ASEO ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE: THE TEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVE

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Resumen
Esta investigación refleja la percepción de una maestra que enseña Inglés como segunda lengua. (ESL). Un cuestionario abierto fue dado a 94 maestros del Sur de Texas para que pudieran obtener su certificado en ESL. Un análisis de sus respuestas fue dado a conocer: 1) en algunas de las respuestas dijeron que tenían que obtener certificado, pero por razones intrínsecas algunos se percataron de que los cursos les ayudaban en su educación, mientras que otros que se habían matriculado en el programa sentían que era de poco valor para ellos. 2) La mayoríaf de las respuestas fueron que se reconocía la necesidad de utilizar el contenido académico como un contexto para enseñar ESL y para motivar a los que aprendían a continuar demostrando su habilidad en inglés, 3) los que respondieron percibieron su rol en la clase ESL tanto en términos humanos como motivadores o en términos más tradicionales como maestros de lengua y cultura. 4) que los estudiantes de ESL se diferenciaban por su limitada habilidad en inglés (LEP), motivación en los estudiantes, habilidad, actitudes y su manera de ser, 5) que los estudiantes de ESL pero no los de LEP, mejoran su aprendizaje en los salones de clase y 6) los que respondieron experimentaban considerables frustraciones cuando ellos trataban de trabajar con estudiantes ESL\LEP. Es recomendado que los programas de ESL para los maestros de educación den mayor enfoque al rol de las percepciones y presunciones y su impacto potencial en el ESL\LEP para estudiantes y trabajar para sensibilizar a los administradores en la importancia de una abierta y positiva actitud del maestro, así como seleccionar a maestros para trabajar con estos estudiantes.

Se ha proyectado que para el año 2000 habrá un exceso de 3.4 millones de estudiantes de inglés (LEP) de edades entre los 5 y 14 años en el sistema de las escuelas públicas de los Estados Unidos (qtd. en McKeon 1). Esta población está compuesta de recientes imigrantes que no hablan bien el inglés, o no lo hablan del todo y de aquellos que han vivido en los Estados Unidos toda su vida pero
It has been projected that by the year 2000 there will be in excess of 3.4 million limited English proficient (LEP) students aged 5-14 in the public school system of the United States (qtd. in McKeon 1). This population is made up of recent immigrants who have little or no fluency in English and those who have resided in the U.S. for most or all of their lives but for numerous reasons lack full proficiency in English. In addition, the priorities and values of both groups of students frequently continue to reflect their native culture. Lacking the necessary skills in English these students are precluded from academic success when placed in an all-English curriculum.

In an attempt to meet the educational needs of this increasing student population, 33 states and the District of Columbia had, by 1987, mandated certification or endorsement for those who teach English as a second language (ESL) (Kreidler 1). In Texas, as in...
the majority of the other states, the mandates are in the form of endorsement rather than certification. This means that the state does not recognize ESL as a teaching field in and of itself. In order to qualify for endorsement in ESL a teacher must first hold certification in another teaching field. Those who were teaching ESL prior to their state's mandate, whether they had the expertise or not, were eligible for the ESL endorsement under a “grandfather clause”. Additionally, because the population of ESL/LEP students is growing so rapidly, particularly along the U.S.-Mexico border, many school districts have begun to place considerable pressure on their teachers to obtain ESL endorsement, regardless of their interest in teaching ESL. Together, these factors underlie one of the most serious problems in the teaching profession, i.e., teachers' negative attitudes toward and erroneous assumptions about teaching ESL.

Teachers are no different from the rest of society when it comes to cultural bias and linguistic stereotyping; however, these perceptions and beliefs take on crucial significance in the teaching-learning process for the ESL/LEP student because they become the basis for judgments of academic achievement and potential (Edwards 27-30). Such factors as the presence of nonstandard linguistic features in a child's language system and the degree to which that system is influenced by another language can become the basis for judgments of a student's capabilities (Christian 1). The greater the degree of influence and the number of nonstandard features, the less favorably that language system is viewed. Ramirez and Milk (500-506) and Ford (33-35) substantiate the extent to which teachers make judgments of capability based on linguistic characteristics in the speech of their students. Teachers in both studies rated Hispanic students who spoke Spanish-influenced English as lower in intelligence, confidence, ambition, pleasantness, and relative quality as students than they rated students who spoke Standard English. The Hispanic student has further been viewed by teachers as being a disruptive influence in the classroom because of a lack of appreciation for education, a general tendency toward laziness, and a restrictive home life which causes students to "go wild" at school (Penfield 31).

