

The Racial and Linguistic Positioning of Black Esl Educators in The United States

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Abstract

Research on Black teachers of English suggest that whether native or nonnative, they are often thought of as less capable language educators because of their racial and/or linguistic identities. The perception of this minority status shapes teachers' identities in significant ways. However, limited studies have explored the perspectives of those teaching English as a Second language (ESL) in the context of the United States where the conceptualization of race occupies a unique space in sociocultural discourse. Drawing from the narratives of seven Black native and nonnative English-speaking teachers, this study examined the extent to which teachers' race, language and cultural identities inform teaching practice and overall experiences within the work environment. Findings showed that while race is a salient feature in the professional lives of these teachers, their multicultural identities are more central to the way they understand their roles and position themselves as language educators, their pedagogical choices and interactions with students. This furthers the idea that Black teachers bring more than their racial identities to the ESL classroom. However, it was also revealed that because of underrepresentation in the workplace, dominant stereotypical perceptions of Blackness played a silent but impactful role in how these teachers were positioned by peers, the racial microaggressions encountered and the impact on working identities. Recommendations for future research include quantitative studies that highlight the dearth of Black educators in TESOL, comparative work that incorporates ESL student perspectives about Black teachers, and research oriented towards the experiences of Black nonnative teachers.

Keywords: black teachers, teacher identity, radicalization, race, native speakerism