

CONCERNS REGARDING THE SUCCESS OF LIMITED  
ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS, AT THE  
ELEMENTARY LEVEL, IN THE MENOMONIE  
AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

by

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Abstract

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A Study of Concerns Regarding the Success of Limited\_  
English Proficient Students, at the Elementary Level,  
in the Menomonie Area School District\_\_\_\_\_

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes and concerns regarding the success of Limited English Proficient students, at the elementary level, in the Menomonie Area School District. The participants consist of elementary teachers in the Menomonie school district. An *Elementary Questionnaire* designed by the researcher, with consultation from an English as a Second Language district teacher, was distributed to all elementary schools including River Heights, Wakanda, Downsville, Knapp, Oaklawn, and Cedar Falls. The results of the study confirm that the majority of teachers have

concerns about the level of success of their Limited

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English Proficient students and express a variety of needs to assist these students. These needs include, but are not limited to, having the school district provide more English as a Second Language services than are currently being offered, correlate English as a Second Language instruction with regular classroom instruction, and provide training for teachers or parents on more effective ways to teach or assist Limited English Proficient students.

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## Chapter I

## Introduction

Groups and individuals who are aware they may not be able to live as citizens with the same rights as others that live in their same country, or who fear for their lives due to political or economical turmoil, have often sought refuge in countries such as the United States (Rigg & Allen, 1989). Hmong refugees first began to arrive in Wisconsin in 1976, shortly after the fall of South Vietnam. Today, Wisconsin has the second largest concentration of Hmong in the nation, totaling approximately 39,178 (Fass, 1997). A group of Hmong refugees, living in the area of Menomonie, Wisconsin, total approximately 1,000 individuals (Vang, 1999). The Hmong population seek acculturation; however, they are struggling to accomplish this. After leaving a simple life of cultivation, they now face cultural, economic, and educational barriers which create confusing and embarrassing situations in their daily lives.

Language has represented the foremost barrier to successful resettlement. A few Hmong in the first wave of resettlement arrived with limited command of English through associations with American military and aid workers. Those who came after 1980 tended to come from

more remote areas of Laos. They had little formal education and no English language training outside of the Overseas Refugee Training Program. Seventy percent could not read in their own

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language (Fass, 1997). During the war, missionaries and USAID workers had helped to equip and run schools in Laos, but shifting battlelines made it difficult for many students to complete even a few years of classes. Those in refugee camps in Thailand faced similar difficulties. In the United States, many Hmong students face the doubly difficult task of learning to read while also attempting to master a foreign language.

A growing body of research has predicted that by the year 2000, the number of Limited-English-Proficient (LEP) students aged 5-14 in the United States will reach approximately 3.4 million (Oxford, et. al, 1981). These students lack the important and necessary English skills for immediate success in an all-English curriculum. The U.S. Department of Labor conducted a study which concluded that between 1990 and the year 2000, immigrants will represent the largest portion of the increase in the population and the workforce since World War I (Reed, 1996). Due to this large increase in foreign residents, one needs to focus on the specialized literacy programs attempting to teach English to students who speak a different language. One important aspect of a specialized

program is to teach the necessary skills needed to obtain a job in the American society. Programs were created to fulfill this task as the Hmong population grew in the United States. These programs were called English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.

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The history of the ESL program in the Menomonie Area School District dates back only ten years. In 1989, the first ESL teacher, known as the "bilingual specialist", was hired to assist LEP students at all levels. A second ESL teaching position was added to the program in 1991. During the years of 1992-1993, the school district began to see an influx of Hmong families, from Laos and Thailand, into the area. Most of the children in these families knew little to no English. There was a definite need to increase staff in the ESL program as these children would soon be placed into the school system. A third teacher was then hired in 1994. Since then, Hmong families have been settling in Menomonie on a consistent basis. Currently, there are about 180 identified LEP students in the school district (see Figure 1). These students are scattered throughout eight schools and are displayed as approximate numbers: River Heights Elementary-96; Oaklawn Elementary-35; Wakanda Elementary-20; Menomonie High School-12; Menomonie Middle School-15; Cedar Falls Elementary-3; Downsville Elementary-0; and Knapp Elementary-0 (Fischer, 1999). Support is needed at all levels for these identified LEP students;

however, the greatest need for ESL support is at the elementary level. River Heights Elementary alone shows that about one out of every five students qualifies for ESL and should be receiving services. Unfortunately, due to decreasing student enrollments, budget cuts have been made and an ESL

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teacher has been removed from the district. As a consequence, the quantity of services being provided are not as strong as they could be. The high school students are provided with only one period of ESL services and the middle school receives only two periods. As a consequence, the students that are being hit the hardest are the elementary students. Some of the students that qualify for the services are not receiving anything due to the lack of staff (Fischer, 1999).

The LEP students in the Menomonie Area School District are offered ESL services after they have been tested with the use of a language assessment test. There are four different forms of the test. One test is used for both kindergarten and first grade students. The second test is given primarily to second and third grade students. The third test is for fourth through sixth grade. The final version of the test is strictly for grades seven to twelve. It should be noted that a copy of these tests could not be included due to copyright laws. Although these tests have been used for many years, there has been concern throughout

the department that the current tests are not assessing students and their needs as accurately as the ESL teachers would like. Due to this dissatisfaction, a new assessment is being created at the state level. This assessment is called the MECCA, which stands for Measuring Essential Communication in the Content Areas. This measure is

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currently in the prepublication draft stage. A copy of this form can be seen in Appendix C. Finally, after these tests have been administered and scored, a student is ranked, on a scale of 1-5, according to degree of acquired language proficiency (see Definition of Terms) (Fischer, 1999).