Often little training is provided for teachers in how to integrate the ESL/LEP student into a classroom of native speakers of
English; thus, it is not unreasonable to expect expressions of resentment, frustration, and a general unwillingness to deal with the added burden of having these students in the classrooms. These feelings emerge, often subtly, when the types and number of teacher-student interactions are studied. Jackson and Cosca (qtd. in DeAvila and Duncan 113-114) noted that teachers had significantly fewer interactions with their Hispanic students than with their Anglo students and that these interactions conveyed more negative feedback and much less praise.

While research in the field of ESL has recently begun to demonstrate the effects of teachers' attitudes on the second language learning process, it is important to determine how pervasive these negative attitudes of the ESL/LEP student are and what their implications for teacher education programs might be. The survey described below examined the perceptions of teachers seeking ESL endorsement through the program at The University of Texas-Pan American, a university located in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas where the majority population is Hispanic and where, often, as many as 90% of the students in the public schools are classified as ESL/LEP.

Method

Design:

The database used to infer the teachers' perspective was descriptive in nature and consisted of their responses to a questionnaire of nineteen, primarily open-ended, questions (see Appendix). The responses were classified into the following four categories based on the topic of the response rather than on the actual question: (1) motivation for obtaining ESL endorsement and perception of the value of the endorsement program, (2) the most effective instructional setting for the ESL/LEP student, (3) role of the ESL teacher in the classroom, and (4) the teachers' attitudes and assumptions of the ESL/LEP student. A detailed analysis of the content of the responses revealed a variety of different perspectives within each of the categories and provide a realistic view of the challenges faced by the teacher who works with the ESL/LEP student in the public school setting in the Rio Grande Valley region.
Respondents:

The questionnaire was distributed to 127 public school teachers enrolled during the summer and fall of 1989 in courses in descriptive linguistics or psycholinguistics, two of the four courses in UT-Pan American's ESL endorsement program. The content of the courses in the program meets the TESOL guidelines for teacher education in ESL (Morris 340-342). All of the respondents had previously taken at least one of the required courses. The questionnaires were distributed during the second class period, completed at home, and returned to the investigator the following class period. Insufficiently completed questionnaires were eliminated, leaving 94 questionnaires to serve as the data base for analysis.

Seventy-four (78.7%) of the respondents identified themselves ethnically as Anglo; the majority (81.1%) were born and educated in the Midwestern United States where the population of ESL/LEP students is much smaller than in South Texas. The remaining 21.3% of the respondents identified themselves ethnically as Hispanic, born and educated in Texas; 14.9% of these were native to the Rio Grande Valley.

Seventeen (18.1%) of the teachers listed Spanish as their native language and indicated that they had learned English as a second language when they began studying in the public school system; all considered themselves equally fluent in both Spanish and English and used both languages in interactions with their family, friends, students, students' parents, and other teachers. The remaining 81.9% (n = 77) of the respondents listed English as their native language. Although none of these teachers considered themselves fluent in another language, 39.4% (n = 37) of them indicated they had proficiency at a survival level in Spanish. The only situation in which they attempted to use Spanish, however, was when talking with their students' parents, although many indicated they used a translator in these situations to ensure understanding.

The respondents represented five urban and four rural school districts in Starr, Hidalgo, and Cameron Counties in South Texas. Eighty-three (88.3%) of the teachers taught in grades K-8 and the remaining 11 in grades 9 through 12. Eight (8.5%) taught ESL on a full time basis; all other respondents had LEP students in their classes. The mean number of years teaching experience for the
94 respondents was 5.59 (range = 24 years to 6 months). Slightly less than two-thirds (60.6%; n = 57) of the respondents had been teaching for fewer than 3 years and, for these, the teaching position they held at the time of the study represented their first one after graduation with their teaching certificate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Motivation for Obtaining ESL Endorsement:

The responses to Question 15, which asked the teachers to indicate why they were obtaining the endorsement in ESL, were separated into two categories based on whether the reasons they gave were intrinsic or extrinsic. (See Table 1.)

