

The Reproduction of Racialization and Racial Discrimination in Classrooms and its Impact on ELLs' Social Interactions and L2 Development

Ayesha Mohammed Mudhaffer

English Language Institute
King Abdulaziz University
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

The consequences of racialization and racial discrimination against English Language Learners (ELLs) in many schools and classrooms are reflected in their degree of socialization in the academic community which ultimately affects their English language development. Since second language acquisition is a social rather than an individual process, ELLs may not find the support they need for essential progress (in the second language they are learning) in their classrooms due to the limited opportunities for social engagement. Inferiorizing newcomer ELLs and discriminating them due to their difference of skills, orientations, and actions will also affect ELLs' degree and forms of participation in the practices of the classroom community. Ignoring such an issue can result in the reproduction of the marginalized social status of newcomer ELLs and the reproduction of the dominating and accepted forms of cultural capital. In the light of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory that supports the social development of language learning, the different forms of discrimination which students are subject to can have a negative impact on learners' social and language development. Racialization decreases opportunities for healthy socialization and thus limits students' development in their L2 and access to the classroom practices.

Keywords: English Language Learners, marginalization, racial discrimination, racialization

Introduction

Many second language (L2) studies have focused on the role of students' motivations, investment, attitudes, orientations, and skills in enhancing or limiting social interactions and language development (Gillette, 1994; Norton, 2000). Other studies examined the role of teachers' scaffolding, feedback, and teaching strategies on L2 learners' social and academic success in second language learning (Sullivan, 2000; Linn, 1999). While both students and teachers are the primary members of the classroom who impact learners' social interactions and L2 learning, the classroom environment (the social context) in which the learning occurs is also an important component which influences the success of social interactions and language learning for English language learners (ELL). In this sense, schools are considered by families, educators, and researchers as important sites for promoting the acquisition of knowledge, language, and building social relationships. They are considered 'safe spaces' for new encounters, interactions and learning opportunities. However, schools (and the classroom environment) can not only facilitate, but can sometimes hinder language development and social engagement. In fact, Duff's (2002) study shows that "large numbers of minority students in schools worldwide are at considerable risk of alienation, isolation, and failure" (p. 316). ELLs who study in foreign countries and who come from diverse backgrounds and races with orientations and skills incompatible with those of native speakers' (NS) and institutions are often subject to different forms of marginalization that impacts their social interactions and language development, and one of the most profound constraints is the racial discrimination existing in schools worldwide. The question is: Why are schools reproducing the same oppressive conditions that marginalize newcomers? And what are the manifestations of racialization and racial discrimination done by teachers and students against ELLs? How can we, as teachers, not reinforce such racialization and racial discrimination in schools in order to provide a healthier learning environment for ELLs?

In this paper, I argue that while educational institutions are considered 'the safe environments' for ELLs to develop socially and linguistically, they can be the very sites that hinder social engagement and limit language development through the reproduction of various manifestations of racialization and racial discrimination by teachers and peers. As theoretical frameworks of this paper, I will begin by reviewing Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of cognitive development and its relation to language development to show that learning occurs in and through social interactions in schools and classrooms, and that social engagement plays a significant role in successful language development (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Johnson, 2004; Storch, 2002). Bourdieu's concept of social reproduction will also be part of the theoretical framework because it helps explain the continuance of racialization and racial discrimination of ELLs in educational settings (Lin, 1999; Richardson, 1986; Tzanakis, 2011). I will then explore the meanings of the notions of racialization and racial discrimination in order to lay the foundation for this paper, and I will offer some examples of its manifestations against newcomers (ELLs). I will conclude by discussing some possibilities of decreasing racialization and racial discrimination, and what needs to be done by leaders and teachers to overcome such a serious issue.

Theoretical frameworks

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Throughout the field of second language acquisition, many theories have been developed to explain how the process of learning English occurs. Some theories focused on the effect of

learners' external environment on language learning and regarded learning as a "habit formation" (Behaviorism, for example). Other theories focused on the innate ability of learners to acquire language (Chomsky 1965, 1980, 1981 in Johnson, 2004). Vygotsky, however, proposed a new theory of second language learning: learning occurs in and through social interactions.

The basic and most fundamental premise of Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development is that "development is social": Learning is constructed through the internalization of the interactions that occurred between individuals of a society (Storch, 2002, p. 121). According to Vygotsky (1978), social interactions have a deep impact on individuals' cognition and understanding of the world (cited in Gnadinger, 2008). In fact, one of the fundamental tenets of sociocultural theory is that "human mental activity is essentially a mediated process in which socioculturally constructed artifacts, the most pervasive of which is language, play an essential role in the mental life of the individual" (Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994, p. 467). In a classroom context, learners can interact with their teachers or peers. The collaborative work between ELLs and their teachers and peers in order to reach higher levels of consciousness of L2 or any subject matter helps L2 learners internalize that knowledge and enables them to use that knowledge individually in the future. Zinchenko (1985) refers to the process of internalization, or in other words appropriation, as "the bridge between external and internal activity" and explains that internalization is not simply appropriating the knowledge of others, rather it "transforms the process itself and changes its structure and functions" (Cited in Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994, p. 4).

