

# Racial and Social Discrimination in the EFL Class: the Case of the Roma Minority

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper aims to study Andalusian students' and teachers' perceptions of social and racial discrimination in the EFL class with special reference to the Roma (gypsy) minority. After a brief introduction on racial discrimination in the world, figures are presented to illustrate the situation in Spain, especially with regard to the Roma ethnic minority in Andalusian schools. The main premises of critical race theory and some studies which have contributed to clarifying the extent of racial discrimination in present day society are also revised.

Our study explores how students and teachers at Primary, Secondary and Tertiary academic levels perceive the treatment given by teachers to students of different social classes and to the Roma minority in particular. A sample of 459 students and 14 schools has been used. Of this group 59 students were attending two schools with a high Roma population in the city of Granada. The results indicate that students and teachers do not perceive a high degree of discrimination, but some of them do, as is often reported in sociological studies.

**Keywords:** social and racial discrimination, students' and teachers' perceptions, gypsy discrimination, Roma minority

## **Discriminación social y racial en la clase de inglés como LE: el caso de la minoría gitana**

**RESUMEN:** Este artículo se propone estudiar la percepción del alumnado y profesorado andaluz sobre la discriminación social y racial en la clase de inglés como lengua extranjera con especial referencia a la minoría gitana. Después de una breve introducción sobre la discriminación racial en el mundo, se presentan algunas cifras que ilustran la situación en España, especialmente con la minoría gitana en las escuelas andaluzas. También revisamos los postulados principales de la teoría crítica de la raza y algunos estudios que han contribuido a clarificar hasta qué punto existe discriminación racial en la sociedad de hoy.

Nuestro estudio explora las percepciones de profesores y alumnos de Primaria, Secundaria y Universidad sobre el tratamiento que se le da al alumnado perteneciente a diferentes clases sociales y a la minoría gitana en particular. Hemos usado una muestra de 459 alumnos y 14 colegios, entre los cuales había 59 alumnos que asistían a escuelas con una alta población gitana en la ciudad de Granada. Los resultados indican que los estudiantes y el profesorado no perciben, en general, un alto grado de discriminación, pero algunos sí que lo detectan tal y como muestran algunos estudios sociológicos sobre el tema.

**Palabras clave:** discriminación social y racial, percepción de profesores y estudiantes, discriminación a los gitanos, minoría gitana

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Most studies, reports and articles on social discrimination seem to claim that , some form of racial and social discrimination does still exist all over the world, despite governments' efforts to fight against it. This social discrimination seems to be deeply rooted in society and culture and is extremely difficult to eradicate. This discrimination is suffered especially by immigrant populations around the world. If we consider that some 150 million people live outside their country of origin, we will recognize the importance of this social problem and the need to solve it urgently.

Almost every day we have news about the alarming upsurge in intolerance, discrimination, racism and xenophobia in practically every country of the world. According to the United Nations (Telemadrid, 15-7-2004), one seventh of the world population, that is around 900 million people, suffer from some kind of discrimination due to their ethnic, racial or religions identity. It is the migrants and ethnic minorities who are particularly vulnerable groups and who often see their rights violated as workers and human beings; they commonly face discrimination and xenophobic hostility. In most countries, the press and mass media have demonstrated the reality of this social problem. For example, in Spain, Esteban Ibarra, President of the Social Movement against Tolerance, has criticized that 300 websites incite discrimination and hate against some social groups. Alfonso Múnera has also denounced racial discrimination in Cartagena (Colombia) in his article entitled «The sun cannot be hidden with a finger». Enrique Patterson, Professor of Philosophy at La Havana University till 1981, has criticised the existence of racial discrimination in Cuba. For him, an excessive egalitarianism eliminates freedom and discrimination cannot be eradicated till full democracy exists. Doudou Diéne has also asked the Guatemalan government to admit in public that racial discrimination does exist in Guatemala. Similarly, Néstor G. Taípe has also denounced the racial discrimination suffered by aborigines, Afro-Latin and Afro-Caribbean people in Latin America, the United States and Australia. In South Africa, the apartheid laws, which institutionalised racial discrimination, are well known the world over.

So, there is enough evidence to conclude that:

- Some forms of racism and xenophobia exist as social attitudes, based on prejudices and stereotypes in the five continents.
- The victims of racial and social discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance also include «mestizos» of indigenous or African descent, Jews, Muslims and Romani communities (gypsies).
- Though there is no explicit and official recognition of racism in most countries and governments deny its existence, it is a social fact.
- Several studies have proved that there is a high degree of correlation between discrimination, inequality, and inequity. As was concluded in the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Geneva, 21 May-June 2001), «discrimination and racism are at the same time a cause and an effect of conditions of poverty and vulnerability».

## 2. The situation in Spain

In Spain, several studies have also reported some forms of social discrimination. The figures presented by the Spanish Centre of Sociological Studies (CIS), published by *El Mundo* (11-8-03), show that 67% of young people think that Spanish people are racist. The newspaper *Ideal* (20-7-2002, p. 6), based on many other publications and 250 cases of racism that were tried in court also reported that intolerance is increasing among the Spanish population and that the Roma (gypsy) minority suffers the same lack of social consideration as it did ten years ago. It was also stated that hostility towards Muslim immigrants has increased dramatically and after the 11<sup>th</sup> of May terrorist attack the situation is likely to become much worse!

