

## A Bourdieuan Analysis: Teachers' Beliefs about English Language Learners' Academic Challenges

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Using Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, this work analyzes five teachers' beliefs about English language learners' academic challenges. In reference to reproductive and inventive qualities of *habitus*, this article argues that teachers' beliefs that are linked to their socio-cultural backgrounds can delimit or enhance ELLs' academic lives, as those beliefs shape what teachers teach and what they see as a productive pedagogy in working with ELLs. The analysis indicates that tensions across teachers' beliefs, as well as within each teacher's set of beliefs, can serve as an opening to transform their perspectives toward more equitable pedagogical practices for ELLs.

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Migration affects almost all aspects of contemporary society (Papastergiadis, 2000), whereby we are constantly crisscrossing cultural boundaries both within the country and globally (Ang, 2003). Because language and culture are inseparable (Vygotsky, 1978), it is not surprising that, in the United States, English language learners (ELLs) are currently the fastest growing population among the school-age group (Pettie, 2011). In fact, the number of ELLs has nearly doubled to about 5.5 million over the past 15 years and, by 2025, nearly one in every four public school students will be an ELL (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition [NCELA], 2007; Winke, 2011). Moreover, ELL enrollment is estimated to be increasing at 2.5 times the rate of the general student population (NCELA, 2007).

Meanwhile, the widening gap between the demographics of teachers and students from diverse backgrounds, including various linguistic backgrounds, is well documented by research studies (Gay, 2010; Milner, 2003; Sheng, Sheng, & Anderson, 2011). Consequently, teachers and schools are faced with challenges in meeting the needs of ELLs (Bergh, Denessen, Hornsta, Voeten, & Holland, 2010; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005). In many states, ELL dropout rates are significantly higher than those reported for non-ELL students (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2011). In some rural states, this trend is accompanied by decreased ELL graduation rates, mainly attributed to the educational and social challenges that these students face in their lives (Walker, 2012).

One of the significant factors that influence ELLs' school experience is the beliefs of the teachers they encounter. Peregoy and Boyle (1997) argued that the beliefs and attitudes of teachers can affect what ELLs learn in their classrooms, and even well-intended teachers can inhibit ELLs' academic and social growth if they have unexamined negative beliefs about ELLs. Other researchers similarly noted that teachers' attitudes towards ELLs affect classroom actions and interactions, as well as pedagogical decisions that teachers make, which ultimately affects ELLs academic achievement (Macnab & Payne, 2003; Mantero & McVicker, 2006; Rueda & Garcia, 1994; Pettit, 2011). Echoing and extending these arguments, this paper reports on an investigation into and analysis of teachers' beliefs about the factors that contribute to ELLs' academic challenges. The assumption implicit in this study is that these teachers' beliefs in part affect what they see as a productive pedagogy for ELLs.

The study focuses on the south-central portion of a western US state (more details provided below). The growing wave of linguistic diversity is no longer limited to large metropolitan areas, and the growth has been much more rapid in less populated rural states. O'Neal, Ringler, and Rodriguez (2008) reported that "ELL students and their families tend to settle in geographical locations that are rural" (p. 6). Similarly, Reed (2010) stated that rural areas are experiencing a rapid increase in racial and ethnic diversity in their student populations; therefore, schools in rural states are facing unique educational challenges in meeting the needs of diverse student populations, including ELLs—a group with which teachers feel inadequately prepared to work productively.

The following section begins with a discussion of the theoretical framework that informs this study, drawing upon Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*. The methodology is outlined in the text section, followed by the subsequent findings and discussion section. The final section offers the study conclusion and implication toward more equitable educational practices for ELLs. The research questions that guide this study are:

1. What are teachers' beliefs about the factors that contribute to ELLs' academic challenges?
2. What are the consequences of these teachers' beliefs with respect to working productively with ELLs?
3. Are there any patterns and/or oppositions among these teachers' beliefs?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The analytical perspective adopted in this study locates teachers' beliefs within their wider socio-cultural, socio-political, and educational contexts. Among many other options, this study utilizes Bourdieu's sociological theory of practice because (a) education occupies a central place in Bourdieu's work (Swartz, 1997), (b) his framework allows the analysis of domination, (c) even though he

was mostly interested in social analysis of class, Bourdieu's concepts can easily be applied to culture (Cicourel, 1993), and (d) culture and language are inextricably linked (Vygotsky, 1978).