From the definitions and explanations provided previously, the essential role of social interaction on learners' cognitive development and thus language learning is clear. In schools and classrooms, ELLs interact with teachers (experts) and old-timer students (either old-timer ELLs or old-timer native speakers NS) where old-timer students can also 'act as experts' in supporting each other. I agree with Storch (2002) when he claims that this is not only helpful for newcomer ELLs, but old-timer ELLs, as well because "the act of teaching or explaining to others may help L2 learners construct a more coherent and clearer representation of their own L2 knowledge" (p. 122). This suggests the importance of collaborative work for ELLs among themselves and with NS students. It shows that social interactions are essential for all learning and specifically learning a second language. However, not all classrooms or schools have or can create a harmonious learning environment for ELLs where they can successfully, socially engage and develop language competence without being positioned for their different cultures, histories, and languages. ELLs' unique cultural capital, which is different from the dominant and accepted forms of cultural capital, can sometimes be used against them to position them and/or discriminate them. When this kind of positioning and downgrading continues without attempting to solve the problem, the inferior social status of ELLs in schools continues. Bourdieu's notion of social reproduction will better explain the problem ELLs face in English speaking schools worldwide.

Bourdieu and Social Reproduction

ELLs come from different educational backgrounds, cultures, and traditions. As they move to different countries, they transmit with them their existing cultural values and norms from generation to generation. This transmission, continuity, and sustainability of cultural experiences across time are referred to by Bourdieu (1990) as *Cultural Reproduction*. As children internalize certain practices, skills, and dispositions "endowed with by virtue of

socialization in their families and communities" they are gaining and shaping their *Cultural Capital* (Lin, 1999, p. 394). As Bourdieu further explains, cultural capital is "the forms of knowledge, skills, education, and advantages that a person has, which give them a higher status in society. Parents provide their children with cultural capital by transmitting the attitudes and knowledge needed to succeed in the current educational system" (Richardson, 1986, p. 47). Through the disparities of such cultural capital that some students have (students of socioeconomic elite), and others do not, community stratification results. This aspect of society (class) when transmitted through generations leads to *Social Reproduction*. Thus, cultural reproduction leads to social reproduction because inequalities in cultural capital reflect inequalities in social class, and thus community stratification (Tzanakis, 2011). How is this related to schools and educational institutions?

Schools facilitate the reproduction of social inequalities through the various practices of teachers and students who possess the dominant cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1998, cited in Hattam, Brennan, Zipin and Comber, 2009). Students with the 'right' cultural capital that fits in with the school curriculum and social and cultural norms are valued and praised depending on how near they are to the 'standard' of school curriculum and norms, whereas students with weaker, non-normative, or less desirable cultural capital tend to be labeled by teachers and students as 'disadvantaged' and far from the standard. I argue that this categorization of students results in community stratification and thus racial discrimination.

The educational system . . . maintains the preexisting order, that is, the gap between pupils endowed with unequal amounts of cultural capital. More precisely, by a series of selection operations, the system separates the holders of inherited cultural capital from those who lack it. Differences in aptitude being inseparable from social differences according to inherited capital, the system thus tends to maintain preexisting social differences. (Hattam, et al., 2009, p. 304). When ELLs come with dispositions, skills, knowledge, and educational backgrounds that are different from the school learning methods and contents, they are often labeled as disadvantaged. Their unique forms of cultural capital are not "utilized to fit with the culturally arbitrary selections that are valued by school" (Hattam et al., 2009, p. 304). Rather, schools try to help them adapt to the dispositions and skills that the school considers 'right' for successful social engagements, language learning, and thus a successful future. Inability to match the standard cultural codes that are dominant in the schools' mainstream curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment marks ELLs as 'failures', and through the reproduction of this acceptable, standard cultural capital results the reproduction of the marginalized social statuses of ELLs. The reproduction of the curriculum also causes social reproduction of marginalized students. When the curriculum does not make connections with ELLs' "learning in their community context, there becomes no intrinsic value to engage them in the educational experience" (Hattam et al., 2009, p. 304). The problem is that although most policy and institutional structures, curriculum designers, and teachers are aware of the lack of connection curriculum makes with students' worlds, they sometimes fail to change or transform the school curriculum. The curriculum continues to legitimize only certain forms of cultural capital and thus contributes to the reproduction of inequalities.

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and social reproduction helps to explain the continuity of racial discrimination of ELLs in schools worldwide. The injustice of treatment caused by teachers and students against ELLs has an impact on the degree of social engagement

ELLs have with native speakers or old-timer ELLs, and since social interactions is an essential part of language learning (Vygotsky), this reproduction of racialization (intentionally or unintentionally) can be seen to hinder ELLs' language development in the classroom community. I agree with Mills (2008) that "the injustices of allowing certain people to succeed, based not upon merit but upon the cultural experiences, the social ties and the economic resources they have access to, often remains unacknowledged in the broader society" (p. 84). The notions of racialization and racial discrimination are examined in the following section.

