

Inequalities and Accommodations: Promoting Equality Among ELL Students by Employing Organization Theory

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Abstract. With the increasing number of immigrants in the U.S., many children whose primary spoken language isn't English travel with their parents and expect social integration and academic and occupational success. How to integrate into society without giving up identities is a challenging and impending question for all immigrants. Especially for immigrant children, changing environments may bring remarkable obstacles in academic learning and cultural cognition. By employing organization theory, this paper first shows pieces of evidence that prove ELL students are unequally treated in schools via interaction, practices, and policies. This paper presents accommodations in different domains, such as culture, structure, technology, and people. In Addition, integrating support from parents and other organizations in communities is essential to construct an equitable and supportive educational environment for ELL students.

Keywords: Inequalities; Accommodations; Organization Theory; ELL Students.

1. Introduction

With the development of traffic convenience and the trend of globalization, an increasing number of people travel to study, work, and immigrate all over the world. The Immigrant's share of the U.S. population has reached 13.7 percent in 2019, compared to 4.7 percent in 1970. Over 44.9 million immigrants with distinctive cultural, social, and economic backgrounds have lived in the United States in 2019 (Batalova, Hanna, & Levesque, 2021). With the increasing number of immigrants in the U.S., many children whose primary spoken language isn't English travel with their parents and expect social integration and academic and occupational success. How to integrate into society without giving up identities is a challenging and impending question for all immigrants. Especially for immigrant children, changing environments may bring remarkable obstacles in academic learning and cultural cognition.

School is expected to lead ELL students to integrate into the community while resulting in mandatory assimilation. According to organization theory, inequalities are stabilized through policies, practices, and discourses in schools, while schools are also places that changes may happen. School, as an embodiment of social and cultural values, is promoting socialization and construction of identities and provides a social-recognized way of climbing up the social ladder. However, schools in the U.S. are also tools to accelerate assimilation and sustain social stratification. In other words, ELL students are educated to give up existing cultural identities, due to an instilled value that learning English and white culture are the only ways to obtain success. Yet, they can never reach white kids' achievements with the same efforts. ELL students are marginalized, discriminated against, and unfairly treated in schools. Thus, there is an urgent need for examining obstacles faced by ELL students and reforming schools to offer equal opportunities to succeed.

By employing organization theory, this paper first shows pieces of evidence that prove ELL students are unequally treated in schools via interaction, practices, and policies. ELL students are exploited of self, because white dominance beneath interaction, practices, and policies to force them to give up their own cultural capitals. After introducing various inequalities against ELL students, this paper focuses on how standardized tests sustain inequality. Although students are unfairly treated in many ways in schools, English-only standardized tests are one of the most prominent ways. The English-only standardized test is the only way to evaluate students' academic performance in most states of the United States and is the vital factor to influence their future achievements and opportunities. Sadly, ELL students are suffering from low pass rates and high retake and dropout rates, due to "hardhearted" exam setups and white dominance in testing. Although ELL students

perform poorly in tests, the scores are lack validation, due to students' linguistic, psychological, and socio-cultural difficulties.

This paper presents accommodations in different domains, such as culture, structure, technology, and people. Schools with ELL students should promote a culture of equity and diversity. It means that children with different cultural backgrounds enjoy the same chances to be successful and they don't have to discard their own cultural identities. In structure aspect, some physical setting can prevent social isolation and changes in the standardized tests for ELL students narrow the existing gap between ELL students and native English-speaking students. In the technology aspect, this paper mainly introduces ways of promoting equity in instructional methods. In the people aspects, human resources and human relations are two main areas needing reforming. This paper discusses how to recruit, train, and thrive teachers. Also, integrating support from parents and other organizations in communities is essential to construct an equitable and supportive educational environment for ELL students.