Bourdieu writes extensively about the central role that schools play in reproducing social and cultural inequalities (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). For Bourdieu, it is the culture of the dominant group—that is, the group that controls the economic, social, and political resources—that is embodied in schools. Thus, educational institutions ensure the profitability of the cultural capital of the dominant. For this study, Bourdieu's central concept of *habitus* is particularly informative, as teachers are viewed as agents that are constitutive of school structures. According to Bourdieu (1984), the *habitus* is a "system of durable, transposable dispositions," that is "progressively inscribed in people's minds" (p. 471) through practical interaction with external social structures, including other people. Social structures, such as family, art, schools, and social class, tend to manifest durable patterns and regularities as they become deposited in individual agents. They are retained in the form of lasting and durable dispositions in ways that predispose people to think and act in particular ways. However, as the *habitus* operates below the level of consciousness and calculation, how people think and act, as well as how they view the world, seems natural to each individual agent. In other words, if people are in contexts where their *habitus* and social structures align with each other, they have "feel for the game" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 80). Bourdieu further explains this process, noting, "When habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a 'fish in water': it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world about itself for granted" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127).

Relevance to this study also is Bourdieu's argument that linguistic ideologies are constituted by the macro-sociopolitical construction (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Recognition that English continues to be a lingua-franca in the world and that only a particular form of English gets promoted as a correct version would inform individual's linguistic *habitus* (Shim, 2012). For instance, Rhedding-Jones (2002) showed that despite the current trends of internationalization embracing plurality and celebrating many different *Englishes*, the global English curriculum still largely centers on colonial and modernist trajectories that insist and value only a particular form as a standard and correct English. Thus, the insistence on the intrinsic superiority of one language over another continues to serve and reinforce the existing system of domination (Pennycook, 2007). What this means for this study is that teachers' judgments against ELLs and their parents related to their English proficiency levels are not so much rooted in their individual thinking but more rooted in their self-evident understandings of the social world embedded in the individual teacher's *habitus* as a English-speaking member of society under which the system of linguistic domination is deeply inscribed in her/his mind.

Moreover, in school contexts, students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, whose *habitus* is not consistent with the structures of the dominant system (e.g., schools), could be misunderstood or alienated. This is often the

case, as many teachers misrecognize these students' differences as a lack of natural gifts, cognitive abilities, and/or personal motivation. Presently, these issues are becoming even more pronounced, as the gap between teacher demographics (predominantly White Americans) and student demographics is ever widening.

Teachers have a high level of control over pedagogical choices and classroom management procedures in their classrooms. Thus, the classroom can be seen as sub-context of the wider school context in which teachers' *habitus* and their pedagogical decisions can reproduce inequality already in place (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). In this regard, the effect of teachers' *habitus* on students is evidenced in Oliver and Kettley's (2010) study that has highlighted the importance of individual teachers' dispositions and their beliefs as important factors in creating (or not creating) the conditions for students to consider the possibility of pursuing higher education. According to the study findings, the teachers' beliefs about student cognitive capacities stemming from teachers' political and cultural dispositions are potential factors shaping students' decision-making regarding pursuing higher education.

