

## **Understanding Quality English Language Learning Teaching from the Human Liberation Approach**

**Dr. Valentin Ekiaka Nzai**

Assistant Professor & Graduate Coordinator (M.S. in Bilingual Education)  
Department of Teacher & Bilingual Education  
Texas A&M University - Kingsville  
Msc 196, 700 University Boulevard  
Kingsville, TX 78363-8202  
USA

**Dr. Jenelle Reeves**

Associate Professor  
Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
44C Henzlik Hall  
USA

### **Abstract**

*The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) strategies have been at the center of a debate between advocates and skeptics. From an intercultural learning approach, exposure to the English language deeply shapes the learner's personal and cultural background. What is learned influences English language learners' identities and consciousness. Therefore, the natural mission of the English Language Learning (ELL) process should consist of putting learners on the path toward human liberation. This later is in opposition to the subtractive teaching approach that legitimizes ELL students' acquired identity, while devaluing others and thereby fostering alienated identities. In this review, we looked at the concept of human liberation as a theoretical lens to understand the meaning of quality ELL teaching and its implications for teacher education. From this frame, we outlined some hypothetical ELL quality teaching ranges and standards.*

**Keywords:** English Language Learning (ELL), English Language Learners (ELLs), English language Students, Human liberation; quality ELL teaching

### **1. Introduction**

High quality education for all currently remains an unachievable dream for many American school children. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB), a law that was presented as a way of improving education of the those who have been underserved by school systems throughout the United States, has been at the center of discussion between educational researchers, teachers, and politicians.

Originally, the No Child Left Behind mandate was a promise to strip away unequal education in the United States in an effort to provide more equitable educational opportunities to all children, regardless of their ethnic background. While the government has touted NCLB successes by calling for expansion, child advocates are decrying it as disastrous for the education of linguistic and cultural minorities. Many classroom teachers and educational activists have spoken out against NCLB. Some of the most serious criticism of No Child Left Behind centers on the issues of funding, (including unfunded mandates), the use of standardized tests, school accountability, and teacher qualification.

For example, the NCLB assessment, incentives, and improvement strategies for low-performing schools diverge with some multicultural teacher educators' perception (Banks, 2008; Haberman, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Nieto, 2011) of minorities' academic improvement strategies.

From the multiculturalism point of view, bridging traditional minority achievement gaps, or what Ladson-Billings (2006) has called an historical educational debt, requires the implementation of cultural responsive teaching methods and curriculum. This idea is in contradiction with what many NCLB advocates believe.

Making teachers accountable for students' performances on state-mandated tests is another important issue that challenges not only school districts, but also Colleges of Education. Through accountability, NCLB introduces the correlation between successes in state – run tests and quality teaching. Poor student performance on state-run tests means intrinsically, that schoolchildren are not taught by quality teachers. By setting the conditions of quality teaching, NCLB is questioning current teacher education training programs, and therefore those who are in charge of preparing pre-service teachers: Colleges and/or Schools of Education.

The discussion between NCLB advocates and educational researchers/practitioners regarding minorities' low academic performance, as well as the questionable quality teacher training, is an opportunity for teacher education programs to critically assess what possibly generated the current state of minority achievement gaps. A brief historical review done by Spring (2007), illustrated how schools were used to de-culturalize various groups of people: Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latino Americans. How can the NCLB reduce the achievement gap in few years, if minority students have been marginalized for many decades?

Instead of throwing guilty stones to each other, parties involved in the generation of this historical educational debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006) should move beyond the controversy by finding genuine strategies to pay off the aforementioned obligation. Colleges of Education should not waste their time involving themselves in sterile debates. Historically, politicians made decisions on educational policies, Colleges and Schools of Education prepared teachers, and school districts implemented politicians' educational policies. To start paying off this educational debt, Colleges and Schools of Education should consider the current NCLB controversy as an opportunity to undergo a structural re-engineering in order to prepare culturally responsive teachers for diverse classrooms.