The immigrant population in Spain is around 5 million, which is nearly 10% of the entire Spanish citizenship. The majority of these people come from Africa, Eastern Europe and Central and South America. The number of immigrants from Latin America is more than one million and the population of Africans is nearly 600.000. The number of people coming from these places is shown in the next table (Spanish Institute of Statistics, Municipal Census, 2007):

| <i>Country</i> | <i>Immigrants</i> |
|----------------|-------------------|
| Morocco        | 539.773           |
| Rumania        | 430.867           |
| Ecuador        | 390.000           |
| Argentina      | 231.630           |
| Colombia       | 299.479           |
| Bolivia        | 157.732           |
| Peru           | 138.593           |

Source: INE, ENI 2007

### 2.1. The Roma minority

We are specially interested in this minority because this study also focuses on the Roma community in Granada (Spain). The Roma population amounts to 650.000 people. About 60% of this population, i.e. 390.000 Roma, live in Andalusia (southern Spain). According to the Romani Associations, around 100.000 Roma still suffer some kind of social rejection and segregation. According to the Spanish social services, absenteeism among Roma school children has decreased in the last five years from 52% to only 20%, but 10.000 Roma children still do not go to school. According to this source, a considerable percentage of the Roma population still suffers from social marginalisation. Unfortunately, this social segregation and marginalisation is deeply imbedded in Spanish history and tradition. For example, in 1532 the Archbishop of Granada wrote to king Charles V complaining about the «Egyptians» (gypsies) who wandered around in his diocese and lived among the Moors converted to Christianity (moriscos), teaching them sorcery, witchcraft, fortune-telling and superstitions; they would steal the Moors' clothes, beasts of burden and cattle, something which the Moors often complained about and denounced. Cervantes also wrote in «The Little Gypsy» (La Gitanilla) that the Roma population seemed to do nothing but commit robberies from birth to death.

For many years, the Roma have worked as blacksmiths, horse traders, musicians, dancers and fortune tellers and have been generally poor and largely illiterate. But recently, their education has improved considerably. Some of them have got university degrees and work as professionals: doctors, lawyers, artists and business people. Modern society considers the Roma a minority who needs social integration and promotion. Since 1983, the Spanish government has implemented special programmes of compensatory education to promote educational rights for the disadvantaged, including Roma communities. The two schools taking part in this study have been following compensatory programs for the last twenty years.

Despite the Spanish constitution compromise of equal social treatment, according to most studies, Roma are one of the social groups with lower social recognition, as the 2005 CIS survey has proved. According to this study one out of four Spaniards (25%) would not like their children to share education with Roma students and 40% would be annoyed if they had Roma as neighbours.

On the other hand, 45 % of the informants used in the Roma population and employment study promoted by the Roma Secretarial Foundation expressed that they felt discriminated at some moment in their working life. This proportion implies that 215.000 Roma people have been discriminated against while looking for a job or when at work. According to the Practical Guide for Roma associations (<http://www.gitanos.org/publicaciones/discriminacionGuiaAsoc/asociaciones-06.pdf>) the reports prepared by the Discrimination and Roma Community include 226 formal complaints of discrimination in the labour environment, housing, health and sanitary services, justice, police, mass media, and other services.

Nowadays, the educational level of the Roma minority is lower than any other social group. (see [http://www.gitanos.org/publicaciones/guiasalud/cultura\\_02.pdf](http://www.gitanos.org/publicaciones/guiasalud/cultura_02.pdf), retrieved 23-7-10). Around 70% of the Roma adult population has not completed primary studies. Though the incorporation of the child population into schools is nearly total (around 95%), their daily attendance, completion of obligatory studies and academic achievement leaves a lot to be desired.

Several studies (Fernández Enguita, 1993; Muñoz, 1993; Fresno, 1994) have evidenced some of these problems: a) the Roma's late incorporation to schools; b) their high rate of absenteeism; c) their difficulties to acquire basic school instrumental techniques and d) their low rate of school certifications, diplomas and degrees.

As Essomba (2003) has pointed out, the prejudices related to the Roma's community schooling (Liégeois, 1998) has been influenced by several social factors derived from their traditional marginalisation and from their culture, such as: a) their social relation models, that challenge school norms and routines, c) a concept of time that gives a high value to the immediate, the here and the now, d) a mature period in which adolescence prolongation –so important in completing some educational tracks - does not take place, e) a concept of space that conflicts with the one on which the school is based, f) an oral tradition that does not fit in well with the direct communication and silent period of schools.

For the Roma community, which maintains a culture that goes against the mainstream, school is perceived as a strange and threatening institution whose education programmes rarely incorporate elements from the Roma environment (see Calvo Buezas, 1989 and Grupo Eleuterio Quintanilla, 1998), where textbooks ignore or distort their way of life, school projects rarely deal with the Roma's lifestyle, and teaching staff do not make contact with their associations. As Essomba has stated (2003), if society uses schools to transmit its values the only functionality

that the Roma population finds is the learning of reading, writing and numeracy. Their lack of involvement with the school curriculum provokes marginalisation and some feelings of rejection and inhibition towards schools and education.

Two alternatives that can improve this mismatch between Roma and «payos» (non-Roma population) would be to try out some intercultural models that overcome the previous segregated education policies and to incorporate relevant cultural elements of the minority group so that its members find elements of their own identity in the school curriculum. Secondly, it would be necessary to negotiate with these communities about their integration process in the economic, social and cultural fields so that racism and social discrimination disappear.

The educational integration of the Roma minority is a complementary factor on which access to housing, employment, health care, social assistance, scholarships, etc., depends. As Essomba (2003) has emphasised, the final objective is to involve the Roma community in their own development, social integration and promotion.

