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INTERNATIONALIZE: Teach English in East Asia

by Tim Swanson





INTERNATIONALIZE: TEACH ENGLISH IN EAST ASIA

GUIDE 1.0

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INTRODUCTION	3
WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS?	4
WHAT IS THE SALARY LIKE?	4
BEST PAY AND LIFESTYLE	5
WHAT KINDS OF JOBS ARE AVAILABLE?	7
DIFFERENCES	7
DO	8
DO NOT	9
ENTREPRENEURS	9
COST OF LIVING	10
RESOURCES	12
CONCLUSION	13
WHAT TO DO	14



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INTRODUCTION

If you are a recent college grad looking for something to do during a gap year, currently between jobs, or just looking to do something different, bar none, the easiest and quickest way to finding a job in East Asia is by working as some kind of teacher, typically an English instructor.

While you will probably not become even remotely rich as an instructor, you can try to parlay your time by networking with other professionals and possibly move into other careers. In other words, come for the work visa, and then look for other opportunities through networking events and websites like [LinkedIn](http://www.linkedin.com/)¹ and [Meet-Up](http://www.meetup.com/).² This, of course, is dependent on your own personal motivation and extra skills in other fields you may have learned.

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¹<http://www.linkedin.com/>

²<http://www.meetup.com/>



WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS?

Generally speaking, the most basic requirement is that you have a bachelor's degree from a country where English is the native language. One small exception to this rule: I knew a Canadian working in Korea who was initially unable to renew his work visa because the administrator noticed his actual degree was written in French because he graduated from a college in Quebec, yet his English was superb (he was eventually allowed to stay). While most English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs want native speakers from the Big Seven (the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, South Africa, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand), I have met people originally from the Philippines, Singapore, Ghana, Romania, Poland, Sweden, Denmark, and even Russia who work as EFL instructors.

Private schools sometimes require different items than public schools (and vice versa).

Each Asian country has its own unique list of requirements and preferences, such as holding additional certificates (TEFL, CELTA, TKT, TESOL) and certain age limits (usually you need to be less than sixty-five years old); and private schools sometimes require different items than public schools (and vice versa). For example, if you want to teach at a public school in Taiwan, you need to be a certified teacher in your home country; however, private schools do not require this. Thus, be sure to check to see what kind of documents you may need, otherwise it could be tedious and very time consuming to notarize criminal background checks and healthcare reports if you do not even have the approved credential.

WHAT IS THE SALARY LIKE?

The average salary you could expect working as a full-time instructor at a language center—after taxes—is about \$2,000–\$2,300 per month in South Korea and Japan. In South Korea the centers are called hagwon, in Japan they are called eikaiwa, and in Taiwan they are called buxiban. Typically, these same centers will provide a one-year working visa, along with some kind of accommodation (nothing luxurious, typically a small apartment). This depends on the financial situation of each company; some may just recommend a housing agent who helps locate an apartment that you must pay rent for. Others may provide the key money (security deposit) and then you may have to pay the actual monthly rent plus utilities. So be sure to check it out and ask specifically what the compensation package provides, and be sure to get it in writing in the contract. Some centers will also provide other fringe benefits like health insurance, transportation, and utilities stipends (e.g., if you have to travel to work by bus or subway, you can receive a refund for a receipt).

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For example, five years ago in Seoul some of my friends worked as language instructors, and they also had their apartments paid for (except utilities) and thus the \$2,000 they made each month was effectively discretionary income. This could change depending on economic conditions. For example, in 2007, Nova (the largest eikaiwa in Japan) **went bankrupt**³ and

³ <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2013/11/03/general/six-years-following-bankruptcy-nova-boosts-the-brand/>



many of the faculty and staff were not paid for several months' worth of work. Similarly, in Korea (and really everywhere else where bankruptcies are allowed), various hagwon chains—and their franchises—have come and gone, leaving expats with unpaid salaries.

In Japan, there is a government sponsored program called **JET**⁴ that brings in foreign, native English speakers to work as advisors and instructors in Japanese schools (K–12). The salary starts off at around ¥3.36 million per year (\$32,600) and can increase each year you renew (up to five years). The competition for these positions is very tough and only 4,300 international teachers are in this initiative today (there is an annual quota). The South Korean government also runs a program similar to JET called **EPIK**⁵ and **TaLK**,⁶ which places foreign teachers into public schools; however, be

aware that some of these programs are slowly **being phased out**.⁷ Hong Kong also has a program called **NET**,⁸ through which foreign teachers are recruited to work in public-sector primary and secondary schools. The compensation ranges from \$3,135 to \$6,063 per month and there are about eight hundred NET instructors in a given year.