However, for Bourdieu, inventive and transformative character is as much a part of *habitus* as is reproductive character (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In other words, Bourdieu's idea of *habitus* does not privilege either the structures of society or the agency of the individual. Therefore, one's *habitus* (and the social structure it inhabits) is not immutable, but can transform across time because both are continually reconstituted in and through practices. For instance, Bourdieu (1998) notes that boxing, a practice that was initially viewed as specific to aristocratic life, was eventually given up by the aristocracy, as it became popular with the bourgeoisie, petit bourgeoisie, or even the lower class (p. 4). Owing to this shift, over time, the perception associated with boxing in France changed. With respect to education, this implies that teachers' *habitus* and school structures are not fixed, and teachers who make choices in different aspects of curriculum and how they are delivered in classrooms do have impact on transforming or reproducing inequality in schools across time. Understanding the function of teachers' own *habitus* (including the linguistic *habitus*), the factors that constitute their *habitus*, and the elements that their *habitus* can influence through their pedagogical practices can help teachers choose pedagogies and practices that mitigate inequality.

## Methods

### Setting

The context of this study is a town located in the south-central portion of a western US state, an English-only state home primarily to rural ranching communities. The town has a population of 9,300 people. Due to many

employment opportunities linked to the state penitentiary and coalmines in the town, in the last two decades the town's population, historically mainly White, has become increasingly diverse, with the greatest increase in the Latino population and also with individuals from China, Thailand, and the Philippines. Consequently, the influx of ELLs has been noticeable in the town, as the public school ELL population has more than doubled since 1990s.

The town's student population is served by two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. All four schools implement a pull-out program for ELLs, whereby, during each school day, the ELLs are taught English during one to two hours dedicated to other main/content-area subjects taught to the rest of their class. Currently, 26.6% of the total student population is Hispanic, and Asians and Native Americans account for 4.1%. With regard to English as Second Language (ESL) services, 11.8% of the total student population qualifies, and over 15% of the total student population lives in a home where one or both parents do not speak English as their first language.

## Participants

The participants in this study are two female elementary school ESL teachers, one female middle school teacher, and a male and a female high school ESL teacher. Their teaching experiences range from 3 to 8 years, and they all agreed to participate in this study. All participating teachers are White Americans, aged 24 to 45, and are all monolingual speakers of English. All participants have an ESL endorsement attached to their teaching certificates, and each participant had her/his own ESL classroom when the study was conducted. The following is a table of the participants' demographic data. All names are pseudonyms.

Table 1.

### *Participants' demographic data*

<b>Name</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Yrs. of ESL Teaching</b>	<b>Age</b>
Linda	Elementary	White	English	6	38
Mary	Elementary	White	English	3	24
Nancy	Middle	White	English	8	45
Karen	High	White	English	6	35
David	High	White	English	4	32

## Data Source

This study draws on 10 semi-structured individual interviews with teachers, even though not all are directly quoted in this study. Each teacher participated in two interviews with the researcher, each lasting 1-1.5 hours. All interviews were conducted between September 2012 and February 2013. Interviews aimed at eliciting responses that would answer the main question: What are your beliefs about the factors that contribute to ELLs' academic challenges? Detailed notes were taken by the researcher. All interviews were also tape-recorded, which were then transcribed by the researcher. The notes were compared with the transcribed data to check for consistency and/or contradictions.

## Data Analysis

Ongoing open coding strategy of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was used to identify and analyze the themes within individual and across the five teachers' responses. Each teacher was interviewed twice across six months. The researcher looked for the themes among what the teachers believe to be the major contributing factors to ELLs' academic challenges. Then, the researcher looked for a pattern and/or opposition among those contributing factors to ELLs' academic challenges. As in all analyses, the researcher brought particular perspectives and views to the analysis that shaped what was seen (and not seen) in terms of data categories. Moreover, because the responses to the interviews pertain to participating teachers' own perspectives, the responses cannot be generalized. However, the findings from this study do illuminate the importance of attending to teachers' beliefs and perspectives about ELLs' academic challenges in relations to more equitable educational opportunities for ELLs.

