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Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong

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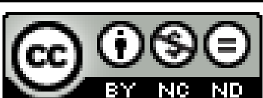

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Abstract of thesis entitled

Communicative Repertoires, Place-making, and Transnational Domestic Labor: Filipino Domestic Workers in Hong Kong

Submitted by

Nicanor Legarte Guinto

for the Joint degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at the University of Hong Kong and King's College, London

in April 2021

One of the hallmarks of Hong Kong's service economy is the presence of a transnational domestic helper workforce. It is estimated that 370,000 of overseas helpers are employed in Hong Kong homes, of whom 200,000 are Filipino Domestic Workers (FDWs). This linguistic ethnographic study examines FDWs' positionality and place-making by focusing on their communicative repertoires. The thesis is primarily anchored in the sociolinguistics of transnational labor and globalization and employs analytic frameworks such as content analysis of narrative accounts, spatialization, and sociolinguistic scales. My data, collected in 2017, come from participant and non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews including body silhouette drawings, photographed multilingual and multimodal signage, and other objects displayed in public spaces.

The data reveal that participants mobilize their multilingual repertoires in a manner that enables them to negotiate their symbolic place within global

migration flows and local (domestic work and leisure) affairs. In their narratives, participants thematize communication, transportation, and financial infrastructures linking the Philippines and Hong Kong allowing them to both reflect and reconcile their transnational status and positionality, being ‘at home’ both in Hong Kong and in the Philippines. Participants’ desire for maintaining a home environment is likewise observed in certain spaces of gathering in their time off work, such as those on Sundays and public holidays in Hong Kong’s Central district. It is then that this ‘global’ financial and business district is transformed and re-scaled by their home-making and activism in social, material, and affective ways as ‘Little Philippines’, indexing a global ‘periphery’. This re-ordering enables FDWs to fleetingly own these spaces as places of familiarity, belonging, and preferred futures. However, the analysis of regulatory and commercial signs carrying Tagalog in Central reveals a more contradictory institutional positioning of FDWs. On the one hand, they are construed as economically desirable target consumers, while on the other as low status and marginalized workforce.

Thus, notwithstanding the inequalities and injustices evident in the ‘unskilled,’ ‘Global South-North’ migration labor flows, this study offers a somewhat counter-balancing perspective to the English language-focused view of FDWs as predominantly disempowered victims of globalist forces. While acknowledging the marginalization and abuse experienced by FDWs in Hong Kong, this study demonstrates that multiple symbolic and material resources within the migrant’s repertoire (viz., languages, ‘immobile’ infrastructures, and space) unlock possibilities, however nascent, towards an expanded view of transnational domestic workers. That is, migrants move equipped with the means, ability, and disposition to exercise their agency with which, to some extent, they

are capable of challenging, subverting and constraining the conditions of neoliberal capitalism, globalization, and power that frame their transnational existence.

Communicative Repertoires, Place-making, and Transnational Domestic Labor: Filipino Domestic Workers in Hong Kong

by

Nicanor Legarte Guinto

MA, University of the Philippines-Diliman

BSE, Southern Luzon State University

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the Joint degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at the University of Hong Kong and King's College, London

in April 2021

Dedication

To

Nanay, who sacrificed not seeing us, her children, grow up,

Tatay†, who served as our *NaTay* ('mother-father'),

and

for the many women and mothers I met

who generously shared their stories

of care, love, and high and deep hopes for their families and children,

para po sa inyo ito.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualifications.

Signed ………………………………………………

Nicanor L. Guinto

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List of Abbreviations

AMCB	-	Asian Migrants Coordinating Body
CHED	-	Commission on Higher Education
FDW	-	Filipino Domestic Worker
FDH	-	Foreign Domestic Helper
FMDWU	-	Filipino Migrant Domestic Worker Union
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
HSW	-	Household Service Worker
ILO	-	International Labour Organization
MDW	-	Migrant Domestic Worker
MFMW	-	Mission For Migrant Workers
OWWA	-	Overseas Workers Welfare Administration
POEA	-	Philippine Overseas Employment Administration
TESDA	-	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
UNIFIL	-	United Filipinos in Hong Kong

Transcription Convention

(.)	micro pause, about a tenth of a second
(0.0)	elapsed time by tenth of a second
,	micro pause, less than a tenth of a second
=	break or gap in a continuous utterance
[	point of overlap onset
]	point at which two overlapping utterances end
↑	sharp rise in intonation
↓	sharp drop in intonation
::	prolongation of sound
word-	dash indicates a cut-off
word	stress
word<	completed word, but seems to stop suddenly
@word@	laughter during an utterance
>word<	speeded up compared to the surrounding talk
<word>	slowed down compared to the surrounding talk
WORD	an especially loud sound compared to surrounding talk
word	emphasized text for discussion
?	intonation rise
°word°	sounds are softer than surrounding talk
( )	transcriber was unable to get what was said
(word)	transcriber's best guess
(( ))	transcriber's descriptions/ comments
[…]	represents segments of talk omitted from transcription

Adapted from Jefferson (2004)

Chapter 1

Introduction

One of the hallmarks of the Hong Kong service economy is the presence of a sizeable transnational domestic helper workforce. Recent figures show an estimated 370,000 foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong, of whom 206,000 are of Philippine citizenship or 55% of the total population of foreign domestic workers in the city. Of this number, 98% are female with a mean age of 35 years old (Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 2019). Since Hong Kong opened its doors to foreign domestic workers in the 1960s, their numbers rapidly increased through the years with the population largely comprised by those coming from the Philippines and Indonesia (Constable, 2007). It is expected to grow further given the evolving care needs of Hong Kong's aging population (Legislative Council Research Office, 2017). This thesis aims to contribute to the bourgeoning literature on language and global domestic and care work in the context of migration from a non-European/North American point of view (Vigouroux, 2013) through the lens of the transnational experience of Filipinos hired as domestic workers in Hong Kong (Gonçalves & Schluter, 2020; Ladegaard, 2017; Lan, 2003; Lorente, 2018). In what follows, I introduce the background that led me to this investigation (Section 1.1). The objectives of this study (Section 1.2) and explanation of key terminological choices (Section 1.3) precede the final section outlining the Chapters of this thesis (Section 1.4).

1.1. Background of the study: Coming from a family of transnational labor migrants

My interest in researching Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong is primarily motivated by my personal background. I was nine years old when my mother left for a domestic worker job in Hong Kong. I was unaware, or perhaps oblivious that my parents were struggling to make ends meet. All I can remember was that my mother, who has a college degree in Education, was having a difficult time finding a teaching job. My father, who is an elementary school graduate, was driving someone else's passenger *tricycle*. After failed attempts to start a food business, my mother was convinced by a cousin to apply for work in Hong Kong. That cousin, who is now in London (also hired there as a domestic worker), was working for a Hong Kong Chinese employer. In 1996, a friend of my cousin's employer asked my cousin to help her find someone from the Philippines she could employ. She would then become my mother's employer for more than 20 years since 1997.

At the time we sent *Nanay* (mom) off to the airport for the first time, not one of my roughly ten relatives, including my father, who were with us, could tell me and my siblings exactly what line of work awaited *Nanay* there. All I knew was that *Nanay* is leaving us for a while (she promised us only two years) to take on a job in a foreign place I knew only by name and some images through souvenirs depicting Hong Kong's iconic skyline sent by my cousin. Only after a few phone calls and hand-written letters did we (my siblings and I) get a name for *Nanay's* work: domestic helper, or DH for short. And so, whenever people asked what *Nanay* was doing in Hong Kong, or whenever needed in forms (under 'mother's occupation'), this was what we would tell or write.

In those early years, what it meant to me was purely based on the stories *Nanay* told us in our once-per-month, one-hour phone calls, monthly letters, goods she sent us, and the overall change in our lifestyle. She was taking care of three children (almost our age) of a wealthy Chinese family in Hong Kong. She accompanied them to and from school and helped them with schoolwork. We could not help but feel envious. But *Nanay*, in her tender voice, always reassured us that she was doing it all and sacrificing not being with us so that she could give us a better life and send us to school. When her wards were in school, she would clean the family's home at a high-rise building and do grocery shopping. Along with letters, and later, recorded messages on cassette tapes peppered with 'I love you's' and 'I miss you's,' were photographs of the family she works for, the large house they were living in, and pictures of her with some friends who became our godparents in various religious and life events.

At least once every year, *Nanay* would send us *balikbayan* boxes ('homecoming' boxes with gifts and other household items). These oversized boxes would be filled to the brim with toys and home appliances no longer used by her employer's family, new and old clothes, bags, bedsheets, shoes, and much more. The boxes were so huge that the three of us could fit inside to play when they were emptied. I remember my siblings and I eagerly waiting for cargo trucks carrying those *balikbayan* boxes not only because of the surprises there but also because of a particular scent we have come to associate with *Nanay* and Hong Kong. It was the closest we could get to *Nanay*.

More than anything else, I remember how much our lifestyle has improved since *Nanay* left. Every month, we would eat out and get a 'happy meal' toy from the only McDonalds restaurant in our entire province back then: a sign to me that

Nanay has remitted her salary. We had new clothes on our birthday and during Christmas, bought a colored TV set, had subscription to cable TV, telephone, and later, internet — things which were considered luxuries in our community during those times. Around five years after she left, we had a modest-sized house of our own. There came the point when my sisters and I no longer had to wear hand-me-downs from well-off cousins. Instead, we were the ones giving away outgrown clothes to relatives.

After *Nanay's* first contract, she would come home for vacation for a month every year. In the earlier years, we would look forward to her homecoming but would feel the awkwardness in the beginning because it felt like she was a stranger to us. Her departures back to Hong Kong were always painful. Suppressed tears would well in our eyes after she and *Tatay* leave the house for the airport. More than five years later, we got used to the situation that even though her homecoming was something we still very much looked forward to, her departures had no longer been as painful as before. The thought that we could give her a call anytime because we already had our own telephone line and, later, internet connection gave us the comfort that she was just a (video) call away.

Barely three years since *Nanay* left, Rory Quintos's (2000) highly-appraised blockbuster movie *Anak* ('Child') was released. It featured the story of a woman, Josie, who reluctantly had to leave her three children to work as a domestic helper in Hong Kong because life was increasingly becoming difficult for them. Little did her family know, her employers were mistreating her. Whenever she calls or sends letters home, she would say things that are entirely the opposite of her unfortunate condition. Making her plight worse, her children refused to talk to her on the phone because they thought she was abandoning them

and their handicapped father for a comfortable life in Hong Kong. She was allowed to come home long after her husband's death, only to be treated like a stranger by her children. Carla, her eldest, has rebelled against her, drinking alcohol excessively, taking drugs, and committing multiple abortions. Because Josie could not take it anymore, in a heated conversation with Carla, Josie revealed the truth about her condition in Hong Kong and her longing to take care of them instead of children she does not even know. Only then did their treatment with her, Carla, in particular, became more amicable. By the time Josie was due to return to Hong Kong, her relations with her children have gotten a lot better, and thereafter, she managed to win her children's trust back.

Nanay was all tears the whole movie while we were watching it together during her vacation that year. In that awkward moment, all I had in mind was the possibility of *Nanay* not telling us things that would otherwise make us worry. Yet no one among us dared to ask. The movie was an eye-opener of sorts. It gave us a different picture of *Nanay's* work in Hong Kong. Far from the dressed-up photos of *Nanay* and her friends in front of upscale establishments in Hong Kong's Central district, the film depicted unspeakable experiences of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Hong Kong. Since then, I started to pay attention to news about Hong Kong and OFW conditions all over the world on primetime newscasts, which are surprisingly not uncommon. Stories about Filipino domestic workers experiencing miserable conditions in Hong Kong and elsewhere in the world regularly appear on TV, radio, and newspapers. Popular culture would typically depict OFWs, especially in the domestic and caring service, as abused, helpless, and with no means of gaining control of their condition[1]. The lyrical

[1] Various scholars have examined this problematic depiction. Oscar Serquina Jr. (2020) considers it a migration melodrama the theatricality of migrant suffering articulated in Ricardo Lee's 1992

narrative would typically end with the celebration of their many sacrifices befitting the description of the *Bagong Bayani* ('modern-day heroes') of the country.

This was my perspective and first-hand experience of globalization growing up. It was informed mainly by my mother's participation in the global migration flow of domestic workers and the concomitant lifestyle changes it brought about my family. However, the heroic and martyr-like depictions of OFWs in popular culture and news media offered a strikingly contradictory image to what seemed to me a 'success story' of this aspect of globalization from our family's end. I have come to ask, if working and living conditions were that bad, then why do Filipinos keep on going to Hong Kong for a domestic worker job? Why are there FDWs, like my mother, who count decades before eventually coming back home for good? It is generally believed that a good education and functional proficiency in the English language are key to more lucrative job positions in the global job market. But why does it seem like domestic work is the only viable job opportunity for Filipinos who would wish to work in Hong Kong or in other high-income economies worldwide despite commanding educational qualifications and proficiency in English? These questions were among those that provided the impetus for this investigation on the lived experiences of FDWs in Hong Kong from a resource-focused, sociolinguistic perspective.

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theater play *DH: Domestic Helper*. Vicente Rafael (1997, p. 276 ff.) writes a scathing commentary on how the Philippine showbiz industry harnessed the 'economy of pity' by capitalizing on the execution of Flor Contemplacion in 1995. Contemplacion was a Filipino domestic worker in Singapore who was accused of double murder of another domestic worker, Delia Maga, and the child of Maga's employer. A movie about her life story – *The Flor Contemplacion Story* – was released in June 1995, a mere 3 months after her execution in March 1995 in Singapore.

1.2. Objectives

This study is a linguistic ethnographic research that examines Filipino domestic workers' positionality and place-making by focusing on their communicative repertoires. Here, I refer to *communicative repertoire* as the material and symbolic resources such as, but not limited to, the 'languages' and other resources for communication and meaning-making and for carrying out particular tasks (more on this in Chapter 3). The attention to repertoire or resources offers insights to notions about available choices and differential access to other symbolic and material resources in a highly globalized world characterized by uneven distribution of socio-economic opportunities (Blommaert, 2010; Hymes, 1996, p. 207). The analysis of repertoire, according to Jan Blommaert (2010, p. 102 ff.), is particularly well suited to a sociolinguistics study of the everyday, from-the-ground experiences of inequalities engendered by the contemporary globalization, especially in the case of migrant mobilities from low-income economies who are believed to benefit the least from globalist and late-capitalist agenda.

Generally, I address the question: What roles do communicative resources play in the transnational experience of Filipinos who are hired as domestic workers in Hong Kong?

Specifically, I seek answers to the following:

1. In what ways do FDWs in Hong Kong use communicative resources within their repertoire to negotiate their positionalities in the global labor migration flow and the local family, domestic work, and economic affairs within which they have come to operate?

2. How do FDWs harness their communicative repertoires to transform particular spaces in Hong Kong into a place of familiarity and a nexus of multiple belongings?
3. How do centering institutions[2] appropriate linguistic resources perceived to be within FDWs' repertoire to discursively represent the migrant group's symbolic place in the social order of Hong Kong?

The thesis is primarily anchored in the sociolinguistics of transnational labor and globalization, employing analytic frameworks such as content analysis of narrative accounts, spatialization, and sociolinguistic scales (more on these in Chapter 4.5, Chapter 5.4.2, and Chapter 6.3, respectively). My data, ethnographically collected in 2017, come from participant and non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews including body silhouette drawings, photographed multilingual and multimodal signage, and other objects displayed and distributed in public spaces. Written between 2016 and 2020, this thesis has had to be constantly reorganized, especially towards the latter end due to the combined effect of the protests in Hong Kong in 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

1.3. Notes on terminology

Throughout this thesis, I use 'Filipino domestic worker' over terms officially used in Hong Kong, such as 'domestic helper' and in the Philippines, such as 'household service worker.' Scholars such as Tiatco (2013) warn against the

[2] In this thesis, I understand 'centering institutions' following Blommaert (2005, p. 75), who, after (Silverstein, 1998, p. 404), defines them as 'real or imagined actors perceived to emanate authoritative attributions' (p. 251). As will become clear in Chapter 6, I consider government and commercial institutions in Sunday-Central to be such 'centering institutions'.

monolithic, methodological nationalism that pervades much migration research. Coloma, McElhinny, Tungohan, Catungal, and Davidson (2012, p. 21) in a comment on studying the 'Filipino' in Canada ask: 'How can one study issues of relevance to Filipina/o Canadians without necessarily calcifying a normative Filipina/o identity?' These authors emphasize at least three approaches: (1) focusing on social construction, or following Rampton, Maybin, and Roberts (2015, p. 20), investigating how the term Filipino is populated and discursively articulated; (2) framing topics on issues rather than identities; and (3) employing theories such as transnationalism and post-colonialism that would complicate the term 'Filipino' (Coloma et al., 2012, pp. 21-22).

In this study, I use the terms 'Filipino' and 'domestic worker' for the lack of a better term and in due consideration and with respect to how my participants would wish to see themselves (at least in the case of my data). That is, as Filipinos working in a foreign country as domestic workers and who see the Philippines as *the* homeland and desired final destination of this sort of 'journey' (more on this in Chapter 5). Of course, this is not to say that I strictly orient to the same terminology and not to say that they can or should be viewed only as 'Filipinos' and/or 'domestic workers' (although I am fully aware that using the term run the risk of such an inevitable effect). As Tyner (2004) warns, '[t]he inscription of terms onto her body… constitutes a political act: an act that is intended to classify her, categorize her, control her' (p. 4). Nevertheless, I use the term to distinguish my participants from the ethnonational 'other' and others who would identify themselves as Filipinos in Hong Kong but are engaged in other lines of work, affiliations, and activities. This terminological dilemma has always been a problem for researchers who have concerned themselves with social research in

light of poststructuralist thought (e.g., Constable, 1997, 2007). Constable, like most other researchers, has opted for ‘Filipino domestic worker’ over official and popular culture’s term ‘domestic helper.’ According to human rights advocates interviewed by Constable, ‘domestic worker’ accords people engaged in this line of work the dignity metaphorically denied in ‘domestic helper,’ which earned negative connotations through the years (Constable, 2007, pp. 8-10).

This sociolinguistic study aimed at *engaging with* (Kulick, 2015, p. 28) issues relevant to Filipinos hired as domestic workers in Hong Kong. Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton, and Richardson (1993) emphasize that doing research ‘on, for, with’ subjects is a complex process that requires careful attention to the research context. This research process would involve the use of methods that do not objectify the researched but ones which are empowering for both the researched and the researcher. While this study sought to speak *for* and *with* the participants at the outset (perhaps with variable success), the insights discussed here, to a great extent and inevitably, speak *about my* interpretation of what my participants said and did in particular activities. Nonetheless, such insights, I argue, are disciplined by the processes of constant comparison of discrepant cases (Erickson, 1986, p. 122) and tempered by relevant theoretical and analytic frameworks in sociolinguistics and allied disciplines (more on these in Chapter 3).

1.4. Outline of the thesis

Following this introductory chapter are two framing chapters (Chapters 2 and 3), three analytic chapters (Chapters 4–6), and the concluding chapter (Chapter 7).

Chapter 2 titled ‘The discourse on (Filipino) transnational domestic work: A literature review’ surveys the relevant studies in relation to the transnational

domestic worker migration particularly from the Philippines to Hong Kong. Following James Tyner's (2004) point that academic research also inevitably contributes to the circulating discourses on migrants and by extension, their discursive 'making,' I trace how scholars from various disciplines problematize notions on transnational domestic work(ers). This chapter focuses on key studies with regard to three geospatial locations relative to the migrant workers investigated in this research: the Philippines, Hong Kong, and the global political and economic order. The chapter ends with a synthesis on how a sociolinguistic lens could contribute to the bourgeoning research on transnational domestic work.

Chapter 3 titled 'Theoretical and Methodological Framework: Sociolinguistics of globalization, transnational domestic work, and ethnographic fieldwork' discusses the broader theoretical and methodological framework of this study. The chapter first deals with theoretical frameworks, such as *sociolinguistics of globalization* and its attention to human mobilities and mobile (linguistic) resources, communicative repertoire and its links to people's life histories and trajectories, place-making, and transnational domestic worker migration. After that, my methodological framework – interpretive, participatory research design – employing the principles of linguistic ethnography and fieldwork research adopted during data collection are discussed. Other, more specific theoretical, analytic, and data collection frameworks are discussed in each of the analytic chapters.

Chapter 4 titled 'Representing and negotiating social roles and relations: Biographic linguascapes, families, economic power, and domestic work' examines FDWs' accounts of their linguistic repertoire and narratives *vis-à-vis* their transnational work migration experience, anchored in John Urry's (2003)

notion of the dialectic of *mobility* and *mooring*. Inspired by Brigitta Busch's (2012, 2016, 2018) method of eliciting representations of linguistic repertoire, the chapter focuses on contributions from four key participants from a domestic worker empowerment organization. The chapter discusses the participants' lived and bodily experiences with language elicited through a body silhouette shaded with colors and symbols to represent their linguistic repertoire. From narrative accounts drawn from the talk of their linguistic repertoire, I probe how they manage particular roles and relations in both the home and work spaces, paying closer attention to how they confront the unsettling liminalities engendered by their transnational migration. The chapter concludes with an observation that participants mobilize linguistic and non-linguistic resources with which to subvert and challenge the dislocations engendered by their transnational work migration.

Chapter 5 titled 'Home-making (in) Sunday-Central: Structures of feeling among Filipino migrant domestic workers congregating in Hong Kong's Central district' delves into conceptions of home and homing from the perspective of my participants who prefer to spend their days off from work with friends and family in the open public spaces of Central. Following Paolo Boccagni's (2017) notion of the nexus of migration and home, and analytically anchored in the sociolinguistic concepts of *spatialization* and *affective practice*, the chapter attempts to understand the social and materially-mediated affective practices that transform Sunday-Central into a 'home away from home' and as a nexus of multiple belongings. The chapter argues that regular homing and home-making practices in Sunday-Central emerge from what Raymond Williams (1977) would call the *structures of feeling* that emerge at the tension of feeling at home, if only temporarily, and not being at home in Hong Kong.

Chapter 6 titled 'The place/s of Tagalog in Hong Kong's Central District: Negotiating center-periphery dynamics' considers public signage (and some talk) in Tagalog found around Hong Kong's Central district where the FDW gatherings are done. Analytically anchored on *sociolinguistic scales* and *center-periphery dynamics*, the chapter uncovers how the presence (and absence) of the language indexes positionings that may be linked to stereotypes and discriminatory practices. Following Del Percio, Flubacher, and Duchêne (2017), the chapter concludes that the *production*, *distribution*, and *consumption* of Tagalog in Central point to its fluid and contingent valuing across differently scaled times and spaces with regard to its perceived speakers, the FDWs.

Finally, I end this thesis with a summary and conclusion in Chapter 7, explaining its implications to sociolinguistics studies on globalization, migrant place-making, and transnational domestic work.

As it may be apparent in the outline above, this thesis is generally structured by giving primacy to the subject-level perspectives of domestic labor migrants – the worker's lived experiences (Holborow, 2018) – in keeping with Duchêne, Moyer, and Roberts (2013a) 'focus on migrants [as] protagonists' (p. 6) (more on these in Chapter 2). Immediately following the framing chapters (Chapters 1–3) is the attention to the personal life trajectories of some key participants through the optic of their linguistic repertoire (Chapter 4). This is followed by another subject-level analysis of the collective activities in Sunday-Central that lead to a 'permanently-temporary' (Boersma, 2018) weekly transformation of Hong Kong's Central district. While the final analytic chapter attends to the institutional positioning of two centering institutions, such institutional positioning nonetheless dovetail with the regularity of certain migrant

activities. Each of these analytic chapters is built to address specific issues that emerged during fieldwork: Chapter 4 largely deals with issues related to the forging and maintenance of personal relationships; Chapter 5 tackles issues of (non-)belonging; and Chapter 6 delves into contradictory discourses linked with migrant activities. Though addressing different yet interconnected concerns, these analytic chapters ultimately show different facets of transnational domestic work(ers) in Hong Kong, specifically with respect to their positionings and place-making through resources drawn from their communicative repertoires.

In the next chapter, I proceed with the literature review.

Chapter 2

The discourse on (Filipino) transnational domestic work: A literature review

2.1. Introduction: The discursive making of Filipino migrant workers

In 2007 the Philippine government adopted a new term for its more than 10 million (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2013) citizens overseas. Then-President Gloria Arroyo promoted the term 'Overseas Filipino Investors' (OFI) as a more rhetorically appealing typification of 'Overseas Filipino Workers' (OFW) to encourage their greater economic spending and investment in the Philippines (Serquina Jr., 2016). Around the same time, those deployed as domestic workers abroad have been renamed 'household service workers' (HSWs) on official documents and 'rebranded' as 'super maids' via required pre-departure skills and language and culture training specific to their country of deployment (Lorente, 2018, pp. 56-59). These discursive attempts at renaming and rebranding its diasporic and working nationals overseas are nothing new in the Philippines as it has become a practice of one administration after another to constitute dominant discourses that legitimize the state's policy on labor out-migration (Encinas-Franco, 2013; Serquina Jr., 2016).

The administration of President Ferdinand Marcos, which began the labor export program in 1974 (more on this below), adopted the term *balikbayan* (lit., returning Filipino) in 1983 to refer first to its largely US-based nationals who would come and visit or return for good to the Philippines. *Balikbayan* has since covered returning Filipinos who are not necessarily based in the US and accrued

positive meanings of *giving back* to the country through investments (Aguirre, 2014, p. 28). It has also been adopted to refer to the box full of goods, the *balikbayan* box, that is sent by its working nationals overseas and accepted into the country tax-free.

In 1988, the term *Bagong Bayani* ('new hero' or alternatively, 'modern-day hero') was used by President Corazon Aquino in a speech to refer to Filipinos hired as domestic workers in Hong Kong (Rafael, 1997). *Bagong Bayani* was later adopted and popularized under President Fidel Ramos' administration to quell public anger on the government's failure to save Flor Contemplacion, a domestic worker in Singapore, from execution in 1994 on what many Filipinos believe to be a false accusation (Encinas-Franco, 2013). In so doing, '[t]he state marshall[s] the rhetoric of pity in order to further its policies of development' (Rafael 1997, p. 279). In the early years of the labor export program, Filipinos sent abroad for work were called 'Overseas Contract Workers' (OCW). Later, this was changed to 'Overseas Filipino Workers' (OFW) under the Ramos administration to foreground national ties and to cover not just those on temporary work contract, but also those who are eyeing for or have emigrated in the destination country (Encinas-Franco, 2013).

Following Michel Foucault, James Tyner (2004) calls these attempts as discursive 'making of migrants' through what Norman Fairclough (1993) would regard as the Philippine government's 'technologization of discourse' on labor exportation centered around migrants. However, Tyner emphasizes that this is not only exclusive to the nation-state nor institutions as these are similarly carried out by migrants themselves and researchers as well (see also Cameron et al., 1993, p. 89). Concerning researchers, Tyner draws our attention to the following scenario:

> A 23- year-old woman moves from Manila to Singapore, is employed for three years as a domestic worker, and then returns to the Philippines. To some researchers, she is an 'international labor migrant'; to others, she is a 'transnational migrant'; for others still, she is a 'sojourner.' Our labels change, but has the woman? (Tyner, 2004, p. 4)

In this chapter, I survey the many ways in which Filipinos hired as domestic workers abroad are portrayed and investigated in the literature with specific attention to geopolitical nodes of the instance of migration relevant to this study; i.e., the Philippines, Hong Kong, and the global political-economic order. This chapter is thus structured into three main sections in view of such geopolitical spaces where migrants are thought to be subjects to discursive 'making.' Since studies arguably and inevitably construct certain forms of representation, the perspectives which such works bring to the table are discussed. I start with studies showing how domestic workers, in particular, are predisposed into becoming laboring bodies in and for the Philippines via the state's migration infrastructure, and how, in the process, they are transformed into tradable commodities in the global marketplace (Section 2.2). Following this are studies that problematize domestic worker conditions in Hong Kong and discursive representations of such migrants as racialized, victimized, yet resilient foreign workers (Section 2.3). Afterwards, Section 2.4 surveys the literature on how transnational domestic workers elsewhere in the world are discursively constructed and problematized in view of the global political-economic order. As will become clear below, studies show that the political and economic processes

in the global scale constitute the very conditions that fuel and drive the labor migration flow from the Philippines to Hong Kong and the rest of the world. I end this chapter with a synthesis and comment on what a sociolinguistic analysis may offer in light of these studies (Section 2.5).

2.2. Departing from the Philippines

This section centers on studies that investigate the mechanisms in the Philippines which transform its nationals as 'laboring bodies' traded overseas to augment State coffers (Section 2.2.1). As I discuss further, such studies also note how the mechanisms, seemingly perfected in time, condition Filipinos into looking outward than in for work opportunities (Section 2.2.2), and how the pattern of migration from the Philippines has become a feminized labor flow through the years (Section 2.2.3).

2.2.1. The Philippine state's migration infrastructure

Research on the Filipino transnational labor migration shows that what was once a provisional solution to economic turmoil, labor exportation has now become the Philippines' prized economic strategy. International labor migration via official channels has been documented to have started in the 1970s (see Appendix B for a timeline of key political and historical events contingent to the Filipino domestic worker migration flow to Hong Kong). During this time, the global oil crisis exacerbated the political and economic upheaval in the Philippines caused by then President Ferdinand Marcos's proclamation of Martial Law in 1972 that left many without jobs. To address unemployment and to stimulate the troubled economy, Marcos signed the Labor Code of 1974

containing provisions for exporting workers to other countries as a stop-gap measure.

To ensure an uninterrupted outflow of migrant workers (hence, the inflow of remittances), the Philippine government established various migration infrastructures. Government agencies were consistently reorganized since the 1980s to efficiently 'manage' the labor export (Goss & Lindquist, 1995; Lorente, 2012). Studies and policy documents have shown that this labor export management involves the discursive production of a particular laboring body mobilized by the Philippine state as well as parties benefitting from labor exportation (Lindio-McGovern, 2012; Lorente, 2018; Tyner, 2004). The labor 'migration infrastructure' of the Philippine state is thought to have been well designed that they consistently respond to the current and emerging labor demands abroad, although often for the so-called surplus labor where pay and status are low (Ignacio & Meijia, 2009).

At present, three government agencies are instituted to facilitate the labor export policy. The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), as stated on their website, 'facilitates the generation and preservation of decent jobs for Filipino migrant workers, promotes their protection and advocates their smooth reintegration into Philippine society' (http://www.poea.gov.ph). The Overseas Worker Welfare Authority (OWWA) serves as the insurance arm of the government for overseas workers. At the same time, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) is made in charge of the affairs of emigrating Filipinos and au pairs. In the destination countries, labor attachés are appointed to assist labor migrants further and attend to their documentation needs (i.e., work contract renewal, passport renewal, assistance when transitioning to another employment,

legal aid, etc.). Recently, incumbent Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has made it his administration's priority to establish the Department of Overseas Filipino Workers, an agency that would exclusively cater the needs of Filipino workers abroad, presently under the responsibility of the Department of Labor and Employment, which attends to both internal and external labor concerns (Tomacruz, 2019).

Intersecting with the government's outward labor deployment mechanism is the education sector of the Philippines. Schools and universities streamline their program offerings based on (apparent) labor needs in other countries and, arguably in the process, ideologically shape labor export-oriented graduates (Lorente, 2013, pp. 192-196; Ortiga, 2018). In her ethnographic research detailing how a labor export-oriented education manifests itself in higher education institutions in the Philippines, Yasmin Ortiga comments,

> One might find it ludicrous to think that the lack of specific professionals in a place like the US could lead to the subsequent expansion of university programmes in a small nation thousands of miles away… As news of labour shortages in particular fields emerge, school owners and administrators rush to offer college majors in line with such 'needs,' instituting large-scale institutional changes in relatively short periods of time. (Ortiga, 2018, pp. 1–2)

Elsewhere, Ortiga (2017, p. 497) likens Philippine Colleges and Universities to a 'global labor factory,' operating in tandem with the global 'commodity chain' for migrant labor that is largely determined by foreign

markets. Reflecting on how she was a product of an educational trend in the early 2000s, Ortiga notes that during her time, a Nursing degree was a popular University offering apparently because of its projected demand in the US, UK, and Australia, among others in the years to come. A decade after that, degree programs on hospitality management, hotel and restaurant servicing have since become popular offerings to address the needs of countries shifting their economic development strategy towards tourism[3]. Corroborating this perceived trend is the 2006–2016 data from the Philippines' Commission on Higher Education (CHED), which shows more than 50% spike in the number of graduates in 'service trades' and 'business administration and related' (where hotel and restaurant servicing is grouped) compared to more than 50% drop in graduates of 'medical and allied' disciplines (Commission on Higher Education, 2018). A recent survey by the World Economic Forum (2019, p. 16) finds that among the youth in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the majority of Filipino respondents (52.9%) – the highest in the ASEAN countries – prefer leaving their home country for work abroad.

Aside from the tertiary education sector, the country's technical education arm, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), is seen to more directly complement the state's labor export strategy of producing particular laboring bodies on-demand (Zhuo, 2017). Now under the Office the President of the Philippines, TESDA is mandated to work closely with POEA and the Department of Labor and Employment for training and skills certification of departing workers. Since 2007, a National Certification for Household Services from TESDA is required before the departure of those hired as domestic workers.

[3] For a report on the global trends and challenges in the hospitality and tourism sector, see International Labour Organization (2010).

This entails training and a battery of tests that would ensure that the departing household service worker (HSW) is equipped with the necessary skills and disposition for work, and cultural knowledge on the destination country. For example, the months-long training program for HSWs is comprised of some hours of language and culture training through TESDA's dedicated Language Skills Institute (LSI). Implemented as part of the Arroyo administration's 'super maid' program, the additional training on the destination country's language and culture, while said to be the government's form of protecting the workforce from abuse, is thought to be poised as a response to the increasing competition in the region for the global domestic labor market (Lorente, 2012; Zhuo, 2017).

The aforesaid institutional processes and programs arguably ensure that departing nationals are 'disciplined' enough to effectively fill the labor gap in the receiving state and, in turn, stimulate the economy of the Philippine state. Notwithstanding undocumented labor migrants, the unprecedented growth in the number of Filipinos deployed via these channels since the 1970s and the country's heavy reliance on remittances from its overseas citizens have proved the institutional mechanisms that produce a 'made in the Philippines' (Tyner, 2004) laboring body to be an economic success for the Philippine state. Through the years, these institutional mechanisms that enable the state to regulate the outflow of people and inflow of money and goods have likewise been found to have engendered a culture of out-migration.

2.2.2. A 'migration revolution'

Contrary to many scholars who claim that the 1970s and the enactment of the labor code in 1974 ushered in the Philippines' formal participation in global

labor migration, historian Filomeno Aguilar (2014) points further back to Spanish colonial times. According to Aguilar, Filipino seafaring crew service for the Spanish Galleon trade since the 1700s marked Filipinos' formal participation in the global (labor) migration flow. Upon the arrival of the Americans on Philippine soil in the early 1900s, male workers, Aguilar notes, have been indentured in plantations in the United States, with many of them permanently settling there after that, and to which the roots of the sizeable US-bound emigration from the Philippines can be traced (see also Ceniza-Choy, 2003 for the case of Filipino nurses in the US). Despite this, the Labor Code of 1974 arguably opened the floodgates for more Filipinos to be able to work abroad and for the development of a mindset about working abroad as the best, if not the only way, towards socio-economic relief.

In a 2017 study commissioned by the International Labour Organization (ILO), Mi Zhou (2017) notes that outward migration has become a 'culture' in the Philippines, with its government's 'well-developed' overseas labor deployment mechanisms becoming a model of neighboring labor-sending countries. From around 4000 workers leaving the country *annually* in the 1970s, by 2000s, the state-sponsored labor migration has been sending roughly 4000 Filipinos abroad *every single day* (Joaquin & Ferrer, 2011). It is not surprising, therefore, that remittances from overseas workers have exponentially grown through the years. Zhou (2017) further notes that the Philippines' overseas workers are some of the country's most vital sources of foreign currency and whose remittances have become a valuable source of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), which in 2014 accounted for around 10% of the country's GDP and hitting an all-time high in 2018 (Lucas, 2019, February 16). It is for these reasons why Aguilar

(2014) points out that the 'Philippine national economy has become both unmanageable and unimaginable without overseas labor migration' (p. 6), calling it a case of 'migration revolution' in the Philippines. Thus, for Tupas (2020, p. 7), 'when we speak of globalization in the Philippines, it is not possible (and in fact, irresponsible) to ignore the export of labor as one of its defining features.'

Nevertheless, studies show that the once male-dominated labor migration flow has since been commodified by the Philippine state, and since the 1980s, shifted into a feminized one.

2.2.3. (Feminized) labor as a commodity

The opening of the Philippines to the global labor market in 1974 effectively transformed the country into a 'labor brokerage state' (Rodriguez, 2008), often negotiating diplomatic ties with other nation-states on account of, and labor opportunities for, its working nationals. Critical analyses of the aforementioned state mechanisms have unmasked how such institutionalized processes treat and discursively construct migrant labor from the Philippines as mere commodities that are traded elsewhere in the world at a gainful price for entrepreneurs, and ultimately, the nation-state (Barber, 2008; Lindio-McGovern, 2012). Initially, government to government agreements offered only work in the oil rich countries of the Middle East for jobs in oil fields and construction sites hiring mostly men. Thereafter, work opportunities diversified, covering other lines of work such as domestic and caring work. This shift in the global labor demands from the construction and manufacturing industry to that of the service industry has concomitantly driven the transition from a male-dominated migration pattern to the feminized flow since the 1980s (Sayres, 2005).

The opening up of industries around the world for work traditionally attributed to women, and the termination of male-dominant construction and oil fields work in the Middle East have been noted to facilitate the female-dominated labor out-migration from the Philippines that we see today (Aguilar Jr., 2014). In a 2017 survey, the Philippine Statistics Authority (2018) reports a female-led (53.7%) international labor migration compared with the 46.3% male workers abroad. Of these, 37.6% are hired in 'elementary occupations', the top line of work in the survey under which domestic service is grouped. Across the world, the same pattern of female labor migration has been observed that research on feminist and gendered dimensions of labor and migration have spiked in the past few decades (e.g., Casumbal, 2004; Parreñas, 2001, 2006; Peng & Wong, 2013; Tyner, 2004; see section 2.4 below). It has been noted that the shifting global labor demands have made 'care [to be] the largest imported product of the Philippines' resulting in 'gendered woes' (Parreñas, 2006, p. 24; also, Ceniza-Choy, 2003).

For being largely employed in 'vulnerable' occupations, Filipino women have been found to be subject to exploitation and abuse. The high-profile cases in the 1990's of Maricris Sioson, a dancer in Japan, Flor Contemplacion, a domestic worker in Singapore, and Sara Balabagan, a domestic worker in the United Arab Emirates, have brought to public attention the increasing participation of Filipino women in labor out-migration and unmasked the vulnerabilities of Filipino women working overseas. The death sentence of Flor Contemplacion in Singapore and the ensuing public outcry prompted the Ramos administration to immediately pass Republic Act 8042: The Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995, which reiterates that the state does not *promote* overseas

employment, but only *facilitates* its citizen's freedom of choice to look for better work opportunities (Section 2c of RA 8042). However, Romina Guevarra (2006, p. 525) comments that instead of addressing the structural conditions that enable such vulnerabilities, the State, labor brokers, and other NGOs mobilize a neoliberal framework for overseas employment that promotes competitiveness and 'empowers' them with a sense of responsibility for their well-being abroad and those of the families they left behind. Romina Guevarra not only finds this actually disempowering for the women in the sense that the conditions that make them susceptible to abuse and exploitation are still there, but even more importantly, it predisposes women to be blamed for the 'social costs' of their decision to migrate (e.g., family separation, children growing up to vices, marital dissolution). 'The state seemingly puts forth an argument that since these women chose to work overseas, they, not the state [even husbands, fathers, and employers], are accountable for the consequences of their choices' (Romina Guevarra, 2006, p. 532).

2.3. Arriving in Hong Kong

At about the same time the Philippines was suffering from political and economic turmoil in the early 1970s, and the decades after that, Hong Kong's economy, by sharp contrast, was growing at an exponential rate (Zhuo, 2017). Such dramatic growth accordingly inspired greater participation among local women in the formal economy, which led to a labor deficit in the domestic service sector (Kuo, 2014). Due to old age, retirement, or other work opportunities of the traditional

domestic workers, the *amah*[4] set-up could not keep up anymore with the increasing demand (Constable, 1996, p. 453). These conditions led the Hong Kong government to decide to open its doors for foreign workers in 1973, initially to cater to its expatriate community (Aguilar Jr., 2014, p. 66; Constable, 2007). The Philippines was among the first to respond to this demand. For many years, Filipino women have dominated statistical figures on foreign domestic worker populations in Hong Kong (Legislative Council Research Office, 2017). Between the 1970s to early 1990s, the foreign domestic worker population in Hong Kong has been dominated by Filipinos, reaching a peak share of 84% in 1995 (*ibid*., p. 2). The increasing numbers of foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong and ensuing issues gave researchers the impetus to investigate such matters that have revolved around abuse, discrimination, dislocations, and disempowerment (Section 2.3.1), the grassroots response to abuse and exploitation through social activism (Section 2.3.2), their perceived contributions to the Hong Kong society (Section 2.3.2), and their resilience to the challenges that confront them in their work migration (Section 2.3.4). While I focus mainly on studies that talk about Filipino domestic workers, I wish to stress that these issues are not unique to the FDWs.

2.3.1. Abused, dislocated, disempowered?

Foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong are given two years of work contract with opportunities for renewal subject to the satisfaction of the employer/s. Based on the standard contract (see Appendix A), domestic workers

[4] The Chinese *amah* were the elderly domestic workers in affluent families in Hong Kong prior to the arrival of foreign domestic workers. Compared to their foreign counterparts, *Amahs* did not normally have a day off from work, received a salary far less, and did not have annual paid leave due to the fact that there was no law that protected their worker rights (Constable, 2007, p. 52 ff.).

are expected to do domestic duties such as household chores, cooking, looking after aged persons, baby-sitting, and child-minding, among others. Yet, the Hong Kong Federation of Asian Domestic Helpers and Progressive Labor Union of Domestic Workers in Hong Kong (2016) comment that the contract offers vague legal protection for domestic workers, which is thought to have been the reason for the many issues of human rights abuses (Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor, 2001). According to the Asian Migrant Centre (2001, 2004) and a study commissioned by the International Labour Organization (Sayres, 2005), underpayment, excessive maid agency fees, deplorable living conditions, domestic violence, sexual abuse, excessive working hours, and racial discrimination are issues confronting migrant domestic workers in the city. 'Domestic work is, in many ways, invisible work, taking place behind closed doors,' making workers vulnerable to exploitation and abuse (Experian Asia Pacific & Enrich, 2019, p. 5).

In a survey with more than 1000 migrant domestic workers (MDW) in Hong Kong, non-profit human rights organization Justice Centre Hong Kong (2016) reports that 66.3% of those surveyed showed strong signs of exploitation. In terms of working conditions, the organization finds that MDWs work, on average, for 11.6 hours per day in 6 days, or a total of 71.4 hours per week. The report also reveals that 39.3% have stated not having a room of their own; 35.2% said they share a room with the child or an elderly they are taking care of, while 2% said they sleep in communal areas or the kitchen. These, the report claims, can be attributed to the 'live-in' arrangement required by law for MDWs. In addition, it is believed that the rising number of abuse cases and host countries' inaction in

making situations better make ‘domestic workers... the slaves of modern Asia,’ according to a *South China Morning Post* report (Carvalho, 2019).

These statistical figures support findings of studies documenting foreign domestic workers’ experiences of exploitation. The language and discourse-focused research of Hans Ladegaard (2012, 2013, 2014, 2015) reveal narratives of violence against foreign domestic workers. Mostly Filipinas and Indonesians, these women have fled from their employers and sought refuge in a church shelter in Hong Kong. Analyzing a corpus of more than 80 sharing sessions with more than 300 workers, Ladegaard (2017) reports harrowing experiences of abuse and exploitation, which embody what he calls the discourse of powerlessness and repression. Replete with crying events, stories from the sharing sessions reveal unspeakable maltreatment and suffering in the hands of cruel employers that is historically attributed to the servant-master system of absolute obedience of the Chinese *amah* that has since been replaced by foreign domestic workers. Despite these, Ladegaard reports how the abused workers attempt to linguistically, emotionally, and psychologically cope with trauma through narrative therapy that enables them to ‘re-author’ (2015, p. 215) for the better, their fractured lives and identities.

The dominance of Filipinos in the domestic labor market of Hong Kong for many years has also been thought to be the primary reason for the metonymic, stereotypical, and discriminatory association of ‘domestic help/er’ to the ethnonational and gendered identity category ‘Filipina’ in the Hong Kong cultural imaginaries. In a study on the cultural representations of foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong, Sharanya Jayawickrama (2017) finds that the representation of domestic workers in the Hong Kong mainstream media has been stereotypically

locked down to Filipinos despite the growing diversity of the domestic worker population from other nationalities since 2000. Analyzing a wide variety of mass media productions between 1980 and 2016, Jayawickrama shows how foreign domestic workers, predominantly represented as Filipinas, are constructed as 'blackfaced,' 'intimate strangers' (p. 8), sources of comic relief, and as figures of dual personas of diligent servants and naive other, alternative mother, or illicit sexual partner/target. But despite these discriminatory representations, Jayawickrama argues that these cultural imaginaries reflect more of the 'anxieties, fears, and desires of the dominant culture' than the constituted 'substituted/ displaced/ hidden subject of the constructions of the other' (p. 3).