There are three different types of ESL programs the Menomonie Area School District utilizes. John Fischer (1999), an ESL teacher in the district, describes the three most commonly used programs as being the: pull-out, team teaching, and inclusion programs.

The primary program used is a pull-out program. An ESL teacher from the department will "pull" a child out from a class in which they child is struggling. For example, if a child is not understanding the concepts during a science class, the child will spend that period with an ESL teacher in the designated ESL room learning science.

A second type of program used to help LEP students is team-teaching. This is where a regular classroom teacher

would teach the class one aspect of the lesson, such as content, and the ESL teacher would teach a different area of the same lesson, such as language, during the same class period.

A third type of program used in Menomonie is inclusion. Currently, this program is mainly used for science and social studies. This is where an ESL teacher would help

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students, who are not understanding certain concepts or ideas, during a regular class period. In other words, a student is still in his or her regular classroom; however, an ESL teacher is available to assist those students, on an individual basis, when needed.

The ESL program in Menomonie is funded by a couple of different sources. First, the Department of Public Instruction determines the financial need for each district based on the number of LEP students. Due to the fact that there are high numbers of identified LEP students at the elementary level, most of the funding for the ESL programs in Menomonie comes from the state. However, funding also comes from local sources, such as taxes (Maslowski, 1999).

Considering the largest minority group that utilizes ESL services in Menomonie is Hmong students, most of the information throughout this research paper will relate to the Hmong population. It should be noted, however, that a growing number of students from other countries also

participate in the program.

A review of the literature indicates that there is a need for ESL programs in the schools in order to assist LEP students' success; however, the research clearly identifies both the areas that create problems for these programs to function maximally as well as the strengths of the current programs.

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### Statement of the problem

The purpose of this study is to describe the concern regarding the success of LEP students at the elementary level, as measured by the *Elementary Questionnaire* (see Appendix B) for teachers, in the Menomonie Area School District. This study will focus on the following objectives:

1. To determine the overall purpose, objectives, and goals of the ESL program as identified by teachers and certified ESL teachers.
2. To determine the effects the removal of one certified ESL teacher now has on the classroom, as identified by teachers.
3. To determine if mainstreaming LEP students is the most optimal form of classroom organization.
4. To determine if teachers feel adequately prepared to teach LEP students.
5. To determine if LEP students are being academically

prepared at home.

### Definition of terms

**Acculturation** is the "adaptation to a culture, especially a new or different one" (Neufeldt, 1990, pg.5).

The acronym "**LEP**" stands for Limited English Proficient and refers to students who meet one or more of the following conditions: "a) the student was born outside of the U.S. or whose native language is not English; b) the

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student comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; c) the student is an American Indian or Alaskan Native and comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on his/her level of English language proficiency; AND has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language to deny him or her the opportunity to learn successfully in English-only classrooms" (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 1999, pg.28).

The acronym "**ESL**" stands for English as a Second Language and refers to a program designed to meet the needs of students who do not speak English as their native language (Bitters, 1994)).

**Identified ESL students** are students that qualify for receiving assistance. They are rated on a scale of 1-5, 5 being nearly proficient. "Under administrative rule (PI

13), school districts shall classify LEP pupils for programming purposes by the following levels of proficiency:

1. Does not understand or speak English;
2. Understands simple sentences in English, but uses only isolated words or expressions in English;
3. Speaks English with difficulty, converses in English with help, understands at least parts of lessons and follows simple directions given in English;
4. Understands, speaks, reads, and writes English with some

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degree of hesitancy which may be due to language interference because of foreign language or non-proficient English spoken at home; or

5. Understands and speaks English well, but needs assistance in reading and writing in English to achieve at a level appropriate for his or her age or grade" (Bitters, 1994, pg.27).

**BICS** is an acronym which stands for Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills; "the aspects of language proficiency strongly associated with basic fluency in face-to-face interaction" (Bitters, 1994, pg.24).

**CALP** is an acronym which stands for Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency; "the aspects of language strongly associated with literacy and academic achievement" (Bitters, 1994, pg.25).

## Chapter II

## Review of Selected Literature

The purpose of this section is to present the reader with a rationale for the use of a questionnaire evaluating the concern regarding the success of LEP students in the Menomonie Area School District. This chapter will discuss the current literature in the following areas: laws regarding ESL programs; required bilingual-bicultural education programs; establishment of programs; types of ESL programs; cultural influence; cultural conflict; language acquisition; ESL curriculum; placement in ESL programs; and funding of ESL programs.

Laws Regarding ESL Programs

The legislature in Wisconsin has had an important

impact on ESL programs as they have developed state laws regarding Bilingual-Bicultural Education. Under Subchapter VII, s. 115.95, the legislature realizes that classes conducted solely in English may not provide adequate instruction for LEP students (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 1999). Therefore,

It is the policy of this state to provide equal educational opportunities by ensuring that necessary programs are available for limited-English speaking pupils while allowing each school district maximum flexibility in establishing programs suited to its

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particular needs (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 1999, pg.33).