## Findings

While the details of each teacher's beliefs were not identical, there were many similar dynamics of importance for the present study. Moreover, tensions/contradictions were revealed not only across teachers' beliefs, but also within each teacher's set of beliefs. In addition, this study does not deny the importance of the competence in English for ELLs. However, the onus is on the beliefs of teachers stemming from their *habitus*. Thus, the findings reported here illuminate the general, yet important to acknowledge, role of teachers' *habitus*, as the main driver of their pedagogical actions and decisions that impact ELLs' academic growth.

The discussions of the findings, which are presented below, are organized into two broad themes—one consisting of teachers' beliefs stemming from reproductive *habitus*, and the other deriving from inventive *habitus*. Following Bourdieu's argument that schools reproduce social inequalities by legitimizing the values consistent with the dominant system and thus individual agents—i.e., the teachers that constitute and who are product of the dominant system—in this study, the knowledge is viewed as privileged in the dominant system. Thus, in line with this premise, this study explores the following: (a) teachers' beliefs that place the factors that contribute to ELLs' academic challenges in individual agents (students and their family) as stemming from reproductive *habitus*, and (b) teachers' beliefs that place those factors outside individual agents as stemming from inventive *habitus*.

### The Reproductive *Habitus*: Individual Perspective

**The problem with using students' first language.** All five participating teachers concurred that one of the main factors that contribute to ELLs' academic challenges is the use of students' first language at school and home. These teachers believe that the frequent use of the first language delays the learning of English, the fluency in which they view as essential for ELLs to succeed in their education and lives. Linda commented:

I think that the biggest problem for ELLs is their parents letting them speak Spanish at home all the time. The kids need to speak English and I focus on grammar with my ELLs because that's what they need. I know it is the easy thing to do, and the nice thing to go "Oh, it's okay at home." But, how is talking to the kids in Spanish helping them? Unless your kids are having a meltdown, their parents need to at least try to speak English to them. I think that is the biggest obstacle because, without having these kids learn English, they cannot learn in school.

This teacher locates *the biggest problem* in ELLs' parents and their continual usage of Spanish in their homes. She does not seem to take into a consideration the possibility that ELLs' parents may not speak English, and more significantly, fails to recognize the value of maintaining ELLs' first language in their learning (e.g., Cummins, 2000). Moreover, this teacher indicates that *grammar*—the subject she teaches—is influenced by her beliefs. Mary similarly noted:

The parents, teachers, and ELLs must realize the importance of being competent in English and not use so much Spanish. Otherwise, the students will be missing out on all sorts of opportunities. When you go to university, they are not going to translate for you. It's not like "Oh, I am sorry you don't speak English, and here is a Spanish version of biology. We will cater for all your needs." That's just not going to happen. If you work at McDonalds, the customers are not going to speak Spanish to you. You know, if I was French, I am not going to order the La Big Mac. I am

going to order the Big Mac and if you don't know what that is, that's tough. Thinking that you can speak your home language in a different country is what's stunting their growth all around.

Echoing Bourdieu's argument, this teacher sees English as the only legitimate knowledge/language in American society, which would allow ELLs to be successful. For this teacher, there is no room for a multilingual society in which many different languages are valued and respected. Karen also stated:

I respect my students' home language, and I think it is great that their parents speak Spanish to them at home. I am all about that. However, I believe that the students who are not proficient in English should not be speaking Spanish at school. The reason is not because I don't respect students' home language but I think using Spanish delays the learning of English, and students are even more confused in learning a new language. To help my students, I usually throw a pizza party for them on Fridays if they spoke no Spanish during class on a given week.

David likewise noted:

In my teaching, I do not usually make reference to the home language of the ELL students I have in class, and I also do not allow my students to speak in their home language in class. I offer practical advice to the ELL students who wish to maintain their home language, but allowing students to speak in their home language at school does not help the students learn English.

