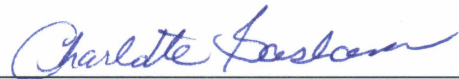


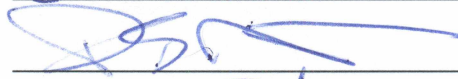
GOALS, NEEDS AND PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS FOR ADULT SECOND  
LANGUAGE ENGLISH LEARNERS IN FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

By

Virginia Colleen Schlichting

RECOMMENDED:

  
\_\_\_\_\_

  
\_\_\_\_\_

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Advisory Committee Chair

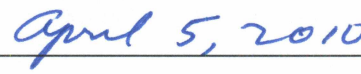
  
\_\_\_\_\_

Chair, Department of Linguistics

APPROVED:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean, College of Liberal Arts

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean of the Graduate School

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

GOALS, NEEDS AND PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS FOR ADULT SECOND  
LANGUAGE ENGLISH LEARNERS IN FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

A  
THESIS

Presented to the Faculty  
of the University of Alaska Fairbanks

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Virginia C. Schlichting, B.A.

Fairbanks, AK

May 2010

## **Abstract**

Adults learning English as a second language face a variety of challenges. This study examines some of those challenges for this population in Fairbanks, AK. Participants were interviewed to better understand their goals for language learning and for other personal aspirations. Four types of goals are identified as well as sub-themes within each goal. From these goals, specific types of needs are determined. Needs focus mainly on written and spoken language proficiency and different competencies required to achieve goals. Finally, suggestions for implementation of programmatic policies and curricula are discussed. However, this analysis is controversial and complicated. Participants were confronted with ideologies, which are present everywhere from daily tasks to the curricula that are geared toward second language learners. In addition, participants' conflicted ideas of identity and their own beliefs about life and language are significant considerations throughout the study.

## Table of Contents

	Page
Signature Page.....	i
Title Page .....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
List of Figures.....	viii
List of Tables .....	ix
List of Excerpts.....	x
List of Appendices .....	xii
Acknowledgments .....	xiii
<b>CHAPTER 1 .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.2 RATIONALE/PURPOSE .....	4
1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	5
1.4 DELIMITATION AND LIMITATIONS.....	6
1.5 DEFINITIONS.....	7
1.6 SUMMARY .....	9
<b>CHAPTER 2 .....</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 LANGUAGE ACQUISITION THEORIES .....	12
Behaviorism .....	12
Input, Output and Interaction.....	14
Affective Factors .....	15
Social Factors .....	16
Participatory Approach.....	17
Identity and Power .....	18
2.2 GOALS AND NEEDS.....	23
2.3 SURVIVAL ESL.....	25
2.4 IDEOLOGY IN SLA.....	29

2.5	CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND ADULT ESL LEARNERS.....	32
2.6	U.S. LANGUAGE POLICY .....	34
2.7	NEEDS ANALYSIS.....	35
	Conclusion .....	39
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>41</b>
3.1	STUDY DESIGN.....	41
3.2	GOALS OF RESEARCH.....	44
3.3	LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.....	45
3.4	AGENCY OVERVIEWS .....	49
3.4.1	<i>Literacy Council of Alaska</i> .....	49
3.4.2	<i>Adult Learning Programs of Alaska</i> .....	50
3.4.3	<i>University Baptist Church</i> .....	51
3.4.4	<i>University of Alaska Fairbanks</i> .....	51
3.4.5	<i>Tanana Valley Campus</i> .....	52
3.5	PARTICIPANTS.....	52
3.6	PROCEDURES OF STUDY .....	58
3.7	ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK.....	60
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>63</b>
4.1	INTRODUCTION .....	63
4.2	GOALS INVOLVING CHILDREN AND FAMILY .....	65
4.2.1	<i>Bilingualism</i> .....	66
4.2.2	<i>Communication with Monolingual Spouse</i> .....	71
4.2.3	<i>Parents Want Sufficient Proficiency to Assist Children's     Academics</i> .....	72
4.3	PERSONAL GOALS.....	74
4.3.1	<i>Build Confidence and Self-Esteem</i> .....	74
4.3.2	<i>Making Friends</i> .....	76
4.4	PROFESSIONAL GOALS .....	77
4.4.1	<i>Reestablish Former Career</i> .....	78

4.4.2	<i>Establish New Career</i> .....	80
4.4.3	<i>Small Business Ownership</i> .....	82
4.4.4	<i>Marketable Skills for Employment</i> .....	83
4.5	EDUCATIONAL GOALS .....	84
4.5.1	<i>Writing and Grammar</i> .....	85
4.5.2	<i>Communication</i> .....	86
4.5.3	<i>Higher Education</i> .....	88
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	.....	<b>90</b>
5.1	INTRODUCTION .....	90
5.2	NEEDS.....	91
5.3	LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY .....	94
5.3.1	<i>Linguistic Needs</i> .....	95
	Restrictions .....	97
	Acquisition of language or cultural competence?.....	99
5.4	TOOLS.....	102
5.4.1	<i>Understanding of Language Learning</i> .....	102
	Family Communication.....	105
5.4.2	<i>Access to Monetary and Social Resources</i> .....	111
	Logistical Obstacles .....	113
	Higher Education .....	115
	Employment.....	117
5.5	IDEOLOGY .....	119
5.5.1	<i>Identity</i> .....	123
	Conclusion .....	127
<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	.....	<b>129</b>
6.1	INTRODUCTION .....	129
6.2	LINGUISTIC NEEDS.....	131
6.3	TOOLS: UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE LEARNING.....	132
6.3.1	<i>Independent Strategies</i> .....	136

6.3.2	<i>Workshop for Spouses</i> .....	142
6.3.3	<i>Instructor Contribution</i> .....	144
6.4	TOOLS: ACCESS TO SOCIAL AND MONETARY RESOURCES .....	147
6.4.1	<i>Participatory approach to language acquisition</i> .....	150
6.4.2	<i>English for Parents</i> .....	153
6.4.3	<i>Specialized Knowledge</i> .....	155
6.5	CONCLUSION.....	157
	<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>158</b>
	<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>165</b>

## List of Figures

	Page
Figure 1. Map of Alaska .....	46
Figure 2. Comparison of Fluency Levels of Alaska and FNSB Residents .....	48
Figure 3. Graphic Comparing Non-English L1's in the FNSB.....	48
Figure 4. Study Participants Compared with Foreign-Born FNSB Residents ...	54
Figure 5. Participants Ranked on Bilingualism Continuum.....	67
Figure 6. Taxonomy of Learners' Needs in Relation to Their Goals.....	92



**List of Tables**

	Page
Table 1. Summary of Participant Data.....	57
Table 2. Summary of Data Collection Information.....	59
Table 3. Codes for Identifying Participants' Goals.....	61
Table 4. Codes for Identifying Learners Needs .....	62
Table 5. Summary of Participants' Goals .....	65
Table 6. Summary of Needs to Increase Language Proficiency.....	94
Table 7. Summary of Services Participants Used .....	131

### List of Excerpts

	Page
Excerpt 1 .....	66
Excerpt 2 .....	68
Excerpt 3 .....	69
Excerpt 4 .....	70
Excerpt 5 .....	72
Excerpt 6 .....	73
Excerpt 7 .....	73
Excerpt 8 .....	74
Excerpt 9 .....	75
Excerpt 10 .....	76
Excerpt 11 .....	77
Excerpt 12 .....	79
Excerpt 13 .....	80
Excerpt 14 .....	81
Excerpt 15 .....	82
Excerpt 16 .....	83
Excerpt 17 .....	85
Excerpt 18 .....	86
Excerpt 19 .....	87
Excerpt 20 .....	87
Excerpt 21 .....	88
Excerpt 22 .....	89
Excerpt 23 .....	98
Excerpt 24 .....	104
Excerpt 25 .....	106
Excerpt 26 .....	107
Excerpt 27 .....	108

Excerpt 28 .....	109
Excerpt 29 .....	110
Excerpt 30 .....	112
Excerpt 31 .....	113
Excerpt 32 .....	114
Excerpt 33 .....	114
Excerpt 34 .....	115
Excerpt 35 .....	115
Excerpt 36 .....	120
Excerpt 37 .....	121
Excerpt 38 .....	122
Excerpt 39 .....	122
Excerpt 40 .....	127
Excerpt 41 .....	139
Excerpt 42 .....	141
Excerpt 43 .....	141
Excerpt 44 .....	144
Excerpt 45 .....	145
Excerpt 46 .....	148
Excerpt 47 .....	149
Excerpt 48 .....	150
Excerpt 49 .....	152
Excerpt 50 .....	154
Excerpt 51 .....	155
Excerpt 52 .....	156

## List of Appendices

	Page
Appendix A: Interview Protocol.....	165
Appendix B: Informed Consent for Initial Participants .....	169
Appendix C: Informed Consent for All Participants Other Than Initial .....	171
Appendix D: Sample Transcribed and Coded Interview .....	173

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank all of the participants interviewed for the purposes of this thesis, without whom this would not have been possible.

## **Chapter 1**

While doing research for a graduate course, I was particularly interested in options for Adult English Language learners in Fairbanks, AK. Anecdotal evidence seemed to imply that for more advanced learners, options were relatively limited. This initial look led to a more in-depth study regarding the needs and goals of adult English language learners in Fairbanks.

### **1.1 Introduction**

This study investigates the linguistic and social goals and needs for intermediate and advanced adult English language learners in Fairbanks, AK. Participation is limited to non-native English speaking immigrants who have no immediate plans to leave the U.S. and feel that they need to learn English. Adult language learners often bring skills or professional experience with them which could elevate their socioeconomic statuses, but a lack of English skills limits access. The potential conflict between a higher-prestige professional identity enjoyed in their home country and the reality of lower-prestige blue-collar employment in this country can be a major source of second language learners' disenfranchisement and a factor in their motivation to learn English. Consequently, professional and personal goals are connected to language learning goals. Understanding these goals will further our understanding of adult language learner needs.

Adult learners of English as a second language (ESL) face many challenges in Fairbanks, AK. These stem from a variety of factors related to the learning environment and a familiarity of learners and instructors with language acquisition methodology. To begin with, this population is limited by the cost of advanced language courses. The only venue that offers courses at an academic level and based on a consistently rigorous curriculum is the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). However, the University system charges

full tuition for a variety of English classes.<sup>1</sup> Of these courses, only a limited quantity is geared toward adult language learners, while others are for native-speaking students. Not every language learner can afford to enroll in language courses at the University.

Regardless of cost, adult English language acquisition advocates have long bemoaned the lack of trained professionals in the field and the offerings in Fairbanks offer few exceptions. Locally, most ESL courses are instructed by those who have little or no background in second language acquisition theory. This includes a volunteer force used by several services in town. Volunteer instructors may undergo a brief training depending on the program and paid staff may undergo training conducted by a funding agency, such as the state, but there is little application of current second language learning research in methodology and instruction. Furthermore, it is common for all agencies to have inconsistency among staff and instructors between classes, which additionally reduces the likelihood of sufficient training. The University naturally requires more stringent standards for its instructors and those instructing the second language English courses, by all accounts, have a background in the discipline. However, instructors of Developmental English courses in which participants also enroll, may not have second language education training.

There is also a disparity between the levels of courses offered even within the same organization. While the University naturally serves more advanced students, there are few ESL classes geared toward adults learning English. The only other viable option for ESL students is to enroll in developmental courses. The other organizations in the community offer less frequent instruction of beginning level courses, and are often limited by fiscal concerns which restrict them to offer ESL classes only as they have the staffing and the budget to fund. Limited frequency includes inconsistent course offerings

---

<sup>1</sup> A 3-credit course for example, costs \$423 for Alaska residents, plus applicable fees. For non-residents the cost of tuition for a 3 credit course rises to \$1,413.

month to month or longer periods of time elapsing between courses. Similarly some courses meet only one or two hours a week. Contrastingly, in University “foreign” language courses, first-year courses typically meet for five or more hours a week. There is clearly an inconsistent standard in the discipline for those learning English versus those learning another, “foreign” language.

In addition to the irregularity in course offerings, there is not necessarily consistent progression of language classes that build on the skills or level of a previous one. For most participants, the services available to them are limited to those offered by service organizations and UAF. Additionally, when the former classify a student as intermediate or advanced, this level is not necessarily compatible with the University’s intermediate or advanced. Most of the University’s language courses are not designed to aid a language learner in acquiring language. Rather, University classes are designed to assist native English speaking students to progress through remedial classes and acquire a skill set necessary to complete academic coursework.

Many students possess skills and competencies necessary to achieve a higher socioeconomic status, however lack the English proficiency necessary to profit from their skills on their own. Complicating the situation is that many second language courses that are offered limit the forms of the language that students learn, as well as the domains in which they will be able to use it. Rather than challenging it, classes often serve to teach learners to be complacent with the status quo where they may enjoy few benefits. For example, English is used in different contexts like at work or with a landlord. However, courses do not always address the forms of language that speakers need to advocate for themselves in these situations and instead the focus is on following orders and being obedient. ESL courses are often given little prestige in higher education as demonstrated by their limited availability and offerings. Consequently, learners are denied access to resources such as higher wage employment and social mobility.



Learners are marginalized at many levels, first by the limited courses and formal opportunities available to study English. Learners are also marginalized by the lack of prestige allocated to the classes available to them. Students finding themselves enrolled in remedial, developmental education courses rather than ESL or academic college English courses will not necessarily be under the tutelage of an instructor familiar with second language education. As with almost all of the programs, adults learning English are grouped in some way with adult basic education (ABE) students. The latter are characterized by those who may need remedial skills in order to earn their GED or prepare for college level courses. Commonly, non-profits serve a dual population—basic education students and adult language learners. As a result ESL students are grouped with native English speaking students who have different needs.

Finally, learners are marginalized because they do not know English, and compounding factors may prevent them from acquiring it. As a result, many learners are not given the opportunity to explore or voice their goals from a context other than that defined by the agency offering courses.

## **1.2 Rationale/Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to forge a beginning in a topic of critical importance to English language learners and programs supporting them in Fairbanks—to ask adult English Language Learners why they want to learn English. My investigation is not meant to be a broad-reaching survey of all the groups present in Fairbanks, but rather a beginning in determining the needs and goals of adults learning English as a second language.

There are several benefits I intend for this study to bring to the field of second language acquisition and ESL pedagogy. With the findings from this study, I hope to first inform language programs, instructors and researchers of some of the goals and challenges that learners face. In Fairbanks, programs may gain a better understanding of their constituents, realize the importance of

being informed by second language acquisition research and implement courses that focus on social interaction. Instructors may become more in tune with the goals needs of their students, gain ideas for classroom activities, and understand the importance of identity. Finally, researchers will hopefully view this study as a starting point into a relatively untapped subject area. While this study is conducted in the context of Fairbanks, it is not meant to be exclusive by any means. Other programs with learners matching the characteristics of the participants in this study or in environments similar to Fairbanks may hopefully glean relevant findings from this study.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

This study is based on three research questions:

- 1) What are adult English language learners' goals in Fairbanks, AK?
- 2) What are learners' needs based on those goals?
- 3) What implications do these needs have for language learning programs?

In the case of this study, I set out to conduct a needs analysis to determine first, what Fairbanks adult ESL learners' goals are. For ESL classes, needs analyses are often conducted to determine course content to fit the particular goals of funding agencies, administrators or other constituents. Although classroom goals are often determined after identifying needs, I felt that the inverse—identifying learners' goals first—would be less marginalizing and would yield more learner-centered data.

Following this line of reasoning, the next step was to determine learners' needs based on these goals. Learners' needs do not necessarily center solely on linguistic or grammatical forms, but rather include more complex social competencies and pragmatic language knowledge. Also explored are learners' ideas about what they require to learn language.

Finally, using learner-determined needs, I assess what implications these have in terms of English language instruction. Participants' statements

regarding their experiences with language courses in Fairbanks are valuable for supporting these implications. They also provide insight beyond the classroom into and particularly research and policy.

#### **1.4 Delimitation and Limitations**

As described above, this study yielded recommendations for adult ESL instructors and programs. I include a detailed set of recommendations which are applicable to programs in a wide variety of contexts, including those in a similar environment or who serve a similar group of constituents rather than a general characterization of a population. In addition, the study provides comprehensive information for instructors in addressing learners' needs.

It is also important to remember, however, that this study is meant to be exploratory and is not meant to be a final exhaustive depiction of the entire adult ESL community in Fairbanks. I focused principally on individuals that had been professionals in their home countries and mostly excluded those who were not fully literate or proficient in their first language since they would be less academically prepared to learn English. The study focused, in part, on those who do not have English linguistic capital necessary to "succeed," at least in a traditional sense.

Participants were chosen via snowball sampling, which resulted in a lack of gender diversity, an unintended consequence. Thirteen individuals were interviewed; however this population only included one male. In addition, participants in the study reflect a relatively small sample of languages represented in Fairbanks and those that are included are not in numbers proportionate to the area's population. While the study was based on the concept of "needs analysis," it is not a comprehensive "needs analysis." Study methodology includes ethnographic techniques and no linguistic analysis or outside interviews. For example, because I wanted to focus on what the

learners' wanted, I purposefully did not talk to instructors or employers, which is commonly done in needs analyses.

I did live and study abroad in a country where I had to use a second language and bring the experience of being this type of outsider to the study. However, this experience still does not make me a member of the adult ESL community. My perspective, therefore, will be different from that of the participants. I do have connections to the adult second language learner community. I first met several of the participants as a volunteer tutor and instructor at a literacy agency in Fairbanks. It is from this pool that I pulled several of my initial participants. The relationship I had with these individuals likely affected their answers in the interviews; these participants specifically may not have wanted to say anything that would have offended me. For example, if they were not happy with a course for which I was an instructor, they may have been less willing to contribute that information. Finally, an additional participant was a family member and her responses may also have been influenced, in part, by our relationship.

## **1.5 Definitions**

The following terms are relevant to second language acquisition, the participants, and the concepts explored. These occur throughout the paper and a general explanation of each in context is warranted.

English as a second language (ESL) refers to adults, who grew up speaking a language other than English and who are learning English as a second (or third) language. ESL in some contexts can also refer to the courses specifically for adults to learn English.

L1 and L2 refer to a participant's native or first language most commonly and second language (e.g. English), respectively.

Participant is used to describe the individuals who were interviewed in the study.

Information from 12 individuals or participants is included.

Cultural and linguistic capital are terms coined by Bourdieu (1991) that refer to the set of experiences and abilities which individuals possess. These are analogous to currency. Individuals—or the participants in this case—may be granted access to resources that will allow them to “buy” the privileges of the majority group. Likewise lacking currency prevents individuals from admission into the majority group. Linguistic capital is not merely limited to the ability to speak “correctly.” It can include grammatical and phonological features, but includes the ability to actually be listened to.

Ideology, as defined by Tollefson (1991), is an intuitive idea that is made to be simple and commonsense. As a result, these ideas are accepted by a majority of people in a society and maybe used to control certain aspects of behavior and set expectations for what is considered normal. Ideologies can be both beneficial and detrimental to segments of society. In the context of Fairbanks language learners, the ideologies that they face are mostly detrimental. For example, in one program policy dictates that learners be equipped with just enough English to no longer qualify for language services, but not enough to enroll in the University or otherwise get ahead. In the case of this study, ideological ideas that seem like commonsense, in reality oppress or exclude a certain group while favoring the majority.

Hegemony, Tollefson (1991) explains, is the successful duplication and perpetuation of ideology. Hegemony is present in the U.S. when linguistic minorities are denied rights and multilingualism is widespread, but officially invisible.

English for specific purposes (ESP), similar to English for academic purposes (EAP) or language for specific purposes (LSP) is an ESL course designed with a specific objective in mind. Usually these focus on academic English or English for a particular occupation. One specific

example may include English needed to pass a test or exam such as Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), required for admission to many universities.

Domain refers to a context or venue in which language is used. A domain may be defined by the interlocutors or the context such as academic, social, etc. (Spradley, 1979). Language needed for specific domains may vary drastically and similarly, programs may not teach language appropriate to all domains.

Adult Basic Education (ABE) is the term used to refer to basic educational services provided to adults in need of remedial instruction. ABE also prepares adults to receive their GED or gain skills for low-wage labor.

Marginalization occurs when participants are systematically denied access to resources such as education, employment, prestige or socioeconomic success. Language courses can be marginalizing in several ways, one includes the limited forms of language that may be available for learners. In addition, learners are marginalized by a variety of systematic factors including the inability to advocate for themselves and lack of access to resources that would help them learn language.

## **1.6 Summary**

In Chapter 2, I provide a theoretical framework on which the study is based. I begin with a discussion of traditional and contemporary second language acquisition theory and move on to discuss individual factors that would influence language learning. After outlining the differences between needs and goals, I discuss relevant literature to this study. The methods by which learners are oppressed, including situational language learning, are discussed as are underlying ideologies. An alternative to oppressive methodology—critical pedagogy, is outlined. I describe how U.S. language policy in practice favors English rather than the languages of non-native

speakers. I propose that one alternative approach is to ask learners why they want to learn English and that one way to investigate this would be to conduct a needs analysis. Finally, I explain the parameters and limitations of needs analyses.

In Chapter 3, I discuss my research methodology. This begins with a general discussion of the qualitative nature of the study and my selection of interviews as the primary research tool. The research goals are described as is the learning environment, Fairbanks, AK, and its population of non-native speakers of English. I describe each of the four local venues offering English language courses and the services they provide to learners. Next, I detail the participant selection methodology and provide a demographic description of the participants. Finally, I describe how the study was conducted and the data collected. Coding for data analysis is described and two tables of codes are provided.