2. Organization theory

Social organization, a constellation of people interacting in a social space, endures patterns of social relationships to organize society. The organization plays a key role in shaping societal structure and individuals' ideas, beliefs, frames of thinking via performing state policies and reifying values and beliefs. Also, individuals reproduce and strengthen social norms, values, and stratification in an organization. Thus, organizations are vital tools to sustain social stratification by limiting the personal agency of minority groups, while providing opportunities for dominant groups (Ray, 2019). In this case, the school is a means to keep the supremacy of the dominant group, rather than a meritocratic institution. Moreover, Scott introduced Nadler and Tushman's "congruence model" which breaks an organization into several essential elements: mission and vision, core task and technology, informal organization, formal organization, people. In each part, inequalities hidden beneath discourses and policies encroach ELL students' opportunities to obtain success and sense of self.

3. Inequalities in schools against ELL students

3.1 A holistic picture: How ELL students are marginalized

Educational policy in the U.S. subtracts from students their linguistic, cultural, and community-based identities (Menken, 2008). Schools with ELL often force them to socialize in the White way, since "cultural values and communication styles other than that of the majority as being less desirable or indicators of deficits" (Sue, Bucci, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007). In other words, since only the dominant group's cultural capitals are valued in schools, ELL students have to abandon their cultural identities to conform. For example, compulsive class participation may place constraints on Asian students. Asian students must participate in class verbally to earn points, although their cultures value silence and obedience. If they refuse to conform to Western norms, they are regarded as lacking interest or inattentive and punished because of Asian cultural values (Sue, Bucci, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007). Also, due to an assumption that only knowledge is tested is valuable, the standardized test forces ELLs to give up their own cultural capitals to obtain success. However, employing dominant cultural capitals while abandoning non-dominant cultural capitals may lead to exploitation of self for ELLs and cost the status of "authenticity" (Carter, 2003). ELLs cannot construct and conceptualize positive cultural and linguistic identities in an inclusive environment.

Also, ELL students cannot be included in the school community. They are often treated as animals in the zoo because native English-speaking students always show huge curiosity towards ELLs' dress style, diet habit, and appearance features. The seemingly harmless curiosity may result in psychological burden to ELLs. Additionally, they often lack positive engagement with teachers and peers and lack authentic access to school resources so that they cannot improve academic achievement (Heineke, Coleman, Ferrell, & Kersemeier, 2012).

3.2 A concentrated analysis: How standardized test cause inequality

The standardized test, as the main tool of the accountability system, widens the gaps between ELL students and native English speakers in several ways. The accountability system refers to a means by which government officials, school administrators, teachers, and parents monitor the instructional efficacy of schools and the academic performances of students. ELL students are unequally treated in the structure domain. First, standardized tests are designed to the disadvantage of ELL students. Also, people who design standardized tests often lose sight of various obstacles faced by ELL students. ELL students who usually have lower scores in standardized tests, compared to native English speakers, are often labeled as “lazy”, “stupid”, and “rigid”, which adversely influence their future achievements. Also, they are forced to prolong formal education, which may further constraint occupational opportunities.

Although the goal of the standardized test is to level the playing field, it cannot inadequately evaluate ELL students’ academic achievement and cognitive ability, due to high requirements of English proficiency and ignorance of ELLs’ challenges beyond the academic domain. Most of the standardized tests only have the English version so that they are English proficiency exams, rather than academic ability exams (Menken, 2008). ELL students bear a remarkable burden of understanding the item sentences in English. There are some uncommon words in tests, which cannot be translated in a dictionary, but the entire success for the part depends on them (Menken, 2008). For example, according to (Menken (2008), words in the English Regents exam are often sophisticated and culturally complicated (Menken, 2008). Except for literacy exams, specific terminology and syntax in Math exams make ELLs confused about tasks and even Math exams are testing their language proficiency (Menken, 2008).

Also, with more requirements of “engaging with multiple literacies and producing languages in complex ways” (Menken, 2008), the contents of tests grow much more challenging for ELLs, since they are required to possess receptive skills, interpretive skills, and productive skills. According to Menken (2008), the English Regents exam in New York demands students write four essays, which are evaluated by five detailed qualities, and even math exams require students to comprehend tasks and describe solutions. It means that reproductive skills are highly demanded, but it takes more time for English students to gain reproductive skills.