This review paper, attempts to move beyond the NCLB debate by taking a closer look at the concept of human liberation as a theoretical lens to understand the meaning of teaching English to K-12 English Language Learners- ELLs- (elementary, middle and high school students who speak a different language than English at home) and its implications for teacher education through examination of the following question of inquiry: from the human liberation approach, what should be the ultimate meaning of quality K-12 English language learning in the United States (U.S.)?

At this stage, teaching English to English Language Learners (ELLs), from the human liberation perspective, is opposed any subtractive bilingualism approach that legitimizes ELLs' acquired identity, while devaluing others and thereby forcing the development of alienated/assimilated identities (Canagarajah, 2002). Stated differently, teaching English to ELLs means stopping the sociological denigration, dehumanization, deculturalization and social injustice in order to enhance ELLs' full-range cognitive, academic, linguistic and multicultural competencies.

To explore the above query, we contrast the NCLB definition of highly qualified teachers alongside the traditional concept of teacher competencies, to some theoretical assumptions and ranges about the construct of quality teaching for ELLs in U.S.

## **2. Brief Theoretical Background**

Almost 8 million students are enrolled in ELL programs each in recent years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). Current projections estimate that by (sentence erased) 2050, students of "color" (students from U.S. minority ethnic groups) will constitute 57% of total student population in public schools. The percentage increase of ELL students is well more than 100% over the past 25 years, and this trend shows no sign of slowing as we project into the future (Hollins & Torres Guzman, 2005). From the overall current ELL population, the Latino learners are the most representative.

A brief review of research literature on minority students' performance (Carter and Wilson, 1992, Ernest, 1994; Gibson, 1993 & 1997; Harklau, 1999; Ogbu, 1987 & 1998, Valdes, 1998) shows that students from linguistic and ethnic-minority backgrounds, mostly Latino and African American, do poorly in school in comparison to their peers Anglo European and Asian Americans.

As Nieto and Bode (2011) argued, the simplistic explanation traditionally used as rationale of school failure of students, particularly those from culturally diverse and poor backgrounds, can be summarized as follows: 1) school failure is the fault either of the students themselves, who are genetically inferior (deficit theory); 2) school failure depends upon the social characteristics of ELL students communities, which suffer from economic and cultural disadvantages and thus are unable to provide their children with the necessary preparation for academic success (cultural incompatibilities); 3) school is used to keep the poor in their place by teaching them the proper attitudes and behaviors for becoming good workers, and to keep the dominant classes in power by teaching their children the skills of management and control that would presumably prepare them to manage and control the working class (economic and social reproduction theory).

One of the most coherent explanations of minority low academic performance is found in the research of Ogbu (1987 & 1998) and Ada (2004) on minority failure in American schools. To the aforementioned scholars, minority school performance depends upon their treatment in society at large and in school, as well as by the perceptions of the minorities and their responses to school due to such treatment.

An understanding of how this behaviour affects ELLs' performance calls for an examination of the overall "white" treatment of minorities. A claim (Koppelman, 2008; Nieto and Bode, 2011) has been made that discriminatory barriers such as the glass ceiling, racial profiling and the steering practices affect ELLs and their families in many states. The impact of dominant American subculture at school and environment is expressed in their responses to the collective problems. According Howard (2006), structural barriers in society and schools are important determinants of low achievement among minorities.

Naturally, the predominantly white American ecological system in schools causes some ELL students' resistance to learning (Howard, 2006). If education is currently considered as the suitable way to increase poor and minority families' well-being, we agree with Cummins (1986) and May (2007) when they postulate that quality education for English language learners, minorities and bilingual children is a new strategy that can easily liberate them from oppressive societal systems. Quality education cannot be reduced to language proficiency or increasing English language learners' GPA or college admittance. It should help students to be alienation-free in order to develop their full potential and to be fully human within a diverse society. Therefore, understanding quality education from the human liberation, means legitimization of ELLs' heritage and acquired identities, prevention of widespread school failure, full-range development of ELLs' cognitive, linguistic, cultural, academic and global competitiveness competencies.