Chapter 4 includes analysis and discussion of the first research question: “What are learners’ goals?” The findings emerged from a compilation of interviews with 12 participants who discussed their language learning experiences with an emphasis on those in Fairbanks, AK. I begin discussion of the first question by breaking down participants’ goals into four distinct types: family and children, personal, professional and education. I focus especially on those themes that are particularly relevant to language acquisition: insight into how participants think language is learned, the complexities of participants’ created and perceived identities, including confidence and self esteem and domains of language use.

In Chapter 5, I discuss my second research question “What are learners’ needs based on their goals?” I discuss and analyze needs expressed by the participants in relation to the goals identified in Chapter 4. Finally, I discuss the influences that ideology and identity have on participants’ responses and views and related implications.

I round out the discussion and analysis of my final research question in Chapter 6. To examine how my findings could inform future courses, I used examples of other courses, analysis from Chapter 5 and participants' statements regarding their experiences in language courses in Fairbanks. I focus on the independent strategies that learners could be taught, how an understanding of language learning could be integrated into courses for learners and their families, and highlight the need for a communicative approach to language instruction. I conclude by discussing implications for future research and policy development.



## **Chapter 2**

This study examines adult English language learners' goals in Fairbanks, AK, and considers their needs based on those goals. Consequently, I also discuss ways that programs could meet learners' needs. In this chapter, I review the literature relevant to my research. To begin this discussion, a focused explanation of the evolution in literature regarding second language acquisition helps establish a perspective for interpreting related situations in this study. Next, individual factors that affect language learning, including identity, are described, followed by a look at defining needs and goals. Also important is situational language learning and U.S. language policy. I conclude this chapter with an overview of the needs analysis literature that informed this study.

### **2.1 Language Acquisition Theories**

The individual as a language learner is complex and linguists do not wholly understand all the processes that affect him/her. Trying to understand needs in terms of language acquisition necessitates an understanding of how second languages are acquired and there are several theories that attempt to explain different aspects of the language learning process. Before discussing them, it is important to establish what is meant by "learning." Krashen (1982; 2002) distinguishes between acquisition and learning. Acquisition refers to acquiring a language through interaction in the target language, while learning refers to formalized instruction about and sometimes in the language. The latter is often characterized by ineffective learning; learners may know how to conjugate verbs, for example, but are unable to produce them spontaneously in discourse.

#### *Behaviorism*

One method of language "learning," is based on the theory of behaviorism. The behaviorist approach to second language acquisition (SLA)

relies on stimulus and response which are environmental conditions. New patterns are created by imitation, practice and reinforcement (Skinner, 1957). Learners receive linguistic feedback from others which strengthens connections between words and objects or events. However, this has mostly fallen out of favor within the field of SLA. Nevertheless, learners and some instructors still subscribe to behaviorist beliefs about SLA methodology and theory.

Although they may have not had official instruction in any SLA methodology, learners have preconceived ideas of how language is learned. Tarone and Yule (1989) explain, "Some adult learners have quite powerful preconceptions about the form a language learning experience should take" (p. 9). Many students, including the participants in this study, come from backgrounds in which language learning experiences are characterized by an authoritative teacher and behaviorist grammar instruction, repetition and rote memorization and success is measured by passing exams. When students enter into an alternate type of learning environment, like one with more conversation, they often feel like the instructor is inadequate. For example, Norton (1997) describes a case study in which an adult second language learner felt that a course that she was attending was not worthwhile. Among other reasons, the learner did not feel that the student presentations in the course were of any benefit to her and she quit attending. While the instructor's methodology may have been theoretically valid, the learner did not feel that it was worthwhile. Language teachers must understand that their students come from a variety of backgrounds. Sometimes teachers have difficulty reconciling methodology with learners' beliefs. On an individual basis, teachers may hope that their students "come around," but faced with group opposition, teachers sometimes abandon proven methods to give students "what *they* think they need" (Tarone & Yule, 1989, p. 9). Often what learners think they need is a behaviorist approach to language acquisition.

### *Input, Output and Interaction*

While behaviorism relies on external processes, mentalism<sup>2</sup> focuses on internal processes which include input, output and interaction (Johnson, 2004). These are important components of language acquisition. Chomsky (2006) argues that there is a part of the brain that is inherently designed for language learning. While environmental factors trigger this device, it is internal processes that are human-specific which lead to language acquisition. Once an individual receives input, the language acquisition device in the brain compares the input to principles characteristic of all language, known as Universal Grammar (UG). From this, individuals are able to understand and decode input and are then able to create output based on what they know about their language. It is important to note that this process is not a conscious or immediate one, but is considered to be a natural part of gradual development.

Three different theories attempt to explain the relevance of input, output and interaction in language acquisition, respectively. First, Krashen's (2002) input hypothesis<sup>3</sup> is defined by as the idea that language proficiency is gradually achieved when learners are provided with as comprehensible input—input that is a little beyond their current level<sup>4</sup>. Krashen (1982) argues that comprehensible input is at a level that learners can understand and process, thus it helps learners build their knowledge of language.

The significance of output is discussed by Swain (1985) who counters that while comprehensible input is necessary, a comparable model for comprehensible output is also essential to the language acquisition process. Output allows learners to use and apply their linguistic knowledge to realistic

---

<sup>2</sup> This is also referred to innatism.

<sup>3</sup> Krashen's (1982) Monitor Model, a mentalist theory, is comprised of five hypotheses. The acquisition-learning hypothesis (discussed above), the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis. I discuss only the hypotheses which are relevant to this study in depth.

<sup>4</sup> Represented as  $i + 1$ . The learner's current level of proficiency is represented by "i," and he/she is provided with input a little beyond that stage, " $+ 1$ ." He/she is gradually able to comprehend more complex structures.

situations which includes learners trying out their own ideas of language use and applications of the grammar of a language. In these situations, they are often forced to negotiate meaning in the case of a breakdown in communication, which further expands their linguistic understanding of the language. Finally output allows learners to actually acquire the language and facilitates sporadic production through creation of grammatical sentences rather than relying on creating meaning with semantics (i.e. vocabulary).

The important of interaction is explored by Long (1996). Although not meant to fully explain SLA, the Interaction Hypothesis accounts for some of the SLA process with the assertion that while both input and output areas are required, so is interaction or feedback through contact with interlocutors. Learners acquire language through negotiated meaning with interlocutors. The more that learners are aware of and are able to comprehend the L2, the more they are able to negotiate and therefore learn the L2. While input, output and interaction are some of the components necessary for SLA, they are not the only factors that influence it.

### *Affective Factors*

In addition to input, output and interaction to learn language, there are also extenuating factors which affect a learner's success. Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis implies that outside factors influence learners in psychological ways (i.e. motivation, anxiety, attitude, etc.) that affect language learning. These factors are known as affect and can include motivation, attitude toward the target language culture and other emotion-driven values. Learners with a high affective filter have a mental block toward language learning. They are unable to obtain the same amount of input as if they had a lower filter. To remove the emotional and psychological barriers to acquiring language, learners need to feel more comfortable. All language learners experience some type of affective-filter raising environment. I was interested to learn in this study

what types of situations raised participants' affective filters and what programs could do to promote a less stressful environment.

### *Social Factors*

In addition to the role of linguistic processes and the psychological influence of outside factors on language learning, language learning is also about social factors. According to Schumann's (1978) acculturation model, the more learners can relate to the target language population, the easier it will be for them to acculturate and learn the target language. The extent to which a learner acculturates determines how proficient he or she will become in the target language. According to Krashen (1982) in the strong version of acculturation (one of two types), learners have access to target language speakers, are fully integrated with them and socially and psychologically aspire to acculturate. The weak version is similar, except that learners are at a social and psychological distance from target language speakers. An example of the strong version of acculturation is noted by Krashen (1982). A study in Germany considered whether contact with native-German speakers was a factor in predicting the level of proficiency in German of Italian and Spanish-speaking guest workers. He found that both leisure and work contact provided an environment which fostered comprehensible input. These activities provided enough social and psychological access to native speakers to promote language learning.

Schumann (1978) also examines research which focused on the weaker type of acculturation. He compared six English L2 learners and found that social and psychological distance from other English speakers had a profound effect on the amount of English one subject—"Alberto"—in particular had acquired. Schumann (1978) reports that Alberto had less growth in the areas of negative construction and interrogative and auxiliary development, and age and intelligence were ruled out as causes for lack of development. Conclusively,

Alberto's English has piginized, or plateaued at a simplified form. Schumann (1978) explains that this is experienced by all learners, but Alberto had not progressed beyond this level and attributes this lack of progression to social and psychological distance from native English speakers. This is key in determining whether or not these speakers become proficient since social and psychological identification lowers the affective filter and paves the way for comprehensible input, which according to Krashen's monitor model, is a component in SLA. This is relevant to this study because I wanted to investigate to what extent participants' social and psychological distance and closeness to native English speakers and might part explain participants' level of proficiency. In addition, it is indicative for future language instruction.

### *Participatory Approach*

Although Krashen and others spend a significant amount of attention on individual factors such as the role of the first language, learners' social distance from native speakers and aptitude, others such as Wong (1976; Wong Fillmore, 1991) identified that language learners must have social contact with target language speakers in relevant situations and receive appropriate input in order to acquire language. Consequently, in this study, analysis goes beyond linguistic needs and into social needs and goals.

To better understand the idea that social factors also contribute to the language learning process, I drew on the work of Lantolf (2000) who describes sociocultural theory (SCT), based on the work of Vygotsky. SCT is based on the idea that processes that occur in the human mind are "mediated." These processes include language learning. People learn to use tools for which there are physical, social and mental representations, in order to complete tasks. These tools are revised as people encounter new information and knowledge of how to use them is passed to future generations. Swain and Deters (2007) emphasize the importance of "languaging" in SCT—the combination of social

mediation with others or tools, the internal formation of the speech, and the output via speaking or writing. An example of “languaging” can be seen in a study cited by Swain and Deters (2007). In this study, groups of English language learners in Japan were observed. One group performed better on a particular exercise after a member commented negatively about the instructor and the group spent a significant amount of time discussing and airing their complaints. Much of the language they used was directly tied to strong emotions and anger, and later, participants were able to more easily recall and use these same forms of language because of the strong emotional connection that learners had with that particular language. Both speech and thought are dependant on each other, and although they are not synonymous, must be considered in order to understand the linguistic processes behind each (Lantolf, 2000). While some may argue that a participatory approach to language acquisition is the most effective, it is not neutral and is influenced by other individual and societal forces.

### *Identity and Power*

Several participatory models have been proposed for SLA beginning with SCT, discussed above. I discuss the tenets of several others below, but perhaps as equally important, I discuss how learners’ identities and power and ideology all influence the learning process when these theories are applied. In this study, identity plays a large role in participants’ goals and needs for meeting those goals.

Swain and Deters (2007) synthesize the work of different researchers to describe different theories informed by SCT. In the context of situated learning, learners become skilled at socializing with language and are socialized by language use. As language learners, they become members of a community and learn how to use language appropriately in the context of that community. An early example of situated learning is described by Heath (1983) in the

context of her ethnography of children learning language. She explored language use and acquisition in two demographically different communities in North and South Carolina. She found that individuals in the communities, and children in particular, were socialized by language use.

The second type of theory, communities of practice introduced by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998), is considered to be a sub theory within situated learning. Learners negotiate learning through participation in a community. Communities do not even have to be formally recognized, but all individuals are members of various social circles (i.e. work, family, friends). Before learners can participate in a community, and therefore learn, they must be accepted as legitimate participants. Legitimacy is determined, again often informally, by a variety of factors including sociocultural history which is very relevant to understanding interactions. Another important distinction in this theory of learning is the construction of identities within the community. To examine them, it's important to consider not only what learners do, but also what they do not do or are not permitted to do. The formation and negotiation of identity also focuses on power relations. Learners' identities determine whether they are granted admission to the community and its resources. However, identity is not fixed and can change as learners move between communities.

Swain and Deters (2007) detail a case study of a Polish immigrant in Canada. Formerly a chemist, they found that his professional identity helped him gain access to the corresponding community in Canada. Much of his success in acculturating could also be attributed to his motivation to learn English and to withdraw from a Polish-speaking community of practice. From this, they concluded that language learning is highly influenced by social factors and "...negotiation of access, participation, and above all, identity" (p. 827). This also highlights the issue of accessible resources within communities for second language learners. I was also interested to hear from participants in this study how accessible resources were for them.



Poststructural theory, also informed by SCT, takes a critical approach to SLA. It draws important conclusions about complex social identities that are constantly being renegotiated through constructed meaning of language and related issues of power.<sup>5</sup> Though learners have access to target language speakers, this does not mean that they have access to input or the components needed in the language acquisition process. Learners often have to overcome marginalization and prove that they are legitimate participants (Swain and Deters, 2007). In my study, I try to understand what legitimate participation means to my participants. I do this by querying the goals that they have and how their resulting needs can be addressed in ESL programs.

Norton (1997) describes a case study from her own research in which a young Vietnamese immigrant to Canada made great sacrifices to attend an ESL course. However, she quit attending after she felt that the course was not worthwhile. Although the instructor was having students explore their identities by describing their home countries in in-class presentations, Norton (1997) speculates that the activity did not provide the students enough leeway to explore their complex identities as ESL learners. If this had been the case, students would have been able to better appreciate their classmates' past histories and could then take advantage of the impact of input and interaction these presentations provided. This is an illustration of the unstable and complex nature of ESL learners' identities. I also wanted to explore to what extent learners' identities frame their goals and needs.

Norton Peirce (1995) criticizes other theories of SLA for assuming that it is the learner who determines if she/he has access to target language speakers. She claims that social identity can be multifaceted and contradictory. Even for those speakers who may be fluent, learning culture does not automatically accompany language learning. Liu (2004), a fluent L2 English speaker,

---

<sup>5</sup> In the context of communities of practice meaning is not necessarily negotiated, though membership in a community may be. Whereas in poststructuralism meaning is highly negotiable in all contexts.

describes her difficulties with English culture after teaching and speaking English in China for ten years: "... the U.S. culture overshadowed my linguistic abilities. The beliefs, values and norms that governed my social behavior no longer seemed to function well in this new environment" (p. 28). For many learners, acquiring language alone is not sufficient to participate fully in the L2 environment.

More closely in line with Norton Peirce's (1995) concept of identity, and the one I propose to use in this study, is the metaphor of "linguistic" and "social capital" coined by Bourdieu (1991). These terms refer to the set of experiences and abilities which either serve to admit individuals to the majority group or exclude them. Linguistic capital is not merely limited to the ability to speak "correctly", though it can include grammatical and phonological features, but it includes the ability to actually be listened to. Through the questions I asked, I gave participants the opportunity to tell me about situations in which they were not able to fully participate (Question #3, see Appendix A).

Bourdieu (1991) compares social interaction to a market and the ability to function socially in that market depends on linguistic capital. Successful interactions are awarded "profit of distinction" (p. 55) and those involved in the transaction reap benefits such as a higher socioeconomic status. An unsuccessful interaction leads to individuals being denied mainstream benefits. Linguistic abilities are often required, though not always officially, to participate in this market. In order to achieve a higher socioeconomic status, individuals must also have the accompanying linguistic skills. However, the ability to acquire the most prestigious form of competency is limited, therefore limiting those who can occupy the highest level of social class on which prestige competency depends. For example, a working-class American may not have the education and experience or social capital required to obtain a higher level of employment. If the worker interviewed for a middle-class position, he or she will likely lack the ability to successfully participate in the interview thereby

making the interaction unsuccessful. Because the worker does not have the linguistic and social skills necessary to achieve a higher position of prestige he/she cannot therefore gain additional skills. While this explanation is overly simplified, it illustrates how cultural capital reserves power and prestige for a small segment of society.

Linguistic capital is linked to social and economic differences or cultural capital which further legitimizes the value of linguistic capital. Institutions that promote one literacy practice such as responding to the imperative over another like learning to object in unjust situations then have the ability to determine which social, cultural and linguistic practices are legitimate. Institutions, such as those in education, are self-preserving since they also reproduce the “market” or the “producers/consumers” necessary to continue using linguistic capital of the specific language. In Fairbanks, individuals who attend the University are the consumers in the market which is self-perpetuating because it continues to produce and regulate the accepted form of language. Bourdieu (1991) explains “... in the reproduction of the market without which the social value of the linguistic competence, its capacity to function as a linguistic capital, would cease to exist” (p. 57). Since the domains themselves are responsible for their existence it only makes sense to consider how they affect proficiency of learners. Bourdieu (1991) explains that the more places that linguistic capital is accepted as legitimate, the legitimacy pervades other markets or domains in which legitimate linguistic capital is expected. In other words, because a certain level of English proficiency is expected in order to attend the University, that same proficiency is required to participate in other similar market interactions like serving as a board member for a community organization. The required level of proficiency is then expected and is the standard in a variety of situations that are limited to those who speak the prestige variety of the language. For this study, I wanted to investigate what linguistic and cultural capital learners needed to become participants.

## 2.2 Goals and Needs

As described above, individual factors may affect the language learning process, so language learning can no longer be viewed as an isolated process. I wanted to better understand how learners' self image, motivation and beliefs about language learning affected their goals and therefore their needs as language learners and resultantly how programs could meet these needs.

Tarone and Yule (1989) explain that learners' reasons for learning language can vary. For example, learners may want to acquire English to gain better employment or to attend a university. Not only do reasons or goals vary, they are also not always consistent or exclusive to life or career. Unsurprisingly, learners may not be able to clearly define their goals. Often, a specific type of language learning is indefinable for second language learners. While what they desire may include generalities that require a range of language skills, nothing definite can be determined as a result of institution disinterest or ignorance (Benesch, 1996, 1999; Hutchison & Waters, 1987; Tarone & Yule, 1989). Benesch (1999) cites an example of needs that were developed for a particular course which was essentially a laundry-list of generic forms. These included 'study or job requirements,' and 'what the user-institution or society at large regards as necessary' (Robinson, 1991, as cited in Benesch, 1999, p. 724). According to Benesch (1999), these are not formulated in conjunction with any particular theory of SLA and are not prescriptive enough to have a specific outcome.

In addition to the vagueness of learners' goals, institutions provide instructors with little information on the motivations of their students for learning a second language since institutions are mainly concerned with meeting predetermined objectives with courses rather than meeting learners' individual needs. As a result, it is left to the instructor to determine what students need and deliver it in a way that students will accept. However, this may be difficult

for many instructors. Tarone and Yule (1989) explain that rather than looking at concepts as needs, instructors often "...define students' needs in terms of processes of learning" (p. 9). Since so many instructors and programs, characteristically have little information on their constituents' reasons for learning language, I am asking participants their goals and looking at their needs for reaching those goals, so that programs can be informed and improved.

Another factor that affects language acquisition is motivation. This has been long studied by various linguists to categorize the progress of language acquisition in second language learners. Traditionally, motivation has been divided into two categories: instrumental and integrative (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). The former is the use of language to complete a certain task, while the latter seeks to integrate with the target language culture. Although described here in a simplified version, Norton Peirce (1995) rejects the notion and instead describes motivation as an investment in the language learning process. It is this investment that I was particularly interested in, in regard to the participants in this study. In finding out participants' reasons for studying English, I was hoping to determine their language learning goals and needs.

Norton Peirce (1995) expands on Bourdieu's metaphor (described above) by arguing that rather than having motivation to learn a second language, learners invest in acquiring new social and cultural tools such as the ability to interact and converse with native speakers. Norton Peirce (1995) also stresses that this investment should include an understanding of the power relations between interlocutors. They need to feel that the investment will see an equal return, but ultimately they must believe that it will increase the value of their cultural capital and give them access to resources that are not currently available to them. Additionally an investment in second language acquisition also means that the learner accepts that he/she will have to negotiate an ever-fluctuating identity.

One important consideration in identifying learners' goals is that the associated needs may lead to disparate distribution of power between the social group the learner belongs and the mainstream. Edwards (1991) cautions that responding to learner needs can inadvertently create a type of learner who engages in a particular behavior or belief. Rather than leaning toward emancipation the learner is conditioned to maintain the status quo. In addition to the politics of learners' goals and needs, the idea of a "learner" is a politically charged one. The judgment that someone is a learner with needs is laced with various social and ideological values. Auerbach (1995) explains that learners' reasons for ESL often go "beyond survival to include issues of self-esteem, self-expression and, significantly, power" (p. 22) which are known as domains (Pennycook, 1999). I conducted interviews in this study to obtain glimpses of participants' motivation and reasons for learning as well as some powerful influential forces on the learning process.

### **2.3 Survival ESL**

In many situations, including the ones faced by participants of this study, and because of the difficulty in determining needs and goals, language is often instructed with a very specific objective in mind. Differentiation of instruction based on learners' goals is widely recognized and is referred to Language for Special Purposes (LSP<sup>6</sup>) (Tarone & Yule, 1989). An example of this may be a Spanish course for healthcare workers where learners are enrolled in the course to acquire Spanish necessary to work in a healthcare setting. According to Hutchison and Waters (1987), the difference between LSP and general language instruction is an "awareness of the need" in LSP (p. 53). Basturkmen (2006) argues that although LSP syllabi are always based on someone's beliefs about language learning, few connections have been made in literature

---

<sup>6</sup> Also referred to as ESP—English for Specific Purposes or EAP – English for Academic Purposes.

between LSP methodologies and objectives and actual SLA theory.<sup>7</sup> For participants in this study, many of the language learning opportunities available to them are characteristic to some degree of LSP curricula.