Considering employers' voices, Janet Ho (2019) analyzes a corpus of more than 2000 posts published between 2013–2018 on a Hong Kong-based Facebook page and discussion forum, '外 傭僱主必看新聞消息'('Information that FDH employers must read'). Composed of approximately 34,000 members, the online forum is regarded as the largest public forum for foreign domestic worker-related topics. In her investigation of the employers' discursive construction of foreign domestic helpers in cyberspace, Ho finds that employers demonstrate 'ideological ambivalence' by using discursive strategies that mark in-group (worker as part of family) and out-group (worker as alien other) relations depending on their perception of reported experiences with their domestic workers. In-group relations, according to Ho, are constructed using naming strategies that signal friendship or kinship relations (e.g., 'old sister'). On the other hand, out-group relations are represented using naming strategies that signal derogatory metaphors and the inferior position of FDHs (e.g., 'grumpy face,' 'princess'). Ho concludes that despite these ambivalent representations, the

narratives foreground employers' self-identities as powerful and in greater control over FDHs who are constructed as being at the mercy of this power and control.

Like their counterparts around the world, Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong are susceptible to what sociologist Rachel Parreñas (2001) calls 'dislocations in migration.' As foreign workers hired on a temporary basis, they are deemed 'partial citizens': they have very slim, if not no chance at all to avail full citizenship status nor permanent residency in the host country; their rights are primarily dependent on their two-year working contract. Section 2(4)(vi) of the Hong Kong Immigration Ordinance states that those 'employed as a domestic helper who is from outside Hong Kong' cannot be considered as 'ordinarily residents' of Hong Kong, which effectively denies them the legal rights to avail permanent residency however fulfilling the seven or more years stay required by law. The Court of Final Appeal, on 25 March 2013, ruled that this law was constitutional despite the Basic Law not mentioning any such restriction (*Vallejos v. Commissioner of Registration and Registration of Persons Tribunal* 2013). In view of these court decisions, Erni (2016) characterizes foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong to be in the state of being 'included-out' in the discriminatory regime of citizenship management in the territory .

With some possessing educational qualifications that would have allowed them to shift to job prospects that command better socio-economic value, they experience 'contradictory class mobility.' Migrant workers who come to Hong Kong on a domestic worker contract are generally not allowed to shift into other lines of work. And because of these, their separation from family, and other barriers to social integration, Parreñas continues, result in an experience of 'non-belonging.' Nevertheless, by virtue of monetary returns, FDWs, like other

Filipinos overseas, display 'spectral presences' (Rafael, 1997) commanding a place in the Philippine nation-state affairs. 'Neither inside nor wholly outside the nation-state, they hover on the edges of its consciousness, rendering its boundaries porous with their dollar-driven comings and goings' (Rafael, 1997, p. 269).

Despite these issues, Hong Kong remains to be one of the better places to work in the reproductive labor sector. When compared, for example, with the Middle Eastern countries (see Fernandez & de Regt, 2014a), Hong Kong laws are said to be better as they guarantee acceptable minimum working standards, and relative freedom to engage in political actions and other personal activities (Constable, 2009; M.-y. Lai, 2010; Yu, 2009). Unsurprisingly, these conditions, together with the relative proximity to the Philippines, Hong Kong is one of the top foreign destinations for Filipinos who wish to work as domestic workers abroad (Rappler, 2012; Zhuo, 2017).

2.3.2. Facilitating transnational solidarity in the streets of Central

One of the most striking images of the Filipino domestic worker in the literature and popular media in Hong Kong is the imposing presence of those spending their day off from work on Sundays and statutory holidays in Hong Kong's Central district[5]. Constable (1997, 2007) claims that the number of Filipinos taking a day-long rest from work doing various activities transforms Central into 'a corner of the Philippines transplanted into Hong Kong' (p.3). On particular days of the week, Central becomes a place where they 're-establish and express other facets of their identity, if only for a few hours' (p. 170). Various

[5] In comparison, Causeway Bay (specifically Victoria Park), which is another important commercial center o n Hong Kong Island, is observed to be dramatically transformed into an Indonesian enclave on Sundays (Choi, 2019; Constable, 2007, p. viii).

performances such as dancing, fashion walk, and beauty pageants are staged transforming the heart of Hong Kong into 'a key source of diasporic identity for Filipina domestic workers' as the activities 'offer a politics of belonging to a community of aspiring beauty queens' who refuse neoliberal impulses, which render them as disposable and compliant migrants throughout the week (Ortuzar, 2020, p. 87). Xiojiang Yu (2009) ascribes the sizeable presence of FDWs gathering at Central on Sundays to the 'intrinsic culture' of the FDWs brought to Hong Kong, which re-shape the cultural landscapes of the city every week(end). From a survey conducted among FDWs in Central, Yu points to religious beliefs, family ties, language, and modes of social contact as the driving forces for the massive gathering at Central every Sunday.

Urban studies scholar Lisa Law (2001, 2002) views the overwhelming presence of FDWs in Central as defiance against claims of 'disappearing' public spaces in intensely capitalist cities such as Hong Kong. Law believes that the corresponding multisensory experience that FDWs collectively create every Sunday turns Central into 'Little Manila,' an 'alternative map' brought about by the infusion of the transnational element whereby the convergence of senses, bodies, and spaces produces a sense of home (more on this in Chapter 5).

It is in the streets of Central on Sundays and statutory holidays where domestic workers, particularly those coming from the Philippines, have been noted to exercise their democratic freedom of speech. Filipino migrant workers are thought to be the most politically vocal among migrant workers in Hong Kong, working closely with various non-government organizations worldwide and establishing transnational grassroots migrant movements in the city (Hsia, 2009). This is attributed in part to their longer presence in the city and their

greater population, which accordingly give them the leverage to affect policy on particular issues in Hong Kong and the Philippines (Constable, 2009; M.-y. Lai, 2010; Law, 2002, pp. 1640-1643). It is with the Filipino group where the founding of the Asian Migrants Coordinating Body (ACMB) is attributed (Hsia, 2009). The ACMB functions as the mouthpiece of Asian migrants in Hong Kong, periodically consulted by the Hong Kong government on policies and legislation that involves them.

Social activist organizations periodically stage various forms of protests on issues that have particular implications on migrant workers (in Hong Kong and around the world) as well as on issues that may affect their families back in the Philippines (Wui, 2012). In a two-sited analysis of activist organizations in New York and Hong Kong, Valerie Francisco and Robyn Rodriguez (2014) report that Filipino migrant organizations such as *Kabalikat* in New York and the United Filipinos in Hong Kong (UNIFIL), along with the International Migrants Alliance (IMA), social activists engage in 'transnational solidarity'. By staging protests often against the very mechanism that facilitated their overseas work and the systematic inequalities which they have to confront with daily, and scaling it up to a transnational movement, we see what Brecher, Costello, and Smith (2000) would view as an instance of globalization 'from below'.

2.3.3. Contributing to the Hong Kong society

Studies about migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong that foreground their contributions to society highlight not only their role in enabling locals to participate in the formal economy. MDWs have likewise been noted to play an active role in the education of children and for their part in stimulating the

economy of Hong Kong. With regard to those from the Philippines, this was tied to their perceived proficiency in English and relatively better educational background.

Elaine Crebo (2003) discusses the changing work expectations and qualifications of Filipina domestic workers, which accordingly gives them greater value in the domestic labor market in the city. Apart from housework, Crebo finds that Filipina domestic workers also play a significant role both in formal and informal English language learning of Chinese children in Hong Kong. Likewise, Sam Tang and Linda Yung (2016) talk about the benefit of hiring Filipina domestic workers to the educational achievement of school children. Drawing from two census data of 15000 school children and a survey of 151 school children, their study shows a sharp contrast with the educational advantages received by children whose families employ Filipina domestic workers, compared to those employing domestic workers from other countries. Tang and Yung argue that the educational attainment, English proficiency, and 'maturity' of Filipina domestic workers are essential in the overall educational achievement of school children, more specifically in English (but, as they report, not in Chinese and Mathematics). However, Alex Leung (2011, 2012) reports that English language learners who have been long exposed to a 'Filipino accented English' tend to avoid using segmental features that are salient to the variety when speaking English than those who have lesser exposure to it. While Leung did not elaborate on the matter, his study gives us insights on the implicit wider social perception about this variety of English and the marginal social position of their perceived speakers in society.

Through the years, the two large ethnonational groups of foreign domestic workers – Filipinos and Indonesians – have been seen to develop a niche in the domestic labor market in Hong Kong (Constable, 2007, p. 40). Those coming from the Philippines are thought to be suited for childcare for they are relatively better educated in an English-medium educational landscape. But they are believed to be less suited for elderly care as they are said to be more vocal and less submissive than their Indonesian counterparts who are typically said to be comparatively less educated, more submissive, and typically with some prior training in Cantonese. With the aging population of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Legislative Council Research Office (2017), in a document, anticipates more MDWs to be hired in the city in the years to come.

Studies also note that MDWs not only contribute to their respective country's economy. They similarly help stimulate that of Hong Kong in their spending in the city. According to a report (Experian Asia Pacific & Enrich, 2019), MDWs in Hong Kong contributed an estimated US$ 12.6 Billion to the city's economy in 2018.

2.3.4. Resilient transnational migrants?

While confronted with issues that arguably places them at the fringes of society (both in their home countries and in Hong Kong), MDWs have been found to perform everyday displays of resilience. A product of her extensive ethnographic engagement with a civic organization in Hong Kong that advocates domestic worker rights, Nicole Constable (1997; 2007) provides a definitive anthropological account of the working and living conditions of domestic workers in Hong Kong (mainly about Filipinas in the first edition of her book). Constable

presents contradictory discourses on resistance and oppression based on her fieldwork as a volunteer in the Mission for Migrant Workers (MFMW). After mapping the early beginnings of, and socio-cultural traditions that she believes to have had direct effects on the present foreign domestic work(ers), Constable argues that 'domestic workers resist oppression in certain ways but also simultaneously participate in their own subordination' (p. 13). Most notable in her work concerning this study is the centrality of linguistic and communicative resources in the workers' assertion of control of their identities otherwise thought to be peripheral(ized). Constable, however, warns that in pursuing studies on people believed to be disempowered, extra care is needed so as not to create a false, romanticizing image of resistance.

In a study of the role and value of language in the experience of Filipino and Indonesian domestic workers, Selim Ben Said (2019) finds that English and Cantonese tend to play a significant role in effecting constraint or empowerment in the worker's experiences in Hong Kong. On the one hand, these languages, Ben Said finds, become sources of empowerment for foreign domestic workers who command the particular language spoken by the host family or used in daily interactions (such as, for example, when talking to predominantly Cantonese-speaking taxi drivers) for they can avoid misunderstandings and get the required job done. On the other, such languages contribute to the alienation or estrangement of domestic workers if the language of the host family or host society (i.e., Cantonese) is not part of the worker's linguistic repertoire as it can cause communication barriers. This is why he also reports about a strongly felt need and expectation among foreign DWs to learn Cantonese. Ladegaard (2020), however, criticizes the pervasive expectation about MDWs needing to learn

Cantonese after spending a considerable amount of time in Hong Kong. For being unable to functionally use Cantonese despite counting years in Hong Kong, some MDWs become subject to disparaging comments of being 'incompetent' and 'stupid'. By contrast, however, he argues that this has never been the same for '*gweilos*, white people who work as professionals in Hong Kong and rarely speak any Chinese' (p. 100, italics original). Hence, Ladegaard finds such ideology discriminatory and hypocritical.

Aside from the above on the open resistance to 'dislocations' (Parreñas, 2001) of Filipino migrant workers in Hong Kong, there are several studies on what I would call subtle forms of resistance and/or adaptation. For example, Valerie Yap (2015) reports in her ethnographic research that Filipino migrant workers 'make use of their religiosity as a survival and adaptive strategy' (p. 91) in a working condition generally deemed to be precarious. Yap argues that more than serving spiritual needs, Filipinos' religiosity in Hong Kong tends to be taken up as a performance of identity. Yap claims that it serves as a strong connection to their Catholic Christian roots in the Philippines, where they see themselves eventually returning after their temporary stay in Hong Kong. Similarly, and also in connection to Sunday gatherings, occupational therapist Terry Peralta-Catipon (2011) as well as a mental health study in 1996 (Bagley, Madrid, & Bolitho, 1997) show that FDWs' Sunday gatherings serve as an adaptive strategy whereby they regain old and embody new identities out of the familiar sociocultural context that Central becomes on Sundays.

Another coping strategy involves the maintenance of kinship relations through available technologies and transnational services that allow instantaneous connections with relatives back in the Philippines. Yinni Peng and Odalia Wong

(2013) paid close attention to ‘transnational mothering’ performed by Filipina domestic workers through telecommunication technologies. They find that their respondents practice diversified mothering patterns such as intensive, collaborative, and passive mothering, which they say, are dependent on the availability of a substitute child carer and the degree of involvement of husbands in child-rearing.

The ethnographic investigation of Clement Camposano (2012) finds the utility of *balikbayan* boxes to Filipino migrant women in Hong Kong in their performance of kinship responsibilities. Camposano claims that while sending goods in *balikbayan* boxes is viewed to be migrants’ way of maintaining coherence and continuity in their identities (as mothers, daughters, wives, etc.) left at home, a ‘performance of intimacy’ and an ‘attempt to link two places in one life’ (p. 99), relatives receiving *balikbayan* boxes, on the other hand, tend to convey ‘dissonant attitudes,’ seeing it as unnecessary and impractical.

2.4. Locating domestic work(ers) in the global economic order

The international migration of Filipinos for domestic work is inextricably linked to macro-processes at the global scale level. The current processes of globalization have increasingly rendered the global service economy an important node for further capital accumulation. In this section, I report about how the Philippines–Hong Kong domestic labor flow is seen to be deeply entrenched with the global restructuring of economic productivity, generally attributed to be the primary culprit that skews global capital accumulation to the detriment of the source of ‘cheap,’ ‘disposable,’ and ‘unskilled’ labor (Section 2.4.1). Since it is said that MDWs’ working conditions and potential career progression are sharply

different when compared with others, the growing intellectual movement that aims to professionalize domestic work by considering it as ordinary work has been met with moral apprehension (Section 2.4.2).

2.4.1. Restructuring of the global political-economic order

The increase in demand for paid domestic and caring work is seen to be deeply embedded in the global shift to a post-Fordist economy, and neoliberal approach to governance predominantly advocated in the 'Global North' (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012; Connell, 2007), or in nation-states that exercise considerable global power in politics, economy and knowledge generation. In these forms of political and economic restructuring, social good is measured by the extent of entrepreneurial, dignity-driven freedoms of individuals (and businesses), and dynamics of market transactions (Harvey, 2005). From an economic standpoint, this effectively meant deregulation and privatization of socio-economic activities once thought to be responsibilities of nation-state governance. Among high-income economies, these changes have brought about increased participation of its citizens to the formal economy since the second half of the twentieth century (Vallas, Finlay, & Wharton, 2009). But 'for women to go to work, they had to replace women's unpaid labor with services purchased in the marketplace' (*ibid*., p. 174). Unable to fulfill the ever-increasing demand for 'unskilled' labor (e.g., domestic work, construction, farm work, etc.) from within, governments looked outward overseas to fill labor shortages. This allowed international migrant flow on a temporary contractual basis, often under agreements with labor-sending nation-states predominantly from the so-called 'Global South' (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012; Connell, 2007).

Paid domestic work has become one of the hallmarks of the new global service economy. While it reflects the deeply interconnected world we live in, it strikingly mirrors the uneven distribution of international labor and opportunities. Paid domestic work has enabled women in the Global North to go to work or to seek more lucrative activities, while at the same time giving men more reasons to escape domestic duties (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003). However, it has often been to the detriment of women from the Global South who typically have no choice but to migrate for such paid domestic work in the Global North. For Hans Ladegaard (2017, p. 9), while there is nothing inherently morally wrong with engaging in paid domestic work, the notion of choice brings to the fore the inequalities in this international division of labor. Women (and men) in the Global North are believed to have the choice to migrate for more lucrative jobs. In comparison, women (and men) from the Global South are often left with no other options but to take jobs of low status and pay despite being well-educated because of international mechanisms in place that give those from the Global North the unfair advantage. For example, migrants from the Global South often have to go through qualification equivalency checks in the destination to qualify in particular jobs or immigration status; whereas, those from the Global North do not necessarily have to go through such procedures.

Nevertheless, paid domestic work is not always viewed to be perpetually precarious. Chatterjee and Schluter (2020, p. 77) argue that the domestic employer and employee can develop ‘reciprocal dependency’ – a bi-directional working relationship built on familiarity that emerges through years of employment. The years of service of an MDW with the host family can lead to a relationship of interdependence where the worker is not necessarily always at the

losing end and where the assumed power imbalance in the domestic workspace can get blurry. For example, an MDW's access to the intimate lives of the host family gives her some covert leverage in certain affairs. If not for the service of the MDWs, middle-class employers would not be able to do their jobs while performing their reproductive duties in the home. The work of the MDW, on the other hand, provides her a relatively better salary with which to augment the socio-economic position of her own family in her place of origin.

The seemingly unending demand for domestic labor in high-income economies and the increasing competition among labor-sending countries have led to the commodification of domestic migrant labor (cf. Heller & Duchêne, 2012). Aside from labor-sending countries such as the Philippines (as discussed above), transnational, mediating institutions have been seen to further enable and expedite the Global South-North migration flow of women for temporary jobs in the domestic service sector. Beatriz Lorente (2018, p. 66 ff.), in her investigation of the nodes of the Philippines-Singapore domestic worker migration flow, finds maid agencies that have offices or partners in both countries to mediate the flow of workers from the Philippines to Singapore. Working closely with both country's governments, the maid agencies recruit workers, socialize the worker and employer into 'scripts of servitude,' and facilitate the '"re-embedding" [of] migrant domestic workers into their niches in a local labor market' in the pursuit of profit (2018; p. 94). Working in the same way, maid agencies in Hong Kong, in close ties with their counterpart in the Philippines and elsewhere, ensure the uninterrupted supply of migrant domestic workers in the city. However, a *South China Morning Post* commentary (Bishop, 2018) points out the growing distrust

among maid agencies in Hong Kong due to allegations of ‘overcharging,’ ‘stealing of worker’s passports,’ and ‘lying to employers’.

Indeed, the domestic labor marketplace has been seen to expand globally, reflecting a ‘worldwide gender revolution’ of more women migrating mostly for work elsewhere and at very long distances than before. Sociologists Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Hochschild write,

> While the European or American woman commutes to work an average twenty-eight minutes a day, many nannies from the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and India cross the globe to get to their jobs. (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003, p. 3)

Hochschild (2003a) thus points out that rather than just ‘brain drain,’ this feminized flow of migration is also very much a ‘care drain.’ Relating the feminized global migration of care work to neocolonialism, Hochschild argues that ‘care’ has become the ‘new gold’ brought over to high-income economies and illuminating the seemingly unbreakable chain of resource extraction that typically ties the previously-colonized and colonizer. As children in high-income economies are nurtured with the care and love they need to grow up as productive citizens in their countries, children of care workers from low-income economies are left either with residues of that care or none at all, which is deemed to take a toll on the sending country’s labor productivity in the long run. The ‘care drain’ thus leaves previously colonized at a perpetually disadvantaged position in the global economy (Hochschild, 2003a).

A strikingly similar neocolonial understanding of the care migration flow globally is astutely observed by sociologist Catherine Ceniza Choy (2003) in her study on the massive flow of Filipino nurses (and indeed the massive Filipino emigration (Aguilar Jr., 2014)) to the United States. Ceniza Choy finds that the nursing schools established by the United States during its occupation of the Philippines and several medical discourses introduced by the US have predisposed Filipino nurses into seeing the United States as the 'land of opportunity'. The US, according to Ceniza Choy, has since then greatly benefited from this legacy, subjecting Filipino nurses to exploitive working conditions incomparable with their American counterparts and thereby giving rise to what she called an 'empire of care'. This empire of care has 'spilled over' to other high-income economies such as Canada (see Coloma et al., 2012).

While nurses are considered 'skilled' professional workers who are often eligible for permanent residency in the country of migration, domestic workers, on the other hand, are deemed 'unskilled' and 'disposable' (Chang, 2000) care workers. As feminist scholars argue, domestic work is easily dismissed as menial work due to these reasons: (1) it is women's work and is therefore culturally thought of as of less value; (2) it is thought to be repetitive, easily done and replaceable by unpaid labor; and (3) duties include the 3Ds of work – dirty, demanding, and difficult. 'Dirt, in other words, tends to attach to the people who remove it – "garbagemen" and "cleaning ladies"' (Ehrenreich, 2003, p. 102). Because of these unfair conceptions about domestic work, those who engage in this line of work are believed to always be vulnerable to, if not the subject of, exploitation and abuse, often hidden from public view since the household where she lives is also her workplace (Shahvisi, 2018).

Whether in the United States (Chang, 2000; Moras, 2010), United Kingdom (McDowell, 2009), Hong Kong (Constable, 2007), Singapore (Lorente, 2018), Latin America (De Casanova, 2013), the Middle East (Fernandez & de Regt, 2014b) or in multiple places (Lindio-McGovern, 2012; Parreñas, 2001), studies on transnational domestic work have pointed to the inequitable global capital flow and accumulation as the primary culprit for systematic inequalities and human rights abuse and injustice the workers are said to confront on a daily basis. Among other things, this makes other scholars averse to the intellectual movement of considering domestic work as 'ordinary work.'

2.4.2. The discourse of domestic work as ordinary work

As I have noted in the earlier chapter, I explicitly use the term 'domestic worker' in this research. To use the term 'domestic worker' may entail alignment with the 'ordinary work' discourse, or a discourse that aims to 'professionalize' the line of work, otherwise thought of as a 'job that has no name' due to its low status (Manipon, 2004). This discourse of 'domestic work as just ordinary work' is likewise promoted in many recent studies and is formally adopted in the international convention for domestic workers of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2011 (Larion, 2014).

However, in a scathing commentary, Arianne Shahvisi (2018) strongly denounces what she calls the 'hermeneutic injustice' that is consequential to treating domestic work as just like any other work. She argues that domestic work 'differs from other occupations in morally significant ways' (p. 18). Shahvisi explains that, first, it is practically impossible for outsourced domestic work to reach a status similar to other service-related work because it is hinged on a

racialized, gendered, devalued, objectified, and commodified labor circuit. Working for three months in a cleaning company in New York, Barbara Ehrenreich (2003) observes thus,

> Increasingly often, the house cleaner is a woman of color and a recent arrival from the Third World, so that the implicit lesson for the household's children is that anyone female with dark skin and broken English is a person of inferior status – someone who has 'nothing better' to do. What we risk as domestic work is taken over by immigrant workers is reproducing, within our own homes, the global inequalities that so painfully divides the world. (Ehrenreich, 2003, p. 102)

Second, domestic work is contingent on the asymmetrical employer-employee relations, with the former outsourcing domestic duties to the latter on a relatively low pay scale either to participate in more lucrative jobs or just to spend time on more personally rewarding ways. 'There seems to be no way for the outsourcing of domestic work not to embody the idea that some people's time, leisure, or well-being is worth more than that of others' (Shahvisi, 2018, p. 24). But Ehrenreich (2003, p. 103) stresses that '[t]he growing servant economy, with all the quandaries it generates, is largely a result of men's continuing abdication from their domestic responsibilities'.

Third, as the household is the domestic worker's workplace, her work within an intimate, hence underregulated (and perhaps, even unregulatable) space where a clear metric for what constitutes to be 'good' work rests on the personal tastes of members of the household.

Therefore, Shahvisi points out that there are no clearly defined and realistic prospects for socio-economic mobility for domestic work, unlike in any other 'ordinary' service work. She stresses that continued adherence to the 'ordinary work' discourse, developed in hopes of 'professionalizing' outsourced domestic work, in reality, further maintains the inequalities it manifest, leaving outsourced domestic workers to be perpetually at the losing end of the global capital flow. As also argued by Bridget Anderson (2003, p. 113),

> '[p]rofessionalizing employment relations and rendering them more anonymous may therefore introduce new difficulties. Labor is a social, not simply an economic process.'

Shahvisi thus proposes for a change in the discourse around outsourced domestic work and making nation-states responsible for maintaining the supply and demand chains of outsourced domestic work morally accountable. As a final point, Shahvisi stresses,

> To instead point out that outsourced domestic work is intrinsically degrading is not to debase domestic workers, but to shame the system that produces both the demand and supply for this work. (Shahvisi, 2018, p. 24)

2.5. Synthesis: Towards a sociolinguistic investigation of transnational domestic work(ers)

In this chapter, I surveyed some of the key literature on migrant domestic work/ers, with a specific focus on the Philippines-Hong Kong domestic labor migration flow. This is, of course, far from being exhaustive. The voluminous work on migrant domestic workers and issues surrounding their work and migration experience reveals their importance in migration and gender studies today. Studies have discussed how, through the years, the Philippines positioned itself as a global labor broker through its well-developed migration infrastructure – a systematic infrastructure that produces laboring bodies that are then 'marketed' to high-income economies. The increasing participation of women in the formal economy, as in the case of Hong Kong, has created a demand for paid transnational domestic labor in the city. But just as foreign workers arrive in Hong Kong, they become subject to regimenting discourses that 'brand' them on account of their race, class, and gender and, in turn, constrain their transnational experience and mobility in many ways. Their agency, integration strategies, and perceived social contributions in the receiving country are similarly recognized and celebrated. This particular instance of labor migration flow, not unlike others, the literature show, is significantly understood as both the symptom and outcome of the inequitable global economic order that facilitates the uneven distribution of capital worldwide.

As it can be gleaned from the above, a number of studies about Filipino transnational domestic work in Hong Kong and how they confront issues relative to their migrant lives have been done employing a sociolinguistic lens in one way or another. Notions about how language and communication figure in MDWs'

subordination and resistance are discussed in passing in much anthropological work cited earlier (for example, Constable, 2007). Although there are studies that mainly employ sociolinguistic frameworks, these are typically confined on at least two topics: (1) narratives and discourses that reveal and highlight their victimization and disempowerment; and (2) their role on the education of children, particularly on English language learning.

Narrative analyses of abuse and exploitation significantly support statistical reports pointing to the precarity of working conditions for MDWs in Hong Kong. Discourse analyses of media representations and employers' portrayal of MDWs on social media reveal their marginal position in the Hong Kong society – relatively powerless largely due to their immigration status and line of work. Indeed, studies about MDWs' victimization and disempowerment hold the promise of, if not already, informing policies towards efforts of eradicating abuse and exploitation in this line of work. However, if left as a singular perspective about the migrant workers, I believe that it can potentially mask the small, often unnoticed 'everyday resistance' (Abu-Lughod, 1990) of migrant workers against regimenting forces (see again James Tyner's 2003 point quoted in Section 2.1).

The English language-focused studies related to Filipino domestic workers, while valuing the FDWs' important role in child-rearing, run the risk of turning English proficiency as a yardstick for their de/valuation as a migrant worker. With the Philippines being a multilingual country for one, and with many migrant workers having worked or planning to work elsewhere in the world, it should not come as a surprise that theirs is a multilingual repertoire with strong links to their roots, journeys, investments, and experiences of confronting in their

own terms the forces of globalization and other regimes. A multilingual perspective, and what people do with such multilingualism, emerges as a necessary contribution to the highly saturated macro-discourse-focused and dominant language-focused studies on transnational migrant domestic workers.

As it is evident above, there appears to be a wide consensus about the instance of Philippines-Hong Kong migrant domestic worker flow largely corroborating the 'push-pull' theory of migration (Lee, 1966) and what Papastergiadis (2000, p. 35) calls the structuralist 'center-periphery model' of the world's capitalist system. In line with these understandings about migration is the economic logic that views the Global South-North migration flow to be caused by the 'push' of socio-economic upheavals in the origin, peripheral economies, and the concomitant 'pull' of potential socio-economic opportunities in the destination, central economies. Nevertheless, scholars in the social sciences have increasingly shown that these migration theories offer only a fraction of the entire picture of the migrant experience as it only sees migration to be primarily governed by external factors outside the control of migrants. As Block (2006) points out, 'making a move from one nation-state to another involves far more than just hunger; there are serious questions around culture and identity that come into play' (p. 10). In a book drawn from her fieldwork on Filipino migrant domestic workers in global cities, Ligaya Lindio-McGovern (2012) emphasizes the importance of learning from the collective experiences and resistance 'of those who are exploited, oppressed, especially of women on the periphery of the global political economy, since their experience embodies intersectionalities of class, gender, race/ethnicity, and nationality' (p. 3). Indeed, it may be difficult to determine directly and unproblematically whether or not migrant domestic

workers feel exploited or oppressed, but finding out how this sort of global labor migration flow is played out in the everyday lives of migrants can offer insights into the lived experience of agency, exploitation, and/or resistance. A subject-level analysis is therefore seen as a way forward (Gonçalves & Schluter, 2020, pp. 4–5; Parreñas, 2001, p. 250), 'allow[ing] the agency of the worker and language speaker to come to the fore' (Holborow, 2018, p. 65). This, I believe, is where a sociolinguistic analysis can be particularly well-suited.

In the next chapter, I turn to the sociolinguistic theories and methodology that I draw from and employ in this research.

Chapter 3

Theoretical and Methodological Framework: Sociolinguistics of globalization, transnational domestic work, and ethnographic fieldwork

3.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the broader theoretical and methodological framework of this study. First, I discuss the theoretical anchors (Section 3.2) such as sociolinguistics of globalization that considers human mobilities and mobile resources as objects of analysis (Section 3.2.1), communicative repertoire and its ties to people's life paths (Section 3.2.2), language and place(-making) (Section 3.2.3), and transnationalism and language and their implications to studying migrant domestic work/ers (Section 3.2.4). Then, I will proceed to the discussion of the methodological foundations (Section 3.3) and the concomitant general data collection procedures that guided this research, such as ethnographic fieldwork and ethnographic interviewing. Given the interpretivist research design I employ in this thesis, I problematize my positionalities in Section 3.2.3. Finally, I summarize the points I discussed in Section 3.3. The more specific data collection methods and approaches and the concepts with which I analyze the data are individually discussed in the chapters that follow (Chapters 4, 5, and 6).

3.2. Theoretical framework

This study is theoretically anchored in the sociolinguistics of globalization, transnational domestic work, and place-making.

3.2.1. Sociolinguistics of globalization

There is a wide consensus in contemporary sociolinguistics that new conditions brought about by rapid developments in communications technology, affordability and speed of international travels, and economic expansions at a global scale demand new ways of seeing and new tools for analyzing language in society (Blommaert, 2010; Collins, Slembrouck, & Baynham, 2009; Coupland, 2016; Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010b; Meyerhoff & Standford, 2015; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015b; Rampton, 2006). Although impossible to delineate the actual starting point at which this 'new condition' actually happened, terms such as late capitalism, postmodernity, and late modernity have been used to characterize and conceptualize these global developments, depending on one's disciplinary and theoretical orientation (cf. Duchêne, Moyer, & Roberts, 2013b; Heller & Duchêne, 2012; Rampton, 2006).

In this contemporary context of intensified globalization and migration, Jan Blommaert (2010, pp. 4-6) argues that traditional ways of researching language in society, which he calls the *sociolinguistics of distribution*, could no longer adequately account for the complex sociolinguistic realities and consequences that such global developments engender. The sociolinguistics of distribution, explains Blommaert, is a paradigm that considers linguistic resources being used in spaces and times where relations are ostensibly deemed fixed and equal. He emphasizes that globalization of this intensity, scope, scale, and speed

produces contradictory points of opportunities and constraints, possibilities and problems, and progress and regression. These are conditions that, according to Blommaert, have significant ramifications in the lives of people, especially for those who benefit from them least; that is, migrants from 'zones of poverty' (2010, p. 3). He therefore suggests the alternative, *a sociolinguistics of mobility*, which gives analytical focus on mobile (language) resources in an unevenly organized, global distribution of capital and opportunities. Concomitantly, in this paradigm, globalization and the inequalities it generates emerge as important subject matters. Blommaert suggests locating particular resources within historically and socio-economically tied structures of power primarily across a vertical continuum of hierarchical positionalities, as well as horizontal, polycentric, and temporally locatable understanding of norms (i.e., its historicity) so as to adequately account for social inequalities where language may have a significant role to play. To make his point operational, Blommaert offers three inter-related analytical frames: (1) sociolinguistic scales, (2) orders of indexicality, and (3) polycentricity.

Sociolinguistic scales stress the metaphorical vertical imagining of space and time (*ibid*., pp. 32–37). At the extremes, scales and scaling[6] can be local (micro) and global (macro) and in between are several intermediary scale levels like the nation-state that condition communicative action. The spaces within which people move and operate in is layered, hierarchically constrained and historically conditioned. Depending on the nature of the scale, access to higher scale levels normally meant ownership and deployment of resources that are

[6] More recent understanding of scale emphasizes its discursive production, i.e., scale-making (Carr & Lempert, 2016) and the effect of ideologically motivated distinction that emerge from comparative association of different scalar frameworks or perspectives by particular social actors towards particular communicative ends (Gal, 2016) (more on this in Chapter 6).

valued within a particular context. Economic migrants from low-income economies, for example, would need, among other things, particular resources at their disposal like linguistic resources – what Bourdieu (1991) calls *symbolic capital* – that are valued in particular migration circuits so as to gain access to more lucrative jobs and opportunities. 'Introducing a notion such as "scale" for describing current phenomena in communicative action has the advantage of introducing a layered, stratified model of society as a frame for the interpretation of such phenomena.' (p. 36).

Blommaert's *orders of indexicality* (*ibid*., pp. 37–39) refers to forms of organization or systemic patterns that normatively determine access, control, and valuation of resources and opportunities. He argues that despite the seemingly complex and muddled scale levels, and contrary to postmodernist assumptions about social processes to be disorderly, patterns of normativity or 'orders' do exist. Inspired by Michel Foucault's (1971) *orders of discourse* and Michael Silverstein's (2003) *indexical order*, Blommaert asserts that gatekeeping mechanisms – 'orders' – may either allow or prevent a migrant from accessing the more attractive scale levels often reserved to home-grown talents or 'nationalized' migrants. These 'orders' point to traces of power and inequality in that there are cases that even if one is in possession of a repertoire that commands a position in the higher scale level, the systems of beliefs and valuation in-place constituting such orders can constrain or hamper one's socio-economic mobility. 'The concept […] should open empirical analyses of indexicality […] about relations within sociolinguistic repertoires, the (non-)exchangeability of particular linguistic or semiotic resources across places, situations and groups, and so forth.' (pp. 38–39).

The orders of indexicality do not take one but a range of forms, which leads us to the final analytical frame in Blommaert's sociolinguistics of mobilities paradigm.

Polycentricity (*ibid*., pp. 39–41) in sociolinguistics is the metaphor for a multitude of authorities – 'centres' – that control what and how we communicate at any given time and space such that we deploy a set of resources (e.g., speech style, register, genre) when speaking with our boss, for example, and a different one when talking to a colleague. '[We] often project the presence of an evaluating authority through our interactions with immediate addressees, we behave *with reference* to such an evaluative authority […] a "centre"' (p. 39; emphasis original). Blommaert adds that centers can be named or nameless, individuals or groups, realistic or imaginative entities, but all with an evaluative agenda. Centers can be as abstract as unwritten societal norms and traditions, or as concrete as an employment contract.

Alongside these theoretical and conceptual shifts in the study of language in society is the necessary move away from the unproblematic notion on what counts as 'language' (Heller, Jaworski, & Thurlow, 2014, p. 426). Various authors, thus, suggest a focus on 'repertoire,' as I shall now turn to below.

3.2.2. Communicative repertoire and/in people's life path

The conceptual developments on the way sociolinguists think about linguistic and communicative practices have manifested in the more recent problematization of linguistic communication practice. People use various linguistic and a host of other semiotic resources for communicative meaning-making activities and practices. The monolithic and logocentric view about language and communication being the singular locus of communicative action,

or the idea that people with respect to their ethnolinguistic origin communicate through at least one named language (e.g., Tagalog, Visayan, English), has since been challenged in sociolinguistics. Out of empirical data, sociolinguists offer analytical terms such as *crossing* (Rampton, 1995), *transidiomacity* (Jacquemet, 2005), *translanguaging* (Garcia, 2009; Li, 2011), *polylingual languaging* (Jørgensen, 2008), and *metrolingualism* (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015b), to name a few, to account for the multilingual, multisemiotic, and multimodal nature of human communication, the emergent, creative strategies that individuals employ, and communicative resources that are within reach and deployed in different interactional settings for particular purposes. Noticeably also, language has come to be viewed as a social practice (i.e., *languaging*), or something we 'do,' hence the typical preference in verb forms over nouns to characterize contemporary communicative practices investigated.

These conceptual developments on the way sociolinguists think about linguistic and communicative practices are believed to be fundamentally influenced by paradigm shifts in the social sciences. Largely stimulated by the works of post-structuralist scholars such as Michel Foucault, Mikhail Bakhtin, Pierre Bourdieu, and Judith Butler, among others, the more recent sociolinguistic investigations turned to viewing linguistic and communicative practices as simultaneously constituted by, and constituting the social (Bell, 2016; Coupland, 2016; Meyerhoff & Standford, 2015). This expanded notion about language and communicative practice, coupled with the influence of poststructuralist theories, have been noted to engender sociolinguistic investigations with greater ethnographic sensitivity (Blommaert, 2010, p. 3; Jaworski, 2014, p. 525) to the social ecologies that build and are built on particular communicative practices

(Rampton, 2006, p. 391). Out of this wide-encompassing understanding of communicative behavior, the notion of *repertoire* has become relatively handy.

The term 'repertoire' is not new in sociolinguistics. It is attributed to John Gumperz (1964) who, in his study of two small communities in India and Norway, observes that members of the communities deploy linguistic features that convey meanings not normatively associated with their respective group's affiliation and position. Here, he describes the existence of a *verbal repertoire*, or 'the totality of linguistic forms regularly employed in the course of socially significant interaction' (p. 137). Gumperz suggests that there exists an 'arsenal' of compartmentalized linguistic forms within community groups from where speakers decide which forms can be acceptably deployed to convey a particular meaning. Aside from recognizing fluidity in linguistic communication and malleability of community affiliations (the crux of recent sociolinguistic work), Gumperz' early work also importantly showed that the link between speech style and normatively associated social categories is never absolute (see also Harris & Rampton, 2009; Jørgensen, 2008; Rampton, 1995).

However, only recently has the term repertoire been increasingly favored accordingly due to its potential to account for the social constructionist approach to analyzing communicative practices in contemporary times (Busch, 2012). As will become clear in the succeeding chapters in this thesis, I draw from several recent conceptions of repertoire as not necessarily just language as it is traditionally defined. I understand *repertoire* to be communicative resources (Rymes, 2014) that, in terms of scope, can be multi-semiotic (Kusters, Spotti, Swanwick, & Tapio, 2017), materially entangled (Ros i Solé, 2020), spatially constituted and constituting (Canagarajah, 2018; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2014), and

inextricably linked to people's life path (Blommaert & Backus, 2013; Busch, 2012, 2015, 2016, 2018; Hymes, 1996, p. 73). Though still paying close attention to 'language' in this thesis, I consider communicative repertoire to be a convergence of multilingual, multimodal, affective, and material means of expression (cf. Shankar & Cavanaugh, 2012) derived from an individual's life trajectory (see Chapters 4 & 5) and the spaces within which they move around (see Chapters 5 & 6). Indeed, as various critics would point out (e.g., Block, 2014; Boutet, 2012; Holborow, 2018), studies on language commodification, migration, and labor, seem to neglect the fact that language is just one of the many resources through which institutions assert control over individuals and with which individuals enact various forms of agency and resistance to regimentation. The investigation of repertoire is therefore deemed best suited as a subject for empirical investigations of inequalities engendered by contemporary globalist and capitalist projects and the ways in which people confront these inequities (Blommaert, 2010, p. 102). As Dell Hymes sharply points out:

> …inequality is historically associated with the notion of 'language.' The true subject, of course, is not 'language' alone, but *repertoire*—the mixes of means and modalities people actually practice and experience. Study of communicative repertoires makes the question of inequality all the more salient, if only because repertoires inescapably involve choices among alternatives. (Hymes, 1996, p. 207, emphasis mine)

A person's repertoire can become formidably linked with the political economy of the locality in which existing conditions and practices attach

monetary and/or cultural value to particular linguistic elements and practices (Irvine, 1989). The politico-economic conditions in our late capitalist world seem to more significantly allocate particular linguistic resources value over others towards further capital accumulation – a condition that recent sociolinguistic work have found to be either or both socially enabling and constraining[7]. An investigation of migrants' communicative repertoire is, therefore, also necessarily an investigation of one's symbolic place in migration circuits and their efforts to find, work around, or make their place therein by drawing the necessary resources from their communicative repertoire.

3.2.3. Language and place(-making)

The attention to space and place-making in sociolinguistics is generally attributed to the so-called 'spatial turn' in the social sciences, which is inspired by the work of cultural geographers such as Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Denis Cosgrove (Higgins, 2017; Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010a). Stimulated by the post-structuralist intellectual climate, the spatial turn problematizes space as a result of human activity and practices: emergent, dynamic, and socially-constructed through *spatialization* or *place-making*[8] – terms whose use could be traced back to urban planning. In this conceptualization, *place* is typically treated

[7] This salience of language commodification – the process by which language (is made to) become a commodity with commensurate market exchange value (Heller, 2010) – in the contemporary global market has been observed in several areas of sociolinguistic inquiry (Block, 2018) such as in tourism (e.g., Heller et al., 2014; Jaworski & Pritchard, 2005; Vitorio, 2019), workplaces (e.g., Boutet, 2012; Duchêne et al., 2013b; Irvine, 1989; Lorente, 2012), and economics (Heller & Duchêne, 2012).

[8] Alan Lew (2017) differentiates *place-making* and *placemaking* based on perceived intentionality in the construction of tourism places. Place-making foregrounds the organic and the unplanned (for example, the 'ethnic' neighborhoods of Chinatowns all over the world turned into tourist spots through historically shaped everyday social practices), while placemaking highlights the planned and intentional (such as the master plans for certain tourism landscape). I follow this conception in this thesis in my explicit use of *place-making* to foreground the fact that social practices investigated in this study are results of historically-shaped organic social processes.

as the discursive, human activity-produced instantiation of what is otherwise the abstract notion of *space.*

Among other things, language is seen to be an important and powerful medium for place-making and the understanding of one's place. Yi-Fu Tuan (1991) stresses the important role of language in the making of place such that when an unnamed geographical feature is given a name, for example, it is then that it significantly comes into being in the human consciousness. Christina Higgins (2017) observes that the turn to space and place-making has had significant implications to the study of language and migration for '…it calls into question the static view of spaces as inherently associated with languages and draws attention to the need to study how spaces… are produced through the intersection of human activity, including the imagining of spaces as belonging to particular ethnicities, religions, genders, and languages' (Higgins, 2017, p. 102).

The study of place-making through language has been particularly productive in the sociolinguistics field of *Linguistic Landscape*. Generally attributed to have been inspired by the work of Rodrique Landry and Richard Bourhis (1997), linguistic landscape analyses have unveiled the role of language (often posted as signs in public) in (mis-/ under-)representing particular peoples, publics, and world views as in- or out-of-place (cf. Cresswell, 1996) relative to policy (Blommaert, 2013; Gorter, 2006; Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010b; Rubdy & Ben Said, 2015; Shohamy, Ben Rafael, & Barni, 2010; Shohamy & Gorter, 2009). Nevertheless, Jaworski and Thurlow (2010a) emphasize the dialectic nature of spatialization; that is, while language(s) used in place gives a space a certain character, the meaning and power of particular language(s) and, by extension, its perceived speakers, are similarly linked to existing conditions in-place. This

conceptualization is useful in investigating the symbolic place and place-making efforts of transnational migrants who are often believed to be confronted by dislocations as a consequence of their migration. In the context of the migration flow of Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong, in Chapter 4, I pay specific attention to symbolic place-making (i.e., positioning) through linguistic and other semiotic resources (e.g., telecommunication and tightly-knit market infrastructure) employed to enact and maintain social relations in the domestic workspace in Hong Kong and the family spaces left behind in the Philippines; while in Chapters 5 and 6, I discuss the more embodied, affective, and material manifestations of place-making derived from talk, observable collective activities, objects, and signs.

3.2.4. Transnationalism, language, and migrant domestic work

Transnationalism, or the notion that multiple connections link people and institutions across national borders, has become an important way of understanding the consequences of contemporary global developments (Schiller, Basch, & Blankc-Szanton, 1992). The developments in communication and transportation technologies in recent decades have been seen to drive neoliberal, late capitalist, and globalist agenda in ways that undermine the modernist ideals of the nation-state. This way of thinking is said to further complicate the long-standing notion of the one to one correspondence between the concept of the nation-state on the one hand, and, among other things, language, ethnicity, and citizenship on the other (Park & Wee, 2017). The intensified global flow of people, products, and images has rendered contradictory experiences of global

cultural homogeneity and local cultural heterogeneity (Appadurai, 1990, 1996), implicating in the lives of people, whether mobile or sedentary (Urry, 2003).

Once typically used to refer to operations of multinational corporations, transnationalism has become a useful lens in understanding the often ambiguous positions of institutions that operate at the global scale and the conflicting lived experiences of people – referred to as 'transmigrants' (Schiller et al., 1992) – crossing national borders. In the institutional level, examples include institutions that, among many others, function outside the grip, but show semblances of nation-state governance (see for example, Bolander, 2016 on the transnational Ismaili Muslim community), mediating institutions or corporations that enable international movement and global capital accumulation (such as, for example, the maid agencies that facilitate the domestic worker flow from the Philippines to Singapore (and other MDW-receiving states) as discussed by Lorente, 2018), and cross-border grassroots social movements that have been seen to challenge globalist projects 'from below' (Brecher et al., 2000; Hsia, 2009). More importantly, transnationalism has become a useful lens in understanding how transmigrants maintain and manage lives made ambiguous by crossing national borders. Through this, migrants have been seen to be equipped with the resources and disposition to engage in multiple belongings and embrace a malleable sense of mooring (Hannam, Sheller, & Urry, 2006; Sheller & Urry, 2006) while physically located in, and inevitably affiliating with, at least one nation-state – matters which I explore further specifically in Chapters 4 and 5.

Language has been problematized as an important site of transnational struggles. At the level of institutions and transnational workplaces, language and other communicative resources have been made to function as gatekeeping

mechanisms for migrants' access to cross-border work and opportunities (see e.g., Allan, 2013; Cooke, 2009; Simpson & Cooke, 2009). As argued by Duchêne et al. (2013a), linguistic regimentation has become a pervasive strategy legitimated in institutions and workplaces that largely operate transnationally.