Salaries at language centers in Taiwan and mainland China are usually lower in nominal terms than their counterparts in South Korea and Japan.

Salaries at language centers in Taiwan and mainland China are usually lower in nominal terms than their counterparts in South Korea and Japan, largely due to the fact that South Korea and Japan are relatively wealthy, developed economies where consumers have larger amounts of discretionary income to spend on extra services like EFL. While the hours and content are usually similar to their peers across the sea, the actual salary might only amount to \$1,500 after taxes, as was the case for several friends in Kaohsiung when I worked in Taiwan. At large language centers on the mainland, such as EF and Wall Street English, the initial pay for a brand new teacher starts off in larger tier one cities (like Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou) at around \$2,000 per month after

taxes. This salary does not usually include any kind of compensation for apartments or cost-of-living allowance. About the only fringe benefit you might receive is travelers insurance with a relatively high deductible.

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BEST PAY AND LIFESTYLE

Universities in East Asia usually pay higher salaries than any other educational institution in the city once all of the benefits are factored in. Sometimes they will provide accommodations as well as flight relocation, and a few will provide some kind of pension payment. But this also varies; in some provinces like Anhui the salary may only be 6,000 RMB per month (\$1,000) whereas salaries of PhD holders at one of the C9 (九校联盟) such as Peking University could be comparable to positions in the West (e.g., the **1,000 Talent**⁹ program). The workload is usually lighter with about fifteen to twenty contact hours with students. In addition to lighter workloads and

⁴ <http://www.jetprogramme.org/>

^{5,6} http://www.talk.go.kr/talk/talk_new/intro.jsp

⁷ <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20130501000556>

⁸ <http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/resource-support/net/index.html>

⁹ <http://1000plan.safea.gov.cn/>



fewer contact hours, many will also pay your salary over the summer and winter holidays.

For those interested, be aware that South Korea, mainland China, and Taiwan begin about a month later than those in the West and Japan (first classes will begin in September, not August, and end in early January). Job applicants are recommended to apply for positions around March or April for fall matriculation and December for spring commencements. For example, the new requirements at colleges in Seoul are a minimum of a master's degree and two years of college teaching experience or a bachelor's degree and four years of college teaching experience.

Some colleges have little in the way of health insurance benefits.

These types of positions are highly competitive as more foreigners with graduate-level credentials are actively recruited internally, especially in larger cities. For those candidates without PhDs it is recommended you also look at smaller provincial colleges. Be aware, however, that you may have to build your own curriculum, especially at smaller colleges, because they do not have the resources or content to produce professional slides for each class. Also, depending on the budget, some colleges have little in the way of health insurance benefits. This might not sound like a big deal, but if you get sick, you may have to leave the countryside or province in order to receive treatment from a modern facility in one of the tier one cities.

International schools are a close second in terms of pay, teaching load, and contact hours. This varies from school to school, but on mainland China many teachers start at 25,000 RMB (roughly \$4,000 per month) and are sometimes provided accommodation.

Public schools at large cities, even those outside of the JET and NET programs, sometimes offer more in terms of compensation than “cram” schools. The downsides are that you will sometimes have less flexibility and creative control over the classes as the rote memorization method is the rule du jour.

Language centers and cram schools are by far the largest segment of the EFL industry in Asia. Many large cram school chains will offer exam prep services such as the TOEFL, IELTS, SAT, and other standardized tests that look good on resumes and/or allow admission into other scholastic institutions. Language centers, while sometimes offering similar test-taking services, also serve other niches, but generally involve helping students improve their oral communication skills. Why is there a market for that? Even though nearly all of the students in primary and secondary schools of East Asia learn English as a mandatory subject beginning at around age seven, few have the opportunity to learn the correct pronunciation used in English speaking countries. As a consequence, even local English teachers who may have flawless written skills may have difficulty maintaining a spoken conversation because they simply have little practice in doing so. Or their confidence may be very low because their pronunciation is indecipherable.

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With that said, many of these same traditional teaching services that were only conducted face-to-face in a brick-and-mortar building are now being offered in an online format. This means you as a teacher may be able to work



from home or some type of call center, yet the pay and compensation oftentimes stays the same. Not all EFL companies offer this, but the largest do, and there are startups entering this segment due to lower operational costs.