### 3. SOME STUDIES ON SOCIAL AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Racism is based on the belief that race is the determinant factor of human traits and racial discrimination exists when people are treated differently depending on their race or ethnic origin. Social and racial discrimination in education implies treating the students differently according to their belonging to a particular social group. It embodies the unequal treatment of students, for reasons that have nothing to do with their rights or capacity. It is a teachers' and administrators' attitude that results from social prejudices.

In Spain and in many other European countries the Roma minority still suffers some kind of social discrimination. According to the activist Jan Stejskal, many Czech Roma are sent, unjustifiably, to schools with students who have learning difficulties or some kind of minor disorder. He stated that the discrimination against Roma children is a daily fact and that more than 10 million Roma children are schooled in special institutions, which is around 27% of the whole Roma school children population, despite of the fact that they have a normal cognitive and intellectual development. In his opinion, it is unjustifiable that teachers and administrators treat them differently to other children. In order to attenuate this effect, he has proposed an integrative educational project called «together at school» (<http://www.radio.cz/es/articulo/119954>, retrieved 15-8-10).

On the international day of the Roma population in 2010, the Council of Europe also denounced the political racism that the Roma population suffers. According to this organization the limited institutional representation of the Roma minority in Europe and the failure of the integration programmes implemented by the European countries seem to be the main causes that explain the present situation.

The race factor and its influence on the teaching and learning processes has been widely studied in all curricular areas and has developed together with intercultural studies. In this field, the contribution made by Solorzano (1997) and the critical race theory of racial stereotyping has been very influential. These studies maintain that instruction and learning are socially determined activities, where social factors such as classroom atmosphere, social and cultural feelings and sentiments, prejudices, stereotypes, interpersonal relations and expectations greatly influence the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process (Le Roux, 2001: 273).

Efficient teachers, from a multicultural point of view, are concerned not only about students as individuals but also as members of specific ethnic and social groups. They are sensitive to the students' groups and cultural affiliations. From this perspective, classroom intercultural relations are an invaluable source of knowledge and mutual enrichment within the context of student cultural diversity, providing that the teacher is able to benefit from it. But if teachers neglect such multicultural contexts or ignore them, intercultural conflicts may arise that produce frustration, segregation, discrimination and social rejection among the ethnic groups.

San Román (2005: 9) also describes how the Roma population is associated with marginalisation, poor living conditions and mistrust. For this reason society does not realise or ignores the fact that a great many Roma have been integrated into society without losing their ethnic origin and identity. Regrettably, these segments of the population seem to be invisible whereas the only visible sector is related to the negative living conditions described above. As Fernández Enguita (1999) has stated, Roma students live in a school context that ignores, silences, forgets and denies their cultural referents and reproduces the stereotypes mentioned above.

### 3.1. Critical race theory

Following Fay (1987) and Tierney (1991, 1993), critical race theory can be defined as «a framework or set of basic principles, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of society that maintain the subordination and marginalisation of people of colour» (Solorzano, 1997:6). This theory challenges the official and dominant discourse on race and racism and considers that the legal dominant doctrine is used to subordinate ethnic and racial groups (Bell, 1992 and 1995; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller and Thomas 1995; Delgado, 1995). This theory is grounded on some basic premises:

#### *a) Importance of race and racism*

For this theory, race and racism are social factors of crucial importance. As Russell points out (1992:762), «a central rather than marginal factor in defining and explaining individual experiences of the law». This phenomenon includes four dimensions (Solorzano, 1997:6):

- Micro- and macro- components.
- Institutional and individual aspects.
- Conscious and subconscious elements.
- Its impact on individuals and on their social groups.

Though the principal objective of critical race theory analysis focuses on race and racism it does not ignore other factors such as *gender* and *social discrimination*, since they have a strong relationship with racial problems (Crenshaw, 1993).

#### *b) Challenge to dominant ideology*

The traditional legal system's assumptions about objectivity, meritocracy, race neutrality and equal opportunities are also challenged, the argument being that all these ideas are used as a camouflage of power and dominant groups (Calmore, 1992).

*c) The commitment to social justice*

This theory has a commitment to social justice and the eradication of racism. In addition to racism and racial subordination, there is a commitment to fight against gender subordination, social and sexual discrimination (Matsuda, 1991).

*d) Importance of experiential knowledge*

It is considered that the experiential knowledge of people of colour is legitimate, adequate and crucial in order to understand, analyse, practice and teach law and its relation to racial subordination (Calmore, 1992). The opinions of people of colour, their narratives, chronicles, biographies, beliefs and experiences are fundamental for this theory.

*e) Interdisciplinary perspective*

Critical race theory insists on analysing racism from a historical point of view and in the present day context using interdisciplinary methods of study and research (Delgado, 1984; García, 1995).

Based on the previous five premises, critical race theory supporters have redefined the concept of race, racism and racial stereotypes and have drawn conclusions of great interest for this study and any other on the topic. Dubois (1989) anticipated that race and racism would be the real problems of the 20th century and that prophesy seems to be applicable in the present time.

According to Banks (1995), the history of the United States proves that race is a socially constructed category which has been created to differentiate social groups and to show the superiority and dominance of one race over another. This is the orientation given to racism in Audrey Lorde's (1992) definition as the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance.

But, despite the theoretical principles and research studies deriving from critical race theory proponents, racial discrimination is decreasing and seems to be non-existent in some social and educational contexts. Don Thompson reports that crime due to ethnic, racial or class hatred has decreased 10% in California. According to the Mexican Office of Foreign Relations racial discrimination towards Mexican people in the United States only exists in some isolated cases but it is not a systemic fact. The study carried out by Marcus and Gross (1991) on the black and white students' perceptions of teacher treatment did not find any discrimination either. They conclude that black and white fifth graders of similar achievement levels do not perceive that their teachers treat them differently. Nevertheless, when the students were divided by sex, it was found that black males perceived that their teachers expected less from them and gave them fewer choices than was the case with the white males.