> Language, it is argued, is key in selection, social mobility and gatekeeping processes as well as being the object of organizational responses to […] wider institutional processes. It is through language that the complex relationship between the material and symbolic capital of migrants is played out on a local scale, as power institutions of the nation-state interact with the globalized economic order. (Duchêne et al., 2013a, p. 1)

Since linguistic communication is an integral part of domestic and caring duties, language is arguably instrumentalized in various ways at various stages of this work migration experience. For an instance, Gonçalves and Schluter (2017), in their study of the language brokering of the plurilingual owner of a cleaning company based in New Jersey, reveal how the owner imposes a Portuguese language policy in managing her company. Employing workers of Brazilian origin who 'do not speak English fluently,' the owner is seen to hold a considerable degree of power and control in her company in that all concerns of the clients and cleaners had to go through her first.

As I have indicated in Chapter 2, studies show how labor-sending countries like the Philippines institutionalize labor migration in ways that would respond to the labor needs of receiving countries (Goss & Lindquist, 1995; Lorente, 2012; Rodriguez, 2008). Among other things, language is mobilized to

tailor departing workers into the 'scripts' (Lorente, 2018) expected of a transnational worker in this line of work. Particularly in the case of migrant domestic workers in Singapore, Lorente finds English to be mobilized by mediating agencies and sending and receiving nation-state governments to segment the domestic labor market and insert certain workers in particular niches. In Singapore, where 'standard' English, among other varieties or languages, are afforded greater social regard, Filipina domestic workers who are known to be proficient in the standard form of the language (sometimes even 'better' than their employers) are symbolically afforded a higher 'market value' within the foreign domestic worker space in the city state, commanding higher salary when compared with domestic workers from countries other than the Philippines (Lorente, 2018, p. 96 ff.).

However, transnational encounters within the migrant domestic work context also reveal 'hidden transcripts' (Parreñas, 2001, pp. 194–195), or the 'discourse that takes place "offstage," beyond direct observation by power-holders' (Scott, 1990, p. 4). Mirroring the ambiguities engendered by the transnational and transcultural encounters, certain accounts and pervading jokes related to linguistic (mis)communication have been found to serve as subtle ways to challenge the scripts of servitude. This has been observed in the case of Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong (Constable, 2007, pp. 172–173), Singapore (Lorente, 2018, p. 96 ff.), and Taiwan (Lan, 2003), who perceives having better proficiency in English than their employers. Pei-Chia Lan (2003, p. 133) finds this embodied in a typical comment she hears from FDWs in Taiwan: 'They have more money but I speak better English!'

In the sections that follow, I proceed with a discussion of the general methodological framework of this research.

3.3. Methodological framework

This study employs the interpretive design in research. Frederick Erickson (1986) explains that interpretive, participant observational fieldwork research involves intensive participation in a field setting, careful recording of what happens in the setting, and subsequent analytic reflection of records. Erickson points out that the interpretive method employing participant observational fieldwork is well suited for social scientific investigations on: (1) structures of occurrences rather than the general character or distribution of a phenomenon; (2) meaning-perspectives of particular actors in particular events; (3) naturally occurring points of contrasts; and (4) causal linkages that are not identifiable through controlled experimental setup (1986; p. 121).

Between February to December 2017, I obtained roughly 30 hours of audio-recorded interviews and various other forms of data, primarily from at least 28 key participants and 7 other interviewees. Prior to fieldwork, ethics clearance is sought from and granted by the University of Hong Kong and King's College London[9]. The data collection was carried out guided by approaches to ethnographic fieldwork and linguistic ethnography (Section 3.3.1). Data were mainly derived through ethnographic interviewing (Section 3.3.2) and by collecting other non-audio-recorded forms of data (Section 3.3.3). In Section 3.3.4, I explain my positionalities during fieldwork, which, arguably, have been crucial for the kinds of data that were derived for and discussed in this study.

[9] Ethics Clearance Reference Numbers: HKU: EA1702066; King's College London: MR/17/18-11

3.3.1. Fieldwork and linguistic ethnography

Following Blommaert and Dong (2010, p. 3), 'Ethnographic fieldwork is aimed at finding out things that are often not seen as important but belong to the implicit structures of people's lives.' Ethnographers immerse themselves in the environment under study in an attempt to look into systems of beliefs and practices *in situ*, not normally widely known but may potentially have greater social implications (*ibid.*, p. 8ff). With a keen sense of her/his subjectivity, the ethnographer acknowledges and tries to reflexively understand her/his inextricable co-participation in this knowledge production exercise (*ibid.*, p. 49–52, 65–67) (i.e., the principle of reflexivity). And with an eye on microscopic social mechanisms (i.e., the principle of spatio-temporal situatedness and relationality), ethnographers are expected to describe the complexities of social reality (i.e., the principle of irreducibility of the human experience) to come up with theoretical statements that could potentially challenge hegemonic beliefs (i.e., the principle of counter-hegemony) (ibid. p. 10–12, 17; also, Rampton et al., 2015, pp. 15–16).

Ethnography is rooted in Anthropology, and therefore already has an established perspective and toolset for investigation. Central to the ethnographic tradition is *humanism,* which sees humans as 'creatures whose existence is narrowly linked, conditioned or determined by society, community, the group, culture' (Blommaert & Dong, 2010, p. 6). Bringing the ethnographic tradition to investigations of institutions, scholars such as Dell Hymes (1996, pp. 4–6), propose a 'topic-oriented' over the 'comprehensive,' 'all of a way of life' ethnography (Shaw, Copland, & Snell, 2015, p. 7) and posing it as a

‘consciousness-raising’ exercise (*ibid.,* p. 14). This topic-oriented method has been embraced in *linguistic ethnography* whose approach to investigating language in society largely relies on the researcher’s deep familiarity with the field site, compared with earlier anthropological research on communities relatively ‘unknown’ to researchers at the outset. ‘The more the ethnographer knows on entering the field, the better the result is likely to be’ (Hymes, 1996, p. 7). Following Dell Hymes, Ben Rampton notes that the linguistic ethnographer thus ‘*tr[ies] to get analytic distance* on what’s close-at-hand… [than] move from the outside inwards, *trying to get familiar* with the strange’ (2007, pp. 590–591; emphases original).

In the case of this study, the two-way view of approaching the field site proved to be useful when viewed in a dialectic way. That is because while I may have a certain degree of familiarity with the experience of transnational migration (i.e., for being raised within a family whose members participate in transnational labor migration, and through my personal experience of moving in to a new country for my PhD), being actually hired as a domestic worker and living through such work category contract after contract (i.e., every two years) are matters that, to a certain extent, are strange to me. Thus, in this study, it can be said that somehow, I speak *for* my participants. Don Kulick (2015) reflects on the notion of speaking *for* others in relation to academic disclosures on researching about issues related to vulnerable populations, which, in his case, are persons with disability in Sweden and Denmark and their sexuality. While feminist scholars have deemed speaking for others problematic (see Alcoff, 1991), as with all vulnerable groups of people, Kulick stresses that rather than not doing anything, it is better to ‘take the risk of reaching out, to facilitate communication,

responsibility (in the sense of both responsiveness and the refusal of indifference), engagement and care' (p. 32) for people of vulnerable groups under study.

In terms of carrying out analysis, linguistic ethnographers can draw analytical tools from a wide array of linguistic and discourse analytic traditions such as, for example, conversation analysis, corpus linguistics, quantitative variationist studies, interactional sociolinguistics, and social semiotics, which means that there is clearly no one way of doing it (Shaw et al., 2015, p. 9). Linguistic ethnographers carry out fine-grained analysis of data that may come in the form of audio and video recordings and transcripts of interactions and interviews, participant-observation fieldnotes, photographs, and policy documents, to name some of the most commonly used, so as to delicately communicate some practical interventions towards aspirations for the improvement of social life (*ibid.*, p. 10–11).

3.3.2. Ethnographic interviewing

My interest in investigating Filipino transnational labor migration with respect to those who are hired as domestic workers in Hong Kong has led me to the investigation of their lived experiences and how they make sense of such experiences. Aside from participant-observation of activities during their leisure time, the information that I seek has been primarily accessible to me via ethnographic interviewing.

To claim that an interview is ethnographic is to accept several fundamental principles about social reality (Blommaert & Dong, 2010, p. 42). Charles Briggs points out that '[t]he social situation created by the interview… [l]ike speech events in general… shapes the form and content of what is said' (1986, p. 22). To

this end, the resulting recordings are to be viewed as jointly produced by the interviewer and interviewee, a form of discourse whose development is dynamically managed by both participants (Briggs, 1986; Mishler, 1986; also, Ochs & Capps, 1996). This means that the interviewer's contributions, contrary to common practice in some social science research, should not be erased from the extracts in favor of the responses of the interviewee.

As this approach aims for participants to *recall* and *retell* intimate points in their lives, Blommaert and Dong (2010, p. 58) remind us that the ability to talk about something, however personal it can be, is a matter of having access to ways of telling and certain forms of discourse. 'When people don't talk, it is not always because they have no words for it, but also because they never had an occasion to talk about it' (*ibid.*, p. 62). This led me to use various data elicitation devices and strategies, which are individually discussed in the chapters that follow.

Nevertheless, however co-participatory, an interview is never free from power relations, with the interviewer typically predisposed to holding more significant influence over the flow of the conversation. Cameron et al. (1993) comment that the relationship between the researcher and the researched is often negotiated so that '…we cannot safely assume an unproblematic split between powerful researchers and powerless researched.' (p. 90). While researchers are believed to command greater control in the research process, the researched can also put forward their own agenda, aware that they possess the information the researcher needs and that the research process can be seen as an opportunity to be heard (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 24). Briggs (1986) notes that it is crucial to bear in mind metacommunicative issues such as power dynamics in the interviews so as not to unduly distort interpretation. To minimize the potential of 'symbolic

violence,' I followed Bourdieu's (1996) suggestion of *on-the-spot reflexivity* during interview sessions. He notes that the goal should be, as much as possible, to reduce inadvertent intrusions and impositions, which at the very least, means 'understanding what can and cannot be said' by employing 'active and methodical listening' (p. 19). This can be seen in my relatively lesser contribution to the conversation, typically involving attempts to back channeling when compared with participants.

Generally, I told my (potential) participants that I was interested in writing about OFWs in Hong Kong. While there are those who expressed willingness to participate, others outrightly refused. Those who refused to participate either recommended others or reasoned that they did not have an interesting life story to tell. Those who eventually agreed to participate either came from my personal network or were recruited via a referral by those who I had come to know.

In strict compliance with the ethical conduct of research involving human subjects[10], participants were first briefed about the study and were either asked to sign a consent form or express verbal consent on record. These 'institutional' procedures may have had particular implications on the dynamics and result of the interview, and by extension, on the politics of representation emergent in the research process. Including the presence of an audio-recorder as another factor, this may have compelled the participant to 'perform' in certain ways akin to social expectations for OFWs during an interview or in other encounters by contributing only those that she believes typifies people belonging to such groups while not mentioning those that do not fit into the general characterizations. Despite

[10] The ethical conduct of research with human subjects are indicated in the following website (accessible as of September 2020): http://www.rss.hku.hk/integrity/ethics-compliance/hrec (for HKU) and https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/support/rgei/research-ethics (for KCL).

assurance that I was interested in listening to *her* own experience, one participant in particular pointed out at the outset that she would rather talk about experiences that, to her mind, generally speak about FDWs in Hong Kong, than her personal ones since she said I should be writing about *all* FDWs in Hong Kong, not just about her. In line with Bourdieu's point noted on the previous page, the research process can also be seen by participants as an opportunity to speak *on behalf of* the group they affiliate with. Cameron et al. (1993) emphasize that social researchers who are committed to a truly empowering research for all participants – one that is aimed for in this study – could benefit greatly from interactive methods, which recognize the complexity of human relations, the shifting social roles across the research process, and engages with a commitment to constant negotiations (pp. 90–91).

The interview data were played back many times as part of data analysis, which meant familiarizing with the data and discovering patterns. Briggs suggests

> to study… tape recordings as a whole in order to ascertain exactly what was said (the linguistic forms), what each question and reply meant to the interviewer and interviewee, and what the researcher can glean from these data. (Briggs, 1986, p. 4)

During the multiple playbacks, a precis, or a summary of each of the recordings with brief interpretations and transcription (see Transcription Conventions on page *xv*) are produced and constantly reviewed from time to time, readjusted and revised in accordance with shifting topical focus during the writing process. What this means is that initially, the data were roughly transcribed. In the

process of repeated listening, noting regularity and patterns, more refined transcripts were produced. The extracts that eventually made their way into the discussion of this thesis were subjected to another thorough listening and cross-examination with other sets of data that embody similar accounts. Some of these data extracts have also been presented and discussed in seminars and workshops that I attended where I solicited further insights that I may have missed otherwise. Despite this methodological rigor expected in the analysis of interview data in the social sciences, it is worth noting at this point that transcriptions are unavoidably never impartial as it is in itself a representation of how the researcher understands the recorded interaction (Ochs, 1979).

3.3.3. Collecting other forms of data

Other than audio-recorded data, this research also draws from a multitude of complementary data. As will be seen in the succeeding chapters (Chapters 4, 5, and 6), not everything has been useful in the discussion, but they have become instrumental in building some of the insights discussed. These other forms of data include the following. Where possible, the data set is digitized and saved in a secure cloud storage that I can only access.

- 29 journal entries[11] of varying length derived from participant-observation fieldwork notes. These notes, saved in digital format, include some photographs of activities and objects being described;

[11] These are written as day log per Sunday of participant-observation. Between February and December 2017, I have been able to join different groups of participants in their various activities for 29 Sundays. While some interviewees opted one of their free weekdays for the interview, it was in some of these Sundays when I conducted ethnographic interviews with participants.

- Roughly 25 pages of hand-written notes in steno pads listing in bullet points some information I found interesting during observation, participation in activities, and interview as well as important information that my participants explicitly mentioned but were not caught on record and insights that emerged during the said activities, cross-referred with relevant literature;
- 20 'linguistic portraits' (Busch, 2012) in a body silhouette shaded with colors to represent particular languages and ways of speaking within participants' repertoire (more on this in Chapter 4);
- 307 photographs of objects and activities, including photographs of group names, group t-shirts, and activities during gathering;
- 12 video records of activities in Central, each ranging between 1 to 12 minutes
- 8 issues of *The Sun*, a tabloid-type newspaper that claims to be the number 1 Filipino newspaper in Hong Kong in terms of circulation[12];
- Documents provided by some participants, such as:
    - work contract and accompanying documents issued by the Philippine Consulate in Hong Kong,
    - constitution and by-laws (CBL), certificate of registration of society issued by the Hong Kong Police, general program of actions (GPOA), accomplishment report of some organizations gathering on Sundays in Central district,

[12] Founded in 1995, *The Sun* is a bi-monthly tabloid-type newspaper that publishes news about Filipinos in Hong Kong. The newspaper is distributed free-of-charge in strategic locations frequented by Filipinos, such as the World-Wide Shopping Arcade. See more at http://www.sunwebhk.com.

    - National Certification for Household Service Work issued by TESDA
    - Pre-departure orientation seminar (PDOS) certificate and brochure
- objects obtained from fieldwork like leaflets, calling cards, phone cards, and event advertisement;
- screenshots of conversations through text and messaging applications;
- screenshots of Facebook posts of participants who agreed for me to take them on condition of anonymity;
- online news media reports saved in portable document format (PDF); and
- 13 policy documents related to FDWs by both governments of Hong Kong and the Philippines.

3.3.4. Understanding of my positionalities; knowing my own story

Interpretivist social researchers hold that there is no such thing as a view from nowhere. Yet, this 'view' should not be construed as unwarranted idiosyncrasy. Erickson (1986, p. 28) explains that what separates interpretivists from other researchers in other traditions is the 'objective' (i.e., systematic) analysis of 'subjective' meaning. Inherently part of this systematic analysis is the reflexive understanding of the researcher's positionalities in the study (see Foley, 2010 for the so-called 'reflexive turn'). Since the researcher is viewed as an *instrument* of research in ethnographic fieldwork (Heath & Street, 2008, p. 31), 'for both good or bad' (Hymes, 1996, p. 13), concomitantly, s/he is also, albeit partly, the *researched*. According to Blommaert and Dong (2010, p. 66) following Bordieuan notion of reflexive sociology, what will differ from my account and

that of others is that it ‘reflect[s]... reality as seen, experienced and understood by [me] in the learning process.’

During my fieldwork, the way I introduced myself or was introduced by another is arguably instrumental in how my conversations and relations with my participants proceeded. My personal story – the son of a domestic worker who has worked in Hong Kong for more than two decades with a Chinese family – is clear to my participants at the outset. Penelope Eckert, in her sociolinguistic ethnographic study of the social production of categories such as ‘jocks’ and ‘burnouts’ in a suburban high school in Detroit, reminds us that

> There is no special way to deal with the potential interference of personal experience. My responsibility as an ethnographer was not to forget my own story, but to know it well and to refer to it constantly to make sure that it was not blinding me to what I saw or focusing my attention on only some of what I saw. (Eckert, 1989, p. 27)

In retrospect, my personal background story became a reasonably good topic with which to start a conversation, and to my mind, a common ground upon which to build ties. However, this way of introduction may have also contributed to how most of my participants viewed me and eventually positioned me in our conversations; that is, as a young, male student. This should not be surprising as I consciously projected a subservient tone of voice and submissive disposition, trying my very best to minimize, if not avoid, arguments when they bring up topics in which we do not share similar opinions as my way to establish and

maintain rapport[13] and solidarity with them (cf. Bourdieu, 1996, pp. 22–24). I expressly did this too by using Filipino politeness particles *po* and *opo* in my talk, and terms of endearment such as *ate* ('older sister'), *nay*/ *nanay* ('mother'), or *tita* ('aunty'), to refer to them. By doing this, I consistently encouraged them to take the position of an authoritative voice and figure on the matters I ask, resulting in their greater contribution in our conversation (i.e., more talk) compared to mine. In effect, they either call me *kuya* ('brother' or 'big brother'), *anak* ('child' or 'son'), or *totoy* ('young boy'). Ilocano speakers would also call me *manong* ('older brother') or *ading* ('younger sibling' or 'friend'). As some conversation would progress into what I do back in the Philippines, some would learn that I am affiliated in a University there, and the term of endearment would turn into 'sir' despite my insistence that they call me by my name. Soon enough, their talk would be peppered with politeness particles.

Throughout our conversation, I consciously used Filipino (Tagalog) as matrix language, avoiding as much as possible the use of English unless they initiate or when we are in the company of non-Filipinos. Speaking Filipino (Tagalog) with them positioned me as a *kababayan* ('fellow Filipino'), who more or less share a common cultural background. Talking to them mainly in Tagalog was a strategic move of transporting our shared sociolinguistic understanding into the interview setting and other related encounters. Due to English's associations with the upper social class in the Philippines (see Bolton & Bautista, 2009; Gonzalez, 1998, 2009; Tupas, 2009; Tupas & Salonga, 2016), I tried my best to limit my use of English. Predominantly using Tagalog in the conversations is also

[13] Ben Rampton (2016) posits that in fieldwork encounters, playback or retrospective participant commentary on recordings of the interaction can help reconfigure the notion of building rapport away from the idea of 'deception' it is often been associated in social science research. Due to unavoidable practical reasons, I have not been able to do this.

my way of saying that I am one *of* and *with* them, regardless of my education and profession in the Philippines. However, my inability to use Philippine languages other than Tagalog proved to be limiting as other participants whose native language is not Tagalog told me they would have opted to speak to me in their native language (see also Phipps, 2013 on 'linguistic incompetence' in researching multilingualism).

Aside from sharing common cultural heritage to a certain degree, my phenotypical features of being male and 'looking-young' (to use the words of others I met) may have also contributed to some things in the conversation being discussed more, while others being left unsaid. Unless they bring it up during our conversation, there are some culturally inappropriate questions that I did not dare ask.

3.4. Summary

This chapter focused on the general theoretical and methodological framework that are instrumental in this study. Theoretically, I substantially draw on the theory of sociolinguistics of globalization that pays particular attention to human mobilities and communicative repertoire. Attention to communicative repertoires allows analysts to unmask the consequences of globalist and late capitalist projects, particularly with regard to migrants from the so-called 'zones of poverty'. Since the analysis of repertoire illuminates available choice and access to systems of valuation across differently scaled space and time, it similarly offers a lens with which to understand migrants' symbolic place and their place-making strategies towards effecting multiple belongings. These have particular implications for migrant workers, such as Filipino domestic workers, who cross

national borders and confront conflicting lived experiences in their transnational and transcultural encounters. Methodologically, I generally draw on the interpretive research paradigm, guided by principles on ethnographic fieldwork. Ethnographic fieldwork typically views data collection to be a participatory enterprise, with the collected data being analytically inextricable from the social conditions from which the data is collected. While other forms of data have been collected for this research, audio-recorded ethnographic interviews largely comprised the material analyzed and from which insights about certain practices are derived. The interview data were elicited with ample consideration of the principles of reflexivity, keeping in mind my positionalities and the social dimensions of the interview as an activity with expected norms and that are never free from power relations.

In the three chapters that follow (Chapters 4–6), I analyze and discuss particular sets of data.

Chapter 4

Representing and negotiating social roles and relations: Biographic linguascapes, families, economic power, and domestic work

4.1. Introduction

Filipinos hired overseas as foreign domestic workers (FDWs) have come to be called the 'servants of globalization' (Parreñas, 2001). While inadvertently fueling the late capitalist and globalist agenda in receiving countries by filling in the reproductive labor left vacant by its citizens participating in the formal economy, FDWs find themselves augmenting the Philippines' economy through their remittances. However, Hochschild (2003b) argues that this happens at great social costs to the migrant herself and the families and countries they left behind (see also Parreñas, 2006). Parreñas (2001) sees the notion of FDWs serving globalist projects in both the home and host countries to cause parallel experiences of 'dislocation': that is, dislocation in terms of 'partial citizenship', 'pain of family separation', experience of 'contradictory class mobility', and 'non-belonging'; and parallel in that her study about the experiences of FDWs in Rome and Los Angeles yielded similar themes of dislocation despite being in two different socio-political systems imposing different immigration policies.

Dislocations of these kinds are said to simultaneously shape and be shaped by conditions of 'double liminality' (Aguilar Jr., 2014, p. 127 ff.) emanating from the quasi-citizenship engendered by their international work migration. Throughout this thesis, I consider *liminality* following how it is typically used in social theory as inspired by the work of anthropologist Victor Turner (1977

[1969], p. 94 ff.) on religion and the tribal societies of Zambia; that is, a social process of transition across borders, or a sense of 'in-betweenness' characterized by conditions of ambiguity and disorientation (see also Rampton, 1999). According to Aguilar Jr. (2014), FDWs find themselves 'in-between' both countries unable to enjoy and perform the full rights exercised by citizens in both places; not in the receiving countries because their migrant status is typically hinged on their temporary work contract, and not in the Philippines due to their physical absence[14]. And within families in the Philippines and those they have come to work for in Hong Kong, they are seen to shuttle between positions of being outsider-insider, insider-outsider towards attempts at being settled both 'here' and 'there,' albeit fraught with anxiety-inducing ambiguities and ambivalences (Hochschild, 1983, 2003b; Ladegaard, 2017; Lindio-McGovern, 2004; Parreñas, 2006). Despite these, and notwithstanding the economic turmoil in sending countries that usually make overseas work the only viable option for socio-economic relief, one may wonder why through the years, many would still opt to take on a domestic worker job overseas, with others counting decades before returning for good to their countries of origin.

Against this backdrop, this chapter examines FDWs' transnational work migration experience through the optics of their linguistic repertoires and narratives of family life, work life, and economic power. I investigate how four key participants represent their lived and bodily experiences with language

[14] As part of the Philippines' economic development strategy of labor exportation, however, several policies have been instituted to offer its overseas nationals some semblance of protection from the state and the exercise of their citizenship privileges while abroad. Some examples include absentee voting and the installation of attached agencies like the Philippine Overseas Labor Office and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration in its embassies and consulates around the world. For more information on the Philippines' labor exportation policy as strategy for economic development, see Goss and Lindquist (1995); Meijia (2009); Zhuo (2017), and Rodriguez (2008).

elicited through a body silhouette shaded with colors and symbols to represent their linguistic repertoire. '[A]nalyzing repertoires', Blommaert and Backus (2013, p. 28) posit, 'amounts to analyzing the social and cultural itineraries followed by people, how they manoeuvred and navigated them, and how they placed themselves into the various social arenas they inhabited or visited in their lives'. From narrative accounts that emerge from the talk of participants' linguistic repertoire, I then probe how they manage to negotiate particular roles and relations in both the home and work spaces, that, previous studies suggest to be fraught with unsettling liminalities consequential to transnational migration. As argued by Gonçalves and Schluter (2020, pp. 4–5), 'an in-depth look into individual care workers' experiences helps to provide a fuller picture...' of processes and consequences that leads us to understand better the emergence of the 'global "female" care chain.' For Parreñas (2001, p. 250), an analysis of migration from the level of the subject can offer us an understanding of their shifting subject-positions across institutions that constitute their migrant subjectivities. This level of analysis, compared for example with the examination of the 'intermediate,' institutional processes (Goss & Lindquist, 1995), allows us to understand 'the limits and possibilities… of agency' (Parreñas, 2001, p. 251) within this context of labor migration experience.

This chapter is built around John Urry's (2003) notion of the dialectic of *mobility* and *mooring* in global flows of people and resources, which I explain in Section 4.2. After this, in Section 4.3, I introduce four key participants and the linguistic portrait interviewing method (Busch, 2012, 2016, 2018) from which the data discussed in this chapter are derived. My analysis proceeds in the next two sections. In Section 4.4, I describe the biographical linguistic data derived from

the linguistic portrait coloring and interviewing procedure. Here, I analyze and discuss the output and interviews with key participants, what I call here *biographic linguascape* – a term I use to refer to their representation of how they mobilize their expanding linguistic repertoires as they participate in the global flow of people and resources. In Section 4.5, I discuss the narratives which reflect my participants' (self-)positionality and (dis-)placement *vis-à-vis* family life, domestic work life, and economic power. I conclude in Section 4.6 by providing a comment on the economic logic with which international work migration experience is typically rationalized; that FDWs demonstrate being enterprising transnational migrants who mobilize resources with which to subvert and challenge the dislocations engendered by their transnational work migration.

4.2. Mobilities and moorings

Mobility has been theorized as an inherent feature of globalization. Often criticized to be overly celebrated because people have accordingly been on the move since time immemorial (see for example, Block, 2006; Britain, 2016, pp. 231–236), the attention to mobilities and globalization in the past few decades, according to cultural geographer Peter Adey (2006), is one that is better understood not only in terms of scale and intensity but more importantly, that of speed.

Particularly concerned with human migration, Sheller and Urry (2006) sought to emphasize the consequences of movement for different people and places. As they argue, migrants carry parts of the places they left to reassemble them materially, figuratively, and imaginatively in places of arrival. As Blommaert (2010, p. 6) puts it, the '[m]ovement of people across space is... never

a move across empty spaces'; spaces of migration are always somebody else's place replete with norms upon which one's 'cultural baggage' is measured and either given or deprived of value. So, sociolinguistically speaking, Blommaert adds, '[m]obility...is therefore a trajectory through different stratified, controlled and monitored spaces' (p. 6) where language has important roles to play. This idea is explored in Section 4.4, where participants' accounts reveal how different languages they have acquired along their life span have been salient in different situations at different times and places.

To talk about human mobility (how to move), however, is necessarily also to talk about mooring (how to settle) (Hannam et al., 2006) because 'those mobilities that connect the local and the global depend upon multiple stabilities' (Urry, 2003, p. 124). Whereas mobilities entail or are hinged on some sense or infrastructures of settlement and fixity, being settled or sedentary nowadays does not always imply not being mobile considering the robustly networked societies we currently live in. John Urry (2003, p. 126) refers to this idea as the 'dialectic of mobility and mooring' that 'produces novel and "flickering" combinations of presence *and* absence of peoples, enemies and friends' (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 222, italics original). I explore this dialectic of mobility and mooring in the narrative tropes brought up by my participants in their accounts of their transnational family lives and domestic work. As will become clear (Section 4.5), these narratives suggest the boundaries around my participants' 'home' and 'work' spaces, as well as 'family' and 'employer/employee' relations are sometimes harder to disentangle than might seem at first sight.

4.3. Drawing linguistic portraits with participants from a domestic worker empowerment organization

This section introduces my method of my data collection and participants whose contributions I discuss in the succeeding sections.

4.3.1. The linguistic portrait interviewing procedure

The data for this chapter is collected following Brigitta Busch (2012, 2016, 2018) and her team's multimodal methodology on eliciting narratives of lived and bodily experiences of language. This is a two-fold method that involves: (1) coloring in specific parts of a body silhouette in relation to one's language repertoire or ways of speaking (and writing); and (2) talking about the output in an interview. Termed as 'language portrait,' Busch (2018) suggests that the procedure and its output are productive means of addressing 'questions that foreground a perspective of lived experience of language and concepts such as subject positioning' (p. 2). This methodology, Busch explains, allows researchers of multilingual practices to investigate how 'historically located discourses enter into the body and the experiential world of the individual subject, but also, conversely, how bodily and emotionally lived experience can contribute to the confirming or shifting of discourses.' (p. 5). The resulting image functions as a conversation starter or point of reference for further elicitation of biographical narratives. As it is an interactional process that allows for the possibility of pausing and reflecting on linguistic practices and preferences, it offers a performative representation of experience which may not be accessible to perception without the visual aid. Annelies Kusters and Maartje De Meulder (2019) add that the linguistic portrait not only serves a performative purpose of

representing one's linguistic repertoire but also functions as a way for participants to elaborate their point using non-verbal means to reanimate an embodied experience with language. In their investigation of the embodied multilingual repertoires of deaf and hearing signers, they note how the accomplished linguistic portrait is seen by participants as something that *is* themselves. '[P]eople *become* their portrait' (*ibid*., p. 34, emphasis original) when they sign, gesture, point or use their actual body part as modes of communication aside from the verbal one to elaborate their linguistic portrait.

Figure 4.1. Body silhouette template

I adopted the linguistic portrait procedure in the following way. First, the participants were asked to color in specific parts of a body silhouette[15] (see Figure 4.1) with which they associated a specific language (*lenggwahe o pananalita*) or way of speaking (*paraan ng pananalita*). Participants were given the liberty to

[15] I am indebted to Prof. Brigitta Busch for allowing me to use for this thesis the same adult body silhouette meticulously designed by her team with the help of their colleagues from Psychology (http://www.heteroglossia.net/Sprachportraet.123.0.html).

identify what for them counted as language or a way of speaking. Through this procedure, participants reflected on and mapped out particular languages in specific parts of the silhouette that could represent their bodily, emotional, and experiential attachments with the languages they identified. In so doing, the body was treated as a canvas through which to 'sketch' representations of their linguistic repertoires (Busch, 2012, 2015). While the method tends to point participants to conventional metaphors related to body parts (head for thinking, hands for work as will be seen below), indirectly supplying conventional discourses on embodiment in the process (Hutton, personal communication), it nonetheless provided participants the necessary impetus to talk about their experience of language that would have been more difficult to elicit otherwise[16]. After some 20 minutes, a semi-structured interview followed guided by a list of pre-determined questions (see Appendix C). The interviews were conducted between February and December 2017, resulting in approximately 20 hours of audio-recordings from 16 participants. The interviews were transcribed and thematically coded with the aid of NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software.

4.3.2. Participants

In this chapter, I focus on the contributions of four participants – Helen, Lyn, Abby, and Rizza[17] – who I met from a domestic worker empowerment organization (I call here as EmpowerDW). As indicated in Chapter 3 Section

[16] It must be noted that most of my participants only had Sundays to participate in this research. To talk about language and their experience with language also seem to be unnatural for most of my participants outside of the school setting as many have commented that the last time they talked about language was when they were in school. My participation with other groups (see Chapter 5) showed that this is not always the case because the ways of speaking of their employers and fellow domestic workers are some of the topics of interest in conversations when they are gathered with friends and family during Sundays (see also Constable, 2007, pp. 175-180).
[17] Participant names throughout this thesis are anonymized.

3.2.2, communicative repertoires are ‘indexical biography’ (Blommaert & Backus, 2013); that is, intimately tied to an individual’s life path. Investigations on communicative repertoires thus involve tracing when and how, in the course of a participant’s life span, particular communicative resources ‘arrived to him’ or ‘he arrived to them’ (*ibid*., p. 27) (see also Busch, 2012; Kusters & De Meulder, 2019; Ros i Solé, 2020; Zents, 2015), their *Spracherleben* (Busch, 2015) or ‘lived’ experience of language, than, say, discussing typical themes (or the common linguistic resources) that cut across a large set of participants. Aside from this theoretical and methodological consideration, the contributions specifically of the four are presented here over others due to at least four practical reasons.

First, my data analysis, where I coded responses with respect to particular themes, show that my conversations with the four capture much of what all participants covered during my interviews (see Appendix D for a summary of linguistic portrait data analysis).

Second, they are the ones with whom I had extended conversations compared with others. Other than the record of our conversation, I was able to join them over meals, and follow, take screenshots of their posts, and communicate with them on Facebook after they gave me consent to do so. This openness allowed me to ask further questions I may have missed during our recorded interviews for them to elaborate on what they had mentioned during the interviews.

Third, specifically with regard to Helen, Abby, and Lyn, their choice to be interviewed together proved to be an abundant source of unexpected insights not only about their linguistic repertoires but also about motherhood, domestic work,

and economic power, as we shall see in the succeeding sections. The three met at EmpowerDW and, after being grouped together for various activities, became close friends long before I met them in September 2017. Throughout my recorded interviews with them, I was positioned more or less as an 'auditor' (in the sense of Bell, 1984), shuttling between the roles of a ratified participant, an eavesdropper and onlooker.

Finally, the four share a relatively common background as mothers whose primary reason for finding work in Hong Kong is to augment their family's financial resources for their son's education and welfare. While there are six other participants from EmpowerDW who are mothers, my conversation with them did not seem to progress much further away from their talk on their linguistic repertoire. In comparison, the four key participants whose contributions I discuss here were the ones who brought up issues about motherhood, domestic work, and economic power (see Section 4.5). Their relative openness in talking about intimate moments of their lives without much prompt from me points back to my extended encounters with them that I was not able achieve with other participants from this group.

A summary of their profile is reflected in Table 4.1 (see Appendix E for a Summary of each participant's work migration timeline mapped alongside key historical-political events contingent to the Filipino domestic worker migration to Hong Kong).

Table 4.1. Summary of key participants' profile

Name	Age	Place of origin	Educational attainment	Years in HK	Current employer	Employed mainly through	Primary reason(s) for work migration
Helen	31	Kidapawan City	BS Nursing	8	HK Chinese	maid agency	son's education family support
Lyn	36	Nueva Vizcaya	Caregiving Program	2	HK Chinese	maid agency	son's education
Abby	28	Isabela Province	BS Education (unfinished)	4	'Western'	relative who works in HK	son's education to pay for husband's debts
Rizza	62	Malolos, Bulacan	BS Mathematics	26	Australian	cousin who works in HK/ 'direct hire'	son's education

Helen, 31, holds a Nursing degree and worked as a nurse in a hospital in her city. When her son's father refused to give financial support for their child, she decided to find work in Hong Kong. She eventually became the main provider to her large family after the death of her father in 2016. Lyn, 36, who had Caregiver training, worked first in Singapore as a domestic worker for four years before moving to Hong Kong. With her husband's income from driving a passenger jeepney becoming less and less stable, they decided she had to work abroad for their son. Abby, 28, is a semester short to earning her BS Education degree due to her difficult pregnancy. Because of debts incurred by her husband's flopped money lending business, she was left with no other choice but to find a job abroad to pay for their debts and growing son's education. Rizza, 62, had a relatively stable job in the 1980s as an account executive in a broadcasting firm after finishing her BS Mathematics degree. When she got married and had a son,

she was convinced by her friends to work abroad because she and her husband's combined income then would not be able to support their son's education. At the time of my interviews in 2017, Helen, Abby, and Lyn each has a son aged between seven to nine. Rizza has a middle-aged son, her only child, who is married and has two children.

Among the four, Abby and Rizza had relatives working in Hong Kong who convinced and helped them to apply, while Helen and Lyn were hired mainly through maid agencies. According to them, their choice of Hong Kong over other possible destinations was driven by its proximity to the Philippines (so that it is easier to fly back during emergencies), the city's relatively safer and just laws for foreign domestic workers, and the relatively better pay (when compared with Singapore or the Middle East). At the time, Helen and Lyn have been working for Hong Kong Chinese employers and in the city for two and eight years, respectively. Abby is working for a 'Western' employer – her second employer in her four years in Hong Kong. Rizza has lived and worked in Hong Kong for 26 years and has been employed for 24 years by her current Australian employer.

At this point, it is important to note that Helen, Abby, Lyn, and Rizza come from a community of practice whose preference on where and how to spend their Sunday day off are markedly different from my other participants[18]. This is an important point to make since the community affiliation of participants constitute the conditions of telling that should inform analysis and interpretation. In the words of Hymes (1996, p. 98): 'What things are said and can be said, how things are said and can be said, presumably is an integral part of the fabric of the

[18] Throughout my interviews, EmpowerDW members would typically compare their Sunday activities with those who prefer to gather at the open public spaces of the Central district (see Chapter 5).

community.' As mentioned earlier, I met the four of them, along with 12 others, in EmpowerDW. EmpowerDW is a non-profit organization that provides a learning and comfortable environment inside a University campus to foreign domestic workers during their days off from work. It was founded by a Filipino University teaching staff in 2014, and has since worked closely with the Philippine Consulate in Hong Kong and various media and advocacy organizations based in the Philippines and Hong Kong. The organization offers free lectures on personal care and health, self defense, financial literacy, laws related to domestic work, among many others. My participants have told me that it is precisely the new learning experiences offered by the organization that attracted them to join. Participants who attended at least 75% of the lectures receive a certificate of completion during a graduation ceremony. As with the rest of EmpowerDW participants I had the chance to speak with, Helen, Abby, Lyn, and Rizza hope that the certificate and the information they gained from the lectures will have some transferrable value when they return to the Philippines for good.

4.4. Expanding global, multilingual life journeys

In this section, I attend to the 'linguistic portrait' of four participants introduced earlier. I first situate my discussion by extending Arjun Appadurai's notion of -scapes into language. This proceeds with a discussion of what, for them, counts as 'language' and 'ways of speaking,' how they have come to learn or acquire them, and where in the course of their lives they found these relevant. Finally, I consider these linguistic snapshots of their lived experiences as *biographic linguascape*, a

representation of the flows of languages into their repertoire as they participate in the global flow of people and resources throughout their life paths.

4.4.1. Linguascape

Cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1990, 1996) proposed the idea of the global cultural flows to characterize the complexities, overlaps, and disjunctures in socio-cultural landscapes brought about by the accelerated movement of people, goods, images, and messages across national borders in the contemporary era of globalization. Rather than seeing the global cultural order as unproblematically swayed by powerful nation-states, for example, he argues that there are dimensions governing the global cultural economy that contribute to an often contradictory sense of global cultural homogeneity and local cultural heterogeneity (1996, p. 32). Using the term -*scapes* to highlight the fluidity and contextual relativity of cultural processes, Appadurai proposes five interacting dimensions, such as *ethnoscape* (flow of people), *financescape* (money, capital), *technoscape* (information technology), *mediascape* (images, narratives), and *ideoscape* (ideas and ideologies) to characterize the contemporary global cultural flows. Heyman and Campbell (2009) note that while Appadurai does not explicitly say so, there is one -scape that seems to have the most impact in and among other -scapes, which is financescape or the flow of asymmetrically distributed financial capital that is one of the root causes of global inequalities.

Inspired by Appadurai's idea, in an effort to investigate processes of globalization and transcultural flows where language plays important roles, sociolinguists adopt the term *linguascape,* extending Appadurai's notion of -scapes into language. In their study of the phenomenology of walking in

Toronto’s China Town and Kensington Market neighborhoods, Ivković, Cupial, Arfin, and Ceccato (2019) trace the usage of the term ‘linguascape’ to Hewitt (1995, p. 98), Jaworski, Thurlow, Lawson, and Ylänne-McEwen (2003), and Pennycook (2003). Jaworski et al. (2003), for example, use the term to refer to the place-making strategy of code-crossing (Rampton, 1995) into ‘host’ languages used in British TV holiday programs, where the snippets of local languages act as indexes of exoticity and authenticity of featured holiday destinations. Ivković et al. (2019) align with this processual view of *linguascaping* in their accounts of the personal experiences of the linguistic landscape in the two Toronto neighborhoods. They suggest that the unique accounts discursively (re)create both places and become ‘distinctive marker[s] of the effects of mobility resting in the new tapestry of migratory patterns of globalization’ (p. 43). However, they further expand linguascaping by suggesting that it can be better understood as a construct, a metaphor, and a heuristic. As a construct, linguascaping highlights the transformative capacity of language ‘to create and recreate personal “places” endowed with human meaning.’ As a metaphor, it ‘stands for place-making... [as] its name and the [Germanic] morpheme -*skape* (to make, to create) suggest.’ Finally, as a heuristic, it ‘presents a set of steps... [towards] a systematic discovery of intimate as well as shared exploits of space with language as a focal point’ (2019, p. 44). It is primarily in this heuristic sense that I consider the linguistic portrait interviewing methodology as linguascaping, a discursive representation of participants’ linguistic repertoire, which provides insights into participants’ intimate ‘exploits with language’ as represented in their biographic narratives.

Linguascape has more recently been used in sociolinguistics research as a portmanteau for ‘linguistic landscape’ (Ivković et al., 2019). For example,

Steyaert, Ostendorp, and Gaibrois (2011) consider multilingual corporations in Switzerland to be linguascapes, or sites where languages flow, cross, and, in the case of their study, where the rise of English-dominated organizational spaces alters discursive negotiations in the corporations' linguascape. In her study of the Mongolian popular music scene where she finds musicians experimenting with English, Dovchin (2017) defines *linguascape* as 'transnational flows of linguistic resources circulating across the current world of scapes, creating local linguistic forms whilst intersecting and interjecting with other moving resources across these scapes' (p. 8).

However, Appadurai had indicated early on that '...the individual actor is the last locus of this perspectival set of landscapes, for these landscapes are eventually navigated by agents who both experience and constitute larger formations, in part by their own sense of what these landscapes offer' (1990, p. 296). Thus, extending the idea of -scapes into language, suggests Appadurai in an interview (Rantanen, 2006, p. 15),

> means you have a view of languages, that you are both a speaker and you inhabit a language, and that you also see other languages. So you are both a see-er and a do-er, so to speak.

In what follows, I discuss the linguistic repertoire of four individuals introduced earlier and hope to extend the notion of linguascape from its typical use today in sociolinguistics research. Analyzing their linguistic portraits and accompanying interviews about their views on and 'doings' with communicative resources, we shall see linguascapes that are intimately imbricated within

individual's 'social and cultural itineraries…, how they manoeuvred and navigated them, and how they placed themselves into the various social arenas they inhabited or visited in their lives' (Blommaert & Backus, 2013, p. 28).

4.4.2. Four linguistic portraits

Four visual representations of my participants' linguistic portrait can be seen in the succeeding figures below (Figures 4.1 to 4.4). On each of the figures, the list of identified languages can be seen alongside corresponding colors or symbols representing them in the drawing. Having come from different places in the Philippines, participants report speaking different Philippine languages as their native tongue. They likewise claim to have a functional command of Filipino (what to most, *is* Tagalog) and English. This is attributed mainly to the bilingual education approach in the Philippines through which they have been schooled as well as the widespread use of these languages in national government agencies and mass media institutions. Other languages they identified to be part of their repertoire include Cantonese and Mandarin to account for their work experiences, and other East Asian or European languages to represent countries or places they aspire to travel or had gone to for tourism or work. As they first listed down languages before mapping them out on the silhouette, those that come first on the list tend to be the ones they instantly recalled, while the last ones represent those that they recalled after thorough thinking. The other side of the visual representation presents the actual body silhouette mapped with corresponding languages identified on the list. The languages are represented with colors and symbols applied in particular parts of the silhouette. While the choices of color were salient in my other interviews (e.g., green for English to represent money, or

red for the language of the heart; See Appendix D), these did not seem to be systematically done among this group of participants. In what follows, I discuss their accounts individually.

4.4.2.1. Helen

Helen identifies five languages to be part of her linguistic repertoire (see Figure 4.2 below). Of these, she claims native proficiency in Ilonggo and Visayan, two languages commonly spoken in Southern Philippines where she comes from. Helen places each language in one of the legs to represent her roots and foundations of her identity: '*s'ya ang naka-gisnan ko*' ('I was born and raised with it'). Additionally, coming from an Ilonggo-speaking family and neighborhood in the Southern Philippines city of Kidapawan, she places Ilonggo in the raised (left) hand and adds a smiling face as her way of portraying pride in her roots: '*…sino ka? Ilonggo ako… proud ako na Ilonggo ako*' ('…who are you? I'm an Ilonggo… I'm proud to be Ilonggo') ((raises left hand and smiles)). In the interview, Helen states that she communicates with her son and her family through Ilonggo. At the same time, she uses Visayan, the pan-regional language in Southern Philippines, to communicate when she is outside of her Ilonggo-speaking neighborhood in the same region. Although to me, Helen seems perfectly fluent in Tagalog, she believes that she is less proficient in the language. She said that if only I could understand a little Visayan, she would have opted to talk to me in Visayan. She recognizes Tagalog's role in finding and making friends in Hong Kong as she places it in the lowered arm: '*mga nakakasalamuha ko Tagalog*' ('those I mingle with speak Tagalog').