Kindergarten positions are probably the least desirable largely due to the amount of physical activity teachers are required to do. In addition, the speaking and vocabulary skills of the students is understandably limited, thus you will need to learn to talk with these younger students at a different level than you would adults or even teenagers. On top of these issues are others, such as lack of teacher resources due to the fact that most of these kindergartens (in each of these countries) are usually operated by a sole proprietor. In reality there is usually more pressure placed on teachers to perform as an entertainer and less as an educator because the facility acts more like a daycare than an actual school. To compound matters, the ability to move into other areas of EFL, let alone outside of the education industry, is made more difficult by the fact that kindergarten employers do not provide the necessary training and skills needed to teach older students or those looking for test-prep training. This is solely a labor of love. Proceed with caution.

WHAT KINDS OF JOBS ARE AVAILABLE?

Accelerated kindergarten programs (Baby MBA), cram schools (IELTS, TOEFL, SAT, GRE, GMAT), international high schools, language centers, and colleges have jobs available. There are also smaller niches such as professional coaching (working with VIPs or wealthy individuals to improve a specific skillset such as articulation, diction, and voice fluctuation); even creative writing courses have emerged because the industry is largely dominated by test prep of some kind.

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DIFFERENCES

For kindergarten, you are on your feet for twenty to thirty hours per week working with children aged three to six. Each center is different depending on the owner. At Montessori facilities, you are considered a guide and mentor, whereas other operations, especially those in smaller cities, may parade you as a type of entertainment. The hours vary, but split schedules are common (7:00 a.m.–noon. and 3:00–6:00p.m.) because these centers act as a form of daycare for families in which both parents work.

Cram schools are usually filled with middle school students that want to travel and attend high school or college overseas. The hours are usually from 3:00–11:00 p.m., as it is a type of after-school program. Yet despite its extracurricular status, most families consider it mandatory for their children to outcompete their peers. Because of the known format of the test, the actual work typically involves a structured model using some kind of Kaplan or Princeton Review guide, a timer, a bell, and lots of drills. Some of these schools have branched out and now include creative writing and other subjects to help prepare students for face-to-face interviews



with college admissions officers. Class sizes are usually smaller, from ten to twenty students, and each class may be only forty to fifty minutes long. You typically work six shifts per day, five days per week in South Korea, mainland China, and Taiwan.

International schools can include students from nearly any grade, but they typically involve high school students. Depending on the city and country, there may be requirements placed on student ratios (e.g., 70 percent must be foreign passport holders, 30 percent local). Because the typical international school is supposed to replicate the learning and teaching environment of a particular country (e.g., the United States or the United Kingdom) many of the actual instructors are licensed and certified from that particular country—or at least are sought out by HR departments. The combination of a restrictive student body size along with highly qualified instructors results in a higher tuition fee, so foreign teachers are paid significantly more than at local institutions. The class size can vary, but typically does not exceed forty students. The class is usually forty-five to fifty-five minutes. Furthermore, English is not the only subject taught by foreigners. The curriculum is designed to follow the course model in the foreign country (**IB**¹⁰ or **AP**¹¹),

and the medium of instruction, language in this case, is also that of the foreign country.

Language centers in general can vary on subject matter.

Language centers in general can vary on subject matter. For example in Korea, most *hagwon*s act as a type of prep school for some kinds of admissions exams (without the boarding aspect). In China, the largest language centers focus almost exclusively on improving business English for practical uses in corporations and foreign trade enterprises. Thus, cultural etiquette and presentation abilities are covered

in curriculum, but not GRE vocabulary words. There is one more thing to consider when working for a language center, especially the larger chains: the franchise issue. Some of the biggest EFL companies have branched out to smaller cities, reselling their resources, supply chain, and curriculum to franchise owners (like fast-food franchises have done). As a result, the quality control and administrative assistance can vary vastly from site to site.