| Table 1: Respondents' Motivation for Obtaining ESL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intrinsic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to teach ESL students</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fascination with language</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extrinsic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future career opportunities</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School district requirement</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>57.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Less than half of the respondents indicated their motivation for obtaining ESL endorsement was intrinsic. Twenty-seven (28.7%) of the teachers expressed the desire to more effectively meet the needs of their students or the belief that teaching language minority students is challenging and rewarding. The following comments are representative of those citing intrinsic reasons: “I want to understand why my students are having difficulties in English and what I can do to help them overcome these difficulties,” “Working with students who are not fluent in English is much more exciting than working with native speakers because I can actually see language growth,” and “There is a lack of knowledgeable and effective ESL teachers; the kids need guidance—well-informed
guidance—and I want to be able to offer them that.” Ten of the
respondents in this category indicated that because English was their
second language, the primary reason they were earning the
endorsement stemmed from feelings of empathy with their students
and the problems encountered in developing the ability to communi­
cate in English. The remaining intrinsically motivated respondents
(n = 3, 3.2%) indicated that they were obtaining endorsement
because of their fascination with language and language teaching: “I
love language and I think I can inspire my students to want to learn
more about English as well as about language in general.”

Questions 17, 18, and 19 elicited the respondent's percep­
tion of the value of the course content in the endorsement program.
In conjunction with these respondents' intrinsic motivation to earn
endorsement, and probably in large part because of it, the comments
they made regarding the coursework were quite positive. All
believed that they were gaining considerable value from their train­
ing; they indicated that they were acquiring a deeper appreciation of
language and of the task facing their students in acquiring profi­
ciency in English as well as the teacher's responsibility in this
acquisition process. In addition, the content of the courses, they
noted, was providing them with (1) a more holistic view of second
language learners, (2) the theoretical bases underlying the teaching
methods used in ESL, and (3) practical techniques needed to work
with the second language learner in the classroom.

The reasons for obtaining ESL endorsement cited by 64
(68%) of the respondents were categorized as extrinsic. Ten of the
teachers felt that earning the endorsement would make them more
marketable and would be helpful in furthering their career goals
because “nowadays an ESL endorsement looks good on an
application for a teaching position in any part of the country.”

The remaining 57.4% (n = 54) of the respondents were
earning ESL endorsement because their school districts demanded
that they do so. A significant number (n = 29) of the comments had
a common thread: if they did not earn ESL endorsement within two
years, they would lose their teaching positions. The general attitude
toward being required to earn the endorsement was quite negative:
“The omnipotent Texas Education Agency demands it.” Several
respondents indicated that the two year limit created considerable
hardship for them especially when coupled with their full-time teaching responsibilities. One teacher noted that “While I think it (the endorsement) is a positive idea, as a teacher new to the area there were just too many things to do these first two years—3 ExCETS, 12 credits at the university plus a delivery system in the classroom, new books, new language, new culture, new place to live, etc.” Many of the other respondents indicated that being required to earn the endorsement caused considerable frustration and made them “more hostile toward non-English speakers,” that “it's unethical; no one can force me to learn,” or that “just because the district makes me go through this, it doesn't mean I'll be a good ESL teacher, especially if I don't really want to teach ESL and I don't.”

The source of the negativism in these respondents' comments is understandable; the implications of it, however, are alarming because this attitude is reflected in other areas, particularly in their understanding of the ESL/LEP student and their perception of the value of the endorsement program. In general, these teachers viewed the language minority student as one who has little motivation to learn, who makes little effort to speak English, and who creates disturbances within the classroom by demanding extra attention. Likewise, the respondents found very little of value in the content of the coursework within the endorsement program. Their comments indicated that much of the course material, particularly in those courses designed to provide an understanding of the nature of language and English language systems, was boring, demanding, too theoretical, or not relevant for the students they work with. One teacher stated she had been told by several other teachers that “the courses were hard and that I'd never use them. They were right.” Another commented “I am a second grade teacher. As soon as I get my ESL endorsement I will have a bilingual class and will have to teach in Spanish. I'm getting ESL endorsement not a bilingual endorsement. My Spanish is limited; I certainly don't feel confident enough in Spanish to be able to teach in it. I don't see the correlation between the ESL courses and teaching curriculum in Spanish.”

These respondents expressed little interest in the program content unless it was directly related to some activity or technique that they could implement immediately in their classroom.
appeared to have little understanding of the difficulty of effectively implementing techniques or evaluating whether the techniques worked with their students if they lacked an understanding of the underlying basis for the technique and what the technique is supposed to accomplish. Unfortunately, these respondents felt they were getting little out of the training program that would allow them to assess their students' needs and/or to develop approaches for meeting those needs; as a result, their comments present a rather bleak picture of the attitudes some teachers take into the classroom with them.

