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Lacking the right aesthetic
Everyday employment discrimination in Toronto private language schools

Vijay A. Ramjattan
Leadership, Higher and Adult Education,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education,
University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

Abstract

Purpose – Expertise in English language teaching (ELT) is determined by being a white native speaker of English. Therefore, ELT is a type of aesthetic labour because workers are expected to look and sound a particular way. As nonwhite teachers cannot perform this labour, they may experience employment discrimination in the form of racial microaggressions, which are everyday racial slights. The purpose of this paper is to investigate what types of microaggressions inform several nonwhite teachers that they cannot perform aesthetic labour in private language schools in Toronto, Canada.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper utilizes a critical race methodology in which several nonwhite teachers told stories of racial microaggressions.

Findings – The teachers were told that they lacked the right aesthetic through microaggressions involving employers being confused about their names, questioning their language backgrounds, and citing customer preferences.

Research limitations/implications – Future research must find out whether nonwhite teachers experience discrimination throughout Canada. Other studies must investigate how intersecting identity markers affect teachers' employment prospects.

Practical implications – To prevent the discrimination of nonwhite teachers (in Canada), increased regulation is needed. The international ELT industry also needs to fight against the ideology that English is a white language.

Originality/value – There is little literature that examines language/racial discrimination in the Canadian ELT industry and how this discrimination is articulated to teachers.

Keywords Aesthetic labour, Employment discrimination, English language teaching, Private language schools, Racial microaggressions

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Appearance and language ability determine expertise in English language teaching (ELT). In fact, being a white native speaker of English makes one the ideal teacher of the language (Amin, 1997; Kubota and Fujimoto, 2013; Kubota and Lin, 2006; McFarland, 2005; Ruecker, 2011; Ruecker and Ives, 2014). The reason for this belief is that English and whiteness are interconnected (Motha, 2014; Sung, 2011). For example, the spread of English has been tied to British and American imperialism (Motha, 2014; Phillipson, 1992) and furthermore, many ELT materials are modelled from the speech of native speakers from predominantly white countries (Phillipson, 1992).

Because English and whiteness are intertwined, some Asian schools seek out white, native-English-speaking teachers in order to attract consumers who believe that these teachers will improve their English (Braine, 2010; Mahboob and Golden, 2013; McFarland, 2005; Ruecker, 2011; Ruecker and Ives, 2014; Sung, 2011). This recruitment

is a type of aesthetic labour, which is the "corporeal dispositions in people that employers can commodify and exploit to their advantage" (Karlsson, 2012, p. 54).

Contrary to white teachers, nonwhite instructors are perceived to lack "the right aesthetic" for ELT. Indeed, nonwhite English speakers are frequently denied teaching positions (or are underpaid) in Asia because their race signifies nonnativeness in English, even if they are native speakers (Braine, 2010; Kubota and Fujimoto, 2013; Kubota and Lin, 2006; McFarland, 2005; Ruecker, 2011; Sung, 2011). Even though it is known that nonwhite teachers experience hiring discrimination in countries with lax anti-discrimination laws, there is less attention paid to how this discrimination is articulated, especially in countries such as Canada where overt racism is publicly unacceptable.

Using interviews with ten teachers who have worked in private language schools in Toronto, Canada, this paper addresses this gap in the literature by arguing that nonwhite teachers are told that they are deficient instructors through racial microaggressions, which are "everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of [colour]" (Sue *et al.*, 2007, p. 273). Specifically, the paper answers this question: what types of racial microaggressions inform nonwhite teachers that they are incapable of performing aesthetic labour in Toronto private language schools? Before outlining how the study was conducted, its findings, and its implications, the paper provides background information on the racialization of English speakers, aesthetic labour, and racial microaggressions.

2. Conceptual background
2.1 The racialization of native and nonnative speakers of English
The difference between native and nonnative speakers of English is described in deficit terms. Whereas native speakers have a strong intuition of the language and are able "to use it accurately, fluently, and appropriately" (Thornbury, 2006, p. 140), nonnative speakers are thought to be lacking in these areas (Medgyes, 1992). Because of these differences, native English speakers are considered the best English language teachers (Amin, 1997; Aneja, 2014; Brutt-Griffler and Samimy, 2001; Cook, 1999; Davies, 2003; Phillipson, 1992; Sung, 2014; Thornbury, 2006).