Although I detail above some progressive approaches to SLA, not every organization embraces them. Below I discuss some types of programs that have adopted practices that are in opposition with SLA theory I discuss above. This is especially significant because this characterizes some of the programs that are typically available to learners like the participants in this study. Though LSP may sound like a simple solution to a complex problem, it also has some disadvantages. One type of LSP is survival ESL,<sup>8</sup> commonly taught to immigrants or those learning English as a second language in the U.S.—the population targeted by this study. Auerbach and Burgess (1985) characterize survival ESL as “situationally oriented around daily living tasks” which is based on the principle that “... language learning for adults should be experience-centered and reality-based” (p. 477). Auerbach (1995) explains that curricula development for adult ESL programs are often based on employer interviews and teacher surveys, and from this, desired learner outcomes are formulated. Rarely are learners asked what they want to learn; “Curriculum developers thus assess students’ needs and prescribe solutions” and in this process “Solutions are found *for* students and imposed *on* them” (Auerbach & Burgess, 1985, p. 490). More emphasis is placed on justifying the program and implementing it, and outcomes are easily measured through job placement and meeting predetermined objectives.

A critical look at survival ESL shows that it serves to maintain the status quo; participants are trained to function in a particular position or remove themselves from government assistance. Students are rarely taught the English

---

<sup>7</sup> One reason for this may be that in language learning context, an organization’s attitude toward how language should be learned is not congruent with more contemporary approaches to SLA. This includes those approaches which focus on issues of power. I discuss later in this chapter, why agencies may feel this is not in their best interest.

<sup>8</sup> Also known as competency ESL or functional ESL.

necessary to challenge their status or working conditions or to rise above low-wage employment (Auerbach, 1986, 1995; Basturkmen, 2006; Edwards, 1991; Tollefson, 1986; 1991). Tollefson (1986) reviewed the language instruction practices of three U.S. Refugee Processing Centers in Southeast Asia. He found that the objectives of the courses offered to refugees focused largely on them becoming self-sufficient which meant finding employment immediately and accepting government assistance. Refugees were taught to embrace “American” values, language forms that focused on submission that included asking permission and apologizing, and were admonished to be grateful for minimum-wage employment regardless of prior experience or education. These objectives, though easily measured, are a direct reflection of the beliefs of those who designed the courses. This can be detrimental, Auerbach (1995) explains, because “teaching survival competencies ... serves quite a different function, that of overtly promoting assimilation into the ‘American way’ while covertly assimilating students into subservient roles” (p. 18).

Subservience is accomplished through several means. First, by limiting linguistic forms in instruction, ESL students learn language associated with subservience, apologizing and following orders (Auerbach, 1986, 1991; Auerbach & Burgess, 1985).<sup>9</sup> Survival ESL curriculum is characterized by a fixed outline of skills and competencies that will lead to the learner accomplishing certain goals, such as gaining employment rather than learning different forms of language that would be required in a variety of settings (Auerbach, 1986; Basturkmen, 2006; Tollefson, 1986).

Secondly, by exposure to specific kinds of social skills and norms, students are only competent in specific domains (Auerbach, 1995; Edwards, 1991).<sup>10</sup> Survival ESL includes instruction of formulaic responses to situations

---

<sup>9</sup> An example includes students being taught to understand the imperative but not how to use it (Auerbach & Burgess, 1985).

<sup>10</sup> ESL texts exclude empowering forms of language that students might require, such as how to protest a landlord’s neglect of a property (Auerbach, 1995).



that do not provide students the ability to problem solve or employ critical thinking. Any digression from these forms, such as spontaneous discussions, is not considered “legitimate parts of learning” (Auerbach, 1995, pg. 14). Additionally, many survival ESL curricula promote gaining favor of the employer. Unfortunately, American workers who work “too hard” or are seen as “kissing up” to employers are ostracized and retaliated against by other employees (Auerbach & Burgess, 1985).

Furthermore, the approach to survival ESL is contrary to adult learning theory. Auerbach and Burgess (1985) explains that too often the focus is on what students do not know rather than building on prior knowledge. More specifically, survival ESL is commonly presented via the banking model of education which promotes that knowledge is neutral and is deposited as a “commodity” from teacher to learner. Complicit learners are treated as “empty vessels” who uncritically, soak up supplied knowledge (Auerbach, 1995, p. 11; 1986; Auerbach & Burgess, 1985). While a survival ESL curriculum may claim to be learner-centered, it places the power of learning and teaching with the instructor (Auerbach, 1995). The idea of a learner is not unbiased and is shaped by social, political and economic ideologies. Because the “learner” and his/her goals are difficult to define, Edwards (1991) explains learner-based programs are used as a front for other interests to promote their own agendas. For example, curricula are commonly designed to terminate minority language speakers’ dependence on government assistance, as quickly as possible, through instruction in common workplace skills (Auerbach, 1995).

In addition to the curricula, survival ESL classrooms also perpetuate the uneven distribution of power found in society (Auerbach, 1995; Auerbach & Burgess, 1985). For example, students are taught polite forms, but teachers do not use these forms with the students (Auerbach & Burgess, 1985). Additionally, the authority that instructors hold to present the “correct” information often goes unquestioned. For example, Auerbach (1995) explains

there are often discrepancies in classrooms about whose life experiences and ways of knowing are valid, the teachers' or the students'. The danger in this is that these practices can marginalize ESL students because "not to recognize that knowledge is inherently interested and situated serves the important ideological function of legitimating certain forms of knowledge and educational practice over others" (p. 11).

Ultimately, Auerbach (1995) clarifies, the students suffer because programs are often forced to "limit enrollment to those who can be quickly and easily made job-ready and thus excluding those whose language or literacy needs are the greatest" (p. 14). Students with the greatest literacy needs include those who are less likely to be quickly placed in vocational or low-wage employment. Controlling how much English a student will learn by the amount of time they are allowed to spend in a program, prevents them from taking jobs which require higher English language proficiency. In Chapter 3, I will describe the programs available in Fairbanks. Though the point of this study is not to critique individual programs, it is important to understand which if any display traits of survival ESL in order to better comprehend participants' learning environments.

## **2.4 Ideology in SLA**

The survivalist curriculum is ideological in nature. This along with other competing and compatible ideologies effects participants' ideas and more specifically their goals and therefore needs for language learning. To begin with, participants are confronted with ideology when enrolled in certain types of courses. Survival ESL is highly ideological and favors maintenance of the status quo. One of the underlying ideologies is explored by Auerbach (1991) who contends that survival-type ESL courses that emphasize literacy are in essence "...a means of social manipulation ..." (p. 5), though this is done covertly and "social manipulation" is not a blatant objective (Tollefson, 1986). The difficulty

with promoting one group's linguistic culture (English) over that of another (any other than English), according to Tollefson (1991), is that "It furthers inequality in the name of equality and contributes to mass acceptance of privilege for the few" (p. 15). While individual needs are being addressed, and education based on individuals' needs can often be viewed as empowering, promotion of one group over another can also splinter education and isolate learners. This leads to disempowerment, and can actually be oppressive. Such education reinforces values of individuality and consumerism, typical of Western culture, but covertly at a lower-socioeconomic level (Edwards, 1991). Through this limitation, participants are denied access to cultural capital, which was described above, as the means for achieving success in the target-language culture.

According to Auerbach (1995), the assumption that learners must acculturate into pre-existing social roles without questioning them, as for those in survival-ESL type courses, is known as "ideological power." This is central in securing control by consent (Auerbach, 1995; Tollefson, 1991), but people might not always realize they are consenting. Often people follow what is made to seem like commonsense. Competency or survival ESL programs promote integration into the workforce in a "commonsense" type of transition. For example, teaching survival strategies could be seen as commonsense because learners with little or no English will need to know how to ask for directions or schedule a doctor's appointment. Additionally, it is commonsense for ESL programs to aid students in finding employment. In this case, everyday practices are seen as practical and nonpolitical (Auerbach, 1995, p. 10), but it is these commonsense assumptions that sustain power for the dominant groups, which is exploitive by Tollefson's (1991) definition. My goal is to better understand participants' goals and needs to ultimately make suggestions for programs that wish to avoid these pitfalls.

One of the reasons students may enroll in ESL classes, which are potentially marginalizing, is because the courses are seen as a way to achieve

success. The challenge of proving marginalization in this setting lies in the assumption that agencies which promote success are rarely conceptualized as vessels of oppression. But when students do not submit to the fast-tracking system—using their newly acquired English to obtain low-wage employment and therefore exit the language learning program—for example, they can be forced to leave for a variety of reasons, regardless of whether they have acquired a level of English they are comfortable with. According to Tollefson (1991) and Auerbach (1991) language is a means of control over access to education and high paying jobs and by limiting access to literacy to that of a survival ESL-type results, the promise of better jobs will likely never be realized.

The nature of this type of ideology is so deep-rooted, that it is often difficult for the average person to identify, especially when he/she is acting with good intentions. A volunteer working with ESL learners may feel that he/she is performing a public service, but may also be influenced by their own ideological views as well as the ideology of the organization they are working with.

Tollefson (1991) and Edwards (1991) both argue that the concept of equal opportunity is strictly ideological. The relationship between power and knowledge is symbiotic. However, the value of 'equal opportunity' could be inferred as commonsense for many since it is an inherent component of American nationalism. Complicating the situation even more is that rarely little can be done legally to change the status quo. According to Tollefson (1991), "exclusionary tactics" protecting the status quo are usually legally reinforced and are often difficult to identify.

In sum, survival ESL promotes the ideology that if immigrants do not succeed and solve the problems they face as newcomers to the U.S. including socioeconomic disparity; it is their own fault (Auerbach, 1991; 1995; Edwards, 1991; Tollefson, 1991). The irony of the situation, Tollefson (1991) explains, is that while societies devote time and resources to language instruction, they are unwilling to deconstruct those same barriers which would have the same or

more effective result. In my study, I looked for ways that language programs could work to deconstruct those barriers from the bottom up.

## **2.5 Critical Pedagogy and Adult ESL Learners**

While power can be oppressive, it can also be used to enact positive change. It is this type of curricula that I wished to explore and incorporate into the findings of this study. Additionally, critical theory informed both the impetus for the study and the questions and rationale behind the interview protocol. Critical pedagogy, or curriculum as practice, is contrary to survival ESL; students understand concepts in English and then use that knowledge to evaluate and challenge social processes (Auerbach, 1986; Benesch, 1993; Edwards, 1991). Critical methodology addresses the reality of students' roles in society. Auerbach (1995) explains, "When education of the subordinated addresses power, it ceases to be domesticating" (p. 12). Benesch (1996) criticizes researchers who claim that academic discourse empowers students since it does not necessarily give them the tools to enact change. She claims that they make the claim of critical pedagogy though are not facing the real issue.

In order to face these issues, students need language skills to construct their own views of society and reality rather than simply being imparted with "factual" knowledge. This would begin with examining the next step in students' learning process in conjunction with their wants and desires. This is a process of discovery and empowerment (Edwards, 1991). Instead of legitimizing and reinforcing the dominant group's linguistic culture which maintains the status quo, teachers provide pros and cons to problems and knowledge becomes a collaborative effort (Auerbach, 1995; Edwards, 1991). This does not simply mean making the classroom democratic, as Pennycook (1999) explains, since that does not necessarily lead to empowerment in the real world. Instead students are provided with the language tools that may ultimately lead to

empowerment. To outsiders this type of access may look more like assimilation and therefore may be more acceptable.

For example, Benesch (1996) designed activities for an EAP class, which was meant to help ESL students pass mainstream college courses. In the end they were tested with multiple choice computerized exams. In order to shift more of the control of the learning environment, the students were given the opportunity to ask questions of their mainstream class professor in writing and the professor visited their EAP class during the semester for more personalized attention. These experiences involved more than students voting on the content of the course for a particular day. Instead, they were provided with tools that would help them first better engage in their current course and communicate with their professor, but they would be able to use those skills in the future in comparable situations. They were not conditioned to simply slip into the mainstream complacently, but also learned questioning and critical thinking skills for that context.

However, this critical approach is not a “neutral” process since it has been shaped by whatever learners view as their own role and purpose which is reinforced by many facets of society including prior language instruction. Many survival ESL proponents argue that survival ESL is unbiased since its purpose is to serve the needs of the learners (Auerbach, 1986), but the information is always manipulated by the context in which it is presented, so it can never be neutral (Auerbach, 1986, 1995; Auerbach & Burgess, 1985). All instruction is ideological in regards to researcher, academia or institution regardless of whether instructors have a political knowledge or purpose or not (Auerbach, 1986; Benesch, 1999; Edwards, 1991; Tollefson, 1986). The goal of my study was to recognize those detrimental beliefs and practices that are ideological and examine alternative ways to approach these ideologies in the classroom.

## 2.6 U.S. Language Policy

Guiding the curricula of adult education and the policies of employment and University access is language policy. This is significant because it allows one to understand the context in which participants are attempting to acquire language. Although not officially sanctioned, Schiffman (1998) explains that the covert policy of the U.S. promotes English alone. While some may argue that language policy is neutral in the U.S. as there is no “official” language, the security of the covert English language policy is guaranteed by the basic assumptions held about language in the U.S. For example, Tollefson (1991) explains that accessing American cultural systems, such as the economy, require specific language proficiencies (i.e. linguistic capital, per Bourdieu), but the system constructs barriers that prevent certain populations from attaining the proficiency needed. These ideological assumptions are rooted in American linguistic culture. They include the necessity of communicative competence in English and attitudes of prejudice (Schiffman, 1998).

These beliefs carry over to the education of adults learning language. Long-standing American education policy, for example, has striven to groom or socialize certain groups, including native English speakers of lower socioeconomic status, for blue-collar menial jobs (Auerbach, 1986; Finn, 1999; Tolleson, 1986). Edwards (1991) explains that isolating learners is an intentional component of the system that works to prevent any cooperative objection and creates consent to the current practices by not allowing discussion of inequities.

At the level of community literacy agencies, adult basic education and ESL students are often grouped in the same category although ESL students may have the knowledge and skills in their first language. Cummins (1984) explains that in primary and secondary education the approach of grouping special education and L2 students has also been abandoned. But this continues in adult education in Fairbanks where the majority of language agencies do

group adult education with ESL. Additionally, for adults who do need rudimentary skills, Cummins (1995) argues that a more effective approach is to first become proficient in these skills in the first language, then they may be transferred to the second. However, instructing language learners in their first language is contrary to U.S. language policy that favors English only.

Within academia, college ESL is marginalized just like the students themselves. Benesch (1993) and Auerbach (1991) point out that EAP is accommodationist because of its low academic status; rather than challenging the status quo it exists to promote it. Faculty members are not tenure track, included in committees or given equitable work loads. If college ESL programs were given status equitable to other programs, faculty would have more opportunity to enact change in curricula rather than working on career preservation. This kind of assembly line-type education is parallel to the fast-tracking characteristic of survival ESL programs, discussed above. Learners are equipped with enough education for low-wage employment, but not to improve their socioeconomic status. They are quickly transitioned into the workforce to make more room for new learners. Tollefson (1991) summarizes that marginalizing language policy in ESL adult education is so pervasive because “In general, the belief that learning English is unrelated to power, or that it will help people gain power, is at the center of the ideology of language education” (p. 11). This study attempts to reveal some of the power issues related to English language instruction and I then to make relevant suggestions for researchers, programs and instructors to incorporate an awareness of power into the curriculum.

## **2.7 Needs Analysis**

In order to break from survivalist curricula, counter covert language policy and bring awareness to prevalent ideologies, courses continuing to employ language acquisition methodology could be offered to language



learners. It is important for ESL learners to have access to courses that meet their needs and that will help them reach their goals. One way to begin investigating course design is to conduct a needs analysis. As Richards (2001) explains, a needs analysis is begun by deciding on a purpose, such as determining which language skills a learner needs in order to fill a particular role or identifying a change in direction for a course. However, needs are judged differently for different parties (i.e. student, teacher, administrator).

A traditional type of needs analysis is centered on a particular class or program. The researcher determines the audience first, though its importance may change over the course of the study. Next, the researcher identifies the target population such as language learners, employers, administrators, etc. and data are collected from them using different forms of inquiry (Long, 2005; Richards, 2001) such as questionnaires, self-ratings and interviews. It is important to define deficiencies as well as what speakers already know. Learners' reasons for wanting to learn language are important to identify because they involve their perspective (Hutchison & Waters, 1987).<sup>11</sup>

In the context of the discussion of critical pedagogy, language ideology and U.S. language policy, this description of needs analysis is overly simplistic. Linguistically-based needs analyses result in a laundry list of grammatical structures and forms, but do not necessarily equate to how they would be used in a contextual situation (Basturken, 2006; Hutchison & Waters, 1987; Long, 2005). Basturkmen (2006) advocates for needs analysis methodology that includes ethnographic data and takes accounts of observations and interviews. One such study of Waikiki hotel maids was conducted by Jasso-Aguilar (2005). In the study, the researcher interviewed maids, coworkers and employers and

---

<sup>11</sup> Richards (2001) elaborates that the focus of the study may include, but is not limited to, situations where English is frequently used, difficulties encountered, frequent comments on performance, common tasks or routines, perceived difficulties, preferences for instruction or activities, common errors in specific settings, common miscommunication, suggestions or opinions regarding learner's problems and regularity of linguistic occurrences in specific settings.

conducted participant observation. She found that the hotel was willing to share the cost of ESL instruction with housekeepers. However, this curriculum would be largely based on English needed for this vocation, and since the employer was paying for it, the course would not likely consist of discussion of the existing power structure. There are various other types of needs analyses that examine a range of levels (Long, 2005; Tarone & Yule, 1989), but most fail to examine learners' needs critically.

In addition, needs analyses are often required to produce results that are incompatible with their methodology. For example, needs analyses are supposed to provide an accurate picture of learners, but Long (2005) explains that needs analyses rarely qualify as an ethnography, instead they "...usually include micro-analysis of social patterns within a cultural group, and of the values and beliefs underlying them, in context" (p. 44). Although this does not discount them as valid research tools, it is important to consider if the results they yield are actually what a particular study aims to discover.

Benesch (1996) explains that needs analyses are ideological and often presented under the supposition that all interested parties have equal interest in seeing that students learn, but in reality disparate levels of power and social standing affect their outcome. One example of this, according to Edwards (1991), is that individuals' needs based on consumerism have been placed over those that would enact social change. Basturkmen (2006) cautions that needs analyses can be domesticating in the approach that they seek to assimilate L2 learners into the majority<sup>12</sup> and the majority's accepted practices. Benesch (1996) explains that although others (Richards, 2001) claim that needs analyses must include social or individual considerations which directly impact students, they repeatedly fail to include important considerations for navigating

---

<sup>12</sup> "linguistically-privileged in-group" (p. 20).

the system that learners need to explore.<sup>13</sup> It has been long assumed that classrooms were immune to socio-political influence; hence this important issue was ignored.

Richards (2001) does concede in his description of needs analysis that learners' needs often equate to "rights"—information they are entitled access to. Though Hutchison and Waters (1987) caution that it is hypocritical to disregard learners ideas and in a course being taught from a perspective of inclusive individual involvement, like ESP. As for curricula, needs analyses cannot be neutral because they are always based on a particular theory of SLA and therefore favor certain approaches over others (Basturkmen, 2006). In addition, they originate from or revolve around institutions which already have defined goals for students. Finally, it is often difficult for researchers to equate needs to wants or goals.

Benesch (1996) describes a transformative needs analysis as one that not only provides detailed description of forms or competencies that learners need, but also recommends change or revision to better meet the needs of the students. She does concede that the ability to enact change may rely largely on the local political climate, learning environment and the position of the instructor (or the person conducting the analysis).

A "Rights Analysis," a term coined by Benesch (1999), would be transformative by definition. Rights analyses are conducted by observing the role of power and making students more aware of it. Though a rights analysis does not automatically guarantee that change will be enacted in every venue, it recognizes that there are possibilities for change in which students may participate. It is irresponsible not to show learners the possibilities they have to enact change. Change will not be successful every time, but at least learners will have been part of the process, and having been part of the process once

---

<sup>13</sup> Benesch refers mainly to English for Academic Purposes (EAP) which does not necessarily fit the scope of this study, though many of the concepts are similar.

may encourage them to speak up in the future. Benesch (1996) criticizes Hutchison and Waters (1987) for advocating for a “learning-centered approach” rather than a “learner-center approach” maintaining that even though institutions often sanction the status quo, change can be enacted from within. Admittedly, I am not able to enact change from within any of the institutions in Fairbanks from an administrative standpoint. However this study aims to affect change at micro and macro levels by making recommendations for programs, instructors and researchers through a rights analysis.

In addition to the problematic nature of the term needs analysis and its traditionally uncritical nature, there are some methodological issues in data gleaned from similar methodology. Long (2005) explains that while language learners can most often name their reasons for language learning, the researcher’s job is to determine what learners need to reach those goals. Basturkmen (2006) also explains that it may not be possible to get accurate answers from students regarding their needs since they do not have the language ability or knowledge (“metalanguage”) to understand or articulate what they actually need. Additionally, speakers have general ideas of why they need English but are not necessarily aware of all the possibilities of their language use (Basturkmen, 2006; Long, 2005). Finally, analysis can depend on who is being interviewed or asked, and varying perspectives have to be either combined or given more weight over others (Basturkmen, 2006; Hutchison & Waters, 1987; Long, 2005).

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I discussed SLA theory and methodology and argue that a participatory approach works best and that learners need engagement in language not just input and output. I highlight the significance of learner identity as well as the issue of power relations. Also pertinent is the discussion of survival ESL which characterizes many ESL programs and how its converse,

critical pedagogy, empowers learners to challenge the status quo. I also discuss underlying ideologies that influence curricula, policy and the learners themselves. Armed with this information, the best way to determine learners' goals and their needs based on these goals in this study is to conduct a critical type of needs analysis. This type of analysis helps to empower learners to understand, challenge and affect the status quo, and allows instructors and programs to address a variety of important issues that effect learners such as identity, social factors, power and, perhaps most importantly, ideology. In Chapter 3, I discuss the methodology and procedures for conducting this analysis.