The state also declares that an LEP student should participate in the ESL program until the student is able to "perform ordinary classwork in English" (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 1999, pg.33).

Subchapter VII also specifies that courses should be taught in the student's native language to help the student initially understand and grasp important concepts; however, the main goal is to provide a "proficiency in those courses in the English language in order that the pupil will be able to participate fully in a society whose language is English" (WDPI, 1999, pg.33).

### Required Bilingual-Bicultural Education Programs

The state has implemented specific requirements for schools to review to check if an ESL program is required in their school, or school district. These requirements are found under Subchapter VII, s. 115.97 of the state statutes. They read:

If... there are 10 or more limited-English speaking pupils in kindergarten to grade 3 in attendance at a particular elementary school and whose parents or legal custodians give written consent to such pupils' placement under s. 115.96, the school board shall

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establish a bilingual-cultural education program for such pupils during the school term. Such a program shall be taught by a bilingual teacher (WDPI, 1999, pg.35).

There is also criteria for a required program to be established for grades 4 to 8. If there are 20 or more LEP students requiring services, an ESL program shall be put in place (WDPI, 1999, pg.33).

### Establishment of Programs

Subchapter VII, 115.96, explains how programs are established. First, annually, on or before March 1, each school must count the number of LEP students, assess the language proficiency with language assessment tests, and

then classify language proficiency according to the five levels. Next, a school board should notify parents if a bilingual-bicultural program may be developed in their child's school. On or before May 1, a parent may send a letter to the school informing the school board that they would like their child to participate in an ESL program. Finally, a program will be established if it meets the criteria, located under 115.97. The program shall provide all of the following:

(a) Instruction in reading, writing and speaking the English language.

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(b) Through the use of the native language of the limited-English pupil, instruction in the subjects necessary to permit the pupil to progress effectively through the educational system (WDPI, 1999, pg.34).

#### Types of ESL Programs

There are a variety of ESL programs that schools can choose from when developing their own ESL program. Denise McKeon explains that there are three main types of programs (1987).

First, there are pull-out programs. This type of program is generally used in an elementary school. A student is taught by a teacher trained in ESL, but the teacher may not be bilingual. In most cases, the student will be pulled out of the regular classroom for a period of

time to obtain specialized help in the areas in which the student is struggling.

Second, there are resource centers. This type of program brings students together from several classes or schools. They are provided with a variety of language instruction and experiences. The teacher is usually trained in ESL and may or may not be bilingual. It is an "enriched" version of the pull-out program.

Third, some students may receive ESL instruction in a regular classroom. This usually happens at the middle school or high school. Students are usually grouped

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together according to their level of English proficiency and the teacher would teach to everyone and help individuals when they are not understanding concepts.

### Cultural Influence

The culture in which a child grows up in has a major impact on the way in which a child learns. Many children are socialized to be able to read as they have been introduced to reading and writing at such a young age. "They learn to read and write when they are socialized in a literate environment" (Piper, 1993, pg.8). Piper believes that by the time that children reach school age, the children's language learning is complete. Children have mastered phonology, morphology, and syntax and have a large vocabulary. This is quite a task for a young child.

Unfortunaltely, when a child comes from a home that is made up of parents who are not literate or do not speak any English, this can have a negative effect on the way in which a child learns (Piper, 1993).

It can be seen as common sense that a child will feel more comfortable and have a greater chance of success in a school setting if they find that their school environment is not very different from their home environment. This is an area in which many LEP students struggle because often their home life is very different from their school life.

Research has shown that schools are geared towards the

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middle class and those who come from middle class homes or who have middle class values are more likely to succeed. In most cases, children from minority families fall into a lower income bracket. This would then infer that these children have a greater chance of failure due to their cultural background (Piper, 1993).

### Cultural Conflict

"It is in the relationship between social institutions and the learner that high degrees of dissonance can result in failure to learn or a distortion of the learning process" (Rossi, 1994, pg.59). A society that is filled with tremendous cultural diversity is at risk of creating dissonance. The at-risk phenomenon for students in schools can arise when schools fail to provide a bridge between

conflicting cultures.

Learning is a personal achievement and is dependent on the learners engagement in the process. However, there is a point when the learning process does not fit, or is alien to an individual. E.T. Gordon refers to this phenomenon as "resistant culture" (Rossi, 1994, pg.60). This phenomenon describes minority individuals that begin to use defense mechanisms, such as isolation or becoming antisocial, when they feel as though they do not understand or comprehend the utilization of a language that is not their native language. According to this phenomenon, students not proficient in the

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English language will suffer due to the fact that he or she does not learn in the same manner as his or her peers.