For students, strengths of native-English-speaking teachers include such things as superior oral skills and interactive teaching styles (Lipovsky and Mahboob, 2010; Ma, 2012; Sung, 2014). However, nonnative instructors may appeal to learners in other areas. For instance, nonnative speakers may be seen as superior in grammar teaching because they have received grammar instruction as learners themselves (Lipovsky and Mahboob, 2010; Sung, 2014).

While nonnative speakers may be superior in certain areas, they continue to be nonnative speakers because the distinction between native and nonnative depends on social rather than linguistic factors (Brutt-Griffler and Samimy, 2001). For instance, becoming a native speaker of a language is determined by being born to parents of the same linguistic background (Cook, 1999; Davies, 2003; Thornbury, 2006). Moreover, being born in particular places determines native speaker status. For example, native speakers of English are thought to be from inner circle countries in which most individuals speak English as a first language (Kachru, 1992). Inner circle countries include Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the USA, and are contrasted with outer circle and expanding circle nations, where English is spoken as a second/official language (e.g.: India and Nigeria) or used in educational settings (e.g.: China and Japan),

respectively (Kachru, 1992). Because of the sociopolitical power of the inner circle, its varieties of English are promoted as the standard in which other varieties are judged (Kachru, 1992; Phillipson, 1992).

In addition to ignoring that people from the outer circle may be native speakers of their own standardized variety of English, one issue with this "three circle model" of English is that it is racialized (Motha, 2014; Romney, 2010). In fact, while inner circle nations, which are home to large white populations, are deemed to speak standard, native varieties of English, outer and expanding circle countries, where mostly nonwhite people live, are thought to use non-standard, nonnative varieties. This racialization of English speakers may be so pervasive that people may falsely identify native and nonnative speakers. In fact, it has been noted that nonwhite individuals who were born and raised in inner circle countries are deemed nonnative speakers of English because of their race (Amin, 1997; Kubota and Lin, 2006; Rubin, 1992; Sung, 2011). Conversely, because of their whiteness, white nonnative speakers are assumed to speak English natively and are thus employable (see Sung, 2011). This point is explored in the following section on aesthetic labour.

2.2 Aesthetic labour (in the ELT industry)

Aesthetic labour refers "to the employment of workers with certain embodied capacities and attributes that favourably appeal to customers and which are then organizationally mobilized, developed, and commodified" (Nickson *et al.*, 2001 cited in Warhurst and Nickson, 2007, p. 104). These processes are seen in how service providers are trained to look, act, and speak in certain ways, which are supposed to come naturally for workers (Witz *et al.*, 2003). In short, service workers are taught to "look good and sound right" (Warhurst and Nickson, 2007).

Having the right traits to perform aesthetic labour is determined by social markers such as age, class, and gender (Williams and Connell, 2010; Witz *et al.*, 2003). While these markers have received much attention in the literature, some have considered race when examining this type of labour (Williams and Connell, 2010; Wissinger, 2012). For example, Wissinger (2012) examines how looking good in the fashion modelling industry entails being white as clients desire this type of model. Aside from race, others have noted the importance of language (Butler, 2014). For instance, in Indian call centres, agents are instructed to sound good by "eliminating" their accents (Mirchandani, 2012).

In ELT, race and language are also components in the aesthetic labour of teachers: to look good is to be white, while to sound right entails speaking an inner circle variety of English. This message is articulated in the recruitment practices of schools in such countries as China, Japan, and South Korea, where whiteness and native speaker status are the prime qualifications to obtain work (Braine, 2010; Mahboob and Golden, 2013; McFarland, 2005; Ruecker, 2011; Ruecker and Ives, 2014; Sung, 2011). For instance, some online job advertisements openly ask for white native speakers of English (Mahboob and Golden, 2013; Ruecker, 2011), while others stipulate that they can only accept teachers with passports from inner circle countries where there are coincidently large white populations (Ruecker and Ives, 2014; Selvi, 2010). This (covert) preference for white teachers may derive from a fear that nonwhite teachers cannot perform the aesthetic labour needed to inspire learners.