Except for high requirements of English proficiency, standardized tests evaluate ELLs with no regard to various challenges they are facing. As Ladson-Billings (2018) presents that “testing has become a proxy for student learning without any consideration for the differential challenges with which many students live”. No Child Left Behind mandates participation rate in national tests reaching at least 95% of all students so that teachers push ELL students to take assessments regardless of the length of time that they have been in America and their literacy skills (Menken, 2008). Besides, even ELLs who have spent a long time in America, still suffer from psychological and cultural challenges. Regardless of their literacy skills, they often feel anxious and nervous about English writing, because they sometimes don’t know how to express ideas in English (Lin, 2015). The tests also place high psychological pressure on ELLs, since teachers expedite the process of English acquisition to meet a high participation rate. Additionally, it is hard for ELL students to transform their native language patterns since they cannot easily conform to a new culture. Due to cultural differences, rhetorical styles, organizations, and the expression of ideas may diversify. For example, Chinese students preferring inductive reasoning tend to put thesis sentences at the end of a paragraph and elaborate points first. However, teachers who prefer deductive reasoning may poorly evaluate or misunderstand Chinese students’ organization of writing. Thus, ELLs’ scores on standardized tests are unreliable and invalid.

Considering that the high demand for English proficiency renders the low pass rate and the high dropout rate of ELLs, they have limited occupational opportunities in the future. According to Menken (2008), in 2005 the pass rate of ELLs on the English Regents exam reached only 33.2%, compared to the pass rate of 80.7% of all students. For the Math Regents exam, the ELL pass rate in 2005 was still roughly 23.4% below an overall pass rate (Menken, 2008). Huge challenges and high-

stakes consequences may push students to drop out. There is evidence showing a strong correlation between standardized exams and high dropout rates of ELL students (Menken, 2008). Teachers often judge whether a student is deviant on the basis of their academic performances so that ELLs who failed to pass exams or drop out generally are labeled as deviant students. However, deviance, a social judgment, cannot prove the quality of the person, while it could influence occupational opportunities (Rist, 1977). People who are labeled as deviant are discriminated and they give themselves as hopeless. Also, ELLs who failed to pass and choose to retake exams are still marginalized because of prolonged education. The retake process results in psychological and financial stress to ELL students.

4. Accommodations for Change

However, organizations are not only the places maintaining inequality, but also the places leading to transform. According to Ray, “organizations are key to stability and change for the entire racial order” (Ray, 2019). Schools can be changed to improve equity, inclusiveness, and diversity. To construct a school offering equity, inclusiveness, and diversity, it is important to disassemble the school into several parts and find accommodations for each part by employing organization theory. Aiming to construct a school that can provide ELLs with an inclusive environment where their diversities are treated as assets and they enjoy equal opportunities to succeed in America, this paper draws several accommodations for schools with ELL students in some ingredients introduced above, which are culture, technology, structure, and people to launch a holistic change.

4.1 Culture

The school as an essential carrier of meanings and commitments promote dominant cultures and value dominant cultural capitals. The school is constructed based on cultures held by people and cultures including norms, values, beliefs, and understandings are reified through the school’s structure, technology, mission, and people. According to Riehl (2000), “schools embody a complex array of understandings, beliefs, and values that find legitimacy through their acceptance by the broader public and that are encoded in school structures, cultures, and routine practices”. In other words, the school serves as a carrier of meanings and a tool to reproduce them. Echoed with dominant cultures, schools often create organizational cultures favoring dominant cultural capitals. The culture within an organization, which is influenced by how workers are socialized, decides how people are treated (Madsen & Mabokela, 2000). People in schools experience organizational cultures since they are deeply rooted in schools’ formal and informal structures. Also, they create, reinforce, and transform the culture through what they say or do.