Figure 4.2. Helen's representation of her biographic linguascape on a body silhouette

Helen points to English and Chinese (she later clarifies to be Cantonese) to play a prominent role in her work. Placing English in the chest and stomach areas, Helen sees the language as something all Filipinos possess: '*nasa atin na talaga. pag-aralan natin o hindi yung English nandyan na sa katawan natin*' ('it's really in us. whether we study it or not English is in our body'). In her narrative, Helen recounts instances when she earned more and managed to establish rapport with her employers due to her training in Nursing and her proficiency in English (see Extract 4.11 below for an example). This is despite Helen claiming her English is '*bali baliko*' ('twisted') at the outset, representing it with contorted shapes (in red color) in the silhouette. She places Cantonese in the navel as a representation of nourishment and a source of more opportunities in Hong Kong: 'the more you know Cantonese, the more Hong Kong dollars you can get.' It is, she points out, the language spoken by most taxi drivers and market sellers, which is why for her,

a functional register of Cantonese is needed to get to a destination and to be able to bargain for and buy goods from market sellers.

4.4.2.2. Lyn

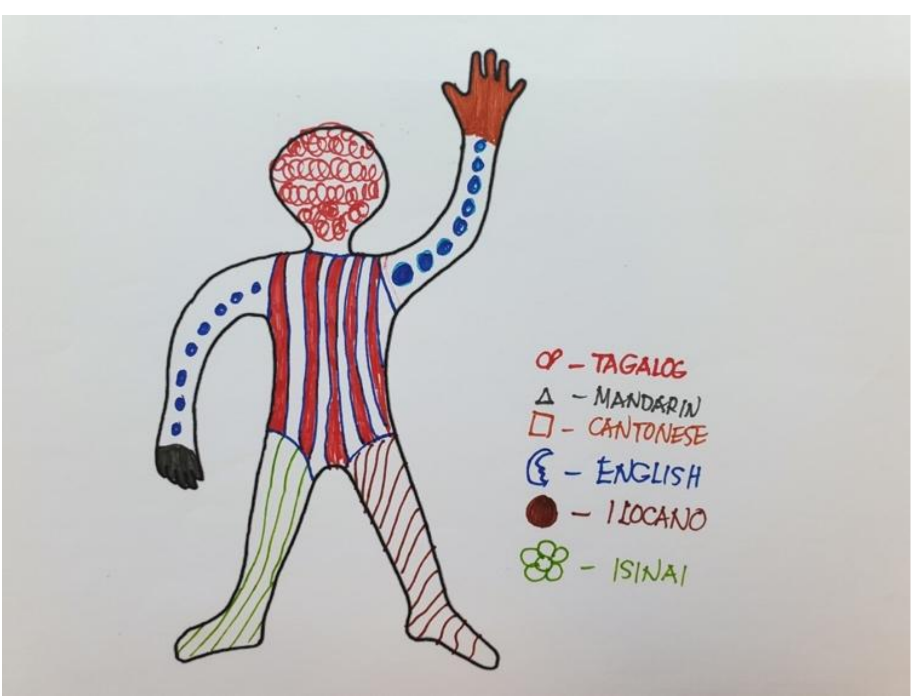

Figure 4.3. Lyn's representation of her biographic linguascape on a body silhouette

Lyn identifies six languages in her visual representation of her linguistic repertoire (see Figure 4.3). Born to a Tagalog-speaking family, Lyn represents it with a heart symbol and maps it in the body part – the chest and stomach area – (alongside English) and the head part. Lyn identifies English, Mandarin, and Cantonese as her languages of work. Cantonese and Mandarin are placed on each of the hand, '*kasi yung kamay ko ang nagtatrabaho mostly kamay ko*' ('because it's my hands that do the work'). Having experienced learning a little Mandarin after working for four years in Singapore, Lyn believes that domestic workers like her have to exert extra effort to learn some expressions in the language of the

household, which, in her current work, is Cantonese. It is through this, she mentions, that she managed to establish rapport with the Cantonese-speaking family she currently works for and the grandparents she was taking care of.

While Lyn points out that she understands Cantonese when spoken to and with the aid of non-verbal cues like gestures and facial expressions, she admits she only has a limited command of Cantonese of only up to two to three-word expressions that are useful for housekeeping tasks, caring for the elderly members of the household, and carrying out market errands. Lyn reasons: '*pero si amo din naman 'pag sa English (1.0) nganga rin sya*' ('but as for my employer when it comes to English (1.0) she can't speak ((sentence-length English)) either'). She represents English with dotted lines in the arm leading to the hands to show how work is communicated with her by her current employer through this language: '*…yung arm ko English ko kasi yun na yung sa amo ko nag uusap kami English*' ('as for my arm it's my English because my employer and I communicate in English').

Lyn places two regional Philippine languages in the leg part to portray the role of these languages when she navigates communities outside her home in Nueva Vizcaya, a province in Central Luzon. One of these is Isinai, for her, a 'flowery' language, which she and her sisters acquired growing up from the Isinai-speaking community in their town and which since then, they use as a secret code; no one else in her family, she claims, knows Isinai. The other is Ilocano, the Northern Philippines pan-regional language, which is also spoken in Nueva Vizcaya.

4.4.2.3. Abby

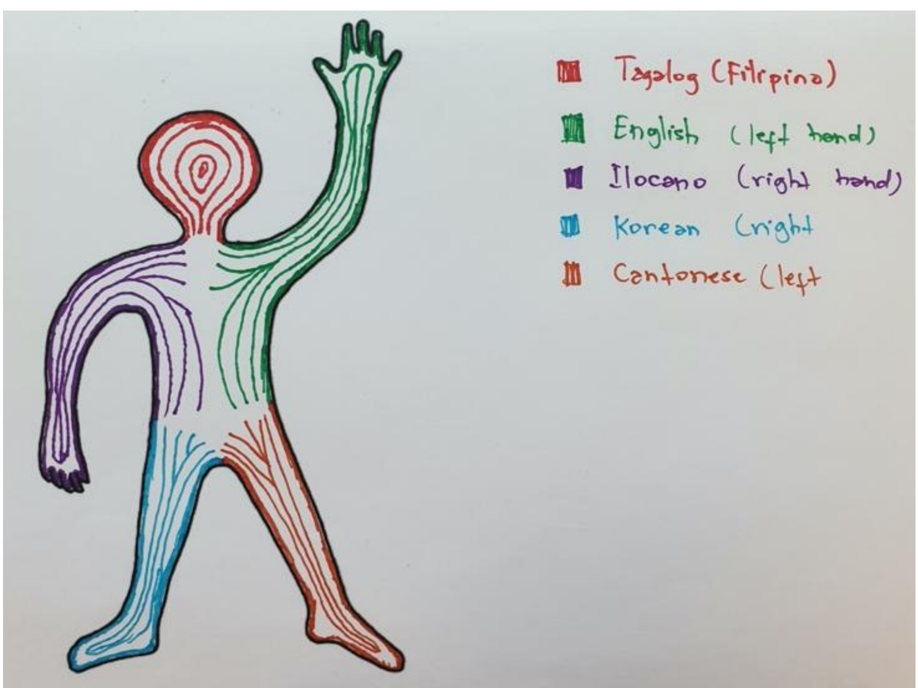

Figure 4.4. Abby's representation of her biographic linguascape on a body silhouette

Abby identifies five languages, mapping them as veins or lifelines in the silhouette (see Figure 4.4). Though living in a predominantly Ilocano-speaking community in Isabela province, north of the Philippines, Abby points to Tagalog as her first language. She attributes this to her father who was raised in the Tagalog-speaking province of Laguna and who insisted the family speak Tagalog at home. It is also the language of her undergraduate degree in teaching Filipino that she majored in, hence she places it in the head as her 'thinking language.' Despite claiming lesser proficiency in Ilocano, she finds it useful when connecting to her neighborhood in Isabela, placing it in the lowered hand. Abby lists English as her second language. She claims to have lesser proficiency in it before coming to Hong Kong; she recalls, '*kapag kinausap mo na ako sa English, matutulala na ako sa'yo* (3.0) *hindi na ako makakapag communicate sa'yo*↓' ('if you spoke to me in English, I'd go blank (3.0) I won't be able to communicate

with you↓’). Her current level of proficiency in English, she finds satisfactory, is attributed to her years in Hong Kong and her current employer who is of ‘western’ descent. ‘*Actually yung English ko nag improve lang sya nung nandito na ako*’ (‘Actually my English has improved only when I came here’). She said she had to use it more than any other languages for her work and in her volunteering activity at a Church where she teaches children of different ethnic backgrounds in a Sunday School.

Abby also names Korean placed at the right leg to show her aspiration to move to South Korea. She plans to work in the manufacturing industry there, where she says she was told pays about three to four times the salary of a domestic worker in Hong Kong. Comparing work opportunities in Canada, Abby prefers Korea better because of its proximity to the Philippines: ‘*madali umuwi kung South Korea* (2.0) *four hours*’ (‘it’s easier to come back home if it’s South Korea (2.0) it’s just four hours away’). However, she points out she needs to pass a test on the Korean language (i.e., EPS-TOPIK) first before being allowed to work there. Thus, Abby is self-studying Korean by watching Korean dramas. Finally, she names Cantonese last, placing it in the left leg. For her, it is the language she seldom uses but is that which allows her to navigate the marketplace of Hong Kong. She claims to know only the register needed for buying items in the market and other simple, useful expressions to move around Hong Kong.

Nevertheless, her placement of Cantonese as last on the list was partly intentional. During her first contract in Hong Kong, she says she had a bad experience with the Popo (grandmother) she was taking care of. The Popo, she recounts, knows no other language but Cantonese. Since Abby could not understand her most of the time, given the 3-day limited Cantonese training she

received from OWWA required prior to departure from the Philippines, she recalls she would always be at the receiving end of the Popo's outrage: '*hindi na nga kami nagkaka intindihan, madalas pa nya akong bulwayan*' ('not only do we not understand each other, but she would usually scold at me too'). Due to this experience, Abby believes that domestic workers like her who have to take care of Cantonese-only speaking grandparents need to learn the language because it is one of the best ways to gain their trust. '*Ikaw ang mag-a-adjust*' ('It's you who need to adjust'), she notes. She says that by doing so, work may become less difficult.

4.4.2.4. Rizza

Rizza lists nine languages as part of her linguistic repertoire (see Figure 4.5). Of these, she names English and Filipino to have the most prominent role in her life path. Placing English in the head and first on the list, Rizza claims fluency in English. She recalls her first year in Hong Kong in 1988 and remembers how through her proficiency in English, she was able to maintain her sense of dignity despite her unfortunate experience with her first employer, a Chinese business tycoon she describes to be abusive. Rizza could not forget her employer's response when Rizza decided after six months she had to terminate her contract. For being outspoken in English, she recalls what her employer once said about her: 'this is my first time to encounter a Filipina who can speak English fluently'.

Figure 4.5. Rizza's representation of her biographic linguascape on a body silhouette

For Rizza, English is the language for acquiring knowledge, which is why she comments how the education system in the Philippines has deteriorated because English is no longer the primary medium of instruction: 'The education now (.) it's really poor (.) I think so (.) because they don't implement English speaking'. She attributes her fluency in the language to having received her high school education in the 1970s from a private school in Bulacan, where she recalled they would be fined Php 5[19] if they were caught not speaking English. It is the language she uses to communicate with her Australian employers in Hong Kong and her grandchildren who live in the Philippines. Mentioning about how she communicates with her grandchildren, Rizza says she has no qualms that they speak to her more in English than in their community language in Bulacan, which is Tagalog: '*kasi everywhere they go universal language is English. kung bata pa*

[19] Based on Ace Subido's Philippine Inflation Calculator, this would have an equivalent value in 2020 of roughly Php 400 (or HK$ 60/ US$ 8). https://acesubido.net/ph-inflation-calculator/

lang sila natututo na sila ng English mas mas mawa widen ang knowledge nila-sa English' ('that's because everywhere they go the universal language is English. if they learn English as a child their knowledge in English will widen'. In fact, she expressed pride in her grandchildren for being able to communicate well in English with her employers when they came to Hong Kong for a visit. Her high regard for English also shows during my interview with her where she initiated and where we carried out much of our conversation in English despite the two of us sharing a common native language, which is Tagalog.

Coming from a predominantly Tagalog-speaking region, Rizza notes she knows no other 'dialect' than Tagalog. As with many others I spoke with, she points out that Tagalog, the language predominantly spoken in Manila and the surrounding provinces, *is* Filipino, the constitutionally-adopted name for the national language of the Philippines. When I asked why she placed Filipino in the chest area, she responds: '*sa puso? e hindi ba Pilipino tayo? hindi mawawala yan kahit anong tuto mo pang mag Ingles hindi mawawala sayo ang pagka Pilipino*' ('in the heart? aren't we Filipinos? that will never be gone from us no matter how good you are in English you will never lose your being Filipino'). It is through this language where she gains access to news and entertainment content streamed online from the Philippines. As a proof of this, she prides herself knowing Filipino colloquial terms such as *lodi* ('idol'), *petmalu* ('awesome'), and *werpa* ('powerful') that are popularized by a television personality in the Philippines (see also Excerpt 4.6 below).

Rizza lists Spanish third because she could not forget winning the best actress award in a school drama performed in Spanish that she participated in in college. She had to take four Spanish classes to fulfill a curricular requirement in

college in the Philippines during her time. She also relates that one of her wards have learned Spanish and that her employers promised her they would bring her to Spain to revive her Spanish.

Rizza identifies German, French, and Thai to represent the places she and her employers visit for vacations: Germany, France, and Thailand. She specifically placed French in the hands part of the silhouette because she says this is how she communicates in France – through 'sign language' using her hands. 'In France it's ((English)) not useful (.) they seldom speak English (.) very very few people speak English', she explains. And while she identifies Thai to talk about their visits in Thailand, Rizza also said she picked up some Thai from her employers' Thai masseur, which explains its placement in the arms part of the silhouette. There are two other Philippine languages she identified which relates with her friend and classmate in college – Kapampangan, and her distant relatives in Pangasinan ('Pangasinan') placed close to the heart. Finally, she places Cantonese in the stomach part to show how through this, she manages to buy produce and food at Hong Kong marketplaces but lists it last because she seldom uses it except when she is out in the market. She admits that in recent years if she does not know the Cantonese term for or the pronunciation of the things she needs to buy, she would use Google translate on her phone and let the seller read or listen to the translation. In the earlier years, when these communication technologies were unavailable or too expensive for her, she says she relied on her cousins and friends who had been working in Hong Kong for many years and who speak Cantonese very well to translate terms and expressions for her.

4.4.3. Discussion: Capitalizing on biographic (multi-)linguascapes

Far from the typically English language-centric view dominant in the socio-linguistic literature about Filipino domestic workers, we can see in this section an embodied picture of the multilingual experience of selected participants. As with the majority of my participants from this organization (see Appendix D for a summary), typically, the head is made to represent the languages of thinking; the arms and hands for the languages of work and friendship networks; the chest and heart for the languages related to family and relatives; the stomach and navel area for languages of nourishment; and the legs and foot for languages of mobility and roots.

Nevertheless, English remains to be the most important communication resource for work migration. Typically the only shared code between them and their employers, English serves as a tool for communicating tasks and other concerns with each other, especially at the outset of their work migration. English becomes the medium through which to speak up about unfair treatment in the workplace (as in the case of Rizza above). Aware of the status of English in the world and in the larger Hong Kong society, their being perceived as proficient in English becomes a source of pride, as it can be seen in one sample extract below.

Excerpt 4.1. 'Filipinos are well known to speak English fluently'

1	Helen:	we- Asian represent English	we Asian represent English
2	Nic:	Mmm	Mmm
3	Lyn:	yung ah majority of Asians are=	the ah majority of Asians are=
4	Helen:	Oo, Engl-	Right, Engl-
5	Lyn:	=from the Phili[ppines	=from the Phili[ppines
6	Helen:	[Philippines	[Philippines
7		and Filipinos are well known	and Filipinos are well known
8		to SPEAK- [English fluently	to SPEAK- [English fluently
9	Lyn:	[English	[English
10	Nic:	[English fluently opo	[English fluently yes

11	Helen:	tapos dito	then here
12	Abby:	kahit carabao ano?	even in carabao ((English)) right?
13	Helen:	ha?	yes?
14	Abby:	pag inano mong English ang ano	when you speak to them in
15		sasagot at sasagot	English they will respond
16	Helen:	Oo	Yes
17	Abby:	ano↑	right↑
18	Lyn:	oo naman.	of course.

The excerpt above immediately following Helen's explanation of her English linguistic repertoire (as discussed in Section 4.4.2.1) reveals a sense of pride with respect to English. Helen and Lyn opens how among Asians (lines 1–6), 'Filipinos are well known to SPEAK English fluently' (lines 7–8). Abby adds that even for Filipinos who can barely speak English, they are able to communicate with others through what she calls 'carabao English'[20] (line 12). We shall see in Extract 4.11 further down how Helen mobilizes her English linguistic repertoire to negotiate her social position in her host family's household. The sense of pride emanating from the hegemonic position of English in the world is similarly observed by other researchers on Filipino domestic migrant workers in receiving countries where English is given higher social regard in social affairs (e.g., Lan, 2003 in Taiwan; Lorente, 2018 in Singapore). Thus, English is deemed one of the driving factors that propelled their participation in the flow of economic migrants to Hong Kong.

Though aside from English, participants find other languages in their repertoire to be important also for carrying out other tasks or to display some

[20] Carabao English is a pejorative popular term for what William Stewart (1965) would consider to be the basilectal variety of English in the Philippines. Predominantly associated with the non-educated class in the Philippines, it is named after the Philippine water buffalo, the so-called Philippine beast of burden, typically seen in remote places tilling rice fields, carrying harvests, or as a means of transportation. It is distinguished from 'standard Philippine English', which is the accepted variety in educated circles (Bernardo & Madrunio, 2015, p. 43)

sense of status, at least when compared with fellow foreign domestic workers. If not considered *the* job itself, Cantonese is generally regarded as the medium for doing a 'better' job, gaining access to certain destinations, the marketplace, and ultimately, the Hong Kong Chinese employer's home – viz., developing rapport and maintaining a comfortable household (more on this in Section 4.5). This can partly explain the widely held in-group view about Cantonese being a vital linguistic resource towards facilitating favorable living and working conditions in Hong Kong, as it can be construed in one of Abby's recollections. For having worked in Hong Kong for more than one contract (i.e., two years), Abby recalls being asked by a fellow FDW: '*Magfo 4 years ka na, hindi ka pa rin marunong?*' ('You've been here for almost 4 years, and yet you still don't know ((Cantonese))?').

Although Cantonese is sometimes equated with unfortunate experiences while carrying out their job, it is likewise recognized as a symbol of greater opportunities and dollars for migrant workers like them who may be interested in further exploring the job market of Hong Kong. Otherwise, they turn to other languages through the aid of communication technologies and international media content for their long-term migration prospects elsewhere (see Abby's case in Section 4.4.2.3). Also, through identified languages, they display status at least when compared with other fellow FDWs. Rizza, in particular, listed some other European and Asian languages to show her special place in the household she has been working for about 24 years; that is, as part of the family who travels and participates in the flows of people for global tourism to places where such languages are spoken. However, among other things, languages native to their communities and home in the Philippines are identified not only to express

orientations about rootedness and territorially-defined affinity to ethnic identity. Such languages are likewise valued for increasing their network or social capital essential for survival in their current and prospect spaces of (work) migration; that is, one maintains connection with families and communities home while expanding friendly, support networks in Hong Kong and elsewhere through these languages.

Thus, through a combination of multimodal means of representing their linguistic repertoire, we see an expanding (multi-)linguascape of four Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong whose accounts exhibit a picture of communicative repertoire that is intimately linked to their biographical life course. The accounts of their of communicative repertoires likewise illuminate Appadurai's notion of -scapes (most notably, ethnoscape, technoscape, mediascape, and financescape) intermeshed with linguistic resources participants carry along and acquire in their transnational mobilities and moorings – their biographic linguascape. I therefore suggest that *biographic linguascapes* reveal their 'exploits' with language, how people conceive of, 'inhabit,' and mobilize flows of languages and other communicative resources in tandem with other flowing scapes into their migrant lives. As I hope to have shown above, these individuals mobilize their linguistic resources as *symbolic capital* (Bourdieu, 1991) in their attempts to strategically transcend from the liminalities that are thought to be inevitable due to their transnational domestic work migration status. We shall also see these strategic attempts of participants to 'settle' in 'both worlds' in their narratives on key themes with which they build their dominant identities as mothers and migrant workers.

4.5. Narratives of displacement and anchoring: Negotiating family, domestic work life and economic power

This section centers on the narrative tropes that emerged during my interviews. I first discuss my alignment with the notion of narrative as an interactive accomplishment. Then, I proceed with the discussion of narratives that, as I suggest below, revolves around particular themes reflecting negotiations of family, work life, and economic power.

Narratives have been prototypically distinguished from other interactional genres on the basis of event sequentiality being an important structural determiner (most notably by Labov and Waletzky (1997 [1967]). Yet, researchers have also shown that narratives told orally are not always single, neatly-sequenced tales of (past) events (Georgakopoulou, 2015). In this regard, researchers have attended to narrative telling's 'world-making' potential and its concomitant performative dimensions (see De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2015; Georgakopoulou, 2015). In this approach, analysis treats the act of telling as an intervention between the 'story world' and the 'story-telling world' whereby the audience exerts as much influence on the shape of the story as the tellers (Bamberg, 1997). This participatory understanding of narrative telling makes narratives collaborative representations of the self (Ochs & Capps, 1996, 2001): narrators negotiate positions or roles of themselves and others (Bamberg, 1997) retrospectively (Freeman, 2015) in both the story world and the story-telling world by drawing from an array of events in their life. In this perspective, therefore, certain narratives tend to be more reportable or tellable than others given certain situations (Labov, 1997, pp. 404–406; 2006; also, Ochs & Capps, 2001, pp. 33–36). As '...the narrator has free access to a store of event representations in his or

her biographical memory...', they get to select which events hold more 'normative significance... in the interest of the narrator' (Labov, 2006, p. 39). Approaching narratives in this way thus allows us to understand voice in that it reveals event and role representations that count as valued within the given conditions of telling (Hymes, 1996, pp. 112–116).

In this section, I look into the content of narratives on family life, work life, and economic power – narrative accounts that emerged out of my interviews with participants about their linguistic repertoire. Reminiscent of Urry's (2003) idea about the dialectic of mobilities (how to move) and moorings (how to settle) (see again Section 4.2), accounts of their transnational migration experience tend to oscillate between tropes of displacement and anchoring. *Displacement* refers to participants' sense of being out-of-place or dislocation, while *anchoring* pertains to a sense of being in-place or being settled. Just as displacement entails external actors or processes operating that render individuals or actions as being out-of-place, anchoring entails a process-oriented subjective being in-place that stem from agentive, calculated decisions and actions of the individual who is cognizant of 'one's place' and have a strong sense of one's limits (see Cresswell, 1996). And these, as I show below, are apparent in the specific life events my participants found most telling as they report them over a host of possible others from their biographic memory.

4.5.1. Family life

Embarking on migrant domestic work entails leaving behind one's family in order to attend to the welfare of another on a paid basis miles away from home. Migration of this kind is said to displace migrants at the outset in the context of

the two families: an inevitable outcome of movement from a familiar to, quite often, a strange place (Kontos & Bonifacio, 2015; Parreñas, 2001, 2006). Yet, through the years, migrants attempt to achieve a sense of intimacy with both families: the families at home despite the distance, and at work despite her initial symbolic position as an ‘outsider.’ In the process, however, they had to go through anxiety-inducing family relationship-building and maintenance that complicates their already difficult situation as labor migrants operating at the fringes of society and the global work order as will be seen in the narrative accounts below.

Tearful leave-takings and awkward homecomings tend to be reported life events that position participants as displaced mothers and family members. In the following excerpt, Lyn relates her painful experience leaving her son and family behind. This extract immediately follows my response to her question about whether I already have a child before coming to Hong Kong. Our conversation went on as follows:

Excerpt 4.2. ‘The hardest sacrifice of a mother’

1	Lyn:	Oh. What more sa amin na may	Oh. What more in our case who
2		mga anak? (0.2) Aalis ka pa lang,	have children? (0.2) Before
3		anak mo na talaga ang iisipin,	leaving, it’s your children you’ll
4		pasakay ka pa lang	think about, you’re about to
5		ng:: [eroplano=	board the:: [plane=
6	[…]		
7	Abby:	[Ye:s.	[Ye:s.
8	Nic:	[Mmm mmm	[Mmm mmm
9	Lyn:	=tutulo na- yun ang pinaka	= (tears) will fa- that’s the
10		mahirap na sakripisyo ng isang	hardest sacrifice of a mother.
11		ina.	And then when you arrive here,
12		Tapos pagdating mo dito, <trabaho trabaho>	<it’s all work>

In the above excerpt, the topic on leaving children marked by boarding a plane (lines 2-3), moments of crying (line 9), and arriving in Hong Kong to ‘all work’ (line 12) are told to recount an experience of painful separation from the family. This kind of leave-taking signals their displacement as mothers to their children whose growth they will not be able to physically and personally supervise due to the distance. This makes Lyn evaluate such leave-taking as ‘the hardest sacrifice of a mother’ (lines 9–10).

The pain of separation becomes more apparent to a mother like them in reported instantiations of homecomings characterized by awkward encounters with their children, as can be seen in Abby’s contribution below. This is a segment of a stretch of talk on their awkward experiences with their family during homecomings.

Excerpt 4.3. ‘where was I in those two years?’

1	Abby:	AKO DIN >alam mo after two	ME TOO >you know after two
2		years na umalis ako<	years when I left<
3		di syempre three years old	he was still three years old
4		yung anak ko	my son
5	Helen:	Uhuh	Uhuh
6	Abby:	nung pagbalik ko di syempre	when I returned so he’s
7		five na sya	already five
8	Helen:	((suppressed laugh))	((suppressed laugh))
9	Abby:	magsi six	around six ((years old))
10	Helen:	[nakalimutan mo na?	[you forgot?
11	Abby:	[nagulat ako	[I was surprised
12	Helen:	Malaki [na sya?	He's [grown
13	Abby:	[syempre=	[of course=
14	Helen:	((laughs))	((laughs))
15	Abby:	=maliligo. Paliliguan mo (0.2)	=he’ll take a bath. I’ll bathe him
16		Mama kaya ko na↑	(0.2) Mama I can do this on my own↑
17	Nic:	((laughs))	((laughs))
	[...]		
25	Abby:	Malaki na ako (.)	I'm a grown-up now (.)
26		Mmm (.) sabi ko, 2 years na	Mmm (.) I said, it’s been two
27		pala yung nakaraan↓ (2.0)	years since I left↓ (2.0)
28		Sabi ko ((whimpers))	I told myself ((whimpers))
29		<hindi ko alam	<I don’t know
30		kung magiging proud ako>	whether to be proud>

31		na kaya na nya? na<	that he can fend for himself?
32		[malaki na sya o=	that< [he's grown up or=
33	Lyn:	[Yun pa kaya mo na bang-	[That one also can you-
34	Mommy:	[( )	[( )
35	Abby:	=Malulungkot ako (.) oh nasan	=I'll be sad (.) oh where was I
36		ako nung two years na yun?	in those two years?

In this extract, Abby reflects on her first homecoming after two years of separation from her infant son. She recalls her surprise to see her son all grown up after her first two years in Hong Kong (lines 1–13). To give an example, she relates how her attempt at reasserting herself as a mother is undermined by her son who instructs her that he no longer needs her assistance while having a bath (lines 15–25). Her account shows that this experience left her at the time in a state of confusion and ambivalence, wondering whether she should be proud of her son growing up while she was away or whether she should be sad that he has grown so much during her absence (lines 26–32). Abby's account reveals how her first two years in Hong Kong leaves herself stuck with an image of her son fixed at the age when she left him. Aguilar Jr. (2014, p. 159) points out that '[w]ith the separation of personal biography and temporality from meaningful physical space while living in the country of employment, the labor migrant finds the self in a sort of suspended state of animation.' That her sense of her son's biological clock has stopped in those years she was away renders Abby's sense of motherhood in a suspended state of animation. This leads her to retrospect in lines 35–36: 'where was I in those two years?'

Nevertheless, while the participants invoke the trope of 'failed motherhood,' they too provide accounts in which they self-present as active carers of their children, albeit at a distance (see Excerpt 4.4).

Excerpt 4.4. ‘I will be just a phone away’

1 Rizza: So Christma::s and summer I was (.) there.
2 So he would tell me mom (2.0)
3 will you please don’t go back to Hong Kong? (.) I would just-
4 Nic: Ilang taon po sya non? ((how old was he then?))
5 Rizza: 8 years old.
6 Nic: 8 years old.
7 Rizza: Will you please don't go back to Hong Kong?
8 It’s not< I’m growing without a mom↓
9 So he grew up to different hou::ses
10 Nic: [Bakit po? ((Why?))
11 Rizza: [because] (2.0) ahm my my husband sent him to his elder sister
12 Nic: Mmm
13 Rizza: to live with them (1.0) and then later on my son wouldn’t stay with them
14 so he came back to my father’s house.
15 Nic: Mmm
16 Rizza: And then he went to my sister’s house.
17 So, he was living in different houses.
18 So he told me, I will just ah deliver newspaper? (.) to houses (2.0)
19 in the morning before I go to school (2.0) and (2.0)
20 and I can earn more and then I don’t need to go to private school (.) to study,
21 I will just study in a public school.
22 I said son, <I am now> working in Hong Kong
23 to give you a better education. I think just live with it.
24 And I will be just a phone away.
25 And if you need me, I will always be here for you. Anytime (.)
26 I will be here for you. ((voice quavers))
27 And (.) he grew up to be a very kind hearte::d, a very thrifty perso::n

Here, Rizza characterizes her son as growing up to be ‘very kind-hearted’ and ‘thrifty’ (line 27) despite her being away and even though his son had to move from one relative’s house to another as a young boy (lines 9–17). This, she attributes to her explaining to her son early on that her leaving for Hong Kong is for his own good (lines 22–23) but that despite being physically absent, she will always be ‘a phone away’ (line 24). An open line of communication is therefore regarded as key in anchoring oneself as a mother despite the distance, as similarly illustrated by Peng and Wong (2013) in their Hong Kong study of OFW mothers. Peng and Wong describe Filipina domestic workers’ diversified mothering

practices in three ways: intensive, collaborative, and passive[21]. In the extract above and in her other contributions related to motherhood, Rizza portrays herself as performing all these three. As an intensive mother, she makes sure she comes home whenever her son needs her, such as in times when he is sick and during special occasions like Christmas (line 1), pointing out that even at a distance, she is always within reach by her son via telephone call (line 24). As a collaborative mother, she relied on female relatives in the hopes of fulfilling for her some of the maternal care her absence could not provide her son (lines 9–17). And although not apparent in the extract above but is so in her other anecdotes, as a passive mother, she tries to distance herself from time to time from her son so as not to be a 'nag' by setting only a specific time of the week when she would get in touch with him. These roles are made possible through mothering with the aid of mobile communication technologies: 'I will be just a phone away' (line 24). And it is through modern communication technologies that they see themselves as continually relevant family members back home, as can be seen in another account from Rizza below.

Excerpt 4.5. 'I haven't left the Philippines'

1	Rizza:	Until now naman naho homesick	Until now I still feel home
2		pa rin ako eh. There-	sickness. There-
3	Nic:	Mmm	Mmm
4	Rizza:	There are times na:: (2.0)	There are times that:: (2.0)
5		I feel bo::red, I feel homesick?	I feel bo::red, I feel homesick?
6		Ganun. (2.0) Hindi mo naman	That. (2.0) You can't
7		maiiwasan yun eh kahit nasaan ka.	avoid that wherever you are.
	[…]		

[21] Yinni Peng and Odalia M. H. Wong (2013) characterize the three ways of diversified mothering enabled by modern communication technologies as follows: *intensive* mothering is maintaining an open line of communication with children, *collaborative* mothering refers to having a caregiver or 'substitute mothers' (such as female kin) for supplemental child rearing roles she could not provide to her children due to her absence, and *passive* mothering relates with keeping a sense of distance from children so as not to be too much involved with matters that could affect her work in Hong Kong.

13	Rizza:	I listen to music,	I listen to music,
14		siguro yung teledrama	maybe the teledramas too
	[…]		
21	Nic:	Saan po? Sa You-	Where? On You-
22	Rizza:	Sa TV ay no, no, sa telepono	On TV oh no, no, on my phone
23	Nic:	Sa Youtube po [o:: may::-	On Youtube [or:: you::-
24	Rizza:	[Hindi. Yung may]	[No. You know]
25		Pinoy channel ganon	there are Filipino channels
26	Nic:	Ahh saan po yun? Paano po?	Ahh where is it? How?
27	Rizza:	Pinoy channel or Pinoy TV.	Filipino channel or Filipino TV.
28		I-search mo sa Google,	Try to search on Google,
29		tapos tingnan mo don	then have a look
30		may mga teleserye <don>	there are television series <there>
	[…]		
43	Rizza:	ahhh updated ako diyan ((laughs))	ahh I'm updated with those ((laughs))
44	Nic:	WOW wow naman ((laughs))	WOW that's amazing ((laughs))
45		So parang hindi rin po kayo-	So it's like you-
46	Rizza:	hindi din ako nawawala sa Pilipinas	I haven't left the Philippines
47	Nic:	Pagbalik niyo hindi kayo	When you come back
48		macuculture shock	you'll not feel culture shock
49	Rizza:	Hindi ako macuculture shock,	I won't feel culture shock
50		kasi kahit yang mga,	because even those terms like
51		wer-, wer @ano@ yan?	we-, wer @what's that@ again?
52	Nic:	Werpa?	Werpa?
53	Rizza:	Werpa:: petmalu, lodi yung	Werpa:: petmalu, lodi those terms
54		ganyan @alam ko din yan@	@I know them@
55	Nic:	Saan? Saan niyo po na, na	Where? Where did you, you
56		nakukuha yon?	get those from?
57	Rizza:	E kay Vice Ganda ((laughs))	From Vice Ganda of course ((laughs))
58		((laughter))	((laughter))
59	Rizza:	@Kaya,@ kaya ano-	@That's why,@ That's why-
60	Nic:	Pero dati po nung walang ganon?	But how about back when there
61		Ay di lalo na po kung ano-?	weren't any of those? So you'd feel more-?
62	Rizza:	Ahh yun culture shock ako don,	Ahh I'd feel culture shock then,
63	Nic:	Pag uuwi kayo-	When you go home-
64	Rizza:	Pag uuwi ako. Di kunwari, ibibili	When I go home. so let's say, I buy
65		ang anak ko ano ng gamit ganyan.	something for my son he would use.
66		Ay pagdating ko hindi pala yun	But when I arrive it's not the one
67		ang gusto niya iba na pala ang uso	that he likes anymore it's already
68		sa atin diba?	outdated back home right?
69		Diba nakakashock yon?	Isn't that shocking?
70	Nic:	@Opo@	@Right@
71	Rizza:	Yung akala mo ang ganda ganda	All along you think it's really good
72		na nung nabili mo yun pala ang	when you bought it but it turns out
73		baduy baduy sa kanya	it's so outdated for him

Rizza, in the excerpt above, relates about keeping herself updated with Philippine popular culture through the Philippine mediascape accessed online. In the same way with Bonini's (2011) study where a Filipino migrant worker in Italy

relies on online mass media content from the Philippines to escape from alienation, Rizza relates making use of online and mass media resources as her way of getting a sense of not having left the Philippines at all (lines 1–30). By keeping herself culturally grounded, she averts from feelings of estrangement on homecomings. To demonstrate her anchoring in contemporary Philippine popular culture, in lines 50–57, Rizza speaks about being knowledgeable of well-known colloquial terms at the time, such as *werpa* (‘powerful’), *petmalu* (‘amazing’), and *lodi* (‘idol’) popularized by a television personality. This motivation to keep oneself relevant stems from another experience where Rizza explains buying a gift to her son from Hong Kong, only to be unappreciated by her son as it is outdated upon her homecoming (lines 64–73). By using mobile communications technology, Rizza achieves a sense of continuity to a life and role suspended by the distance consequential to her work migration.

The desire to display oneself as relevant to the family left behind tends to be equally matched with attempts at anchoring oneself in the workplaces. This can be seen in accounts where they note how they invest their emotional spirit for maternal and familial care to the child and the household they work for. The next example is part of a long stretch of talk on how they vent their longing for their sons to their ward by treating them as their own child.

Excerpt 4.6. ‘You treat him as your own child’

1	Lyn:	Kasi yung:: bonding mo ng	You see your:: bonding with
2		alaga mo [ay naka-	your ward is [like-
3	Helen:	[Isang kibot] pa lang nya,	[His every move],
4		alam mo na.	you'll know.
5	Lyn:	Oo. Oo. Parang↑ itinuring mo	Yes. Yes. It’s like↑ you treat him
6		na ring anak yun kaya kapag	as your own child so when
7		pinapagalitan yung alaga ko?	he is reprimanded? When his
8		Sinisigawan nung nanay? (2.0)	mom would yell at him? (2.0)
9		[Nahe hurt] ka.	[You’d get hurt] too.

10	Helen:	[Nahe hurt	[You'd get hurt
11	Lyn:	Kasi na- mas close ka sa alaga	It's because- you've been much
12		mo kesa dun sa amo mo	closer with your ward than him with your employer

In this example, Lyn shares how her spending more time with her ward makes him more attached to her than to his mother, to the point that Lyn treats him as her own son. However, this extract also reflects the problematic issues posed by this kind of arrangement. While Lyn manages to vent her motherly care and protection to the child she is taking care of, she nevertheless could not extend the same protection if it involved the child's own mother hurting him (lines 5–10). This results in mixed emotions, as can be seen in Lyn's statement in line 9 (and echoed by Helen in line 10), resulting in a sense of hurt for her ward and for herself that she could not defend him from his own mother.

As they emotionally invest the maternal and familial care they could not readily provide their own families back home, they manage to eventually get a sense of 'feeling at home' within the family they work for. Based on Rizza's account below, we can see how she not only demonstrates explicitly in her narrative that she has become part of the family she is serving for more than 20 years, but it reflects so in her linguistic choices when telling about this narrative.

Excerpt 4.7. 'You are part of my family'

1	Rizza:	My work for them is like (2.0) personal assista::nce=
2	Nic:	Uhuh
3	Rizza:	=mayor doma
4	Nic:	Uhuh
5	Rizza:	cook. Everything. But I don't clean.
6	Nic:	Ahh. So somebody else is [doing the cleaning
7	Rizza:	[somebody is clea]ning.
8		**We** have- I have a second helper.
9	Nic:	Uhuh. Ahh you mean, also a Filipino?
10	Rizza:	Filipina.
11	Nic:	Ah so-
12	Rizza:	She was staying- she is staying with **us** now for six years.

13	Nic:	Ahh
14	Rizza:	Yeah. **We** always have a second helper.
15		because every time **we** go to other places,
16		**we** have a dog. Someone would ahm stay at home to look after the dog.
17	Nic:	Mmm mmm. And you're the one who's always with them [traveling?
18	Rizza:	[with them. Yeah.
	[...]	
48	Rizza:	And my boss doesn't want me to go home.
49		Every time I told him, ah I better go home now because I am getting o::ld?
50		He said no. (2.0) There's no:: life in Philippines.
51		You are part of my family.

In this extract, Rizza uses the inclusive we (in lines 14–15) and us (line 12), signaling her being part of her employers' family. In doing so, she dissociates herself from the 'second helper' (line 14), who is in charge of the 'dirty' work such as cleaning and taking care of the dog when she and the family travel abroad. Her being part of the family, she confirms in her later recollection of what her male employer told her, reported in lines 48–51: 'You are part of my family.' Shahvisi (2018, pp. 22–23), however, warns that the treatment of domestic workers as being 'one of the family' does not always favor the workers as it sometimes becomes a cover for discreet forms of exploitation; that is, like members of the family, domestic workers can be asked to do additional favors outside of her work contract with no corresponding remuneration. Nevertheless, Rizza's recollections do not seem to suggest that she is on the losing end of the family relationship as she prides herself to have traveled to many places with the family, and whose authority for child-rearing (she opened up in her other accounts not presented here) is given equal weight as the parents. In fact, as it will be seen in another account below (see Extract 4.10 below), this sense of being part of the family becomes her leverage to be more transparent about what she feels with regard to work, which made her relationship with her employers and her workload much less difficult than during the earlier years.

The accounts above demonstrate examples on how my participants negotiate their positionality *vis-à-vis* motherhood and family relations. Despite their reported displacement and occasional instances of detachment from their own families, they demonstrate striving to maintain legitimacy as caring mothers. They report doing this by means of communication and transportation technologies with which they display presence at a distance with families back home. They also talk about their attachment and legitimate membership within their adopted/employer families. They actively attach familiarizing emotional and relational values with certain work responsibilities in ways that bring them closer to being part of their employer's family. These narrative accounts thus suggests that, in time, the boundary between 'here' and 'there' becomes but a blurry mark of their work migration experience.

4.5.2. Domestic work life

Research on domestic workers in Hong Kong has uncovered the many instances of abuse, exploitation (Ladegaard, 2017), and discrimination (Ho, 2019; Jayawickrama, 2017) that render foreign migrants engaged in this line of work to be silenced, submissive, and alienated (Lindio-McGovern, 2004). While these seem to also resonate in the accounts of my participants, as we shall see next, they equally narrate instances of being able to work around these dislocating tendencies through means available in their communicative repertoire.

Participants report experiences of being silenced as well as experience of alienation within the context of their domestic work life in Hong Kong. In the example below, Helen initiates the conversation on a general disposition of losing the right to speak their mind, along with their movements being restricted.

Excerpt 4.8. 'you don't own your body here'

1	Helen:	Yung minsan na-	Sometimes-
2		Sa building namin, ganyan	In our building,
3		ganyan ganyan ganyan.	it's this and that this and that.
4		Bawal dito yan.	You can't do this.
5		Bawal magreklamo.	You can't complain.
6	Nic:	Ahh	Ahh
7	Helen:	Kasi lahat yun,	It's because all of those,
8		pati damdamin mo	including your feelings
9		binabayaran yan (0.1)	(they) pay you for that (0.1)
10	Nic:	Ah, ganun po?	Oh, is it?
11	Lyn:	Hindi kasi, hindi ka mag=	You see, it's just that=
12	Helen:	=Hindi mo pag-aari ang	=You don't own your
13		katawan mo dito	body here
14	Lyn:	°Oo°	°Yes°
15	Helen:	[Damdamin mo=	[Your feelings=
16	Abby:	[Kasi bayad ka.	[Because you're being paid.
17	Lyn:	Oo.	Yes.
18	Helen:	=hindi mo pag-aari	=you don't own
19	Abby:	[Bayad ka.	[You're being paid.
20	Helen:	[Kaya you need] to hold it	[That's why you need] to hold it
21		((your feelings))	((your feelings))
22	Abby:	Bayad ka e. lahat.	You're being paid for it. everything.

In the preceding excerpt, Helen initiates what to her seems to be the only stance available to domestic workers in relation to their employers, that is, a position of submission on account of their being paid for it. Helen relates the case of other fellow FDWs in her building (the housing estate where her employers live) who receive nothing but commands and rules of what to do and not to do with which they are not allowed to complain (lines 1–5). She then explains that it is so because such a stance is part of the work they are being paid for (lines 7–9). This leads her to say that domestic workers like her do not own their 'feelings' and 'bodies' while on the premises of her employer's household (lines 12–15). Both Lyn and Abby agree to this sense of absolute submission as part of domestic worker duties, as evidenced by their affirmative responses to Helen's account (lines 14–22). Abby finally resolves in line 22 that domestic workers like them are

paid for being submissive in that they have to control their feelings and bodily movements ('everything') to the satisfaction of employers. As several sociolinguistic and anthropological work would suggest according to Weidman (2014), losing or being deprived of one's voice, or the disposition of making oneself understood, is tantamount to losing or being deprived of some aspects of one's individuality. Helen, Abby, and Lyn convey this loss of individuality in what they deem a general expectation from a domestic worker of controlling one's own actions and holding one's feelings aside as a necessary part of their paid work.

Reported instances of alienation, especially at the outset of their migration experience, tend to highlight their displacement as foreign workers in Hong Kong. Across all my interviews, everyday encounters with Cantonese tend to evoke feelings of non-belonging. While their limited Cantonese learned from the pre-departure training in the Philippines and those picked up since arriving in Hong Kong is enabling for them to a certain extent (see again Section 4.4), deficiency in Cantonese linguistic and cultural knowledge remain to be seen as an impediment towards achieving a fuller sense of being settled. In the sample excerpt below, Helen initiates an anecdote on an instance when her good night greeting in Cantonese to a grandfather was misinterpreted as something else (i.e., 'You go die').

Excerpt 4.9. 'Another struggle'

1	Helen:	Nag good night ako	I once said good night
2		gung1 gung1 aa1. zou2 tau2 aa1	gung1 gung1 aa1. zou2 tau2 aa1
3		@kinuha@ (1.0) @yung baston@	@he took@ (1.0) @his crane@
4		((makes gestures of about to hit someone))	((makes gestures of about to hit someone))
5	Abby:	((laughs out loud))	((laughs out loud))
6		((laughter))	((laughter))

7	Lyn:	@kaya nga@	@that's true@
8	Helen:	CI1SIN3 gaa3 nei5	CI1SIN3 gaa3 nei5
9		@Nagtanong ako sa alaga ko	@I asked my ward
10		bakit?@	why?@
11		@sinabihan mo syang you go die@	@you told him you go die@
12		((laughter))	((laughter))
13	Helen:	Sabi ko sabi it's good <night>	I said what I said was good<night>
14		Sabi nya, no it's you go die la	He said, no it's you go die la
15	Nic:	@oh my God@	@oh my God@
16	Lyn:	@Diba struggle na lang yun@	@That's another struggle right@
17		wala pa yung trabaho dun	that doesn't even include work

In this excerpt, Helen recalls an amusing experience with Cantonese language use (specifically, line 2) where she conveys a point about the possible detrimental effect of using the 'wrong' tone in Cantonese (the segment of talk omitted here but precedes this extract). Ladegaard (2020) notes that in such an intimate space as the household, in the absence of a shared code for communication between the employer and domestic employee, some abusive employers easily resort to violence. Here, Helen reanimates the grandfather's gesture of hitting her (line 4) and being called 'crazy' (line 8), showing that the misunderstanding can indeed potentially lead to physical and verbal abuse. Helen attributes the apparent miscommunication problem in the extract to the variety of meanings a Cantonese expression can carry when pronounced differently. However, since certain underlying socio-linguistic assumptions can render one expression sayable by a Cantonese in-group member but not by a 'cultural other,' Helen may have been unaware of an essential cultural knowledge. Although Helen may have pronounced the greeting correctly, her being thought of as a 'cultural other' in this context could have been the reason why the grandfather took it to mean as 'you go die,' instead of 'good evening.'[22] Whether or not the

[22] I am indebted to Andy Lok Chung Hui for this very valuable insight and for the tonal transcription of Cantonese expressions in the excerpt.

grandfather actually meant what he reportedly did is questionable due to the playful context of this narrative based on the successive laughter. Nevertheless, just as joking imitations by the Western Apache people construct playful images of 'the Whiteman' in Keith Basso's (1979) ethnographic study, perhaps, we can also say in the case of the extract above that retrospectively, 'the whole thing has been in fun – but then, paradoxically, not really' (p. 82). Evident here is Lyn's evaluation in line 16 where, after the laughter, she shifts back to her normal narrator voice to say that the case raised by Helen *is* a form of 'struggle.'