In fact, because they do not have the look as determined by various schools in Asia, nonwhite instructors are often denied teaching positions or receive lower wages than their white counterparts (Braine, 2010; Kubota and Fujimoto, 2013; Kubota and

Lin, 2006; McFarland, 2005; Ruecker, 2011; Sung, 2011). Although nonwhite native speakers of English may be more likely to find work than their nonnative peers because they "sound right" (McFarland, 2005), the general trend is that nonwhite teachers, as a whole, experience employment discrimination in Asia. In the inner circle, this discrimination seems to remain on the linguistic rather than racial level. For example, in the UK and USA, ELT employers seem to highly prefer native speakers (Clark and Paran, 2007; Mahboob *et al.*, 2004). Perhaps one reason why there are no racial preferences is because clear-cut anti-discrimination laws in these countries would prevent expressions of such sentiments.

Canada is also a nation in which strict hiring discrimination laws would prevent racist recruitment practices. Nevertheless, it is possible to find evidence of aesthetic labour in Canadian ELT by examining private language schools. Because they are subject to little educational/labour legislation and therefore not under public scrutiny (Breshears, 2008; Clark and Paran, 2007), these schools have no responsibility in promoting employment equity. Moreover, because they are emblematic of the market discourse of seeing students as consumers (Breshears, 2008; Fairclough, 1993; Hodge, 2005; Ruecker and Ives, 2014), private language schools may resort to dubious tactics to attract students. For instance, Hodge (2005) suggests that the marketing materials of some private language schools imply that one can only learn Canadian English from white Canadians. Hodge makes this argument based on her interviews with immigrant teachers at one Vancouver school, some of whom noted how white teachers were featured in promotional materials and marketing trips.

If some Canadian private language schools market English and whiteness as inseparable, then they may have a strong preference for white teachers. Instead of displaying this preference explicitly in a country that does not tolerate overt racism, employers may express their sentiments through racial microaggressions, which are explained below.

2.3 Racial microaggressions
The concept of racial microaggressions was first coined by psychiatrist, Chester M. Pierce, but has been further developed by Derald Wing Sue and colleagues. According to these scholars, "racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily, verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults" (Sue *et al.*, 2007, p. 273). One example of a racial microaggression is when a woman clutches her purse when approached by a black man, which implies that the latter has criminal tendencies (Sue, 2010). Another example is when Asian Canadians are asked where they are really from, the meta-communication is that these people are perpetual foreigners in Canada (Sue, 2010; Sue *et al.*, 2007).

Aside from Sue and colleagues, racial microaggressions have also concerned critical race theorists, who offer additional insights on microaggressions. One such insight is that racial microaggressions not only thrive on notions of race, but also, on other intersecting social markers such as gender, class, and language (Kohli and Solórzano, 2012; Pérez Huber and Solórzano, 2015). For instance, nonwhite English language teachers may experience microaggressions because of their race and (perceived) language background: since they are nonwhite, they are thought to be nonnative English speakers and thus, inadequate teachers of English (Amin, 1997; Kubota and Lin, 2006; McFarland, 2005; Motha, 2014; Ruecker, 2011). Aside from intersecting forms of oppression, critical race theorists also stress how context facilitates microaggressions (Kohli and Solórzano, 2012; Pérez Huber and Solórzano, 2015).

For example, microaggressions against nonwhite instructors may be more prevalent in private language schools because these institutions are not subject to legislation that may deter discrimination (Breshears, 2008; Clark and Paran, 2007). This point emerged in the interviews, which are the subject of the next section.

3. Methodology

This study employed a critical race methodology, which acknowledges that nonwhite people have intimate knowledge about racism and as such, should be able to voice this knowledge through storytelling (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002). Therefore, my goal as the researcher was to collect teachers' stories of everyday employment discrimination in Toronto. In order to accomplish this task, I sought out and received ethics approval from my academic institution, and I then distributed recruitment flyers through personal, professional, and academic networks. These flyers asked for ten participants who satisfied the following criteria: they were nonwhite, they were current/former teachers at Toronto private language schools, and they felt that race or racism played a role in their interactions with others in these schools.

In studies about racism, selection bias may be unavoidable as researchers may solely desire participants who have experienced racism, which may result in misleading findings. While this study is not immune to this critique, the third recruitment criterion was carefully worded to lessen the impact of selection bias. That is, participants could feel that race or racism influenced their interactions with others, thereby allowing them to share stories of both positive (characterized by "race") and negative (characterized by "racism") interactions. Apart from carefully considering the issue of recruitment, careful consideration was also given to the site of the study. Toronto was chosen as the site of the research because it hosts more private language schools than other Canadian cities, thus making it easier to find participants.