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DO

- **Talk to anyone you know from that country. What are their thoughts are on living there? This is a good time to scan through social networks you may belong to and re-connect with old colleagues and classmates. You may even know someone who has worked in the city you are planning to work in.**

¹⁰ <http://www.ibo.org/>

¹¹ <https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/home>



- **Start reading local news information about the city and country you are thinking of moving to. While the region is generally peaceful overall, there are still environmental issues that can make a big impact on your quality of life, like hazardous smog in Beijing and Shanghai.**
- **Research and perform due diligence on the company you are thinking of working with. While most schools try to stay out of the negative limelight (otherwise they could lose paying customers), scandals and scams abound and appear on social media sites like Weibo and Twitter, as well as Google News.**

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DO NOT

- **Do not pay for a recruiter unless it is for a management-level position. Recruiters are almost always paid by the school or center; if they ask for money find a different agent or HR company.**
- **Do not work for any company without first talking to the manager you would be reporting directly to. Preferably, talk with some employees and teachers you would be working with. The more you find out about the company, the more risks you can quantify.**
- **Do not sign a contract without first reading through it. Make sure the exact hours and shifts you were told about appear as stated. Make sure no other additional labor is expected unless agreed upon beforehand. Regardless of the size or location, school administrators may try to slip in extra programs for you to work on such as judging contests, role-playing, public lectures, demonstration classes, writing corrections, surge hours during certain seasons, and even voice acting. All of these extracurricular activities should be agreed upon beforehand and not added, yet this type of bait and switch happens frequently.**

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ENTREPRENEURS

For those of you who think you can open an EFL center, be aware that the market conditions are relatively mature in the largest cities in East Asia. There are enormous amounts of competition. For example, in China, urban wages for the average white-collar employee have largely remained stagnant the last two to four years when cost-of-living (inflation) is taken into account. This has a big impact in a family's ability to afford pricey EFL courses. In fact, this is probably the biggest reason why companies like EF and Wall Street have been unable to meet their original growth goals.

Until either course costs come down (by removing intermediaries that do not add real value) and/or wages go up



(providing more discretionary income), it is likely that the go-go days of fast growth are over for much of the traditional, urban EFL market. With that said, there are roughly **100,000 foreigners**¹² working in China each year as EFL instructors, an industry that generated \$7.5 billion in 2011 and one that includes **50,000 training centers**.¹³ So, there may still be room to grow if you find a specific niche to work in such as a creative writing center or a Montessori-style kindergarten.

For perspective, South Korea, which invests more on EFL education than any other country, collectively **spends**¹⁴ between \$10–\$15 billion per year on EFL education; one 2005 **estimate**¹⁵ put the figure even higher: 1.9 percent of GDP (approximately \$16 billion). And with a number of domestic programs similar to its neighbors, Japan **spends**¹⁶ about \$8 billion per year on EFL.

I discuss more specific details of the education market in **chapter 9**¹⁷ of my book.

COST OF LIVING

In general, if you can get a working visa with full-time hours at a training center (twenty-five or more contact hours is considered full-time) you can typically afford a standard of living with few frills, just the basics. You will not be living a life of luxury; you will probably not be able to afford more than a motorcycle or scooter unless you work extra private lessons and save for several years. You may be able to go out to eat at a Western-style restaurant once or twice a week or enjoy a few beverages at a bar or club a couple of times per month. Depending on what city and specific job you get, you may be able to save up a little money and remit it back home, but in general you will probably not be able to pay off a home mortgage in either country, let alone any other large purchases beyond a new laptop, appliance, or bed.

So for example, the cost of living in Shanghai places it among the top twenty in the world, yet the pay is unlike the equivalent of what you would make as an educator in the other twenty cities. According to one

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October **2012 estimate**,¹⁸ the per capita income of tier one cities such as Guangzhou (\$9,200), Beijing (\$8,980) and Shanghai (\$8,325) are significantly higher than the average urban annual salary (\$5,000). For comparison, according to the **Social Security Administration**,¹⁹ the national average wage in the United States in 2011 was \$42,979.19. Mercer's 2012 **ranking report**²⁰ on the most expensive cities notes that the cost of living for expats in China is disproportionately higher in these same cities: (first being the most expensive) Shanghai is

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¹² http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200605/23/eng20060523_267892.html

¹³ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/indepth/2013-10/21/c_125574667.htm

¹⁴ http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/n_feature/2010/09/17/86/4901000000AEN20100917002200315E.HTML

¹⁵ <http://www.koreantranslation.com/REPOSITORY/TheEconomicsofEnglish/tabid/1552/Default.aspx>

¹⁶ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/mar/08/japan-launches-primary-english-push>

¹⁷ <http://www.ofnumbers.com/2013/03/20/chapter-9-the-education-market/>

¹⁸ <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1022100/guangzhou-has-highest-average-salaries-cities-mainland-china>



sixteenth, Beijing is seventeenth, and Guangzhou is thirty-first. Similarly, an ECA International cost-of-living [survey](#)²¹ published in December 2012 found that Beijing is the twenty-second and Shanghai is the twenty-sixth most expensive city globally for expats.