Thus far, I have shown that instances of silencing and (linguistic) alienation bring to bear tendencies of displacement with regard to FDWs' work life. Despite this, however, speaking up is similarly noted as a way to assert one's voice and resist unfair treatment, as we shall see in the following extract.

Excerpt 4.10. 'I can work on Sunday. Just ask nicely.'

1	Rizza:	Before she has a very ba::d character. She will tell me,
2		like (1.0) oh anyway I gave you free ticket. (2.0)
3		Can you work for Sunday? (2.0)
4		I said, did I ask for it? (2.0)
5		You- you gave me that wholeheartedly right? (2.0)
6		I can work. I can work on Sunday.
7		Just ask ni::cely. Tell me. <Rizza I need you can you work on Sunday.>
8		I think that's a better< better ahh words to say to me
	[...]	
16	Nic:	And how do they respond po?
17	Rizza:	Okay↑
18	Nic:	Ahh. And the following:: [ti-
19	Rizza:	[time she won't do- do that again.
20		[She won't do it
21	Nic:	[Ahh::
22	Rizza:	She will tell it nicely.
23	Nic:	Mmm mmm
24	Rizza:	So that's why that's the way we communicate.
25		And now we are::- our relationship is so much better than the first.

In the excerpt above, Rizza recalls a time when her employer asked her to work on a Sunday in exchange for a free plane ticket given to her (lines 1–3).

Offended by what to her was an improper request and a demonstration of her female employer's 'bad character' in the past, Rizza recalls answering back, saying she never asked for the ticket in the first place and that her employer gave it to her wholeheartedly (lines 4–5). She continues by saying that she can work on Sundays; that her employer only needs to ask in a nice way (line 6). Rizza then shows recommending her employer the 'better words' to say to her in line 7. She reports that after that incident, her employer started speaking to her nicely and that their relationship eventually became better (lines 17–25). This account thus demonstrates a degree of freedom for Rizza in managing her working relationship with her employer in such a way that transforms her work space into a more comfortable and inclusive one for her. Evidently, having a good command of the shared code for communication – here, English – is instrumental in voicing out concerns and eventually negotiating favorable working relationships with employers. This is also seen in the next extract below.

Narratives that directly speak about their command and use of linguistic resources the household they work for deems of high value (i.e., typically Cantonese and English) have also been common across my interviews. In the extract below, Helen reports her being the 'boss in [the] household' through her imposition of what Bernard Spolsky (2012) would call a family language policy (FLP) that is hinged on her host family's high regard for English. An instance of this FLP is reported here in the context of watching television shows.

Excerpt 4.11. ‘I’m the boss in our household’

1	Helen:	Pag nanuod sila ng TV	When they watch TV
2		ako ang boss sa amin.	I’m the boss in our household.
3		Pag nanuod ng TV bawal	When they watch TV I prohibit
4		ang manuod ng Chinese (2.0)	them from watching Chinese
5		It should be English	(2.0) It should be English
6	Nic:	Ba::[kit po?	Why:: [is that so?
7	Helen:	[Kase (1.0) may subtitle	[Because (1.0) there’s
8		na Chinese (2.0)	subtitle in Chinese (2.0)
9		Nababasa mo sya (1.0)	You can read it (1.0)
10		So narinig mo yung English	So you can hear English
11	Nic:	Mmm mmm	Mmm mmm
12	Helen:	English yun ((draws an imaginary TV set on air))	That’s English ((draws an imaginary TV set on air)) (2.0)
13		(2.0) Chinese ((points to the part where subtitles appear))	Chinese ((points to the part where subtitles appear))
14	Nic:	Oho	Yes
15	Helen:	Nababasa mo (2.0)	You can read (2.0)
16		Pero kung nanonood ka ng	But if you watch shows in
17		Chinese naririnig mo Chinese	Chinese you hear Chinese
18		hindi mo mababasa ang	you won’t be able to read
19		English. Kasi mabilis ang	English.
20		subtitle (1.0) Right? So pano<	Because subtitles appear quickly
21		ka matututong mag English	(1.0) Right? So how<
22		kung wala kang ginagawa↓	would you learn English if you don’t do anything↓

In her earlier accounts (omitted here) before this segment, Helen characterizes the family she works for as linguistically deficient in English but aspires for a functional proficiency in the language mainly in connection with their plans for their son’s future education in Australia. In this extract, the family is positioned as acquiescing to Helen’s terms for watching television shows with English audio and Chinese subtitles. As it can be seen, the family’s recognition of Helen’s legitimacy as a speaker of English becomes her leverage to broker an FLP that Helen suggests later also works to her advantage – because she can understand what is said on the TV show. In lines 20–22, she rationalizes her FLP on watching TV with English audio and Chinese subtitles as a way for the family to ‘do something’ to ‘learn English.’ Similar instances have been documented in Singapore (Lorente, 2018, p. 96 ff.) and Taiwan (Lan, 2003) where Filipino

domestic workers, generally perceived to be proficient in English, wield a certain degree of power over particular affairs of the less English-proficient household they work for. In similar ways, the account above reveals how FDWs like Helen have within her linguistic repertoire the reasonable means to subvert the perceived power imbalance inherent in the domestic employer-employee relations in such a way that depicts FDWs as being 'more than just maids' (Lorente, 2018, p. 116).

Although confronted with experiences on silencing and alienation, the accounts show that FDWs also have in their repertoire the means to circumvent dislocations in the pursuit of anchoring oneself in as a migrant worker who actually has or finds voice in certain affairs in the households they work for.

4.5.3. Economic power

Filipinos hired as domestic workers are said to be confronted by contradictory class mobility as a consequence of their transnational work migration (Parreñas, 2001). On account of their economic power, they are considered to be relatively powerful in their communities in the Philippines due to the visible economic upswing their remittances bring to their families and communities, while at the same time, relatively powerless in countries where they work for for being among low-waged migrants. These contradictory class positions are deeply felt in reported instances of discrimination in Hong Kong, and periodic sending of *balikbayan* boxes to the Philippines, as we shall see below.

In the following extract, Rizza recalls a degrading experience in a Hong Kong department store.

Excerpt 4.12. ‘This is for rich people only’

1	Rizza:	One Sunday we we::re looking at	One Sunday we we::re looking at
2		the Estee Lauder products?	the Estee Lauder products?
3		May bibilhin yata kami nung	My friend and I were to buy
4		friend ko. Tapos yung:: assistant	something. Then the:: assistant
5		don, sinabi nya sakin (2.0) ah this	there, she told me (2.0) ah this is
6		is for the rich people only. (3.0)	for the rich people only. (3.0)
7		Sabi ko, excuse me? (2.0)	I said, excuse me? (2.0)
8		This is for the rich people only.	This is for the rich people only.
9		>Okay< So umalis ako.	>Okay< So I left.
10		Ahm I approached one:: assistant.	Ahm I approached one::
11		Can you help me find your	assistant.
12		manager please? I want to talk to	Can you help me find your
13		your manager. So, the manager	manager please? I want to talk to
14		came. Sabi ko that area?	your manager. so, the manager
15		Estee Lauder	came. I said in that area?
16		she’s a pers- she's an assistant	Estee Lauder
17		right? Did she undergo any	she’s a pers- she's an assistant
18		training? on how to deal with	right? Did she undergo any
19		clients? or buyers?	training? on how to deal with
20		Why Ma’am? Because she told	clients? or buyers?
21		me that is for the rich people	Why Ma’am? Because she told
		only.	me that is for the rich people
			only.
	[...]		
38	Nic:	Ahm what did the manager say	Ahm what did the manager say?
		po?	
39	Rizza:	I’m really sorry for what have	I’m really sorry for what have
40		she done. (2.0) Because you	she done. (2.0) Because you
41		cannot tell me that I am not rich	cannot tell me that I am not rich
42		or I don’t have money	or I don’t have money
43	Nic:	Mmm mmm	Mmm mmm
44	Rizza:	because I’m a domestic helper?	because I’m a domestic helper?
45		Because I’m a Filipino↑	Because I’m a Filipino↑

In this extract, Rizza relays an event that happened on a Sunday in a department store where an assistant told her and her friend that the items they were looking at were ‘for rich people only’ (lines 4–6). She took this as prejudicial and discriminatory on the grounds of her class and ethnonational affiliation (lines 44–45). Refusing to be treated this way, Rizza narrates calling the manager to complain about the discriminating staff (lines 9–13), asserting her right to equal respectable treatment as other customers (14–21). Her assertive stance, she reveals, is cordially responded to by the manager who apologized for

the staff's ill manners (line 39). It is here where Rizza demonstrates how she manages to deal with discriminatory remarks in a manner that challenges social class distinctions (Bourdieu, 1984) typically attributed to FDWs. Often deemed as relatively low-waged and passive migrants short of economic means to afford products like Estee Lauder, Rizza's account shows FDWs like her possess both the communicative and economic means towards challenging discriminatory stereotypes.

With respect to home, the Philippines, narratives about the sending of *balikbayan* box[23] provide another source of FDWs' expression of control over and through material resources. In the next extract, participants co-construct the shared experience of this important ritual evident in their overlaps (lines 3–4, 7–8, and 11–12) and latchings (lines 7–9). This extract comes before a segment of talk (omitted here) about imbuing expressive values of care and remembering to items and the act of sending such items home through *balikbayan* boxes. In this narrative, Helen and Lyn tell about sending *balikbayan* boxes that contain their *pasalubong* ('homecoming gifts') at least a month before they travel to the Philippines for short vacations.

Excerpt 4.13. 'do not open that box yet until I arrive'

1	Helen:	Ay box sya. box	Oh I send it in a box first. box
2	Lyn:	Hindi. Mauuna yung box	No. The box will arrive first
3		[@kesa ikaw@	[@before you arrive@
4	Helen:	[1 month before ka umuwi]	[1 month before you come
5		padala mo na sya	home] you have to send one
6	Nic:	Ahhh	Ahhh

[23] In 1987, the Philippine government officially waived taxes and duties on items in *balikbaya*n boxes. Since then, cargo forwarding companies in many countries where there is a large number of Filipino workers started operations. For an explanation on how the practice of sending *balikbayan* boxes is historically shaped by American colonialism and Filipino notions about family, see *South China Morning Post*'s feature article (accessed on December 3, 2019) here: https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/2143906/homesick-filipinos-overseas-fuel-billion-dollar-gift-box

7	Lyn:	[@Nakarating na yung box mo=	[@Your box already arrived=
8	Helen:	[kasi one month yun	[that takes one month to arrive
9	Lyn:	=ikaw nandito ka pa@@@	=yet you're still here@@@
10	Nic:	((laughs))	((laughs))
11	Helen:	@Oo@ [Ganun para hindi ka	@Yes@ [That's how you do it
12		mahirapan	so it wouldn't be that hard
13	Lyn:	[@Pero bibilinan mo sila]	[@But then you'll tell them]
14		wag nyong bubuksan yan	do not open that box yet
15		hangga't hindi [pa ako]	until [I]
16		dumarating@	arrive@
17	Nic:	[opo	[yes
18	Helen:	Oo	Yes
19	Nic:	Bakit po? bakit ayaw nyo pong-	Why? why don't you want-
20	Lyn:	Hindi-	You see-
21	Helen:	Yun na yung pasalubong <mo::>	That's <your> homecoming gifts
22	Lyn:	Kasi yun na nga yung pasalubong	that's where your homecoming gifts are in
21	Abby:	Nandun na nga yung	That's where your <home-
22		<pasalubong> kasi kung sa::=	coming gifts> are because if it's in::=
23	Helen:	bag lang trenta kulang	your bag is only thirty kilos that's not enough
24	Abby	=luggage mo wala na	=your luggage you have no more space

In this final extract, Helen and Lyn relate a common practice of sending *balikbayan* boxes before coming home for short vacations in the Philippines. After Helen's account of how she would buy or save certain items to be given to family, other relatives, friends, neighbors, and some church members on her list months before her scheduled vacation, she notes in this extract that she would send such items in a *balikbayan* box at least one month before she leaves; something which Lyn confirms (line 1–9). As the box arrives earlier than them, Lyn talks about her special instructions to her family of not opening the box until she arrives (in lines 13–16). This special instruction is deemed necessary since all their *pasalubong* could not fit in the limited baggage weight allowed for air travel (lines 19–24). This talk reflects at least two things evident in FDWs' attempt to assert their economic power at home. First, they report having a say on when to

open and who to give items to in the box. This implies recentering of their role as someone who wields power over the products of their work; that is, as mothers or family members who have control over the family's wealth and whose sense of control is recognized and validated by receiving family members who follow their instructions. And second, by making sure everyone back home who matters to them gets a *pasalubong* to the point of taking the trouble of buying or saving items, packing them in a huge box, and listing and ticking off names of people back home to give *pasalubong* to upon return endows such items given away and the act of giving in-person some performative displays of holding economic power. Although some of the items sent can indeed be bought in the Philippines as later confirmed by my participants, such reported acts, nonetheless, demonstrate to others their status of having been abroad – what has become a symbol of upward social mobility in the Philippines in recent decades – and a distinction (Bourdieu, 1984) of having amassed surplus wealth that they can share such wealth outside of the family circle.

4.5.4. Discussion: Tethering two life worlds into one social field

Studies on transnational migration have dealt strongly with displacement, unmasking the difficult struggles encountered by migrants (e.g., Baynham & De Fina, 2005; Cooke, 2008; Parreñas, 2001; Simpson & Cooke, 2009). Similarly, those that highlight 'homing' or settling in were not uncommon either (Hannam et al., 2006, p. 10). This dichotomy is likewise very much apparent in studies on temporary migrant domestic work(ers) which typically highlight *either* displacement *or* resistance (though with notable exceptions such as, Constable (2007) Lindio-McGovern (2012), and Lorente (2018), for example). One of the

pitfalls of this approach, however, is that it may blind us (or our readers for that matter) from the complexities inherent in ordinary human life, rendering one-sided images of the slice of lived experiences we are investigating (see also Constable, 2007, pp. 11–12; Groves & Chang, 1999). While focusing on the displacement of vulnerable populations may be beneficial at best in the hopes of transforming their conditions for the better, it may give the false impression that they are totally out of control of their current circumstances. Emphasizing on their abilities to adjust to their current circumstances, however difficult they may be, in hopeful acknowledgement of their agency could be deemed overly optimistic. However, here, we can see that FDWs' contradictory experiences of displacement and anchoring oneself into roles and relations made complicated by their transnational life journeys are negotiated rather than fixed.

As the move to Hong Kong for work displaces FDWs as mothers and family members to the children they left behind, they similarly portray themselves as actively anchoring themselves as mothers- and family members-at-a-distance to their families. They report having been able to do this through '(im)mobile' (Hannam et al., 2006) infrastructures of media, communication, transportation technologies, and interconnected markets of the Philippines and Hong Kong, which make possible their 'flickering' presence and absence (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 222), most importantly to families back home. One reported means of tethering both worlds is through sending *pasalubong* in *balikbayan* boxes. In their narrative, we can see how the interconnected markets of the two states become channels in the performance of intimacy (Camposano, 2012) and 'spectral presences' (Rafael, 1997), if only through the 'balm of commodities' (Aguilar Jr., 2014, pp. 159–164). While this practice does inadvertently promote neocolonialist

thinking that ‘Western’ products translate to ‘better’ quality – what has come to be called ‘(United) states-side’ despite not coming from the United States (Rafael, 1997), my participants’ account on the sending of *balikbayan* boxes containing *pasalubong* indeed show how such boxes and items mediate the overseas Filipino’s existence in ‘two worlds’ asserting economic power and control of the family’s wealth.

Whereas their work migration unsettles their symbolic positioning in terms of economic power as well as their family roles back home, the accounts similarly demonstrate how they can wield control over their positionality in Hong Kong. Often subject to discrimination on account of their work (that sometimes ‘spills over’ to racial fronts) as reflected in Rizza’s narrative in Extract 4.11, participants nonetheless show that they possess the means and disposition to communicatively counter typical stereotypes of passivity and socio-economic marginality attributed to those hired as foreign domestic workers. We can see this in their attempts at communicatively asserting one’s right to respectable treatment as others and by mobilizing their linguistic repertoire to negotiate work relations. Domestic and care work is said to be inherently ‘affective labor’ (Hardt, 1999) in that the worker’s primary responsibility is to both physically and emotionally create a comfortable home environment to the people s/he works for, usually through suppression or control of one’s and others’ emotions. Yet, the accounts above show participants also effecting such affective labor to shape better working conditions for themselves. This is done by establishing communication conduct between herself and the employers and through the deployment of linguistic resources within their expanding repertoire that are valued-in-place, relying on

'reciprocal dependencies' (Chatterjee & Schluter, 2020, p. 77) built between the household and themselves through the years.

Likewise, they also present themselves as having anchored themselves in the household-workplace through time as an important part of the family through attempts at venting to them the maternal and familial care they could not readily provide their families back in the Philippines. Hochschild (2003), however, would find this problematic in the sense that children in the Global North receive far more care and motherly love (from both the carer and their own mothers) at the expense of the carer's children left at the Global South: what she terms a 'care drain.' This leads her to argue that care and love have become the 'new gold' extracted from the Global South at great social costs. The uneven distribution of care and 'love' has often been thought of as the root cause of children in the Global South growing up to vices, teenage pregnancies, and creating dysfunctional families of their own (Parreñas, 2006). Contrary to these, however, my participants show that they do their very best to reserve an equal share of that motherly love for their own children through diversified mothering, however channeled through modern communication technologies, 'substitute mothers,' and if only during more frequent vacations.

The narrative accounts discussed above thus present agentive possibilities of finding themselves shifting from the liminal '*state of dissonance, ambiguity, and confusion to one of consonance, clarity, and order*' (Samonte, 1992; p. 287 cited in Aguilar, Jr., 2014; p. 159; italics in original) by tethering together two distinct life worlds into one social field through means available to them. Therefore, it is here where we see how boundaries between the notions of 'here' and 'there,' presence and absence, disempowerment, and empowerment that tend

to structure migrant mobilities and moorings are porous rather than rigidly demarcated. Through strategic mobilization of specific communicative resources (i.e., languages, communication, transportation, and certain market infrastructures), FDWs actively create favorable conditions for themselves in relation to family life, work life, and economic power that subvert and challenge liminality-inducing dislocations (Parreñas, 2001).

4.6. Conclusions: FDWs as enterprising transnational migrants

In this chapter, I examined four key participants' representation of their linguistic repertoire as well as the accompanying narrative accounts related to family life, domestic work life, and economic power that emerged from the interviews. Their accounts of their linguistic repertoire reveals a biographic linguascape reflective of how languages they know and aim to know facilitate mobilities and moorings in their transnational life journeys so as to bind distinct lifeworlds that have come to be separated by their migration. Their native and community languages bridge them home and connect them to diasporic communities elsewhere; English gives them access to job opportunities via/and communication infrastructure that link them to their own families and serves as a gateway to certain (work)places in Hong Kong and the 'world'; Cantonese that can help them do a 'better' job and enable further access to Hong Kong's financial and job market; and other European or Asian languages that allow them to display some sense of status from others, if not aspirations for career move. And though filled with dislocations engendered by their transnational work migration, reported instantiations of *displacement* and *anchoring* show negotiated practices on the maintenance of roles and relations with respect to family life, work life, and economic power.

These reveal the porosity of boundaries between typical notions brought about by migration from one place to another.

In the accounts above, we can see that participants demonstrate acting as social actors who take advantage of particular resources (here, infrastructures-in-place and their communicative 'traits' used in forging certain alliances). Cognizant of dislocating tendencies that hound the line of work they entered into (as in Extracts 4.2, 4.3, 4.8, 4.9, and 4.12), they show attempts at creating comfortable working conditions by familiarizing themselves to the household they work for (Extracts 4.6–4.7) and brokering a business-like rapport with their employers (Extracts 4.10–4.11). At the same time, they demonstrate securing themselves the position of enterprising members of the family back home in the pursuit of augmenting the family's wealth (Extracts 4.4, 4.5, and 4.13). Their membership with EmpowerDW confirms their desire to constantly make themselves better. The ethos of empowerment that we may directly associate with the organizing principles of EmpowerDW, the source of 'expert' advice for upgrading skills, also seem to cut across the accounts discussed above.

All these points may be easily interpreted as 'neoliberal agency' (Gershon, 2011) – a perspective which sees workers viewing themselves as autonomous individuals, able to broker alliances as though one is a business through judicious use of their skills and traits. However, we can see that, at least with respect to participants from EmpowerDW, they do not seem to see themselves as just a 'bundle of skills' (Urciuoli, 2008; Urciuoli & LaDousa, 2013) who merely respond to market demands. Although the neoliberal markets (of the Philippines, Hong Kong, and the global economic order) do organize, enable, and constrain their migrant worker lives, aside from the economic logic with which work

migration is typically rationalized, we see personal, more intimate reasons and actions informing their decisions and experiences for work migration. They do not seem to necessarily see themselves as always marginalized; in fact, they portray themselves as having the means to withstand the marginalization and having the disposition of being in control of their migrant lives, contrary to typical reading of their transnational experiences from a purely economic standpoint. Their accounts thus demonstrate domestic worker personas who take the role of an enterprising transnational migrants whose initiative and resourcefulness pose a challenge to the very systems of neoliberalism and globalization that render them as mere 'servants of globalization' (Parreñas, 2001).

In the next chapter, I further explore the notions of mobilities and moorings through 'homing' or home-making practices and social activism apparent among those who prefer to use the open public spaces of Hong Kong's Central district as places of leisure during their days off from work.

Chapter 5

Home-making (in) Sunday-Central: Structures of feeling among Filipino migrant domestic workers congregating in Hong Kong's Central district

5.1. Introduction

'This?' Liza, a member of a transnational progressivist organization for domestic workers, directs my attention to the spot in the street of Chater Road where her friends congregate on Sundays. 'This is our home away from home.' These are words logged in my fieldwork notes that have not been uncommon to hear among the Filipino domestic workers who gather in Hong Kong's Central District on Sundays and public holidays almost *every time* I asked questions about what their Sunday gatherings meant for them or why they choose to gather there in the first place.

On Sundays and public holidays, thousands of people hired as domestic workers in the city can be seen gathering in the open public spaces of Hong Kong for these are the common days off from work of foreign domestic workers in the city (Kwok, 2019, p. 288). Studies and news media features about domestic workers in Hong Kong have identified those who come from the Philippines to be congregating in Central along (and around) the streets closed to traffic. In comparison, those who have been identified as coming from Indonesia are seen congregating in large numbers at Victoria Park and around Causeway Bay (Choi, 2019, p. 5; Constable, 2007, p. viii). On fine-weathered Sundays, the number of those who gather in groups can reach a visibly considerable number (Choi, 2019)

that Nicole Constable (2007) deemed the scene at Central a 'spectacular sight' (p. 1): a seeming paradox to the towering skyscrapers and luxury brand stores around the area. 'There in Hong Kong's most celebrated financial district,' Constable writes, 'crowds of domestic workers, mainly from the Philippines... gather to socialize, to attend to personal matters, and to escape the confines of their employers' homes and their mundane weekly routines of domestic work'. Although there have been more and more 'comfortable' options[24], others wonder why many continue to prefer to gather and rest in areas susceptible to, if not already characterized by, inhospitable weather and environment conditions (Choi, 2019, p. 74).

In Chapter 4, I hinted on the notion of *homing,* or the process through which my participants negotiate a sense of attachment to their host family and workplace, in their narratives of mobilities and moorings related to their linguistic repertoire, family life, work life, and economic power. I have demonstrated how their biographically-informed comments on language reveal instantiations of displacement and anchoring in roles and relationships intimately tied to their transnational migration experiences. According to Boccagni (2014, 2017), attention to the homing experience of international labor migrants allows us to problematize the nexus of migration and home that constitute the 'bottom-up view of transnationalization' (2014; p. 280). In this chapter, I look into the recurring practices of FDWs who prefer to spend their days off from work with friends and family in the open public spaces of Central. I pay specific attention to *home-making*, which I understand here as social and materially-mediated affective

[24] This can include airconditioned malls, beaches, parks with more green spaces, or facilities offered for free such as the *Bayanihan* Center at Kennedy Town and by non-government organizations such as the University setting I mentioned in the previous chapter.

practices that reveal conceptions about home. Efforts towards home-making necessarily entails *homing*, which I refer here to be experiences of finding a sense of home. Thus, I attend to how the concepts of home and homing are discursively articulated and performatively enacted through recurring practices (e.g., spatialization of community building, use of flattened cardboard boxes, wearing of group t-shirts, protest sign-making) and during interviews derived from my participant-observation in various activities in 2017.

I begin by discussing how the notions *home* and *homing* as affective practices have become important analytical lenses in the study of human mobilities and moorings within the context of transnational migration (Section 5.2). Next, I trace the historical foundations that made Sunday-Central a place of leisure, a meeting-place of sorts, and a de facto commercial center for Filipino migrant domestic workers in the city (Section 5.3) – historical patterns that may have contributed to the stability and patterning of the gatherings as an affective space that we see today. This is followed by a discussion of my participants, the data set, and the analytic lenses I employ, which is spatialization (Section 5.4). The analytic sections are organized as follows: Section 5.5 demonstrates the ways in which Sunday-Central is constructed and construed as 'home'; Section 5.6 shows how, in the same space, participants construct through discourse and social activism a politically and economically favorable 'home-of-return'. I conclude in Section 5.7 by arguing that these affective practices emerge from what Raymond Williams (1977) would call the *structures of feeling* that appear at the tension of feeling at home and not being at home upon which Sunday-Central appears as a site manifesting experiences of liminality conditioned by mechanisms that constrain migrants' efforts towards full social integration.

5.2. The migration-home nexus: Home-making as an affective practice

In much migration-related research, home is often seen as a geographically mappable, territorially-definite, and materially-built place left behind and to be eventually returned to, or not (Ahmed, 1999; Brah, 1996). In this sense, home refers to the 'homeland,' the country of origin, or place of birth that is often used in contradistinction to 'host' (society) (Grossmann, 2016; Zhou & Liu, 2016). Thus, home is usually deemed to be that place of social and physical distance as a result of migration, yet replete with emotional attachments emanating from nostalgia of the past and desire for future repatriation (Ahmed, 1999, p. 331). For many scholars who worked on globalization and transnational migration, the unproblematic dichotomization of this kind (home-host) can potentially obscure migrants' productive attempts at social (re)integration and privileges modernist conceptions about nation-states as the sole container of sociality (e.g., Block, 2006; Glick-Schiller, 2010; Heller, 2011). This is because for transnational migrants, home can mean more than one country (Levitt, 2004); 'home is also the lived experience of locality, its sounds and smells' (Brah, 1996, p. 192). And so for Ahmed,

> It is such transnational journeys of subjects and others that invite us to consider what it means to be at home, to inhabit a particular place, and might call us to question the relationship between identity, belonging and home (1999, p. 331).

While a transnational lens offers an approach to critically examining migrant mobilities and their multiple attachments beyond the constraining ideas about nation-state affiliation, a considerable number of international labor migrants on temporary work arrangements are left with no other choice but to rely on these institutionalized distinctions in order to build (or sever) ties, do identity work, and imagine preferred futures (see Fortier, 2000; Ladegaard, 2018). Indeed, as Aguilar (2014) observes in what he has come to call the 'migration revolution' in and from the Philippines, the ornate government infrastructure that effectively sends migrant labor to practically every country in the world (see again Chapter 2) is ingeniously complemented by discourses[25] that can make labor migrants see no other 'final destination' of this 'sojourn' as the Philippines. Romina Guevarra (2006), for example, finds that the discourse of 'empowerment' that aims to address vulnerabilities and is promoted by various government overseas labor-sending channels imbibe departing workers the ethic of a 'gendered moral economy' that makes overseas workers, particularly the women, responsible not only for nation-building, but also for social reproduction in the Philippine society despite being away. Through this approach, the state gains control of a large portion of its labor migrant nationals' fruits of labor back to the homeland (Lagman, 2015; Lorente, 2012; Serquina Jr., 2016). This becomes obvious in various ways in which OFWs perform familial and patriotic duties such as, for example, in periodic sending of *balikbayan* boxes (Camposano, 2012; see also

[25] Among others, these prominently include the discourse of overseas workers as *Bagong Bayani* ('new heroes'), which views overseas work as a sacrifice for the family and the nation (Encinas-Franco, 2013), and the discourse of overseas Filipino workers as investors for national development (Serquina Jr., 2016). These discourses promoted by one administration after another (see again Chapter 2) have been picked up by popular culture and media (Rafael, 1997; Serquina Jr., 2020), perhaps amplifying the 'culture' of migration observed in the Philippines (Zhuo, 2017, pp. 6-7).

Chapter 4), 'dollars' (McKay, 2007; also, Rafael, 1997), and consumption of Filipino media content (Bonini, 2011). 'In the global workplace cross-national alliances and friendships arise, but in the same breath [Filipino] national attachments are deepened' (Aguilar, 2014, p. 57).

To 'bring' matters of home to the experience of international labor migrants, cultural geographer Paolo Boccagni (2014, 2017) proposes the migration-home nexus as a research optic by mapping 'migrants' views, feelings, and practices of home' (2017; p. xxiv). Following his study on the Ecuadorian economic migration to Italy, Boccagni (2014) points to the relationality of home built upon emotional attributions or 'feeling at home' with material structures, such as the house. He finds that housing investments in the origin (Ecuador) and receiving (Italy) states mirror the transnational homing aspects of migrants' experience. Financial investments (and indeed, affective ones) are often routed to the places of higher degree of emotional attachments – what Lopez (2010) calls the 'remittance house'. However, Avtar Brah (1996) reminds us that, among diasporic collectivities, what counts as home depends upon processes of inclusion or exclusion, which makes home an object of 'political and personal struggles over the social regulation of "belonging"' (p. 189). For sociologist Mary Douglas, '[H]ome starts by bringing some space under control' (1991, p. 289). In that sense, home can be both 'real' or 'aspired,' a process, or a product (Boccagni, 2017). Home can be multi-locational (i.e., occurring in different places) and multi-scalar (i.e., a domestic space or a whole country and spans across time frames), depending upon emotional attributions and negotiation of belonging. Encapsulating these ideas, one familiar aphorism holds: 'home is where the heart is'.

Notwithstanding the constraining effects of social inequalities across migration circuits, home-making, as understood within social science, is built upon at least three dimensions of the homing experience. Quoting Boccagni, these are as follows:

> 1. *Security*: a sense of personal protection and integrity which is attached to a place of one's own, where outsiders should not have free access and one's identity… is not the question;
> 2. *Familiarity*: both in an emotional sense, pointing to intimacy and comfort, and in a cognitive one, standing for orientation in space, stability, routine, continuity or even permanence… The frequent connections between home and notions such as household, kinship, or neighborhood are telling of the centrality of this factor; and
> 3. *Control*: as autonomy in using a certain place according to one's needs and tastes, in predicting the development of events in it, and in expressing oneself, inside it, out of the public gaze and judgement… (Boccagni, 2017; p. 7)

Based on these dimensions, and as also indicated earlier, home-making practices are as much affectively or emotionally constituted as it is materially and relationally organized. Although there are scholars who draw analytic distinctions between affect, emotion, and feeling, taking affect as the more general term subsuming the two others (e.g., Ochs & Schieffelin, 1989; Wee, 2016, p. 107), I use such terms here interchangeably. I understand *affect* as the performative force driven by the sociality of emotions (Ahmed, 2014; Wetherell, 2012).

Cultural anthropologist Sara Ahmed (2014) views emotions to be 'made': culturally (re)produced and circulated. They are effects of repetition of emotional sensation across different people – 'manageable' (Hochschild, 1983) to a certain extent – that they affect or move people and make our world. In a similar vein, social psychologist Margaret Wetherell (2012) argues that emotions are relationally entangled with the social and, by extension, the material. To analytically examine emotion as a performative force rather than simply an unintelligible sensory experience it has been thought to be, she suggests a focus on *affective practice*, which, she defines, is 'a figuration where body possibilities and routines become recruited or entangled together with meaning-making and with other social and material figurations' (Wetherell, 2012, p. 19). To illustrate her point, Wetherell gives the dancing plague as an example out of historian John Waller's account of the epidemic in medieval Strasbourg (2012, pp. 4–5). Wetherell notes how prior to the increasing number of people who suddenly felt the urge to dance uncontrollably to their death, the famine that struck the area, waves of sickness and diseases and the indifference of the clergy and their landlords, may have led to the pervasive feelings of frustration, distress, and uncertainty. At the time, the dancing plague was attributed to supernatural causes. More than 500 years later, scholars coming from different intellectual traditions, studying the epidemic would dismiss the supernatural explanation of the time. Despite these differing interpretations, Wetherell notes that the dancing plague may not be construed in any conventional way of understanding emotions, but she argues that there was something *felt*: 'Bodies became organized and a situation was formulated, evaluated, negotiated and crucially, communicated. It demonstrates why social researchers might want to expand the connotations of

affect beyond the familiar emotional palettes' (2012, p. 6). By focusing on affective practice, she notes that social analysts will be able to examine the 'emotional as it appears in social life [by following] what participants do' (p. 4). Examining affective practice involves attending to the discursive-representational and semiotic manifestations of affective meaning-making (Wetherell, 2012, p. 51 ff).

In this chapter, I examine recurring objects and practices in Sunday-Central that are linked with the FDW congregation. As I demonstrate further below, these objects and practices are imbued with affective values as revealed through my participant and non-participant observation and in attendant stances that emerge from our conversations (more on this in section 5.4). In this regard, the 'meaning' of home among FDWs who congregate in Central, while echoing the three dimensions of home-making indicated by Boccagni (2017) to a certain extent, is built around multi-sensory discursive resources. Infused with familiarizing significations, such resources are suggestive of, in Avtar's (1996) sense, their personal and political struggles over the regulation of belonging. Since affective practices rely on patterns of 'stabilization,' 'solidification,' and 'habituation' (Wetherell, 2012, p. 14), it is crucial to trace first the history of how the gatherings examined in this chapter originated, which I turn to in the next section.

5.3. The emergence of gatherings at public squares in Hong Kong's Central district

On Sundays and public holidays, the various public spaces in Hong Kong transforms into temporary gathering and leisure spaces for those identified to be

hired as foreign domestic workers in the city. A 10–month analysis of human activity and pedestrian flow in 2016–2017 in areas where the large gatherings can be observed in Hong Kong Island reveals a great concentration of human activity around a portion of Chater Road closed to traffic, Victoria Park in Causeway Bay, and Gloucester Road Garden, in that order (Choi, 2019, specifically the figures on pp. 13–14).

Those seen gathering around Chater Road, the Statue Square Garden, Chater Garden Square, adjacent streets, nearby parks, covered walkways, and underpasses host about 10,000 people in groups who identify or are identified as Filipinos. They can be seen doing various activities such as eating home-cooked Filipino food, sleeping, singing karaoke, dancing, participating in beauty pageants, celebrating birthdays, holding farewell parties, or sitting around and making voice or video calls to their relatives in the Philippines. Some engage in some forms of social activism, taking part in protest marches, demonstrations, and outreach activities with other congregating groups. The site/sight has earned the labels 'Little Manila' (Kwok, 2019; Law, 2001) and 'a corner of the Philippines transplanted into Hong Kong' (Constable, 2007, p. 3).

The large-scale gatherings can be traced to multiple factors that include enabling and constraining government and commerce-driven policies, and needs-based options available to labor migrants. Following former Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos' labor export policy signed in 1974, the number of Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong more than doubled by the 1980s (Constable, 2007). Around that time, the Statue Square Garden and Chater Garden Square, once symbols of colonial power and largely reserved for ceremonial use by the colonial government (Law, 2002), became FDWs' favorite gathering places on

their days off. These places were easily accessible by public transport, provided convenient public communication facilities, and were located near establishments that cater to migrant Filipinos' needs.

At the time, telephone booths and mailboxes were ubiquitous around the area (Law, 2002). While some FDWs were making calls to the Philippines, others would wait, sitting at the Square writing letters. Nearby St. Joseph's Catholic Church started offering Tagalog Sunday masses to accommodate the growing number of the Filipino congregation (Edna Apostol[26], personal communication). The Philippine Consular office moved its offices close to the squares (Philippine Consulate General, 2014). With the pressure from the newly-founded grassroots progressivist umbrella organization, United Filipinos in Hong Kong (UNIFIL), the consulate started offering services on Sundays in 1987 (Dolores Balladares[27], personal communication).

Aside from the communication, government, and religious facilities and services, commercial establishments were set up initially by Filipino musicians and their families. As their popularity waned and work opportunities became scarce following the rise of Cantonese popular music in the 1970s, many musicians saw the opportunity to offer distinctly Filipino products and services to a growing number of compatriots employed in the domestic service sector (HK Magazine, 2016; Watkins, 2009). Despite more shops opening in other locations in Hong Kong, World-Wide Shopping Arcade, the three-story commercial complex in close proximity to the squares, has, since 1981, remained the central

[26] Edna Apostol heads the Sowers Ministry at St. Joseph's Catholic Church for more than 30 years. Sowers is one of the first Filipino groups founded in the 1980s that assist in church service operations. As of 2020, there are five Filipino ministries that take turns in assisting the parish in various capacities during Sundays.
[27] Dolores Balladares is the head of United Filipinos in Hong Kong (UNIFIL).

commercial establishment for remittances and purchases among migrant Filipinos. On a typical Sunday, the walkways around the building are used by up to 1000 people coming and going at any given time, comprising one of the largest foot traffic in commercial areas in the city (Choi, 2019, p. 97).

While commercial establishments, churches, and consular services have had important roles to play in the ever-increasing congregation in Sunday-Central, Law (2002) points to Hong Kong Land's decision to close some roads at Central on Sundays as the main reason why more and more people were attracted to come to the area and stay for the day. In a bid to attract shopping in the upmarket area of Central, in 1982, Hong Kong Land proposed that parts of Central be closed to traffic on Sundays. However, as Law (2002, p. 1635) writes, '[t]he crowds did arrive but were not the clientele [they] had in mind'. By the early 1990s, the increasing visibility of the FDWs congregating in Central become the subject of public scrutiny, culminating in a fierce media debate between 1992–93, and periodically re-opened in the years that follow (more on this in Chapter 6).

Foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong are required by law to live in with their employers ('live-in rule') and leave Hong Kong within two weeks after the expiration or termination of their contract except when they sign with or find another employer within the same time frame ('two-week rule'). The 'live-in rule,' which was formally instituted in 2003, made it legally impossible for migrant domestic workers (who would have the option) to get a comfortable place of her own. The 'two-week rule' enforced in 1987 makes investing in long-term housing an impractical move. If they do manage to work around[28] these

[28] Some of those I have met were able to work around the live in rule with the consent of the employer who signed their contract. But this meant they had to do extra work and forfeit Sunday and holiday days off to pay for a bed space in a shared apartment.

immigration policies, the cheapest accommodation by Hong Kong standards has become steeply-priced beyond their financial reach. Compounding the high cost of housing in Hong Kong is the relative decrease in floor space (Jayantha & Hui, 2012), which meant that live-in domestic workers might either have to make do with a small space[29] enough to fit a small bed or not have one at all, sharing rooms with wards, or transforming kitchens and living rooms into sleeping quarters at night in their employers' homes. These 'deplorable' accommodation conditions (Justice Centre Hong Kong, 2016), according to a *South China Morning Post* report, renders the said migrant labor group to be 'sleepless in Hong Kong' (Hollingsworth, 2017). While there are no studies that correlate the implementation of the live-in and two-week rules with the ever-increasing number of congregating migrant domestic workers in the open public areas on particular days, the pervasive sentiment about days off as a 'respite' to or 'relief' from the work week (Choi, 2019, p. 11; Constable, 2007, p. 1; Peralta-Catipon, 2011), the underregulated law on providing MDWs suitable accommodation, and the costly yet shrinking floor sizes of Hong Kong homes would be compelling reasons why many prefer to go and stay elsewhere other than their employers' home on their days off.

Among my participants, Sunday-Central is more than a center of administrative, religious, commercial, and social activities, but a space of familiarity and relaxation. It is not uncommon to hear that the reason why they come to and gather in Sunday-Central is because they do not have anywhere else to go. Days off from work are deemed essential for uninterrupted hours of rest. But it is important that spending the day off does not translate to spending money

[29] Choi (2019) draws the room layout of less that 3 square meters provided to domestic workers in an average apartment in Hong Kong (see Fig. 1.3 on page 6).

to get the needed rest until curfew[30] hours. Although there are times when they schedule activities outside of Central such as hiking, swimming and barbecue parties at the beach, or going to amusement parks on special occasions, gathering at Central has become the standard weekly practice (hence, my emphasis on the inextricability of Sunday and Central – *Sunday-Central* – despite the gatherings also happening during statutory holidays that do not fall on Sundays). Against this backdrop, I introduce my participants and briefly describe how I collected and analyzed my data to be discussed in a later part of the chapter.

5.4. Methodology

In this section, I first discuss how I recruited my participants, who they are, and how I collected my data. Next, I outline my analytic framework.

5.4.1. Participants and data

Between February and December 2017 on Sundays when I was not with the EmpowerDW (see previous chapter), I regularly walked around the places typically occupied by Filipinos on Sundays. These include Statue Square Garden, Chater Garden Square, the portion of Chater Road and adjacent streets closed to traffic, the HSBC passageway, and the underpass connecting Chater Road and Edinburgh Place at Central. Unlike the EmpowerDW participants who I came into contact with through a network of friends, I did not know anyone from the

[30] Although by law, MDWs are entitled to a 24-hour uninterrupted day off from work per week, some employers set a curfew time for them to return at the end of the day. While for some, the curfew time is agreed upon as a form of protection and is not strictly enforced, in the case of others, non-compliance to the curfew can lead to unfavorable consequences (like being locked out until they are allowed in again the next day, or worse, threats of termination).

gatherings[31] until some groups allowed me to join them after sharing my story (see Chapter 1). These include members from activist groups and those who hang out mostly with family or relatives in their respective *tambayan* (hang-out place) typically covered with flattened out cardboard boxes or picnic mats.

Those who gather together with family and friends that I got in contact with were from the Ilocos region and Central Luzon area (generally gathering at the HSBC passageway), Bicol region (generally gathering at the other end of the HSBC passageway), and Southern Tagalog region (generally gathering around Jardine House and nearby park). The activist groups, apart from engaging in the social and recreational activities as the others, organize and take part in various acts of political advocacy or protest along the portion of Chater Road closed to traffic. Affiliated with the coalition group UNIFIL, social activist participants come from organizations called 'LIKHA,' an arts and culture advocate group, 'Organic,' an environment advocacy group, 'Gabriela,' a women and children's rights advocate group, 'Pinatud A Saleng Ti Umili,' a province-wide organization of migrant workers from Northern Luzon which is part of the region-wide umbrella organization, 'Cordillera Alliance,' and those directly involved with UNIFIL. They could be easily identified by their organization names and protest messages on tarpaulins and cardboard boxes displayed next to their *tambayan*.

During the course of my fieldwork, I positioned myself as an 'observant participant' (Erickson, 1986, p. 127). With varying degrees of integration, I joined in-group activities like birthday parties and protest marches or simply hung out

[31] Many of those I already know do not have friends who participate in the weekly practice. Whereas others go there, some choose not to stay because, as some participants told me, their employers do not want them to be seen on local television partaking in the gatherings or they themselves do not wish to be associated with the negative image that has come to be linked with the square and the gatherings (see also Peralta-Catipon, 2011, specifically, p. 18).

with them during the day, sharing stories about family, life, and politics in the Philippines over home-cooked Filipino food that they brought or that we bought from the sellers in the area. My data consist of photographs of activities at the *tambayan*, protest signs, organization names on tarpaulins, t-shirts, and approximately seven hours of audio-recordings of group interviews. I consider the photographed data as semiotic artifacts that, in my analysis, are used to index homes and homing. I also extract from my interviews particular instances when ideas about home and homing emerged as salient points during our conversation, often as an offshoot of our talk about the objects mentioned above. These were not necessarily the information I actively sought[32], yet they emerged quite naturally during the course of our encounters.

5.4.2. Analytic framework: Spatialization

I employ the notion of spatialization used in sociolinguistic research on place-making and affective practice. Drawing on cultural geographical research on space and place (such as those of Denis Cosgrove, John Urry, and Henri Lefevbre), Adam Jaworski and Crispin Thurlow (2010a) bring the notion of *spatialization*, or place-making, to account how displayed language and other semiotic resources construct a sense of place and place identities. These authors suggest also that '[w]e create our identities in part through the process of geographical imagining, the locating of self in space, claiming the ownership of specific places, or by being excluded from them, by sharing space and interacting with others, however subtly and fleetingly...' (Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010, p. 7),

[32] Again, I was more keen at finding out the role of particular languages within their repertoire in their work and life in Hong Kong.

which is particularly salient in the case of migrants. The construction of a sense of place and place identities are done in multimodal ways through multisensory discursive resources drawn from what Pennycook and Otsuji (2014) and Canagarajah (2018) term as 'spatial repertoire'. In a meaningful assemblage of multimodal resources at one's disposal within one's spatial repertoire (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2017), migrants can turn a place, once strange and foreign, into one that is familiar and present (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010a). Such multimodal spatialization practice is observed, for example, by Nettie Boivin (2020) in her year-long ethnographic investigation of three Nepalese family homes in the UK. Boivin finds the 'homescape' of these transmigrant families invoking particular identity frames in particular rooms in the house and during particular occasions. Through multisensory discourse resources such as, for example, the smell of daily burning of incense for religious purposes, colorful Saris (traditional clothing) worn, and putting up Christmas decorations, these families index their ethnic, transnational, and globalized identity framings. In this manner, the families transform the house into what Boivin calls a 'homescape' where threads of identity, though riddled with contradictions, are made to 'flow' into the house to turn it into a home.