This latter does not occur in minority groups that are positively oriented towards both their own and the dominant culture, that do not perceive themselves as inferior to the dominant group, and that are not alienated from their own cultural values (Cummins, 1986 & 1996). From Jim Cummins' research conclusions, we can infer that the development of bilingual-bicultural competencies is the layer of English language learners' human liberation, and as such has to be considered the ultimate instructional goal. The fact is that ELLs' human liberation could not be achieved without an anti-oppressive education (see next pages), which should help to overcome all kinds of ethnocentrism, racial prejudice and transactional teaching promoted by the NCLB.

### **The NCLB Transactional Notion of Highly Qualified Teachers**

To reduce the achievement gap, the NCLB centers on teacher quality. The law requires that all teachers of all students be highly qualified in the subject areas they are teaching. The law defines highly qualified mostly in terms of content. The term highly qualified according to the NCLB Section 9101(23) means that the teacher has obtained full state certification as a teacher (including certification obtained through alternative routes) or passed the state teacher licensing examination, and holds a license to teach in such state, except that when used with respect to any teacher teaching in a public charter school. The term means that the teacher not only meets the requirements set forth in the state's public charter school law; but also has not had certification or licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis.

The NCLB identifies different "quality standards" for teachers at several levels. For elementary school teachers who are new to the profession for example, highly qualified teacher means that the teacher holds at least a bachelor's degree and has demonstrated (in most cases by passing a rigorous state test) subject knowledge and teaching skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and other areas of the basic elementary school curriculum. This may consist of passing a state-required certification or licensing test or tests in reading, writing, mathematics, and other areas of the basic elementary school curriculum. (NCLB Section 9101(23)).

But for in-service teachers who are not new to the profession, highly qualified means that the teacher holds at least a bachelor's degree and has met the applicable standard in clause, which includes an option for a test; or demonstrates competence in all the academic subjects in which the teacher teaches based on a high objective uniform state standard of evaluation that is set by the state for both grade appropriate academic subject matter knowledge and teaching skills (NLCB 9101 (23)).

This definition narrowly describes quality in terms of content knowledge and has led many states to employ paper – and – pencil tests as absolute gatekeepers (Selwyn, Doug, 2007). Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005) noted that there are currently more than 600 tests used across the United States to measure a teacher candidate's basic skills or content knowledge, and there is no evidence that they are effective at predicting who will be an effective teacher.

Certainly, transactional teaching is the most popular practice in American School districts. A major problem that envelops transactional teaching is its focus on test scores. Predictable output is at the center of achievement. From the transactional teaching perspective, highly qualified teachers (Cochran-Smith and Zeichner, 2005) are defined as those with full state certification.

According to this explanation, transactional highly qualified teachers seem to be like technicians who faithfully implement highly sequenced instructional techniques stipulated by school districts. Under this viewpoint, high quality learning is reduced to developing the required critical thinking skills and language proficiency to improve test scores at school level. The long-term outcome of the implementation of transactional teaching is a broken educational system. By narrowing its concept of quality teacher, the NCLB doesn't want to take into account a list of knowledge and skills teachers must possess to work successfully in today's multiracial classrooms (Banks, 2008 and Cochran – Smith, 2005). Prospective teachers with great intercultural attributes who do not pass the required tests are automatically kept away from the teaching profession.

Pre – service teachers' failure on these entrance tests means intrinsically that teacher education programs are not producing the types of highly qualified teachers that the NCLB demands. In the ELL field, this problem is serious considering the cultural and social distance between ELL students, their teachers (mostly whites) and the school – community settings. Meeting quantitative requirements to be an ELL teacher does not warrant achievement of ELL students' learning goals.

As we stated above, the ultimate goal of any second language learning process should be the achievement of ELLs' human liberation. The language learning should lead the learner not only to succeed academically as measured by standardized tests, according to the NCLB assessment policies, but also to develop his/her intercultural competencies. This theoretical postulate is widely shared by minority and bilingual-bicultural teachers and allies (Banks, 1998; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Corson, 1998; Cummins, 1986; Ferdman, 1990; May, 2007; Williams, 2004) when they argued that minority students need to be bicultural to succeed professionally in the United States of America. For non – English speaking students, they must be bilingual – bicultural to succeed living and working in America.