## Chapter 3

### 3.1 Study Design

With this study I was interested in examining language learners' goals and needs in Fairbanks, AK, and determining what implications there were for ESL programs. No studies of this nature have been conducted before in Fairbanks, thus I was more interested in general themes characterizing the learners themselves rather than course or program-specific results. When relatively little is known about a population, in this instance adult English language learners in Fairbanks, qualitative research is generally conducted to explore and determine some broad themes relevant to the population. Following this, different methodology could be employed to produce more "statistical generalization," typical of quantitative research (Yin, 2003, p. 10), that might further define learners' goals and needs.<sup>14</sup> However, this is most effective after the initial conclusions have been formulated.

As a result, qualitative inquiry using interviews were the primary investigative tool for this study, though it originated as a needs analysis. The global needs analysis described by Tarone and Yule (1989) was attractive because it "specifies the situations in which learners will need to use the language and the language-related activities required in those situations" (p. 37). Using it, I hoped to develop some generalizations that described learners' needs in the Fairbanks area. With most needs analyses (NA), many different stakeholders are interviewed, observed and surveyed. NA's are often conducted for a particular course or with a particular goal in mind (Richards, 2001). Because the focus of this inquiry was on the needs and goals of learners, I felt that their opinions and experiences were the most significant and more

---

<sup>14</sup> Yin (2003) recommends determining frequency, which would be a good follow-up to this study, is done by conducting surveys and analysis of archival records.

relevant than those of outsiders who were not included in this study (Benesch, 1996; Hutchison & Waters, 1987; Tarone & Yule, 1989).

After further consideration of the NA process including this deliberate exclusion, I determined my objective did not meet the parameters of a traditional needs analysis for several reasons. For example, Richards (2001) suggests ongoing classroom observation and assessments to measure needs. Since these situations vary for my participants, it would be nearly impossible to evaluate each of them individually and then synthesize generalizations and recommendations in general for learners in Fairbanks. I also used interviews as the primary research tool rather than an initial survey from which interviews are developed, which Richards (2001) recommends for conducting a needs analysis. Additionally, needs analyses often yield results that would not have been informative to this study, such as a list of grammatical structures and forms (Hutchison & Waters, 1987; Long, 2005).

The information I sought to gain from this study was less structurally linguistic and more ethnographic.<sup>15</sup> For this reason, I chose to collect the ethnographic information I was seeking via interviews or personal narratives. Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) argue that the use of personal narratives, which include the results from the semi-structured interviews I conducted, as a primary research tool has been underutilized. They counter that the use of personal narrative is both valid and valuable. Furthermore, the use of interviews as a primary data source is not without precedent. Summers (2002) conducted a needs analysis of civic education in Anchorage, AK, for adults. Using a semi-structured interview, she interviewed 11 prominent civic leaders in the community and summarized their needs in terms of adult civic education. Jiang and Smith (2009) conducted 13 interviews lasting 30 minutes each with three generations of L1 Chinese speakers to investigate strategies used by these speakers to learn English and to explain the popularity of these strategies.

---

<sup>15</sup> Rarely do needs' analyses yield ethnographic results (Long, 2005).

Guardado (2006) conducted semi-structured interviews with five Spanish L1 parents for approximately an hour each to investigate their attitudes toward their children's L1 language maintenance and loss. Yan and Horwitz (2008) interviewed 21 L1 Chinese students to examine how the students believe their anxiety couples with other factors to affect language learning.

Interviews were chosen because they are the best way to collect the data that yield answers to the research questions posed here. While other data collection methods were considered, I ultimately did not use them for several reasons. For example, a survey or some other quantitative method would neither have yielded the richness of data nor the depth of insight into learners' situations that interviews did. Ellis (2008) remarks that questionnaires do not effectively yield affect-oriented results; participants are not able to respond to preformulated themes that do not accurately or wholly reflect affective factors. Yin (2003) explains that they limit the "ability to investigate the context," which was the main objective of this study (p. 13).

In addition to the limitations of the data a survey would have presented, I found administering surveys would have been logistically impractical. While all participants were relatively proficient in spoken English, there was no guarantee that their reading comprehension and writing abilities matched. Assessing this and then finding and coordinating interpreters to assist in administration of surveys to a variety of L1 speakers would have been exceedingly difficult. Limiting participants to those who were more proficient readers and writers would have constricted the sample size even further and would have made participants difficult to find. Having access to a population large enough to produce a sample size that would have been required to yield a valid statistical sample appropriate to quantitative data was not possible within this context. Additionally, though adult English language learner populations are loosely connected through various language agencies in Fairbanks, coordinating with



the agency would have not only affected the sample population, but also the participants' responses.

Interviews are the main data source for this investigation. They provide many benefits in collecting data including a richer quality of the data. In addition they provide the researcher a better opportunity to look further into topics of interest as well as themes that may emerge in participants' responses during the actual data collection process. Interviews are also a good way to develop a general understanding of a particular topic—or breadth—rather than depth.

### **3.2 Goals of Research**

The goals of the study were to determine adult English language learners' goals, identify their needs based on those goals and then assess what implications these have in terms of English language learner instruction. Since exploration of English language learners' needs and goals in Fairbanks had really not been covered in any substantial study, I felt it was first appropriate to conduct a "needs analysis" to determine the status of language learning in Fairbanks, and to better inform subsequent studies and language course offerings. Language learners are rarely asked about their own goals (Benesch, 1996; Hutchison & Waters, 1987; Tarone & Yule, 1989), but instead traditional needs analyses are designed to determine the needs and goals in the context of specific courses or programs (Richards, 2001). For this reason, I wanted to take a different approach; I felt it was appropriate to start by asking the participants what they wanted.

Next, I wanted to identify learners' needs based on those goals. Needs provide insight into the complexity of the goal and may vary from participant to participant. I conclude by discussing how participants' needs could be incorporated into language programs and to inform agencies which offer language services. This includes discussion of examples provided by

participants that showed whether these needs were met by any classes they had experienced.

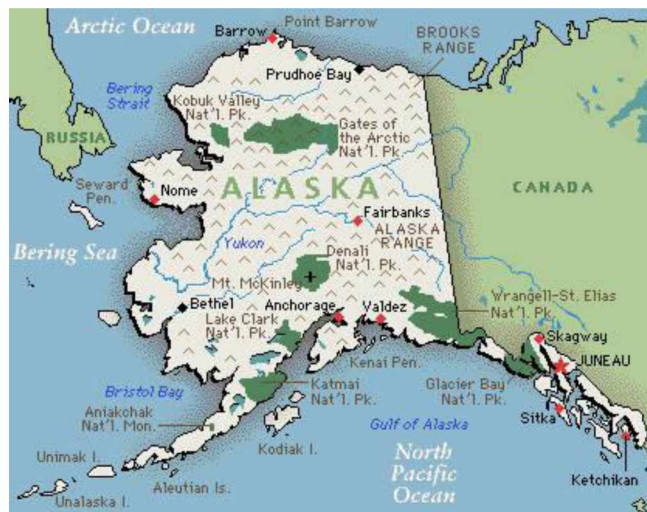
Though the parameters of traditional needs analysis are too restrictive for the topics I am examining in this study, my research design is consistent with a more liberal approach—the global needs analysis described by Tarone and Yule (1989) who explain that:

[it] should identify the learners' purposes in learning the second language and arrive at a useful description of the situations in which the learners will need to use it, including in that description the types of language related activities which typically occur in these situations. (p. 40)

However, conducting a global needs analysis in its entirety for each participant is beyond the scope of the study. Instead the study should be considered as one that will help establish facts at the global level. In turn this will allow for further needs analysis at the rhetorical, grammatical-rhetorical and grammatical levels, respectively. These may be areas for future study.

### **3.3 Learning Environment**

Fairbanks, AK, population 76,200 according to the U.S. Census (2000), is located in the Tanana Valley at the confluence of the Tanana and Chena Rivers in Interior Alaska. Geographically isolated, the next largest city, Anchorage is located more than 300 road miles and one hour by air from Fairbanks. Because of Alaska's isolation, Fairbanks serves as a hub community and is surrounded by smaller communities ranging in population and distance.



**Figure 1. Map of Alaska**

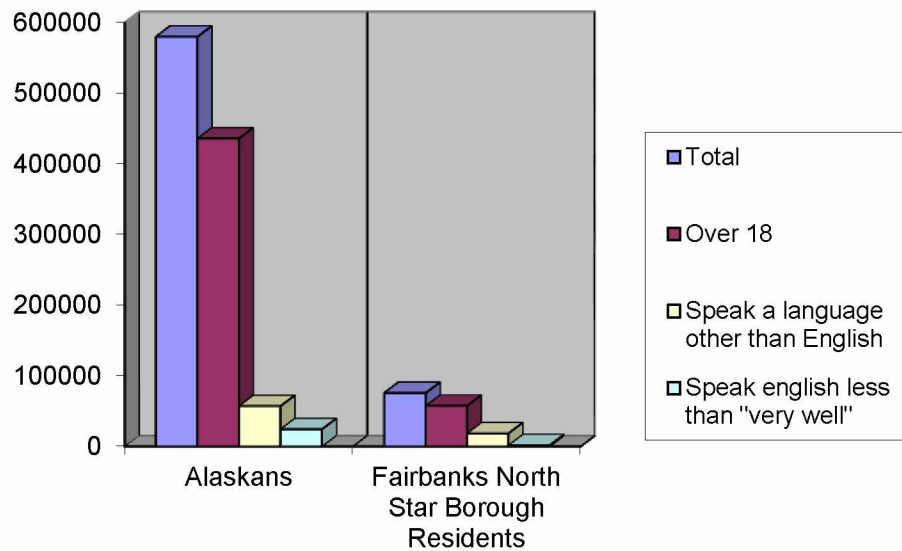
Fairbanks' residents are part of the larger Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB), a county-like governmental structure, which incorporates two military bases (Ft. Wainwright and Eielson Air Force Base), and the outlying communities of North Pole, Salcha, Ester and Fox. Employers in the Borough include federal, state and local governments, Flint Hills Refinery (located in North Pole), Ft. Knox Gold Mine, the University, Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, oil service company-related employment, trade unions, seasonal visitor industry employment and other private sector work. Additionally, two smaller governments, the City of North Pole and the City of Fairbanks have jurisdiction over smaller regions within the borough.

Winters in the Interior often last from mid-September through mid-April and go hand-in-hand with darkness lasting in the deepest of winter for 20 hours. Daylight hours are often dusky as are the periods before and after sunset. Temperatures in winter can reach  $-40^{\circ}\text{F}$  or colder. These conditions coupled with the isolated location can be hard for some to tolerate. In contrast, summers are radically different with 24 hours of daylight in mid-summer and temperatures ranging from  $60\text{-}80^{\circ}\text{F}$  or higher.

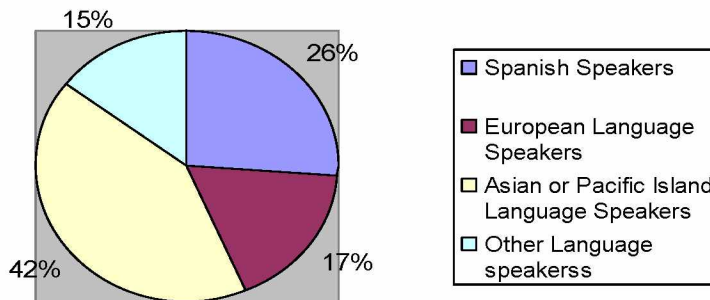
There is a borough bus service, however many find that it has limited hours in comparison with what they may be used to in other parts of the country

or world. It does not run on Sundays and does not run past 8 pm on weekdays. A patron who needs to catch a bus may have to wait up to three hours for a bus to pass a particular location and may spend the same amount of time traveling from one destination to another across town. As Fairbanks is not a particularly pedestrian-friendly city, partially due to infrastructure and climate conditions, this leaves few other options for those who do not own a car. Some bike year-round, which may be an alternative for the hardy or those without children. There are also several taxi services in town, but taxi rides are expensive and one can easily expect to pay over \$20 for a one-way transport. In addition to these conditions, residents are facing several crises in the Interior. One is lack of childcare providers and the other is the rising cost of energy.

Alaska is home to roughly 579,740 people. According to the 2000 Census, 57,504 Alaskans age 18 and over identified themselves as speaking a language other than English. Of these, 24,716 identified themselves as speaking English less than “very well” such as “well,” “not well” or “not at all.” Roughly 76,200 residents were identified as residents of the Fairbanks North Star Borough area, and 57,958 residents were over age 18; of these 18,697 age 18 and over (24.5%) identified themselves as speaking a language other than English, and 1,702, or 2%, reported speaking English “less than very well” at home. Figure 2, below depicts the percentages of non-native English speakers in Alaska and in the FNSB, respectively. Specifically, 444 were Spanish speakers, 297 spoke another European language, 708 spoke an Asian or Pacific Island language and 252 spoke another language. Figure 3 below, illustrates the various non-English languages represented in the FNSB.



**Figure 2. Comparison of Fluency Levels of Alaska and FNSB Residents**



**Figure 3. Graphic Comparing Non-English L1's in the FNSB**

Though Fairbanks is geographically isolated, it clearly has a population with linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. Many of these individuals need or want second language instruction. Correspondingly, these residents were the potential participants for this study, though not all are represented proportionally by the participants whom I interviewed. Significantly, I spoke with mostly Spanish speakers and several speakers of Asian languages as well as

one European. One population not reflected in my study or specifically identified in Census data was that of Alaska Native residents. It is possible that some are non-L1 English speakers and would require some language instruction. However, I considered only immigrants in this study.

### **3.4 Agency Overviews**

There are basically four venues for adult English language learner education in Fairbanks: Adult Learning Programs of Alaska, Literacy Council of Alaska, University Baptist Church and University of Alaska Fairbanks. By all accounts, agencies do not collaborate and operate independently. Some, such as the non-profits, charge a minimal or no fee for services. They are funded by state and federal grants as well as fundraising efforts and local charitable contributions from the United Way. Although individual responses regarding a particular agency are not the focus of the study, the experiences with each agency shaped participants' answers. Consequently, agencies are each described below in terms of historical relevance (i.e. how long they have been offering services), the services they offer relevant to participants, the level of English proficiency they accommodate, and admission requirements, including cost.

#### **3.4.1 Literacy Council of Alaska**

Literacy Council of Alaska (LCA) was established in the 1970s to serve adult basic education students, though it has evolved over time to meet the demands of a larger ESL student base. LCA offers services to the adult community in several different capacities. Volunteer-based tutoring is a one-on-one weekly or biweekly event. One of 400-500 volunteers works with an adult on English language or reading, writing, math, computer and other life skills or with children on academics. Twenty hours of instruction are required for tutors and the training is conducted by agency staff. ESL classes are also available,

and levels range from beginning to advanced. Some classes are free, while others are offered at a minimal cost (Literacy Council of Alaska, n.d.). LCA may only serve students not being served by another agency and who fall within guidelines for services (i.e. may not be too “advanced”). LCA also serves monolingual English speakers who need help with basic reading, writing, math or computer skills.

As a graduate student, I became involved with LCA first as a tutor and later as a volunteer instructor of three ESL courses, two focused on advanced conversation and the other beginning/intermediate conversation. It was in this capacity that I first met many of the study’s participants. Though not all were known to me through LCA prior to conducting this study, I met and have tutored individually for approximately two and a half years the participant with whom the study originated with. Three other participants were also known to me through LCA, including one whom I tutored for approximately a year.

### **3.4.2 Adult Learning Programs of Alaska**

Adult Learning Programs of Alaska (ALPA) is a non-profit educational organization established in 1975 that offers “English Literacy” services including GED/adult basic education through its Learning Resource Center. ALPA also offers computer classes, disability services, training for seniors to gain employment, administers the AmeriCorps VISTA program in Fairbanks, and sponsors an oral history project as well as fundraisers. At ALPA, ESL students must take the BEST test—an English literacy assessment that measures proficiency in a variety of situations—to be placed in an appropriate level course. ESL courses include beginning and intermediate level courses which include speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Beginning classes focus on building vocabulary repertoire and the intermediate class focuses on grammar (Adult Learning Programs of Alaska, 2008). Students enrolled in advanced courses are encouraged to take Adult Basic Education, which includes GED type

preparation and computer literacy courses, and English workshops. The ALPA Web site advertises that English language software is available and that courses are \$50 with a \$15 charge for a workbook.

### **3.4.3 University Baptist Church**

The University Baptist Church located near the UAF campus in Fairbanks offers “literacy services” as a ministry. The Church’s Web site advertises volunteer-taught weekly classes for two hours each covering topics such as English as a second language, citizenship and TOEFL tutoring, as well as adult reading and writing instruction. Attendees do not have to be church members and courses are open to “non-English speaking residents.” Classes may be provided to children if there is a demand. Childcare is provided and students are charged a minimal \$15 for materials. The Web site stresses that courses cover all learner levels “from no English knowledge to preparation for the TOEFL test administered for entrance into the University of Alaska” (University Baptist Church, n.d., ¶ 1). New students are requested to arrive 15 minutes prior to be tested for and placed in an appropriate level course. Courses run from September through May, but students may begin at any time.

### **3.4.4 University of Alaska Fairbanks**

ESL courses are offered through UAF’s English Department. Hollerbach (1994) explains that Foreign Language Department faculty initiated the introduction of ESL courses to UAF curriculum in 1982 as a response to the needs of an increasing number of international students. The course was added to English department offerings and today the UAF 2008-09 Catalog (2008) reflects the English Department offering two sequential, three-credit courses (ENGL 230-231) English Language Proficiency. The course description emphasizes course content focusing on “Intensive listening, speaking, reading and writing in English. Especially recommended for all students for who English



is a foreign language” (§ 11). Instructor permission is required and courses may be repeated once each for credit. Students may also enroll in an introductory three-credit English course, (ENGL F111X) Introduction to Academic Writing. Three ESL courses listed in the course catalog are below 100-level (i.e. College-level), but are offered “as demand warrants” and consequentially have not been offered in recent years. Students are charged regular undergraduate tuition for all the above listed courses (\$134/credit hour Alaska resident plus applicable fees) and must purchase any required texts.

### **3.4.5 Tanana Valley Campus**

Although not specifically designed for ESL learners, the Developmental English Classes offered through Tanana Valley Campus (TVC) attract many language learners either by either referral or self-selection.<sup>16</sup> TVC is a community college branch of UAF. Courses available are below 100-level which is below University level. Available to students are (DEVE 060) Elementary Exposition each three-credits and (DEVE 070) Preparatory College English and ranging from one to three credits (DEVE 068) English Skills. Students are charged the same amount of tuition for TVC and regular UAF courses.

### **3.5 Participants**

Interviews were conducted in several locations: in a private study room in the Rasmuson Library on the UAF Campus, in the participant’s home, in a private study room in the Noel Wien Fairbanks North Star Borough public library or in a classroom at the LCA. In the latter case, verbal permission from LCA staff was obtained before the interviews were conducted. Participants in this study were selected by snowball sampling. Participants 2 and 3 were initially known to me through tutoring and volunteer activities. They subsequently

---

<sup>16</sup> TVC does have a separate location, but many of the courses are the same as those offered at the main campus and offered to either TVC or UAF students. There is no separate accreditation and UAF is ultimately the authorizing institution.

recommended the remaining participants, except for Participant 12 who was also known to me prior to the study's conception. Subsequent participants were also asked to identify potential participants until the desired quota for this study was met or the availability of referred participants was exhausted.

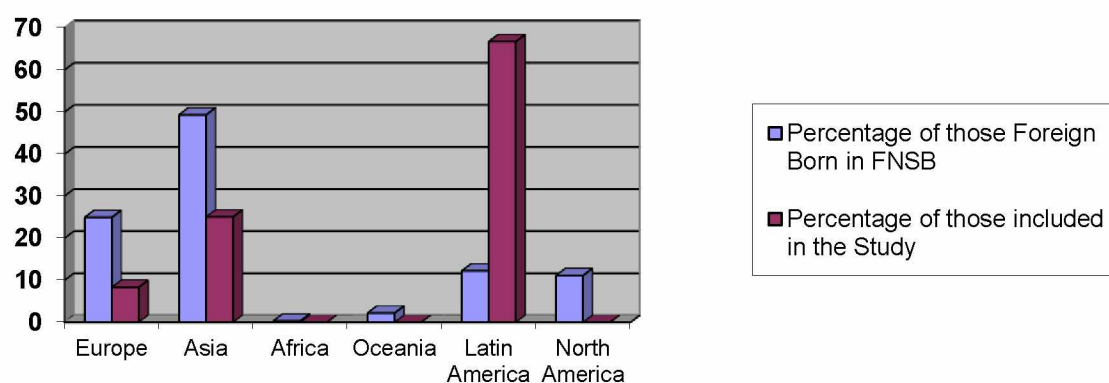
To begin with, the participant definition was limited to advanced or intermediate adult English language learners in Fairbanks who had enrolled in advanced courses at LCA or the equivalent. For the purposes of this study, intermediate/advanced English language learners are defined as adults who have enrolled in a University class, exceeded the proficiency level required to receive services from LCA, or enrolled in an advanced class at LCA or the equivalent. Due to the inability to find participants who met the above criteria, the definition was later relaxed to include additional participants who still had useful information to contribute. These participants still needed to understand the informed consent form ensuring that they had intermediate levels of proficiency, but also included those who had little or no English language instruction in Fairbanks, and individuals who planned to leave the area in the foreseeable future. To accommodate a variety of participants, wording for the interview protocol was intentionally kept simple (5<sup>th</sup> grade level), and alternate explanations were provided orally when necessary (see Appendix A for the interview protocol).