#### 4. THE STUDY

In this paper, the following research questions will be given an answer, taking into consideration students' and teachers' perceptions in the foreign language class (see also Madrid, 2004):

*Treatment of students according to social class*

1. Do teachers treat high social class students better than those belonging to low social classes? Does such treatment have any influence on achievement?

*Racism*

2. Are the students discriminated against or treated differently depending on their race? Does this differential treatment have any influence on their achievement?

3. Would Roma students obtain better academic achievement with Roma teachers?

**4.1. Variables**

The variables controlled were the following:

- Students' academic level (Primary, Secondary, Upper-Secondary, University)
- Type of school (compensatory, public, maintained, private)
- Treatment of high social class students
- Treatment of low social class students
- Racial discrimination and its influence on academic achievement
- Roma students' preference for teachers of their ethnic group.

**4.2. Instruments for variable control**

In order to answer the research questions and to control the variables involved in the study objectives, the following questionnaire was used. The teachers and students included in our sample were asked to provide information on the following points, which were presented in Spanish:

|  |   |                      |  |
|--|---|----------------------|--|
| School: .....  |   | Year: .....          |  |
| Type of school (underline):  |   |                      |  |
| 1 = compensatory   | 2 = public and rural  | 3 = public and urban |  |
| 4 = maintained   | 5 = private   |                      |  |
| Gender: M ..... F.....   |   | Date: .....          |  |
| <b>a) Qualitative data</b>   |   |                      |  |
| Briefly state your opinion on the influence of the following aspects on the students' learning process. Continue on the back side of the page if necessary.  |   |                      |  |
| 1. Do you think that high social class students are better treated and more influential in the EFL class than working class students? Give reasons for your answer.<br>.....   |   |                      |  |
| 2. Do you think that the teachers' ethnic origin has got any influence on their academic results? Do you think that the student's identification with the teacher's ethnic group has any influence on his/her academic results? Do teachers treat students differently according to their race?<br>..... |   |                      |  |
| <b>b) Quantitative data</b>  |   |                      |  |
| Give your opinion on the following statements using this scale:  |   |                      |  |
| 4 = <i>always</i> 3 = <i>almost always</i> 2 = <i>sometimes</i> 1 = <i>seldom</i> 0 = <i>never</i>   |   |                      |  |
| (....) 1.  | High social class students are treated better than low social class students and that helps them to obtain better academic results. |                      |  |
| (....) 2.  | Low social class students are treated better than high social class students and that helps them to obtain better academic results. |                      |  |
| (....) 3.  | Students are treated differently depending on their race and that influences their achievement.                                     |                      |  |
| (....) 4.  | Roma (Gypsy) students would obtain better results with gypsy teachers.  |                      |  |

The first part of the questionnaire deals with qualitative aspects and is made up of open questions which reflect teacher and student perceptions, opinions and beliefs with regard to the treatment of social classes and racism. The closed questions in section b) gather quantitative and objective data about the sample.

As is widely acknowledged, the *questionnaire* or *survey* is perhaps the most widely employed instrument in educational research (cf. Cohen and Manion, 1989; Fox, 1981). It is especially useful to explore the conditions in which the teaching/learning process takes place from the point of view of teachers and students. It equally provides information about certain beliefs and opinions which are at the core of teacher and student thoughts. Taking these opinions as a point of departure, certain norms and patterns can be identified which are systematically repeated in connection to certain classroom contexts. Finally, the relations and correlations which exist between the data obtained can be established.

## 5. SAMPLE

The sample could not be selected randomly, but rather employed the data obtained from those institutions which agreed to the administration of the questionnaires. The subjects and schools completing the questionnaires were the following (see Madrid, 2004):

### STUDENTS

| <i>School</i>                                | <i>Town</i>        | <i>Grade</i>      | <i>Students</i> |              | <i>TOTAL</i> |
|--|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
|  |                    |                   | <i>Boys</i>     | <i>Girls</i> |              |
| I.E.S. "Pablo Ruiz Picasso"                  | Chiclana (Cádiz)   | 2nd CSE           | 6               | 13           | 19           |
| Vocational Training                          | Osuna (Sevilla)    | 3rd CSE           | 5               | 9            | 14           |
| I.E.S. "Inclá Garcilaso"                     | Montilla (Córdoba) | 3rd CSE           | 21              | 12           | 33           |
| I.E.S. "Padre Suárez"                        | Granada            | 3rd CSE           | 13              | 15           | 28           |
| San Juan Bosco                               | Granada            | 2nd CSE           | 8               | 9            | 17           |
| San José                                     | Granada            | 5th PE            | 13              | 9            | 22           |
| I.E.S. "Inca Garcilaso"                      | Montilla (Córdoba) | 2nd CSE           | 20              | 12           | 32           |
| Victoria Eugenia                             | Granada            | 1st CSE           | 8               | 21           | 29           |
| I.E.S. "Camilo José Cela"                    | Granada            | 3rd CSE           | 12              | 13           | 25           |
| C.P. "Luisa Marillach"                       | Granada            | 6th PE            | 7               | 5            | 12           |
| Amor de Dios                                 | Granada            | 1st CSE           | 9               | 10           | 19           |
| Amor de Dios                                 | Granada            | 2nd Bach          | 15              | 14           | 29           |
| Amor de Dios                                 | "                  | 4th CSE           | 13              | 15           | 28           |
| Dulce Nombre de María                        | Granada            | 6th PE            | 19              | 6            | 25           |
| Dulce Nombre de María                        | "                  | 2nd CSE           | 28              | 3            | 31           |
| Dulce Nombre de María                        | "                  | 4th CSE           | 17              | 4            | 21           |
| I.B: "Francisco Javier de Burgos"            | Motril (Granada)   | 4th CSE           | 13              | 17           | 30           |
| Faculty of Education (University of Granada) | Granada            | 2nd and 3rd years | 6               | 39           | 45           |
| TOTAL  |                    |                   | 233             | 226          | 459          |