### Language Acquisition

Research, by Banks and Banks (1997) expresses that language acquisition "is a developmental process that goes through predictable stages" (275). As a child, language is first learned through the process of observing and imitating those around him or her. These individuals would mostly consist of parents, other adults, and peers. Through these interactions, a child learns to communicate with the use of nonverbal cues as well as incomplete responses. Cummins describes this type of language as basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) (cited in

Banks & Banks, 1997). Their research has estimated that a child would be able to learn this form of language, BICS, in about two years. Although a child may seem to speak English well and not require any more services, this may not be the case. At this point, a child has learned the basic skills to survive in an English-speaking culture. However, a child may not be equipped to meet the cognitively demanding tasks in a classroom. "Cognitive tasks require a second developmental level beyond conversational language that consists of the language used in school and many facets of adult life" (Banks & Banks, 1997, pg.275). Cummins also states that language competence as cognitive academic language

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proficiency (CALP) is important. This entails being able to utilize the English language by understanding grammar and being able to manipulate vocabulary. Cummins stated that:

In our studies we have found that in U.S. schools where all instruction is given through the second language (English), non-native speakers of English with no schooling in their first language take 7-10 years or more to reach age and grade-level norms of their native English-speaking peers. Immigrant students who have had 2-3 years of first language in their home country before they come to the U.S. take at least 5-7

years to reach typical native-speaker performance  
(cited in Banks & Banks, 1997, 276).

### ESL Curriculum

Inconsistent curriculum among ESL programs is one of the biggest problems. Overall, a curriculum is "probably the best indicator of a successful program" (Reed, 1996, pg.4). Reed also thought that "Baselines for ESL curricula should include lessons designed to teach life skills of modern society and work-related skills" (1996, pg.4). This is not happening everywhere as some programs remove a student once that student gains minimal conversational skills. These students have often been placed into English-speaking classrooms without learning or

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understanding necessary life skills or skills needed to comprehend a teacher's lesson (Montavon, 1996).

### Placement in ESL Programs

Many students that are in ESL programs are at different levels of comprehension and application. Placement should be made on an individual basis and individual differences should be considered. This does not always happen due to the fact that it is much more convenient for the instructor to teach a whole class rather than break it down and teach many sections. An example of a good model that was followed in Mexico, during the years

of 1995 and 1996, was one that taught to individual needs. "Adult education programs separate their students into four categories: 1) Urban adult learners, 2) Rural adult learners, 3) Indigenous adult learners (population with a native language other than Spanish and isolated from modern technology), and 4) Elementary school drop-outs 10-14 years of age" (cited in Reed, 1996, pg.4).

Research also shows that it is important for students to take an assessment test to see where their best fit would be. This way, students with the same needs would be in the same classes. Studies have shown that students learn faster if they already have a good grasp on their native language, which suggests that these students should be in a separate class from those who might take a longer time to learn

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English (Montavon, 1996).

#### Funding ESL Programs

ESL funding can be very expensive. The average cost for each LEP student is \$1,972 (Hutchinson, 1997, pg.15). ESL funding in the past came from a variety of sources which included different federal and state agencies involved in education, human services, and labor. "Federal and state government frequently cover a large portion of the cost of immigrant education. However, since the early 1900s, labor unions have been helping to fund ESL in the

workplace" (Rosenblum, 1996, pg.2). The Wisconsin Policy Research Institute reported that federal funding for the programs has ended and more recently, state funding has been cut. They also stated, "A larger and larger portion of total program costs is borne by local school districts, making these very expensive programs both in the commitment of teaching resources and local school revenues" (Hutchinson, 1997, pg.16).

Due to the "hodgepodge" method of ESL funding, the quality of the programs continues to diminish. One reason for the lack of quality is because the faculty that provide the education spend a good portion of their time securing future funding. "Administrators spend most of their time either filling out required forms or writing new proposals...as teachers struggle to adapt the curriculum to

the requirements of the various funding sources" (Wrigley, 1993, pg.2). A teaching environment such as this makes it difficult to keep quality and consistent teachers. Many programs today suffer from high turn-over rates, unqualified faculty, and poor student-to-teacher ratios. Due to this erratic form of funding, it can be seen that students and schools are getting minimum services with the minimum funding. It is essential to increase funding in this area. Different ways to possibly accomplish this goal are for the schools and ESL programs to show concrete positive outcomes of their programs and to demonstrate that

the schools are putting competent individuals in the workforce. "Demonstrating accountability can be done by improving efficiency through better organization. Once ESL programs demonstrate their effectiveness in benefiting immigrants and the general public, it is more likely for them to get the increased funding they need" (Reed, 1996, pg.4).

State statutes, regarding funding and reimbursement for ESL programs in Wisconsin, are as follows:

It is the policy of this state to reimburse school districts, in substantial part, for the added costs of providing the programs established under [Subchapter VII, s. 115.95] (WDPI, 1999, pg.33).

Also, if 10 or more students in kindergarten to grade 3, or 20 or more in grades 4 to 8, are participating in an

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ESL program, the school district may be eligible for some reimbursement.

The state laws, information regarding culture and language, appropriate placements in classes, and ideas about funding have explained some aspects that need to be considered when designing an appropriate ESL program. Most importantly, these factors should be looked at in order to best meet the needs of the LEP students and create a road of success for each one.

### Chapter III

#### Methodology

This chapter discusses the methods and procedures for the study. Included in this is a description of the subjects, the instrumentation, the procedures, and the analysis of data.

This study attempted to focus on the concerns of teachers and other school personnel regarding the success of Limited English Proficient students, at the elementary level, in the Menomonie Area School District.

### Description of Subjects

The subjects were 51 teachers in the Menomonie Area School District. The teachers that chose to participate were from four of the six elementary schools in Menomonie: River Heights (23); Wakanda (9); Oaklawn (13); Cedar Falls (6). The two schools that did not participate, Downsville and Knapp, have little to zero identified LEP students in their school at this time.