Home-making as a spatialization practice and the affective practices akin to home-making appears to manifest alongside various activities of FDWs congregating in Sunday-Central in Hong Kong, which I now turn to in the succeeding sections.

5.5. The making of Sunday-Central as 'home away from home'

Home, as I have indicated earlier, is thought to be a kind of space (Douglas, 1991) infused with affective attributions (Ahmed, 1999) of security, familiarity, and control (Boccagni, 2017). In the context of transnational migration, it emerges out of migrants' personal and political negotiation of belonging (Brah, 1996). Despite constraints in residency or citizenship that engender feelings of non-belonging or not being home, the FDWs I met at Sunday-Central manage to find ways to build attachments through recurring activities. Although they may not overtly deem such activities to be attempts at home-making, arguably, they enact processes towards homing while invoking the Philippines in the process. As I show below, such activities involve ethnolinguistic-based community-building practice and attaching affective meanings of security, familiarity, and control to objects and activities that, in turn, constitute the Sunday-Central space of belonging and relaxation.

5.5.1. Ethnolinguistic-based community-building practice

As has been mentioned, the Sunday-Central gatherings are primarily characterized by ethnolinguistic allegiances. My participants indeed note this as many consistently told me that one could map the Philippines in Sunday-Central. A strikingly similar case is Lisa Law's (2001) study about home-cooking brought in and shared by congregating groups in Sunday-Central. Law's participants claimed that one could map the Philippines in Sunday-Central through smell and taste of home-cooked Filipino meals, which she called the 'geography of the senses'. While Law did not map out these sensorial geographies, my participants were consistently able to point me to specific places in Sunday-Central where

particular groups of distinct ethnolinguistic origin congregate in large numbers. An informal survey I carried out with the assistance of social activists who regularly conduct counseling missions[33] in all areas of Sunday-Central generated a consolidated map indicating typical locations of specific ethnolinguistic groupings.

Figure 5.1 (in the next page) suggests the presence of four main language-based groupings: Tagalog and a mix of speakers of other languages, Tagalog, Ilocano, and Visayan speakers. Tagalog and a combination of different languages (numbered 1 on the map) have been identified to be spoken in common meeting points such as the Statue Square Garden, and walkways such as Chater Road and adjacent streets where large-scale events and activities are periodically staged, typically in Tagalog. Groups who come from the Tagalog-speaking provinces and regions (numbered 2 on the map) have been identified to occupy Tamar Park, the perimeter of City Hall Memorial Garden, and the walkways around Jardine House. The Ilocano-speaking groups and regions (numbered 3 on the map) that comprise Filipino communities from across Northern Luzon typically gather at the HSBC passageway, Ice House Street, Chater Garden, and around the Post Office Building and IFC Mall. Finally, those who speak Visayan (numbered 4 on the map), comprising those coming from the Visayas and Mindanao islands, tend to congregate at the Post Office Headquarters, around the Central Library (i.e., 'Bus 13'), and beside the Court of Appeals Building. It is not to say that these are the only places where speakers of these languages congregate,

[33] This is led by UNIFIL and Mission for Migrant Workers (a non-profit organization). Their members (volunteer domestic workers) take turns every week to roam around the gathering places to give information about MDW rights as well as who to contact or where to go in case of need.

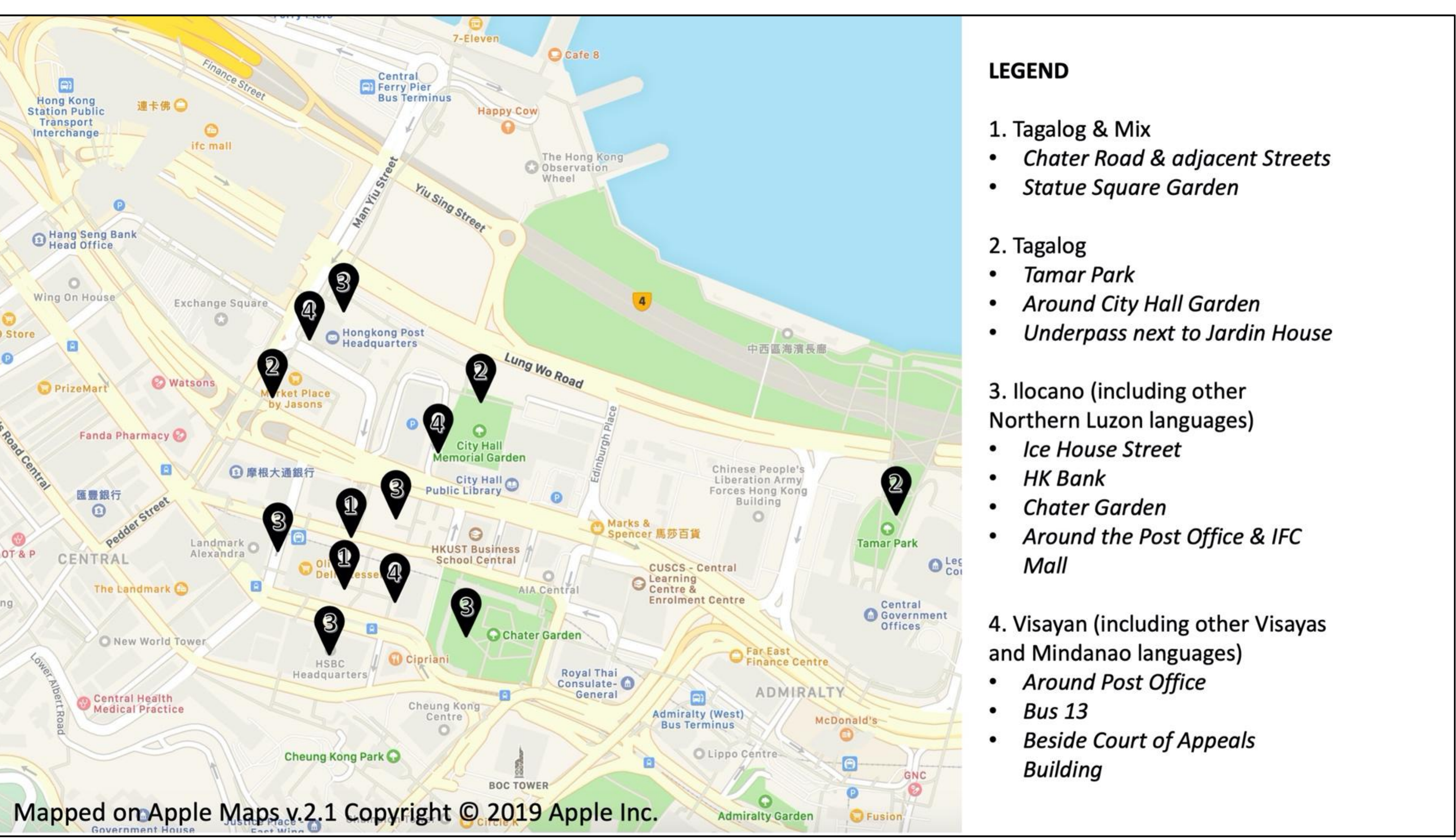

Figure 5.1. Consolidated sociolinguistic map of groups in Sunday-Central

as those who do not belong to the more organized groups tend to gather randomly in many other areas. According to some participants, such individuals are referred to as *kalat-kalat* ('spread out').

The practice of gathering together by ethnolinguistic origins seems to be driven by a host of pragmatic and affective reasons. Groups tend to form from a network that involves family members, distant relatives, close friends, and neighbors who already have settled abroad and are relied on for easing oneself into the reality of migration and as a support system in times of need. This way of forming alliances among temporary labor migrants from the Philippines has been documented by many others, for example, by Lambino (2015) in the case of factory workers who are seen to be concentrated more in certain Japanese prefectures than in others, and Piller and Lising (2014) in the case of meat processing workers in Australian suburbs. However, we see here that rather than settling in particular neighborhoods, some FDWs, largely due to their living arrangements prescribed by their work contract and immigration status, do so in a 'permanent temporary' (Boersma, 2018) way amidst Hong Kong's government, business, and financial center on Sundays and statutory holidays.

These networks tend to serve as another convenient channel for sending goods and remittances to families back home, bypassing shipping and money transfer companies. It is common to ask others to carry some *padala* ('items brought by others'), usually as a reciprocal favor, when they are about to go back to the Philippines for a short vacation. On their return, individuals may also bring back gifts for other FDWs from their families. This can only be effective when one knows several others whose families live close to their own.

Last but not least, ethnolinguistic-based networks alleviate to some extent the longing for one's family and home, while at the same time gaining a sense of belonging away from home. This is apparent in the following extract from an Ilocano-speaking family of five gathering at the HSBC passageway. As with most of those I spoke with here, Rachel shares what hearing her native language, Ilocano, spoken in the Northern part of Luzon in the Philippines, makes her feel.

Excerpt 5.1. 'I forget about my homesickness'

1	Nic:	ano po yung feeling pagka na-	how do you feel when whe-
2		nakaka::salubong po kayo ng mga	you ran into someone
3		taga- [Ilocano	who come fro- [Ilocano
4	Rachel:	[ang saya saya	[very happy
5		natatanggal yung ho::mesick	I forget about my ho::mesickness
6	Nic:	Mmm	Mmm
7	Rachel:	kasi AY marami pala ditong mga	because you'd know OH there are
8		<Ilocano:>	many <Ilocanos:> here
9		AY hindi lang pala ang yung	THAT I am not the only
10		@Ilocano dito@	@Ilocano@ here
11		yung parang ganyan (2.0)	it's like that (2.0)
12		at least natatanggal yung:: ibang::=	at least you forget about:: other::=
13	Nic:	Opo	right
14	Rachel:	=nararamdaman mo na::	=things you feel like::
15		homesick. ayun	homesickness. That's it

In this extract, Rachel shares that just hearing others speak in her native language, Ilocano, makes her forget about her 'homesickness' (line 5). Not only does being within the earshot of her Ilocano-speaking relatives and others make her forget about her longing for home, it likewise gives her the assurance that she is not alone in this foreign land but in the company of familiar others (lines 7–11).

In this sense, the ethnolinguistic networks that organize the gatherings at Sunday-Central transform it into a space of familiarity built on 'connections between home and notions such as household, kinship, or neighborhood' (Boccagni, 2017, p. 7). As it becomes a meeting place of sorts for family and

friends from the same household or neighborhood back in the Philippines, they share stories from and common narratives of home. As such, it becomes an avenue for social support that takes away homesickness and provides security for both newly-arrived and long-time FDWs, while serving as another channel through which to display care and remembering towards families at home (through the *padala*). Through these ethnolinguistic-based groupings, Sunday-Central transforms into a site where memories of home become both a source of *remembering* (as when being within the earshot of fellow Ilocano speakers invokes a sense of being home) and a means of *forgetting* (certain emotional burdens like homesickness), albeit temporarily. Their specific *tambayan* ('hang-out spot') in Sunday-Central are thus allocated 'memories' (Douglas, 1991) brought over and/or (re)configured towards settlement (Hannam et al., 2006), however provisionally, as we shall see further in the sections that follow.

5.5.2. Material bases for homing in Sunday-Central

Flattened out cardboard boxes used as covering, group names (printed on tarpaulins), and group t-shirts are three of the most commonly visible resources used to display group/community belonging, and in turn, index home-making practices in Sunday-Central.

Figure 5.2. Ilocano-dominated gathering at the HSBC passageway using flattened out cardboard boxes as floor covering and border

As is evident in the following extract, flattened out cardboard boxes (see Figure 5.2) are not only used for practical purposes to provide shelter and a modicum of comfort; they are also imbued with affective meanings.

Excerpt 5.2. ‘OUR LAND WITH TITLE’

1	Nic:	Yun pong ano napansin ko po	I also noticed
2		yung mga:: katulad po nito,	there are:: like this one,
3		((pointing at the carton mat))	((pointing at the carton mat))
4		meron po kayong parang::	you have something like::
5	Daisy:	Sapin sapin?	a mat?
6	Nic:	Opo	yes
7	Daisy:	Ah:: eto yung<	Ahh:: this is what’s <
8		eto yung @maganda@	this is what’s @good@
9	Nic:	(laughs)	(laughs)
10	Daisy:	eto lang yung ano.	this is the only.
11		Ano yan ah:: magkano ba?	That’s ah:: how much is this?
12		((to Merly))	((to Merly))
13	Merly:	Ang bayad jan?	The cost of that?
14	Daisy:	Oo	Yes

15	Merly:	Ano. Ano ata e,	It’s. I think it’s
16	Daisy:	isang karton	per carton
17	Merly:	isang karton is five dollars.	one carton is five dollars
18	Daisy:	five dollars? Oo. depende sa::	five dollars? Yes. It depends on
19		laki (2.0) <pero ito yung	its:: size (2.0) <but this is what
20		tinatawag nila>	they call>
21		na halimbawa dito dito	for example from here to there
		((points at borders of the mat))	((points at borders of the mat))
22		parang yung hanggang dyan	it’s like up to there
23		lupa na namin to	that’s our land
24		LUPA NAMIN MAY TITULO	OUR LAND WITH TITLE
25		ganyan	that’s it
26	Nic:	Mmm	Mmm
27		((laughter))	((laughter))
28	Daisy:	dyan din sa kabila. ayan.	it’s like next-door too. there.
		((pointing at neighbors))	((pointing at neighbors))
29		parang ano, parang: amin na to=	it’s like, it’s like: this is ours=
30	Merly:	bawal na<	it’s prohibited to<
31	Daisy:	wag kayong mag squatter dito	you can’t be squatters here
32		yung ganon na	it’s like that
33		hindi ka pwedeng-	you can’t-
34	Merly:	hindi ka pwedeng mag latag	you can’t unfold a mat here
35	Daisy:	kahit wala pa sila yung dating	even though those who regularly
36		nakapwesto hindi ka pwedeng	stay here are not yet around
37		pumunta dyaan	you can’t come here and stay
38	Nic:	Mmm mmm	Mmm mmm
39	Daisy:	Kasi once na nagpunta ka jan	Because once you come here
40		papapaalisin ka nila kasi	they’ll ask you to leave because
41		pwesto namin to. O:: ganyan.	this is our place. That’s that.
	[...]		
51	Daisy:	Oo. Ito binabakuran namin.	Yes. We put a fence around it.
52	Nic:	Wow. Nakakatuwa naman po	Wow. That’s amazing
53	Merly:	Hindi kasi pag- pag may ganyan	You see when- there’s that
54		usually pag winter kasi	usually during winter because it’s
55		sobrang malamig	very cold
56	Nic:	Oho	right
57	Merly:	parang	it’s like
58	Daisy:	proteksyon sa hanging	protection from the wind
59	Merly:	sa lamig	from the cold
60	Nic:	Ahh	Ahh
61	Merly:	[kaya ganun	[that’s why ((there are fences))
62	Daisy:	[Hay nabaha] na naman yung	[Oh no their] house is flooded
63		bahay nila o	again look
64	Merly:	@Oo@	@right@
65	Nic:	Kawawa naman po yung mga	Poor thing those who
66		nandon sa labas	are outside
67	Merly:	Oo. Baha na naman.	Yes. They’ve been flooded again.
68		Sira na naman [bahay nila	Their house is [destroyed again
69	Daisy:	[lumipat sila dun	[they moved over there

Noticing the flattened-out cardboard boxes Merly and Daisy were sitting in one rainy Sunday, I was introduced to at least two important views here widely held among congregating groups: (1) the informal economy that drives and is driven by the use of flattened out cardboard boxes for covering, and (2) the cardboard boxes serving both symbolic and practical purposes.

In the first instance, Merly relates the informal economy of the cardboard box that has emerged out of the need for a covering (lines 10–19). The cardboard boxes are bought from so-called ‘cardboard grannies’ who, on Sunday mornings and public holidays, would station at particular places of gathering. Either they would be seen staying at particular locations throughout the day or returning at the end of the day to collect the cardboard boxes left by congregating groups. If still usable, the same cardboard boxes would be resold the following Sunday. Although the buying and (re)selling of cardboard boxes are outlawed (see Keegan, 2018), the use of cardboard boxes as covering seems to be tolerated (see Mandap, 2017), constituting the informal economy within what Choi (2019, p. 7) calls the ‘urban marginality’ of Hong Kong.

In the second instance, despite other possible reusable materials for covering that would not have cost more than the price of each carboard box bought every Sunday (such as picnic or yoga mats, for example, which are actually used by others), Merly and Daisy point out the symbolic and practical functions for the choice of the cardboard boxes. In lines 19–25, Daisy can be seen invoking a sense of territoriality over their *tambayan* whose perimeter is symbolically marked by the cardboard box they were sitting in, emphasizing in line 24: ‘OUR LAND WITH TITLE’ (notice the emphasis in terms of loudness that convey conviction). It must be noted that in another conversation (omitted

here), Daisy told me that she 'inherited' (*minana*) their place of gathering from her aunt who had returned to the Philippines. In addition, such sense of having a claim to this space is further supported in lines 35–41 where they reveal that their ownership is made possible through community recognition and support in that if some other groups come and stay, as good neighbors, regular occupants will police each others' *tambayan* to keep it away from 'squatters'. The practical purposes of the cardboard boxes as border and covering can be seen in lines 51–59: Merly and Daisy relate such structures to fences and walls in that the cardboard boxes are put up around the perimeter of the place of gathering (as pictured in Figure 5.2 above) for the boxes to serve as walls from the cold wind during winter. Here, experiences of security and comfort towards their place of gathering are similarly expressed through assertions of the symbolic and practical purposes hinged on the cardboard box. The temporary structure, as Merly and Daisy see it, *is* indeed described as *bahay* ('house') (line 63).

In this extract, we can see how temporary cardboard structures, built and rebuilt every Sunday, are endowed with both pragmatic and affective values typically associated with physical homes and the social process of home-making. The indicative lexical choices of the participants make this clear: *lupa* ('land'), *titulo* ('land title'), *squatter* ('squatters'), *kabila* ('next-door'), *bakod* ('fence'), *proteksyon* ('protection'), *bahay* ('house'). It is clear that in this context, the cardboard boxes are 'resemiotized' (Iedema, 2003) from its original function into one that allows them to assert possession for what is otherwise a space that is open to the public. The cardboard box as a container of commodities 'ceased to *mean*' (Lou & Jaworski, 2016, p. 638, emphasis original). Just as the umbrella in Lou and Jaworski's study has become a symbol of dissent in Hong Kong that

emerged out of its trajectory of usage during the 2014 umbrella movement, the regular use of the cardboard box by FDWs congregating in Sunday-Central imbues it with meanings that likewise depart from its original purpose. In this context, it is made to become an important material basis for community building and, arguably, by extension, their homing experience.

Other resources for community building and belonging include the display of group names on banners (Figure 5.3) and t-shirts (Figure 5.4) that are two of the reasons why others could easily locate where one group can be typically seen to gather (as I have indicated in Section 5.5.1 above). As it can be seen in the photographs in Figure 5.3, group names are typically printed on durable materials (such as tarpaulin and fabric). These group names are either unfolded on the ground (as in panel *a*) or hanged on roadside railings (as in panels *b*, *c*, and *d*) next to the group's *tambayan*. Naming, in Austin's (1962) sense, under socially-acceptable conditions, is a performative act of bringing something or someone into being. For Tuan (1991), 'naming is power' because when naming a place, '[t]he proper name and the geographical feature so merge in the consciousness of the people who know both that to change the name is to change, however subtly and inexplicably, the feature itself' (p. 688). Group names hanged or unfolded next to the *tambayan* do not only point to the existence of the group but, more importantly, index the group's ownership of the place where the name is displayed (*vis-à-vis* other congregating groups).

Figure 5.3. Photographed samples of group names

Figure 5.3 (continued). Photographed samples of group names

Figure 5.4. Photographed samples of group t-shirts

Figure 5.4 (continued). Photographed samples of group t-shirts[34]

Naming a space in Sunday-Central as one group's own is arguably an exercise of power over such space: an assertion of one's 'autonomy in using a certain place according to one's needs and tastes… and in expressing oneself, inside it…' albeit in this context, not 'out of the public gaze and judgement…' (Boccagni, 2017; p. 7). In so doing, such space is reordered at least once every week from being part of Hong Kong's financial, business, and government center for most of the week, into a space of control for FDWs akin to home-making.

Another material way of expressing ownership to their places of gathering and belonging to a community is by wearing t-shirts. Figure 5.4 (in the preceding pages) presents photographed samples of group t-shirts worn at Sunday-Central. As it can be seen, group t-shirts bear the name and logo of the group imprinted on the shirt (see panels *a*, *b*, and *c*), are made to carry messages of a political cause (see panels *d*, *e*, and *f*), and are typically similar in color (see panels *c* and *e*).

[34] The image on panel *f* translates to English as: 'Jobs in the Philippines, not abroad.'

The act of wearing t-shirts of similar print, color, or message here is arguably a communicative expression of solidarity. As these shirts are worn together at the *tambayan* during special occasions (anniversaries, birthdays, protest marches) and thereafter, practically anytime or anywhere the wearer wants, the act of wearing the group t-shirt (in and outside of the *tambayan*) turns the wearer into a 'moving discursive locality' in a similar way as tattooing does to the tattooed in Peck and Stroud's (2015) 'skinscapes' study. Wearing the shirt regularly while in the company of friends and family at the Sunday-Central *tambayan* links the place of gathering and typical activities or interests with the wearers (e.g., religious activities in panel *a* or social activism in panels *c*, *d*, and *e*). It turns the wearer into an 'expressive person' of mobility and mooring, as in the case of #wordswewear or linguistic inscriptions on t-shirts and accessories observed by Jaworski and Lou (2020) in the urban centers of Hong Kong, London, and Shanghai. It *locates* the wearer while on the move and at the same time keeps the wearer *located* such that even when the wearer leaves the *tambayan*, the shirt reveals aspects of the wearer's biographical details (her interests), her membership to a community of practice, and that community's place of gathering in Sunday-Central. Just as the #wordswewear enable fleeting 'contact without the need for eye contact' (Jaworski & Lou, 2020, p. 24) in keeping with the implicit social contract of civil inattention (Goffman, 1971) in urban centers, the group t-shirts pictured above similarly affords the wearer the (em)phatic means to engage public attention to a sense of solidarity, coordination, and uniformity closely associated with the ideals of being home (Douglas, 1991). In that regard, the group t-shirt is, to a certain extent, made to serve as an indirect

speech act (Caldwell, 2017) for homing, conveying a sense of affinity to a community ‘attached to a place of one’s own’ (Boccagni, 2017, p. 7).

5.5.3. Emotional bases for homing in Sunday-Central

The sense of familiarity occasioned by Sunday-Central gathering makes the weekly (or for others who live and work far, monthly) participation an experience imbued with emotional significance that invoke a sense of being in the Philippines. This can be seen in the extract below.

Excerpt 5.3. ‘it’s like you’re in the Philippines’

1	Nic:	Ito ngapo yung nami miss ko	This is what I miss the most
2		kasi para po bang <pag nandito ako	because I feel like <when I’m here
3		pag Sunday?>	on Sundays?>
4	Sonia:	oo	yes
5	Nic:	parang- parang ano	it’s like- like
6		ang [sarap ng pakiramdam	it [feels good
7	Sonia:	[**at home.**	[**at home.**
8		parang nasa Pilipinas ka lang.	it’s like you’re in the Philippines.

In this extract, Sonia can be seen aligning with my sense of comfort toward Sunday-Central. As I convey how I miss Sundays because it makes me feel good (lines 1–6), Sonia confirms the pervading understanding about Sunday-Central as something that can make one feel ‘at home’ as if ‘you’re in the Philippines’ (lines 7–8). According to Boccagni (2017), home can be anywhere one attaches relational and emotional attributes of security, familiarity, and control. Among transnational migrants, Levitt (2004) notes that it can be located in more than one country. However, Sonia’s contribution in the extract reflects two things about her homing experience. First is that ‘home’ is ‘the Philippines’. Since migrant workers like her are bereft of the right of abode in Hong Kong, it may not come as a surprise that ‘home’ remains to be located in the country of

origin despite counting years in the city as a domestic worker. And second, it implies that although she may not be at home, Sunday-Central nonetheless gives her a semblance of being at home – of being in the Philippines.

As activities in Sunday-Central to a certain extent invokes the Philippines, traveling to Central is viewed in affectionate terms. This is evident in the next extract in Merly's choice of terminology when she relates what traveling to Central means for those who live farther away.

Excerpt 5.4. 'they would say they'd visit Central'

1	Merly:	Kasi yung mga iba:: na: galing	You see for others:: who: come
2		sa mga ibang:: iba ibang ano,	from other:: from other places,
3		nagpupunta dito sa Central.	they come here at Central.
4		>Parang yung sa::< mga taga	> It's like in::< for those from
5		>Yuen Long<	>Yuen Long<
6	Nic:	Opo	Yes
7	Merly:	pag ganung may mga sahod,	when they get their salary,
8		sasabihin **dadalaw** dito	they would say they'd **visit** here
9		sa Central kasi	at Central because
10		parang nasa kabilang-	it's like they live in another-
11	Nic:	Opo	Yes
12	Merly:	barrio ang tawag nila dun e	barrio that's what they call it
13		malayo sa (city)	it's far from (the city)

Merly uses the term *dadalaw* ('to visit') (line 8) to refer to how others consider their travel to Central from the countryside of Hong Kong like Yuen Long. *Dalaw* (visit) is a term usually used to describe a visit to a person or place one has emotional attachments to (in contrast to *pagpunta*, 'to go,' for example). One uses *dalaw* to convey a visit to a relative or friend who may live far away, or one has not been in touch with for a long time. *Dalaw* is also the term typically used to describe visits to the tomb of departed loved ones whose remains are laid to rest at the cemetery. And quite often, *pagdalaw* signals a reunion filled with merriment and remembrance of past experiences together with persons or places

being visited. Merly's lexical choice, therefore, relates the typical affective stance toward traveling to Sunday-Central as a unifying experience of catching up for times lost from being apart.

It is also hard not to see from this extract how Merly geographically imagines Hong Kong's countryside and the city within the experience of migrant domestic workers: that is, the countryside (here, Yuen Long) construed as a place intimately tied with the city (here, Central, particularly the commercial areas and where the gatherings are done). This idea mirrors Raymond Williams's (1973) argument about the inseparability of the English country and the city. Williams notes how these two places are never the contradictory image they are typically shaped by English novelists but are instead inextricably glued with one another. Yet in the experience of FDWs reported by Merly, we can assume that the nexus of these ties is not only located within the geographic distinction of the country and the city but is significantly intermeshed with the nexus of home and migration in fractal recursive ways (Irvine, 2019; Irvine & Gal, 2000). Migrant workers from the countryside travel, carrying the fruits of their labor (see line 7), to the city where commercial infrastructures that link Hong Kong with the Philippines – the remittance centers and shops that sell Filipino products and other services – enable them to reconnect with their loved ones, if only through their 'dollars' (McKay, 2007). This in turn affords them the means to 'displays of presence' (Fortier, 2000) both 'here' and 'there.' We can therefore speculate that, at least through financial means, the country and the city (in Hong Kong) affectively become one with home (the Philippines) at the intersection of the 'home away from home' (Sunday-Central).

What makes Sunday-Central an attractive place to visit and stay in for a day is the collective, familiar and festive ambiance of its different activities, as the following extract reveals.

Excerpt 5.5. ‘it’s happy here’

1	Nic:	Bakit po sa: Central, dito sa	Why at Central, here in Central
2		Central pa sila pumupunta?	do they go to?
3	Merly:	<iba [naman ka:si::>	<it’s [entirely different::>
4	Daisy:	[parang may- iba kasi yung<	[it’s like- it’s different what<
5		iba kasi yung pakiramdam mo=	it’s different what you’d feel=
	[...]		
14	Daisy:	Talagang sinasadya kong	I really intend to come
15		pumunta dito sa: Central once a month noon	here at:: Central once a month then
16	Merly:	>kasi< <masaya>	>because< <it’s happy> ((here))
	[...]		
37	Daisy:	Parang kwan e pag:: day off mo	It’s like when:: it’s your day off
38		at hindi ka nagpunta dito sa	and you did not go here at Central
39		Central parang kulang.	it’s like something is missing.
40	Nic:	Ahhh	Ahhh
41	Merly:	Parang:: hindi kumpleto	It’s like:: it’s not complete
42	Nic:	Mmm	Mmm
43	Daisy:	Parang hindi kumpleto	It’s not complete
44		yung araw mo	your day
45	Nic:	Mmm mmm	Mmm mmm
46	Daisy:	Kasi usually pa dito,	And usually here
47		yung mga magkakaibigan,	those who are friends
48		magkakamag anak, meeting place	or family, this is their meeting place
49		talaga nila dito sa Central	it’s really here at Central

Another widely shared feeling expressed to me by my participants relates to their convivial experience at Sunday-Central. As Merly asserts the difference (line 3) the gathering makes, Daisy elaborates that this difference is something she can *feel* (line 5), which is why she always looks forward to going (line 14). Merly then elaborates what this different feeling is in line 16: ‘it’s happy ((here)).’ This sense of joy, which Daisy asserts as attractive enough not to miss (lines 37–39), emanates not only from the festive ambiance created by parties and commercial

activities taking place but, more importantly because the gatherings typically involve a meeting of friends and family (lines 46–49).

In the next section, I turn to my participants' home-making at Sunday-Central through social activism. When compared with the home-making practices that reflect homing experiences in Hong Kong discussed in this section, we shall see in the next section strategic practices for social mobilization subtly oriented towards building aspired homes within a socio-politically and economically favorable Philippines.

5.6. Cultivating homes-of-return through social activism

'Hongkong [sic] is not their home.' Former Consul Bernardita Catalla explicitly stated this in an interview on the Philippine Consulate's reintegration programs offered to FDWs in Hong Kong (Presidential Communications Operations Office, 2017, par. 9–11). While this is indeed arguable in relation to how my participants in this and the earlier chapter framed their homing experiences in Hong Kong, there is no question, as I have indicated in the previous section, that for my participants, Hong Kong is a site of home-making, albeit not a permanent one.

Aside from Sunday-Central activities discussed in the earlier section, social activism is very much observable particularly at the stretch of Chater Road closed to traffic. This is prominently noted in studies about foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong and is often framed as agentive attempts of transnational grassroots solidarity movements to challenge the global neoliberal framework deemed to structure migrant worker experience (Constable, 2009; Francisco & Rodriguez, 2014; Hsia, 2009). Nevertheless, what seems to be entirely missed is that these efforts are primarily driven by hopeful ideals of the kinds of home they

would wish to return and retire to. For all my participants, the Philippines *is* home, *the* place of eventual return, and to which home-making investments, in whatever form, are routed (cf. Boccagni, 2014; Lopez, 2010). Since what constitutes as home to social actors is also ‘affected by much broader economic and political factors, rather than being only a matter of personal attitudes or emotions’ (Boccagni, 2017, p. 88), what home means (or at least, what they hope for it to mean, at least for now) among my participants also seems to be a potent resource for social and political mobilization towards a vision of homes to return to (cf. Brah, 1996, p. 189). In this regard, Hong Kong becomes a site not only of present, temporary home-making efforts (as discussed above), but, through protest activities in Sunday-Central, also of future-looking home-making discourses. Cognizant of the legal impossibility of building an actual home in Hong Kong, social activist participants have constantly fought for their idea of home in the Philippines, as reflected in the following extract.

Excerpt 5.6. ‘we will go back to the Philippines... whether we like it or not’

1	Jessie:	Oh so like your advocacy is more abou:t
2		like what happens in the Philippines
3		or you’re also like in by some issues in Hong Kong?
4		[( )
5	Jenny:	[oh oh so ok]
6		so we are as a migrant worker here
7		we are concerned of the working situation
8		worker worker issues in Hong Kong
9	Jessie:	Yeah yeah
10	Jenny:	Like ahm our salary livable wage
11		live out as an option
12		the ratification of C189::[35] (2.0)
13		that’s it. our regularization of our working hours
14		BUT although that we are just migrant workers
15		<whether we like it or not> as I said
16		WE will go back to the Philippines
17		and we have to proactively participate

[35] C189 is the 2011 United Nations Convention on Domestic Workers. As of this interview in 2017, Hong Kong has not ratified it yet.

18		in the issues dealing in the Philippines
19	Jessie:	right
20	Jenny:	So that's [that's what I'm trying to say
21	Jessie:	[yeah yeah yeah
22	Jenny:	whether we like it or not
23		as with her ((Mafe)) twenty years
24		but she will go back home five more years
	[...]	
27	Nic:	How important is< is it for you to do- ah these advocacy work
28		on top of your work [here in Hong Kong
29	Jenny:	[Ahh
30	Nic:	and everything else that you (.) [you're thinking about
31	Jenny:	[how important is it
32		so let's say that is gonna be more ah ninety percent?
33		important for me?
34		because I want my son my grandchild to have ahm
36		good future. It's not all about us anymore.
36	Mafe:	And it's make- it makes us happy
37		[( )
38	Jenny:	[if- if no yeah] if no one will act who will?

The extract above captures the typical response I receive for why they do protest activities on the day when they are supposed to be taking a rest. Jenny, the leader of Organic, indicates the rationale for social activism widely shared across members and affiliate organizations of UNIFIL. Alongside their fight for a more comfortable and just living and working conditions in Hong Kong (lines 7–13) is their attention to issues in the Philippines. As Jenny points out in lines 15–16 and reiterated in lines 22–24, 'whether we like it or not... we will go back to the Philippines.' Just like Mafe, one of the members of the organization, Joan points out that they will have to 'go back home' (line 24) in a few years' time. The thought of this impending return and the future of their children compels activists like Jenny and Mafe to envision a kind of home in the Philippines through their protest activities. Their strong affective bonds at home provides sufficient impetus to complement financial investments for 'remittance houses' (Lopez, 2010) with efforts that aim for such houses to be built under a good political and economic climate.

Nevertheless, despite championing efforts towards better living and working conditions both in Hong Kong and the Philippines, activist groups have also been criticized for their social mobilization activities, with other fellow FDWs seemingly unconvinced by their way of voicing out their concerns. Joan, one of the members of a region-wide organization under UNIFIL, raises this matter and shares a metaphor during one of our conversations in their *tambayan* about their activism.

Excerpt 5.7. 'if you keep a horse… and don't feed it, it will kick you'

1	Joan:	minsan nga magsa- nagsasabi sila	sometimes there are people who say
2		titigas ng ulo ng mga Pilipino	(these) Filipinos are hard-headed
3		nagra rally pa sila.	they do rallies.
4		sabi ko naman	what I say to them is
5		alam nyo ang kabayo pag	you know if you keep a horse
6		kinulung nyo? at hindi nyo	in its stable? and you don't
7		pinakain, nainipa yan at naninira	feed it, it will kick you and destroy
8		ng <u>bahay</u>	its <u>house</u>
9	Alma:	@okay yung logic ah@	@that logic is good@
10	Joan:	(1.0) diba?	(1.0) right?
11	Alma:	@@@	@@@
12	Joan:	i-cre- yung baboy nga na:	you cre- same with pigs that you::
13		nakakulong? hindi mo	keep in a pig pen? and you don't
14		papakainin, iyak ng iyak e	feed it, it will cry and cry

In this extract, Joan speaks about a typical criticism they hear from others, especially from fellow Filipinos who view their protest actions as being 'hard-headed' (lines 1–3). Instead of directly explaining to them their reason for doing so, Joan mentions her preference in using metaphors about farm animals that she believes may be more relatable. Joan notes horses and pigs kicking their owner, destroying their house, and crying when they are left hungry and locked inside their stable and pigpen (lines 5–14). Considered by Alma, a fellow member of the organization, as a good logical explanation (line 9), Joan notes how like farm animals left hungry by their owners, activists like them are making a move to

alleviate the hunger they and their families in the Philippines experience. And they prefer to do this in Hong Kong and in Central because of the symbolic stature of the place in global politics. As another leader notes in another conversation: '*kapag kasi sa Pilipinas, hindi ka papansinin*' ('if you do this in the Philippines, nobody will pay attention at you').

Among other social mobilization activities, the idea of what exactly is a 'good' home or the Philippines to return is reflected in various protest signs put up weekly or created on-site and the strategies they employ to display and scale up such messages to a much wider audience. Figure 5.5 (in the next page) presents samples of protest signs displayed by social activist groups along Chater Road closed to traffic, which arguably reveal their desires for a politically and economically favorable Philippines-of-return. Panel *a*, 'signed' by Gabriela Hong Kong, calls for an end to the 'commodification and modern-day slavery of women' as well as the 'labor export program.' Panel *b*, by Movement against tyranny–Hong Kong Chapter, calls for an end to the 'attacks on peace and human rights defenders' and appeals to 'fight Duterte's tyranny in the Philippines.' Panel *c,* coming from the environmental advocacy group called Organic, calls on migrant workers to oppose mining in the mountains of the Philippines and the 'Mining Act of 1995' that accordingly enables it. Finally, panel *d*, written in a way reminiscent of hashtags on social media by the trade Union group called the Filipino Migrant Domestic Worker Union (FMDWU), demands 'food supply,' 'human rights,' and '*tulong hindi kulong*' ('aid not imprisonment').

Figure 5.5. Photographed samples of protest signs

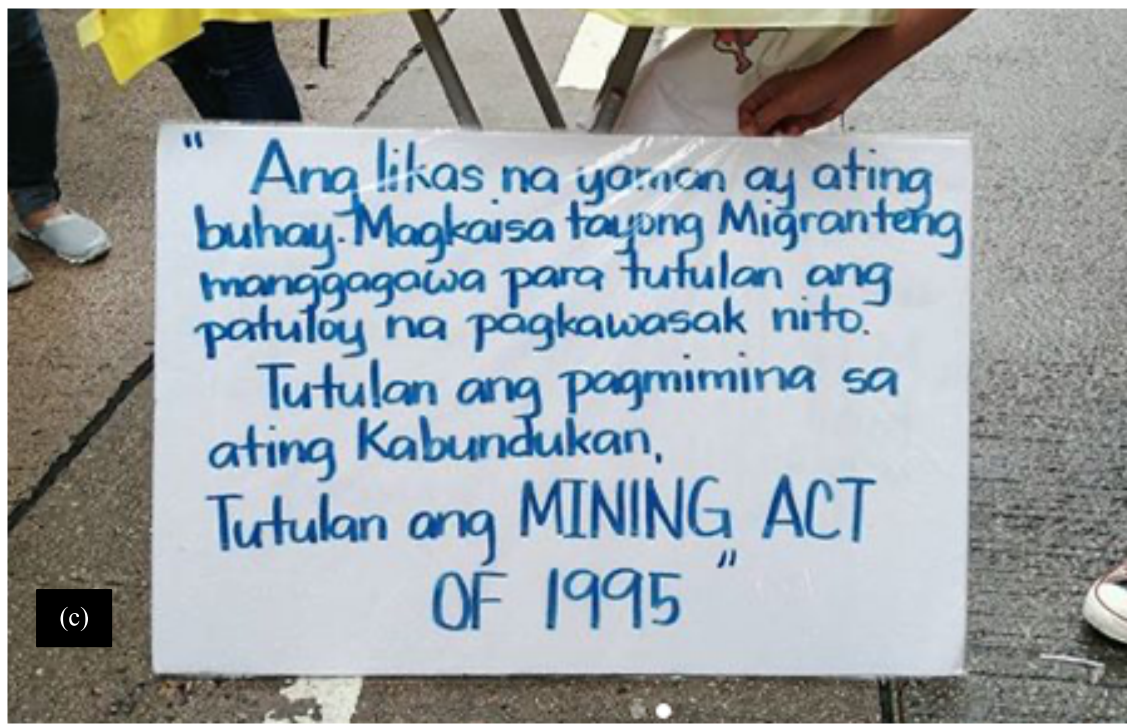

Figure 5.5 (continued). Photographed samples of protest signs[36]

[36] The text in Tagalog in the third panel (c) translates in English as: ‘Our natural resources are our wealth. Let's join together migrant workers to oppose its eventual destruction. Oppose mining in our mountains, oppose MINING ACT of 1995.’ The Tagalog text in the fourth and last panel (d) reads in English as: ‘#HelpNotImprisonment’.

Noticing that identical protest messages are visible in locations other than Chater Road (where I took these photographs) but are ‘signed’ by other organizations, I was informed by a leader of another affiliate organization of UNIFIL that having similar or identical messages on protest signs is a deliberate move.

Excerpt 5.8. ‘we have one call for action’

1	Cita:	kaya tingnan mo diba doon?	that’s why when you look there?
2	Nic:	opo yun din< yun din po halos	yes it’s similar< it’s almost the
3		yung nandun e	same as the one over there
4	Cita:	oo. magkakaparehas kami	yes. we have the same (messages)
5		para hindi magkakaiba	so that we’re not different
6		at least parang iisa lang	at least it’s like we’re united
7	Nic:	kahit magkakalayo po	even though you’re in different locations
8	Cita:	oo	right
9	Nic:	ano [iisa yung	like [you have one
10	Cita:	[iisa yung] [panawagan	[one] [call for action
11	Nic:	[message (2.0)	[message (2.0)
12	Cita:	iisa yung panawagan	we have one call for action

In the extract above, we see one organization leader, Cita, explaining the significance of having the same protest messages with other organizations. It is meant to display a sense of unity across all social activist organizations whose *tambayan* is located in different spots at Central (line 6). More importantly, it is meant to convey and amplify the same calls for action in different locations (lines 9–12).

As in the case of carrying similar or identical messages, the materiality, languages, placement in strategic locations, and symbols (e.g., hashtags) of the signs convey the social activist groups’ desire for the increased visibility of their message and engagement not only with congregating FDWs but also other

nationalities who come and visit the area. As can be seen (see Figure 5.5 again), messages appear on durable (such as tarpaulins on panels *a* and *b*) and non-durable materials (such as cardboard and scrap paper on panels *c* and *d*). The durability of the materials on which the protest messages appear reflects the relevant issue's temporality: the long-standing ones are printed on the durable materials (panels *a* and *b*), while the short-term or new issues are hand-written on less-durable ones (panels *c* and *d*). Sonia has these to say about their protest signs printed in more durable materials:

Excerpt 5.9. 'we'll be able to use it the whole year'

1	Sonia:	dahil mas okay din yan kasi	it's better printed there because
2		isang beses lang namin	with one (printing)
3		pero magagamit na namin sya	we'll be able to use it
4		the whole year.	the whole year.
5	Nic	<ooohhh>	<ooohhh>
6	Sonia:	or hanggang kailan tatagal	or until when the duration
7		yung< [campaign	of the< [campaign
8	Nic:	[issue opo	[issue right
9	Sonia:	or yung issue	or the issue
10		e dahil naman yang mga	but since these
11		issue na yan ay::	issues have counted
12		deka dekada na:	decades already:
13	Nic:	oo ngapo	right
14	Sonia:	so alam mo ba yon?	so you see?

Here, Sonia points out her organization's preference for using durable materials such as tarpaulin to print out messages of protests on campaigns and issues that are long-standing (lines 1–7), emphasizing that some issues reflected on the signs are in fact decades-long (lines 10–12). Sonia reasons that by doing so, they could maximize their limited resources they receive from generous benefactors she identifies in other conversations to include locals, business establishments catering to migrant workers, and other migrants in high-paying jobs.

In these regard, the protest signs demonstrate the sign-makers' deep familiarity with issues from home, and by extension, their affective ties and investments with matters about home. Preferred notions of home on protest signs in Sunday-Central are mobilized to enact active involvement on Philippine national affairs while in Hong Kong. As reflected in the extracts above and the messages on sample protest signs pictured in Figure 5.5, and though may not be explicitly construed as home-making, social activists arguably envision a home that is favorable enough for their sons or daughters and themselves to live and work in a home country that, among other things, respects human rights, protects the environment, and breaks the vicious chain of labor out-migration.

Through these present-oriented actions on matters related to home, social activist FDWs take the responsibility of being transnational home managers further by mapping a terrain of preferred future homes-of-return through social mobilization and protest actions at Hong Kong's Sunday-Central.

5.7. Discussion & Conclusions: The structures of feeling home at Sunday-Central

According to Mary Douglas, home is 'a pattern of regular doings' arising from 'affectionate images' (1991, p. 289). The centrality of Hong Kong's Central district as a meeting place of sorts and the regularity of certain activities in the gatherings typically done on Sundays transform Central into a 'home' and become a site of home-making the Philippines-of-return. The coming together of friends and families of similar ethnolinguistic origin from the Philippines in their gathering places affectively infuses Sunday-Central with materialities and emotional values akin to notions about home. Flattened out cardboard boxes are used for symbolic and practical purposes analogous to discourses around housing

(Excerpt 5.2). Group names printed on tarpaulins and group t-shirts are made to index community belonging and unity (Figures 5.3–5.4). Weekly or monthly travels to Sunday-Central are viewed with such familiar affection derived from the convivial ambiance evoked by regular activities (Excerpts 5.4–5.5). This 'semiotic assemblage' (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2017) of familiar people speaking familiar languages, materials imbued with home-making meanings, and emotional attachments thus evoke a sense of being at home. It is then that 'Little Philippines' emerges at the fringes of this global center of commerce and finance out of what Raymond Williams (1977) might call the *structures of feeling* home.

