

**“No Difference Between African American,  
Immigrant, or White Children! They Are All the Same.”:  
Working Toward Developing Teachers’  
Raciolinguistic Attitudes Towards ELs**

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**ABSTRACT:** This study explored Midwestern US teachers’ raciolinguistic attitudes toward English learners. Two research questions guided the study: “How did teachers perceive racism and linguicism” and “How did a professional training influence teachers’ awareness of them?” Critical race theory was used to examine how racism evolved into racialized linguicism. Data analysis demonstrated that teachers tended to conflate the experiences of African American students and English learners, even though they are linguistically and culturally distinct. They also tended to understand the racism and linguicism encountered by the two groups in Black/White and Standard-English/Nonstandard-English binaries. Implications consider the future direction of TESOL teacher education.

**Key Words:** linguicism, racism, institutional racism, racialized linguicism, raciolinguistics

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The United States’ population of English learners (ELs) grew by 51 percent from 1995 to 2014, to 18.7 million (Camera, 2016). While ELs - most of whom are children of color – are increasing, the teaching force has remained predominantly White, female, middle-class, and monolingual (Sleeter & Thao, 2007; Zumwalt & Craig, 2008). About 82% of public school teachers are White (Edwards, 2017) and monolingual English-speakers (NCES, 2019); only about 17% are teachers of color while about 44% of students are students of color (Edwards, 2017); and about 77% of teachers are female in the United States (Loewus, 2017). The demographics of

pre-service teachers largely mirror those of in-service teachers (Marx, 2004; NCES, 2019).

While scholars have called for the diversification of the teaching force over the past several decades, the demographic landscape of PK-12 teachers has not changed much (NCES, 2019; Zumwalt & Craig, 2008). Teacher diversification not only means that the numbers of teachers of color and/or multilingual teachers (Kea et al., 2002) should increase, but also that these teachers need to be aware of the racial, linguistic, and cultural competencies they have to acquire and demonstrate (Marx, 2004) to create equitable and socio-politically appropriate classroom climates. In order for teachers to incorporate equity and social justice in teaching ELs, it is crucial that they first recognize and critically examine their own beliefs and attitudes towards ELs, and try to understand and explore socially just world views that are aligned with ELs' situated experiences (Bennett, 1993).

This qualitative study explored in what ways undergraduate students (pre-service teachers) and graduate students (in-service teachers) in a year-long TESOL professional development program conceptualized the intersectionality of race and language, and how such understandings can potentially influence equitable and socially just attitudes towards and teaching practices for ELs. Particularly, we examined awareness about racism and linguisticism toward ELs from immigrant and refugee backgrounds among pre- and in-service teachers who participated in a National Professional Development (NPD) grant project, Quality Teachers for English Learners (QTEL) in 2011-2016. This QTEL project, sponsored by the Office of English Language Acquisition, aimed to strengthen participating teachers' practice of equity and excellence for ELs' academic achievement by 1) offering six TESOL courses and 2) providing five full-day professional development sessions. Two main questions guided this study; (1) *How did participating teachers perceive racism and linguisticism?* and (2) *How did the professional development program impact participating teachers' critical awareness of racism and linguisticism?*

### **Theoretical Backgrounds**

In this section, we first recognize the importance of developing critical raciolinguistic perspectives among teachers towards ELs for meaningful changes in their education. Then, we review the literature on discrimination based on one's race and language use from the Critical Race Theory perspective, particularly in terms of how explicit racism has evolved into colorblind racism and racialized linguisticism.

### **Teacher Beliefs on the Education of ELs**

Research shows that teacher beliefs impact their practices regarding ELs' education in mainstream classrooms, calling for more professional development opportunities for teachers to reflect on and revise their beliefs about ELs (Pettit, 2011). As Nieto (1995) contends, the attitudes, beliefs, and practices shared by schools and community members allow or limit educational opportunities for diverse student populations. Students from immigrant and refugee families – who tend to speak marginalized language in the US – are more likely to experience a

deteriorating impact from teachers' misguided notions about ELs' identities and practices. Thus, it is crucial for teachers to reflect on their sociocultural identities and cultivate positive attitudes and beliefs about ELs and their families (Herrera & Morales, 2009; Pettit, 2011).