Once the participants were found, I conducted two semi-structured interviews with each teacher. While the first interview gathered background information from each participant, the second interview recorded stories of microaggressions that the teachers experienced while working. As narrative interviewing requires the researcher "to generate detailed accounts rather than brief answers or general statements" (Riessman, 2008, p. 23), I asked questions beginning with phrases such as "Can you think of an occasion when […]" Given the issue of selection bias, these questions did not explicitly ask for stories of microaggressions. Rather, they appeared like the following example: "Can you think of an occasion when your race affected your relationship with a prospective employer?". With questions like this one, participants could share either positive or negative stories. After the interviews were transcribed verbatim, I analysed the data using thematic narrative analysis, which places emphasis on the content of narratives rather than their format or the way that they are told (Riessman, 2008). This analysis first entailed descriptive coding. Next, these descriptive codes were organized into themes and within these themes, I identified stories, which I defined as brief segments of text that have a clear introduction and conclusion (Riessman, 2008). Lastly, I linked these stories to theoretical literature in order to name the microaggressions that the teachers experienced.

In the next section, these microaggressions are presented through the stories of four teachers, Maria, Q, Josh, and Chao (all pseudonyms), all of whose experiences are representative of the discrimination experienced by the other participants. Additionally, these teachers were chosen as they reported more instances of employment discrimination than their peers.

4. Findings

These teachers experienced various microaggressions that informed them that they lacked the right aesthetic for ELT, three of which included being confused about teachers' names, using language to hide racial discrimination, and citing customer preferences. These themes are explored below.

4.1 Confusion about teachers' names

An individual's name can be an identifier of one's ethnicity (Kohli and Solórzano, 2012). For employers who want to hire workers of a particular ethnicity, names can become a convenient means to screen out undesirable applicants. However, names do not always correspond to specific ethnicities, which may be problematic for ELT employers who might mistakenly invite nonwhite applicants for interviews based on names that are associated with white ethnic groups. Three of the teachers noted this problem in their interviews in which they related stories of how employers dismissed them as soon as they discovered that their "white-sounding" names did not match what they looked like.

Such a scenario happened to Maria, who comes from Brazil and is of Japanese descent. Having a husband who has German heritage, Maria consequently took his German last name, which may have enticed one school to call her. When Maria arrived for the interview, however, the employer seemed shocked, which Maria describes below:

> When the employer saw me for the interview, the first thing that came out of her mouth was, "What's your name? Why do you have this last name?" I explained that I'm married and that's why. From the moment she saw me, I knew that she did not want to hire me as she mentioned right away that the position had just been filled.

Racial microaggressions indirectly communicate insulting messages to nonwhite people (Sue, 2010; Sue *et al.*, 2007), and it is clear that the employer's confusion about Maria's last name indirectly told Maria that she was unqualified because she is not ethnically German.

It is interesting to note that before meeting with Maria, the employer would have known from her résumé that Maria was a nonnative speaker of English as most of her education was completed in Brazil. Therefore, one may begin to speculate the possibility that sounding right was less of a concern than looking good from the perspective of the employer (Sung, 2011). That is, if Maria were able to visually lure new customers through her whiteness, then her nonnative status would not have been an issue provided that these customers stayed in class.

This idea that looking good in ELT may be more important than sounding right also appears in one narrative told by Q, a native speaker of British English who is of Indian descent. When Q called an employer to drop off her résumé at his office, her ability to speak an inner circle variety of English as well as having a non-Indian first name disguised her ethnicity. As soon as Q arrived at the office, she was greeted by the receptionist who quickly notified the employer of her arrival. Q continues the story:

> [The employer] said, "Yes, send her in […] That's what I want." So I was very sure that this was a job that I had already gotten […] And the [receptionist] got up […] and she said, "Come." So I started following her, and she walked through the doorway to the man. Out of politeness, I just stopped at the doorway [to] let her go in [first]. She went over, handed the résumé, and then the man saw my last name. And he said, "Is she not a native speaker?" And the lady said, "Yes, she sounds like one." He then said, "But the name is not English. See [Q's last name]." And I think he asked something about me being [brown]. Finally, he said, "Tell her we'll call her".

Whereas her first name granted her an opportunity for an interview, Q's last name ended her chance to meet the employer. A likely reason for this change of mind is that the employer used Q's last name as a signifier of her nonnativeness in English: having an Indian surname signified that one was Indian and therefore not a native speaker of English (Mirchandani, 2012).