Structures of feeling, according to Williams, pertains to 'meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt' that emerge from 'practical consciousness' towards an 'articulation of presence' (pp. 132–135). Often criticized for the conflicting sense invoked by the term 'structure' (Peschel, 2012) while emphasizing its formative, unfinished and emergent character, structures of feeling are often left unarticulated but should not be deemed unanalyzable (Rampton, 2013). Indeed, I would not have sensed these emergent structures of feeling home at Sunday-Central without immersing myself with regular activities alongside those who actually gather here; something which later, as I have shown in interview extracts above, I have managed to ask about, which in turn made it articulated. The structures of feeling home among this migrant worker group are, as I have demonstrated above, hinged on large-scale ethnolinguistic-based community-building practice where material and emotional bases of the homing experience are 'recruited or entangled together with meaning-making' (Wetherell, 2012, p. 19) to achieve what Boccagni (2017) suggests to be hallmarks of home-making – security, familiarity, and control. As migrant communities are built

through networks of kin and friends, the transmission of affective practices through habitual socialization (Ahmed, 2014; Wetherell, 2012) becomes a powerful force in how they operate. The practice of gathering in open public spaces where they talk to each other in their native languages, share Filipino food, sing and dance to the tune of Filipino music, 'transform[s] the urban landscape' (Lindio-McGovern, 2004, p. 230) into one that makes FDWs *feel* closer to home (the Philippines). Indeed, as Sara Ahmed argues,

> What moves us, what makes us feel, is also that which holds us in place, or gives us a dwelling place. Hence, movement does not cut the body off from the 'where' of its inhabitance, but connects bodies to other bodies: attachment takes place through movement, through being moved by the proximity of others (Ahmed, 2014, p. 11).

Having said these, it did not come to me as a surprise that Liza (from the introduction), when I asked whether she and her friends would move elsewhere if provided with another 'better' place to stay in, categorically said no.

Nevertheless, behind all these lies a sense of absence that may have been the primary driving force for home-making practices at Sunday-Central. Following Lila Abu-Lughod's (1990) view of resistance in everyday practice, the very desire to feel closer to home to the point of making efforts towards socially, materially, and emotionally (re)producing such feeling, however temporarily and if only through available means, is indicative of something else going on that may be traceable to larger structures in operation: non-belonging or feeling of not being home. A collective longing for home and family may be indicative of being

in a place where people may not necessarily feel at home, if not deprived of any right to building a home. Among regular Sunday-Central groups, this can be traced to the temporary nature of foreign domestic workers' migrant status and rights, hinged on their renewable two-year contract. Along with problems with accommodation exacerbated by the live-in rule and the ever-rising cost of housing in Hong Kong, investing socially and economically to build an actual home in Hong Kong towards full social integration would seem impractical at best. This is compellingly observable in social mobilization activities in Sunday-Central whereby a future, favorable home- or Philippines-of-return are instead actively fought for in weekly demonstrations.

Thus, it can be said that the nexus of migration and home in this instance of transnational labor migration lies at the (cross)roads of Sunday-Central, literally and figuratively, where 'home*s*' are envisioned, felt, lived, and discursively 'made.' For being transformed as the nexus of home and migration, Sunday-Central appears as a site manifesting experiences of liminality conditioned by mechanisms that constrain migrants' efforts towards full social integration. It is here where we see how FDWs feel, articulate, and collectively build a sense of being at home, although, again, in retrospect and simultaneously, not completely at home (at least, just yet).

In the next chapter, I examine regulatory and commercial signage that carries Tagalog, which is found close to these Sunday-Central gatherings. I suggest that such signage reveals contradictory institutional positioning, particularly of those perceived to speak Tagalog, rendering the 'place/s' of Tagalog (and its perceived speakers) in Central.

Chapter 6

The place/s of Tagalog in Hong Kong's Central District: Negotiating center-periphery dynamics[37]

6.1. Introduction

Officially, the Central district (henceforth, Central) is Hong Kong's government, financial, and commercial center. Yet, as I demonstrated in Chapter 5, it transforms into a 'home away from home' on Sundays and public holidays for migrant domestic workers, mostly from the Philippines, who choose the open public spaces of Central as meeting places for leisure and relaxation.

I showed in the previous chapter that Tagalog, one of approximately 187 identified languages in the Philippines (Simons & Fennig, 2018), can be heard (alongside Ilocano and Visayan) and seen prominently in the area on Sundays and public holidays. Largely spoken in the capital, Manila, and surrounding provinces, Tagalog is the basis of *Filipino*, the national language, and one that is used as the language of the central government, the media, and education alongside English (Gonzalez, 1998). A translocal language in the Philippines, the Tagalog-based Filipino also serves as the lingua franca of the roughly 10 million Filipinos overseas (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2013; Tupas & Lorente, 2014).

In Hong Kong, Tagalog speakers, broadly speaking, include approximately 200,000 temporary migrant (and predominantly female) domestic workers from the Philippines, 184,000 permanent residents of Filipino descent, and a sizable number of Filipino tourists, the group ranking seventh in tourist

[37] An earlier version of this chapter is published as Guinto (2019).

arrivals in 2017 (Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 2017, 2019; Hong Kong Tourism Commission, 2018). Despite these large numbers of Tagalog speakers and, as I show below, the noticeable presence of Tagalog in Hong Kong, studies on the linguistic and semiotic landscape in and of Hong Kong (e.g., M. L. Lai, 2013; Lock, 2003; Scollon & Wong Scollon, 2003) seemed to have entirely missed Tagalog.

In this chapter, I consider public signage (and some talk) in Tagalog to uncover how the presence (and absence) of the language indexes positionings that may be linked to stereotypes and discriminatory practices. Specifically, I examine the dynamic of discursive peripheralization/centering of Tagalog by two centering institutions in the semiotic landscape of Central with respect to particular scalar configurations: the one regulatory, the other, commercial. As has been argued by Haarstad and Fløysand (2007), a scalar approach provides a more nuanced view of globalization and power, one that opens up possibilities of challenging neoliberal constructions of globalization in which power and privilege are seen to be fixed to government entities and those perceived as socio-economically powerful. Following Lemke (2000, p. 280), signs such as the ones I analyze here are 'heterochronic' objects; that is, they are the product of processes, events, or activities across stretches of time that have consequences for shorter timescale activities and social meanings. To illustrate his point, Lemke provides the classroom notebook as an example of heterochrony such that what were written days or weeks ago become frames of interpretation for the relevant class activities in the now. The notebook then serves as the material link between long-term processes and short-term events. '[T]he object also function as *signs* for an interpreting system of meanings that belong to processes on a very different

timescale than that of the event in which the interpreting process is taking place' (Lemke, 2000, p. 281, emphasis original).

The structure of the chapter is as follows. First, I give a brief background on the weekly presence in Central of foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong, specifically those from the Philippines (section 6.2). This is followed by a short discussion of how I 'approached' Central and of my theoretical approaches: geosemiotics, scale, and centre-periphery dynamic (section 6.3). In section 6.4, I analyze my data and demonstrate how they are contingent on the spatio-temporal activities of Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong. In my conclusion (section 6.5), I follow Del Percio et al. (2017) and argue that the production, distribution, and consumption of Tagalog in Central point to its fluid and contingent valuing across differently scaled times and spaces.

6.2. Filipino domestic workers in Central: A contested space

As in much other academic research and media reporting on Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong, of the many places in the city, Central has been described as an important social space for FDWs (see Constable, 2009; Dwyer, 2016; Law, 2002; Lee Moss, 2017; Lyndio-McGovern, 2004; Peralta-Catipon, 2011; and again, Chapter 5). The increasing number of FDWs who prefer to congregate here can be traced to multiple factors that through the years since the 1980s transformed Central into an ideal place to spend days off from work (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3 for more detail). By the early 1990s, the ever increasing crowd had become overwhelmingly visible that it had become the subject of public scrutiny, culminating into a fiercely debated and mediatized topic between 1992–93, and periodically brought up into public attention in the years that follow.

Infamously called the ‘Battle of Chater Road’ in the early 90’s, reports indicate that the overwhelming presence of migrant workers ‘taking over’ Central public squares on Sundays had become a cause of public concern (Constable, 2007, pp. 3–8). On the side of the opposition, it was argued that the enormous number of migrant workers here had become a problem of public hygiene, illegal activities, and disruption of vehicular and human traffic in the main shopping area that cost businesses thousands of dollars in losses on Sundays. There are those who proposed to reopen the portions of Chater Road closed to traffic on Sundays as a way to drive off congregating migrant workers. Others suggested giving FDWs designated areas such as underground parking spaces removed from public view. In response, some defended the congregating FDWs, arguing that comments about migrant groups bordered on racism and that proposals to keep them away from public view were inhumane and a reflection of the systematic inequality all global MDWs are forced to endure (see specifically, Constable, 2007, p. 5).

Nonetheless, it appeared that, despite the relative silence of the congregating migrant workers on the matter, their embodied response was to maintain the status quo by simply continuing to use the public areas for their Sunday social activities. For Constable, this was evidently a strong enough message to the wider public; by 2006, the ‘battle’ had long been forgotten, and ‘[t]he area surrounding Statue Square, still filled with Filipinas on their day off, had become, as Hongkong Land (sic) had first imagined, a tourist attraction and a *well-accepted* part of the urban landscape’ (Constable, 2007; p. 8, emphasis mine). However, in 2018, a statement by Legislative Council Member Yung Hoi-Yan seems to show otherwise (Tubeza, 2018a). In a privilege speech, the lawmaker said,

> At present, there are over 350 000 foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) in Hong Kong. During holidays, a large number of FDHs congregate in public places, such as parks, footbridge passages and places under flyovers... They sit, eat and sleep on the ground, thus affecting the daily lives of the public, the operation of shops and the environmental hygiene in public places. The problem has persisted for many years and shows a worsening trend.

It appears that this 'worsening trend' is based on government data from the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD). According to Tubeza (2018a) in a *Hong Kong News* report, the LCSD received 22 complaints in 2017 related to the gathering of foreign domestic workers in its facilities citing 'obstruction of public places,' 'unlicensed hawking,' 'noise nuisance,' 'suspected gambling in public place,' 'sleeping and playing music on the lawn,' 'excessive use of toilet facilities,' and 'congregating in park.' The report also indicates that LCSD personnel gave 1,958 verbal warnings and gave out 16 penalty tickets for these offences. Migrant worker organizations as well as other lawmakers were quick to respond by saying that Yung's statements were insensitive and offensive, and demanded an apology (Tubeza, 2018b). While the lawmaker later apologized, such recurring public sentiments against the gatherings seem to indicate that Constable's claim about the gatherings being a 'well-accepted' part of the urban landscape warrants further probing. To this end, I consider Central's linguistic landscape with a specific view to regulatory and commercial signage (and some instances of talk) in Tagalog. This signage, I propose, reveals the wider social meanings of FDWs and their ethnonational discursive position(ings).

6.3. The geosemiotics of Central: Sociolinguistic scales and center-periphery dynamics

The area under examination here covers an approximately 500-meter radius around World-Wide House and the MTR Central Station. From this space, the data I am discussing are notable samples of signage (and some overheard talk) in/or containing Tagalog. This material was collected as photographs and observation notes during fieldwork in 2017. During this time, I also found signage with Tagalog appearing – albeit sparsely – elsewhere in Hong Kong; this happened alongside five other 'minority' languages in sanitation-related signage.

Drawing from Scollon and Wong Scollon's (2003) framework for *geosemiotics*, my analysis attends to the *indexicable world* and the *social meanings* generated through the material placement of signs. Incorporating some degree of ethnographic detail (cf. Blommaert, 2013; Jaworski, 2014), my analysis is heavily informed by my engagements with different Filipino groups (see Chapters 4 and 5). I myself have first-hand insights through my mother (see Chapter 1 Section 1.2) who I had the chance to 'follow' during my fieldwork. It was in this way that I sought what Rampton (2007, p. 590) describes as 'analytic distance on what's close-at-hand'. To this end, I considered not only the linguistic tokens and the visual landscape, but also contingent semiotic resources and arrangements. Finally, my analysis is organized through two contemporary perspectives in sociolinguistics: scalar relations and center-periphery, both understood as inherently 'ideological projects'.

Introduced to sociolinguistics initially by Blommaert (2007), the notion of *scales* is intended to complement the field's generally horizontal, distribution-driven investigations (see Chapter 3 Section 3.2). In an age of escalated

globalization where the (im)mobility of people and inequitable access to resources emerge as pressing concerns, Blommaert argues that a concern for vertical 'scalar politics' and relations of power is a necessary corrective.

Scales are both spatial and temporal (Blommaert, 2007, 2010; Lemke, 2000). A social phenomenon that is 'local' and 'momentary' and generally interpreted as 'lower scale' tends to have limited mobility and value, while those that are 'global' and 'timeless' and commonly interpreted as 'higher scale' tend to have a greater trajectory potential. This attention to spatio-temporal scalar relations is necessarily a matter also of *orders of indexicality* – of differential norms which invariably reveal *polycentricity*, the presence of many centers of authority at one point. As Irvine (2016) stresses, scalar configurations are ideological projects, which means scalar perspectives are always in competition, always relative and/or relational (see also, Carr & Lempert, 2016). In other words, the scaling of an object, practice or person as 'central' or 'peripheral' is contestable or, at least, negotiable. Examples of this way of thinking about scalar relations and center-periphery dynamics are to be found in Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes's (2013b) investigations of multilingualism in minority-language sites, or Jaworski and Thurlow's (2013) attention to multilingualism and mobility in the semiotic landscape of airports. Sari Pietikäinen and Hellen Kelly-Holmes (2013a) propose an investigation of 'multilingualism in minority language sites… to examine how the dynamics of center-periphery might shape language practices, and how these practices might, in turn, have wider resonance beyond the sites under investigation' (p. 1). They note that center-periphery relations are not clear-cut, driven by the reality that they are 'constantly renegotiated and mutually constitutive' (p. 2). They argue that most studies on multilingual contexts have

been investigated in view of an imagined center, with peripheries 'rarely examined in terms of their contribution to globalization' (p. 5). Likewise, Adam Jaworski and Crispin Thurlow's (2013) visual discourse ethnography of the semiotic landscape of two airports, Cardiff, UK and Seattle-Tacoma, USA, demonstrates how the centering and decentering of airport spaces, and their concomitant *localization* and *globalization*, can be related to the deployment of various multilingual resources, images, and spatial arrangements. In precisely the same vein, I will show below how a scalar analysis of the place (or placing) of Tagalog in Central's semiotic landscape reveals the dynamic, negotiated status and subject-positionings of Filipino migrant workers.

6.4. Analysis: Marginalizing and centering Tagalog in Central

When I started my fieldwork, I asked locals and fellow Filipinos alike where I could meet FDWs to interview, pretending not to know exactly where to go, a strategy recommended by Blommaert and Dong (2010, p. 27). Interestingly, *everyone*, including those who refused to participate, pointed me to Central on Sundays. This was in spite of the fact that I had seen and met small groups of FDWs congregating in parks and other locations outside Central, and despite the groups in Central being just a small proportion of the entire population of FDWs in Hong Kong. Regardless, the whole scene in Central appears to be a transient, yet well-organized community (see Chapter 5). Yet, if we follow Tuan's (1991) point about naming places as a power-invested world-making practice, Sunday-Central migrant community, reified and objectified by having such labels such as 'Little Manila' (Law, 2001) or 'a corner of the Philippines transplanted into Hong Kong' (Constable, 2007, p. 3) attached to them, call it into being, make what is

otherwise invisible visible, and impart a certain 'character' to the place; in this case, we could argue that the labels invoke a sense of global periphery usurping a place in a global center – a major financial and business hub.

As it may have been already apparent in Chapter 5, the embodied presence and considerable flow of FDWs turns Sunday-Central into a 'spatial repertoire' (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2014) in at least five key interrelated ways:

(1) *soundscapes* (Mitchell, 2010; Pappenhagen, Scarvaglieri, & Redder, 2016) constituted through chatter (online and offline), music in multiple Filipino languages but predominantly in Tagalog, and from unexpected Tagalog speakers like sidewalk vendors of a different ethnonational background;
(2) *smellscapes* (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015a) constituted through cooked Filipino food brought and shared in their respective *tambayan* (hang-out place) (see Law, 2001);
(3) *taskscapes* (Ingold, 1993, p. 158) constituted through a multitude of interconnected activities done *en masse* in the area (see Chapter 5);
(4) *bodyscapes* (Porteous, 1986) invoked by the anthropomorphic configuration of buildings and urban design *vis-à-vis* people, turning specific street-level ('passageway') parts of Sunday-Central into a bodied landscape and landscaped bodies of a particular 'female' character relative to the central-global, 'male' character; and, finally,
(5) *sign-scapes* which is the focus of my analysis below.

Every Sunday, this range of resources and recurring activities transforms what is otherwise a 'foreign' space for the rest of the week into a local, familiar place for the occupying FDWs. Following Jaworski & Thurlow's (2013) analysis, we might understand this transformation as one where the central becomes marginal and/or the marginal becomes central. My analysis is organized in terms of this dialectical relationship, although what becomes apparent is that processes of marginalization/centering are structured along very different political-economic lines – the one regulatory, the other commercial.

6.4.1. Marginalizing Tagalog: Regulatory signage

Regulatory signs are perhaps the most obvious indicators of an indexical order which hinges on the discretion of a known authority. In Hong Kong, most public order signage is in Chinese and English, the two official languages; as such, the presence of any other language on government (top-down) signage warrants special attention. One example of this is shown in Figure 6.1: a trilingual sign (Chinese, English, Tagalog), emplaced in concrete rectangular plant boxes in Chater Garden Square; the sign reads, in capital letters, 'Hawking or littering is prohibited. Offenders will be prosecuted.'. About 12 similar signs are located around Statue Square Garden, the Square next to the Cenotaph, and Chater Garden Square. Throughout much of the week, these areas are frequented by a mix of locals, tourists, and migrants. However, the presence of Tagalog at the bottom of the sign also clearly points also to the park's Sunday occupants as an intended audience – specifically targeting the FDWs and street vendors.

Figure 6.1. Permanent sign in Chater Square Garden

As noted by Angermeyer (2017, pp. 167–168; see below), regulatory signage, by nature, exhibits a *dual indexicality*: while it informs addressees of what actions are prohibited in the relevant area, it points also to the possibility that these actions have previously occurred, or may occur in the future. Reflected in the message and the materiality of the signage are (potential) events over an extended timescale that signal a possible history of unregulated hawking and littering incidents committed by those who are literate in the languages (hence, the need to put up a permanent sign). Implicit in the specific, marked use of Tagalog is the assumption that these prohibited acts have been committed and/or will be committed again by the people who speak or understand this language.

Figure 6.2. Notice on a stairway close to the heart of Central

Another trilingual sign (see Figure 6.2) appears in English, Chinese and Tagalog warns against littering, spitting, unauthorized postings, and 'fouling of streets by dog faeces [sic]'. Again, the sign's dual indexicality links these undesirable acts (past, present or future) to either dog owners but, most probably, dog carers who are predominantly FDWs. The Tagalog in this sign appears somewhat anomalous in its word-for-word translation of the English; this results in some pragmatic infelicities, such as '*pagbabasura*' ('scavenging') instead of '*pagkakalat*' ('littering'); '*kasalanan*', typically meaning 'sins' or 'faults', rather than 'offences'; and '*matatag*' being used instead of '*karampatan*' meaning 'fixed'. The cataphoric use of '*ganoon*' (such/those) in '*ganoong mga kasalanan*'

before the actual prohibited offenses is similarly anomalous in the context of public regulatory signage.

Figure 6.3. Sign on a Church gate next to a walkway

Another permanent sign (Figure 6.3) with Tagalog appears on a church gate by a walkway leading to a Catholic Church. Every Sunday, the walkway is busy mostly due to groups of tourists walking towards the Victoria Peak tram terminal, and worshippers (predominantly Filipino women) attending English-language services in the morning or one of three consecutive Tagalog-language services in the afternoon. The church grounds and the adjacent Cheung Kong Garden are likewise host to groups of FDWs congregating on Sundays.

In this case, the sign admonishes passersby to observe silence on the church grounds, but the three language versions are markedly non-parallel[38]:

座堂	範圍內,
'Church'	'within the area'

You are welcome to use this gate. Please be quiet in the Cathedral grounds.

請	保持	寧靜.
'please'	'keep'	'quiet'

Panatilihin	po natin	ang katahimikan	ng hindi po	magambala	any*[39] mga sumisimba.
'Keep'	'please' 'us'	'the quietness'	'so that' 'don't'	'disturb'	'the churchgoers'

As is evident, the English 'You are welcome to use this gate' is absent from the Chinese and Tagalog, and the Tagalog version gives an entirely different impression. Like the Chinese version, it does not carry a welcoming sentence; instead, it is a typically formulaic directive + consequence Tagalog regulatory expression. Although the use of the inclusive '*natin*' ('us') and politeness particle '*po*' suggests the sign authors' acknowledgement of a shared responsibility for maintaining a quiet environment, the dual indexicality of the term '*magambala*' ('disturb') points to Tagalog speakers (potentially) being a nuisance to churchgoers, presumably more so than any other group of passers-by who may be literate in both or any of the two other languages.

[38] Throughout this chapter, the English translation of Tagalog texts are mine. I am indebted to Cao Libing, Corey Huang, and Jasper Wu for the translation of the Chinese texts, and Alvin Dharma Saputra Bunjaya for the texts in Bahasa Indonesia.

[39] I use * as a sign to signal anomalous form.

Although evoking different messages, the arrangement of the languages on the sign (English on top, others at the bottom) seems to echo Lam and Graddol's (2017) observation on the political-economy of the 'vertical landscape' of Hong Kong based on signs that appear on each level. They find that the vertical configuration of buildings in Hong Kong's Central and Western Districts indexed by language choices on signs and styles of the signs reveal a stratified and hierarchized system. On the one hand, they find that the basement, ground, and street-level signs where traditional Chinese is more prominent than others seem to be made to cater the less affluent communities (including foreign domestic workers) allowing passage but not prolonged stay. On the other hand, the signs in the upper levels, typically used as living and office spaces, more prominently carry English, servicing affluent, highly educated international workers and businesspersons who, accordingly, more recently comprise Mainland Chinese.

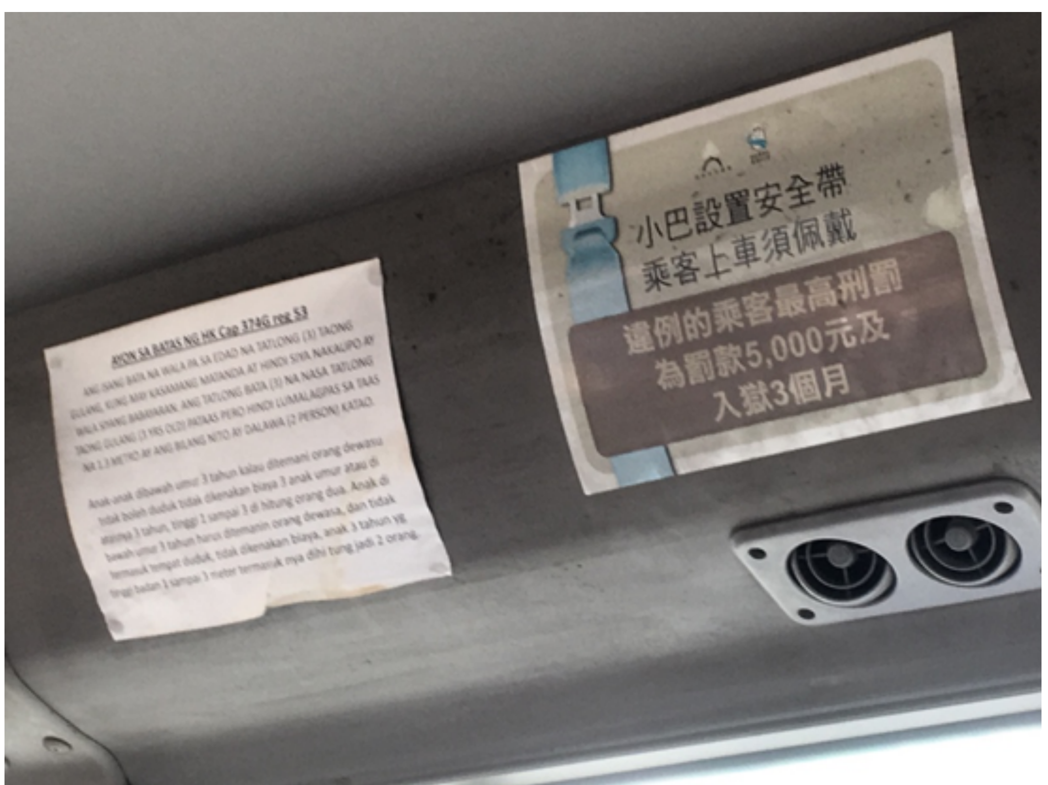

Figure 6.4. Semi-permanent sign on a minibus

My final example of this type of regulatory signage is a sign appearing to be a plain print-out on a sheet of A4-sized paper and pasted on the side of the ceiling of a minibus serving Central and the upmarket residential area known as The Peak (Figure 6.4). I attribute this top-down sign to the management of the company running the transportation service. Arranged with Tagalog on top and Bahasa (Indonesia) at the bottom, the sign clearly addresses the two ethnic minority groups, the two largest groups of domestic workers in Hong Kong.

I offer here the Tagalog text and my English translation:

Ayon sa batas ng HK cap 374g reg53
Ang isang bata na wala pa sa edad na tatlong (3) taong gulang, kung may kasamang matanda at hindi siya nakaupo ay wala siyang babayaran. Ang tatlong (3) bata na nasa tatlong taong gulang (3 years old) pataas pero hindi lumalagpas sa taas na 1.3 metro ay ang bilang nito ay dalawa (2 person) katao.

According to HK law cap 374g reg53
A child who has not reached the age of three (3), if accompanied by an adult companion and who is not occupying a seat, shall not pay for the ride. Three (3) children who are three years of age but who do not exceed 1.3 meters in height shall be counted as two (2) persons.

The crude, seemingly machine translated Tagalog appears, on first reading at least, very complex and unintelligible. For example, the mention of two subjects in the first sentence ('*bata*' or child, and '*matanda*' or adult companion) makes the referent of the pronoun '*siya*' ambiguous. The tendency to apply the normative active voice syntactic construction of English to the typically passive

syntactic construction of Tagalog adds further obscurity in the second sentence. Examining its dual indexicality, the sign points to the speakers of these languages (hence domestic helpers) as likely ignorant of the Hong Kong public transport regulations, but this is not assumed of Chinese, English or other language-speaking parents and carers riding on the minibuses. One may thus wonder if the assumption in the sign is that these other speakers are being driven in, or driving their own cars.

As I have suggested, the presence of Tagalog in these regulatory signs is *marked*, a markedness that may be understood in scalar (and also discriminatory) terms. In this regard, the government, property owners, and businesses are construed as centers of authority. On the surface, the target audience appears to comprise those who are literate in one or other of the languages, be it English, Filipino and/or Chinese. However, the presence of Tagalog in these spaces, and compared with its relative absence elsewhere (or its parallel presence with a host of other 'minority' languages), arguably indexes the Filipino workers' presence in Central as temporary, marginal or anomalous, but at the same time, expected. The (semi-)permanent materiality of the signs accords with this too. It appears to match the provisional nature of their status – they may be present but they do not belong.

The evidence of machine-generated translations of Tagalog resonates with Angermeyer's (2017, p. 175) observations about Google-translated Hungarian in public order signs aimed at Roma migrants in Toronto. Angermeyer shows how such translations 'control' Roma refugees in ways which ironically reproduce the kinds of discrimination they have escaped in Europe. He explains that pragmatically felicitous and infelicitous translations index the Roma refugees'

contradictory social position(ings), with public order signage in Hungarian (or at least what looks like it) tending to function as a 'covert racist discourse that stigmatizes speakers of particular languages as social deviants' (p. 179). In much the same way, I suggest the use of Tagalog in the Central signage reflects what Angermeyer (2017, p. 167) calls *punitive multilingualism*, whereby the inclusion of a language (here, Tagalog) not normatively done in other instances, covertly invokes the exclusion or punishment of its 'deviant' speakers.

6.4.2. Centering Tagalog: Commercial signage (and register)

As indicated earlier, previous studies of Hong Kong's linguistic landscape (e.g., M. L. Lai, 2013 in the 'busy areas' in Hong Kong; Lock, 2003 in the MTR subway system) have overlooked Tagalog as a part of the commercial landscape of Hong Kong. In this regard, I start here with Figure 6.5 (in the next page), which shows the facade of a telecommunications shop located at the Eurotrade building next to World-Wide House.

Translated, the texts in this shop name read in English as follows:

手提	電話	直銷	中心
'mobile'	'phone'	'direct sales'	'centre'

MOBILE PHONE DIRECT SELLING CENTRE

Ang	shop	naito*	ay	espesyal	para	sa	mga	Filipino
'The'	shop	'this'	'is'	'special'	'among'		-s plural	Filipino

This shop is special among Filipinos

Toko	ini	khusus	buat	Orang	Indonesia
'Shop'	'this'	'special/ made for'	'for'	'people'	Indonesia

This shop is specifically made for Indonesians

Figure 6.5. Tagalog and the Philippine flag on a telecommunications shop

Clearly aimed at making profit from the two ethnonational groups that largely comprise the (domestic labor) migrant population in Hong Kong, Tagalog and Bahasa Indonesia can be seen in this permanent shop name as two of the four languages on 'display' (Eastman & Stein, 1993) other than the Chinese name of the shop and its parallel English translation. Although the Tagalog text is only one of the four, following Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, pp. 194–203), Tagalog's central-medial position (alongside Bahasa Indonesia here) reveals its being given importance. Between Tagalog and Bahasa Indonesia, those who read from left to right, top to bottom would instantly see Tagalog. And despite Bahasa Indonesia being present in the shop name, symbols and texts related to the Philippines (and the relative absence of Indonesian counterparts) are mobilized in banal ways (Billig, 1995) to attract attention from their target market segment in the area – the Filipinos. The Philippine flag and the text underneath, 'Philippines', are placed in the top left corner of the shop's sign, or the part where the left-to-right, top-to-bottom readers are likely to pay attention first (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 191–192). The Tagalog-dominant message in the floor-standing signs placed next to the shop along the walkway (see the left panel of Figure 6.5) and various similar others inside it, reveals the shop's predominant targeting of Filipino customers in this area.

The supposed parallel meanings intended in the two sentences in Tagalog and Bahasa Indonesia placed side by side each other noticeably evoke quite different semantic load. The Tagalog text, albeit containing an anomalous form (i.e., missing a space in '*na ito*'), accords agency to 'Filipinos' in that it claims that the shop's Filipino customers collectively deem the shop to be 'special.' In

contrast with the Bahasa text, agency is accorded to the shop for being specially ‘made for’ Indonesians despite the shop name carrying only the flag and country name of the Philippines. The semantic and syntactic discrepancies, as well as the permanent placement of Tagalog (and Bahasa Indonesia) and related symbols in this shop’s sign, again, demonstrate its profit orientation.

Figure 6.6. ‘Maligayang Pasko’ on a Hong Kong clothing brand store

The next example (Figure 6.6) shows a bilingual English-Tagalog seasonal sign in a branch of the Hong Kong-based clothes store Giordano, next to World-Wide House. At the time of taking this photo, no other Giordano branch I visited in other tourist and shopping areas of Tsim Sha Tsui and Mong Kok carried such bilingual signs, with FDWs in Sunday-Central constituting target audience. Here, we see the Tagalog expression for Merry Christmas ‘Maligayang Pasko’ centered in a large, stylized (gold-colored) font. Inspired by Rudolf Arnheim (1974, 1988),

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) note that information centered in an image (or sign) is usually rendered salient and hence important. Since the Christmas period is a peak season for sending home *balikbayan* boxes (Camposano, 2012), the store clearly orients to Tagalog speakers as an important customer base, demonstrating a clear example of *audience design* (Bell, 1984) knowing that the mid-range prices of Giordano's make their goods a popular choice with the FDWs.

Another commercial sign (see Figure 6.7) is a movable floor-standing sign by the door of a watch shop located on the opposite side of the street from World-Wide House. Foregrounded is the Tagalog 'lingguhang espesyal' (lit. trans., 'Weekly Special'); again, this foregrounding is achieved through its being centered in a larger, clearer font. This is supposedly a Tagalog translation of the English 'Weekend Special' which appears in the background, printed in a complementary color scheme. The design is reminiscent of a circular assembly line, or a 'wheel of fortune' – though only half of it – with the pointer resting on Tagalog. A copy of the same sign is pasted in one of the display cabinets inside the store. Jaworski and Thurlow (2013) discuss how movable signage in airports allows for the temporary centering of different airline companies in spaces used by many different social actors. Similarly, the 'Weekly Special' sign appears to have been moved into place next to a common footpath for Filipinos headed to *Ali-Ali*, an open commercial area, to buy cheap souvenir items, chocolates, and (sometimes counterfeit) merchandise, or to avail themselves of cheaper salon and massage services. Considering that those who seemed to be their target customers are biliterate in both English and Tagalog, the mistranslation, whether intended or not, is commercially useful in the sense that it tends to foreground the idea that their 'special' promotion is a recurring one ('*lingguhan*' – 'weekly') that happens

on ‘weekends’. Despite its awkward or incorrect translation, the foregrounding (in the sign and in its emplacement) appears to be a well-designed commercial strategy.

Figure 6.7. ‘lingguhang espesyal’ on a watch shop

We see similar commerce-driven appeals to FDW’s emerging in other less formalized ways too in Central; take the example in Figure 6.8.

Figure 6.8. ‘*Tubig*’ on a bottom-up sign

In small mobile stands or kiosks owned by Hong Kong locals (Figure 6.8) is the Tagalog word ‘tubig’ (water) along with the brand names of various carbonated beverages on sale for HK$ 6 (about US$ 0.75, € 0.65) Every Sunday, stands like this one are stationed in different places around Central, especially in more densely occupied spaces of socialization. Also, around the area are sidewalk vendors of Chinese and South Asian descent who call out their customers using Tagalog terms for prices and merchandise quality like ‘*beinte; mura na*’ (‘Twenty dollars only; this is cheap’) or ‘*maganda ‘to; bagay sa’yo*’ (‘This is good; it fits you well’). Some vendors can manage extended conversations with bargaining Filipino customers in otherwise ‘accented’ Tagalog. More often than not, their ‘metrolingual’ (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015b) Tagalog is clearly an important marketing strategy – in much the same way that Thurlow and Jaworski (2010) found in the use of English by Gambian market vendors seeking to attract British tourists. Tagalog is even more prominently seen and heard in commercial spaces such as World-Wide House and *Ali-Ali*; in these places – generally staffed by Filipinos – Tagalog and other Philippine languages are clearly transactionally functional on an everyday basis. As Hutton (2014, p. 605) suggests, in any landscape, ‘the amount of signage escalates as vendors, official agencies and private citizens compete within an “economy of attention”’. This is certainly the

case in and around Central where we also find Filipino personnel being hired to facilitate transactions and encourage purchases.

Commercial Tagalog signage tends to construct FDWs as a particular kind of consumer in a much lower price range, 'distinct' (Bourdieu, 1984) from, say, the customer base of upscale multinational stores in the area where signs remain in English and/or Chinese (see Bauman, 2007, p. 54 on the notion of 'society of consumers'). Regardless, Tagalog is evidently part and parcel of the political economy of Central. In this sense, and in contrast to the regulatory signage, Tagalog is given value and its speakers are accommodated and centered rather than excluded and marginalized. These relatively temporary (seasonal or weekly) signs and accompanying talk correspond with the once-a-week presence of Filipinos in Central. However, in this case, the presence of Tagalog signals FDWs' considerable, collective purchasing power. From serving for the most part of the week to being served on particular days and in this part of Hong Kong, FDWs are positioned as desirable, privileged migrants to be welcomed; if only fleetingly, they and, again, partially, are the center of attention.

6.5. Conclusion: The contradictory political economy of Tagalog (speakers)

In the signs analyzed above, the fact that Tagalog reaches the widest possible audience among Filipino migrants precludes the choice of other possible ones (like Ilocano or Visayan, for example as noted in Chapter 5) in sign-making practices (and some overheard commercial transactions) in Central. The Tagalog signs (and some sales talk) examined in this chapter represent in material ways the two competing scalar perspectives – one regulatory, one commercial – tightly linked to the place-related activities of migrant Filipino domestic workers.

Temporally speaking, both kinds of signs are entrenched manifestations of the kind of 'permanent temporariness' (Boersma, 2018) which characterizes FDWs' presence in Central. While the materiality and emplacement of regulatory signage shows no indication of the possibility of replacement or removal anytime soon, most commercial signs may look temporary, their seasonal or weekly appearance reveals their recurrence or repeatability.

Among others, this chapter also responds to the relative absence of Tagalog in studies about the linguistic landscape of Hong Kong despite their obvious presence in sites investigated in such studies. Arguably, this is symptomatic of the relative invisibility of Tagalog and 'erasure' (Irvine & Gal, 2000) of its speakers. By addressing the particular – and particularly marked – presence of Tagalog in two types of signage in Central, I also hope to have shown how center-periphery politics are not only negotiated linguistically but also in sometimes contradictory or at least competing ways. On the one hand, Tagalog's presence or absence in the regulatory signs suggests the relative marginalization and/or invisibility of FDWs in ways which recursively reiterate (Gal, 2016; Irvine & Gal, 2000) the global marginalization and invisibility of these and other 'unskilled' migrant workers (Figures 6.1 – 6.4). On the other hand, the same Tagalog speakers are centered as desirable, valued consumers, being linguistically accommodated to in the pursuit of profit (Figures 6.5 – 6.8).

Del Percio et al. (2017) suggest that the valuation of linguistic resources in particular sites emerges from the *production*, *distribution*, and *consumption* of such resource at particular times organized by different entities to achieve particular ends. Tagalog in Central is a good case in point. Here, we see how the relatively volatile political economy of Tagalog is spatialized (as reflected in the

signage) and, in turn, is structured by space (its presence in particular locations and absence in others). It is in this way that Tagalog speakers are also scaled as both peripheral and central. In this first instance, Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong are positioned within the larger global 'South-North' divide which drives economic migration in the first place (cf. Heugh, 2013). In the second instance, another layer of indexical order emerges (i.e., commerce-driven), one that positions them, however provisionally and temporarily, as relatively powerful migrants, or at least affluent enough in their numbers to be a viable customer base for the city's businesses. These concomitant, competing scalar ideologies (Irvine, 2016) certainly undermine any essentialized configuration of center-periphery relations, just as the chronotopic fluctuations of the migrant workers' status confirms the dynamic, complex political economies in contemporary urban linguistic landscapes.

In the final Chapter that follows, I summarize what have been discussed previously, and provide concluding statements.

Chapter 7

Summary and Conclusion

This thesis examines the Filipino domestic workers' positionality and place-making by paying attention to the roles that communicative repertoires or resources play in their transnational migration experience. It primarily sought to address the following questions:

1. In what ways do FDWs in Hong Kong use communicative resources within their repertoire to negotiate their positionalities in the global labor migration flow and the local family, domestic work, and economic affairs within which they have come to operate?
2. How do FDWs harness their communicative repertoires to transform particular spaces in Hong Kong into a place of familiarity and a nexus of multiple belongings?
3. How do centering institutions appropriate linguistic resources perceived to be within FDWs' repertoire to discursively represent the migrant group's symbolic place in the social order of Hong Kong?

The study is primarily anchored in the sociolinguistics of globalization and transnational labor and employs analytic frameworks such as content analysis of narrative accounts, spatialization, and sociolinguistic scales. Methodologically, it is anchored in the interpretive research design of participant observational fieldwork. My data come from participant and non-participant observation, semi-structured ethnographic interviews, including body silhouette drawings,

photographed multilingual and multimodal signage, and other objects displayed in public spaces.

7.1. Summary of findings

This thesis was set out initially as a response to a seeming contradiction on circulating discourses and personal experience. News media and popular cultural representations of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in the domestic service sector tend to portray this instance of labor out-migration as a seeming 'melodrama' (Serquina Jr., 2020) where migrants are almost always portrayed to be victimized, abused, and suffering, befitting the description of a *Bagong Bayani* ('modern-day hero'). Yet, from first-hand personal experience of being part of a family whose members participate in the domestic worker migration to Hong Kong, this seemed to be quite strikingly contradictory (Chapter 1.2).

A thorough review in Chapter 2 of the key literature on the Filipino domestic worker migration to Hong Kong seems to affirm this contradiction. While researchers from various disciplines have unmasked the precarity and vulnerability of migrant domestic work (Chapter 2.2.3, 2.3.1, 2.4.1 & 2.4.2), some studies have explored the resilience of MDWs despite precarious conditions as well as their perceived contributions to the receiving countries (Chapter 2.3.2–2.3.4). The literature review also reveals that a number of studies have been conducted employing sociolinguistic lenses. However, these have been typically confined to at least two topics: (1) narratives and discourses that reveal and highlight migrant workers' victimization and disempowerment; and (2) the migrant workers' role on the education of children, particularly on English language learning. While the first instance may have been/ could be instrumental

for emancipatory policy development and the second instance recognizes migrants' societal contributions, they arguably portray migrant domestic workers as predominantly disempowered victims of globalist forces inadequately recognizing their sense of control over their migrant lives. This study attempted to probe on these typical themes explored in the previous literature on the Filipino transnational domestic worker migration to Hong Kong through the lens of sociolinguistics.

This thesis draws primarily from theories and methods in sociolinguistics that are noted to be particularly well-suited for investigations of migrant mobilities and multiple attachments. Chapter 3 discusses the theoretical frameworks of sociolinguistics of globalization, transnational domestic work, and place-making. In this framework, a repertoire- or resources-focused analysis is deemed important to uncover how the uneven distribution and valuing of resources across times and spaces is implicated in the lives of people-on-the-move particularly those coming from low-income economies. A sociolinguistic investigation of 'from the ground' perspectives of globalization with regard to transnational domestic workers and their positionality thus needed a methodological framework that objectively explores subjective meaning. The methodological framework in this study follows what can be regarded as an 'ethnographic turn' to contemporary sociolinguistics studies (see Bell, 2016; Coupland, 2016; Jaworski, 2014; Maybin, 2013; Rampton et al., 2015). As explained in Chapter 3, the data for this research was collected guided by principles on ethnographic fieldwork and interviewing.

The analyses reveal that participants mobilize different communicative resources at their disposal, such as their linguistic repertoire, transnational

infrastructures for communication, transportation, and finance, transnational social network, and leisure spaces collectively transformed as a space of familiarity to effect, manage, and maintain multiple belongings both in Hong Kong and in the Philippines.

Chapter 4 reveals that participant-FDWs report using multilingual repertoires in a manner that enables them to negotiate their symbolic place within the global migration flow they have come participate and local (domestic and leisure) affairs. Their accounts of their linguistic repertoire reveals that the languages they know and aim to know are deployed to facilitate *mobilities* and *moorings* in their transnational life journeys (Hannam et al., 2006; Sheller & Urry, 2006; Urry, 2003) and to tether into one social field the distinct lifeworlds that have come to be separated by their migration. The data and analysis in this chapter give us a glimpse of languages aside from English to be of equal importance in navigating domestic migrant workers' transnational migration circuits (Chapter 4.4.2). As discussed, Cantonese is deemed useful for greater mobility in Hong Kong, Philippine languages, such as Tagalog, Ilocano, and Visayan, for expanding transnational Filipino networks, and their native languages to maintain ties with families back home. Other languages such as Korean and French are identified to show aspirations for career move and their participation in global tourism. In their narratives, participants thematize communication, transportation, and financial infrastructures linking the Philippines and Hong Kong, allowing them to both reflect and reconcile their transnational status and positionality, being 'at home' both in Hong Kong and in the Philippines (Chapter 4.5). Although confronted with dislocations engendered by their transnational work migration, participant-FDWs report instances of

displacement and *anchoring*, thus illuminating negotiated practices on family life, work life, and economic power. Equipped with relevant resources in their transnational life journeys and showing signs of a proactive disposition for personal development, participants from the EmpowerDW organization demonstrate ways and means to circumvent circulating discourses about foreign domestic workers as typical victims of the uneven global capital accumulation in contemporary globalization. Instead, they position themselves as enterprising transnational migrants who display having the ability and resources to establish rapport with employers and host family while simultaneously acting as resourceful family members to augment their family's wealth.

Chapter 5 demonstrates that participants' desire for maintaining a home environment manifests in certain activities in spaces of gathering in their time off work, such as those on Sundays and public holidays in Hong Kong's Central district. It is then that this 'global' financial and business district is transformed on Sundays and public holidays by their home-making and activism. For being a meeting-place-of-sorts for remittance, shopping, leisure, and other ethnolinguistic-based group activities with friends and family members in Hong Kong, Sunday-Central transforms temporarily as 'Little Philippines,' indexing a range of global 'peripheries' (different parts of the Philippines) through social, material, and affective means (Chapter 5.5). This re-ordering enables FDWs to fleetingly re-arrange and own these spaces as places of familiarity, belonging, and preferred futures (also, Chapter 5.6). As such, the space is imbued with a familiar sense of home but retrospectively, reflects a sense of non-belonging traceable to the underregulated rule on MDW accommodation and the immigration law that deprives them the right of abode in Hong Kong.

The analysis in Chapter 6 of regulatory and commercial signs carrying Tagalog reveals contradicting institutional positioning of FDWs in Central, particularly the signage found near the places where the weekly gatherings are done. The Tagalog signs (and some sales talk) examined in the chapter notably portray in material ways the two competing perspectives – one regulatory, one commercial – tightly linked to the place-related activities of migrant Filipino domestic workers. On the one hand, they are construed as low status and marginalized workforce by regulatory signs with the presence of Tagalog (and absence in others), indexing the Filipino workers' presence in Central as temporary, marginal, or anomalous (Chapter 6.4.1). On the other hand, they are regarded as economically desirable target consumers being linguistically accommodated to in the pursuit of profit, albeit in a much lower price range than, for an instance, the customer base of multinational stores in the area (Chapter 6.4.2). I suggest that the competing political economy of Tagalog represented in the sign-making in Central mirrors the FDWs' peripheral positioning in the Global South-North economic migration flow, and their simultaneous central positioning as relatively powerful migrants, at least in their numbers, to be a viable customer base for the city's businesses.