To do so, ELL students need allies. How can the majority of certified native English speaking teachers become ELLs' intercultural allies if teacher education programs do not challenge them? Certainly, pre – service teachers are encouraged to undergo deep ontological changes to develop the needed cultural competences to be considered as qualified ELL teachers. These skills and abilities are not addressed by the NCLB. The time has arrived to claim deeper changes in ELL teacher education programs, practices and policies.

Teaching a second language is a highly complex task and should be in the hands of really qualified ELL teachers, rather than in the hands of whom NCLB defines as highly qualified teachers. From the intercultural learning approach, qualified ELL teachers do not mean only those who fulfilled state certifications or endorsements. Banks (1998) and Wenger (2002) have suggested one of the crucial criteria of quality teaching: becoming insiders and old-timers within the community they teach.

Unfortunately, many universities or colleges do not have specific teacher education programs majoring in K-12 English Language Learning (ELL). Can current ELL endorsements and certifications lead pre-service teachers to become culturally astute insiders and/or old-timers in the community they teach? Do ELL endorsements and certifications mean ipso facto quality English language teaching? What is the meaning of quality English language teaching? To answer these questions, it is necessary to look at the notion of good ELL teacher first. This is the content of the next segment.

**Notion of Good ELL Teacher**

Teaching is like no other profession. Becoming an effective ELL teacher means making a difference in ELL students' lives. From our observational field notes of non – native English-speaking teacher practices, we might argue that ELL teachers wear many hats. In most cases, they are communicators, disciplinarians, conveyors of information, evaluators, classroom managers, counselors, members of many teams and groups, decision-makers, role-models, surrogate parents and intercultural advocates of their students. Each of these roles requires practice and skills that are often not taught in teacher preparation programs. Not all who want to be teachers should invest the time and resources in preparation programs if they do not have the appropriate temperament, skills, and personality (Parker, 1997).

In fact, there is a lack of agreement on the characteristics of a good teacher among the research community. Some scholars (Cochran-Smith, 2002, Cooper, 2003; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Kizlik, 2007; Parker, 1997; Tsui, 2003) suggested some identifiers of good teaching. In fact, good teachers enhance student learning and demonstrate the high level of knowledge, skills, abilities and commitments created by the following five core propositions.

Good teachers are: experts (marked by effortless, fluid performance guided by intuition), passionate to teach their subject matter, compassionate and careful about their subject matter and their students, committed to students and their learning making knowledge accessible to all students regardless of their cultural and racial differences; know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students; are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning by creating, enriching, maintaining and altering instructional settings to capture and sustain the interest of their students and to make the most effective use of time; think systematically about their practice, learn from experience and are members of learning communities (Cochran-Smith, 2002, Cooper, 2003; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Kizlik, 2007; Parker, 1997; Tsui, 2003).

If there is a lack of agreement on the characteristic of a good mainstream teacher, the same situation is applied to the ELL field. Traditionally, the position deeply embedded in ELL students and parents, and widely defended by many ELL educational managers is that the good ELL teacher should be a trained native speaker of English. Teaching English to ELL students cannot be limited on gaining the linguistic fluency and proficiency only. It goes beyond the simple language learning process. Unfortunately, English has been taught under subtractive bilingualism settings in U.S. and many developing countries, which reinforce the fallacy of native speaker (Phillipson, 1996). Such approach (subtractive bilingualism) of teaching English forces K-12 ELL students' alienation and assimilation to mainstream culture while devaluing their own heritage cultures.

Reflecting on their experiences, some scholars (Braine and Ling, 2007; Lee, 2000) suggested two informative characteristics that make a good English language teacher. In the same vein, the aforementioned authors pointed out that students' perceptions of good English teachers, regardless of their accent are often affected by two factors: (a) the quality of help students get from the teacher and (b) their relationship with the teacher. These factors boil down to (a) the teacher's expertise, which includes knowledge and training as well as teaching techniques, and (b) the teacher's intercultural personality, which directly influences the teacher-student relationship.