Furthermore, the challenge of meeting the mandated accountability requirement of schools has created a backlash against the EL population among classroom teachers (Youngs & Youngs, 2001). Au (2016) argues that, while the narrative of education reform focuses on the goal of racial equality, "standardized testing has always reproduced racial inequality in the U.S." (p. 40). Similarly, despite education policy that promises no student will be left behind, ELs are required to pass high-stakes tests in English (Menken, 2006). These tests are framed as objective and language neutral (Bale, 2016), yet serve to further penalize and marginalize ELs and the schools where they attend. For example, English-only high-stakes assessments cause major challenges to ELs with low English language proficiency. The goal of these standardized high-stake tests is to raise standards for student learning, yet ELs are increasingly challenged to meet these higher levels of academic achievement tests without proper accommodation (Bronwyn, 2002; Moore, 2015). When ELs take these tests, the results tend to reflect their English language proficiency, but not accurately assess their content knowledge or skills (Menken, 2000), which results in low validity of the tests. Therefore, the test results "may not be a valid reflection of what the [EL] students know and can do" (Bronwyn, 2002, p. 3).

Such deficit beliefs and practices are often reflective of the society's deeply rooted cultural and raciolinguistic attitudes towards ELs. Despite the evident marginalization of students who are not White, middle-class, and/or English-speaking, some teachers avoid talking about race and racism, claiming that they *do not see* color or are colorblind with their students, as if their indifference to racial, cultural, and linguistic differences would ensure the equity of students (Flores & Rose, 2015). With the exponential increase of the diverse student population, however, teachers can no longer claim colorblindness, which they would interpret as a *bias-free* stance, but need to *see* and deal with the substantial differences and resulting inequities that students from linguistic and racial minority groups encounter on a daily basis (Herrera & Morales, 2009). Taylor's (2006) study suggests that "integrative antiracism education can support immigrant language learners' intersectional and multilevel understandings of discrimination" (p. 519). ELs from immigrant and refugee backgrounds are among the groups whose race, culture, and language are construed as deficits that may prevent them from accessing better educational opportunities. There has been an urgent call for teacher training to move beyond color-evasive rhetoric to serve ELs in equitable, antiracist, and socially-just manners (Taylor, 2006; Walker et al., 2004).

### **Racism through Critical Race Theory and Colorblind Racism**

Drawing from critical race theory (CRT), scholars recognize the tenacious nature of race and racism in our society (Kubota, 2002; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT scholars describe racism as systematic social patterns and hierarchies in which Whites benefit at the expense of other racial groups (Bell & Roberts, 2010).

Racism is not a “figment of political correctness” (Luke, 2009, p. 287), nor “inherently meaningful” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 7), but “materially and phenomenally real for those who experience it” (Luke, 2009, p. 287). Racism, according to CRT, needs to be understood as “a system of advantage based on race” (Tatum, 1999, p. 7) or White privilege in the United States. Another central tenet of CRT is that providing racial equity should be normal, rather than abnormal qualities of American society (Bell, 1992).

CRT has been used to make institutionalized racism visible by attending to how educational theories, policies, and teaching practices have subordinated certain racial and ethnic groups (Solórzano, 1998). Prevalent discussion on race and race-related issues contributes to the masking of unconscious and implicit or colorblind racism among teachers towards immigrant and refugee students. Bonilla-Silva (2003) has termed this phenomenon *colorblind racism* – refusal to talk about race because the act of mentioning “race” itself is perceived as a “racist.” However, liberal multiculturalism, defined as “liberal discourse of colorblind individualism, equality, and meritocracy” (Kubota, 2002, p. 87), perpetuates institutionalized racism without explicitly devaluing certain cultures. Liberal multiculturalism, however, fails to address fundamental issues of inequality and discrimination across diverse racial and linguistic groups in society. Thus, colorblindness can be “a mode of thinking about race organized around an effort not to see or at any rate not to acknowledge race differences” (Bell, 2002, p. 238).

As Markus et al. (2000) emphasize, the real harm comes from the ideological stance of colorblindness as it denies how race constitutes social divisions and inequality across racial and ethnic lines while aiming to overcome it. Another issue in liberal multiculturalism is the tendency to stereotype students based on their language, race, and culture, even with a well-intentioned desire to help students succeed in school (Ellwood, 2009). The attitude of essentializing and othering of cultures is often called “cultural racism” (Bonilla-Silva, 2003), through which teachers overgeneralize or binarize different cultures and reify their stereotypes. Thus, it is important to note that the impact of colorblind multicultural rhetoric is not benign but serves to produce and maintain inequitable educational outcomes (Markus et al., 2000). Teachers cannot, however, be neutral bystanders because they are “either part of the problem or part of the solution” (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997, p. 24). Teachers, especially monolingual English-only teachers, need to explore and understand their own raciolinguistic ideologies so they may normalize multilingual repertoires (Flores, 2019).