CSE = Compulsory Secondary Education; PE = Primary Education; IES= Secondary Education School; CP = Public School

## TEACHERS

Summary of cases within the teachers' sample:

|  |           |             |
|--|-----------|-------------|
| <i>Total number of teachers</i>              | <b>35</b> | <b>100%</b> |
| <i>Types of institutions where they work</i> | N         | %           |
| In marginal area                             | 2         | 2,9         |
| In public rural                              | 5         | 14,3        |
| In public urban                              | 20        | 57,1        |
| In private                                   | 3         | 8,6         |
| At university                                | 6         | 17,1        |
| <i>Academic levels</i>                       |           |             |
| 3rd Cycle of Primary                         | 9         | 25,7        |
| 1st Cycle of CSE                             | 7         | 20          |
| 2nd Cycle of CSE                             | 8         | 22,9        |
| Upper-Secondary                              | 5         | 14,3        |
| University                                   | 6         | 17,1        |
| <i>Gender</i>                                |           |             |
| Male teachers                                | 17        | 48,6        |
| Female teachers                              | 18        | 51,4        |
| <i>Age</i>                                   |           |             |
| From 20 to 30                                | 7         | 20          |
| From 31 to 40                                | 15        | 42,9        |
| From 41 to 50                                | 12        | 34,3        |
| Over 50                                      | 1         | 2,9         |
| <i>Teaching level</i>                        |           |             |
| Primary                                      | 9         | 25,7        |
| Secondary                                    | 20        | 57,1        |
| University                                   | 6         | 17,1        |
| <i>Political ideology</i>                    |           |             |
| Does not belong to a political party         | 35        | 100         |
| <i>Religious beliefs</i>                     |           |             |
| Non-practising Catholic                      | 27        | 77,1        |
| Practising Catholic                          | 8         | 22,9        |

## 6. RESULTS

### 6.1. Perceptions of students about how teachers deal with different social classes and racism

In general, the students surveyed think that there are no differences in the way they are treated in class and that there are no signs of racism at school. Nevertheless, in the schools with a Roma population, which are following compensatory programmes, the students have expressed a variety of opinions that may be crucial for knowing what they feel about the topic under discussion (see also Madrid, 2004: 100-107):

QUALITATIVE DATA (translation of the student’s opinions)

*Some perceptions of primary school children:*

Some students have expressed themselves in the following terms:

- All people are equal; we are all treated equally; rich pupils and poor pupils are treated equally.
- High social class pupils have got more money and are treated better! As they go to schools where they pay some money, they are treated better.

*Perceptions of students attending primary schools with Roma children:*

- Teachers do not treat students differently in my school. The students’ ethnic origin does not count. There are Roma in my school and they are treated like the rest of the students.
- I prefer non-Roma teachers because non-Roma people are calmer than Roma!
- We are all treated equally.
- The rich and the poor are treated equally, because we are all persons.
- Poor people are treated better, because they are often sad!

*Perceptions of secondary school students about social and racial discrimination:*

The majority of students attending the schools with a considerable Roma population thinks there are no signs of social or racial discrimination. However, some students do acknowledge some sort of discrimination, as expressed in the following words:

- Some teachers do discriminate, others don’t.
- Some non-Roma teachers treat Roma students worse. They might treat us better if they belonged to our ethnic group, because Roma teachers can understand Roma students much better.
- Teachers favour the students of their ethnic group

QUANTITATIVE DATA

The students’ perceptions on the influence on academic results of school contexts, and the teachers’ treatment of social class and racial diversity are presented in the following table (see Madrid, 2004):

|  | Primary |      | S. Ed. (1) |     | S. Ed.(2) |     | Upper S.Ed. |     | University |     | ANOVA |            |
|--|---------|------|------------|-----|-----------|-----|-------------|-----|------------|-----|-------|------------|
|  | M       | SD   | M          | SD  | M         | SD  | M           | SD  | M          | SD  | F     | Sig.       |
| 1. Treatment of high social class students | ,93     | ,67  | 1,47       | ,55 | 1,60      | ,59 | 1,25        | ,63 | 1,25       | ,63 | 1,93  | ,13        |
| 2. Treatment of low social class students. | 1,05    | 1,02 | 1,13       | ,77 | ,93       | ,83 | ,90         | ,28 | ,90        | ,28 | ,73   | ,56        |
| 3. Racial discrimination                   | 1,18    | 1,01 | 1,36       | ,54 | 1,48      | ,60 | 1,0         | ,21 | 1,05       | ,21 | 3,02  | <b>,03</b> |
| 4. Roma students with Roma teachers.       | 1,00    | ,97  | ,90        | ,80 | 1,36      | ,46 | 1,25        | ,63 | 1,25       | ,63 | ,34   | ,84        |

The variance analyses of the students' perceptions show significant differences in relation to variable 3 (racial discrimination). The mean comparison with the T-Student procedure gave the following results:

|                          | Primary - University |            | Secondary - University |           |
|--------------------------|----------------------|------------|------------------------|-----------|
|                          | t                    | Sig.       | t                      | Sig.      |
| 3. Racial discrimination | -2,51                | <b>,03</b> | -3,70                  | <b>00</b> |

Significant statistical differences were found in favour of primary and secondary school students who perceive a higher degree of discrimination than university students.