Specifically, if you got a job at a language center, you might make \$2,000 after taxes, but unless you have multiple roommates your rent could be 5,000 to 6,000 RMB (\$1,000) per month for a simple apartment in Shanghai, Shenzhen, or Beijing. Urban areas in South Korea and Japan are likewise just as expensive relative to wages, if not more so, especially in Seoul, Busan, Kyoto, and Tokyo.

Thus, be sure to do research to see what kind of budget you would need to make regarding food expenses, utilities, transportation, rent, insurance, pension, taxes (both foreign and domestic), and whatever level of social life you would like to have. For example, regarding clubs, in some parts of East Asia you cannot simply buy a shot or glass of whiskey and coke,

In some parts of East Asia you cannot simply buy a shot or glass of whiskey and coke, you need to buy the entire bottle.

you need to buy the entire bottle of Jack Daniel's. If you do not like eating out, you may still be limited by what the local grocery store has to offer; perhaps you are not comfortable eating spicy Sichuan dishes, sushi from Yokohama, or pickled cabbage in Seoul. If that is the case, you may want to buy foods and ingredients you are familiar with that are imported but more expensive. CityShop produce and meats are 50–100 percent more expensive than groceries stocked with local food. While subways and bus lines are typically very cheap (usually less than one dollar for an entire route), using a taxi every day can add up very quickly.

While this is not an endorsement of their services or employment, English First has a [simple budget](#)²² for expat teachers in China. The disposable income will vary of course, depending primarily on rent, but that should give you a cursory idea of the general costs. For expenses in Seoul, I recommend looking at [this budget detailed](#)²³ at Koreabridge.

For Taiwan, ESLinsider has a [breakdown of costs](#)²⁴ that looks similar to my time in Kaohsiung (which is slightly more expensive than Taichung and Tainan); also see Toshuo's [post](#)²⁵ regarding Taiwanese buxiban. While the format of the site is not aesthetically pleasing, [this information](#)²⁶ at YCTE regarding budgets in Japan is currently accurate. ESLinsider also has a [brief explanation](#)²⁷ for how much money you should, at minimum, bring to these four regions.

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¹⁹ <http://www.ssa.gov/oact/cola/AWI.html>

²⁰ <http://www.mercer.com/press-releases/cost-of-living-rankings>

²¹ <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2012/12/12/beijing-shanghai-cost-of-living-leaps/?mod=WSJBlog>

²² <http://www.englishfirst.com/trt/cost-of-living-in-china.html>

²³ <http://koreabridge.net/post/cost-living-seoul-korea-2012-breeze>

²⁴ <http://eslinsider.com/blog/taiwan-expenses-cost-of-living>

²⁵ <http://toshuo.com/2005/the-lowdown-on-teaching-english-in-taiwan/>

²⁶ <http://youcanteachenglish.com/teach-english-in-japan-cost-of-living/>

²⁷ <http://eslinsider.com/blog/how-much-money-do-i-need-to-move-to-korea-china-taiwan-japan>



RESOURCES

[Please note, the companies and services listed are not endorsements; they are merely examples of potential employers in those areas. Be sure to check out the specific details and to be aware of possible scams as companies change management over time.]

For everyone, I highly recommend visiting [Dave's ESL Cafe](http://eslcafe.com/).²⁸ Its EFL community has not only been around for about a decade; it has both a forum in which EFL instructors can talk about all of the issues they face (employer problems, regulations, credential requirements, curriculum design, etc.) as well as frequently updated job listings for many East Asian countries. If you plan to work in the EFL industry in Asia, I highly recommend researching the school or institution on the forum and asking other users about their direct experience with them.