### **Racialized Linguicism toward English Learners**

While scholars of CRT and colorblind racism have analyzed ways in which racism intersects with social class and gender, language has not been a focus in such discussions (Cho, 2017). Whereas colorblind racism serves to perpetuate existing intergroup inequalities, the view of language as neutral reinforces the highly racialized social practices, which we call linguicism (Baugh, 2005) or “linguistically argued racism” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1998, p. 13). Linguicism is further defined as “a form of social discrimination that privileges one language variety over another” (Austin, 2009, p. 253) and serves as a legal and subtle way of

discriminating against people whose dialect or language does not align with Standard American English (SAE) (Austin, 2009; Endo, 2015). Standard English language education in the US has been developed around the practices of White, middle-class, and monolingual English speakers (Gibbons, 2005). This way of deciding language norms can marginalize ELs whose *Englishes* and native languages are not SAE (Mahboob & Szenes, 2007). In liberal multicultural education, the term *race* is often replaced by culture or ethnicity (Kubota & Lin, 2006; van Dijk, 1993). Just like White racism is made to look neutral or invisible, linguicism is also perceived as non-existent. However, educational discourse cannot be neutral (Marx, 2004). Discourses of racism and linguicism are aligned with the normalized way in which differences become the source of establishing a hierarchy of power and domination (Cho, 2017). The social process of racism and linguicism privileges White over Black, and Standard American English over other languages, reinforcing the established power hierarchy. In this process, racial and linguistic constructs are inseparably intertwined, calling for a more delicate approach to understanding the complexity of their intersectionality (Cho, 2017). For example, the image of an Asian American or a Latinx American whose English is not SAE is that of a perpetual “foreigner,” regardless of their English proficiency (Rubin, 1992). Motha (2006) points out that speaking a standard variety of English associated with Whiteness grants a position of power. In the discussion of racism, therefore, language needs to be a critical focus of investigation (Kubota & Lin, 2006).

When Whiteness is combined with SAE, it forms language colonialism, a named language (Liggett, 2014; Flores & Rose, 2015), in which Whiteness and SAE translate into social, cultural, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 2010). Dominant public discourses around SAE versus non-SAE varieties are highly racialized (Liggett, 2014), rendering speakers of mainstream English or SAE more legitimate than speakers of other *Englishes* (Motha, 2006). In this binary scheme, SAE is promoted as the norm, while other varieties of English, including African American English (AAE) and World *Englishes*, are pathologized (Motha, 2006). In turn, such normative views of SAE attribute an inferior status to speakers of other *Englishes* (Wolfram, 2013).

Such linguistic racialization deprives ELs from linguistic minority backgrounds of equal access to “political-economic power and control of natural resources, and subordinates them to “those inferiorized as the other”” (Darder & Torres, 2004, p. 71). White educators and policy makers have predominantly shaped policies and practices of education with little to no input from children and adults who speak languages and dialects other than SAE. Thus, educational practices and policies such as high-stakes testing expedite the process of EL students losing their heritage, culture, and language (Darder & Torres, 2004). Although several educational policies and court cases have resulted in accommodations for students with different linguistic backgrounds, this does little to disrupt linguicism or the SAE primacy (Austin, 2009). In this context, SAE serves to “other” different languages and dialects. Linguicism in U.S. language policies, with their racial overtones, has made “differences of culture, language, and race function as categories that lead to inequitable treatment” (Austin, 2009, p. 259).

With such racial and linguistic prejudices present in their daily lives, ELs are at risk in their communication, academic learning, and identity development (Kubota, 2002). Few scholars, however, have explored how language identity intersects with racial identity for youth who have been labeled as inferior learners (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Educational research has not extensively analyzed issues of language discrimination or linguicism (Wiley, 2015), even though, in reality, language is at the center of discrimination, either serving as a proxy for other kinds of marginalizing practices, or upholding institutional biases (Viesca, 2013; Wiley, 2015). Although many institutions in our society are built on legally sanctioned racial and linguistic discrimination (Cho, 2017; Omi & Winant, 1994), many people do not recognize how they help perpetuate social inequities (Viesca, 2013) based on race and language use. Cho's (2017) counter-stories of bilingual faculty and preservice teachers illustrate that teaching about race and language fosters critical reflection on power imbalance in schools. Mitchell's (2012) case study illustrates the influence of the "English-is-all-that-matters" story, which treats multilingual learners as if they were monolingual or English-speaking students; their educational opportunities are limited through a forceful use of "English only." Our society needs to address not only race-based discrimination but also language-based discrimination since language is an important part of the racialization process (Delpit, 2008).