## 6.2. Student sample of compensatory education schools

The data from the 59 students attending compensatory education programmes with Roma, non-Roma and mixed-race students are presented in the following table (see also Madrid, 2004):

| <i>Variables of social classes and racism<br/>(Students' opinion)</i> | <i>N = 59</i>   |           |             |           |                   |           | <i>ANOVA</i> |             |
|---|-----------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|
|   | <i>Non-Roma</i> |           | <i>Roma</i> |           | <i>Mixed-race</i> |           | <i>F</i>     | <i>Sig.</i> |
|   | <i>M</i>        | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>    | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>          | <i>SD</i> |              |             |
| 1. Treatment of high social class students                            | 2,07            | 1,61      | 1,35        | 1,53      | 1,00              | 1,60      | 2,10         | ,13         |
| 2. Treatment of low social class students                             | ,93             | 1,12      | 1,35        | 1,53      | ,38               | ,74       | 1,89         | ,15         |
| 3. Racial discrimination  | ,96             | 1,17      | 1,48        | 1,53      | ,88               | 1,25      | 1,13         | ,32         |
| 4. Roma students with Roma teachers.                                  | 1,00            | 1,19      | 1,61        | 1,50      | ,38               | 1,06      | 3,01         | <b>,05</b>  |

Statistically significant differences were revealed in relation to variable 4. The students' means comparison, grouped according to ethnic origin, yields the following results:

| T-TEST                           |                          |      |                                  |      |                            |            |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|------|----------------------------------|------|----------------------------|------------|
|                                  | Non-Roma & Roma students |      | Non-Roma and mixed-race students |      | Roma & mixed-race students |            |
|                                  | t                        | Sig. | t                                | Sig. | T                          | Sig.       |
| 4. Roma students & Roma teachers | -1,61                    | ,11  | 1,34                             | ,18  | 2,13                       | <b>,04</b> |

We can observe significant differences between the perception of Roma and mixed-race students in favour of Roma students, who think that their achievement would be better with Roma teachers.

The results obtained with the 59 students attending the two schools with a high percentage of Roma population, grouped by academic levels, were the following:

| <i>Data from students of schools with a high Roma population</i> | <i>Primary</i> |      | <i>Secondary (1)</i> |      | <i>Upper-Secondary</i> |      | <i>ANOVA</i> |            |
|--|----------------|------|----------------------|------|------------------------|------|--------------|------------|
|  | M              | SD   | M                    | SD   | M                      | SD   | F            | Sig.       |
| 1. Treatment of high social class students                       | 1,09           | 1,45 | 2,16                 | 1,46 | 1,52                   | 1,70 | 1,76         | ,18        |
| 2. Treatment of low social class students                        | 1,73           | 1,68 | 1,00                 | 1,20 | ,76                    | 1,09 | 2,39         | ,10        |
| 3. Racial discrimination   | 1,73           | 1,62 | 1,79                 | 1,03 | ,52                    | 1,12 | 8,00         | <b>,00</b> |
| 4. Roma students with Roma teachers.                             | 2,64           | 1,03 | 1,63                 | 1,26 | ,28                    | ,75  | 26,01        | <b>,00</b> |

As can be seen in the previous table, significant differences were also found in the two schools with a high percentage of Roma students. A means comparison with the T-Test procedure gave the following results:

| <b>T-TEST</b>                                      |                                      |            |  |            |
|--|--------------------------------------|------------|--|------------|
| <i>(Compensatory education students' opinions)</i> | <i>Primary &amp; Upper-Secondary</i> |            | <i>Secondary &amp; Upper-Secondary</i> |            |
|  | t                                    | Sig.       | t                                      | Sig.       |
| 3. Racial discrimination                           | 2,68                                 | <b>,01</b> | 3,96                                   | <b>,00</b> |
| 4. Roma students with Roma teachers.               | 8,00                                 | <b>,00</b> | 4,68                                   | <b>,00</b> |

As can be seen in the previous table, significant differences between the groups compared do exist in the two variables. In primary and secondary education the students believe that they sometimes suffer racial discrimination and that Roma students would obtain better results with Roma teachers.

### 6.3. Teachers' perceptions about the treatment of social classes and racism

Some teachers also admit that they practise some forms of social and racial discrimination in class. Their opinion on the topic was expressed as follows:

#### QUALITATIVE DATA (translation of teachers' opinions)

##### *Primary school teachers' opinions on social and racial discrimination:*

- I think that sometimes there is some kind of social discrimination: poor students are treated differently because they often cause discipline problems.
- I think the students are sometimes racist.
- Sometimes working class students are treated differently. There are social prejudices against them because they often show bad social habits, cause discipline problems and show little interest in class. All that influences the way they are treated.

##### *Secondary Education teachers' opinions on social and racial discrimination:*

- Sometimes, high social class students may attract teachers, because they are often respectful, disciplined and motivated for learning.
- My students would be delighted if I were a Roma.

- I think that high social class students are often more influential in class, they have a better preparation and are more demanding.
- Unfortunately, our society considers itself tolerant but it isn't. People are more racist than they think and many students would not naturally accept teachers of different races.

*University lecturers' opinions on social and racial discrimination*

- I don't think there is racial discrimination at the university. It may be because racial diversity is minimum.
- At university level, the social background of students is unknown, consequently there are no differences in the way they are treated.
- I don't think there's any kind of racial discrimination at the university. Students are rewarded and graded according to their academic performance and excellence.