**Instructional Setting for the ESL/LEP Student**

Questions 12 and 13 on the questionnaire provided the basis for determining teachers' views of the type of instructional setting that best suited the ESL/LEP student. Question 12 asked the respondents to indicate which instructional setting they believed most appropriate for students who are non-native speakers of English: ESL classes only, regular classes plus an ESL class, regular classes only, or bilingual education. As can be seen from Table 2, slightly over half of the respondents (53.2%; n = 50) favored placing the language minority student in the regular classroom in addition to an ESL class because this setting allows maximum exposure to English. Most commented that the regular classes allow students to maintain and continue to develop their knowledge of the content areas while the ESL component provides

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Setting</th>
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<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular classes + ESL class</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL classes only</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular classes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual education</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends on proficiency</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the opportunity to focus intensively on specific aspects of the English language. One of the respondents commented on the importance of the regular classes by stating that she did not feel that “isolating the non-native speaker of English to ESL-only classes provided sufficient motivation; many regard the isolation as safe and then don't work to move out while others view themselves as having problems and needing to go to a ‘dummy' class.” In addition, several respondents felt that the regular classes help motivate students toward fluency in English by giving them an opportunity to maintain contact with their non-LEP peers. Although most instructional settings are not designed to take advantage of this valuable source of input, research into the second language acquisition process supports the idea that the more successful L2 learners are those who have opportunities to establish and maintain interaction with L2 speaking peers. Wong Fillmore (“Instructional Language as Linguistic Input” 292), Johnson (65-66), and Chesterfield, Barrows Chesterfield, Hayes-Latimer, and Chavez (414-416) noted that the growth in English language proficiency was notable when fluent English speaking peers provided L2 learners with the informal social and linguistic environment they needed to augment the formal L2 learning.

Eighteen (19.1%) of the respondents indicated that the most appropriate educational setting for non-native speakers was intensive classes in ESL only. Two main reasons were cited for this choice; first, ESL provides the language base on which learners are then able to build the rest of their skills; and second, ESL has the most appropriate techniques and activities directly related to teaching those who have language barriers. Many commented on the efficacy of the ESL-only classes: “ESL seems to be the most efficient method of teaching English; it is quicker than bilingual education and more humane than dropping the learner into regular classes.” and “The students in my ESL class communicate in English much sooner and more competently than the bilingual education students, with no noticeable difference in knowledge of content areas.” None of the teachers who favored ESL-only classes expressed undue concern for the learners' falling behind in the other academic areas. They felt that this instructional setting represented the first phase of their students' education process and should be maintained for a
limited period of time. In the second phase, learners should be
placed into “sheltered” classes where the language of the academic
content, but not the content itself, is simplified and where ESL
teaching methods could still be utilized. The final phase in the
process should be full transition into regular classes.

Seventeen of the respondents (18.1%) viewed bilingual
education as the most appropriate setting for non-native speakers of
English. In general, they believed that using the learner’s native
language to teach core concepts was necessary for helping students
develop cognitively, for providing meaningful input, i.e., the
content, as a basis for instruction in the English language, and for
helping to make the transition into all-English classes smoother.
Several noted that for the ESL/LEP students to develop academically
while simultaneously acquiring English placed far too great a burden
on their capabilities. Another overriding concern of the respondents
who favored this instructional setting was the importance they
attached to being bilingual-bicultural. A comment by a kindergarten
teacher, though not bilingual herself, summarizes the attitude of
these respondents, “non-native speakers of English should never be
asked to abandon their first language; it should serve as a basis for
learning and should be enriched as much as the second.”