Actually, there is some sort of consensus among scholars regarding teachers' cultural competencies needed to effectively develop culturally responsive teaching for diverse classrooms. Research in diversity education in the teacher education field (Banks, 1998; Cochran-Smith, 2002; Cooper, 2003; Gay, 2001; Howard, 2006; Kizlik, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Sowden, 2007; Wenger, 2002) highlight some common threads of understanding and skills that good ELL teachers would possess: appropriate personal qualities and the development of good intercultural competencies. The aforementioned skills or abilities are not addressed in the NCLB document, although they are crucial to achieving quality ELL process.

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Thus far, the most commonly used quality standards for basic English language teacher education were designed by the association of TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), and, approved by the National Council of Teacher Education. To fulfill the mission of ensuring excellence in English language teaching to speakers of other languages, TESOL advocates their performance – based standards for the preparation and licensure of ELL educators. The TESOL Standards for PK-12 Teacher Education Programs address the need for consistency throughout the U.S. in how teachers are prepared to teach English to K-12 ELL students.

No one objects the NCLB's noble mission of reducing the achievement gap by 2014, considering the increasing percentage of ethnic student minorities (Selwyn, Doug, 2007). To do so, thousands of ELL teachers are recruited each year. As a result, many of them can attend college to become highly qualified professionals; consequently, the U.S.'s economy can remain competitive in the global marketplace, considering the increasing number of jobs that require higher education qualification.

From the NCLB premise, increasing ELLs' college entrance and graduation means ensuring U.S.'s well-being. How can excellence in ELL practices be achieved considering the existing cultural and social capital distance and disconnect between the majority of ELL teachers and the ELL students from minority ethnic backgrounds?

Howard (2006) argued that teachers cannot teach what they do not know. Although the research about the importance of teacher – student cultural match is not unanimous, there are strong indications that it can make a significant difference in the academic achievement of diverse students (Cochran-Smith, 2002; Haberman, 1996; Klopfenstein 2005; Oates, 2003 cited by Doug, 2007, Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Wiggins, Follo & Eberly, 2007).

Without any doubt, the teacher – student cultural match can be utopist in the ELL field considering not only the variety of ESL student backgrounds in American public schools, but also the current profile of young people coming into the teacher education field. Most of them are culturally naive white females whose parents have attended high school and possibly college. Their average age is in the low 40s, and they have had little or no contact with inner – city children or minority families (Doug, 2007; Wiggins, Follo & Eberly, 2007). Zumwalt and Craig's (2005) analysis of the Department of Education statistics data for school year 1999–2000 shows that 74% of public school teachers are women and 84% of the teacher corps are white, with that number higher in the suburbs.

Moreover, the number of teachers in public elementary and secondary schools increased 27 percent between 1991 and 2004 and is projected to increase an additional 18 percent between 2004 and 2016 (Zumwalt and Craig, 2005). Based upon these data, and considering the natural goal of the English language learning process, it is imperative to look at the meaning of quality ELL teaching from the human liberation approach which might serve as a layer of experimental ELL teacher education programs.

### **3. Discussion: Answering the question of Inquiry**

Our question of inquiry was: from the human liberation approach, what should be the ultimate meaning of quality K-12 English language learning in the United States (U.S.)?

Theoretically, quality is not a concept. It is a construct from the business management field. As a construct, its conception varies from one organization or society to another. There is no universal agreement on its content.

In Business management, quality refers to the level of customers' performance and satisfaction (Deming, 2000; Watson, 2004). Two terms have been used to represent the content of quality in the aforementioned field: effectiveness and excellence. Effectiveness is almost virtually synonymous to success. It is about outcomes, consequences and results. Being effective means achieving the outcomes and results you had planned (Ekiaka, 2000).

In other words, effectiveness is achieved when you meet the established standards. These must be set up according to the latest global education market trends. If the standards are too narrow or too hemispheric, students will be equally ineffective. In many cases, effectiveness should be measured, while excellence will move beyond effectiveness.