#### QUANTITATIVE DATA

If we focus our attention on the mean results, the analysis of the data and scores obtained from teachers shows a great concern and sensitivity about the influence of the school social context on the students' attitudes, interests, motivation and achievement, as we can see in the following table. Whereas primary and secondary school teachers acknowledge some form of social and racial discrimination, perception of racial discrimination at the upper-secondary and at university level is much lower (see also Madrid, 2004)(see Madrid, 2004):

| <i>(Teacher's opinion on social and racial discrimination)</i> | <i>Primary</i> |      | <i>Secondary</i> |      | <i>Upper-Secondary</i> |      | <i>University</i> |     | <i>ANOVA</i> |      |
|--|----------------|------|------------------|------|------------------------|------|-------------------|-----|--------------|------|
|  | M              | SD   | M                | SD   | M                      | SD   | M                 | SD  | F            | Sig. |
| 1. Treatment of high social class students                     | 1,56           | 1,67 | 1,07             | 1,03 | 1,00                   | 1,00 | 1,33              | ,82 | ,39          | ,81  |
| 2. Treatment of low social class students                      | 1,22           | 1,09 | 1,73             | 1,67 | 1,00                   | 1,22 | 1,50              | ,55 | 1,91         | ,13  |
| 3. Racial discrimination                                       | 2,11           | 1,54 | 2,13             | 1,46 | 1,20                   | 1,79 | ,67               | ,82 | 2,03         | ,11  |
| 4. Roma students with Roma teachers.                           | 2,78           | 1,48 | 2,40             | 1,59 | 1,80                   | 1,79 | 1,67              | ,82 | 1,22         | ,32  |

It can be seen that the teachers' perceptions on these variables are very homogenous and there are no significant differences.

The comparison between all the students' and teachers' scores is summarised in the following table:

| (Teachers' and students' perceptions)      | Teachers |      | Students |      | T-Test |            |
|--|----------|------|----------|------|--------|------------|
|  | M        | SD   | M        | SD   | t      | Sig.       |
| 1. Treatment of high social class students | 1,23     | 1,17 | 1,64     | 1,61 | ,35    | ,72        |
| 2. Treatment of low social class students  | 1,46     | 1,31 | 1,02     | 1,28 | -1,80  | ,07        |
| 3. Racial discrimination                   | 1,74     | 1,50 | 1,15     | 1,34 | -1,66  | ,10        |
| 4. Roma students with Roma teachers.       | 2,29     | 1,49 | 1,15     | 1,35 | -4,08  | <b>,00</b> |

The differences between teachers and students is statistically significant only in relation to variable 4, that is, the potential achievement of Roma students with Roma teachers. It is the students who believe that when students and teachers belong to the same ethnic group their achievement is higher. Consequently, Roma students would do better with Roma teachers.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The quantitative and qualitative results presented and discussed in the previous pages seem to provide enough data to answer the initial research questions and allow us to draw conclusions, as follows:

*Are high social class students better treated than low social class ones? Does such treatment have any influence on achievement?*

Students and teachers perceive hardly any differences in the social and racial treatment dispensed in class. However, some have indicated that high social class students can be treated better. Others believe that we are all human beings and are treated equally. It has been found that secondary school students perceive a higher degree of social discrimination in the EFL class than university students.

Some teachers cite the following factors in explaining the existing discrimination situations:

- Working class students are sometimes undisciplined and cause some trouble in class.
- There are sometimes prejudices against low social class students and teachers often expect bad behaviour, negative attitudes and low interest in academic activities.
- High social class students sometimes have more influence in class: they often have a better preparation and are more motivated for learning.

*Are the students discriminated against or treated differently depending on their race? Does that differential treatment have any influence on their achievement?*

*Would Roma students display better academic achievement with Roma teachers?*

In general, students hardly notice racial discrimination at schools but teachers perceive it to a higher degree. In the two schools with Roma students, students are aware of considerable differences, as the standard deviation shows. Some students and teachers admit that, though present day society hardly accepts it, some forms of social and racial discrimination do exist and it still constitutes a social problem. In schools with a Roma population, some students think that ...

- Some teachers do discriminate against students.
- Some non-Roma teachers treat the Roma students worse.
- Teachers treat the students of their same ethnic minority better.

On the other hand, some teachers think that the students are also racist and that our society considers itself tolerant, but it is often racist. As at university level there is no racial mixture, and consequently discrimination does not take place.

Among the primary and secondary school students, significant differences were found in the items which inform about social and racial discrimination. The youngest students perceive more discrimination than those at upper-secondary and university level.

In primary and secondary education the students believe that they sometimes suffer racial discrimination and that Roma students would obtain better results with Roma teachers. Significant differences were also found among the students attending the two schools with a Roma population. They believe that their achievement would be higher if the teacher belonged to their ethnic minority.

When comparing students' and teachers' perceptions on the topic studied, significant differences were found in the influence of the school context on the students' attitudes, interests and academic achievement. It is the teachers who feel that such influence is very strong.

*Would the Roma school population obtain better results with Roma teachers?*

As stated above, teachers and students answered the question in an affirmative way. Significant differences were found between teachers and students in favour of students who perceived a deeper empathy and understanding between students and teachers of the same race.

## 8. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Two important objectives of the 21st century school are to foster intercultural education, and to guarantee all peoples their right to a quality education based on the principles of equality, equity and social justice.

In connection with this, De Haro asks herself (2009:190): are we really integrating people when their cultural referents are forgotten, silenced, and negated, when they are rejected and segregated from the homogenous organizations promoted by institutions, when some prejudices and stereotypes are reproduced by social agents, when a high school failure is produced in schools or when an harmonic and peaceful coexistence does not take place?