Overall, this study offers a multi-dimensional picture of the Filipino migrant domestic work experience that, I hope, further enriches our understanding about transnational labor migration. Chapter 4 focused on personal lives, Chapter 5 delved into grassroots collective activity, while Chapter 6 tackled local institutional regimes. As such, these findings can have potential implications to various areas of study, as I shall now turn to in the next section.

7.2. Implications

This study offers particular implications to the sociolinguistics study of global migrant mobilities, studies on migrant place-making and positioning, and studies on transnational domestic work.

7.2.1. Sociolinguistics of global migrant mobilities

Contemporary sociolinguistics studies have been particularly productive in unmasking inequalities at various scale levels (local and global) where language and other communicative resources (are made to) play gatekeeping roles (e.g., Duchêne et al., 2013b; Gonçalves & Schluter, 2017; Holly & Meinhof, 2013; Meinhof, 2009; Piller & Lising, 2014; Song, 2012; Tupas, 2015; Tupas & Salonga, 2016). The uneven global distribution of resources and opportunities has been found to have implications to transmigrants (Blommaert, 2010; Glick-Schiller, 2010), disproportionately affecting the economic migrants from the Global South (e.g., Allan, 2013; Dalmau, 2016; Heugh, 2013; Vigouroux, 2013, 2017). This thesis is an attempt at contributing to this bourgeoning area of study by treating migrants as 'protagonists' (Duchêne et al., 2013a) in their migration stories, attending to their lived experiences of language and transnational migration (Busch, 2012; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2014, 2017).

Studying about people's lived experiences with language have likewise gained traction in recent years. These studies consider the individual as the locus of linguistic repertoire (cf. Canagarajah, 2018; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2014) and employs various strategies for data collection (e.g., Blommaert & Backus, 2013; Busch, 2012, 2015; Ros i Solé, 2020; Zents, 2015). Busch's (2015) approach to studying linguistic repertoire as an investigation of the speaking subject's 'lived'

experience of language focusing on bodily and emotional dimensions (the concept of *Spracherleben*) departs from the earlier understanding of linguistic repertoire as a set of tools or competencies available to a person belonging to a definite and clearly definable community. Consistent with Busch's point about the need to rethink our understanding about linguistic repertoire in view of the current phenomena of rapid mobilities and increased participation in transnational networks, in Chapter 4, I offer the notion of *biographic linguascape* to foreground the idea that the lived experience of language of internationally mobile speaking subjects – here, the FDWs – are not just the story of their languaging experiences across migration circuits, but also a story deeply entrenched with global flows of other resources where languages and particular ways of speaking and writing are differentially valued. The concept of *biographic linguascape* foregrounds the ways in which my participants represent their expanding linguistic repertoire and their bodily and emotional experience of language relative to their participation in the global flow of people and resources. I stress that how languages (are made to) 'flow' (Appadurai, 1990, 1996) through the individual at particular junctures of a migrant's life path and how such flows (are made to) interact with other -scapes of globalization have particular implications to experiences of migration, informing their abilities to negotiate roles and relations made more complicated by their transnational life journeys. As such, it offers us a 'from below' (cf. Appadurai, 2000; Brecher et al., 2000) perspective of globalization, straight from the experience of people who find themselves caught up in the fabric of global transcultural flows of people, resources, and ideas. In this sense, the concept of biographic linguascape enables us to depart from the 'prism of management-speak' that Holborow (2018, p. 65) finds to be prevalent in much recent work on

language, commodification, and labor, allowing 'the agency of the worker and language speaker to come to the fore'.

This thesis also responds to the call for an expanded view of repertoire in sociolinguistics away from the traditional logocentric and monolithic notions of language (Canagarajah, 2018; Kusters et al., 2017; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2014; Rymes, 2014), one which stresses the convergence of multilingual, multimodal, and material means of meaning-making (cf. Canagarajah, 2021; Shankar & Cavanaugh, 2012). The locus of repertoire is not just the individual, but also the spaces within which s/he moves around. As has been noted, in the narrative accounts of participants in Chapter 4, we see ideas about 'immobile' infrastructures (Hannam et al., 2006) for communication, transportation, and finance to be embedded in their talk related to efforts toward managing 'double lives' (Section 4.5). Chapter 5 reveals how the assemblage of symbolic, social, and material resources constitute a 'semiotic repertoire' (Kusters et al., 2017) for collective meaning-making. These resources are deployed *en masse* in the places of gathering at Sunday-Central, imbuing the space with familiarizing meanings that transform it into a nexus of multiple belongings. Thus, I hope to have demonstrated in this thesis how language is but one of the multiple ways with which people make sense of their place and their position in particular spaces of mobility. As such, it also has particular implications to migration studies and migrant's place-making and positioning.

7.2.2. Studies on migrant place-making and positioning

The results of this thesis echo the contradictions, ambiguities, and anxieties found to typically confront economic transmigrants (e.g. Boccagni,

2014, 2017; Brah, 1996; Fortier, 2000). Participants in this study reveal how they attempt to tether into one social field the two life worlds demarcated by having to cross international borders for work – a matter that is made more complicated by their being welcomed as temporary workers for jobs of relatively lesser value and pay, yet unwelcome as permanent residents in the destination country: what Erni (2016) calls the state of being 'included-out'. Their deeply felt and lived dislocations in both the labor sending and receiving countries (Aguilar Jr., 2014) manifests in various reported and observable attempts and instantiations of enacting multiple belongings through place-making; that is, maintaining their place in the families left behind, seeking a place in the household they work for, and (re)creating homes or places of familiarity away from home through available resources (Chapters 4 and 5).

This thesis thus responds to the need for subject-level analyses of the migration experience to complement the macro- and meso-level analyses that are said to pervade migration research (Lindio-McGovern, 2012; Parreñas, 2001) and studies on language and work (Gonçalves, 2020; Holborow, 2018). As explained throughout this thesis, the sociolinguistic approach of resource- and repertoire-focused analysis complicates such subject-level analysis. Focusing on repertoires allows researchers to empirically locate, map, and problematize migrant voice and access across a spectrum of differentially valued systems of resources and opportunities (Hymes, 1996) – some of the important empirical questions on investigations of 'from below' perspectives to globalization as well as migrant mobilities (Appadurai, 2000; Brecher et al., 2000; Urry, 2003). This thesis demonstrates that although there are studies that see migrants as victims of forces of power, in certain respects they can be centered and can wield a certain degree

of power over their lives, work, and wealth (Chapters 4 and 6). While economic migrants from the Global South are susceptible to precarious work conditions relative to the uneven global distribution of opportunities, they nonetheless exhibit a command of creative ability and disposition to withstand dislocating tendencies of precarity.

Finally, and more significantly, the results of this thesis have implications to studies on transnational domestic work.

7.2.3. Studies on transnational domestic work(ers)

Sociolinguistic studies on transnational domestic work have productively addressed how the English language and its global hegemony is implicated in the lives of those hired as domestic workers (Chatterjee & Schluter, 2020; Gonçalves & Schluter, 2017; Lan, 2003; Lorente, 2018). This thesis therefore fills a gap in this area of study by investigating various communicative resources (aside from English) that have particular implications to migrant domestic workers' transnational lives. The results of this research reveal a variety of languages acquired and learned by participants from the home, community, school, trainings for overseas work, the household and places of work, international travels for tourism, and those that hold promise of a better career move elsewhere (Chapter 4). This multilingual understanding of migrant workers' lived experiences and life paths departs from the economic logic steeply associated with English towards a view of other aspects of migrant lives that have been addressed least in sociolinguistics research on transnational domestic work/ers. Among others, these aspects include how certain languages are instrumentalized to maintain connections at home, forge ties in places of migration including the household-

workplace, display status (at least in relation with other foreign domestic workers), and express aspirations towards better career path elsewhere. An understanding of migrants' multilingual communicative repertoire and what they do with this multilingualism promises a more holistic understanding of migrant trajectories and aspirations, just as transnational domestic workers in this study demonstrate the mobilization of their multilingual resources to their perceived advantage.

As with all other economic migrants from the Global South, transnational domestic workers in Hong Kong have been largely seen to be at the mercy of forces of power (e.g., Asian Migrant Centre, 2001; Bagley et al., 1997; Choi, 2019; Constable, 2003, 2007; Ho, 2019; Jayawickrama, 2017; Justice Centre Hong Kong, 2016; Kuo, 2014; Ladegaard, 2017). That domestic work happens inside an intimate space, removed from immediate public scrutiny, and for being hounded by discriminatory associations to the so-called 3Ds of low wage work – dirty, demeaning, demanding – makes domestic workers some of the most vulnerable workers to abuse and exploitation (Shahvisi, 2018). This study thus offers a balancing picture to these perspectives as it demonstrates participants harnessing various resources within their disposal (again, languages, infrastructures for communication, transportation, and finances, and space), 'assembling' (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2017) them to achieve a semblance of normalcy in their lives (Chapters 4 & 5) fraught with regimenting ideologies (Irvine, 2019) (e.g., Chapter 6) that structure and constrain their transnational migration experience.

7.3. Avenues for future research

A relatively ambitious plan was initially intended for this research, but various circumstances[40] inevitably narrowed its focus, but without, I hope, undermining all of its value. I offer them here instead as suggestions for future research.

First, an investigation of spontaneous linguistic communication within the domestic space remains an important avenue for future research. This could further probe the actual linguistic practices on negotiating relationships retrospectively described by participants in this study. Privacy concerns, however, remain to be the critical consideration if this is to be pursued, just as it had been a major stumbling block during my investigation. Nevertheless, this is not impossible as scholars like Barbara Ehrenreich (2003) who worked for a cleaning company in New York for 3 months has demonstrated (although note again the problem of deception in establishing rapport in some social science research, as Rampton (2016) warns).

Second, throughout this thesis, I have hinted on circulating representations about OFWs in general, and FDWs in particular in news media and popular culture. Except for a few studies that either problematize these representations in passing (e.g., Rafael, 1997) or in production genres that do not have a large audience (e.g., Serquina Jr., 2020; Tiatco, 2013 for theater productions), to the best of my knowledge, the mediatization of overseas (domestic) work seems to have been neglected. During my fieldwork, it was not uncommon to hear from participants how much their experience as overseas workers defies expectations set by portrayals on TV and movies. These portrayals, in fact, seemed to have become the measure for what sort of life story can and cannot be told, at least

[40] Including the civil unrest in Hong Kong in 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 that stymied other plans in relation to this research.

among those who refused to participate in this research. I received comments like: "*Hindi pang MMK ang buhay ko.*" ('My life is not worth an MMK[41] story.'). Since mass media and popular culture shape ideologies (Agha, 2011; Androutsopoulos, 2014; Fairclough, 1995), they arguably have an impact for the thriving 'culture' of out-migration in the Philippines touched upon by some researchers (Aguilar Jr., 2014; Zhuo, 2017) but without much empirical support.

Third, and in relation with the previous, video blogs (vlogs) on Youtube and other social media platform about domestic work in Hong Kong have proliferated through the years. Some of these vloggers have been featured by Philippine television networks for garnering a large number of views and engagements. Their self-portrayal of their life and work, though constrained by the affordances of digital platforms, can be another avenue of further exploration. Studies on digital media representations on what constitutes domestic work could offer an empirical understanding on how this work category is actually populated (Coloma et al., 2012; Rampton et al., 2015, p. 20) by people who are hired in this line of work.

Finally, out of the roughly 210,000 Filipinos hired as domestic workers in Hong Kong, about 3% are male (Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 2019). According to my participants, the male domestic workers are typically hired as drivers, gardeners, and messengers on a comparably better pay than female ones (i.e., roughly three times the salary of female MDWs in Hong Kong). Male domestic work and the gendered pay gap for the same work category thus seems to reproduce the gendered dimensions of the global labor market, which is

[41] MMK or *Maala-ala Mo Kaya* is a long-time-running drama anthology by the largest television network in the Philippines, ABS-CBN, that features the lives of real people. Stories of OFWs and FDWs in Hong Kong have been featured many times in the show.

thus another attractive point for investigation to complement the largely female-oriented research on domestic work.

7.4. Final words

In conclusion, notwithstanding the inequalities and injustices evident in the 'unskilled,' 'Global South-North' migration labor flows, this study offers a somewhat counter-balancing perspective to the English language-focused view of FDWs as predominantly disempowered victims of globalist forces. While acknowledging the marginalization and abuse experienced by FDWs in Hong Kong, this study demonstrates that multiple symbolic and material resources within the migrant's repertoire (viz., languages, 'immobile' infrastructures, and space) unlock possibilities, however nascent, towards an expanded view of transnational domestic workers. That is, migrants move equipped with the means, ability, and disposition to exercise their agency with which, to some extent, they are capable of challenging, subverting and constraining the conditions of neoliberal capitalism, globalization, and power that frame their transnational existence.

Appendices

Appendix A
Sample Employment Contract
for a Domestic Helper recruited from abroad
(as of November 2016)

D. H. Contract No. ....

EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT
(For A Domestic Helper recruited from abroad)

This contract is made between ....
("the Employer") and .... ("the Helper")
on .... and has the following terms:

1. The Helper's place of origin for the purpose of this contract is ....
....
....

2. (A)† The Helper shall be employed by the Employer as a domestic helper for a period of two years commencing on the date on which the Helper arrives in Hong Kong.

(B)† The Helper shall be employed by the Employer as a domestic helper for a period of two years commencing on ...., which is the date following the expiry of D.H. Contract No. .... for employment with the same employer.

(C)† The Helper shall be employed by the Employer as a domestic helper for a period of two years commencing on the date on which the Director of Immigration grants the Helper permission to remain in Hong Kong to begin employment under this contract.

3. The Helper shall work and reside in the Employer's residence at ....
....

4. (*a*) The Helper shall only perform domestic duties as per the attached Schedule of Accommodation and Domestic Duties for the Employer.

(*b*) The Helper shall not take up, and shall not be required by the Employer to take up, any other employment with any other person.

(*c*) The Employer and the Helper hereby acknowledge that Clause 4 (*a*) and (*b*) will form part of the conditions of stay to be imposed on the Helper by the Immigration Department upon the Helper's admission to work in Hong Kong under this contract. A breach of one or both of the said conditions of stay will render the Helper and/or any aider and abettor liable to criminal prosecution.

5. (*a*) The Employer shall pay the Helper wages of HK$ ....5,000.00.... per month. The amount of wages shall not be less than the minimum allowable wage announced by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and prevailing at the date of this contract. An employer who fails to pay the wages due under this employment contract shall be liable to criminal prosecution.

(*b*) The Employer shall provide the Helper with suitable and furnished accommodation as per the attached Schedule of Accommodation and Domestic Duties and food free of charge. If no food is provided, a food allowance of HK$ ..1,037.... a month shall be paid to the Helper.

(*c*) The Employer shall provide a receipt for payment of wages and food allowance and the Helper shall acknowledge receipt of the amount under his/her* signature.

6. The Helper shall be entitled to all rest days, statutory holidays, and paid annual leave as specified in the Employment Ordinance, Chapter 57.

7. (*a*) The Employer shall provide the Helper with free passage from his/her* place of origin to Hong Kong and on termination or expiry of this contract, free return passage to his/her* place of origin.

(*b*) A daily food and travelling allowance of HK$100 per day shall be paid to the Helper from the date of his/her* departure from his/her* place of origin until the date of his/her* arrival at Hong Kong if the travelling is by the most direct route. The same payment shall be made when the Helper returns to his/her* place of origin upon expiry or termination of this contract.

8. The Employer shall be responsible for the following fees and expenses (if any) for the departure of the Helper from his/her place of origin and entry into Hong Kong:—
   (i) medical examination fees;
   (ii) authentication fees by the relevant Consulate;
   (iii) visa fee;
   (iv) insurance fee;
   (v) administration fee or fee such as the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration fee, or other fees of similar nature imposed by the relevant government authorities; and
   (vi) others: ....

In the event that the Helper has paid the above costs or fees, the Employer shall fully reimburse the Helper forthwith the amount so paid by the Helper upon demand and production of the corresponding receipts or documentary evidence of payment.

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* Delete where inappropriate.
† Use either Clause 2A, 2B or 2C whichever is appropriate.

ID 407 (11/2016) 1

9. (*a*) In the event that the Helper is ill or suffers personal injury during the period of employment specified in Clause 2, except for the period during which the Helper leaves Hong Kong of his/her* own volition and for his/her* own personal purposes, the Employer shall provide free medical treatment to the Helper. Free medical treatment includes medical consultation, maintenance in hospital and emergency dental treatment. The Helper shall accept medical treatment provided by any registered medical practitioner.

(*b*) If the Helper suffers injury by accident or occupational disease arising out of and in the course of employment, the Employer shall make payment of compensation in accordance with the Employees' Compensation Ordinance, Chapter 282.

(*c*) In the event of a medical practitioner certifying that the Helper is unfit for further service, the Employer may subject to the statutory provisions of the relevant Ordinances terminate the employment and shall immediately take steps to repatriate the Helper to his/her* place of origin in accordance with Clause 7.

10. Either party may terminate this contract by giving one month's notice in writing or one month's wages in lieu of notice.

11. Notwithstanding Clause 10, either party may in writing terminate this contract without notice or payment in lieu in the circumstances permitted by the Employment Ordinance, Chapter 57.

12. In the event of termination of this contract, both the Employer and the Helper shall give the Director of Immigration notice in writing within seven days of the date of termination. A copy of the other party's written acknowledgement of the termination shall also be forwarded to the Director of Immigration.

13. Should both parties agree to enter into new contract upon expiry of the existing contract, the Helper shall, before any such further period commences and at the expense of the Employer, return to his/her* place of origin for a paid/unpaid* vacation of not less than seven days, unless prior approval for extension of stay in Hong Kong is given by the Director of Immigration.

14. In the event of the death of the Helper, the Employer shall pay the cost of transporting the Helper's remains and personal property from Hong Kong to his/her* place of origin.

15. Save for the following variations, any variation or addition to the terms of this contract (including the annexed Schedule of Accommodation and Domestic Duties) during its duration shall be void unless made with the prior consent of the Commissioner for Labour:

(*a*) a variation of the period of employment stated in Clause 2 through an extension of the said period of not more than one month by mutual agreement and with prior approval obtained from the Director of Immigration;

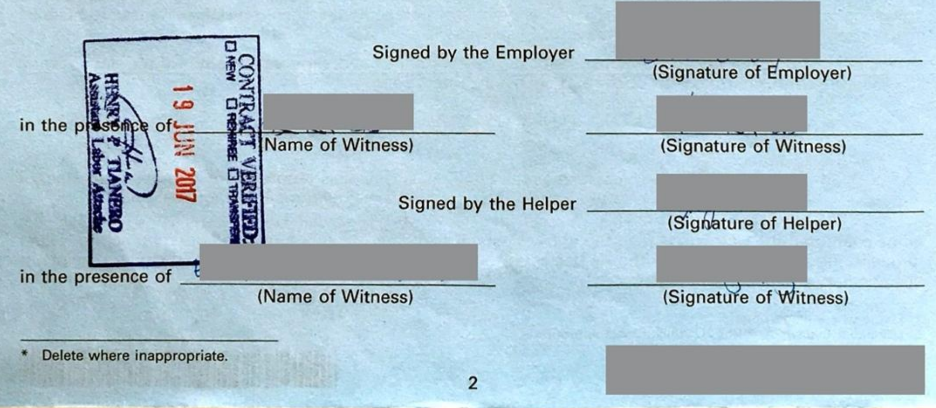
(*b*) a variation of the Employer's residential address stated in Clause 3 upon notification in writing being given to the Director of Immigration, provided that the Helper shall continue to work and reside in the Employer's new residential address;

(*c*) a variation in the Schedule of Accommodation and Domestic Duties made in such manner as prescribed under item 7 of the Schedule of Accommodation and Domestic Duties; and

(*d*) a variation of item 4 of the Schedule of Accommodation and Domestic Duties in respect of driving of a motor vehicle, whether or not the vehicle belongs to the Employer, by the helper by mutual agreement in the form of an Addendum to the Schedule and with permission in writing given by the Director of Immigration for the Helper to perform the driving duties.

16. The above terms do not preclude the Helper from other entitlements under the Employment Ordinance, Chapter 57, the Employees' Compensation Ordinance, Chapter 282 and any other relevant Ordinances.

17. The Parties hereby declare that the Helper has been medically examined as to his/her fitness for employment as a domestic helper and his/her medical certificate has been produced for inspection by the Employer.



Signed by the Employer ________________
(Signature of Employer)

in the presence of ________________ ________________
(Name of Witness) (Signature of Witness)

Signed by the Helper ________________
(Signature of Helper)

in the presence of ________________ ________________
(Name of Witness) (Signature of Witness)

CONTRACT VERIFIED
☐ NEW ☐ REHIRE ☐ TRANSFER
19 JUN 2017
HENRY P. TIANERO
Assistant Labor Attache

* Delete where inappropriate.

SCHEDULE OF ACCOMMODATION AND DOMESTIC DUTIES

1. Both the Employer and the Helper should sign to acknowledge that they have read and agreed to the contents of this Schedule, and to confirm their consent for the Immigration Department and other relevant government authorities to collect and use the information contained in this Schedule in accordance with the provisions of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance.

2. Employer's residence and number of persons to be served

   A. Approximate size of flat/house .1,500 square feet/square metres*

   B. State below the number of persons in the household to be served on a regular basis:

   ..5..... adult .... minors (aged between 5 to 18) .... minors (aged below 5) .... expecting babies.

   .... persons in the household requiring constant care or attention (excluding infants).

   (Note: Number of Helpers currently employed by the Employer to serve the household ....)

3. Accommodation and facilities to be provided to the Helper

   A. Accommodation to the Helper

   While the average flat size in Hong Kong is relatively small and the availability of separate servant room is not common, the Employer should provide the Helper suitable accommodation and with reasonable privacy. Examples of unsuitable accommodation are: The Helper having to sleep on made-do beds in the corridor with little privacy and sharing a room with an adult/teenager of the opposite sex.

   ☑ Yes. Estimated size of the servant room ....50............... square feet/square metres*

   ☐ No. Sleeping arrangement for the Helper:

   ☐ Share a room with .... child/children aged ....

   ☐ Separate partitioned area of .... square feet/square metres*

   ☐ Others. Please describe ....

   ....

   ....

   B. Facilities to be provided to the Helper:

   (Note: Application for entry visa will normally not be approved if the essential facilities from item (*a*) to (*f*) are not provided free.)

(*a*) Light and water supply	☑ Yes	☐ No
(*b*) Toilet and bathing facilities	☑ Yes	☐ No
(*c*) Bed	☑ Yes	☐ No
(*d*) Blankets or quilt	☑ Yes	☐ No
(*e*) Pillows	☑ Yes	☐ No
(*f*) Wardrobe	☑ Yes	☐ No
(*g*) Refrigerator	☑ Yes	☐ No
(*h*) Desk	☑ Yes	☐ No
(*i*) Other facilities (Please specify)	______	

4. The Helper should only perform domestic duties at the Employer's residence. Domestic duties to be performed by the Helper under this contract exclude driving of a motor vehicle of any description for whatever purposes, whether or not the vehicle belongs to the Employer.

5. Domestic duties include the duties listed below.

   Major portion of domestic duties:—

   1. Household chores
   2. Cooking
   3. Looking after aged persons in the household (constant care or attention is required/not required*)
   4. Baby-sitting
   5. Child-minding
   6. Others (please specify)

      ....

      ....

      ....

      ....

6. When requiring the Helper to clean the outside of any window which is not located on the ground level or adjacent to a balcony (on which it must be reasonably safe for the Helper to work) or common corridor ("exterior window cleaning"), the exterior window cleaning must be performed under the following conditions:—

   (i) the window being cleaned is fitted with a grille which is locked or secured in a manner that prevents the grille from being opened; and

   (ii) no part of the Helper's body extends beyond the window ledge except the arms.

7. The Employer shall inform the Helper and the Director of Immigration of any substantial changes in items 2, 3 and 5 by serving a copy of the Revised Schedule of Accommodation and Domestic Duties (ID 407G) signed by both the Employer and the Helper to the Director of Immigration for record.

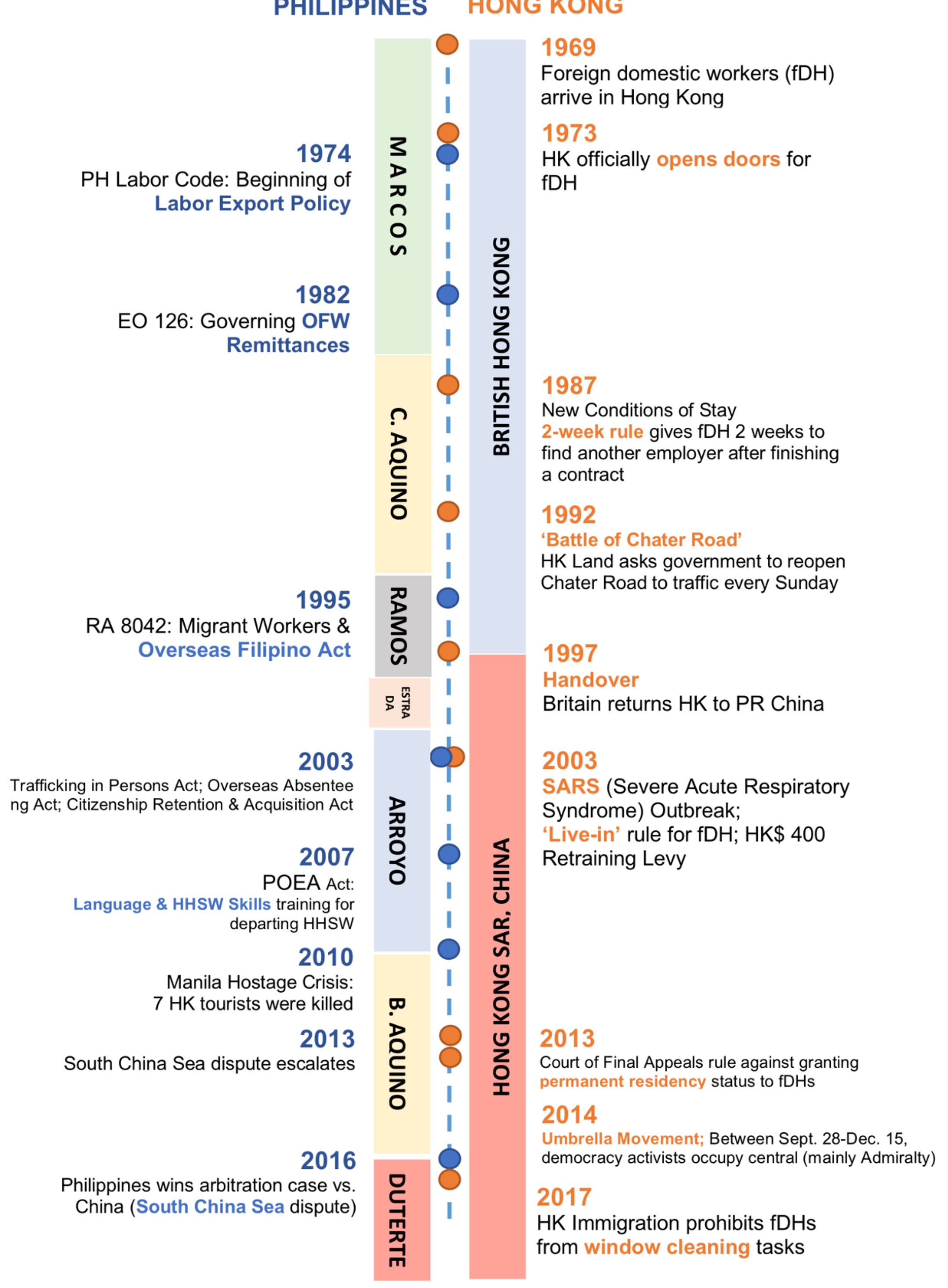
Employer's name and signature	Date	Helper's name and signature	Date

CONTRACT VERIFIED
☐ NEW ☐ RENEWAL ☐ TRANSFER
19 JUN 2017

* delete where inappropriate

☐ tick as appropriate

Appendix B



Appendix C
Semi-structured Interview Guide Questions

The informant will first be briefed about the purpose of the study, the procedure that will be undertaken, and her rights during and after the interview.

1. Please describe your background and your current position.
   Maari po ba kayong magpakilala?

2. Why did you choose to come to Hong Kong and seek employment as a domestic worker?
   Bakit po kayo napadpad sa Hong Kong bilang isang domestic worker?

3. Please "talk me through" your body drawing?
   Maari nyo po bang ipaliwanag ang ibig sabihin nitong ginawa nyo?

4. What motivated your choice of colors in the drawing and their placement on the body?
   Bakit po ninyo kinulayan ng [kulay] ang [parte ng katawan] para sa *[pananalita]?*

5. In what ways is language relevant to your life and work in Hong Kong?
   Maaari po bang magbigay kayo ng halimbawa o mga pagkakataon kung saan may kaugnayan ang [pananalita] sa inyong buhay at trabaho dito sa Hong Kong?

6. Who are the people you're in touch with in Hong Kong and elsewhere. How do you communicate with them?
   Sinu-sino ang mga taong nakakausap nyo dito sa Hong Kong o sa ibang lugar?
   Paano kayo nakikipag usap sa kanila?

7. What are your plans for the future?
   Ano ang inyong plano para sa hinaharap?

Follow-up questions will be asked depending on their responses to these questions.

Appendix D
Summary of Linguistic Portrait Data Analysis

SUMMARY BY BODY PART

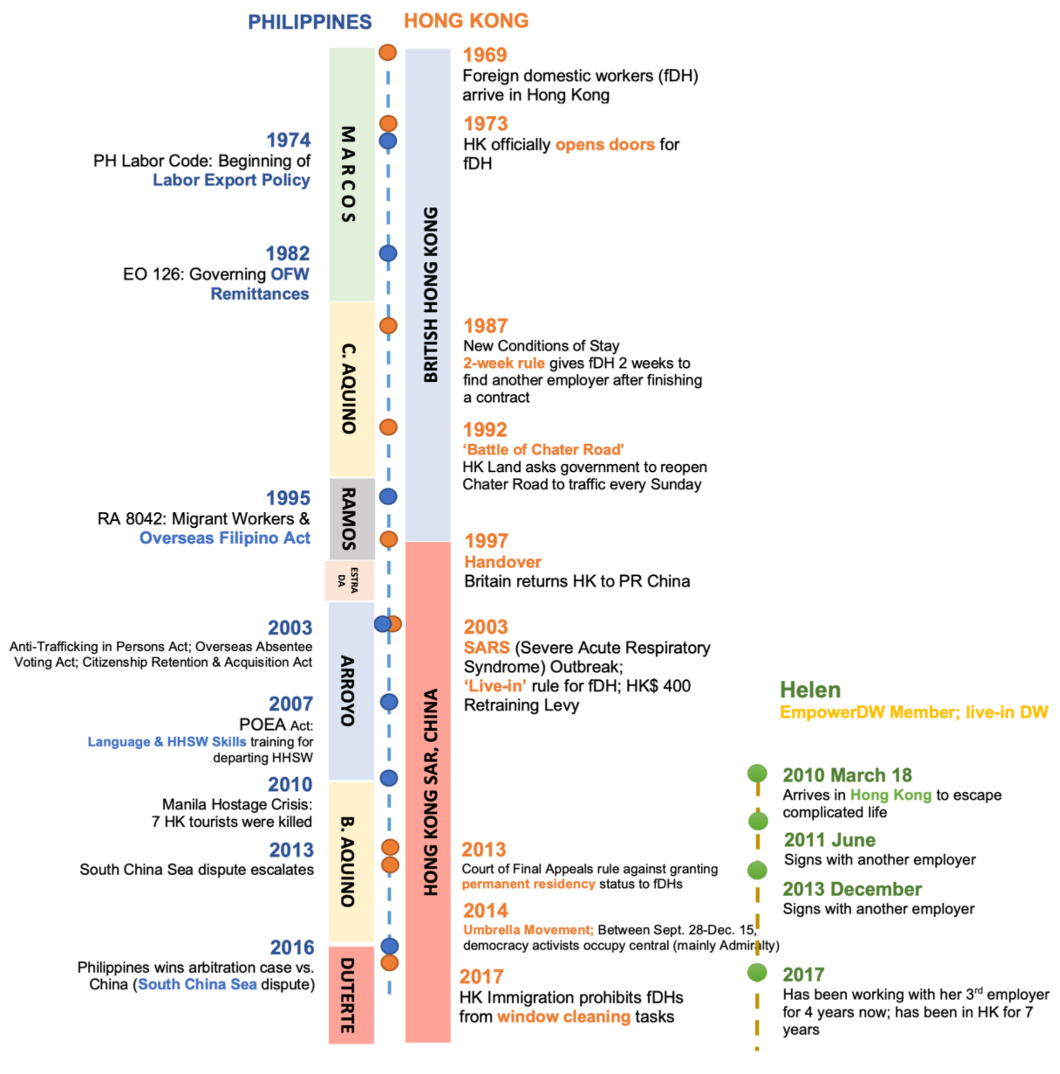
Summary	Head	Body	Raised Arm	Lowered Arm	Left Leg	Right Leg
Typical language per main body part:	Tagalog/Native Language (11) Tagalog (10) English (5)	Tagalog/ Native Language (13) English (8) Tagalog (7) Chinese (Cantonese/ Mandarin) (5) Cantonese (4)	English (9) Tagalog/ Native Language (5) Cantonese (2)	Tagalog/ Native language (7) Chinese (Cantonese/Mandarin) (6) Cantonese (5) English (4) Tagalog (3)	Philippine languages (8) Chinese (Cantonese/ Mandarin) (6) Cantonese (5) Other European Languages (4)	Philippine languages (11) Other languages (4) Chinese (Cantonese/ Mandarin) (3)
Typical placement:	Whole head (13) Brain (3)	Chest-Heart area (11) Chest only (4) Heart only (4) Stomach-navel area (11) Stomach only (2) Navel area only (3) Whole body (5)	Whole raised arm (13) Hand-fingers (3) Forearm-arm (2)	Whole lowered arm (13) Hand-fingers (3) Forearm-arm (2)	Whole left leg (9) Foot (4) Knee-foot (2) Hip (2)	Whole right leg (10) Foot (4) Hip-knee (2) Knee-foot (2) Hip (2)
Based on interviews, typically associated with:	what they know best most comfortable to use what is commonly spoken thinking or the need to exert extra effort to think	emotional attachment family/ relatives source of strength navel part: source of nourishment	work something high or of high value self defense	making friends in Hong Kong work self defense	roots or foundation mobility something lower or of lesser value	roots or foundation mobility something lower or of lesser value

SUMMARY BY LANGUAGE

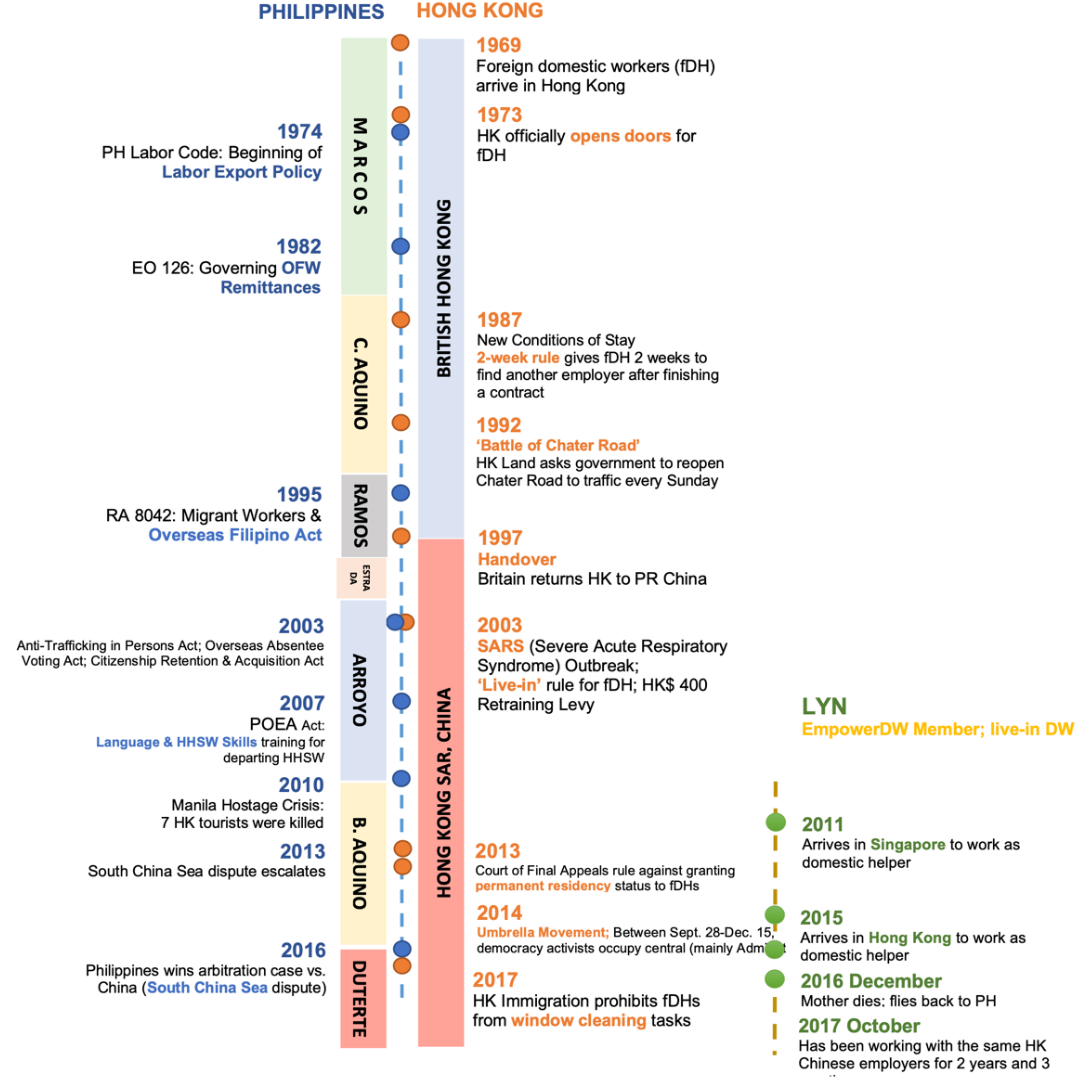
Summary	Tagalog (Filipino)	Home/ Community Language*	English	Cantonese	Mandarin	Other Languages
By rank, typically mapped in:	1 head 2 body 3 lowered arm	1 body (chest-heart area) 2 leg 3 head 4 lowered arm	1 raised arm 2 body (stomach-navel area) 3 head	1 left leg 2 lowered arm 3 body (stomach-navel area)	appears in: body lowered arm (hand) left leg righ foot	1 right leg 2 left leg
Based on interviews, typically associated with:	being Filipino making friends in Hong Kong navigating Filipino places in HK	family/ roots/ identity heart and heart sign foundation/ stronghold	work something WE have and my employers dor learning enabled movement to/ in Hong Kong opportunities strength and confidence dollar sign	Hong Kong marketplace opportunities in Hong Kong something I don't have but MUST know Popo (grandmother) the elderly in Hong Kong	ward's homework work	places/ countries visited "expat" employers

Appendix E
EmpowerDW Participants' Work Migration Timeline

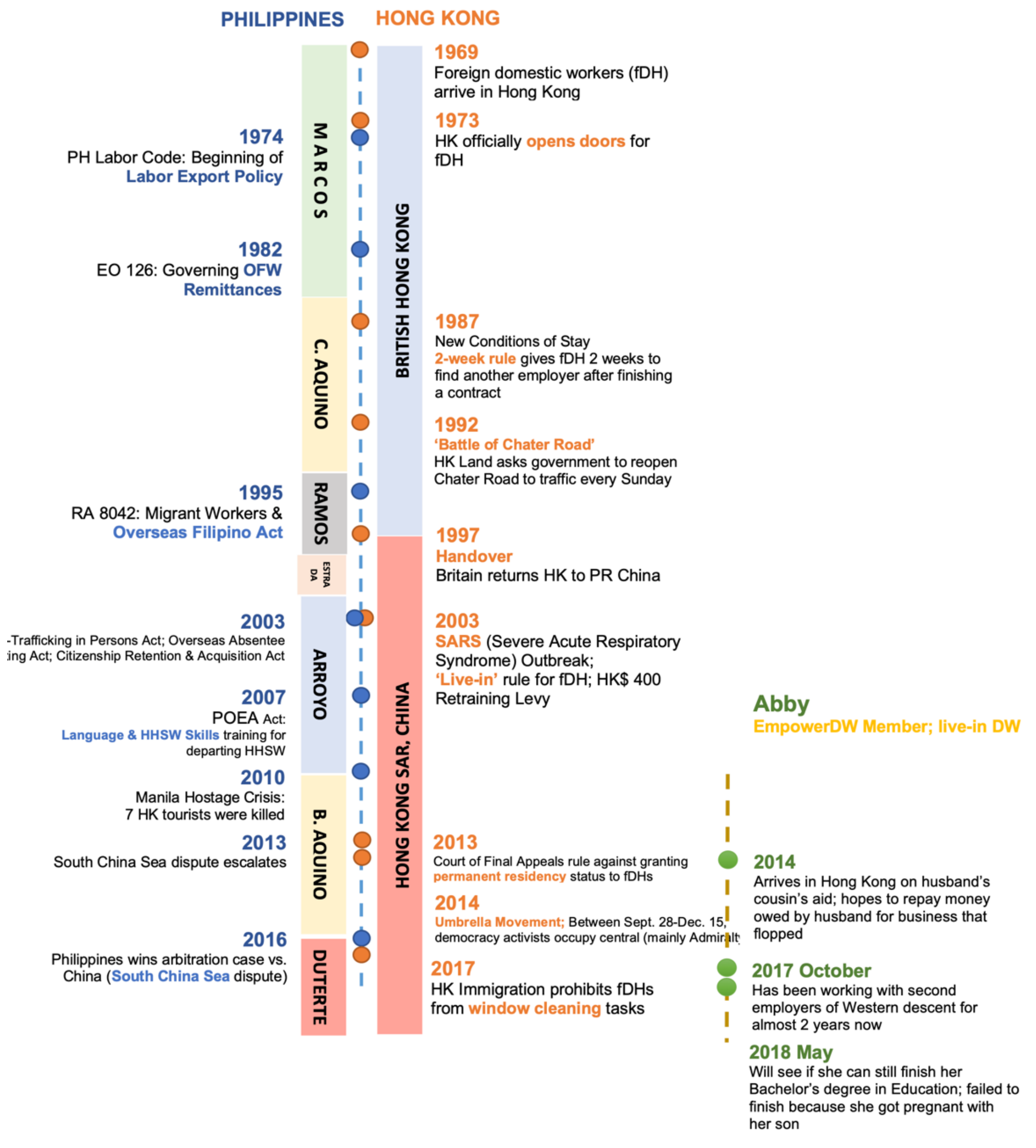
Helen



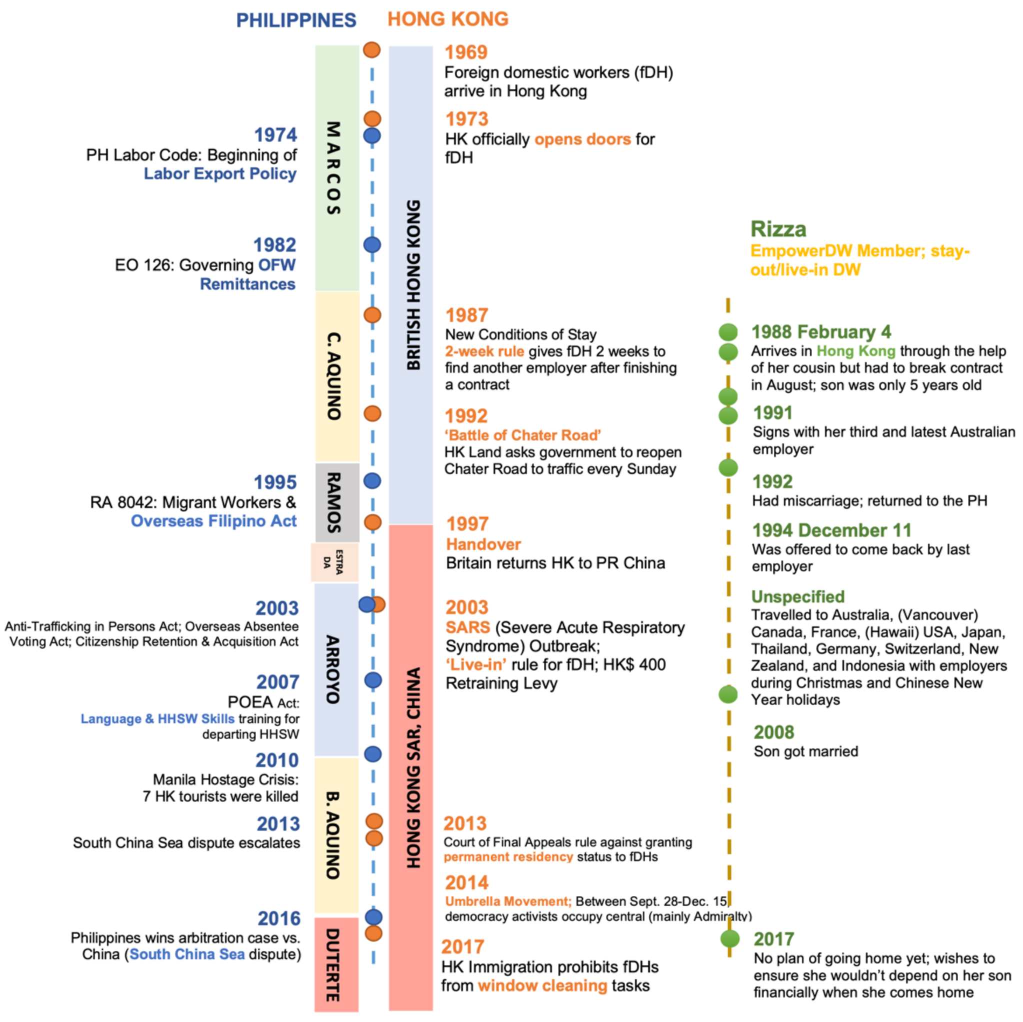
Lyn



Abby



Rizza



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