The Notions of Racialization and Racial Discrimination

As mentioned previously, the classroom is an important site that can facilitate as well as hinder social interactions and language development for ELLs. In Sharkey and Layzer's (2000) study examining the factors that affect language learners' access to academic success and resources, ELLs considered the ESL (English as a second language) room as "a safe haven, a second home" (pp. 352, 353) where their various forms of cultural capital were valued and respected. ELLs often came back to the ESL classroom even after they transitioned out of the program just to be in a friendly environment (Sharkey and Layzer 2000). Many ELLs do not feel this way in their mainstream classrooms due, sometimes, to the racialization they are subject to by native speaker students (old-timers), teachers, and school officials. In such cases, schools are considered places where learners are marginalized due to their different backgrounds and cultural capitals. As Talmy (2010) claims,

Schools are key institutions where [people] "make each other racial". . . not only are [they] central places for forming racial "identities," but they are key places where we rank, sort, order, and differently equip our [students] along "racial" lines even as we hope for schooling to be the great societal equalizer (p.39).

From the many scholars who explore these notions, Miles and Brown (2003) believe "*racialization* can be defined simply as racial categorization, a dialectical process by which meaning is attributed to particular biological features of human beings, as a result of which individuals may be assigned to a general category of persons that reproduces itself biologically" (cited in Kubota and Lin, 2006, p. 477). Markose and Hellst'en (2009) believe that racialization involves "processes, attitudes and behavior which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping" (p. 62). The two definitions show that there are different forms of racialization. Miles and Brown believe it can be merely the categorizing of people according to their biological features, and this categorization is reproduced throughout the generations. On the other hand, Markose and Hellest'en believe that racialization is based more on attitudes and actions that can lead to categorization of groups according to difference and is associated with discrimination. What the two possible definitions have in common is that racialization is a *process* by which certain groups are categorized either due to their color and the way they look, or due to their different conducts and manners, or their national and cultural backgrounds. It is based on individuals' histories, cultures, and orientations (cultural capital) and is sometimes learned through the society. "Thus, [racialization] produces [and reproduces] and legitimates difference among social groups based on perceived biological characteristics, yet it is a dynamic and historically situated process in which racial significations are always shifting" (Kubota and Lin, 2006, p. 477). The shifting nature of categorizing people and groups helps explain why some categorizations of ELLs are created, some are transformed, some are destroyed, and some are reproduced in schools worldwide.

Because racialization can be more than mere categorization, it can sometimes lead to discriminatory actions. Categorizing people according to certain racial features and stereotyping them without taking into consideration their unique differences and individual cultural capital is racialization. However, when certain attributes of people, their actions, their cultures, their language, and their ways of thinking are inferiorized and used against them, it is an act of discrimination. People with different forms of cultural capital are considered unique, but when sometimes their differences are negatively or unfairly compared to the so called 'normal' or standard or probably mainstream behavior and traits, then that is considered racial discrimination.

As mentioned previously, racial discrimination against ELLs can have different forms as well as various causes. ELLs' accents, their biological features, their unique but different cultural capital, their degree of accepted English language proficiency, their actions or even non-actions and silence can all be causes for their racialization and marginalization in classrooms. It involves the personal racialization between students and students or students and teachers (e.g., avoiding, silencing, making offensive jokes, insulting, name calling, and even through physical violence with members of racially identified groups) or can be as simple as treating ELLs in a 'rude' manner. Racialization and racial discrimination also involve the institutional racialization of policies, curriculum, and discussion topics that intentionally or unintentionally discriminate newcomer ELLs. In this paper, the examples I draw on to illustrate racialization and racial discrimination in classrooms are the stereotyping of certain nationalities, laughing and teasing, harassment, resentment and being disrespectful to ELLs. Exploring the notions of racialization and racial discrimination helps us understand ELLs' limited social interactions and its effect on their language development in a setting that is established to promote them. These different forms of racialization and discrimination affect ELLs' engagement with peers and limit their classroom interactions which are essential aspects of effective language learning (Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of language learning).

Manifestations of Racialization and Racial Discrimination in Classrooms

Teachers

In order to make ELLs feel included in classrooms practices, some teachers put endless efforts in trying to achieve engagement and inclusion. Some teachers focus on group discussions, others prefer pair activities, and some teachers make an effort by focusing on discussion *topics* that are related to ELLs' cultures and histories. In the attempt of raising interesting discussions that will help learners interact, teachers can unintentionally racialize students and make them feel discrimination. This will not only affect their participation in classroom practices, but will also limit their language development. More importantly, unawareness of the influence certain discussion topics have on ELLs especially describing the issues in a negative manner leads to the reproduction of the curriculum, in particular an insensitive curriculum, and thus the social reproduction of community stratification.

In Duff's (2002) study of examining issues of respect and integration of newcomers into classroom practices, the author focused her analysis on one classroom and teacher, Ms. Smith, who taught Canadian Social Studies 10 (SS10) in a Canadian secondary school (grades 8-12). Concentrating on events in two lessons "that illustrate issues of variable participation, socialization, and positioning in-and through- classroom discourse", Ms. Smith undertook various approaches to integrate ELLs more fully in class, but also considered it a challenge for her (p. 295).