As mentioned in section 2.1, several studies concerning the schooling of the Roma minority have revealed their absenteeism, dropping out from obligatory education, a high percentage of failure in school achievement, and their scarce presence in upper secondary and university education. In addition to that, there is still some degree of reticence, discrimination and segregation attached to being a Roma in a school of «payos». As Arnaiz and De Haro (2005) have emphasised, transforming this type of society is an urgent challenge if we want to develop an inclusive and intercultural society (see also Chisholm 1994; UGT, 2010 and González Piñeiro, Guillén y Vez, 2010).

In this section we want to propose some pedagogic initiatives that may contribute to Roma students' school integration and their successful school achievement. According to Abajo y Carrasco (2004:194), two groups of factors favour the successful academic achievement of these students:

1. A positive appreciation of their intellectual capabilities. Here, applying motivating techniques from the expectancy paradigm of motivation (Brophy 1985) is crucial.
2. The students' personal involvement in his/her education process. This is promoted with successful initial achievement, with tenacity, personal commitment and social abilities. For Miralles (2002), this implies the abandonment of the assimilation model, the incorporation of intercultural education, giving participation and leadership to the Roma minority in an inclusive and intercultural school.

For Arnaiz (2003: 150) an inclusive education is above all a matter of human rights, given that it maintains that people cannot be segregated as a result of any type of disability, learning difficulty, gender or membership of an ethnic group. In the second place, it is an attitude, a system of values and beliefs.

According to De Haro (2009), some aspects to bear in mind in order to develop an inclusive and intercultural education may be the following (see also Pujolás, 2003):

- Placing *intercultural* education in the centre of global policies committed to equality in education. This would include special programmes addressed to the Roma minority in the field of education, housing, employment, health care, etc. given that equality cannot be achieved, exclusively, at school and with education. This entails collaborative action on the parts of education agents. The publication *Index for Inclusión* by Booth y Ainscow (2000) translated into Spanish as *Guía para la Evaluación y Mejora de la Educación Inclusiva* is a good reference for this purpose. The second work recommended by De Haro (2009) that favours intercultural education is the GUÍA INTER (Aguado, 2002).
- Avoiding the creation of school ghettos with a majority of the school population of immigrant origin.
- Creating solid links with Roma families in the community.
- Intercultural activities must be present in the school spaces, academic contents and curricular activities carried out by children. As Besalú (1999:100) pointed out, the main objective of an intercultural teaching proposal must be the understanding of reality from a variety of social and cultural points of view and helping the students understand our world from different perspectives. To achieve this, De Haro (2009) recommends using communicative, socio-affective and cooperative approaches in the classroom to impel the development of intercultural competences such as empathising with others, debating and talking, reaching agreements and mutual help.
- The resources and materials used must be selected with an intercultural focus. In the case of the Roma minority, in order to encourage respect and appreciate their history, materials highlighting their historical achievements, success and important attainments should be used. An example of interactive material recommended by De Haro (2009) would be MAJ KHETANE (Salinas, 2003).
- The creation of inter- and intra-school networks in order to share materials, experiences, teaching units among the students and teachers.
- Collaboration between institutions, organizations and official boards working to promote inclusive and intercultural schools.

- Use of ICTs to encourage an inclusive and intercultural education.
- Developing initial and in-service teacher education programmes which include an adequate preparation for putting into practice inclusive and intercultural initiatives at school.

For Essomba (2003), working together for a social agreement about the Roma's social integration is essential. The aim would be to develop an educational policy oriented towards negotiation with Roma organizations so that schools stop being the school of others and not theirs. He proposes the following variables to be considered in this social agreement:

| ASPECTS OF THE SOCIAL AGREEMENT WITH ROMA   |  |
|---|--|
| CURRICULUM AS A CULTURAL SELECTION  | ROUTINES AND CURRICULAR GUIDELINES   |
| Eliminating the prejudices and stereotypes associated with Roma from textbooks  | Strategies to achieve a higher level of Roma children school attendance. Initial schooling, regular attendance, etc. |
| Incorporating in the school curriculum the most relevant aspects of Roma history and culture.   | Negotiating school routines: materials, timetables, interactions, cleanliness,                                       |
| An adequate representation of the Roma minority in social organisations, presenting positive models of interaction between the minority and majority population | Upgrade the Roma school children's attention, their progress, access to upper academic levels and degrees.           |
| Reflecting on the present day social manifestations of Roma integration in social life and analysis of conflicts.   | Improve their vocational training and preparation to ease their labour insertion.                                    |
| Applying teaching and learning models that take into account different learning styles as well as verbal and non verbal communication strategies.               | Implication and participation of families in the school community and in the school learning processes.              |

Obviously, this project of social agreement with the Roma population must be subject to continuous negotiation between the social agents involved. However, the language used by negotiators, their cultural differences and their different social status can become an important and difficult obstacle to overcome if participants do not show a strong commitment towards negotiation.

## 9. FUTURE RESEARCH STUDIES

Although the sample of schools with Roma children has not been very representative, we believe that this study has provided enough evidence to know the degree of social and racial discrimination suffered by the Roma minority in Andalusian schools. Nevertheless, given the present diversity of ethnic minorities and nationalities living in Spain, a more complete picture must be obtained by studying the situation among the Muslim and Latin-American population. Future studies should focus on these minorities and the procedures to obtain data should also more be more varied. For example, some semi-structured interviews with the students and teachers may be necessary to supplement the information on the topic.

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