While the last two high school teachers quoted above showed their understanding of the importance of and respect for students' home language, they both believe that the use of students' home language interferes with the learning of a second language. Their statements also show that their beliefs directly influence their classroom management strategies, determining what they do or do not do in class. Karen rewards students for not speaking Spanish in class by throwing a pizza party. However, not having a pizza party could equally be viewed as punishment for speaking Spanish in class.

The teachers' beliefs discussed so far show that the use of students' home language is viewed as a hindrance to students' learning in general and to their learning English in particular. This view is contradicted by empirical evidence indicating that allowing ELLs to think and use their first language produces a positive, rather than negative, effect on individual learning (De Angelis & Dewaele, 2009). In summary, these teachers perceive ELLs' competency in English as the major limiting factor in their academic achievement, which is consistent with Bourdieu's (1990) argument that "one looks at the situation of the dominated through the social eyes of the dominant" (p. 131). More specifically, English has been and continues to be a lingua franca in the world, and these teachers' belief that the competency in English is the key factor in becoming successful in school and society is similar to the findings reported by Rhedding-Jones (2002). In this respect, there is no empirical evidence indicating that requiring students to use only English while banning



students' first language is beneficial in any way for ELLs' social, emotional, and educational growth.

**Value of education for parents.** Three teachers also believed that ELL parents' inability to see the value in their children's education is a limiting factor for ELLs' academic achievement. Linda commented:

I ask myself, "Do the parents value education or not?" I think in the back of their minds, they are thinking that they are eventually going back to their country and so they think "why waste our time?" When parents do not value education, how can you expect their children to value education?

Nancy also noted:

ELL students are very bright and their parents are also very intelligent. I mean, what the parents do is a sign of intelligence—just to pick up their things and move to another country for a betterment of their lives. I don't think I can just do that. The problem is the parents don't believe in themselves and in their children that they can be successful.

David noted likewise:

Students can't learn when they are not in class, and many ELLs often miss class. I don't think parents see how crucial coming to school is. They just let their children stay home. Without parents' support and beliefs that education is important, their children cannot succeed in school.

Here, once again, the teachers perceive individual parents' and students' attitudes towards education as the key factors limiting ELLs' learning. These teachers' beliefs about ELL parents' inability to recognize the value of education are a mere assumption based on their speculation. None of them stated that ELL parents actually told the teachers that they do not value education. Following Bourdieu's argument, these teachers accept the conditions of school as natural, and thus, they are not problematizing the structures of school as a possible challenge for ELLs; rather, they are locating the problems on ELL parents.

### **An Inventive Habitus: Sociological Perspective**

As demonstrated above, the participating teachers' beliefs seem to be rooted in their reproductive *habitus*. In this section, however, I illustrate somewhat contradictory views from the ones shown above. According to Bourdieu (1977, 1990), individual *habitus* is constituted in and through multiple and often intense entanglements within various social structures, which partially accounts for why these teachers' beliefs show some level of contradictions. In other words, while teachers' beliefs shown above seem to stem more from the earlier acquired *habitus*, those presented below seem to stem more from *habitus*

acquired later. Each individual teacher's *beliefs* are intimately linked her/his socialization histories and afforded within her/his *habitus*, which is constitutive of various social fields that have different values unique to them. Hence, the fact that the teachers' comments are contradictory is inevitable since the social fields that constitute each teacher's *habitus* may coalesce but also collide. Most importantly, the two do not align, indicating that this issue requires further exploration.

**Mismatch between students' and school cultures.** During the interviews, several teachers indicated that, in their view, the problem of a misalignment between ELLs' cultures and those of school structure is a factor contributing to ELLs learning. Linda commented:

Have you even been invited to a Thanksgiving dinner to a family who's from a different culture? You know how awkward that experience is even if they are from the US and they all speak English. I experienced this when I was in college. Even if you know how to use their utensils and stuff, being in a place where the culture you are used to isn't the same as theirs is simply very uncomfortable. I think this is how the ELLs in my school feel every day.