In one of the lessons where students saw a film about an aboriginal student who was trying to negotiate her own cultural values which the school tried to eliminate, Ms. Smith raised a discussion about the racial term 'banana' in relation to the topic 'turning white' and the issue of being "caught in between cultures" for aboriginals (Duff, 2002, p. 308). Her awareness of the issues of intercultural differences existing in the school, her desire in implementing "respect for cultural diversity and difference, social justice, and empathy for others", and her interest in finding ways to engage ELLs into classroom discussions encouraged her to raise such a topic. In asking the students about their understanding of the term 'banana', Bradley (Chinese/Honk Kong, NNES) responded "I don't know?", Mary (Chinese/Taiwan NNES) said "it means ummm...", and Liz (2nd generation Asian/UK) very quietly answered "usually refers to Chinese" (p. 307). In the discussion that followed about 'being caught in between cultures', Kim (first generation Korean) chose not to participate in the discussion by responding 'no' three times to the teacher's question "Have you ever experienced any of that (caught in between cultures)?" (p. 309).

In this example, Ms. Smith aimed to engage ELLs in whole class discussions by relating the lesson to their cultures and personal experiences. It is important to note that before relating both topics to ELLs' personal experiences, she described 'turning white' and 'being caught between two cultures' as being "totally lost" and as a "hideous" position to be in, and that the people from aboriginal students' own culture consider them now doing things in a "different, weird, and funny way". Unfortunately, Ms. Smith's negative description of the situation of aboriginal students unintentionally made ELLs feel that they are not only racialized as 'bananas', but also made them feel discrimination. This feeling of racial discrimination was probably the reason behind ELLs' such responses and limited participation. As Duff (2002) states, Kim "persistently rejected being positioned as someone 'caught between two cultures' or perceived by self/others as 'a banana'" (Duff, 2002, p. 309). She was not willing to negotiate her strong sense of belonging to her Korean identity and neither was she open to accepting a label imposed upon her by others. The teacher's insensitive description of the topic of discussion made Kim and other ELLs feel racially discriminated against.

Another topic was about corporal punishment for aboriginal students in residential schools. The topic speaks for itself, but Ms. Smith added that "it is hard to imagine" and that it's a "theory that is totally dead in the world". She then assumed that some ELLs experienced such punishment and related it to specific countries "Taiwan and Hong Kong and possibly Korea" (p. 302). Connecting such a topic to specific countries made some ELLs feel racialized and discriminated.

The teacher's primary intention of connecting racial issues to ELLs' cultures and personal experiences was to maximize ELLs' interaction in classroom discussions. Her aim was to raise consciousness of some racialized problems existing in the school, and make connections to show how racialized students feel towards such discrimination. Her sincere intentions to engage ELLs into class discussions and bringing the connections into consciousness sometimes positioned them in a discriminatory manner, especially describing such situations negatively. Although her purpose may have been to transform the social order and intercultural issues existing in the school, she unintentionally reproduced the discriminatory position (the social order) by negatively describing the situation of aboriginal students and connecting serious issues (corporal punishment) to ELLs' cultures and countries which made them feel discrimination. I agree with Mills (2008) that

those involved in reproducing the social order often do so without either knowing they are doing so or wanting to do so. In particular, teachers frequently do not see and often do not intend the social sorting that schooling imparts on students (p. 84).

More importantly, such positioning and discrimination impacts ELLs' forms of participation which relatively affects their language development because social engagement is essential for language learning. Although silence can be a strong form of participation, in Kim's case, her non-participation was a form of protecting her cultural capital and her unwillingness to connect the discriminatory position of aboriginal students to her personal experiences and history.

While some teachers unintentionally racialize ELLs and sometimes make them feel discrimination, other teachers deliberately racialize them. Since racialization can have different forms, the following example shows how one teacher simply ignored the fact that one of her ELLs was marginalized in her classroom. During Ms. Giles' social studies class in a Canadian high school, Edouard (an immigrant refugee from Rwanda and the only ELL in the class) "never spoke during the lecture format, and during group work his desk was physically outside of the small circle of his group" (Sharkey and Layzer, 2000, p. 362). The classroom teacher should have encouraged Edouard to take part in classroom discussions or she could have encouraged the native speakers to include him in group activities and discussions and raise the sense of community among her students. She was aware about his situation but simply chose not to act upon it. As she mentions "I have a feeling that he [Edouard] is a little bit left out. He has moved his seat to the back row and I don't force assigned seats because [very softly] I don't care [laughs] ... I just haven't tried to manage the situation basically" (p.362). This kind of action from teachers makes ELLs feel more marginalized than they already are and prevents them from socially interacting with classmates and taking part in classroom practices. In this kind of situation (Edouard's case), I believe teachers hold full responsibility for ELLs' marginalization.

Many ELLs are categorized as quiet, shy, and not very social and this is usually in relation to their cultural backgrounds. This can sometimes be true, as in the case of the Vietnamese participants in Phans' (2007) study. They were students of a TESOL program in an Australian university and they strongly valued the traditions of the education system of their home country which is based on respecting instructors and asking only meaningful questions. They considered asking not meaningful and unnecessary questions disrespectful for the educator. Their limited interaction in class discussions was not due to marginalization, but due to their respect to their own cultural capital. These reasons for not asking questions are often not recognized by teachers. As for Edouard, his non-interaction was due to the unfriendly atmosphere of the classroom, but he was positioned likewise, as a typical ELL (quiet, shy, not social). Just as the teacher did not undertake any effective strategies to include him in classroom practices, students also reproduced his social status and did not seek his inclusion. Perhaps this is the reason why most ELLs prefer their ESL classrooms and often returned just to be in a friendly environment free of racialization, judgments, and community stratification. As Edouard describes his ESL classroom, "It's like a home. Who wouldn't want to come back here?" (p. 356).