### **Research Methods**

Attending to the intersectional nature of race and language, we examined pre-service and in-service teachers' raciolinguistic attitudes toward English learners. In what follows, we first describe the study context, methods of data collection, research questions, and analysis before sharing the results and implications.

#### **Study Context**

For this study, it is important to understand the particular regional and sociopolitical context. This study was conducted in a large, industrial Midwestern US city with a long history of Black-White racialization, including racial segregation (Gordon, 2008), even after "Segregation of the Negro Ordinance" was ruled unconstitutional in 1916 (Wright, 2005). There is a close relationship between the region where a teacher lives and his or her attitudes toward African American and immigrant/refugee students (Byrnes et al., 1997). As cases of police violence on Black bodies in the US frequently have shown, racial issues are pertinent to Black and White racial identities and interactions. In this Black and White binarized social context, immigrants and refugees whose children are mostly non-native English speakers in this city are not considered major decision makers like, for example, school board members who are mostly native English speakers. According to the state's most recent database, one of the school districts in this city has 34% minority enrollment, mostly Asian and Black. However, there are no Asian or Black board members; rather, all seven board members are white. Not unlike other areas in the United States, colorblind rhetoric is prominent in progressive circles in this city, and teachers are no exception (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Kreamelmeyer et al., 2016; Ullucci & Battey, 2011).

This particular binary context of the city was considered when we designed the QTEL professional development program sponsored by the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA). Given that most participating teachers were working in a district where African American students comprised the majority of the student body, we incorporated in the Crosscultural Communications QTEL course opportunities to critically review U.S. language planning and policy and discuss the privileging of Standard American English (SAE). For example, we examined how African American students have been labeled as speaking African American English (AAE). This conversation was inextricably linked to race, particularly within the Black/White racial framework of the city. This discussion then expanded into a discussion of native vs. non-native speakers of English, including all other varieties of Englishes and their different accents in terms of how the native norms ultimately devalue all other kinds of speakers (Flores, 2013).

We recruited in-service teachers from the three middle schools who teach ELs in the East Urban Public School (EUPS) District (pseudonym). Each middle school that had more than 25%— or 150 – ELs had one TESOL-certified teacher. The EUPS District has about 2600 ELs (9.2% of the District student population) from 61 countries, representing over 40 native languages. The predominant languages of ELs are Arabic, Bosnian, French, Maay, Russian, Spanish, Swahili, and Vietnamese. ELs are from 61 countries, including Mexico and Latin American countries; Bosnia and other Eastern European countries; Somali and other African countries; Middle-East countries like Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon; Southeast Asian countries like the Philippines and Vietnam; as well as many other countries. Recently, EUPS has had increasing numbers of refugees from Syria, Tanzania, Congo, and Somalia. Each participating teacher in the study typically had 3-7 different native languages in his/her classroom. For pre-service teachers, the grant team visited the teacher education classes that Junior and Senior undergraduate students were taking and shared the grant objectives and benefits of the project to becoming more effective in teaching content lessons for ELs. Twenty pre-service teachers were recruited from Elementary education majors.

The purpose of the QTEL project was to prepare K-8 content teachers to become linguistically and culturally responsive teachers for ELs with a set of professional development programs that were developed by the project team. For one year, from January to December 2016, these pre- and in-service teachers took six TESOL-certification courses which included Foundations of TESOL, Principles of Second Language Acquisition, Crosscultural Communications, Assessment in TESOL, Methods and Materials in TESOL, and Practicum in TESOL. Participants also joined five full-day professional development workshops which had diverse learning goals including linguistically and culturally responsive math pedagogy, culturally responsive classroom management, content area literacy teaching support, and developing connections with families of immigrants and refugees. We engaged with this cohort group in multiple capacities as the QTEL director, workshop providers, and course instructors while guiding participants' progress in the program as well as establishing rapport to encourage sharing of perceptions about race/racism and language/linguicism in the coursework and the professional development workshops. Author 1 is a Korean-American bilingual scholar who has

lived in the US for 39 years and taught teacher education courses about 30 years. Her research interest includes equity and creativity when preparing teachers for ELs. Author 2 is a bilingual scholar from South Korea whose research focuses on immigrant youth's identity work as seen through their language use and media engagement. Author 3 is a White English and Spanish bilingual scholar who grew up in predominantly White communities and schools; she has attempted to listen to voices of marginalized groups of people in order to better understand issues of equity. While critically challenging each other's perspectives, researchers analyzed the data collaboratively.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

For the main data set for the study, we conducted interviews between July and October of 2016 with three prompting questions regarding participants' 1) perceptions of appropriate teaching preparation to support ELs, 2) conceptions of race and racism, and attitudes toward ELs and other language minority groups such as African Americans, and 3) perceptions and responses to the language use of ELs and their parents. Each interview lasted between 15 and 50 minutes and the audio files were transcribed for analysis. All participants' names are pseudonyms.