Six of the respondents, all of whom felt forced by their
school districts to earn ESL endorsement, favored regular classes
only for the ESL/LEP student. Their reasoning was that far too
much of the learners’ first language is used in all of the other
instructional settings, thus causing the students to become so
dependent on their first language that they never develop sufficient
proficiency in English. One teacher stated that she was “...shocked
at the number of ESL students who were born in this country and
have attended 5 to 7 years in a supposedly English-speaking school.
If they want Spanish taught, do it as a language class and work on
English for everything else.” Each of the respondents who selected
the regular classroom only mentioned that ESL/LEP students must
be immersed in English and must be forced to communicate and to
think in English because they lacked the motivation otherwise. “It
worked 40 years ago when non-English speakers were granted no
special privileges, so why not now?” another respondent noted.
Only three of the respondents indicated that determining the most appropriate approach for teaching non-native speakers of English was dependent on the students' level of proficiency in English. For those with little or no proficiency, bilingual education was deemed most appropriate because it allows students to develop basic academic skills in their native language. Students with survival skills in English should be placed in ESL-only classes where the focus of instruction is on further development of English language skills. The regular class plus an ESL class was deemed appropriate for students who are "sufficiently proficient in English" to handle the content.

Question 13 asked the respondents when the non-native speaker should be placed solely in the regular classroom. Fifteen (15.9%) of the respondents indicated that they had no idea when this should be done. Seventeen of the teachers (18.1%) set a time limit for ESL instruction stating that after 1 1/2, 2, or 3 years of ESL, the students should be able to survive in the regular classroom without benefit of special instruction in English. Wong Fillmore ("Research Currents: Equity or Excellence?" 476) notes, however, that even under the best of circumstances, it is generally 4 to 6 years before the ESL/LEP student achieves sufficient proficiency in English for full participation in school. Twenty-three (24.5%) felt that certain skills should be achieved before being placed into regular classes, i.e., "when reading at one grade level below the rest of the class," or somewhat more unreasonably "when they achieve a workable English vocabulary of 500 words," or "when they have a complete grasp of English grammar." The remaining 41.5% (n = 39) of the respondents, however, were less specific, stating that ESL/LEP students should be placed in the regular classroom only when they could comprehend and communicate their ideas sufficiently to be active members of the class.

Despite the diversity of opinion as to the type of instructional setting best suited to the needs of the ESL/LEP student, the respondents, in general, did recognize the need for maximizing the opportunities these students have to use English and the importance of using academic content as both a motivator and a meaningful context for teaching English.
Role of the ESL Teacher

Question 14 asked the respondents how they perceived of themselves as ESL teachers. Analysis of the content of their comments indicates that the ESL teacher assumes three primary roles: (1) facilitator/motivator, (2) teacher of language and culture, and (3) a teacher of academic content (see Table 3).

Table 3:

| Teachers' Responses on the Primary Role of the ESL Teacher |
|-------------|---------|--------|
| Role                          | n  | %   |
| Facilitator/motivator         | 41 | 43.6%|
| Teacher of lang. and culture  | 47 | 50.0%|
| Teacher of academic content   | 6  | 6.4% |

Forty-one (43.6%) respondents saw their role as primarily facilitator/motivator and tended to view themselves and their interactions with their students in humanistic terms. They saw their main responsibility as providing a situation conducive to learning language, a positive and safe but challenging environment where their students are free of ridicule and can reach “their highest potential, and be happy with themselves and their lives” as one respondent put it. These teachers noted that the most effective way of achieving this environment was for them to be “patient, open, caring, motherly cheerleaders.” In addition, one teacher noted that a part of the responsibility of the ESL teacher in the role of facilitator/motivator was to “create pride in the student by inspiring him/her to be proud of being bilingual.” The types of activities these respondents indicated they used to meet the language needs of their ESL/LEP students (Question 9c) imply that their classrooms are very much student-oriented. A wide variety of activities were mentioned with role plays, games, songs, paired and small group work, and whole language and manipulative activities cited most frequently.

Half of all respondents viewed their role in the ESL classroom to be that of language teacher. They saw themselves as
providing the model in English, as monitoring their students' language attempts for errors, and as teaching specific skills or language areas such as word attack and reading skills, grammatical structures, writing skills, and oral communication and vocabulary. All indicated that in addition to teaching language it was their responsibility to "teach some of the values of the 'American Way.'" A second grade teacher commented that "part of my role in the classroom is to be that of ambassador to bridging cultural gaps." Twelve of the teachers in this category reported that the activities they used with their ESL/LEP students did not differ significantly from those they use with native English speaking students and that they relied upon a Spanish-speaking teacher aide to translate when necessary. The remaining respondents reported using traditional language teaching activities, such as oral and written language drills, listening exercises, and reading aloud.

The role of the ESL teacher as seen by six of the respondents is that of content area teacher. Their comments indicated that in addition to increasing their students level of proficiency in English, they were responsible for teaching grade-level subject matter. It was apparent from the responses in this category that academic content was used not as the context for developing language skills but as a separate body of knowledge to be taught in addition to teaching language.