Those who did not qualify for this study included children under 18, speakers of English as a first language, beginning speakers of English, and foreign exchange students<sup>17</sup>. An equal sampling of men and women participants was sought. Since finding participants did prove difficult at times, any qualified individual was included without regard to fulfilling equal numbers of men and women. Contributing to this limitation was that participants usually only recommended others who were common L1 speakers and/or of the same

---

<sup>17</sup> Participant 1 was not an exchange student, though she was enrolled full-time at the University. Her feedback was included because she provided insightful information regarding ESL services at UAF.

nationality. Similarly, I sought to include participants of what I believed were representative of the variety of first language speakers and heritage in Fairbanks at the time such as Hispanics (Latin American and Caribbean), Thais and Koreans, but due to limitations in sampling, any qualified participant was interviewed.<sup>18</sup> Figure 4 depicts a comparison of study participants' demographics with those of FNSB residents (U.S. Census, 2000).



**Figure 4. Study Participants Compared with Foreign-Born FNSB Residents**

Most Asian residents hail from Korea (15.2%), Philippines (13.2%) and China (9.2%). There is no dominant Latin American country from which foreign born residents originate; rather 3.5% are from the Caribbean, 6.3% from Central America (including Mexico) and 2.4% from South America. There are almost as many Canadian born residents as those born in Latin American countries. This suggests that foreign birth is not necessarily indicative of language learning needs.

I planned to interview up to 20 participants regarding their language goals and needs in Fairbanks. A total of 13 individuals were interviewed, including one test interview (Participant 1) who was recommended by a classmate of mine. Participant 1 did not necessarily fit the parameters of the

<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, what I perceived as common heritage was not necessarily reflected by 2000 U.S. Census Data. More specifically, 4% of the Fairbanks North Star Borough is foreign born. Of these, 25% come from Europe, 49.3% are from Asia, .3% are from Africa, 2.2% from Oceania, 12.2% from Latin America and 11.1% from North America (Canada).

study; however, she yielded some interesting and insightful information about being a 2<sup>nd</sup> language learner at the University, so her comments were included. One interview was discounted since the participant fit few of the criteria on which the study was based: she was moving away from the area in a matter of days, she had very advanced proficiency and had earned a Master's degree in the U.S., and she had not taken, nor was interested in taking, any language courses in Fairbanks. I attempted to contact an additional five individuals multiple times that were recommended by participants, but they did not respond to requests for interviews despite that I had been introduced to three of them. I decided that insufficient English proficiency disqualified an additional participant after we had a short phone conversation in which she demonstrated limited comprehension. I exhausted the participants made available by snowball sampling. Table 1. Summary of Participant Data provides a comprehensive overview of participant demographics.

Of the 12 included participants, 11 were women and 1 was a man. Eight participants were Spanish speakers and of those, five were from Columbia. The others were from Argentina, Guatemala, and Panama. Two participants were native Japanese speakers from Japan, one was a Korean speaker from South Korea and the remaining participant spoke Bulgarian and was from Bulgaria. The participants ranged in age from 20 to 55 and the average age of the participants is 37.75 years.

Participants reported a myriad of reasons for coming to the U.S. Two participants, who were married to one another, came to the U.S. seeking asylum. Two participants accompanied their spouses who accepted jobs with the University. Two participants came to visit family. One participant came to Fairbanks to attend the University. The remaining five participants were either married or were going to be married to U.S. citizens. Participants lived in the U.S. anywhere from two months to 31 years—the average length of residence in the U.S. being about six and a half years. Most of the participants (10) had

established careers in their home countries and had attended some form of higher education. Six had earned the equivalent of four-year degrees or higher. Four had either a vocational degree, 2-year degree equivalent or some college. One moved to the U.S. to attend college and another did not go beyond junior high in her home country. Seven participants were employed at the time of their interview. Of the five who were not, one was a student, three were stay-at-home spouses, and one was visiting her sister.

Consent for interviewing was acquired before the interview took place and participants were told verbally and in writing that they could choose to end the interview at any time with no consequences (see Appendix C). The informed consent forms read at a 7<sup>th</sup> grade level to ensure participants' comprehension of the process. Additionally, for initial participants who were already known to me through tutoring, I guaranteed that their choice to either participate in the study or decline would not affect any tutoring or language services they receive (see Appendix B). Anonymity was guaranteed to the participants and, for this reason, they are identified with numbers and all mention of their names have has replaced with participant numbers. I sometimes shorten the label participant to "P."

**Table 1. Summary of Participant Data**

	Gender	Age	L1	Home Country	Previous Profession	Current Profession	Programs Attended	Highest Level of Education in Home Country	Time in U.S.
P 1	F	20	Japanese	Japan	Student	Student	UAF	College	1 yr.
P 2	F	40*	Spanish	Columbia	Business/ Office Manager	Home Care Assistant	LCA, UBC, ALPA, UAF	Graduate Studies	6 yrs.
P 3	F	44	Spanish	Argentina	Computer Programmer	Translator	LCA	Baccalaureate Computer Science <sup>†</sup>	6 ½ yrs
P 4	F	40*	Spanish	Columbia	Special Education Instructor	Supervisor at Senior Social Service	ALPA, UBC, UAF, LCA	Baccalaureate Special Education	15 yrs.
P 5	F	35	Japanese	Japan	Nurse	Babysitter, translator	UAF	2-yr degree	1 ½ yrs.
P 6	F	26*	Bulgarian	Bulgaria	Clerk, student	Stay at home spouse	UAF, UBC	MBA <sup>†</sup>	1 ½ yrs.
P 7	M	45*	Spanish	Columbia	Pilot	Small Business Owner	LCA, UBC, UAF	Vocational Training	5 yrs.
P 8	F	45*	Spanish	Columbia	Dental Technician	Small Business Owner	LCA, UBC, UAF	2-yr degree	5 yrs.
P 9	F	38*	Spanish	Panama	Spanish Teacher	n/a	LCA	Baccalaureate	2 mos.
P 10	F	30*	Spanish	Columbia	Food Process Engineer	Stay at home spouse	LCA	Baccalaureate	1 yr.
P 11	F	35*	Spanish	Guatemala	Grade-School Teacher	Stay at home spouse, mom	LCA	Some college	4 yrs.
P 12	F	55	Korean	S. Korea	Waitress	Small Business Owner	None in Fairbanks	Jr. High	31 yrs.

\* Information not provided; approximate guess

† Or approximate equivalent.

### **3.6 Procedures of Study**

After research questions were devised, I developed a list of interview questions. The interview protocol went through several drafts and incorporated feedback from my committee, advisor, other departmental faculty and students. I derived my interview protocol methodology from Spradley (1979) who prescribes descriptive grand-tour and mini-tour questions as the best method to elicit information on a cultural scene. While the former asks, "the informant to generalize, to talk about a pattern of events (p. 87)," the latter deals "...with a much smaller experience (p. 88)." Examples of these questions would be "Describe your life before you came to the U.S." and "What do you do in a typical week?" respectively. Questions were designed to be open-ended to obtain the most information.

From explicit circumstances or situations described by participants, I followed up and asked even more specific example questions when appropriate. An example was, "Do you remember the first time you went to the doctor? What was it like?" Questions are divided into domains, which Spradley (1979) recommends as part of ethnography. Similarly, my interview protocol was divided into different sections based on topic. Many of my "tour" questions are very broad, but have a list of bulleted topics below to guide the conversation and/or to use as a basis for follow-up questions if they are not addressed by the informant. They established personal history, educational background, language learning experiences, and perceived goals and needs of participants. Participants were asked to compare and contrast many of their experiences to elicit as much descriptive information as possible.

The interview protocol was also tested on another student doing similar research and her comments and feedback were noted. Next, approval for work with human subjects was requested and granted through the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). After receiving IRB approval, I contacted a test

subject recommended to me and I conducted an interview with her. No substantial changes were necessary to the protocol (See Appendix A).

I conducted 10 additional interviews, including one with three participants from November 2007 through June 2008. A total of 8.75 hours of interviews were collected. Table 2 summarizes data collection information for all the participants. I also wrote down any observations I had made during the interview which included any non-verbal communication and impressions as well as notes about comments made when the recorder was off. Interviews varied in length from 28 to 75 minutes. Although it was not my first choice to interview the three participants together as noted in Table 2, they all requested to participate together in the interest of free time and convenience. While the participants may have not elaborated in some areas as much as they would have had they been alone, it provided an interesting venue for insightful discussion that would not have otherwise occurred.

**Table 2. Summary of Data Collection Information**

	<b>Location of Interview</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Length Interv.</b>
P1	Rasumson Library	10/30/07	28 min.
P2	Participant's home	11/16/07	60 min.
P3	Rasumson Library	11/19/07	43 min.
P4	Participant's Home	11/30/07	46 min.
P5	Public Library	12/1/07	58 min.
P6	Rasumson Library	12/12/07	47 min.
P7	Public Library	12/15/07	39 min.
P8	LCA	04/02/08	36 min.
P9	LCA	04/8/08	93 min.*
P10	LCA	04/8/08	n/a*
P11	LCA	04/8/08	n/a*
P12	Participant's Home	6/18/08	75 min.

\* This interview with three participants lasted 93 minutes.

All interviews were recorded with a digital Marantz PMD660 recorder and all recordings are stored in MP3 format on CDs in a secure location. I transcribed each interview with a macro transcription focusing on what was said.



No pronunciation or other morphological, syntactic, phonetic or phonemic information were noted, as these were not the focus of the study.

### 3.7 Analytic Framework

After interviews were transcribed, I used grounded theory method of analysis as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990) to analyze the data. Grounded theory is based on the concept that research begins with an area of interest and from that research, develops theory. In the analysis process, data are “systematically” compared to other data to reveal important aspects, which support broader conclusions. Comparisons begin with coding the data and refining the codes as data are grouped together in related categories. From these constant revisions, theory is developed.

To begin, I read through four interviews and identified themes by using open coding for any applicable or reoccurring topics rather than imposing predefined concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This is a strategy used by others doing research using interviews (Jiang & Smith, 2009; Yan & Horwitz, 2008). Codes were marked with a different color text and underlining of the utterance that was significant. An example of this coding includes:

Then I decided to coming to the United States because my best friend she propose to me maybe to prove(FRIENDS, DECISION TO COME TO U.S./IMMIGRATION), to change your life (OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE) to say maybe you can do something (OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE) because in Columbia over there you are stuck you have almost nothing (REASON FOR LEAVING/IMMIGRATION). You can get a job whatever kind of job you are looking for (IDEOLOGY — PURSUING THE AMERICAN DREAM — IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH FOR PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT).

The codes were refined and tailored to the type of information that would answer my research questions based on debriefing sessions with my advisor, a visual mapping of the themes that emerged, and a careful consideration of how each topic related to my research questions (Lichtman, 2009; Mills, 2003). Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to this as axial coding. Although there were many interesting strands of information, ultimately I was charged with focusing on the answers to the research questions. Applicable codes that follow below were developed based on the first two research questions.

**Table 3. Codes for Identifying Participants' Goals**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
Personal Goal	PG	Identified goal by the participant relating to personal, largely ego-centric, desire	P6: <u>then maybe we will go home after some time, one or two years, maybe.</u> (PG)
Goal Involving Family	FG	Identified goal by the participant either for any member of his/her family in general, or specifically relating to a child's language	P2: <u>I want him to improve his English</u> (FG)
Professional Goal	LG	Identified goal by the participant relating to his/her professional aspirations	P6: <u>And I hope after this time I hope that I will be able to find this job.</u> (LG)
Educational Goal	EG	Identified goal by the participant relating to his/her training in a subject that would enhance his/her knowledge in an area to foster a marketable skill, includes language education	P8: <u>I would like to get another degree or go to the University.</u> (EG)

**Table 4. Codes for Identifying Learners Needs**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
Language Need	LN	Pragmatics, vocabulary, jargon, fluency, proficiency, etc.	P6: <u>So this class was more like, it helped me to start to relax and to feel comfortable between American people but I did not learn much of his class.</u> (LN)
Emotional Need	EN	Pain, affect, self esteem	<i>So what other types of activities do you do in the week?</i>  P6: <u>Cooking, cleaning, meeting with friends, reading, nothing important unfortunately</u> (EN)
Pedagogical Need	PN	Specific type or style of instruction	P6: <u>We did not have any books</u> (PN)
Educational need	EdN	Level of education to reach desired goal	P6: <u>for me it was really hard first because they already had knowledges on this topic</u> (EdN)
Grammar Need	GN	Grammar used in a linguistic sense, not merely syntactical	<i>So what do you remember most about the English classes you've taken in Fairbanks?</i>  P2: ...working in grammar...
Family language need	FLN	What the participant feels his/her child needs in terms of language ability or the family needs in terms of language for communication	P2: <u>he has a tutor too and he is keep busy to study English too, because English is his second language too</u> (FLN)

After all the interviews were recoded with the codes listed above, coded data were compiled in a word document, synthesized and analyzed using selective coding (See Appendix D for an example of a coded and transcribed interview) (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The findings from the data analysis follow in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

## **Chapter 4**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The first aim of this study was to establish Fairbanks area adult language learners' goals. The findings emerged from a compilation of interviews with 12 participants who discussed their language learning experiences with an emphasis on those in Fairbanks, AK. Participants were asked both directly and indirectly about their goals with questions such as "What are your goals as a language learner?" and "What are your reasons for studying English?" respectively. Often they volunteered what their goals were without being directly asked. Some goals were very clearly articulated while others were more vague. For example, some participants clearly stated "My goal is to ...," while others discussed similar topics, they did not express it as an explicit goal. In these instances, the information was considered in light of other participants' goals, and I inferred whether it would be appropriate to consider the statement a goal for the relevant participant.

Participants interviewed in this study listed several categories of goals which are compiled below in

Table 5. Summary of Participants' **Goals**. All the goals identified were in direct correlation to language learning; those that may have been interesting though unrelated to English language acquisition were excluded for the purposes of this analysis. The categories of goals included: family and children, personal aspirations, professional development and education. All goals are stated in relation to the participant unless otherwise noted.

**Table 5. Summary of Participants' Goals**

Goal	Participant	Type of Goal
Children remain bilingual	P1, P2, P4, P7, P8, P11	Family and Children
Communicate with monolingual spouse	P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, P8, P10, P12	
Learn English to help child's academics	P4, P7, P8, P11	
Build happiness, confidence and self esteem	P2, P5, P6, P10, P11	Personal
Make friends	P3, P6, P7, P10,	
Establish new career after study	P4 <sup>19</sup> , P8, P9, P11	Professional
Reestablish former career after study	P1, P4, P5, P6, P7, P10	
Small business ownership	P2, P4, (P7, P8, P12)	
Marketable employment	P2, P9, P10, P11 (all)	
Participant wishes to "improve" proficiency	P1, P2, P3, P4, P8	Educational
Improve writing and grammar	P2, P4, P11, P12	
Improve communication (incl. pronunciation)	P3, P4, P7, P11	
Attend higher education	P1, P3, P4, P11	

Each of the four global goals are now discussed in terms of subgoals.

## 4.2 Goals Involving Children and Family

Almost all of the participants had goals for their families in general and also desired to achieve family-specific language abilities. Only three participants (P3, P6, P9) did not include some type of English language-related goal that would benefit or impact their family. This can be attributed to having no children (P6, P9) and having a common L1 spouse (P3, P6) or living with an L1 speaker (P9). Although P3 does have children, she expressed no lack of confidence in her English language ability related to her family, with whom she uses Spanish.<sup>20</sup> All other participants either had school-age children, spouses or other family members with whom they needed to use English.

<sup>19</sup> P4 does not commit herself one particular career. She talks about wanting to advance her current career but also opines about establishing herself in her field of training.

<sup>20</sup> Participant 3 does not express an explicit desire to have her children remain bilingual, but she does report using only Spanish with her family. In addition, she and her husband are both L1 Spanish speakers. This may be something that P3 takes for granted—while her children are already bilingual and the home is a Spanish domain, maintenance of Spanish language fluency may not be something that she thinks about or is an identifiable priority.

Within this goal, there are three primary themes. 1). Participants expressed a desire for their children to remain bilingual. Although this is not directly related to their own language acquisition, it is relevant to participants because it is connected with the language learning process. 2). Participants wanted to learn English in order to better communicate with English speaking spouses. 3). Most parents with school-age children indicated that an improvement of their language proficiency would help them better assist their children in academics.

#### **4.2.1 Bilingualism**

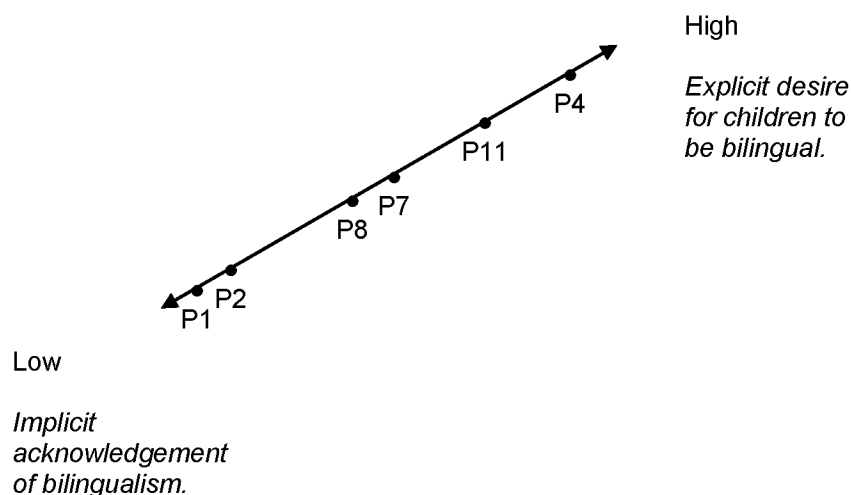
Bilingualism in children was a significant, yet complex theme in the study. Participants not only discussed their desires for children to be bilingual but also some of the challenges associated with raising bilingual children. The interesting consideration for me is that in the course of the study, the participants could not always define their own goals, therefore defining the language related goals of their children would be equally as difficult. Correspondingly, the concept of bilingualism is not straightforward. Rather than all participants expressing this goal emphatically or even verbatim, the interest in children's bilingualism existed more on a continuum. On one end of the continuum, participants stated explicitly that they wanted their children to be bilingual. The other end is for more implicit statements. A participant placed at the lower end would be one who acknowledged bilingualism, but did nothing to promote use of both languages. Two participants (P4, P11) were very explicit about their desire. P4, for example, described her language use with her family and defended her use of Spanish with her son. She explained this practice:

##### **Excerpt 1**

I want him to be bilingual.

From other participants (P1, P2, P7, P8), I inferred that bilingualism is an expectation for their children though they may not have explicitly stated this

goal. Although not as clearly stated as with P4 above, I rejected the idea that participants would report completely conflicting statements regarding language use and their goals. Instead, I interpreted these participants' statements as an indication that they would be placed lower on the bilingualism continuum. First, I felt that they reflected some degree of consideration of the concept of bilingualism, and secondly, resolved that their children will know and use both languages, but did little to promote use of both. An example of this can be seen in the example of P2 who described her language use practices. Although she did not explicitly say that she desired for her son to be bilingual, she said that she uses Spanish with him now, and although she may use English in the future, she does not believe that he will lose his Spanish proficiency. This places her lower on the continuum than Participant 4, above. below shows where all participants with a goal of bilingual children placed on the continuum.



**Figure 5. Participants Ranked on Bilingualism Continuum**

Two major influences that I feel correlate with the placement of participants' goals on the bilingualism continuum: the ages of the children when they were exposed to the L1 and L2, and whether English is the dominant language in their current living situation. For example, Participant 2's child emigrated to the U.S. from Columbia when he was 12 and did not begin learning English until his



arrival in the U.S. The more significant priority is that her child fluently acquires English rather than maintain Spanish. For this reason, I believe that bilingualism is not an immediate concern as compared to P4 in Excerpt 1 for whom it was a priority. In contrast P4's child has grown up speaking both English and Spanish and participates in different domains where English and Spanish are dominant.

However, this leads to the problematic definition of the term "bilingual." Participants expressed different ideas of what bilingualism was and how it was achieved. For P4, this meant using Spanish with her son, because presumably he was getting English from his father and at school. For P2, it meant not losing the "original language." These contrasting statements illustrate the difficulty in defining to what degree a child is or should be bilingual. I do not feel that participants have necessarily considered this. Most cite the desire for their children to remain bilingual in order to connect with family members. Rather than being bilingual for intellectual or academic reasons, Participants 2, 4 and 11 all identified communication with family in their home country as an important reason to remain bilingual. Participant 11 discussed why she believes it is important for her children to speak Spanish in addition to English.

### **Excerpt 2**

*So you encourage him to use Spanish?*

Yeah, I try because you know it's good because someday we will visit my country and they need to talk with his grandparents, yeah. It's good to know two language.

Maintenance of family ties, especially those of Spanish-speaking relatives may be a value inherently tied to identity, especially to that of the L2 English-speaking parent. Though this may be a huge priority for the parent, children, especially younger ones, grow up in a strongly English dominant environment. Interestingly, P11 for example, did not want her son to remain bilingual to communicate with her, but with her parents. This creates a disconnect of sorts for both generations; children may not place the same value on maintenance of relationships with people who are far away and very

removed from the English domain they are so influenced by. In this case, the proficiency would be quite different than if the children desired to attend a University in their non-English language or even obtain skilled employment.

In the course of “helping” their children remain bilingual, participants reported several different obstacles. Mainly, the practice and maintenance of the non-dominant language varied between families. The goal of raising children bilingually may be contradictory to parents’ actions, as some are clearly not promoting practices that are conducive to bilingualism. Participant 2, for example, used Spanish with her son at the time of the interview, but says that she expects that they will be monolingual English speakers within their household in the future. I feel that although bilingualism for her son is important to P2, it is more important for her that he will be proficient and successful in English. For her, this meant being monolingual English speakers at home. However, for children to improve their English, as their parents desired, it often must occur in school or other English dominant social settings, rather than in the English L2 home which does not provide the best source of accurate input.