In the ELL field, a review of some public school ELL program goals (Ernest, 1994) indicated that the formal planned objective of the second language learning process consists of helping students to achieve the required linguistic and academic competences to succeed in schools. Authors such as Brown (2000), Valdes (1998), and Pierce (1995) clearly highlighted that school districts' ELL learning objectives emphasize only the development of cognitive and academic language proficiency. Even more, it is questionable if some instructional delivery methods (Echavarria, et al, 2003; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994) can lead the learner toward the development of higher level critical thinking and background changes, if the school fails to attend to two crucial issues: enhancement of teachers' cultural competencies and English language learners' world outside the school classroom (Clark, 2004; Gruwell, 2007; Valdes, 1998).

Prior to suggesting the meaning of quality ELL teaching construct, it is important to provide standards for some ELL learning effectiveness from an intercultural communication approach.



As we stated above, the human liberation should be considered as a crucial approach to the understanding of quality ELL teaching.

Based not only on preliminary data of non – native English speaking teachers' practices (Braine & Ling, 2007; Lee, 2000), but also on emerging research literature on culturally responsive teaching for diverse classrooms (Banks; 1998; Gay, 2002; Howard, 2006; Ladson–Billings, 2000; Sleeter, 2001; Wiggins, 2007) and recent diversity teaching experiments (Clark, 2004, Gruwell, 2007), we can postulate that the road toward ELL students' human liberation should clearly follow five different learning standards: a) meet and exceed the development of cognitive and academic proficiency in order to succeed in American schools according to TESOL/NCATE standards; b) meet and exceed the development of student functional fitness in order to succeed professionally in U.S.; c) achieve the highest psychological health in order to avoid psychological duress or individual breakdown; d) achieve intercultural identity which will link the ELL students to more than one culture, and e) achieve intercultural personality as a final outcome of the deeper long-term involvement in intercultural learning and relationships inside and outside the classroom. It does follow from the above that the aforementioned standards contrast the NCLB definition of highly qualified teaching.

Moreover, they constitute what we named as standard of the new content of high quality ELL teaching. Meeting or exceeding them is indicative of fostering ELL student human liberation. By developing bilingual-bicultural identities or multilingual – multicultural identities, ELL students have reached or exceeded the functional fitness and psychological health stages (Kim, 2001) toward his/her own personality transformation.

When starting their English language learning process, ELL students are ipso facto entering into a new culture. The process of cross – cultural adaptation is set in motion and continues as long as they maintain some form of interaction with their host culture (Kim, 2001). Throughout this process, the students undergo a degree of intercultural adaptation that occurs naturally and inevitably even when they neither plan nor actively seek for it.

Under the intercultural communication approach, ELL students, as strangers in an unfamiliar setting, instinctively strive to know their way around and how to control their own behaviour as well as the behaviour of others. Functional fitness, according to Kim (2001), represents an outcome of such effort, manifested in the suitability of the ELL student's internal capabilities, as a newcomer, to meet the external challenges of the environment.

The notion of functional fitness means that ELL students will be well adapted, and therefore will be capable of carrying out everyday life activities smoothly and comfortably in a new culture (Kim, 2001). An increase in functional fitness will be reflected in increased congruence of subjective meaning systems and will be accompanied by an enhancement in psychological health (Kim, 2001).

Psychological health can be defined as a state in which the student's cognitive, affective, and operational tendencies work in harmony. It is one phenomenon that is difficult to observe concretely because it reflects a normal, taken-for-granted state of being. ELL teachers and managers must help ELL students to positively overcome all types of cultural-shock symptoms, which might include negative self-image, low self-esteem, low morale, social isolation, dissatisfaction with life in general, a bitter attitude of being a helpless victim of circumstance, and related distresses such as depression, communication dysfunction or breakdown, hostility to the host environment, frustration and aggression (Kim, 2001; Searle and Ward, 1990).

Naturally, increased functional fitness and psychological health mean emergence of an identity that is increasingly richer in content and more complex in structure. In fact, teaching an English course from the intercultural communication viewpoint is essentially different than teaching the same content under a mono-cultural “English only” setting. The difference relies on the promotion of on intercultural identity development or cultural identity reconstruction. The term, ‘intercultural identity’ refers to an acquired identity constructed during the individual's enculturation in a new cultural environment (Kim, 2001).