Penfield's study focused on the regular classroom teachers perception of the ESL teacher and found that her respondents placed a particularly heavy burden on the teacher of ESL (34-35). Although their primary responsibility was to teach language, it was equally important for the ESL teacher to reinforce academic content taught by the regular teacher, to advise the regular teacher on relevant materials for the ESL/LEP student and to monitor the students' progress in the regular class. Because of the frustrations expressed by Penfield's respondents toward the ESL teacher and the ESL/LEP student, she notes that one of the primary roles of the ESL teacher may be to serve as a consultant to the regular teacher. Although none of the respondents in the present investigation indicated that they perceived of themselves as advisors/consultants to the regular classroom teachers, it is an aspect of the ESL teachers' role that should receive considerably more focus in ESL training programs.
Ending the isolation of the ESL teacher from the regular teacher by establishing lines of communication which will help them plan for the ESL/LEP students can only improve the effectiveness of the educational process for these students.

The ESL/LEP Student

Questions 10 and 11 focused on the contributions which the ESL/LEP student brings to the classroom and the frustrations the respondents experienced in working with these students. A summary of the categories of comments can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4:

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributions of ESL/LEP Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural variation</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role model for others</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No contributions</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustrations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher related factors</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student related factors</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External factors</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
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Although not specifically elicited by the survey instrument, 58.5% (n = 55) of the respondents commented that they made a distinction between the LEP student and the ESL student. For these teachers, the LEP student is one who was born in the U.S. but whose native language is Spanish. Despite having attended school in this country and having some proficiency in English, LEP students are still not fluent speakers. These students are more often viewed in a negative light, as generally unmotivated and with little potential in the learning situation, uninterested in learning or using English, and incapable of functioning at a higher academic level; in addition, numerous behavioral and attitudinal problems are asso-
ciated with the LEP student. The following comments are representative of many respondents' view of the LEP student: “Because they don't speak English, they stand out as illiterate, inarticulate students, and they get laughed at,” “They don't make any effort to speak English; in fact, they refuse to practice,” and “They're harder to discipline because they have no regard for any authority.” In differentiating between LEP students and ESL students, a kindergarten teacher stated that the Spanish influenced English used by her LEP students was “a demented form of English.” The ESL students, on the other hand, are identified as recent immigrants to this country who have had less exposure to English. Even though they have less proficiency in English than the LEP student, they are seen as highly inquisitive, highly motivated, serious, enthusiastic and well-behaved students. Several of the respondents stated that they wished it were possible to separate the students because before long the ESL students acquire the negative attitudes of the LEP students and then develop behavior problems.

Question 10, which focused on the contributions that ESL/LEP students make to the classroom, elicited comments from only 70.2% (n = 66) of the respondents. Forty percent (n = 22) of those who felt they were being forced to earn ESL endorsement and 15.4% (n = 6) of those whose involvement in the endorsement program was motivated by internal factors failed to respond to this question.

Fifty-five (58.5%) of the respondents acknowledged that ESL students, but generally not LEP students, enhance the learning environment in their classrooms in two primary ways. They are seen as positive role models for the other students in the class by approaching the learning situation seriously, by being enthusiastic and patient, by persevering, and by valuing what they learn. As such, “they show the rest of my students what it means to be a ‘real’ student.” In addition, ESL students introduce cultural variation within the classroom. “They bring a different perspective to everything that takes place in the class” and thus help to teach other students cultural sensitivity and tolerance. One comment in particular summarizes this contribution succinctly: “They open my mind and eyes as well as those of my other students as we try to open theirs.” One respondent, a first year sixth grade teacher, found her
ESL/LEP students' primary contribution to be in their art ability; "they made bulletin boards for me since I began teaching the day after I finished student teaching and had no materials."