Additionally, parents found it difficult to compete with the dominant language (English). Participant 11 reported that it is difficult for her to maintain Spanish in her household. She explained how English, the dominant language, affected her children’s language abilities despite her efforts to raise them bilingually:

**Excerpt 3**

... but you know my old[est] child is speak English with them [the other children] and his daddy too and now he speak more English than Spanish. All the time English, but I try to him repeat the word in Spanish.

P11’s husband is also a Spanish speaker, though English is his L1. It was not clear if bilingualism is a goal her husband shares and supports. There are strong implications not only for P11’s ideas about how language is learned and maintained, but for the role of the dominant language in this household.

P11 also may have felt that her identity is linked to that of her children and in experiencing difficulty in maintaining her L1, she may have viewed it as a threat to her identity and a shortcoming as a parent.

Another complication is that parents may not have been aware of their language use practices with their children. This results in inconsistent practices and general unawareness of how language could be maintained. P7 reported using only Spanish with his family, but his wife P8, also a Spanish L1 speaker, reported a somewhat contradictory practice with their younger son.

#### **Excerpt 4**

My youngest son came here around one and half year old and he all the time he speak English in the home but he understand very well the Spanish. And sometimes he speak Spanish in good way, good pronunciation and good sentences. But with him sometimes we use English.

P7 may not have wanted to admit to using English with his child or he may have viewed his home as a Spanish domain and may not “count” the English he used with his youngest son. P8 also spoke largely in terms of “we” to include her husband when I asked her questions, so it could also be that P8 used English more with their youngest child than her husband did. In any case, neither seemed to be cognizant that they had varying language practices. Because they are both strong L1 Spanish speakers, they may not have been concerned with the role of English or their roles in maintaining their son’s bilingualism.

In sum, parents’ goals for their children to remain bilingual is complex and often contradictory. On one hand L2 English speakers—the participants—retain part of their L1 identity by raising their children bilingually through practice and use of language, culture and related practices. Conversely, children who speak English fluently will have access to capital and resources not available to their parents, such as career and education-related opportunities. Despite the fact that all parents want to their children to succeed and bilingualism can be a

realistic goal, parents' language practices and their inability to compete with the dominant language do not necessarily ensure it. In addition to communicating with children, participants also need to communicate with their monolingual spouses.

#### **4.2.2 Communication with Monolingual Spouse**

For half the participants (P1, P2, P4, P5, P10 and P12), another common family-related goal was the desire to learn English to communicate with a monolingual spouse or significant other. Coincidentally, all but four interviewed had English L1 partners. These partners serve as important sources of English input, feedback and interaction with the participants. Like many partners, it can be assumed that they provide emotional support not only for the language acquisition process, but for adapting to the L2 culture. For many participants, their partners will be the most influential and significant target language resource. However, based on participants' statements, L1 English spouses did not always have realistic expectations of the participants' language learning process and spouses often lacked knowledge that would promote effective second language acquisition. There are several examples of this throughout the study. One occurs with P2's husband who told her that she would become comfortable with her English proficiency after six years of residence in the U.S. This claim seems unfounded, although P2 seems to believe it.

The English speaking spouse's encouragement of the participant to learn English ranged from support to insistence. For those spouses who had firmer approaches to the participant learning English, participants often reported that the spouse placed them in submersion-type situations that were not necessarily advantageous to language learning. For example, P11 cited an occurrence when her car needed to be brought to the auto repair shop and she felt very uncomfortable discussing the situation with the mechanics in English. Despite

her apprehension, her husband told her that she should go anyway as it would be the best way for her to improve her proficiency.

These well-intentioned, but ill informed interactions with spouses are internalized by participants and manifested themselves as pressure that participants felt to improve their proficiency. In P10's case, her English L1 husband has pressured her to improve her English proficiency.

#### **Excerpt 5**

My husband he can understand Spanish, he can sometimes speak Spanish. But he do not want to do. He said you have to learn English. I have to do.

P7's husband may have had a variety of motives for encouraging his wife to improve her English language proficiency. A reluctance to use his wife's L1 sends a strong signal that, at least at that time, he was more interested in her use of English than his use of Spanish. On the other hand, he may have felt that his "encouragement" would more quickly promote her English acquisition.

The pressure that participants felt also materialized in the form of negative feelings about their proficiency and their abilities as language learners. For many second language learners in a non-native language domain, there are a lot of conflicting feelings and messages they receive. These can be societal messages or internal conflicts between maintaining identity and complying with the demands of becoming proficient in the language and culture. Learning language is an emotional task. However, from their statements, it seemed that participants' spouses did not really comprehend the complexity of the situation.

#### **4.2.3 Parents Want Sufficient Proficiency to Assist Children's Academics**

Parents with school-age children<sup>21</sup> (P4, P7, P8, P11) felt that improving their English would benefit their children both directly and indirectly. Some participants identified specific language functions such as improved spoken

---

<sup>21</sup> Excludes P3 – discussed above

proficiency and comprehension and writing that they wanted to improve to either communicate with their children's teachers or assist their children with homework, respectively. P4 expressed sentiments about helping her son through improved written English proficiency; her son is younger (approximately 12 years old) and the direct benefit to her son was apparent.

#### **Excerpt 6**

I was thinking now that maybe I could find some programs online to help with my writing that is so challenging for me for myself and my son so that I can help him out.

She spoke repeatedly of her feelings of responsibility in assisting her son with his homework and was able to articulate that in addition to writing, she wanted to improve her reading comprehension in order to better assist him. Being able to perform adequately in this area was of very significant importance to her.

For participants P7 and P8, who made more general statements about how they could assist their children through improved English language proficiency, the connection was more difficult to make. Indirectly, with increased proficiency, participants may be able to better assist their children financially, as well as provide emotional support. Perhaps their improved proficiency will lead to additional financial opportunities. P7 and P8 viewed their English abilities as a direct influence on their high school age son's success. P8 explains her goals:

#### **Excerpt 7**

Oh, maybe for me now, or maybe for my husband too, now is bring the education to my son. He is study in private pilot but he want to get his license like in commercial pilot. In this time is our goal, to make that finish with him. Our goal is to improve our English and improve our education.

Neither explained what part of their improved proficiency would aid their son in his education.

Goals related to family and children are complex. They are influenced by participants' motivation for self-preservation, influence from family members

and participants' ideas of how families function and the domains in which participants exist. I discuss further in section 4.3.3 and in Chapter 5 how the idea of identity is a pervasive theme throughout the study. In the next section, I discuss participants' personal goals, also related to identity.

### **4.3 Personal Goals**

Another category of goals that participants identified was in regards to personal aspirations. These were directly related to language and the participants' sense of their own levels of fluency. Although all participants expressed some desire to fulfill goals of a personal nature, the ones relevant to this study relate to language proficiency and have commonality with other goals identified by participants. There are two major types of personal goals that I discuss: those related to participants' confidence and self-esteem and those related to communicating and developing friendships with L1 English speakers.

#### **4.3.1 Build Confidence and Self-Esteem**

Five participants (P2, P5, P6, P11, P10) directly attributed their self-esteem to their perceived level of proficiency. Participants commented that if they could improve their proficiency, they would be able to accomplish certain tasks and would feel better about themselves. For some it included reestablishing a career. P5 viewed her success in reestablishing her former career—in which she had been successful in her home country—as a confidence builder. She struggled between her desire to be successful and what she views as her own shortcomings, in addition to reconciling her dislike for the American health care system.

##### **Excerpt 8**

I was burned out, I burned out as a nurse in Japan, so I'm not sure. But it's good job and very worthwhile. If I can do that I'm sure I will have some confidence about myself. I need to have confidence.

Throughout our interview, P5 revealed that she feels confident in the skills she has as a nurse, but felt that her English proficiency is holding her back. She acknowledged the range of English proficiencies that she will need: medical, the ability to communicate with a variety of people, the ability to communicate over the phone and written English. She started off rockily though, as she felt she had to withdraw from a University course that was preparing her to take a state nursing exam. Much of P5's confidence was tied to her ability to succeed in what she had already excelled at in Japan. In turn, this was dependent primarily on her English language proficiency and knowledge of specialized nursing and medical vocabulary.

For other participants, improved proficiency in general will make them better communicators and give them more confidence in interactions with English speakers. The less insecure one feels about one's language ability, the happier one will presumably be. Additionally, improved proficiency will also allow speakers to be less reliant on others and more independent and self-sufficient. These qualities are tied to self-worth and confidence. P10 spoke at length about needing to feel comfortable in English-speaking domains. She describes the emotional process she went through when confronted with an unfamiliar situation. She began by describing her goal of interacting in English language domains:

**Excerpt 9**

... have a natural life for me. Do not feel scared for do something simple. Something simple, like go to the store and buy something. 'Noo, I do not go there, you have go with me! I do not go, I do not go!' Something like that it's something simple. Sometimes I do not do because I am afraid to do... I feel scared and afraid a simple question I do not sometimes I cannot do a simple answer. Oh a big problem in my mind to look at the correct word. I need to feel better with myself.

Her fear at answering incorrectly or not being able to answer a question at all revealed underlying beliefs about language learning and the expectations



she had of herself as an L2 English speaker. Increased proficiency would allow her to express herself better and ultimately feel more confident. This exemplifies the burden of becoming both linguistically and culturally fluent. While one or the other would be difficult on its own, participants are faced with a huge challenge and do not always get the support they need or want.

#### **4.3.2 Making Friends**

Four participants (P3, P6, P7, P10) cited the desire to be able to converse with native-speakers and in some cases (P7, P3) make English-speaking friends. Having a role and participating in society is a key ingredient to membership and more importantly self-worth. Being able to interact completes a person and fulfills the needs to be around people and to feel useful and productive. The ability to do this not only depends on one's social skills and cultural knowledge, but also a person's language proficiency. While I was able to interact easily enough with all of the participants, they still viewed themselves as deficient in their abilities to communicate. P10 for example, explained:

##### **Excerpt 10**

For me to feel natural or comfortable living here and speak with the people. Do not have to think what I'm going to say.

She also expressed some shyness and dependence on others to accomplish tasks, so this could definitely be inhibiting her. Participants may have been confusing proficiency with cultural capital. None referenced any L1 English-speaking friends although some use English with other L2 English speakers. There was the unspoken expectation that with fluency comes the ability to befriend and communicate with Americans. P6 explained that she wanted to learn English to communicate with others and joked that her goal was "To start speaking as ... an American" and explains further that she would be very happy if:

**Excerpt 11**

When I speak with American I would like he or she to understand me and to be able to lead complete conversation this is my goal, to be able to communicate.

P6's comment alluded to the idea that more is needed in order to communicate effectively with Americans. She discussed attending and succeeding in a graduate-level course, but still felt that she has not achieved her goal of complete conversation with Americans. Cultural capital in any form is rarely a topic of ESL courses, so participants obviously had some difficulty naming it. For example, a level of fluency was not defined to any extent by any of the participants. However, if logically participants felt like inferior interlocutors, then the most rational explanation was that they were not proficient enough, rather than they had not yet acquired the appropriate cultural capital. Participants' goals were not limited to personal themes; they extended into the realm of employment.

**4.4 Professional Goals**

Another common category of goals related to participants' careers. I had expected before beginning this study that participants' goals would relate to more civic endeavors. The reason for this was that needs analyses often focus on employment and course-specific needs, and result mostly in recommendations for obtaining employment or advancing to another course and lists of linguistic forms that learners should acquire. I suspected then that these civic aspects of participants' lives must have been overlooked. However, I did find that in a cash-based economy, much of what participants discussed was related to capitalism and therefore employment and earning money. As with many of the goals described by participants in the study, identity is a common and significant thread which is especially prevalent with participants discussing their goals, relating to their professions. Although I begin the discussion here, further and more in-depth analysis continues in Chapter 5.

There are two major threads that emerged within this goal and one subtopic of interest. First, a number of participants wanted to reestablish the careers they occupied in their home countries. Others opted to achieve new careers either because they had none before they arrived here or for other reasons. An important subtopic within the second theme was the concept of small-business ownership that was discussed by several of the participants.

#### **4.4.1 Reestablish Former Career**

Some participants (P7, P3, P4) desired to reestablish themselves in the careers they occupied in their home country. Nearly all felt their lack of proficiency in English was the most persistent barrier to reestablishing their profession. To a lesser extent, participants might have also needed to refresh or learn specific American ways of performing in those job fields. Participant 4, for example, described what she would need to do to begin working as a computer programmer again. She was resolved to the idea that she would not begin in management, but expected to work her way up after many years of employment.

As skilled professionals, the participants may have expected to earn a comparable wage and enjoy a level of prestige, or cultural capital, in the field here as they did at home. While for some this may be realistic with increased proficiency, the systems between countries may be too radically different to facilitate such a goal. For both, those who may find similar employment and others who have difficulty, another challenge may be the expectations required for their position and the knowledge or skills it requires. Like others interviewed, Participant 10 wanted to reestablish herself in her career. She is resolved to the fact that she does not have the cultural capital necessary to step into an American equivalent and needs a master's degree to compete in a job field in which she previously led.

**Excerpt 12**

I want a job in a big company for process the food. First for that I have to study. I want to go to the University take my master it's possible. And start to do the master. I want to do but, I want to do, but sometimes say my English my god, my English is so poor how I can do that? But something that.

Rather than lack of knowledge in the subject matter, she viewed her language proficiency as more of a hindrance. Additionally, it may be difficult for P10 to find a comparable career or area of study; it's possible that the Columbian and American systems are too different.

Another interesting complication was that although it may be easiest for participants to become more proficient and resume their former careers in this country, they may be less motivated to do so. Reestablishing a former career may only be attractive because it is the easiest path to productive, skilled employment. As highlighted in Excerpt 8, Participant 5 was considering reestablishing herself in nursing. Like others interviewed, she realized that she would need to accomplish certain tasks and meet certain guidelines in order to become a nurse in the U.S. She also felt somewhat unmotivated to become a nurse because she had burned out in that profession in Japan, and discussed different forms of English that she would need in order to be successful in that field including communication with doctors and patients. Participant 5 might have felt that this is the most logical career path for her to pursue because she already had knowledge of the field.

While participants may just need to increase their level of proficiency in order to participate in their chosen career field, what they must also realize is that the opportunity to do so may be elusive because of differences in the American system. Additionally, participants must reconcile their knowledge of the field and any lack of motivation to work in that field. Failure to do this could lead to participants starting over for a third time if they train for a field which they later abandon and then pursue a different career altogether. The sense of

urgency to become employed as quickly as possible that many experience is not compatible with participants getting a full understanding of the limitations and expectations of an occupation before committing to it. While some participants saw establishing their careers as the most viable option, others anticipated that new careers would be essential to their success.

#### **4.4.2 Establish New Career**

Other participants (P4, P8, P9, P11) wanted to establish themselves in different careers rather than pursue the same career they occupied in their home countries. There are a number of factors that could contribute to this. First, as in the case of P4 who worked in a social service agency, participants may have already worked their way up in a company and are comfortable in that line of work, although it is not what they originally trained for. Secondly, many may have to reenter higher education to learn, in English, what they learned in their L1 and become familiar with the American perspective on their field. Additionally, having already once been an expert on a particular subject, they are now reduced to novices because they lack the linguistic and social capital necessary to participate in that job market. Starting over in this manner may be especially daunting. P4 is a good example of this situation. Originally she was educated to be a special education instructor, but she did not see this as a realistic career for herself in Fairbanks. She worked for a local social service that serves senior citizens at the time of the interview. When asked what she wanted to do in the future she explained:

#### **Excerpt 13**

But I really like social services, so probably something in social services but more of the supervisor.

She may have to reenter higher education to learn in English what she learned in Columbia and also the American perspective on Special Education. Since she has progressively worked her way up in her current field, starting

over would be an overwhelming task. P4 also expressed interest in becoming a small business owner, discussed below in section 4.4.3. It is not clear how these two careers fit together or if she has considered that.

Finally, a new career may be the opportunity that participants need to try something new. They may not have been able to pursue aspirations of a different career in their home country due to channeling in school or other mitigating factors. The option to choose a new career may be motivating for some. Unlike the other participants, P9 came explicitly to Alaska to learn English which she saw as an opportunity needed to change careers. She also intended to stay here less time than any of the participants.

#### **Excerpt 14**

I love teaching, but I would really like to have another opportunity in Panama so I would like to have another job so that's why I came here to study a little bit more.

P9's attitude contrasted to most of the other participants.<sup>22</sup> While others felt the pressure of family, the urgency to jump into the job market and feelings of inadequacy because their skills that were once prestigious are no longer relevant, P9 expressed little immediacy in achieving any specific goal other than just to improve her English proficiency. Also unlike most of the others, she planned to return to a country in which she already feels culturally proficient. It may be a difficult reality for some to acknowledge that although they have worked hard in their home countries, they find that once they come to the U.S. Their previous achievements are negated by lack of capital. For some participants, there is a belief that the key to success is earning capital without the burden of retraining for a career.

---

<sup>22</sup> With the exception of P6 who echoed many of the same sentiments.

### 4.4.3 Small Business Ownership

One consistent theme in the study was that of small business ownership. Two participants from Columbia (P2, P4) cited their desires to be small business owners while three others (P7, P8, P12) had already become small business owners. Two of these three are from Columbia and one is from Korea. Those from Columbia know each other and maybe P2 and P4 are motivated by their friends' success.<sup>23</sup> The two aspiring business owners viewed small business ownership as a path to better parenting and home management. P4 explained:

#### Excerpt 15

I'm hoping that I can have my own business. Someday I think that I will have one, but now I need to have more time for my family. When he gets to be a teenager, when he is going through the hardest years, I want to be able to do everything... So I would like to stay and home and maintain that relationship with him. So I would like a job with flexibility or definitely be able to have my own business where I can help him.

P4's statement is slightly contradictory. She expected that having her own business will give her flexibility to fill many roles, including the most important—mother. She directly attributed this to a cultural value and explained that as a Hispanic, her family is very close. By staying at home, which she believed will give her increased flexibility, she would be able to “do everything.” P2 expressed identical sentiments—that she believed a business or the ability to work from home would give her increased freedom and prosperity.

P7 and P8 largely stated that in their line of work, their English has not improved as a result of exposure to other native speakers. P2 and P4 may both have to compromise this goal with their goal of small business ownership. While for P2 and P4 small business ownership is the ultimate achievement (a goal that once achieved will automatically allow other goals to be realized) and

---

<sup>23</sup> I am not sure that P2 and P4's expectations of small business ownership are realistic. What they aspire to gain from small business ownership has not been the experience of other small business owners interviewed.

representative of the American dream, for others (P8, P12) it is a means to achieving future goals such as someday changing careers. Additionally, ownership has increased self-confidence and provided for their families.

#### **4.4.4 Marketable Skills for Employment**

For all the participants interviewed, none were satisfied with entry-level employment. All participants reasonably desired skills for marketable employment. The ideas various participants expressed about the path to employment is telling; it is directly linked to their ideas of identity, ideology and others' expectations of them. This is explored in a larger discussion continued in Chapter 5.

For some (P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P9), satisfactory employment was gained through improvement of language proficiency; others believed that they must first occupy low-paying jobs and work their way up. For Participant 9, it was important to have effective communication skills to obtain employment with a living wage. As discussed in conjunction with Excerpt 14, P9's motivation for learning English was different than most of the other participants; she had far less pressure to learn English to improve her quality of life or gain better employment. If she did not succeed, she still had the cultural capital necessary to succeed in her country that she planned to return to.

Others (P2, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12) had a much different outlook on employment and the unofficial rules for working one's way up the socioeconomic ladder. Some seemed resolved that they had to start in minimum-wage jobs in the U.S. despite prior skills or competencies. For P11, entry-level employment was associated with only a basic knowledge of English:

##### **Excerpt 16**

Learning English is very important. If you want to continue with your life and to progress, the first thing is to learn English ... I have a problem with my back. And my brother told me you want to go to work in the hotel like a housekeeper, it's too hard {P11} for



you, for my problem my back. And then he told me you have to learn very well English and then you find another kind of job. This is true because people came to other country and do not learn the English, work in that kind of job.

P11's powerful statement was something not just adopted when she moved to the U.S., but propagated by her brother who lives in another country. The stereotype of immigrant workers is so pervasive in the idea of America, that none questioned it. Entry-level employment in housekeeping was described almost as a rite of passage to newcomers to the country. P11 viewed the immigrant's experience as one where a person has to improve his/her English proficiency in order to improve his/her employment. Like many, she lacked cultural capital for employment, despite prior knowledge and skills.

#### **4.5 Educational Goals**

Many participants expressed the goal of studying or explained that they needed to study in order to improve their quality of life. The concept of "study" was not always well-defined. It is likely that participants struggled with defining what areas of language acquisition they needed to address. For example, several participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P8) expressed a desire to learn more English as a generalization, though all had specific outcomes in mind for studying English.

Participants 1, 3, 4 and 8 all said almost verbatim that their goal was to improve their English, and Participant 8 reiterated the same two more times. While all generally agreed that more proficiency would be desirable, they varied in terms of what they thought was significant both for language learners in general and for themselves specifically. In addition, participants did not necessarily understand what this process will entail or if it is realistic for reaching those stated goals.

Other education-related goals were more clearly stated. Some participants felt that they needed to improve their writing and grammar through

education in a classroom or other formalized learning situation. Similarly, there were certain aspects of communication that participants identified that needed to be improved, including pronunciation, within a classroom context. Finally, some identified attending higher education institutions as the only way to achieve their language goals. Four participants (P5, P6, P9, P10) are not represented within this thread. This does not mean that they have no educational goals. On the contrary, these participants' goals are reflected throughout the study. However, none of their statements apply to the threads within this theme.