Interview data analysis was conducted in three phases. First, each of the three researchers conducted an individual analysis of interviews following the constructivist grounded theory approach of open coding and writing analytical memos (Charmaz, 2014). Then, we individually added to and commented on the other two researchers' initial codes, categories, and analytical notes. As the second step of our analysis, we discussed and confirmed overlapping categories and further explored different viewpoints or areas that were captured by one researcher but not by others. We critically assessed our different interpretations using a range of personal and disciplinary backgrounds, including our different racial and linguistic experiences and identities. For example, Author 3 as a White female researcher from the US context was more acutely critical than the two Korean immigrant researchers towards teachers' racial biases. These different racial, ethnic, and personal identities contributed to solidifying our discussions, triangulating data analysis with diverse viewpoints, and complementing the "blind spots" of each researcher. Finally, based on these individual and collective analyses, we proceeded with axial coding through constant comparison and finding patterns across interviews (Charmaz, 2014). From this collaborative analytic process, we identified how racism and linguicism intersected and became conflated in teachers' perceptions about students from non-English or non-SAE-speaking backgrounds. While recognizing that racism and linguicism were inextricably linked and conflated in teachers' perceptions, we decided to present our findings in separate categories of attitudes towards racism and linguicism, and tried to unlock their complicated and subtle intersections in daily manifestations.

### **Findings**

In this section, we present the findings to answer our two research questions: (1) How did participating teachers perceive racism and linguicism? and

(2) How did a professional development program impact participating teachers' critical awareness of racism and linguicism? Data analysis demonstrated that the participants had grown in awareness about racism and language discrimination experienced by ELs from immigrant and refugee families, but in a relatively superficial way. A continuous pattern in the interview data was the participants' dichotomous view of racism and linguicism (Austin, 2009). Participants used racialized rhetoric in their discourse at the individual level, but few addressed institutionalized racism. In the interview, the urban pre- and in-service teachers used African American students' experiences and their English as a recurring reference and analogy in order to discuss racism and linguicism towards ELs. We argue that while these participant connections between African American students and ELs helped them access and relate to ELs' experiences, such juxtaposition minimized the unique characteristics and challenges of ELs. Without a deeper understanding of EL-specific contexts and challenges, teachers might end up being less, rather than more, attentive to their ELs' needs.

### **Black vs. White Dichotomy for Racism**

To the question of how the participating teachers conceived race, all teachers answered with the racial paradigm of Black and White, which, perhaps unintentionally, excluded ELs' experiences. For example, Samara, a Black female teacher, suggested that contemporary racism is more "subliminal" than "outward" as in her grandparents' time for Black people. To the point about her perception of ELs and immigrants/refugees, however, she mentioned:

I had not really had any experiences with people who were refugees or immigrants, so I think this class really opened my eyes and helped me see clearly and to not be so ignorant and be more knowledgeable about different cultures and different types of people.

Briana, a White female teacher, described her upbringing in a "predominant White community" whereas Leah, a Black female teacher, had the "predominant African American" experience "until college." For most of the participating teachers, the notion of race and racism existed as a Black and White issue and they consciously avoided racialized aspects of their students' lives. Jessica's perception of students being "race-blind" is an example:

But I have never seen Black on White, Bosnian on African American, that just doesn't happen in our building ever – it's amazing. I think the kids are pretty much culture and race blind.

Likewise, participants' views of language seemed to hinge on the binary concepts of SAE as "correct" and African American English as "slang" or "incorrect." Natali and Eva viewed other EL students or ELs' foreign accents as existing beyond the frame of correct or incorrect English; instead, they exotified such other accents using words like "intriguing," "educated," "cool," "intelligent," and/or "sex appeal." These two teachers seemed to distinguish SAE, the normative language, from African American English and ELs' accented Englishes, but they did not fully engage in the perspective of language practice as a core part of one's personhood,

history, and identity. Natali, a Black in-service teacher, recognized the need to listen better to her ELs' speaking, but exoticized their accents:

I was intrigued by ELs and would say, "say something in your language" ... I think accents are cool. I guess the only thing that I have to try is to really listen, so I understand what they're saying and I usually don't. Accents kind of have a sex appeal to them, for some reason (underlining emphasis added).