The frustrations in working with the ESL/LEP students felt by the respondents to this survey were numerous and appear to arise from several sources. One major area of frustration is related to the teachers themselves. The respondents expressed concern about their lack of knowledge of the methods and techniques used to teach the ESL/LEP student. "I make assumptions," said one respondent, "about my students' ability to comprehend the sentence structure and the vocabulary I use in class and about the type of experiences they bring to the classroom. Usually my assumptions are inaccurate and my lesson falls apart. Then I don't know what to do." Most of the respondents expressing this concern indicated that they hoped their level of frustration would diminish as their experience in ESL increased. Ten respondents indicated that courses in Spanish should be a requirement in the endorsement program since what upset them was not being able to understand what their students were saying when they were speaking in Spanish: "If I knew more Spanish, I could stop the sassing or under-the-breath comments that I get." In addition, a number of respondents cited the negative comments expressed by other teachers about the ESL/LEP student as their major source of frustration: "What frustrates me most is the attitude of some teachers; they make uncalled-for comments about ESL students in the Teachers' Lounge. Teachers should pass some kind of vocation test."

A variety of external factors over which the respondents felt they had little control presented another source of frustration for 12.8% of them. The parents of the ESL/LEP student are generally viewed as being uneducated, as having limited proficiency in English themselves, and as working at more than one job in order to support their families. Consequently, according to these respondents, they have neither the ability nor the time to provide support for their children and what they are accomplishing in school. While parental involvement correlates with student achievement, school attendance, and classroom behavior (Simich-Dudgeon 1), few respondents in this study appear to be aware that involvement may be a new cultural concept for many of the ESL/LEP students'
parents and attempts to involve these parents in the educational process of their children may be viewed as a request for interference. Those teachers commenting on the lack of materials expressed dissatisfaction with both student and teacher resource materials available to them: “You'd think that with the tremendous numbers of LEP students in the schools, there would be a plethora of good materials, but that certainly doesn't appear to be the case.”

The time factor was another source of concern for those not teaching exclusively ESL/LEP students; they indicated that there was not sufficient time to help students with language problems without holding back and frustrating those students who had no language difficulties.

The major frustrations felt by the teachers were related to the behavior and attitudes of the students who are perceived as having little or no respect for authority, little or no self-esteem, little or no motivation to learn, and little or no ability to set goals and as a result create the most serious discipline problems in the classroom. While these comments were directed primarily toward the LEP student, the ESL student is also a source of frustration for teachers by being impulsive, talking too much and too loudly, asking too many questions, not being able to follow instructions, and having to touch everything the teachers brought into the classroom. The following comment summarizes this attitude: “These students think they're so special because they receive much more individualized instruction from the teacher or the aide; they are constantly demanding attention and feel they can get away with doing things the other kids aren't allowed to do and they're constantly bringing this to the attention of the other kids.” Another student-related frustration stems from the students' seeming disinterest in learning and using English: “The students know they can survive in Spanish so they see no need for developing skills in English.” One teacher commenting on the difficulty she experienced in motivating her students to use English noted, “I've tried everything I can think of to help; sometimes I just go home and cry, but, of course, that doesn't solve the problem.”

Adding to this frustration is the tendency by other teachers and administrators of speaking to the ESL/LEP student primarily in Spanish thus reinforcing the notion that learning English is not
essential and, in a very real sense, defeating the purpose of the work
done in the language classes.

Why these frustrations are so profound is a difficult question
to answer without considerably more research. It appears some
frustration stems from the respondents' motivation for obtaining
ESL endorsement. Feeling forced to teach ESL without having the
desire to do so and fearing the loss of one's job understandably
causes stress and frustration. Furthermore, the respondents reflect­
ing this negativism may have a cultural bias against the language
minority student. In fact, the preponderance of frustrations and
negative comments came from the young teachers in their first
teaching position who were raised and educated in a geographical
area of the U.S. where there are not large populations of limited
English speaking students. Because they have little experience in a
bilingual/bicultural environment, they have few coping mechanisms,
other than hostility, to draw on in dealing with their situation. Yet
another explanation may be found in the students' reaction to the
quality of instruction. Wong Fillmore ("Research Currents: Equity
or Excellence?" 477-478) in a summary of her large-scale study on
academic and English language development found that Hispanic
students were much more sensitive than Chinese students to the
quality of the learning situation. When the emphasis was on com­
prehension and interaction, when teachers' instructions were well-
organized and clearly presented, and when the material was rich in
content, the Hispanic students performed well; when the work was
tedious, non-challenging, or seemingly irrelevant, they lost interest
and did not perform well. The Chinese students, on the other hand,
were not disturbed by this type of work and tended to perform
willingly and well. The reason, then, for some of the frustration felt
by the respondents in the present study may be found in the way
their students react to what is being taught and how it is being
presented in the classroom.