#### **4.5.1 Writing and Grammar**

Several participants (P2, P4, P11, P12) identified writing and grammar as areas they would like to improve. Writing is not limited to composing essays or short answer questions. It has a broader definition for the participants interviewed that may include filling in blanks in worksheets, taking notes, recopying information and conjugating verbs on paper. As with other areas in the study, the importance of improving writing varied as did the reasons motivating participants. Some viewed improvement and mastery of English grammar as a key to improved proficiency. P4 mentioned in four separate instances that she wanted to improve her writing and P8 identified writing as an area she wanted to improve because "it's hard to write." P2, identified her language education goals as

##### **Excerpt 17**

To study, to sit and study to practice to do more grammar, writing.

She may have seen speaking, writing and comprehension as a unit rather than separate skills to be acquired. She viewed formal instruction of grammar as the key to writing and speaking more proficiently.

Others felt that their English was functional, but they were limited by the lack of writing proficiency. For the latter type of participant, it was more a desire

to broaden opportunities than to improve quality of life. P12 also felt that while her reading was strong, her writing ability had inhibited her from certain opportunities. Though like the concept of “study” these opportunities are not well defined. P12 referred to them below as “many thing” and did not elaborate beyond that.

#### **Excerpt 18**

So when I have time my goal is when I have time practice writing, that's my goal... oh yeah I love to I love to taking many, many class I love to do so many thing but think is just writing level has stopped a lot of thing I want to do. But that's ok, there are some thing—there a lot I can do without writing. But I would love to learn someday without worry about writing so I can do, who knows, a lot of things... I'm still learning how to writing English after 31 years. That's my goal for when I have time.

Although P12 felt that she can participate in L2 interactions, she would be better personally fulfilled by improving her writing, and in her opinion, broaden her opportunities. Like P9, she expressed no urgency in improving either her written or oral proficiency. While she did express an amount of regret at what could have been, but she was also optimistic for the future. For P12, learning to write better might have been more of a hobby and unlike many of the other participants, she will experience less pressure to become a more proficient writer. While some participants expressed a strong desire to improve their written proficiency, others felt that improving oral proficiency was equally significant.

#### **4.5.2 Communication**

For many participants (P3, P4, P7, P11), improved oral communication skills was the path to improved proficiency overall. One significant communicative feature that participants (P3, P4, P7) wanted to improve was pronunciation. While some thought this could be accomplished through formal education, others were less specific on how to accomplish this goal. P3 had an

acute awareness of her linguistic deficiencies, but did not express any desire to take a course or “study” to improve her pronunciation. P3 explains:

**Excerpt 19**

... and also I want to speak more fluently because sometimes I think what I want to say but when I talk it looks different sounds different.

Participants' responses regarding pronunciation ranged from awareness of non-native like pronunciation to believing that it was a significant factor impacting how much English they acquired. Pronunciation or retention of L1 phonological features can often be reflective of a participant's identity. Additionally, participants may believe that they need to sound as much like an L1 native English speaker as possible in order to be better communicators, in reality, though they are marked as L2 English speakers, there is no breakdown in communication as a result of phonological deficiencies.

For other participants, the goals were less specific. They wished to become more fluent, but they did not define the concept of fluency well. What participants may have desired, similar to what is discussed above and in Section 4.3.2, was the cultural capital and competence to participate in conversations. Fluency is an all-encompassing term that includes the linguistic and social nuances of language. Additionally, as noted in the discussion about writing above, some participants expressed the belief that improved communicative skills would best be achieved through formalized education. P11 explained how she thinks that education will help her become fluent.

**Excerpt 20**

This is my {goal}, I want to study and talk very fluently.

P11 associated formal education with increased fluency. Interestingly she did not offer an alternative, I want to participate and talk very fluently. Often participants' statements about what they wanted to improve include insight into how they think language is learned. In the above excerpt, for example, Participant 11 believed that studying will help her achieve a higher level of

proficiency and, as she discussed in Excerpt 16, she linked improved proficiency to success in other areas such as marketable skills for employment. However, only accepting “studying” as the valid way to learn limits the participants and decreases their chances of reaching their goals.

### **4.5.3 Higher Education**

Aside from specific (or not so specific) aspects of language participants wanted to improve through “study,” many expressed the desire to attend higher education for ESL. This likely included attending University classes as there were no other options in the Fairbanks area at the time of the interview. Participants presumably viewed the University as the next logical step if they had exhausted the services from other agencies. However, they may not necessarily have been familiar with the courses offered at the University. It is possible that the University may not offer classes that directly correspond with participants’ goals. For those who wanted to pursue professions with specialized skills, University attendance is essential for achieving their goal. P3 explained, for example, that enrolling at the University is key to employment in her field of former, and hopefully future, employment—computer programming.

#### **Excerpt 21**

I want to start to do something here at the University because I think when I came here I did not do anything. I think I have to study if I want to get a job in my area.

She reiterated this during our conversation and then restated she wants to begin a bachelor’s degree program. However, with many goals expressed, such as employment, hobbies and general navigation of day-to-day activities, participants viewed their level of proficiency as a barrier to gaining initial access to the University, and do not necessarily have access to the resources that would help them achieve proficiency required for entry into University courses. P11 also said that she aspired to attend the University someday to study

nursing or education, but knows that she did not have the language proficiency required to succeed at the time of the interview.

**Excerpt 22**

But first to do is to learn very well English. The classes in the University is hard or the English over there is too high for me.

Like with many goals P11 expressed, such as employment, hobbies and general navigation of day-to-day activities, she viewed her level of proficiency as a barrier to gaining initial access to the University. Unfortunately, participants had few options to pursue additional formalized language education and do not necessarily understand or acknowledge the validity of learning language on their own.

Participants' needs fall into four categories family, personal, education and career. Within theme, there are more specific needs which reveal participants ideas about how language is learned and elucidate the impact that ideology and participants' perceived identities have on language learning. It is the needs that will help participants meet these goals, as well as the influence of ideology that I address in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 5

### 5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 5, I explore my second research question “What are learners’ needs based on their goals?” I discuss and analyze needs both expressed by the participants and those I extrapolated from the goals identified in Chapter 4. The connection between goals and needs is complex. While some participants, such as P3, may need written and grammatical linguistic skills and a specific tool, like understanding the American school system, in order to meet their goal of learning English to help their children’s academics, other participants, like P7 and P8, may only require the tool of understanding the American school system. Another example of this can be seen with P4 and P10 who both wanted to study to reestablish their former careers. While P4 felt that she just needed to update her knowledge in her field, P10 felt that she needed the English language proficiency to compete in the job market. Additionally, she also needed realistic expectations of the prospects of finding an equivalent job. Therefore, the needs of one participant are not necessarily consistent with the needs of other participants who expressed the same goal. Conversely the same needs are not necessarily prescriptive of one particular goal. For example, one can assume that improved levels of language proficiency would help participants achieve their goals. P3 and P12, for example, both wanted to improve their written language proficiency. However, their goals were decidedly different. P3 wanted to improve her writing to obtain better employment, assist her son with his education, and pursue a college degree. On the other hand, P12 wanted to improve her writing skills just to have the possibility of more opportunity in the future which may include access to monetary and social resources or additional education. Both participants have various strengths and weaknesses and vastly different background experiences; so there is not a uniform set of linguistic forms that they all need to learn.

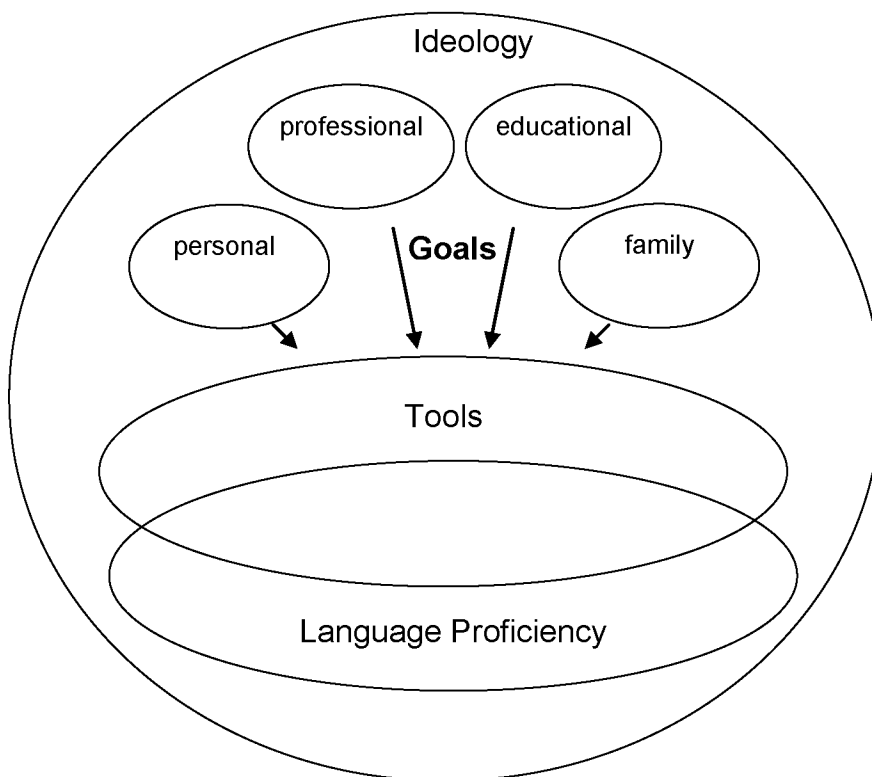
This disparity was something that I did not anticipate at the beginning of the study. I struggled at times with assigning particular needs to goals and drawing general conclusions about participants' needs based on their goals. I found that the literature in these areas also did not define these concepts in the manner that I was using them. In Chapter 6, I discuss how this may be a future area of research. Throughout my analysis, I realized the important influence of ideology, family and identity and conclude my discussion by addressing these themes in relation to participants' responses and views and related implications.

## **5.2 Needs**

In order to determine learners' needs, I built on the goals that participants stated during their respective interviews as detailed in Chapter 4. As a researcher, I used the literature on language acquisition, ideology and language instruction featured in Chapter 2 and my personal experience in order to interpret learners' needs from the statements they provided in the interviews. I also felt it was important to consider learners' ideas that I could either directly attribute or ideas that indirectly alluded to what participants felt they needed to do to meet their goals. From this analysis, I differentiate between two types of needs: language proficiency and tools. Figure 6. Taxonomy of Learners' Needs in Relation to Their Goals. depicts the relationship between the four categories of goals discussed in Chapter 4 and the tools and language proficiency needed by participants to realize their aims. Overarching participants' needs and goals is ideology which is depicted by a circle encompassing all the other components of the taxonomy. Both participants' goals and needs are shaped by ideology. Within the circle of ideology, exist the other components of the taxonomy. Although there were many different categories that goals could be classified under, for the scope of this project, I have chosen to only represent the ones discussed in Chapter 4. The goals are represented independently as they are presented in the previous chapter. (Further analysis, which is beyond the scope



of this paper, would reveal the extent to which these goals overlap.) Needs based on those goals are noted below the goals in two overlapping categories represented by a Venn diagram. Goals are met when participants acquire certain tools, which are discussed below in section 5.4 and/or improve their language proficiency. Proficiency and tools are equally significant because without the former, learners will not be able to effectively employ tools required to achieve their goals. Proficiency alone is not enough and for that reason, tools are positioned above proficiency in the pictorial representation.



**Figure 6. Taxonomy of Learners' Needs in Relation to Their Goals.**

One of the two types of needs, language proficiency, is defined as linguistic skills that allow participants to listen, speak, write and interact in the target language. When this need is met, no breakdown in communication occurs and participants are able to accomplish a specific objective. Acquiring these linguistic skills will help learners obtain higher levels of proficiency. From

the data, I found that language proficiency needs fell into one of two subcategories: those related to written and grammatical proficiency and those related to communicative proficiency. Rather than discuss these subcategories separately, I focus on themes common to both. The first significant theme involves participants' identification of specific linguistic skills needed to achieve their goals. Next, I examine linguistic needs for activities in which participants express low confidence. Finally, I raise the question of whether the acquisition of linguistic skills alone is enough or if learners require something more, such as an understanding of how to use language.

Another major component of my hierarchy is tools, a repertoire of skills and competencies participants use to attain their goals. These are similar, to the artifacts that Lantolf (2000) describes as components of sociocultural theory. Artifacts have physical, mental or social representations and through their mediated use, are components of the language acquisition process. The way that the participants employ these artifacts also shapes learners' identities, views of the world and personal philosophies (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). In this study, tools are artifacts that are a component of participants' language acquisition process. Examples of tools include understanding of language acquisition, cultural competence needed to interact with native English speakers, and access to resources. Also contributing to the language acquisition process includes input learners receive, mental processes for comprehending and applying language, output and interactions with others. This process is mediated and the artifacts are a part of the mediation. I discuss the significance of artifacts below in more detail. Additionally, while some learners said explicitly what they thought they needed to learn language and what tools could help them achieve their goals, others expressed less awareness. For the latter, I inferred needs and tools from their statements.

To round out the taxonomy, I discuss the implication of ideology which has an overarching impact on influencing both needs and goals. Throughout

the analysis, I observed how ideology impacted learners' goals and therefore their needs and vice versa. For example, P2 had particular ideological beliefs of how language is learned, such as rote memorization and completing grammatical exercises. As a result, these beliefs shape education-related goals like her general aspiration to "study" rather than being able to name specific objectives that she wanted to accomplish through language instruction. I noticed that ideology explicitly affected participants' identities and also explore how the concept of identity affects participants' needs and goals.

### 5.3 Language Proficiency

In Excerpt 11 (see Chapter 4) P6 described her goal to be understood by Americans when she speaks. I argue that this, along with many similar instances in Chapter 4, requires participants to increase their language proficiency through writing and grammar or communicative means to achieve their goals. However, the purpose of this section is not to deconstruct individual participants' goals and articulate them into linguistic needs. Instead its intent is to focus on explicit instances where participants state that they want to either improve their language proficiency or where it can be easily inferred that improvement of language proficiency would help participants achieve their goals. This is represented in

Table 6. Summary of Needs to Increase Language Proficiency, which equates specific goals to these two subcategories of language proficiency.

**Table 6. Summary of Needs to Increase Language Proficiency**

Need	Goal
Writing & Grammar Learning Opportunities	Improve Writing & Grammar Learn English to help child's academics Build happiness, confidence and self esteem
Communication (incl. Pronunciation) Skills Learning Opportunities	Make Friends Communicate with monolingual spouse Build happiness, confidence and self esteem Reestablish Former Career (Improved) Communication

For example, learning opportunities for written and grammatical linguistic skills meets the goals of improved writing and grammatical skills. Since P3 wanted to improve her written skills to help her son with his academics, her language proficiency need is more acquisition of written and grammatical skills. Learners acquire new language in part by producing some sort of written or spoken representation (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). However, participants in my study were not necessarily cognizant of the role that proficiency or spoken or written representation of language plays in acquisition. Instead, many viewed proficiency only as a means of communication and the end result of a learning process.

I found that for all of the language proficiency needs, there were corresponding tools that were equally or more significant. In the instances where needs include tools and language proficiency, the individual circumstances are much too varied and complex to discuss in terms of each participant. Instead, in my discussion, I examine a few notable patterns of goals that would be met from acquisition of language proficiency. Next, I scrutinize factors that restrict individuals from accessing these tools, such as why P6 may not have regular contact with Americans as in the example referenced above, rather than language proficiency itself. I also explore the idea that participants may not actually need language proficiency but cultural capital.

### **5.3.1 Linguistic Needs**

While improvement in linguistic areas would be welcome and productive for participants, the focus of the study is on more general needs. Additionally, since participants could not always define what they need, mention of linguistic forms is noticeably absent from their responses. For example, no participant identified specific linguistic features such as conjunctions, prepositions, forming past tense, conjugating irregular verbs, forming plurals, etc. he/she felt needed improving. Basturkmen (2006) and Long (2005) explain that speakers have

general ideas of why they need English but are not necessarily aware of all the possibilities of their language use and are therefore unable to offer any alternative answer other than the ones they provided. Additionally, participants' input regarding what they thought they needed to learn language may have only been based on courses that they have taken in the past—courses based on an outdated version of second language acquisition methodology or grounded in no particular theory at all.

Although increased proficiency may help participants feel more confident in their ability to use English, participants' expectations regarding their desired level of proficiency were obviously absent. Language proficiency may have been a difficult concept for them to define, but as L2 English speakers, they may never be satisfied with their level of proficiency, no matter how competent. Participants identified many more contexts in which improved spoken communicative skills would help them achieve their goals. In a more general example, P11 attributed studying in general as the key to improving her proficiency.

#### **Excerpt 20**

This is my {goal}, I want to study and talk very fluently.

I argue that in order to meet the need of language learning opportunities, learners need to acquire specific linguistic components such as use of the past tense or situation-specific vocabulary rather than trying to learn language as one big task. This is both overwhelming for learners and an inefficient approach to language learning.

Accent and pronunciation were also common general themes. I differentiate between the two based on retention of L1 phonological features for the former and breakdown in communication based on phonological delivery for the latter. However, I do not feel that the participants necessarily made this distinction. One distinction between the two concepts in the data can be seen in the interview with P3. She mentioned accent five times during her interview and

said that she wanted less of an accent because it marked her as Hispanic. In her case, the accent is not causing a breakdown in communication, but she felt that her audience judged her because of it. I discuss the implications that this has on identity later in Section 5.5.1. Others, like P7, felt that pronunciation was important. He stressed that his instructors needed to correct his pronunciation in part so that he can be better understood by native English speakers. In his case, the identity of being an L2 speaker of English was not as critical as was being understood, though it could have also played a role. I argue that rather than being something that can be instructed, a change in linguistic pattern or skills in this case may be better achieved through a greater understanding of language learning theory, from which Kavaliauskiene and Kaminskienė (2009) explain strategies may be developed that a learner could employ on his/her own.

What participants viewed as their needs may not be the same as what I view as their needs. I believe that written and communicative learning opportunities are genuine needs, as with many language learners. But rather than being directly related to writing and grammar and communication, these needs have greater implications for participants' ideas about language learning which I discuss in depth in Section 5.4.1.

### *Restrictions*

In this section I am more concerned with what participants did not explicitly identify. Some learners felt that writing presents barriers for them, while others feel it was their oral communication that prevented them from fully achieving their goals. I looked at the factors that perpetuate these barriers and consider different mechanisms to overcoming these needs. For participants who have learned conversational English through contact with native speakers, written instruction at a comparable level matching their communicative

competence would be beneficial.<sup>24</sup> P12 exemplifies this type of learner. In Excerpt 18 below, she expressed that she felt that while her reading is strong, her writing ability had inhibited her from certain opportunities.

**Excerpt 18**

So when I have time my goal is when I have time practice writing, that's my goal...oh yeah I love to I love to taking many, many class I love to do so many thing but think is just writing level has stopped a lot of thing I want to do. But that's ok, there are some thing—there a lot I can do without writing. But I would love to learn someday without worry about writing so I can do, who knows, a lot of things...I'm still learning how to writing English after 31 years. That's my goal for when I have time.

In this case, Participant 12 felt that she had improved her spoken communicative skills through practice, but never had the same opportunity with her written skills. While it was not urgent for her, as discussed in Chapter 4, the same need for writing instruction could be applied to other learners who have learned English mostly through interaction with native speakers rather than through formal instruction.

Conversely, there were situations in which participants were incapable of participating in activities due to their low oral L2 proficiency. P11 was one participant who expressed a need to learn a specific form of language. She explained:

**Excerpt 23**

I asked my husband '----,' is his name, 'say that.' 'What he say? This is a bad word.' 'Really?' ... I need to learn bad words.

She seemed to feel that if her knowledge of slang and less formal English were better, it would improve her ability to parent and communicate with her children. She described why she wanted to understand non-formal English, especially when parenting her younger school-age children. Language instruction that focused on slang or unsanctioned forms of English falls within

---

<sup>24</sup> One side effect of improved written English skills will be improved confidence as discussed in Section 4.3.1.

the realm of critical pedagogy since it is meant to empower learners to understand, participate and challenge social structures (Auerbach, 1986; Benesch, 1993; Edwards, 1991). While one could easily argue that all learners should be instructed from a critical perspective in acquiring taboo or less sanctioned forms of language, I discuss this further in Chapter 6. Participation in events with speakers of the target form of the language will assist learners who need these forms in achieving their goals (Swain & Deters, 2007).

#### *Acquisition of language or cultural competence?*

While participants expressed several areas in which they wanted to improve their written and spoken competence, once examined, the needs appear to be more complex than just improving linguistic skills. Many of the participants' needs in this case have less to do with linguistic proficiency and more to do with cultural competency or communicative competence. As Ellis (1985) explains, these competencies include not only linguistic knowledge, but also the ability to discern how, when and where to use language. To reiterate, this does not discount the necessity for improving language proficiency; however, it cannot be improved to its full potential without learners understanding the cultural connotations related to their goals.

An example of improving communicative proficiency can also be applied to participants' goal of making friends and may rely in part on participants increasing proficiency. While they understand friendship, participants need to understand what specifically American ways of interacting and speaking which includes metaphors and idioms. Yet many L2 English speakers surround themselves with others with whom they have much in common. For several participants (P2, P4, P7, P8), this includes other Spanish speakers. Understandably, friendship with other speakers of the same L1 provides camaraderie and a link to the L1 culture that they could not otherwise find in an English-dominant society. While this domain serves an important and essential



role in the happiness and well-being of the participants, it is also not conducive to increasing English language proficiency or learning to interact with native speakers. I am not arguing that it is advisable or realistic for participants to abandon their L1 domains. However, to improve their proficiency in English, they need to introduce some L2 domains, or situations, in which they feel comfortable. For example, in her interview, P12 attributed her level of English proficiency to her employment and frequent interaction with English speakers. Moreover, successful interaction with native speakers requires more than L2 linguistic competency, which P12 did not recognize, at least in our interview. Participants need to understand cultural nuances as well as being accepted as legitimate speakers of the language.<sup>25</sup>

I found that written and grammatical skill development to assist children with their homework was a more readily apparent example of the necessity for acquisition of cultural competence along with increased proficiency. As discussed in Section 4.2.3, several participants hoped to learn English to aid their children's academics. For example, in Excerpt 6, P4 discussed how she thought improving her written skills would allow her to better aid her son with his homework. She cited examples of incidences when her son had homework problems with which she could not help. As her husband worked out of town, she was often the sole caregiver for weeks at a time. Assuming the role of homework helper may be more realistic for some participants than others because of availability as with Participant 4 or a parent's natural strengths and weaknesses. What all need is a basic understanding of and exposure to the school system. Participants need to understand what is required of their children in order to successfully assist them.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> In section 5.5.1, I explain how that legitimacy relates to identity.