### Instrumentation

This study was conducted by using a descriptive assessment questionnaire regarding the English as a Second Language Program in the Menomonie Area School District. The questionnaire consisted of a cover letter (see Appendix A) and the questionnaire. The instrument contained 14

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questions which could be rated on a Likert scale of 1-5, (1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-undecided, 4-agree, and 5-strongly agree), and a space provided for comments.

### Procedures

A questionnaire was administered by distributing them in teacher's mailboxes at all six elementary schools. The questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter which informed teachers about the study, explained that the answers given would be kept anonymous, and included

telephone numbers for teachers to utilize if they had any questions. A collection envelope was stationed in the main office of each school, for one week, for the teachers to place the completed questionnaires into.

### Data Analysis

For each of the 14 questions on the questionnaire, percentages were recorded for each response. Comments, in which teachers felt the need to add to a particular question, were included after the percentages. The remaining question allowed room for any other comments. These were also recorded. The findings of the assessment are listed in Chapter Four.

## Chapter IV

### Results

The results from the questionnaire are presented and discussed in this chapter. Each item is presented in the order found in the questionnaire. There was a total of 51 respondents to the questionnaire. However, not every respondent completed each of the questions. The number of total respondents for each question are listed along with the percentages. There are also comments included from teachers who wanted to respond more to a question. Each

question was rated on a Likert scale ranging from 1-5, (1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-undecided, 4-agree, 5-strongly agree).

**1. Having Limited English Proficient (LEP) students in my classroom provides a better learning experience for all students.**

1 (strongly disagree)	3.9%	n=50
2 (disagree)	3.9%	
3 (undecided)	11.8%	
4 (agree)	31.4%	
5 (strongly agree)	47.1	

Comments from teachers:

"Culture wise".

**2. Most of my LEP students have parents that speak English fluently.**

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1 (strongly disagree)	29.4%	n=48
2 (disagree)	37.3%	
3 (undecided)	13.7%	
4 (agree)	9.8%	
5 (strongly agree)	3.9%	

Comments from teachers:

"This year neither do".

"Two out of three".

**3. The loss of one certified English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher in 1999 has had a negative effect on our**

**students.**

1 (strongly disagree)	2.0%	n=49
2 (disagree)	3.9%	
3 (undecided)	7.8%	
4 (agree)	31.4%	
5 (strongly agree)	51.0%	

Comments from teachers:

"We were understaffed to begin with, so we went from poor to [worse]".

"Unsure of what is happening in other building.

My students receive programming five times weekly".

**4. The certified ESL teacher responsible for providing service at my school is doing a satisfactory job.**

1 (strongly disagree)	5.9%	n=47
2 (disagree)	7.8%	
3 (undecided)	9.8%	
	25	
4 (agree)	41.2%	
5 (strongly agree)	27.5%	

Comments from teachers:

"Because of his schedule".

"Not enough time to work with students - spread too thin".

"Doing a good job with a cut in time".

"Doesn't have enough time to offer what he could"!

"He does as much as he can with time allotment".

"Yes considering the busy schedule and limited time to work with students".

"Does what he can considering numbers. Has to prioritize needs and meet those needs".

**5. Mainstreaming the LEP students for more time during the school day has had an adverse effect on student behavior during class.**

1 (strongly disagree)	23.5%	n=43
2 (disagree)	31.4%	
3 (undecided)	21.6%	
4 (agree)	7.8%	
5 (strongly agree)	0%	

Comments from teachers:

"I would think this would help them and others".

"Haven't noticed".

**6. The LEP students in my school district need more ESL services than are currently being offered.**

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1 (strongly disagree)	0%	n=49
2 (disagree)	0%	
3 (undecided)	7.8%	
4 (agree)	25.5%	
5 (strongly agree)	62.7%	

Comments from teachers:

"Especially high school".

**7. The LEP students in my class need more ESL services than are currently being offered.**

1 (strongly disagree)	0%	n=45
2 (disagree)	9.8%	
3 (undecided)	13.7%	
4 (agree)	27.5%	
5 (strongly agree)	37.3%	

Comments from teachers:

"My class is entirely focused on ESL".

"None".

"Especially one of the three".

**8. I have had to increase time with LEP students, and decrease time with other students, during class time this school year.**

1 (strongly disagree)	2.0%	n=44
2 (disagree)	17.6%	
3 (undecided)	7.8%	
4 (agree)	29.4%	
5 (strongly agree)	29.4%	

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Comments from teachers:

"I don't have any [LEP students]".

**9. I feel that the LEP students entered my class with an adequate academic preparation.**

1 (strongly disagree)	13.7%	n=46
2 (disagree)	27.5%	
3 (undecided)	17.6%	
4 (agree)	25.5%	
5 (strongly agree)	5.9%	

Comments from teachers:

"Some of course-some NO"!

**10. I feel that my LEP students are receiving help with academics at home.**

1 (strongly disagree)	21.6%	n=47
2 (disagree)	25.5%	
3 (undecided)	31.4%	
4 (agree)	9.8%	
5 (strongly agree)	3.9%	

Comments from teachers:

"Some do, most don't because parents don't read or speak English well".