To summarize, the employer committed linguistic racial profiling, which is an assumption that race rather than language ability determines who is a native speaker (Romney, 2010). Indeed, despite the receptionist's comment that Q sounded like a native speaker, the employer ignored this linguistic evidence based on seeing a "brown" last name. This instance of linguistic racial profiling remained microaggressive as the employer did not openly state that he did not want a brown teacher, but rather, tried to make Q a nonnative speaker upon discovering her ethnicity. This practice of using language status as a way to mask racial discrimination is explored in the following section.

4.2 Language masking racial discrimination

Even though the native speaker of English is a socially-constructed category based on notions of race and nation, many still see it as a linguistic category and uncritically accept that native speakers are linguistically superior (Aneja, 2014; Brutt-Griffler and Samimy, 2001). Because the superiority of the native speaker is deemed a linguistic fact, it is acceptable to deny teaching positions to nonnative speakers, who are seen as failed users of the language (Cook, 1999). For example, Maria remembered a conversation with one employer who was openly hesitant to hire a nonnative speaker:

> [The employer] asked me, "Do you have experience?" And I said, "I do." [Later on,] she became very direct and told me, "You know what. You're not a native teacher. If I were to hire you, I would just tell you to teach beginner levels".

When the employer assessed her eligibility for a teaching position, Maria's language background superseded her teaching experience. By advising Maria to teach beginners, the employer implied that nonnative-speaking teachers are linguistically incapable of teaching complex language (Park, 2012).

The above view can disguise the racism that nonwhite job seekers face. Indeed, five teachers of this study reported microaggressions in which employers positioned them as nonnative speakers and thus unfit to teach English because they are nonwhite. One such teacher is Josh, a mixed-race native speaker of English who describes how one employer doubted his native speaker status:

> [The employer asked,] "Where did you do your studies?" And I replied, "Here in Toronto." She went, "And anywhere else?" I replied, "No." She then asked, "What language do you speak at home?" And I said, "At home, I speak English." She then asked, "And your parents?" "They speak about six or seven different languages all mixed up," I replied, "But I can't speak those languages. I can only speak English." And after that, she went, "But when you communicate with them, how does that work?" I said, "They have jobs in Canada. They understand English perfectly." And then […] she said, "Okay, but we're really looking for a native speaker." And I said, "That's fine because I am a native speaker." Just as I said that, a white woman came out with a Scottish accent. And I thought, "Gee, she's not a native speaker [because her first language may be Gaelic or Scots] and she's working here." So I didn't know what to take from it, but they never called me back.

Through her questioning, the employer seemed intent on identifying Josh as a nonnative speaker of English. In fact, by trying to establish that Josh did international studies and speaks multiple languages, the employer was implying that in order to be

a native English speaker, one must be born and raised in an English-speaking country and also, monolingual (Cook, 1999; Davies, 2003; Thornbury, 2006). However, when he noticed the Scottish woman, Josh suspected that this questioning was intended to mask the employer's belief that being nonwhite entailed being a nonnative speaker (Kubota and Lin, 2006).

This failure to recognize Josh as a native speaker could be a result of the employer not believing that she could convince students that he is such a speaker. Since English is closely tied to whiteness (Motha, 2014; Sung, 2011), students may see nonwhite teachers as inauthentic English experts and may thus choose schools with white instructors. Fearing the loss of revenue from this choice, employers may cite customer preferences as justification for not hiring nonwhite teachers.

4.3 Citing customer preferences

Indeed, four of the teachers reported instances in which employers told them that not being white would be an issue for customers. For instance, Q reported on microaggressions in which employers denied her positions because students would not approve of her as a teacher as exemplified in this story:

> [The employer] said outright, "Are you a teacher of English? Are you an English teacher?" From the sound of it, it was okay if I was teaching math […] but not English. I replied, "Yes, and here's my résumé. I've got a CELTA [Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults], and I have […] experience." She looked at my résumé and commented, "Oh, you have been teaching actually." I said, "Yeah, that's what I said." She then said, "Unfortunately, I don't think our students would accept you".

When the employer asked Q if she was a teacher of English, the underlying assumption was that Indians are not effective English language instructors, which may rely on the belief that they are poor speakers of English (Mirchandani, 2012). Moreover, Q's belief that the employer would be more comfortable with her if she were teaching mathematics perpetuates the stereotype that Indians are naturally gifted mathematicians.