Natali shared how she also viewed a colleague from Kenya as being more "intelligent" because of her accent. Natali was, perhaps inadvertently, othering her immigrant/refugee students and an immigrant colleague by romanticizing their accents, reflected in her word choices of "cool," "sexy," and "intelligent." Eva, a White pre-service teacher, showed a similar othering view of immigrants and refugees by using terms like "cool" and "fascinating" to describe "the artifacts in their cultures hanging in their [immigrants'] houses" that she visited. Eva described her experience of "being around all these businessmen" when she was young as "heavy exposure to people from other countries and languages." However, Eva had an overly fantasizing view of foreigners as "intelligent" with "cool" accents, a view collected from a very small sample of people she encountered when young. Her idea of immigrants as "educated foreigners" implicitly positioned students with accents as "others" existing somewhere beyond the Black and White paradigm. With the new challenge of serving EL students from a variety of diverse backgrounds and experiences, her singular story of accents and their users might not work to the best interest of her EL students.

### **Standard vs. Nonstandard English Dichotomy for Linguicism**

Since, for most teachers, immigrant and refugee students' experiences existed beyond their framework of race, Natali, an African American urban teacher, and Jessica, a White urban teacher, juxtaposed their perceptions of African American students with ELs to understand them. In other words, these teachers recognized more similarities than differences between African American students and ELs. For example, Natali, a Black female teacher, assumed parallel experiences between the racism experienced by Black people and that experienced by immigrant ELs. For example, she told Black students not to make fun of the ELs and to develop empathy based on the assumptions of their shared struggles and discriminatory experiences. Likewise, Jessica, a White teacher, took a protective stance towards ELs based on her assumption that ELs' challenges would be similar to the "really rough life" of African American students.

Both Natali and Jessica made a generalized assumption with good intentions that African American students and ELs from immigrant and refugee backgrounds would share similar challenges in life. The juxtaposition of African American students and immigrant/refugee EL students also occurred in the realm of language use and learning. Teachers viewed both groups' language practices as problematic and deviating from the standard English norms, and thus needing remedial support. They assumed a harsher bias towards African American English. For instance, Jessica felt responsible for bridging the gap in the English

communication of linguistically struggling ELs. However, she strongly disapproved of African American English as an appropriate language of education, saying that aspects of African American English that sound irregular in SAE sounded like “fingernails on a chalkboard.” Thus, Jessica overcorrected African American students’ English based on the SAE rules.

It is notable that African American English was one of the topics of the Cross-Cultural Communications course with the goal of reducing teachers’ biases towards linguistic variations. In this course, QTEL participants discussed African American English as a legitimate language with its own grammar rules and phonemic system and demonstrated shifting perspectives towards its usage. Jessica was one of the teachers who shared how the training reframed her notion of African American students and their language use. However, the discrepancy between such shifting perspectives and persisting practices of devaluing African American English through overcorrection indicates the deeply rooted monolingual SAE ideology that these teachers work with in the monolingual English-only classroom.

### **Towards EL-Specific Understanding and Support**

Overall, participants made a deeper connection with African American students through the QTEL training. Since the pre- and in-service teachers had a longer history of working with African American students than with ELs, a newer and more diverse population, they felt that the training provided them with necessary tools to revise their language ideologies and instructional strategies for African American students. The parallel view of two student groups helped the teachers better understand the groups’ shared challenges. However, by attending overly to their similarities, they missed opportunities to focus on the differences between the groups. In practice, teachers utilized QTEL training to change their service for African American students, claiming that teaching strategies geared to support ELs were effective for other students, especially African American students. Natali’s quote supported such a one-size-fits-all mindset: “The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) strategies such as using sentence stems, frontloading, and outcome-based language-objectives could be used to teach my Black students.” Thus, we identified that the program needed to move teachers beyond the similarity-focused approach by bringing teachers’ attention to the unique challenges of each group and providing opportunities to apply and reflect on their practices with ELs in particular.