Although Edouard has transitioned out of the ESL classroom, social interaction is still essential for him to maintain his language development. Social engagement should be facilitated by the teacher, especially in Edouard's case since he is the only ELL in the classroom. Unfortunately, his social status as a newcomer or ELL was not transformed despite his progress in the ESL classroom. The teacher simply did not care about his position in the classroom, and did not take on any action to transform the social order in her classroom.

Native Speaker Students

Racialization among peers can be caused by the inequalities of cultural capital that students have. Since ELLs are considered newcomers and they are in the phase of learning the language, their lack of language competence can be used to racialize them and sometimes discriminate against them, as well. Old timers (NS) use their language proficiency and the so called 'standard' accent to racialize ELLs and make them feel discrimination. Qin, Way, and Rana's (2008) study of adolescent Chinese American students in Boston and New York is a great example that illustrates racialization and discrimination of ELLs by old-timer native speaker students. The aim of the study was to explore the reasons behind the racial discrimination Chinese Americans were subject to from their peers. The authors believe that discovering these reasons "can help ... protect students from perpetual harassment and victimization" which will improve their socialization and thus language development (p. 30). One of the findings of the study indicates that some students were subject to peer discrimination (from NSs) due to their English accent, or for speaking Chinese at school: "When I was in sixth grade, people would always say that I was speaking Chinese with others. They would imitate what we said and laugh about it" (16-year-old Tina). Or else students would feel discrimination for making mistakes while speaking: "The most difficult thing is English. My English is still not as good as my classmates'. If I make a mistake while I'm talking, they laugh at me." (Tommy) (Qin et al., 2008, p. 33). Asian students also "reported being called names, and close to 50% reported being excluded from social activities or threatened as a result of their race" (p. 29). Stereotyping of Chinese Americans such as use of the term "Chino" and maintaining that "Typical Chinese can't speak good English" were forms of racial discrimination used against ELLs in the study. Old timers tended to always find ways to marginalize ELLs. The examples from Qin et al.'s study made me realize the truth of Mathews' (2008) study that "ideological and discursive processes of racialization deploy images, symbols, terminology and classifications that make skin color, ethnicity and nationality distinct, meaningful and able to be inferiorized" (p. 38).

Qin et al.'s (2008) study also suggests that teachers themselves can be the cause of racialization and discrimination among peers. Although some ELLs are considered non-proficient language speakers of English, they are stereotyped by some teachers as "so hardworking and so respectful, always on time, just such a delight to work with! If they get me to teach students like this, I will never retire for the rest of my life!" (p. 35). Such explicit statements and high expectations of ELLs caused frustration and anger for non Chinese students (in this study) "and they vented their anger on the Chinese American students themselves" (p. 35). Teachers are human beings and they are going to have preferences. However, in delicate situations like this, what teachers need to do is not express those publicly in front of other students, and they need to behave in a non-discriminatory fashion.

High academic achievement can also be the cause of the racial discrimination ELLs are subject to from native speakers. The Chinese Americans in Qin et al.'s (2008) study are usually stereotyped as "being too smart," being "geeks," "nerdy," "studying too much," and "not having fun" as indicated by the ELLs during their interviews. NSs related these features to ELLs' nationalities and they teased, resented, and harassed ELLs for their academic skills. Although their academic achievements are validated by their teachers, ELLs felt "isolated and shunned by their peers" (p. 34).

Old-Timer ELLs in ESL Classrooms

ELLs can also be exposed to racialization by old-timer ELLs. This can be seen in Talmy's (2010) study of the ESL program in a Hawaii public high school (Tradewinds High) and the examination of the "racializing and racist conduct directed at Micronesian students by a group of old-timer ESL students, primarily of East/Southeast Asian inheritance" (p. 36). Old-timer ELLs constructed their identities on the expense of the 'difference' between themselves and newcomer ELLs. Newcomers were positioned as FOBs ("fresh off the boat") for various reasons, such as their lack of cultural knowledge about Hawaii and U.S. schools and their low degrees of English proficiency (as well as lack of expertise in Pidgin which is the local language of Hawaii). This racial discrimination also took different forms such as mockery of newcomers' mistakes in English, making racist jokes, teasing them about their clothing, hairstyles, and some practices that teachers and non-Micronesian students found odd, such as "eating Kool-Aid drink powder straight from the packet; applying liberal quantities of perfume during class; frequently massaging moisturizer onto themselves and their friends; and chewing betel nut" (Talmy, 2010, p. 46).