**11. I have students in my classes that are not identified LEP, but I feel they are Limited English Proficient.**

1 (strongly disagree)	19.6%	n=42
2 (disagree)	37.3%	
3 (undecided)	9.8%	
	28	
4 (agree)	5.9%	
5 (strongly agree)	9.8%	

Comments from teachers:

"All are identified".

**12. I feel I am adequately prepared to teach LEP students.**

1 (strongly disagree)	13.7%	n=48
2 (disagree)	27.5%	
3 (undecided)	19.6%	
4 (agree)	25.5%	

5 (strongly agree) 7.8%

Comments from teachers:

"With support".

"I don't have time to individualize".

"I have the ability, but am I the best choice?

No"!

"At the preschool level".

**13. I would like more training on effective ways to teach LEP students.**

1 (strongly disagree)	0%	n=48
2 (disagree)	5.9%	
3 (undecided)	11.8%	
4 (agree)	56.9%	
5 (strongly agree)	19.6%	

Comments from teachers:

"Might help".

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**14. I feel the skill level of the ESL aides/teachers are sufficient in order to have adequate communication with LEP parents.**

1 (strongly disagree)	5.9%	n=48
2 (disagree)	11.8%	
3 (undecided)	3.9%	
4 (agree)	52.9%	
5 (strongly agree)	19.6%	

Comments from teachers:

"[I] Would like to see a set curriculum for them".

**15. Comments about, or suggestions for, ESL, in the Menomonie Area School District: (i.e.: Subjects LEP students struggle with the most):**

"The time spent with ESL Aide/teacher needs to be correlated with classroom teacher. This would help the student".

"I think the instructors need more support, more curriculum materials, more funding and more staff".

"Students in first grade struggle with social studies/science concepts. I feel this is because of their limited experience and background knowledge in their culture of the US".

"Reading and language, social studies, science, writing".

"Reading and written language".

"I do not feel Menomonie as a district has ever

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adequately addressed the issue of our ESL population. The staff we have are doing the best job possible under the circumstances - this has always been the case".

"How adequately served are ESL students in rural schools? Are high school ESL students getting enough support from ESL and interpreters"?

"Needed: more wages to get LEP parents involved in their child's education".

"We need more ESL services. There are too few teachers for students' needs"!

"Reading and written language are the most difficult for subjects for LEP students. In some cases math can be very hard as well".

"Concepts can be a challenge as well as an appropriate role model for them to read with".

"LEP students struggle with science and social studies concepts. With some students their reading ability is not at grade level. I would encourage the district to offer ESL pre-school district wide and do more to assist parents directly (either at home or school parenting programs)".

"We need more help. My [LEP] students need more ESL! How else are they supposed to learn English? How can they learn reading, writing, and spelling without adequate ESL programming"?

"The younger ones especially need help in specials. They often feel lost, don't understand, and are difficult to

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get going and stay on task. They seem especially shy in an environment they are not so familiar with".

"We need more staff for our LEP students".

"In my experience working with LEP students, they struggle with vocabulary/comprehension in all areas. Language Arts is an area that most of the LEP students I've had have struggled in the most (which also affects all

other curriculum areas)".

"In art students seem to have at least some if not a lot of success. I feel with the way art is taught (visually, for the most part) students can do the projects, although they may not grasp the concepts and terms used in art".

"Intense help with students who fail to learn English in language patterns, vocabulary development (basic lamp, stove, refrigerator...) pronunciation of difficult sounds, auditory discrimination of sounds used in English but not in Hmong...".

"Team teaching is very beneficial".

"More ESL help for students (at least back to normal). Training for classroom teachers".

"Since the LEP students in third grade have already received some services in the lower primary grades, mainstreaming is not a problem. If I have a student that is a new arrival with limited English, this is difficult. Also, the age and academic or content area learning

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expectations increase as the student progresses. Mainstreaming may be a problem in the middle school and high school. I'm not sure. ESL should not become tutoring in subject areas alone. Developing writing and reading, speaking and listening should be the focus".

"Writing and reading"

"Understanding language - oral - therefore they also

have difficulty with written language. They also arrive with limited conceptual knowledge compared to other kindergartners".

## Chapter V

### Discussion, Conclusion, and Implications

This chapter will discuss the purpose of this study, a review of the methodology, draw some conclusions from the research findings, and then summarize the findings. It will then conclude by suggesting some implications for further research.

The purpose of this study is to describe the concern regarding the success of LEP students at the elementary level in the Menomonie Area School District.

The following objectives were studied;

- 1) To determine the overall purpose, objectives, and goals of the ESL program as identified by teachers and certified ESL teachers.
- 2) To determine the effects the removal of one certified ESL teacher now has on the classroom, as identified by teachers.
- 3) To determine if mainstreaming LEP students is the most optimal form of classroom organization.
- 4) To determine if teachers feel adequately prepared to teach LEP students.
- 5) To determine if LEP students are being academically prepared at home.

To gather information regarding the ESL Program in Menomonie, a 14-item questionnaire was developed. Teachers

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at the six elementary schools: Wakanda, River Heights, Downsville, Knapp, Cedar Falls, and Oak Lawn were given a copy of the questionnaire with a cover letter in their mailbox. They had one week to fill out the questionnaire.