In addition to inherent psychological conflicts, it links the individual from one cultural/racial background to multiple cultures, and ultimately to humanity itself, having internalized host communication competence, deeper core values, beliefs and loyalty. Personal interviews with experienced non-native English speaking K-12 teachers denote the emergence or acquisition of aesthetic perception and sensitivity of the host culture, once the developmental or reconstruction intercultural identity process is almost over.

In other words, the newcomer begins to perceive and appreciate the “beautiful” or “hideous” through the host culture's eyes.

So, teaching in English to ELL students from an intercultural setting connotes motivating them to develop their roots and wings; in other terms, becoming a cosmopolitan and global citizen, etc (Appadurai, 1996; Appiah, 2006; Bank, 2008; Zachary, 2003).

A claim (Spring, 2007) has been made English teaching has historically contributed to students' deculturalization of many minority students in U.S. One of the deculturalization strategies very often used consists of using learning/reading material from the dominant culture. In those texts, argue Canagarajah (2002) certain values, norms, practices, and codes are held in higher esteem than others. English language learners and minority students who do not share the mainstream norms, values and/or codes may feel that they are at a disadvantage. So, ignoring these inequalities can cause learners to develop a negative identity. To prevent such an outcome, the use of culturally embedded- pedagogy might help to build up ELL students' linguistic and cultural competencies.

The growing presence of ELL students in the American public school population suggests that not only classroom members, but also the entire school community is involved in multi or interethnic relationships. Within the school community, ELL teachers, in particular, are deeply implicated in interethnic and intercultural exchanges, since they interact with ELL students from a variety of cultural and racial backgrounds daily.

In multiracial ELL classrooms or schools, LSL students from different cultures have the privilege to develop an interethnic composite of their intercultural identities through long –term and deeper intercultural exchanges, described as fundamentally anti – racist – advocacy for “alter-egos” from other ethnic groups; color matterless and color comfortable.

A close look at Raible's (2005) research allows us to better understand the impact of long – term interethnic exchanges, within and outside classrooms, on ELL students' identity changes. By developing intercultural identities, ELL students become sensitive to and aware of racial and cultural issues, specifically, more aware than others who do not share the learning experience of a multiracial ELL classroom. So, they will be able to experience the aesthetic enlightenment of both or many cultures.

From the human liberation approach, learning English is opposed to deculturalization. Instead, learners should not see themselves as alienated from both the dominant and their own cultures. Therefore, schools and teachers must not presume that a teacher's job is to rid students of cultural vestiges (Ladson – Billings, 2000) and linguistic repertoires (Ernest, 1994; Grosjean, 2010).

As discussed above quality ELL practices means achieving teaching excellence. Teachers cannot achieve this highest instructional standard when teaching English to ELL students prior to the accomplishment of second language learning effectiveness. Obviously, some ELL programs are designed to reach the lower level of quality and from there move progressively to the next level while cutting-edge ELL programs target second language learning effectiveness, at the very least. The chart below sums up our theoretical frame of quality ELL teaching.

#### **Quality ELL Teaching Levels & Ranges**

<b>Levels</b>	<b>Quality ranges</b>	<b>Intercultural human Integration stages</b>
D	Good	Cognitive and academic language proficiency. TESOL/NCATE
C	Better	Functional Fitness and psychological health
B	Effective	Intercultural identity development
A	Excellence	Intercultural personality

As our readers may note in the chart above, intercultural personality constitutes the ultimate human integration stage, according to this suggested frame. Its application in the in the field of ELL teacher education, suggest the determination of the suitable profile of quality ELL teacher.

#### **4. Implications for ELL Teacher Education**

In fact, the quality framework described in these pages has strong potential to ensure a healthy, competitive and pluralistic society. It has several implications for ELL teacher education regarding the following: the redefinition of the ELL teacher's mission, the determination of the ELL teacher profile, and the determination of ELL teacher education strategies according to the five standards of ELL students' human liberation discussed above.