As racial microaggressions are characterized by their subtlety (Sue, 2010; Sue *et al.*, 2007), Q's story seems different from the previous microaggressions as the employer directly told Q that she would be an unacceptable teacher rather than insinuating this message. However, this direct comment was delivered in an indirect way as the employer placed blame on students' prejudices. Indeed, the comment is still microaggressive because it was masked in a market logic: ELT employers need to practice racism in order to keep customers. Therefore, the employer could exonerate herself of racism by stating this business fact.

By making racism a business truth, employers may even be able to publicly discriminate against nonwhite instructors without any immediate consequence. Such a situation happened to Chao, an ethnically Chinese native speaker of English who noted how after completing his teacher training at one school, the director told him that hiring an Asian teacher would be a problem in front of his classmates:

> After finishing CELTA, we sort of did interviews with the director at [the] school. And during […] [this] class interview, I asked him, "In Toronto, would hiring an Asian teacher be an issue in your school?" I asked this question because this was right after I worked in China where it was an issue. I recall him directly telling me, "Yes, it is, which is why you most likely won't be asked to stay on." And that was weird for me because I would expect that in China, but not here.

As Chao had stated, he would expect such discriminatory treatment in China, where employers and customers were openly skeptical about his language/pedagogical ability as a result of being Chinese. Because they associated whiteness with nativeness in English, clients, in particular, were overtly apprehensive about having a "fellow local" teach the language (Sung, 2011). This apprehension from customers may not disappear when they come to another country to study English. Therefore, Canadian ELT employers, like their counterparts in China and elsewhere, may need to take the apprehension into account in order to keep customers. As one of these employers, the director at Chao's school may have needed to deny Chao a position because as someone who is responsible for generating revenue for his institution, his allegiance must first go to the consumer (Tilbury and Colic-Peisker, 2006).

5. Discussion and implications

It is important to note that the microaggressions experienced by Chao and the other teachers were not continuous occurrences. Indeed, they all noted how many of their interactions with employers were positive and often resulted in an offer of employment. While the teachers experienced microaggressions as isolated incidents, the fact that they told similar narratives warrants a consideration of how the employment discrimination faced by these teachers followed discursive patterns.

One such pattern is transferring blame to the employee (Tilbury and Colic-Peisker, 2006). That is, rather than implicate themselves in any discriminatory behaviour, employers emphasize that employees have an irremediable problem. This point is seen when Maria's prospective employer told her that she was a nonnative-speaking teacher and thus, only capable of teaching beginners. In Maria's narrative, this blame was directly stated as it seemed to be based on language. However, blaming the employee may become more subtle when the blame is based on more than language. That is, as exemplified by Josh's story, when employers do not want to hire nonwhite applicants because of their race, they may cite the applicants' (perceived) language background as the real problem in attaining employment.

Aside from blaming the job seeker's personal failings, another discursive device that the employers seemed to employ was transferring racial discrimination over to clients or the market (Tilbury and Colic-Peisker, 2006). Even if they want to hire nonwhite teachers, ELT employers may need to subscribe to students' preferences for white native speakers of English in order to attract these learners to their institutions. Therefore, when these employers openly reject nonwhite individuals for teaching positions, they are not necessarily doing so on their own volition. Rather, as seen in Q and Chao's narratives from the previous section, employers may position themselves "as merely a [helpless] conduit through which the concerns of clients […] must be addressed" (Tilbury and Colic-Peisker, 2006, p. 659).

It is essential to note that these discursive strategies, as elements of the racial microaggressions described above, depend on context (Kohli and Solórzano, 2012; Pérez Huber and Solórzano, 2015). Specifically, they thrive in the context of the private language school for two reasons. First, one must consider the fact that this school context commercializes education and thus positions English language learners as customers (Breshears, 2008; Hodge, 2005; Ruecker and Ives, 2014). Like other educational institutions that must engage in self-promotion in order to attract students (Fairclough, 1993), private language schools will market themselves in relation to consumer tastes (Ruecker and Ives, 2014). Therefore, if consumers prefer white native speakers of English, then these schools may promote that they only hire these

instructors. The consequence of this promotion is that not only does native speaker status acquire a high-market value (Selvi, 2010), but whiteness as well.