Karen commented in a similar manner:

I think the way the school here is set up is very foreign to ELLs. When happens, there are students who know what to do, but most ELLs have no idea, and schools can be a horror experience for them. ELLs might feel that the school here isn't meant for them. Some people say that ELLs should participate in more extracurricular activities, but if I feel outside in my class and when I am barely getting by, why would I want to join a basketball team? I think schools have unreasonable expectations for them, and the goal should be to re-think about what we are doing, so that the students are more comfortable.

Note that these are the teachers who commented earlier that they believe that ELLs should not speak Spanish in class and that allowing the students to speak Spanish at home and school can inhibit their academic success. Here, however, those same teachers noted that they believe that a mismatch between the school and students' cultures is a problem. Therefore, they locate the limiting factors for ELLs' learning outside of the students' and parents' responsibility and their lack of ability, which is very different from their earlier stance. Instead, the focus is on school and teachers, highlighting the importance of reflecting on how and why school is or is not accommodating ELLs.

**Unprepared teachers.** Some teachers also felt unprepared teachers are another factor adversely affecting ELLs' learning. Nancy noted:

We have too few teachers who know what to do with ELLs. When I was going through my ESL certificate program, I learned how a very few teacher education programs actually prepare their pre-service teachers to work with ELLs, and most, if not all, teachers I work with in this schools have no idea how to help ELLs.

David also expressed:

One of the problems I see is that we don't have enough qualified teachers who can assist ELLs. We need more professional developments for all teachers.

Again, as shown above, these are the teachers who believe the problems associated with ELLs' academic achievement stem primarily from their use of their first language and their parents' inability to recognize the value of education. Consistent with the teachers' beliefs discussed in the section immediately above, these teachers place the problem with school structure (assuming that teachers are a part of school structure), rather than in students and their parents. Although the forces that contribute to individual *habitus* cannot be directly traced back (Bourdieu, 1977), it appears that the *habitus* that these teachers in this section are speaking from are their later acquired *habitus*, given that some referred to their college experience and education.

### Discussion and Implication

The inability of most US schools to meet the academic needs of ELLs is a national concern (Smith, Coggins, & Cardosi, 2008), and more equitable educational opportunities for ELLs are indeed a requisite. For Bourdieu, when a goal is to work against inequality in education, one must understand the complexities of inequality and the factors that inform the inequality within educational contexts (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Among many options, this study focused on teachers' *habitus* and their beliefs pertaining to ELLs' academic challenges as a possible factor that contributes to inequitable educational practices for ELLs, as well as a factor that can undermine the efforts to treat ELLs equitably. The assumption underlying this study was that the teachers' beliefs largely stem from their *habitus* and impact what these teachers see as a productive pedagogy for ELLs. For instance, those teachers who see lack of English competency as a major problem adjust their pedagogical practices accordingly, so that the students only use English in class.

Thinking within the theoretical framework of this study, the teachers' insistence on their students using only English in class and assuming that their belief benefits ELLs is not surprising, given that an English-only policy has historically dominated the educational policy in the United States (Crawford, 1992); hence, such an ideology is most likely a durable part of individual teacher's linguistic *habitus*. However, the approach in which English-only is imposed, according to empirical evidence, contributes negatively to ELLs'

academic, social, and emotional development, even when these teachers have opposite intentions. On the other hand, those teachers who see the mismatch between school and students' culture as a problem feel that the school and teachers should find ways to better accommodate ELLs, which for Bourdieu is a better way to work against inequality. It is thus interesting and important to note here that teachers who held both views voiced the same concern. Given such inconsistent and contradictory beliefs of the teachers that took part in this study, there are a few important implications drawn with respect to more equitable educational practices for ELLs. This study recognizes that the findings reported here cannot be generalized; therefore, implications presented here are general and suggestive, rather than confirmatory.