Although, it is impossible to change the social culture which is all-encompassing in a short time, cultivating a school culture of equity, inclusiveness, and diversity can be and need to be done. By improving an equal culture, the opportunity gap between ELL students and English-speaking students. It is important to refuse to regard the White way as the only and irreplaceable way to communicate or act. People need to acknowledge that the White way isn’t superior to other cultural values and see the full humanity and potential of all students by valuing their cultural identities in an equal way. In this way, students’ cultures, experiences, and histories are respected and they can thrive while maintaining their cultural identities.

Also, an organizational culture promoting inclusiveness and diversity is significant. Diversity in thought and culture should be regarded as beneficial resources and a positive asset rather than obstacles to learning (Heineke, Coleman, Ferrell, & Kersemeier, 2012). To value cultural diversity, people first need to see cultural differences. Seeing all Asians as either Chinese or Japanese and ignoring cultural and ethnic differences among groups in Asia are common ways to aggress them (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007). Thus, in order to include everyone and value their different cultural backgrounds, students’ specificity of ethnicity, home language, religion, and other cultural values should be distinguished and explicitly named rather than using “all” to generalize.

Also, to maintain cultural identities, students are allowed to speak their home languages outside of the classroom.

4.2 Structure

A school's ideological construction and culture should be reflected in the physical structures that drive daily practices (Heineke, Coleman, Ferrell, & Kersemeier, 2012). It means that structures should be constructed so that a school's culture can manifest in the actions of all people in the school. According to Heineke, one of the obstacles impeding the academic achievement of ELL students is social isolation. Thus, administrators should consider how the physical layout of the building helps to construct an inclusive environment. For example, ELL students are not sequestered to one wing of a building, but have access to integrate into mainstream student groups as a whole (Heineke, Coleman, Ferrell, & Kersemeier, 2012). Also, national flags representing ELL students' home countries can be decorated on the walls of classrooms and hallways. On school ceremonies, such as entrance and graduation ceremonies, schools are decorated with different cultural symbols according to cultural histories and backgrounds of students and teachers. In addition, Heineke, Coleman, Ferrell, and Kersemeier (2021) suggest that looped classes help teachers know students from various cultural backgrounds and make more accurate decisions with students' achievement data and needs. Also, for bilingual students, the experience of staying with the same teacher and peers for over two years is associated with greater social, linguistic, and academic achievements (Heineke, Coleman, Ferrell, & Kersemeier, 2012).

Also, standardized tests as one of the important mechanisms of the accountability system need to be adjusted to better evaluate ELL students' academic aptitude. The standardized test is a way to measure the performance of schools and teachers and an approach to decide promotion and retention. However, as discussed above, standardized tests in which contents and settings are the same for all students would place obstacles on ELL students. Standardized tests for ELLs can be adjusted before and during tests.

Contents and formats of exams for ELL students should be different from those of English-speaking students. Some test-makers take for granted that all students that the dominant cultural values are universal. However, some contexts which are normal in dominant cultures are unfamiliar to ELL students. Thus, familiar contexts related to test takers' experiences in home cultures and non-language compensatory supporters are needed for ELLs to understand item contents (Kopriva, 2008). Also, teachers often assume that ELLs would understand test expectations and rules which are familiar to English-speaking students (Kopriva, 2008). Yet, test expectations aren't always clear and explicit to ELL students due to cultural and regional differences (Kopriva, 2008). A direct, clear, specific rubric about item requirements should be written before tests and inform ELL students verbally. In addition, considering that some ELLs often transfer schools in more than one location, the regular movements result in learning gaps. Teachers should consider the gaps in learning and make sure the test doesn't require prerequisite skills. It means that teachers should minimize the influence of ancillary skills and close the gaps by offering supporting information.

Besides, simple language structures are necessary due to the assured difference between ELL students' home language structures and English structure (Kopriva, 2008). There are four accommodations to construct simple language structure: keeping canonical phrases and sentence structures without additional clauses, presenting a clear organization in paragraphs thought the test, using present tense and active voice as much as possible, and minimizing the use of rephrasing and rewording concepts (Kopriva, 2008). These accommodations would minimize confusion and ambiguity in item sentences. However, oversimplification and compression of sentences and paragraphs may cause the omission of connecting information (Kopriva, 2008). Thus, it is important to make sure the main points and ideas are presented with minimal words. If significant information cannot be expressed with limited words, educators could consider the use of visuals, such as illustrations, diagrams, graphs, or international symbols, on the condition that visuals don't complicate the contents of the test (Kopriva, 2008). In addition, educators need to pay attention to

item formats (Kopriva, 2008). For example, separating ideas by using bullets helps ELL students to identify key points. Using titles can also draw ELLs' attention to intended key points.