Related to their business nature, the second reason why private language schools may facilitate microaggressions concerns the freedom that they enjoy as private institutions. In fact, since these schools are not subject to government regulation in Canada (Breshears, 2008), employers do not need to adhere to any mandate requiring that they have a diverse workforce. Furthermore, by not being tied to any regulation, these employers were not under the surveillance of a governing body that could monitor their hiring decisions.

Even if a lack of regulation and market forces dictate the preference for white teachers, concentrated efforts are needed to prevent the aversion to their nonwhite counterparts in Canadian English language schools. But what can be done?

One answer is increased regulation. That is, these schools need to be subject to some regulatory body that enforces employment equity policies. This recommendation may already be in place with the establishment of Languages Canada, a national organization that strives to make Canada the prime destination for English/French language learning. All language schools in Canada have the option to join Languages Canada provided that they adhere to a code of ethics, which includes respecting and promoting the ethnic/cultural diversity of staff (Languages Canada, n.d.). Moreover, member institutions that do not follow this code can be subject to fines and other punitive actions (Languages Canada, n.d.). As acquiring membership in Languages Canada is a voluntary process, nonmember institutions may still discriminate against nonwhite teachers without any surveillance. To prevent this situation, it should become mandatory for all Canadian English language schools to become a member of Languages Canada or some other appropriate organization.

Even though this recommendation concerns Canada, it also applies to the international ELT industry, which does not provide satisfactory legal protection for nonwhite ELT job seekers. In reference to the USA as an example, Selvi (2010) recommends that language be added to existing social markers (such as race, gender, and religion) that are currently protected by employment law. This addition would prove useful as it would prevent employers from using language as a means to mask racial discrimination. In order to achieve this type of legal amendment and other changes, major organizations within the ELT profession must be involved. For instance, TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), the largest international ELT organization, should engage in more advocacy work to deter employment discrimination (Ruecker and Ives, 2014; Selvi, 2010).

Beyond advocacy and regulation, the racial and language ideologies that position nonwhite speakers of English as inferior to white native speakers of the language must be combatted. These ideologies pervade beyond Canadian English language schools and must consequently be fought by the entire ELT industry. While specific modes of combat is beyond the scope of this paper, one general strategy might involve attacking oppressive ideologies on the interpersonal level. Indeed, Kubota and Fujimoto (2013) suggest that racially and linguistically marginalized individuals should voice their concerns to perpetrators of discrimination in order to raise awareness. One issue with this suggestion, however, is that unless they display incredible tact, marginalized individuals who directly confront discrimination may be seen as hostile (Kubota and Fujimoto, 2013).

A less confrontational way to dismantle oppressive ideologies is through education. For instance, instead of being modelled after the speech of native speakers from the

inner circle, ELT textbooks and other learning materials should expose learners to other varieties of English. With regard to ELT training programmes, more attention should be paid to the sociopolitical tensions of the field. For example, students in these programmes can explore critical race and critical discourse literature in order to discuss "ways to collectively respond to […] discriminatory practices [in the profession]" (Ruecker and Ives, 2014, p. 20). As a way to create empathy for those who are marginalized by these practices, training programmes could also encourage their racially and linguistically diverse students to share life histories of racial/linguistic discrimination with their peers (Park, 2012). Whether it be through life histories or some other outlet, students and everyone else involved in the ELT industry must learn that English is not exclusively owned by white native speakers (Romney, 2010).

6. Conclusion

As highlighted in this paper, however, the idea that one needs the right racial and linguistic aesthetic to teach English is still evident in the hiring decisions of Toronto ELT employers. While this sentiment may apply to the employers of this study, it may not be applicable to all ELT employers in Toronto or in Canada. Therefore, one recommendation for future research is to conduct surveys or comparative qualitative studies to find out if nonwhite teachers experience employment discrimination throughout Canada. Such research could also be conducted in other inner circle countries.

Further research can investigate the possible hierarchy among nonwhite teachers looking for work. For instance, even though this paper has suggested that both nonwhite native and nonnative speakers of English experience the same type of employment discrimination, could it be possible that native speakers secure more interviews because of their language (McFarland, 2005)? Aside from language, further inquiries might note how other intersecting identity markers affect the employment prospects of nonwhite instructors. By doing these studies, it will ensure that all qualified English language teachers are given respect in Canada and elsewhere.

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About the author
Vijay A. Ramjattan is a Doctoral Student in the Adult Education and Community Development Program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, a division of the University of Toronto. His research interests include aesthetic labour in language teaching, racial microaggressions, and language/racial discrimination in the workplace.