Teachers’ efforts to address ELs’ experiences of racism also drew from their understanding of African American students’ experiences of discrimination. However, except for a few teachers who are African American themselves, teachers based their understanding on only a few anecdotal examples of racism in their school context but not from the general recognition of its history and predominance in the larger society. They were even less attentive to the cases of linguicism towards ELs. Many believed linguicism was an individual bias against different languages or accents rather than institutional practices that limit life outcomes for ELs, immigrants, and refugees in general. Bailey, a White pre-service teacher, received some advice (or warnings) for her internship in an urban school

in dealing with African American students' behaviors and their academic gap, but little training or words of expectation for teaching ELs. Briana, a White in-service teacher, also shared a similar lack of appropriate attention to ELs in her school where ELs were automatically assumed to need remedial classes without being given other elective course options. The disproportionately high rate of ELs in such remedial classes is one of the indicators of institutional racism and linguicism in education that bases important academic decisions on race and language use. This phenomena in turn can impact ELs' academic achievement negatively. Even though Briana was one of the few participants who demonstrated critical awareness of institutionalized bias, she did not seem equipped with power, resources, and strategies to challenge such institutionalized practices in the system.

### **Discussion: Remaining Challenges beyond QTEL**

The purpose of this study was to examine how the QTEL cohort pre- and in-service teachers perceived the intersection of racism and linguicism, and whether they enhanced – or did not enhance – their awareness of equity through critical consciousness of racism and linguicism towards ELs through the QTEL training. Overall, the participants in our study understood race and language through the dichotomous lens of Black versus White, and SAE versus non-SAE. In the meantime, the participating teachers seemed to ignore ELs' multiple identities and languages outside this binary as “foreign” or “exotic.” The participating teachers still engaged with the assimilation or subtractive framework rather than an integrated or additive approach that would promote the development of “standardized language skills while encouraging students to maintain the minoritized linguistic practices they bring to the classroom” (Flores & Rose, 2015, p. 150). The participating teachers expressed that in language education, language-minoritized students, e.g., ELs and African American urban students, were expected to replace their [home] language varieties with the standardized American language (Flores & Rose, 2015). As argued earlier, the unique context of the city as well as teachers' personal upbringings in the dichotomous Black and White environment might have shaped our participants' perceptions and experiences with race and racism. Both White and Black teachers associated racism mainly with a Black and White issue. Some teachers perceived racial discrimination as personal experiences, whereas others highlighted the history of racism and awareness of and resistance towards systematic White privilege. In all these discourses, however, experiences of immigrants and refugees were largely absent or associated with Black/African American experiences. The results indicate that pre- and in-service teachers needed more explicit opportunities to consider the unique and diverse range of immigrant/refugee and/or ELs' racialized experiences including linguicism beyond the Black and White paradigm. To this end, teacher educators need to provide professional learning experiences of bilingualism/multilingualism so that their pre- and in-service teachers can move beyond defining English accents as “cool” or “exotic,” and conflating the challenges of African American and ELs students. The reductionist or othering view might further alienate these ELs from proper educational opportunities.

Kumaravadivelu (2003) mentioned that cultural stereotypes are products of colonialism which enacted the binaries of East/West, us/them, and the “essentialized and static Other” (p. 716). The field of TESOL has maintained, rather than disrupted, the binary of native/nonnative speaker, along with the “predominance of Western perspectives to the teaching of culture” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 716). Bonilla-Silva (2003) referred to this essentialization and othering of cultures as cultural racism in which the discursive legacy of Western colonialism assumed a racialized power hierarchy of Western being the preferred norm. The “Other” was viewed as “exotic” and “colorful,” while at the same time it was deviant from the “norm” (Kubota, 2001). In this context, language and culture were conflated, or one was used as a proxy for the other. Colorblind racial attitudes often mask the institutionalized ideologies of such cultural colonialism while “Standard” English is endorsed as an official language with automated power. When individual teachers, especially African American teachers, claim to perceive immigrant and refugee ELs as better behaving than African American students or their accents as cool and exotic, they might still unintentionally contribute to institutional biases and inequitable practices by exotifying the cultural and linguistic practices of students. As with the colorblind attitude towards racism, linguicism is often perceived as individual bias without recognizing its systemic and institutionalized nature (Shin, 2006). In our QTEL program, there was no sign that participants embraced or practiced explicit or overt racism or linguicism. However, critical reflection or expanded perception towards the social and institutional levels of racism and linguicism was not practiced on a regular basis. We do not ascribe this lack of critical awareness to the individual teacher as their deficit. Despite the conscious design and continuous efforts through the QTEL program to cultivate teachers’ critical reflection on systemic biases and discriminatory practices towards linguistic minority students, we recognized that even a year-long intensive training like ours was not sufficient for teachers to foster such in-depth awareness to advocate equitable and socio-politically just practices for linguistically and racially diverse students. Therefore, we argue that the TESOL field and the general teacher education should engage teachers in more in-depth inquiry of the sociocultural and political contexts of learning English, as well as their own ideological stances.