During tests, educators can offer some supporting tools and settings. Text supports, such as bilingual and monolingual glossaries and picture-word lists, can aid ELL students to figure out abstract words and ideas during tests. Educators prefer picture-word lists to bilingual and monolingual glossaries, considering that bilingual supports constrain those who are literate in both home language and English and monolingual glossaries place extra burdens on people with a low level of English literacy. A pictorial representation of specific words in the tests can solve the problems of using bilingual and monolingual glossaries. Also, full-scale dictionaries may exert limited influence, while test-specific glossaries offer more supports to ELLs (Kopriva, 2008).

Offering extra time for tests can be considered a way to accommodate ELL students who don't familiar with the testing processes, language, formats, and contents (Kopriva, 2008). ELLs often spend more time comprehending item sentences and constructing ideas in English. Hence, increased lengths of tests can narrow the language gap between ELL students and English-speaking students. Kopriva (2008) also notes that tests administered in a small group setting can help ELLs to perform in a comfortable environment, especially beginner ELLs. While in the large-scale testing context, hiring language liaisons can be a viable accommodation. Language liaisons are properly trained to answer language questions in the exam text if glossaries offer limited help. They are often from students' cultures so that they can easily connect to them and understand potential constraints.

4.3 Technology

Except for organizational culture and structure, technology, which includes materials, processes, tools, and methods for accomplishing tasks and goals, is another important part of the organization. Technology in a school refers to curriculum, instructional methods, and other materials, such as computers and books. Along with an organizational culture of equity, inclusiveness, and diversity, multi-cultural education should be employed to address all cultures (Ellis-Robinson & Wayde-Coles, 2021). Multi-cultural education incorporates various instructional methods, such as culturally sustaining pedagogy and culturally relevant pedagogy.

Alim and Paris (2017) propose culturally sustaining pedagogy to sustain linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as an asset to cherish rather than eradicating it. It aids teachers to recognize children's cultural identities and experiences as wealth and promotes inclusiveness. For example, Chinese people, hold aspirational capital, one of the cultural capitals, which refers to the capability to maintain hopes regardless of challenges and obstacles (Yosso, 2005). Chinese people, even the poorest, keenly believe in achievement ideology, which means capacity is the vital factor of success rather than social position and economic advantages. Even those living at the bottom in society are encouraged by the model of upward mobility instead of suffering from frustration (Fong, 2002). Aspirational capital may aid them to break the bounds of current circumstances and parents' occupational status (Yosso, 2005).

Culturally relevant pedagogy aims to improve students' self-esteem, critical-thinking skills, and academic performance by connecting subject content and students' home cultures (Yu, 2018). In this case, educators should offer a curriculum that is relevant to students' cultural backgrounds (Ellis-Robinson & Wayde-Coles, 2021). The purposes of the culturally relevant pedagogy are obtaining academic success, developing positive ethnic and cultural identities, and cultivating the ability to recognize and challenge social inequalities (Muñiz, 2019). In this way, ELL students are empowered intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically (Muñiz, 2019).

4.4 People

Since each organization is constructed by people, the roles of "workers" in an organization and interactions of workers within the organization or across organizations are important factors to change an organization. This part mainly discusses human resource practices and human relations within schools and outside of schools.

Human resource practices in schools often include recruiting, training, and encouraging teachers. Due to various cultural backgrounds and experiences of ELL students, teachers with diverse ethnic, language, religious identities should be recruited. In this case, teachers are likely to develop a positive relationship with ELL students and help them adapt to a new culture. They also know pertinent social and cultural attributes that may be used as assets to influence ELLs' academic performances (Heineke, Coleman, Ferrell, & Kersemeier, 2012). In addition, teachers need sufficient knowledge and skills to support ELL students academically. Moreover, teachers with experiences of teaching bilingual students and/or second language acquisition personally can acknowledge potential challenges faced by some ELL students.