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In fact the aforementioned human liberation standards suggest per se what should be the profile of quality ELL teachers. From this viewpoint, all qualifications of good teachers described in previous pages applied might be considered as the starting point for the enhancement of excellent ELL teacher profile. However, since almost 80% of teachers in U.S. United States are white, monolingual, and have very limited diversity experiences, it is our opinion that in order for them to legitimately become cultural insiders and old-timers in the communities they teach (Wenger et al, 2002), it will be wise to help them get involved into a true intercultural learning experience.

Fostering pre-service ELL teachers' personal cultural competencies will better prepare them to reduce the existing student - teacher cultural and social capital distance. Paragraph erased. To succeed in the pre-service ELL teacher's interculturalization process, a partnership must be fostered between ELL students' families and teacher education programs.

A brief review of literature on cultural identity development or reconstruction (Hoopes, 1990; Helms, 1994, Kim, 2001; Tatum, 1992; Thomas & Schwarzbaum, 2006) shows that cultural competencies are acquired basically through second language acquisition/learning, second culture acquisition/learning, through systematic linguistic and cultural immersion, and through deeper long-term intercultural exchanges.

Since some postulates, discussed in this paper, logically challenge current K-12 ELL and ELL teacher education practices in the U.S., the authors recommend the exploration of current effective bilingual-bicultural and/or multilingual-multicultural ELL teachers' processes in a predominantly monolingual society in order to design ground-breaking strategies aimed at enhancing future ELL teachers (with low linguistic and cultural skills)' full-range cognitive, academic, linguistic and multicultural competencies.

Furthermore, research (Banks; 1998; Colombo, 2007; Gay, 2002; 2006; Ladson – Billings, 2000; Sleeter, 2001, Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Wiggins, Follo & Eberly 2007) indicated that building teachers' cultural competence requires more substantive and intentional planning than a one-time training course, student-teaching practice, or even a one-time immersion experience. Here, we support Raible's (2005) idea of experimenting with new teacher education strategies such as creating real intercultural learning communities where all members will be mutually infused by different cultures.

## **5. Conclusions**

The debate between the NCLB advocates and educators regarding achievement gaps, school accountability, and teacher quality inspired the authors to look at the quality ELL teaching. In this review article, we have attempted to offer new substance to the ELL quality teaching construct. ELL teacher education quality is crucial to ensure academic, personal, and professional success in the lives of ELL students in U.S. Sentences erased

ELL teachers' failure may well be partially to blame for the percentage increases in newcomer students drop out rate here by negatively impacting educational, economic, and social wealth that is so strongly sought in the United States. Because a skilled workforce is crucial to ensure a healthy and competitive economy, so this will be impacted as well. Further lacking will be a well-educated and thoughtful citizenry it needs for a vibrant and energetic democracy. Thus, the social and economic gaps that exist between ethnic groups in the United States will widen further.

Sometimes, being deeply involved in social processes might represent a great limitation to effectively evaluate how the institutional or community system works. Some school-based studies referenced in this paper have provided theoretical insights relative to ELL students' low performance at K-12 levels. However, they still stick on causal explanations. Most of them do not consider, for example, the existing cultural and social capital distance between ELL students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds and their white monolingual-monocultural ELL teachers or the subtractive nature of most formal structured ELL programs. All official standards used in structured ELL school programs in U.S. have been focused mostly on the development of academic and cognitive proficiency (White, 2004). Sentences erased

To achieve ELL students' human liberation, ELL teachers have to set their teaching goals at the highest level of intercultural integration standard. The challenge here consists of how the primarily white majority ELL teachers could lead this process, if they cannot teach what they do not know! (Howard, 2006). Bearing in mind the increasing numbers of ELLs each year, it is urgent for ELL teacher education programs to experiment with new ELL teacher education strategies from the latest intercultural learning and teaching research in a concerted effort to increase native ELL teachers' cultural competencies.

Throughout this review paper, we stated that ELL teachers' cultural development means ipso facto becoming intercultural allies for their pupils. Becoming an intercultural ally implies being a cultural insider and old-timer of the community you teach (Bank, 2008; Wenger, 2002). This is a long-term process that cannot be achieved through limited intercultural exchanges. An exploration of teachers' cultural competencies and subsequent enhancement are needed to understand how native ELL teachers can enable ELL students to be alienation-free in a predominantly monolingual society.

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