Although not every teacher completed a questionnaire, there were 51 participants from four schools(River Heights, Wakanda, Cedar Falls, and Oak Lawn) that replied. The data

for the questionnaire was tabulated into percentages.

### Discussion

The results of the questionnaire were overwhelming. Each question proved, by the high percentages and comments provided, that there is a concern for the success of LEP students at the elementary level in the Menomonie Area School District.

First, the majority (88.2%) of the elementary teachers surveyed believe the school district needs more services than are currently being offered. Approximately eighty-four percent also agreed or strongly agreed that the loss of an ESL teacher has had a negative affect on the students. As mentioned earlier, this loss was due to the decreased student enrollments which in turn demanded budget cuts. These results appear to show that it may be beneficial to increase the number of ESL staff.

Secondly, a few questions on the questionnaire pertained to the services provided by the ESL teachers. The

majority (68.7%) feel that the current ESL teachers are providing satisfactory services considering their busy schedules. Due to the busy schedules, many teachers commented that the ESL teachers do not have enough time in their day to meet the needs of all the LEP students. The student teacher ratio for one of the ESL teachers is

approximately 85:1. If this is the case, one might question whether or not the LEP students are actually succeeding if the *quantity* of services being offered are limited.

The teachers (56.9%) also felt that the students needing ESL services are being "identified". This may infer that ESL teachers are doing an appropriate job testing and identifying the students in need of extra help.

It appears as though teachers also believe that the skill level of the ESL teachers are sufficient in order to have adequate communication with LEP parents. Approximately seventy-three percent agreed with this statement.

Overall, it seems that the current ESL staff are doing the best job they possibly can to help LEP students succeed, under the circumstances.

Third, much of the research provided in the literature review, regarding the parents and home life of LEP students, is quite astonishing. Piper (1993) explained that when children come from a home that is made up of parents who are not literate or who do not speak any English, this will have a negative effect on a child placed in a school with an

English curriculum. The majority of the teachers surveyed(66.7%)stated that most of the LEP in their class have parents that do not speak English fluently. This suggests that many LEP students might be set up for failure

due to their parents inability to speak English.

Teachers were also asked if they felt that their students entered their class with an adequate academic preparation. Approximately forty-one percent of teachers felt that their students were not adequately prepared and 31.4% felt that their students were. If this study were to be conducted again, this question should specify as to where they were academically prepared. Some students might have been prepared at home and others might have been prepared in a different environment. What might be inferred from the results on this questionnaire is that the LEP students were not adequately prepared from home due to the fact that the majority of LEP students had parents that did not speak any English. However, one must consider other environments where a child might become educated. For instance, a child might have relatives who speak English that live in or visit the home. This relative might assist the child in the learning process. Also, a child might learn things in a social environment from his or her peers or at school.

Another question, relating to home life, was that teachers felt their students were receiving help with academics at home. Approximately forty-seven percent

strongly disagreed or disagreed to this statement. This data would support the previous data concluding that parents of LEP students may not be spending a lot of time

helping their students with academics. It should be noted; however, that 31.4% of teachers were undecided about this question. This might mean that it is difficult for teachers to know what actually happens in the home of their students. This question would probably hold more value if it were on a questionnaire made for parents.

The data from the last three questions might suggest that the majority of the LEP students might have a difficult time succeeding due to factors from home.

Finally, teachers were asked a variety of questions relating specifically to their classroom as well as teaching abilities. First, they were asked if they had to increase time with LEP students, and decrease time with other students, during class time this school year. Approximately fifty-nine percent agreed with this statement. This possibly means that other students are not getting as much time with the teacher as they used to. On the other hand, research shows that students not proficient in the English language will suffer due to the fact that he or she does not learn in the same manner as his or her peers (Rossi, 1994). This statement might suggest that LEP students need to be at a high level of English proficiency in order to be placed in the classroom with other students. This thought restates

two inferences. First, LEP students might not succeed if they have not sufficiently learned how to comprehend

information in the same manner as his or her peers. Second, other students might not succeed if they are receiving less time with the teacher due to the fact that LEP students are using more time.

A second question teachers were asked, relating to their abilities, was if they feel they are adequately prepared to teach LEP students. The majority (41.2%) disagreed with this statement. They did not feel as though they were adequately prepared. One teacher stated, "I don't have time to individualize". Another teacher wrote, "I have the ability, but am I the best choice? No!". It should be noted that 33.3% of teachers did feel prepared to teach LEP students and 19.6% were undecided.

When teachers were asked if they would like more training on effective ways to teach LEP students, 76.5% agreed. There wasn't one teacher that strongly disagreed with this question.

The last three questions might imply that teachers are not comfortable having unprepared LEP students in their classroom. Also, many teachers felt it would be beneficial to have more training or background knowledge about ways to teach and help LEP students to succeed.

Overall, the responses to the questionnaire were overwhelming and enforced the issue that teachers are

concerned about the success of their LEP students.

### Conclusion

First, it should be known that the intention of this paper is not to be judgmental about or direct blame towards ESL teachers or classroom teachers involved in this study. It is also not an attack on the school district as a whole. The main intention is to be concerned about LEP students and to examine the current program and other factors that might assist, or prevent, their success.