First, Bourdieu's sociological theory already tells us that the participating teachers' beliefs revealed in this study are not autonomous but are reflective of the larger social structures and conditions in which their *habitus* is acquired. As shown in the teachers' responses in this study, the dispositions within individual's *habitus* are durable and these forces speak powerfully through each individual. Though not explicitly visible in this study, the teachers' judgments against ELLs' English proficiency levels and the legitimization of their beliefs will almost certainly impact their teaching, which is a dimension of hegemony and reinforcement of privilege that gets reproduced in local contexts regardless of an individual teacher's recognition. This is not because these teachers are not supportive of ELLs' learning, but because the durable dispositions within their *habitus* are often invisible, not context-specific, and they present themselves as social reality. Thus, teachers who are committed to providing more equitable educational practices for ELLs would do better to recognize that the enduring dispositions in their *habitus* may limit what teachers can do to promote equality in education. That stated, although individual change is possible, working against one's socialization histories to actually change one's practices should not be viewed as an easy, simple, one-time process.

Second, there is an inventive aspect to the teachers' *habitus* that is not entirely determined by the social structure under which it was initially formed. More specifically, the contradictions in the teachers' responses in this study reflect how the experiences that these teachers encountered later in life, if they are different from their earlier acquired *habitus*, can create a space of change in their thinking. The conditions for change are "set up when habitus encounters objective structure radically different from those under which it was originally formed" (Swartz, 1997, p. 103). In such a potential space of change, the teachers' *habitus* that usually inclines them to unquestionably take the current school structure as natural, and thus blame ELLs and their parents for their low academic achievement, may be altered. Here, Ladson-Billings' (2006) assertion that "the problem teachers confront is believing that successful teaching" is primarily about "what to do" when in actuality "the problem is rooted in how we think about the social context, about the students, about the curriculum and about instruction" (p. 30) seems to resonate powerfully in thinking about the importance of altering teachers' beliefs that may be counterproductive to ELLs' learning. Therefore, while acknowledging that subjects (teachers) are always

situated within structures and dynamics of power such that no theory can extract individuals from those conditions of possibility and that no theory is capable of providing a full set of answer to trace back the underlying reasons for our thinking, it seems imperative to attend to the reproductive dispositions that may alienate ELLs while also attending to the inventive dispositions that challenge the beliefs that stem from the reproductive dispositions. In this regard, the incidences of contradictions within and across each teacher's beliefs must not be taken for granted but must be attended to as an extremely important locus of individual, institutional, and social change.

From such a realization, a more practical implication is also offered. Offering training programs that help inform the teachers about the value of ELLs' first language and why its continued use is an asset for ELLs, particularly for the achievement of long-term academic and emotional benefits, may alter teachers' linguistic *habitus* (Shim, 2012). Moreover, this initiative would help the teachers reevaluate their beliefs, which, in turn, may alter their pedagogical practices for ELLs in more productive ways. In this regard, teachers would also benefit from training on how to teach bilingual or multilingual students more effectively. The findings reported here indicate that most teachers share the view that students' first language background should remain outside of the class. However, if the teachers were more confident and knowledgeable about working with multilingual students, they would likely be less inclined to prohibit the use of ELLs' first language in class.

Numerous studies have been conducted, focusing on how White teachers unintentionally perpetuate the system of domination in their teaching practices. Substantial attention has also been devoted to the question of how teachers of color can contribute to more equitable educational practices in working with students from various racial and linguistic backgrounds. While recognizing that no teacher can escape our social and historical backgrounds, by utilizing Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, this study attempted to show how White American monolingual ESL teachers can potentially change their beliefs that may not have been beneficial initially and contribute significantly in ELLs academic achievement. Recalling the significant gap between the English-speaking White American teacher population and the ELL student population, as well as the achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs in the United States, the findings of this study add yet another angle from which to understand the challenges ELLs face in school and how teachers' assumptions may inhibit or contribute to ELLs' learnings. It echoes Bourdieu's argument that, for inequality in education to be transformed, transformation of educational contexts and opportunities available to students is required, as only this approach will benefit disadvantaged students.

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