To further illustrate how old-timers racially identified the Micronesian newcomers and constructed their identities based on this discrimination, I will draw on an excerpt from Talmy's (2010) observations of one of the ESL classes in Tradewinds High. In the following excerpt, students were assigned to give an oral presentation, which includes both a visual diorama and a written report, about a unique holiday from their countries. Two of the Micronesian girls, G-Koput and Star, have prepared their presentation well on New Year's as celebrated in Chuuk State (one of the Federated States of Micronesia). Ms. Ariel is the ESL teacher and China and Nat are old-timer ELLs from China and the Marshall Islands, respectively.

01. G-Koput: okay. Mine is about New Year. I did New Year at my country.
02. Ms. Ariel: and your country is?
03. G-Koput: oh, [Chuuk.
04. ☆: [Chuuk.
05. Ms. Ariel: okay.
06. China: that's a country?
07. Ms. Ariel: Chuuk?
08. G-Koput: yeah. It's a country, yeah.
09. China: It is?
10. Nat: It's a island.
11. ☆: [country!
12. G-Koput: [country!
13. Ms. Ariel: yeah. Chuuk State.
14. G-Koput: Okay. ((holds up the pop-up)). This is a guy with a sack and a stick.
15. ☆: ((giggle))
16. G-Koput: okay. I'm gonna read it. okay. Happy New Year. um, I do mine on Happy New Year. ((reading)) Okay people. I am going to present my presentation about Chuuk. the New Year. On the first day of the New Year, the people of Chuuk go to church first. then after church some people walk around or cruise around in car and they yell, sing Happy New Year everybody. In New Year, for our country, we use cab. that's all.=
17. China: =(loud, exaggerated clapping))
18. ?Ss: ((clapping))
19. G-Koput: Thank you.
20. China: YAAA OOOO WW! ((laughs))
21. Raven: ((sarcastic)) That was good.

(Talmy, 2010, pp. 46, 47).

In the previous excerpt, the author shows how "subtle [old-timer] ESL students' racialization of Micronesian classmates could be" (p. 47). The first is downgrading the status of Chuuk from a country to an island due to the fact that there is some question about whether or not Chuuk is a national entity, especially in that in a previous assignment, Micronesian students specifically had had a difficult time finding reference materials about their country and their flag (Talmy, 2010). Old-timers took advantage of this fact to racially discriminate against the newcomers and identify them in comparison to their own countries whose status is not in doubt (e.g., China, Tawan, Korea, etc.). This comparison suggests that Chuuk "is less well known; less worthy, perhaps, of *being* known, an association that binds to students who are 'from' there" (p. 47). The ridicule implied by the exaggerated applause made by China, and the sarcastic comment by his friend Raven is also a form of racialization.

The ridicule made by the three old-timer ELLs is not only an example of verbal peer discrimination to identify new timer ELLs as FOBs, but it also shows how stratification occurs in a classroom community. I agree with Talmy (2010) that this kind of ridicule does not only cause categorization of students from different countries into certain subordinate groups, but also sets a hierarchy among students. Such stratification based on difference in cultural capital is itself a form of racial discrimination.

While students are usually discriminated by the old-timers of the target language community, the previous example shows that old-timer ELLs can also be the cause of positioning new comer ELLs. Rather than supporting them in the process of language development and social interaction, old-timer ELLs used their dominant cultural capital (as they assume) to discriminate new comers. Old-timer ELLs did not utilize the opportunity of helping newcomer ELLs to discover their own language abilities and maximize social interactions for themselves. Rather, old-timer ELLs rejected newcomer ELLs, identified them as FOBs, and constructed new local identities for themselves based on insensitive comparison with the newcomers. By doing this, they reproduced the social order of newcomer marginalization.

All the reasons that may cause teachers, NS students, or old-timer ELLs to marginalize newcomer ELLs and discriminate against them in one form or another have an inevitable effect on learners' language development, especially when viewed from the Vygotskian perspective. Newcomer ELLs are in a critical point of their language learning and they need all the support they can get from their teachers and peers. What they learn in their ESL classes is not enough. They need to engage in social practices outside the ESL classroom because language learning is a social process not a merely cognitive and individual one. ELLs need to internalize the knowledge they received in their ESL classrooms through social interactions in order for this knowledge to become part of who they are not just something they learn and forget. According to Johnson (2004), internalization is a complex process where learners move from the interpersonal "(social, historical, institutional) plane" to the intrapersonal plane "(the individual)" through the internalization of the "patterns of the social activities to which the individual has been exposed" to (p. 111). Internalization is an essential aspect of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of language learning, and social engagement helps learners appropriate the language. Unfortunately, the patterns of racialization and racial discrimination newcomer ELLs are subject to decrease their opportunities for social engagement with old-timers which lessens their opportunities for improving the language they are learning and internalizing it because, as Vygotsky puts it, "learning is the internalization of the social interaction" (Storch, 2002, p. 121). Negative remarks, unfair treatment, an insensitive curriculum, ignoring, and any other forms of racialization and racial discrimination have a negative impact on ELLs' appropriation of the L2.

In fact, they can cause "high levels of depression, low levels of self-esteem, and poor levels of social adjustment" (Mills, 2008, p. 38). And when these causes are ignored or not appropriately dealt with by teachers or administrators, racialization and racial discrimination against ELLs, the marginalized social statuses of ELLs, the disvalue of their unique yet different forms of cultural capital becomes reproduced throughout the generations.