Currently, program directors for ESL have designed their own individualized curriculum. One problem with this is that there is no way to measure the issue of accountability and to assess what needs to be done in the program since there isn't a standardized program throughout the nation. This needs to be a combined effort with the federal government and each state. Once a national program is designed with similar goals, it might be possible to evaluate what needs to be changed and restructured so that programs can demonstrate what a difference they have made. Another strong point to be made about the collaboration of ESL programs is it "not only reduces duplication of services but [it can] also lead to more cost effective and responsive service delivery" (Schoua-Glusberg, 1993, pg.5).

Although the ESL faculty in Menomonie is very educated, there are still many ways to improve the pedagogy for LEP

students. First, training courses could be required, such

as a master's program for ESL teachers. An ESL teacher with a master's degree could demonstrate a proficiency in the student's native languages and provide the students with distinctive method of teaching English. Administrators could be skilled in organizing and running the program and have an understanding of which course would be necessary for the students. Organizing a program with qualified individuals would definitely have an impact on funding since training would be very costly; however, I believe it is important to look at the needs of the students first. Alicia Schoua-Glusberg stated that "staff development and organizational development is needed to maintain high quality education in any type of ESL program (1993, pg.5).

Another possibility might be to add training programs to educate teachers how to teach LEP students more effectively. This seemed to be of interest to the majority of teachers. Also, a training program for parents might be beneficial. Ultimately, a goal might be to teach parents English so it would benefit them in society as a whole and create an avenue for the parent to help their LEP child with academics.

There were some limitations with the questionnaire. As stated throughout the discussion, there were some questions that would be changed or directed toward a different party if this study were conducted again.

A concluding thought is many educators try to change the child rather than change the system of schooling, the latter being one that educators have complete control of changing.

### Implications

Although this study looks at a specific school district, the basic components of the questionnaire can be used to study ESL Programs in other school districts.

For a further follow-up at the Menomonie Area School District, the same tool could be implemented again to see if there are any changes in the attitudes toward the success of LEP students in years to come, depending on if there are any changes made to the current program.

Finally, it would also be beneficial to conduct a similar study including the middle and high school teachers to investigate how their LEP students are succeeding. This would be interesting because the findings might suggest that ESL is no longer needed at the middle and high school levels due to the fact that students, once identified as LEP in elementary school, are no longer limited English proficient. On the other hand, the findings might conclude that services are still needed.

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Appendix A

Dear Teachers,

My name is Carrie Voeks and I am a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. I am currently working toward my Masters degree in Guidance and Counseling and I plan to graduate in December. One of my final requirements is to complete a thesis. I have put a lot of thought into deciding upon a topic, and I realized that most of my interests pertained to the Hmong culture. With the assistance of my thesis advisor, Jill Stanton, I have decided to investigate the English as a Second Language (ESL) Program in the Menomonie Area School District, which has been approved by the district. In order to accomplish this task, I am looking for your help to provide any information that might be useful. I have attached a brief questionnaire to this letter which asks less than twenty questions and has a space for any appreciated comments. I have arranged with the school to have an envelope available in the front office for you to put your completed forms in. I will collect these envelopes from the schools on November 2, 1999. These forms will be kept confidential and no one, except for myself, will read them. If you have any questions about this questionnaire, please feel free to contact me at 235-2542, or my advisor, Jill Stanton, at 232-1622.

I thank you in advance for taking your time to help me.

Sincerely,

Carrie Voeks

## Appendix B

**Elementary School Questionnaire**

What grade level do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_

How many students, as a total, do you have in your  
classroom? \_\_\_\_\_ students

How many students in your classroom are **identified** as  
Limited English Proficient? \_\_\_\_\_ students

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**Please rate the following statements on a Likert scale of  
1-5.**

1-strongly disagree	2-disagree	3-undecided
4-agree	5-strongly agree	

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1. Having Limited English Proficient (LEP) students in my  
classroom provides a better learning experience for all  
students.

1            2            3            4            5

2. Most of my LEP students have parents that speak  
English fluently.

1            2            3            4            5

3. The loss of one certified English as a Second Language  
(ESL) teacher in 1999 has had a negative effect on our  
students.

1            2            3            4            5

4. The certified ESL teacher responsible for providing  
service at my school is doing a satisfactory job.

1            2            3            4            5

5. Mainstreaming the LEP students for more time during

the school day has had an adverse effect on student behavior during class.

	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The LEP students in my <b>school district</b> need more ESL services than are currently being offered.				

1	2	3	4	5
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Appendix B (continued)

7. The LEP students in my **class** need more ESL services than are currently being offered.

	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I have had to increase time with LEP students, and decrease time with other students, during class time this school year.				

	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I feel that the LEP students entered my class with an adequate academic preparation.				

	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I feel that my LEP students are receiving help with academics at home.				

	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I have students in my classes that are not <b>identified</b> LEP, but I feel they are Limited English Proficient.				

	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I feel I am adequately prepared to teach LEP students.				

	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I would like more training on effective ways to teach LEP students.				

	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I feel the skill level of the ESL aides/teachers are sufficient in order to have adequate communication with LEP parents.				

	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Comments about, or suggestions for, ESL in the Menomonie Area School District: (i.e.: Subjects LEP students struggle with the most):				

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Figure Caption

Figure 1. The approximate number of identified LEP students in the Menomonie Area School District.