For those considering China, I recommend visiting [Angelina's ESL Café](http://www.angelinaslcafe.com/).²⁹ Be sure to send the HR team there your latest resume and include any certificates you may have (TEFL, TKT, CELTA). Each city and province has their own requirements, with Shanghai having the most (college graduate with two years of work experience, TEFL certified, criminal background check, etc.). You can find other job listings on a variety of smaller job boards such as [Craigslist](http://craigslist.com/),³⁰ [Delta Bridges](http://www.deltabridges.com/),³¹ and [Smart Shanghai](http://www.smartshanghai.com/).³² Salaries vary from 4,000 RMB–7,000 RMB (\$750 to \$1,100) in the rural countryside, 12,000 RMB–14,000 RMB (\$2,000 to \$2,200) at language centers in cities, and 25,000 RMB (\$4,000) or more at international schools. Some of the biggest chains are [EF](http://www.ef.com/),³³ [Wall Street English](http://www.wallstreetenglish.com/),³⁴ [Disney English](http://www.disneyenglish.com/),³⁵ and [New Oriental](http://english.neworiental.org/).³⁶ A few of them will provide retention bonuses, but most will not provide any accommodation, pension, or round-trip airfare.

For those considering Taiwan, [Tealit](http://www.tealit.com/)³⁷ is probably the most comprehensive resource, but if you plan to go to Kaohsiung, I recommend joining the [Kaohsiung Living forum](http://www.kaohsiungliving.org/).³⁸ The average private hourly rate is around NT\$600 (roughly \$20 USD) and salaries range from \$1,500–\$2,000 per month. [Kid Castle](http://www.kidcastle.com.tw/en/jobs/teaching.html),³⁹ [Kojen](http://www.kojenenglish.com/jobs/jobs.html),⁴⁰ [Joy](http://eng.joy.com.tw/),⁴¹ [Giraffe](http://www.giraffe.com.tw/ForeignTeacher01.aspx),⁴² and [HESS](http://www.hess.com.tw/en/)⁴³ have coverage throughout the island.

For Korea, Dave's ESL Café above is the best by far. [i-to-i](http://www.i-to-i.com/)⁴⁴ usually has updated listings as well. Summer and winter language camps are also very popular in Korea, but not as popular in other countries. While the camps typically pay a little more because they are short events, the average monthly salary at a hagwon is about 2.1 million won (\$2,000 USD). In addition, Korean schools generally provide some kind of accommodation, basic medical insurance, pension matching (into the national social security fund), annual retention bonus (equal to a month's pay), as well some airfare reimbursement (it used to be full roundtrip but it depends on the institution). [Avalon English](http://english.avalon.co.kr/)⁴⁵ and [CDI](http://www.epik.go.kr/index.do)⁴⁶ are two of the largest hagwon chains, where you would typically teach about thirty hours per week and another ten or so hours of grading and planning. [EPIK](http://www.epik.go.kr/index.do)⁴⁷ and [TaLK](http://www.talk.go.kr/talk/talk_new/main/main_eng.jsp)⁴⁸ place foreign teachers into public schools.

For Japan, [O-Hayo Sensei](http://www.ohayosensei.com/)⁴⁹ has a bimonthly newsletter for teaching jobs. The average monthly salary is around ¥250,000 (\$2,400) with \$20–\$30 per hour for private lessons. [Gaba](http://teaching-in-japan.gaba.co.jp/),⁵⁰ [ECC](http://www.ecc.jp/),⁵¹ [Aeon](http://www.aeonet.com/),⁵² and [Berlitz](http://www.berlitz.co.jp/)⁵³ are several of the biggest eikaiwa in Japan. Both Nova and GEOS went bankrupt, but have restarted some services.

²⁸ <http://eslcafe.com/>

²⁹ <http://anesl.com/schools/index.asp>

³⁰ <http://craigslist.com/>

³¹ <http://www.deltabridges.com/>

³² <http://www.smartshanghai.com/>

³³ <http://www.englishfirst.com/trt/esl-jobs-in-china.html>

³⁴ <http://www.wallstreetinstitute.com/jobSeekers/overview.aspx>

³⁵ <http://disneyenglish.disneycareers.com/>

³⁶ <http://english.neworiental.org/Default.aspx?tabid=4836>

³⁷ <http://tealit.com/>

³⁸ <http://kaohsiungliving.org/>

³⁹ <http://www.kidcastle.com.tw/en/jobs/teaching.html>

⁴⁰ <http://www.kojenenglish.com/jobs/jobs.html>

⁴¹ <http://eng.joy.com.tw/>

⁴² <http://www.giraffe.com.tw/ForeignTeacher01.aspx>

⁴³ <http://www.hess.com.tw/en/>

⁴⁴ <http://www.onlinetefl.com/tefl-jobs-abroad/tefl-jobs-in-asia/tefl-jobs-in-south-korea/>