After recruitment, administrators should arrange training sessions for new teachers. Because cultural understandings, biases, and blind spots of teachers greatly impact classroom behavior and teachers' effectiveness to teach students with various cultural and linguistic identities, it is necessary to help teachers acknowledge a holistic understanding of cultural responsiveness and students' cultural wealth (Ellis-Robinson & Wayde-Coles, 2021). Equating with Ellis-Robinson and Wayde-Coles (2021), Yu (2018) notes that new teachers should be prepared for multicultural instructional settings. The training programs should help teachers to acquaint students' current status and challenges as well as social and cultural experiences. Teachers in the training programs also should learn knowledge that incorporates multicultural pedagogies (Yu, 2018).

Except for training separately, schools can encourage teachers to form weekly teachers' meetings, in which they can constantly communicate. The program not only can help teachers to construct an inclusive environment but also can contribute teachers to thriving at schools by promoting agentic behaviors, such as heedful relating and exploration (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005). The meeting program can challenge teacher isolation (Heineke, Coleman, Ferrell, & Kersemeier, 2012), which adversely influences teachers' productivity and psychological well-being. In the meetings, teachers critically examine interactions with students and families to build a positive and lasting relationship (Heineke, Coleman, Ferrell, & Kersemeier, 2012). They also can collaboratively formulate particular strategies to manage classrooms and together solve social and academic challenges faced by students by employing students' cultural resources (Heineke, Coleman, Ferrell, & Kersemeier, 2012).

Human relations are incredibly crucial in an organization since the social organization is constructed by social interactions and networks. Scott (2015) asserts that person-to-person ties evolve into social structures. Human relations within schools include interactions between teacher-student relationships and student-student relationships. These school-based relationships are integral to facilitating the achievements of ELL students (Heineke, Coleman, Ferrell, & Kersemeier, 2012). Mentoring relationships support ELL students to maneuver obstacles in academic, social, and cultural domains, and mentors guide ELLs through schooling experiences. Hence, teachers should actively and constantly communicate with students. Schools also should ensure every individual student matches with one experienced and effective adult mentor, considering that longitudinal and targeted attention leads to the success of ELL students (Heineke, Coleman, Ferrell, & Kersemeier, 2012). Additionally, based on information collected by mentors, they can hold some activities, such as consoling groups for students who have experienced traumatic situations and after-school tutoring for students who have special linguistic needs (Heineke, Coleman, Ferrell, & Kersemeier, 2012). Moreover, positive peer relationships can also support ELL students emotionally and psychologically. Schools can hold some extracurricular activities, such as soccer games and peer-support groups, to improve peer relationships.

Besides, not only human relations within an organization are important, but also social interactions between organizations and the community are significant. Family as another social organization can offer huge support for ELL students so that teacher-parent relationships contribute to students' academic achievement. According to Yu (2018), students learn in a continuum of both "in-school" and "out-of-school" time and students' home is one of the most important learning sites out of school, so parental involvement in students' learning is crucial. However, compared to native English-

speaking parents, ELL parents interact with teachers less frequently due to communication gaps and teachers' indifference to ELL parents' ideas (Wassell, Hawrylak, & Scantlebury, 2017).

5. Conclusion

This paper first discuss how ELL students are marginalized and forced to assimilated in a holistic picture and in a more concentrated domain. Also, by breaking down the organization into several important parts, this paper makes some accommodations for some parts, such as culture, structure, technology, and people. These accommodations indicate what can school as a whole and teachers can do to build a more inclusive, equitable, and diverse environment for ELL students. The most important thing suggested by organization theory is that no one part is predominant and can be considered isolated from other parts (Scott, 2015). It means that reformation should be launched holistically, which requires supports from students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the community as a whole.

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