Implications: (Teachers/ Leaders, Students, Curriculum)

After exploring the notions of racialization and racial discrimination against ELLs and how they manifest in classrooms by teachers and students intentionally or unintentionally, it is now important to examine how schools can decrease the rates of such racialization and discrimination in order to provide a healthier learning environment for ELLs. Since teachers, leaders, students, and the curriculum are all important constituents of the school and classroom community, I will suggest how each component can play an effective role in amplifying ELLs' social engagement which is important for facilitating language learning, and thus transforming the social structure rather than reproducing it.

First, school leaders (principal, vice-principal, social supervisors ... etc.) need to be aware if racialization and discrimination exists in their schools. More importantly, they need to know what racialization and racial discrimination is and how they manifest. Through periodical meetings with ELLs and their families, issues of racialization and language learning can become apparent. These meetings can also provide opportunities for discussing possible solutions from the learner's perspectives, especially those who are being racialized against. Although parents and ELLs are not always likely to be open and candid about such issues, these kinds of meetings will require sensitivity on behalf of the leaders. More importantly, if marginalized ELLs know that they can find the support of both their families and leaders, they are more likely to be open and candid about these problems. Also, the consciousness that leaders can gain from such meetings can help them undertake various actions to help overcome or decrease the problem. Holding school events such as a 'cultural day' or a 'multicultural festival' where students from different backgrounds can share their histories, languages, educational backgrounds, cultures, and traditions can take part in raising awareness of the existing diversity among students and teachers, but they might even contribute to unintended racialization due to their *occasional* reoccurrence. Therefore, such 'cultural days' need to occur daily and be an established part of the norms of the school. When students and teachers observe how leaders appreciate and respect difference of appearance, language, skills, and orientations of ELLs on a daily bases, students (NSs and old-timer ELLs) and teachers will also learn to show consideration of diversity and learn to value it, as well. Leaders need to be models that represent positive attitudes towards ELLs' unique forms of cultural capital in order for students and teachers to reproduce ELLs' social statuses as legitimate and equal members of the school and classroom community. Leaders need to show that they value difference, although it might not always work to eliminate marginalization, but it would definitely help reduce it.

Leaders can also minimize racialization and discrimination through their close observation of classroom practices. Taking part in some practices, and becoming members of the classroom community is a great way of showing that there should not be a hierarchy among members of the school; what exists are different roles members take upon themselves and hold responsibility for. Visiting the classrooms and other school sites (e.g. cafeteria, gym, etc.) regularly can also bring to consciousness the practices or discourses that unintentionally racialize or discriminate ELLs by students and teachers.

Second, since leaders are not always in direct contact with and have observation of classroom practices, both ESL teachers and mainstream classroom teachers can create better learning environments for ELLs through various approaches. Usually, when teachers notice discrimination of ELLs, they advise discriminators not to engage in it. Their attempt to prevent racial discrimination among students is through not accepting discriminatory behaviors, words, or attitudes. What teachers should do is confront students for the reasons they are positioning their peers and treating them in a rude manner. Teachers should work together with students who are treating their peers unfairly to find solutions for creating a healthier learning environment for everyone. Confrontation should not only be between students who are marginalizing their peers and teachers, but should also include the marginalized students to show discriminators the inappropriateness of their behavior, and help them sense what ELLs are experiencing. Confrontation should not only be by asking *why* students are racially discriminating their peers, but should also be by asking them to imagine they are in that position ... how would they feel?

Another possible way for teachers to lessen racial discrimination among students and prevent them from categorizing and stereotyping newcomers is through maximizing activities that require NSs and ELLs to work together. Group discussions are a great activity that can provide opportunities for social engagement. However, if not well organized by teachers or group leaders, they will not be an effective strategy for ELLs. Teachers should not only give clear instructions about the purpose of group discussion and its benefits for both NSs and ELLs old-timers and newcomers, but should also facilitate how the discussions are undertaken, who is dominating the discussion, who is being left out, and can also take part in some discussions. Teachers can also choose the members of the group that they believe might work best for all sides (combination of weak or quiet, strong or dominating). Listening to conversations and sharing opinions is also an effective strategy teachers can carry out. Maximizing collective scaffolding is considered a successful approach for increasing social interaction among learners and supporting language development (Donato, 1994).

As for the curriculum, "instead of being a site of 'disjunction and dislocation', schools can relate curricula to students' worlds, making the classroom more inclusive" (Mills, 2008, pp. 84, 85). This was evident in Ms. Smith's classroom, and, although, it did not always have a successful outcome, her purpose of implementing a hidden curriculum was thoughtful. As Naicker and Balfour (2009) claim, "the strategies that an educator employs can have either a positive or negative impact on the language learner" (p. 343). However, to ensure the success of a hidden curriculum and teaching strategies, teachers can discuss with ELLs before class to see if any connections between the lesson or topic and their backgrounds exists. This can be done through e-mail or during the same periodical meetings that leaders hold for ELLs and their families. They can organize a special time to discuss the curriculum. It can raise teachers' and leaders' awareness of how ELLs feel about the curriculum, and can probably prevent any discrimination or positioning. Through such dialogue, teachers and leaders can become enlightened on how to transform the curriculum or integrate learners' different forms of cultural capital rather than reproduce the same curriculum and teaching strategies that marginalize and discriminate ELLs deliberately or by mistake. Leaders should allow teachers to bring to class their lived experiences and engage with the "lived curriculum" rather than following the "curriculum as plan" (Aoki, 2005, p. 159).