Despite these limitations, however, we also noted that most participants in QTEL training, including the selected interviewees, improved their understanding of ELs from immigrant and refugee families, although at the level of micro-transformation (Kreamelmeyer et al., 2016). We believe that QTEL has provided the important initial step of transformation for teachers, particularly in the perceptual level of the complexity of the ELs they teach. Teachers started to realize that language would be an essential part of one’s identity and could be a source for discrimination in the current political landscape. They planned to apply instructional methods and classroom designs that they learned from QTEL in their own classrooms with ELs. With the results of these instructional changes and the micro-transformation towards in-depth understanding of intertwined racism and linguicism, we can better design future training programs to support teachers to be not only linguistically and culturally responsive, but also raciolinguistically

responsive educators. This is in line with Bajaj et al.'s (2017) work around socio-politically relevant pedagogy for multicultural professional development for teachers of diverse students.

### **Conclusion**

This qualitative study showcased deeply rooted issues of racism and linguicism reflected in teachers' perceptions. We argue that in order for the TESOL field to be successful, it should address sociocultural and sociopolitical discourses around race, racism, language, and linguicism beyond teaching instructional strategies for ELs. Particularly, teachers need to reflect consciously on how power dynamics along the lines of race and language can impact EL students' learning and their identity development (Gitlin et al., 2003). This is why we call our story a "counter-story" to the typical success stories of teacher training programs (Cho, 2017). This is not a deficit-oriented claim about individual teachers' perceptions and practices around racism and linguicism. It is to highlight the systemic and institutionalized teacher education programs that permeate teachers' raciolinguistic ideologies and their daily practices.

We, therefore, suggest that TESOL courses and professional development programs be designed and implemented to include critical discussions on difficult-to-open topics such as racialized linguicism and colorblind racism. At a national level, we have witnessed a shift from the colorblind, post-racial rhetoric, to blatant and overt xenophobia and racist policies that continue to impact our whole society. Now, more than ever, as teacher educators we need to center an analysis of systemic racism and linguicism, pushing past the colorblind rhetoric that is prevalent in education. We must address individual bias, but we should not stop there. The concept of systemic racism and linguicism means that even if we eliminate every single individual bias, the system will continue to enact inequitable outcomes for marginalized people. We maintain that a TESOL program is not exempt from these issues and should integrate a clear position throughout the program that "Black Lives Matter," immigrant and refugee lives matter, and English learner lives matter. This stance should be incorporated into every class in the program to deliver a consistent message that race, culture, and language cannot be relegated to one particular professional development session or only during certain months of the year.

Teacher educators, thus, must continue to examine their own blind-spots and zoom out to view the systems-level view of everything from educational policies to hiring practices to university recruiting practices that exacerbate and perpetuate racism and linguicism. In very concrete terms, within a TESOL program, we maintain that teacher education must start from the top-down and bottom-up at the same time. TESOL programs should reflect the student populations we hope to serve (bottom-up). To this end, universities should hire a diverse group of instructors, also attending to the dispositions for equity that the instructors possess (top-down). In addition, schools and colleges of education must recruit a diverse body of pre-service and in-service teachers. This must be accompanied by explicit instruction about racism and linguicism, since teachers of every background can internalize the racism of the larger society. This struggle needs to be explained in

concrete terms, making explicit the connections between racist policies and deleterious outcomes for students of color and ELs. We must continue this fight as if our lives and the lives of our students depend on it. Within TESOL courses and professional developments for EL teachers, we continue to work towards more fundamental pedagogical investigations of teachers' and students' identities, raciolinguistic ideologies, and systematic issues of equity along with the conventional methodologies. For example, teachers' raciolinguistic experiences can open up a new mental space to understand what it would be like to be an EL in an English-only classroom. Then, the program activities should be designed to enhance not only their conventional instructional capacities but also the socially just curriculum for ELs. Including readings, multimedia resources, and discussion activities, produced with multilingual education frameworks and equity-oriented perspectives, will help teachers step out of their comfort zone and share new perspectives, questions, and plans. We suggest that such an integrative program, which provides a series of milestones in which teachers recognize and share their transformation in perceptions and practices, can challenge and change the deep-rooted system of inequity.

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