⁴⁵ <http://english.avalon.co.kr/>

⁴⁶ <http://www.teachinkorea.com/about/Introduction.aspx>

⁴⁷ <http://www.epik.go.kr/index.do>

⁴⁸ http://www.talk.go.kr/talk/talk_new/main/main_eng.jsp

⁴⁹ <http://www.ohayosensei.com/>

⁵⁰ <http://teaching-in-japan.gaba.co.jp/>

⁵¹ <http://www.ecc.jp/>

⁵² <http://www.aeonet.com/>

⁵³ <http://www.berlitz.co.jp/>



I have a couple friends and acquaintances who have worked as EFL instructors in Vietnam. It is the least mature market out of East Asia, primarily because of the developmental status of Vietnam and lack of discretionary income by residents. Thus, the EFL industry is not as organized and it is difficult to find many job listings online (you need to do it on ground, in person). Almost all of the work available is paid by the hour, not weekly or monthly. The average rate per hour is currently \$15–\$20 an hour, paid in dong and thus changeable due to the inflation rate. These were (for the time) quite good wages relative to the cost of living, but apparently the golden age is now over; the actual job opportunities continue to decrease and **the economy stagnates**.⁵⁴ Because of the diminishing hours available, you need to try to work at two or more schools to afford living costs. In contrast, as noted above, the average rate in a city within Taiwan and mainland China is roughly \$15–\$45 per hour, if you do face-to-face private lessons. Recommended resources are **The Asian International School**,⁵⁵ **ILA**,⁵⁶ **VUS**,⁵⁷ **American Academy**,⁵⁸ and **International School Ho Chi Minh City**.⁵⁹

There is a joke that it is much easier to get into TEFL than it is to get out. What is your exit plan to get into another industry?

CONCLUSION

While it is possible and arguably easy to come to Asia and work as an English instructor, it is by no means something that I recommend as a long-term career. In fact, there is a joke that it is much easier to get into TEFL than it is to get out. What is your exit plan to get into another industry?

There are multiple issues within the industry itself, including consumer burnout (not seeing visible results that translate into better career prospects), teacher burnout (extra unexpected hours, classes, writing corrections, administrative work), and policy changes like **reduced emphasis**⁶⁰ on English on official entrance tests in Chinese schools or **phasing out**⁶¹ English teachers in some public schools in Korea. The labor market is potentially any fluent English speaker, thus in an increasingly globalized world where nearly every adult in the developed world has constant access to broadband internet, your peers are your long-term competition. That is 450 million people in the Big Seven alone. When online education and online training become practical and reliable, any one of these native speakers can become an English tutor or instructor, putting downward pressure on wages. Ultimately, English will merely become the medium, rather than the tool itself.

Come for the experience. Come to network. Come to see creative destruction and market liberalization in action. But be open to other opportunities that involve more marketable skills. After all, if you spend a decade working in the EFL industry in Asia, what skills and expertise can you provide back at home?

⁵⁴ http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/07/11/the_end_of_the_vietnamese_miracle

⁵⁵ <http://www.asianschool.edu.vn/en-us/>

⁵⁶ <http://www.ilavietnam.com/ilaportal/index.php?lang=en#splash>

⁵⁷ <http://www.vus.edu.vn/vi/job-at-vus/staff-positions/detailstaff/6>

⁵⁸ <http://www.ama.edu.vn/en/>

⁵⁹ <http://www.aavn.edu.vn/>

⁶⁰ <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2013/11/07/learning-english-may-be-losing-its-luster-in-china/?mod=WSJBlog>

⁶¹ <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20130501000556>



WHAT TO DO

1. Decide which country you want to go to.
2. Decide what kind of institution you want to work at.
3. Send your resume and CV to several different companies, schools, and organizations, as well as headhunters, for maximum offers.
4. Decide what kind of compensation suits your budgetary needs. It is very important to do your due diligence regarding cost-of-living. Renting is probably more expensive than you think, especially if you have never traveled abroad before.
5. Interview with your manager and talk with future coworkers and colleagues; conduct searches to see if anyone has talked about the institution before.
6. Decide what documents you will need: degrees, certificates, criminal background check, health and drug tests, etc.
7. Talk with friends, family, or any other trusted party that may have visited or lived in that country for first-hand knowledge and anecdotes.
8. Sign the contract (which you have read through to clarify your duties and responsibilities), submit paperwork, and get a visa.
9. Purchase a ticket, but be sure to bring enough extra money to pay for a return flight in case an emergency occurs.
10. Begin your experience abroad.