Conclusion

The consequences of racialization and racial discrimination against ELLs in many schools and classrooms are reflected in their degree of socialization in the academic community which ultimately affects their English language development. Since second language acquisition is a social rather than an individual process, ELLs may not find the support they need for essential progress (in the second language they are learning) in their classrooms due to the limited opportunities for social engagement. Inferiorizing newcomer ELLs and discriminating them due to their difference of skills, orientations, and actions will also affect ELLs' degree and forms of participation in the practices of the classroom community. Ignoring such an issue can result in the reproduction of the marginalized social status of newcomer ELLs and the reproduction of the dominating and accepted forms of cultural capital. In the light of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory that supports the social development of language learning, the different forms of discrimination which students are subject to can have a negative impact on learners' social and language development. Racialization decreases opportunities for healthy socialization and thus limits students' development in their L2 and access to the classroom practices.

The classroom environment needs to be a healthy environment that promotes equality between teachers and students and students with their peers, and a respectful environment where students' different forms of cultural capital are valued. Schools need to establish a positive climate and "a learning community in which all [students are] included and valued" (Hite and Evans, 2006, p. 102). Collaborative work between school leaders and teachers to help raise cross-cultural awareness and consciousness of the negative effects and consequences of racialization and racial discrimination against ELLs can be an effective start to overcome such an issue.

About the Author:

Ayesha Mohammed Mudhaffer is a Graduate Teaching Assistant at the English Language Institute (ELI) in King Abdulaziz University (KAU) in Saudi Arabia. She received her BA in English Language at KAU and her M.Ed in TESL at Simon Fraser University in Canada. After spending a year at ELI, she joined the exam preparation unit. Currently, She is a member of the grading committee.

References

- Aljaafreh, A. & Lantolf, J. (1994). Negative feedback as regulation and second language learning in the zone of proximal development. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(4), 465-483.
- Aoki, T. (2005). *Teaching as indwelling between two curriculum worlds*. In W. Pinar & R. Irwin (Eds), *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted Aoki* (pp.159-165). Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In Richardson, J.E. (ed.). *Handbook for Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241-258). New York: Greenword Press.
- Duff, P. A. (2002). The discursive co-construction of knowledge, identity, and difference: An ethnography of communication in the high school mainstream. *Applied Linguistics*, 23(3), 289-322.

- Gnadinger, C. (2008). Peer-mediated instruction: assisted performance in the primary classroom. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice*, 14(2), 129–142.
- Hattam, R., Brennan, M., Zipin, L., & Comber, B. (2009). Researching for social justice: contextual, conceptual and methodological challenges. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 30(3), 303-316.
- Hite, C. E. & Evans, L. S. (2006). Mainstream first-grade teachers' understanding of strategies for accommodating the needs of English language learners. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 33(2), 89-110.
- Johnson, M. (2004). *Philosophy of Second Language Acquisition*. Yale University Press.
- Kubota, R. & Lin, A. (2006). Race and RESOL: Introduction to concepts and theories. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40(3), 471-493.
- Lin, A. (1999). Doing-English-lessons in the reproduction or transformation of social worlds? *TESOL Quarterly*, 33(3), 393-412.
- Matthews, J. (2008). Schooling and settlement: refugee education in Australia. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 18(1), 31-45.
- Markose, S. and Hellst'en, M. (2009). Explaining success and failure in mainstream schooling through the lens of cultural continuities and discontinuities: two case studies. *Language and Education*, 23(1), 59–77.
- Mills, C. (2008). Reproduction and transformation of inequalities in schooling: the transformative potential of the theoretical constructs of Bourdieu. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 29(1), 79-89.
- Naicker, S. & Balfour, R., J. (2009) Policy and strategies for ESL pedagogy in multilingual classrooms: the classroom talk programme. *The Language Learning Journal*, 37(3), 339-358.
- Phan, L. (2009). Australian-trained Vietnamese teachers of English: culture and identity formation. *Language, Culture, and Curriculum*, 20(1), 20-35.
- Qin, D. B., Way, N., and Rana, M. (2008). The “model minority” and their discontent: Examining peer discrimination and harassment of Chinese American immigrant youth. In H. Yoshikawa & N. Way (Eds.), *Beyond the family: Contexts of immigrant children's development*. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 121, 27–42.
- Sharkey, J. and Layzer, C. (2000). Whose definition of success? Identifying factors that affect English language learners' access to academic success and resources. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34(2), 352-368.
- Storch, N. (2002). Patterns of interaction in ESL pair work. *Language Learning*, 52(1), 119-158.
- Talmy, S. (2010). Becoming “local” in ESL: Racism as resource in a Hawai'i public high school. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 9, 36–57.
- Tzanakis, M. (2011). Bourdieu's social reproduction thesis and the role of cultural capital in educational attainment: A critical review of key empirical studies. *Educate*, 11(1), 76-90.