Despite the reasons, the overwhelming negativism
associated with the comments expressed by many of the respon­
dents in this study has very serious implications for the ESL/LEP
student. The teachers' perceptions of and attitudes toward these
students can have a tremendous impact on their self-concept, their
expectations and their academic performance. Cohen (qtd. in
DeAvila and Duncan (114) reports that teachers' perception of their students can produce a self-fulfilling prophecy on the part of the student. As a result, students who are perceived as having little motivation and little academic potential are directed by prior experience to fulfill this perception.

Conclusion
The results of this investigation support the finding that, often, teachers hold negative perceptions of ESL/LEP students. These perceptions affect not only the way they view themselves as teachers of ESL, but also their desire to gain additional expertise in defining and meeting the needs of these students. The failure of teachers to recognize and accept differences among students and the language varieties they speak can cause a lack of response on the part of the students to the sociolinguistic demands of the classroom. This lack of response is interpreted by teachers as lack of motivation and valuing of the educational process. Teachers then tend to lower their expectations of their students' academic potential which in turn results in poorer student achievement and second language learning.

Because of the potentially destructive effects on the ESL/LEP students and their education, these perceptions must be recognized by the teachers themselves, by their administrators, and by the educators in teacher education programs. However, recognition by itself is not sufficient. It is essential that teacher education programs place greater emphasis on the development of knowledge of linguistic and cultural variation. It is equally critical that these educational programs provide opportunities for teachers to examine the beliefs and assumptions that they hold toward the language minority student as well as opportunities for them to modify these beliefs and assumptions. In addition, the educators in the training programs must work more closely with administrators in the school systems to provide pre-service and in-service training programs and to develop methods of identifying a teacher's potential, or lack of potential, in the ESL/LEP classroom. Above all, administrators must be sensitized to the importance of positive teacher attitudes as they are involved in the process of selecting teachers to work with the ESL/LEP student. Only when we recognize and focus on alleviating the very serious effects of negative teacher attitudes can
we begin to provide the ESL/LEP student the same access to a quality education that we accord the non-ESL/LEP student. §

References


Wong Fillmore, Lily. "Instructional Language as Linguistic Input: Second Language Learning in Classrooms."

APPENDIX:
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

1. Ethnic background:  
   _____Anglo  
   _____Hispanic  
   _____Other

2. Place of birth:  
   _____in the Rio Grande Valley  
   _____in Texas, other than the Valley;  
   where__________________________  
   _____outside of Texas; where_________

3. (a) What is your native language?  
   (b) What other languages do you speak?

4. Rate your proficiency in the other language(s) you speak:  
   _____highly proficient in__________________________  
   _____more proficient in ___________________________ than in English  
   _____equally proficient in _________________________ and in English  
   _____more proficient in English than in________________  
   _____highly proficient in English

5. What language do you use when interacting with:  
   (a) your family____________________________________  
   (b) your friends____________________________________  
   (c) your students___________________________________  
   (d) your students' parents____________________________  
   (e) other teachers in your school_______________________

6. What school district do you teach in?

7. (a) What grade do you teach?  
    (b) What is your primary teaching area?

8. (a) How long have you been teaching?  
    (b) How long have you been teaching ESL/LEP students?

9. (a) How many ESL/LEP students did you have in your classes during the last academic year?  
    (b) How many hours a day did you work with these students?  
    (c) What types of activities did you use to meet the language needs of these students?

10. What contributions do ESL/LEP students make to your classes?
11. What are some of the things that frustrate you most in working with ESL/LEP students?

12. Which instructional setting do you feel is best suited to ESL/LEP students? Why?
   - ESL classes only
   - regular classes plus an ESL class
   - regular classes only
   - bilingual education

13. When, in the process of their language development, should ESL/LEP students be placed solely in the regular or content classroom?

14. How do you perceive your role as an ESL teacher?

15. Why are you earning ESL endorsement?

16. At U.T.-Pan Am the ESL endorsement program consists of the following four courses. Which have you completed?
   - ENG. 3319 Introduction to Descriptive linguistics
   - ENG. 3330 English Grammar
   - ENG. 4238 Introduction to ESL
   - EDCI.3324 English as a Second Language

17. In what ways have each of the courses that you have completed been valuable to you?

18. In what ways did each course NOT meet your expectations in providing what you thought it should?

19. What suggestions would you make for enhancing the value of each course for you?

Additional comments?