<sup>26</sup> This may be especially difficult when a parent is not familiar with American school system. P3 works as an interpreter in the schools and did not cite this as a noteworthy goal. She, and her professor husband, may already feel comfortable helping their children negotiate the system.

For native English-speaking parents, the knowledge and language that they contribute to their children's education is shaped by years of participation in the American school system. L2 English parents cannot possibly substitute one year or even five years of English language education for the 12 plus years that native speaking parents can contribute. Adding to the urgency of the situation is that children progress through school while parents work on developing language skills—the knowledge and competencies that parents need only become more complex as children advance to the next grade. As the gap widens between the child's academic and linguistic needs and the parents' linguistic skills, the parent becomes less and less able to support his/her child.

Rather than trying to compress 12 years of knowledge into one year or two years of instruction, parents instead need to learn first and more importantly what is expected of their children in the American school system and be able to help them navigate through the demands of academic life. While convincing parents of this may be easier said than done, parents also need to realize that the experience and advice that they bring to the situation, although not from an L1 English perspective, are valid and should not be discounted. Finally, parents also need to understand that not all L1 English parents contribute to their children's education. The idea of L2 English parents' roles are discussed more at length in Section 5.5.2, but P4, for example, reported feeling that she was putting her child at a disadvantage by not being about to contribute like an L1 English parent. This perception of L1 English parent is often grounded in a stereotype rather than real-life personas<sup>27</sup>.

Participants may genuinely want to improve their written skills and grammatical competence. Plainly, the needs they stated, and to some degree the ones I inferred, are both complex and not particularly clear-cut. What participants think they need may not be the best path to achieving their goals.

---

<sup>27</sup> This also blurs into the area of identity, which is discussed in Section 5.5.2.

Understanding the complexity of the situation and the different approaches to their goals could be the responsibility of a language learning program.

## **5.4 Tools**

Tools that participants will need to accomplish their goals are grouped into two major categories: a) understanding of language learning and b) access to monetary and social resources. Access to resources is further broken down into specific resources participants may require in order to accomplish their respective goals.

### **5.4.1 Understanding of Language Learning**

As described above, just knowing that they need learning opportunities to improve their linguistic proficiency is not sufficient for participants to achieve higher levels of proficiency. Participants need to understand some of the theories of language acquisition in order to have realistic expectations for their own language learning and to have more input in their language learning experience. In the following discussion, I look at the role that an understanding of language learning could play to help participants achieve their goals. Yet this discussion would be incomplete without noting how participants' statements, influenced in large part by their own language learning experiences, including what their English L1 spouses have told them to expect, reveal ideas about how they think they learn in general and learn English in particular. I highlight how these statements reflect a lack of understanding of language acquisition. It follows then that an understanding of language learning will have several benefits. First, it will assist learners establish and maintain a bilingual household—a goal many expressed. It will help them employ effective techniques in raising their children bilingually and allow them to be stakeholders in their own education, including aiding participants to overcome the generic term “study” and define specific aspects of linguistic improvement.

An understanding of language learning principles will also support parents in choices they make for their children's education—a priority for all participants with children. By understanding how language is learned, parents will be able to better identify which specific forms of language they need to achieve this goal and how that language is best learned. Two participants, P2 and P11, had goals for their children to learn fluent English. To do this, children need sufficient exposure and an opportunity to practice it (Krashen, 2002). Additionally, bilingualism must be additive rather than subtractive. While subtractive bilingualism means that the dominant language eventually, completely replaces the L1 or non-dominant language, additive bilingualism means that the L1 and L2 complement each other and neither threatens to eradicate or replace the other, (Hamers & Blanc, 1989; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995). Parents need to understand the parameters and the limitations of providing children with exposure. This includes the benefits of being bilingual, which will make parents more invested in raising their children bilingual. In turn, this will help parents better understand their own language learning.

Another concept that an explanation of language learning would help parents understand would be the difference between learning language and learning about a language which is known as the learning vs. acquisition distinction made by Krashen (1982, 2002). Krashen's (1982) acquisition-learning hypothesis refers to the difference in acquiring a language through interaction in the target language culture versus formalized instruction about language. The latter is characterized by ineffective learning; learners may know how to conjugate verbs but are unable to produce them spontaneously in discourse. However, it is not a coincidence that two participants felt that their L1 English spouses "taught" their children English. This points to a common underlying misconception of language acquisition, that language is "taught" rather than "acquired" (Krashen, 1982; 2002). Participants expressed their

ideas about first language learning through the experiences of their children which correlate with the acquisition-learning misunderstanding. P12 explained:

**Excerpt 24**

Me and my boys learn English together, you know we learn together English. Luckily they have good father to taught them right and all that and I was learning with them so I did not teach them lot. I'm really lucky they are really, really intelligent boys, they are really smart boys so they really did not struggling.

It would be more accurate to say that her children were provided comprehensible input, (Krashen, 2002) by their father rather than being taught by him. The assertion that her children were taught English, however, is also echoed by other participants. P11 also relied on her husband to “teach” her children English, and she felt her use of English was a detriment to her children’s language acquisition. Like P2, she wanted her children to speak fluent English.

P12’s remark that since her boys were “intelligent,” they were able to learn language without struggling is also indicative of her beliefs about language learning and a reflection of her own language learning experience. For her, learning English was challenging and she views her children, who never struggled, as intelligent as a result. In this case there is not much of a distinction between L1 and L2 learning, the latter of which some believe relies on aptitude—a person’s affinity for learning language (Hamers & Blanc, 1989). While language learning may require some measure of intelligence, language acquisition does not. But rather than viewing language learning as an inherently human and natural process, P12 viewed intelligence as a relevant variable. Additionally, although there is a distinction between intelligence and aptitude, but P12 may have believed that the two are synonymous.

For the participants, it is important to understand that although language learners may be taught grammatical rules, for example, through formal instruction, not until they actually understand and are able to use the

information spontaneously, do they actually acquire it.<sup>28</sup> An understanding of this distinction will allow the parents—the participants—to be more self reflective in their own language learning and help them cope with feelings of frustration and inadequacy when they do not progress in their language learning at the rate they would like.

For children to remain bilingual, parents ideally need an understanding of types of bilingualism and the difference in first and second language acquisition. To raise children bilingually, parents should have some sort of plan, not just “hope it works out” (Rosenberg, 1996). An example of this would be that each parent uses a different language, respectively with the child or, parents may use one language exclusively at home, and the other language is spoken in the community or school. Another example would be assigning certain domains for one language use and other domains for the other language, such as days of the week or specific situations. Most importantly, in practice, parents need to maintain domains in which language is used.

### *Family Communication*

Participants portrayed a variety of opinions about second language acquisition. An understanding of language learning would empower participants to disregard uninformed advice and promote use of more efficient learning strategies. Often, participants’ ideas of language learning were heavily influenced by the ideas and opinions—usually by a well-meaning though ill-informed monolingual spouse. For example, P2’s husband told her it would take her six years to become comfortable with communication in English. P2 was limited by this and she expressed her frustration with the idea that it would take her such a long time to learn English, which by all accounts, she believed. After

---

<sup>28</sup> P11 and P12 are conscientious of their children acquiring their mistakes and feel that it is detrimental to their English language acquisition. Cummins (1995) cites research that suggests that minority L1 children immersed in the majority L2 in school undergo the language shift process very rapidly and early in their education—proving that minority L1 children have little difficulty developing L2 fluency.

six years in the country, she did feel more proficient, but did not yet feel that she was fully proficient. P2 explains:

**Excerpt 25**

I think so that I still need to practice.

She could be more comfortable at the time of the interview because she was given and therefore had adopted a predetermined amount of time in which it would take her to learn English, though waking up on the day marking six years not fully proficient and likely disappointed at the same time. She viewed native speakers as experts in language learning, as she felt she would be an expert for others learning Spanish, so she had no reason to question her husband's prediction. Finally, P2 did not define any parameters of proficiency including particular tasks that she wanted to accomplish. Instead, she spoke only in terms of larger abstract goals that have no clear path for completion. It is predictable that for the future, she felt that she needed to "practice," but there was no real understanding of individual components that needed to be included in this practice.

In addition to misinformation about the language learning process, participants also reported that their spouses encouraged them to interact in L2 domains that they were not necessarily comfortable and were not beneficial to language learning. One prevalent occurrence was participants learning language in submersive situations that do not provide effective domains for communicative competence. Submersion bilingualism occurs when the learner has little or no knowledge of the L2; however, they are instructed solely in it while their L1 and the accompanying competencies are ignored (Hamers & Blanc, 1989). P11 discussed submersion type situations, which she participated in that her husband felt would help her acquire cultural and linguistic competence:

**Excerpt 26**

... when the car is bad I went to the I think Jiffy Lube but he told me go to Jiffy Lube and you explain. No, I cannot go because I do not have the part of the car or what they need to work in the van. But he send me all the time, you need to learn.

P11's apprehension was understandable regarding submersive type situations like the one she reported interacting in. These have been shown by Skutnabb-Kangas (2004), among others, to be largely ineffective for language learning. Immersion, on the other hand, provides several different methods for learning, which include instruction in the L1 and the L2 to varying degrees or sole instruction in the L2, but with modified forms of the language that promote acquisition. Immersion type bilingual education programs have shown to be effective, whereas submersion have not. The same principle, then, should apply to real-life language learning. Immersion type situations, with some explanation in the L1 would be effective while submersion situations, like the one described above are not. With knowledge of language learning, like the difference and efficacy of submersive and immersive bilingualism, participants could better prepare for these types of situations or lobby their spouses to approach them in different ways.

An understanding of how language is learned will help participants reach both their general and specific linguistic goals. Many participants expressed general goals of "improving English" and "studying." As discussed above in Section 5.3.1, participants explained that they wanted to become proficient speakers. An understanding of language learning would help participants define first what strategies they need to adopt to become proficient speakers, what areas of proficiency they need to improve, and how to improve them. In addition to what an understanding of language learning would add to participants' lives, outside the classroom it would also help curb the use of ineffective techniques and reinforce effective ones. Kavaliauskienė and Kaminskienė (2009), for example, explored learning strategies that 90 language learners employed in



their EFL classes. They recommended that learners become aware of their preferred learning strategies as these strategies can be utilized throughout the learner's lifetime.

One such strategy would apply to learners' approach of language learning. Rather than approaching this as one momentous task, learners should break it down into a predefined task or goal that will help boost their self confidence. Goals can even be small, and perhaps have less to do with language, but are personally meaningful to boost confidence and self-esteem. One method that has worked for P5 was to set goals for herself. In the interview, she explained that she wanted to improve her English proficiency enough to enroll in a mainstream college English course and to take a nursing exam. She described the individual attention she received in a course in a one-on-one conference with the instructor. During the conference the instructor asked P5 about her goals.

#### **Excerpt 27**

Then I just made the goal each day. I need to read 25 pages or something. So then I started to do that and when I could read it, it was—I felt good. I could read it good. Then I wrote thoughts, lots of notes. After I finish it, she (the instructor) check my writing then. That was good experience.

P5 set tangible goals and once she was able to meet them, she felt better about herself. This would be an effective strategy for all of the participants wanting to boost their self esteem. Participants' goals of wanting to be "happy" and attain higher self confidence and self-esteem can largely be met with language learning opportunities. This leads to increased independence, self-sufficiency and flexibility in employment and quality of life. Many participants identified that they would feel better about themselves if they had higher levels of English language proficiency as discussed in conjunction with Excerpt 8 and Excerpt 9. By understanding how language is learned, participants will better understand their own challenges and successes.

Inside the classroom, participants' understanding of language learning would give instructors more credibility and encourage participants to be more open-minded to methodology used by instructors even those that are contrary to what participants view as common sense. Many of the participants expressed unyielding beliefs about language learning, though they may be divergent from what SLA theory suggests. This is common in the area of error correction. Three participants (P2, P7, P11) felt that error correction would help ESL learners. P7 explained:

**Excerpt 28**

So some teachers do not tell you when you are—you have bad speaking. So that kind of things do not help us so its very important if I'm speaking in the wrong way. So this is very important if the teacher tell me you are not pronouncing in the right thing because I learn in that way it's very important to correct the student and let him know that he's making a mistake in pronunciation.

Krashen (1982) explains that effective corrective feedback helps the learner change his or her mental understanding of a rule; however, there are only specific circumstances under which errors should be corrected. Lantolf (2000) argues that in sociocultural theory, learners must understand, apply rules and reproduce correct utterances in order to truly acquire them. Spontaneous, vacuous error correction will achieve neither. Research shows that while some students feel the need to be corrected and prefer feedback, others feel that error correction lowered self confidence and raised anxiety (Krashen 1982; Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Omaggio Hadley, 2001). The same holds true for grammar instruction as discussed in Section 5.3.1. Although participants may have believed that formal grammar instruction was the best way to learn language, they should understand why many instructors choose not to focus on grammar instruction as it results in limitations in spoken utterances as described by Krashen (1992) and focus instead on improving communicative competence. Learners need to understand why instructors may

or may not correct their errors or teach grammar. After this is established, learners will be able to lower their affective filter in terms of instructor contribution to their learning (Krashen, 1982) and expend less energy questioning the validity of the instructor and more time on the context of the course.<sup>29</sup>

While participants did subscribe to inaccurate or outdated ideas of language learning, they also recognized, though not explicitly, situations or conditions that are likely to improve language learning. For example, participants recognized that learning to speak English in different domains would make them more versatile language learners. Participants, though implicitly, reported learning language more efficiently through real-life exposure and situations that gave them practical experience. By understanding how language is learned, participants will be able to position themselves to gain the most from these worthwhile situations.

Participants recognized that not practicing is detrimental to increasing proficiency. On some level, participants understood that a certain amount of interaction is required in order to acquire language. They realized that the interaction they received at home was not sufficient for them to become proficient. P9 talked about her usage of Spanish at home and said that the only practice she got was at LCA.

#### **Excerpt 29**

I really do not have the opportunity to practice at home because my sister and I just speak Spanish and Spanish and Spanish. I just practice when I come here [to LCA]... [laughs].

Implicitly, P9 knew that to increase proficiency, she must have more exposure to and engagement with the language and explains that she thought

---

<sup>29</sup> This is not to say that participants should never question their instructor, on the contrary increased understanding of language learning will allow participants to have a more active role in their education including demanding that instructors fulfill certain needs in terms of course design and instruction. However, with this increased understanding participants can also accept and understand why a course is being instructed in a certain manner rather than resisting it because they do not understand it.

that the classes offered are limiting to someone who does not have a lot of outside English exposure. Another contradiction in the statements made by participants include that they knew what they need to learn language (i.e. exposure,  $i+1$ ) (Krashen, 2002), but did not always provide this in practice for their children or arrange situations in which they had accurate exposure. This shows a disconnect between what participants wanted to do and what they did in practice. Although most participants identified the need, to at least some extent, to have some sort of natural immersion situation in order to increase their proficiencies, when asked how they would teach or about courses that were particularly helpful, many cited more traditional notions associated with learning language. P7 cited the need for homework and courses that forced one to “study hard.” With a better understanding of how language is learned, participants could be more active stakeholders in their and their own children’s education.

#### **5.4.2 Access to Monetary and Social Resources**

Many participants already possessed the world knowledge required to achieve their goals. Many came with solid work ethics, understanding of job requirements and required knowledge and skills. They viewed new or refreshed skills as the key to successful employment. At the same time, skills or knowledge they already possessed may fulfill requirements for employment or achieving other goals. However, without having a native speaker’s competencies and prestige of validity, or cultural capital discussed in Chapter 2, participants were unable to achieve the success they desire. They lacked the cultural capital to participate equally in the dominant culture “market” (Bourdieu, 1991). On the market, goods representative of socioeconomic resources are bought and sold. With no or low cultural capital, participants are not able to obtain the higher quality socioeconomic prestige or privileges that their native English-speaking counterparts are. A good example of this may be seen in

conjunction with participants' goal of communicating and befriending native speakers. For this, participants may need not only language learning opportunities as discussed in Section 5.3.1, but also require cultural competence.

Participants 3, 6 and 10 expressed the desire to improve their English to communicate and make friends with L1 English speakers. In addition to linguistic skills, there is a certain amount of cultural capital and cultural competence that learners need in order to maintain friendships with L1 speakers, which is acknowledged by P5.

**Excerpt 30**

I want to speak proper English and it's difficult. We can never be able to speak like American. I do not have to be that way but I just want to understand what people talk about. I can understand now, but I want to know more. Culture joke or lots of stuff I cannot understand...

Increased interaction with native speakers would facilitate participants' achieving their goals. However, this may be paradoxical, since many participants felt most comfortable speaking with other L2 English speakers or in their L1, but they need more practice in order to increase their L2 English proficiency and feel more self-confident.

Hegemony, which according to Tollefson (1991) is defined as self preservation of ideology through duplication, exists in this example because the market self-perpetuates and consistently controls who may have access to it. Participants' access to resources does not become any easier unless *they* change rather than a change occurring within the market operation parameters. For example, this type of change would include employers hiring employees with appropriate background knowledge, but in need of education in other areas at which native English speakers would excel. However, without interacting with native English speakers, participants do not have access to the culture in which they need to participate in the market, and are denied access by their own lack

of confidence in their deficient capital, by societal forces, or both. Participants all wanted to improve their communicative competence and language proficiency; however, I feel that most do not understand that they also need cultural capital in order to succeed. I agree with Bourdieu (1977), that one cannot be acquired effectively without the other. I started this discussion in Section 5.3.1 and continue it below. The difficulty of gaining access to social and monetary resources is explored below in a variety of contexts.

### *Logistical Obstacles*

Participants felt that they needed additional education either through the University system or a community agency in order to be successful. However, there are some logistical obstacles to participants accessing education. To begin with, participants found that the times at which courses are offered were inconvenient and impossible to work around. For these participants (P1, P4, P7, P8, P11, P12), there must be access to courses at times convenient to them and balanced with the other commitments in their lives. In addition to the time schedule, the time commitment was an obstacle for P11. She felt that to appropriately devote the necessary amount of time to her studies, she would need to rid herself of some of the responsibility she currently had in order to have sufficient time to devote to higher education.

#### **Excerpt 31**

It's too hard because at the University maybe is a lot of homework and I cannot do three or four thing at one time.

While participants may be used to focusing on just their studies in their home countries, as adults with families, that may not be a realistic expectation. This is a challenge that adult learners everywhere face. For these participants, gaining time in their schedule could mean different employment or more flexible employment or, on a more personal level, may require sacrificing family commitments in order to pursue personal interests. Participants may not be at a

point in their lives when they are able or willing to make such a sacrifice. For example, P4 explained that

**Excerpt 32**

I haven't had the chance to study.

For her, the “chance” is her need. A variety of factors may contribute to her perception that she has never had the chance to study. These would include courses at convenient times, at the appropriate level and with relevant content.

Another barrier to attending classes is the responsibility shouldered by the majority of the participants as primary caregivers of younger children. For P11, one barrier to attending the University was the lack of childcare. She explained that insufficient childcare had limited her degree of English language proficiency.

**Excerpt 33**

My English I know now is from here and I should thank the Literacy Council because they can watch my baby for two hours.

P11 desired to have a career in the U.S. and aspired to be a teacher or nurse, but knew she needed to improve her English to be employable. However, it was difficult for her to negotiate accommodating her children and finding language courses that met her needs. P11 lamented that she did not feel that the two hours a week of instruction were enough to meet her language learning goals.

This system is marginalizing in itself and ideological in nature. By only offering courses with a narrow timeframe and with limited options for childcare, the hegemony of the current system is preserved (Tollefson, 1991). In order to acquire the linguistic capital as well as the cultural capital participants need, there would have to be more options for language learning opportunities.

### *Higher Education*

There are a variety of needs for participants expressing a desire to attend higher education. For most, some sort of perceived or real barrier had to be overcome which may be economic, social or cultural. In addition to the barriers discussed above, the cost of attending the University—the only venue with advanced level language classes—can be very expensive. For P8 and P11, the barrier to attending the University was monetary. P11 also explained that her husband was the sole income earner and that their income goes toward paying household expenses and there was none left over to pay University tuition.

#### **Excerpt 34**

Or maybe because it's too expensive over there [at the University]. I can't pay because I said my husband it's too expensive. He needs to pay bills and insurance. It's too expensive for us.

She also explained the paradox in wanting to improve her English through higher education and needing to pay for it while finding childcare:

#### **Excerpt 35**

You know I need to find a job because I need to pay for the University.

Connection with affordable education is a resource that many participants do not have access to. This is another example illustrating how hegemony is perpetuated. Participants cannot afford to attend higher cost English language classes that they believe will propel them to higher socioeconomic success. To save money or to pay tuition, participants only have the option of working low wage jobs and still must find childcare. Childcare, however, is also costly, and participants will save little after all expenses are accounted for. Although low-income native English speakers face the same challenge, L2 English speakers are further disadvantaged because they do not have the linguistic skills required to locate additional resources. With these built-



in barriers, participants are relatively powerless to change the system according to Tollefson (1991).

Even for participants who do receive access to University courses, success is not automatic. Even for native speakers, the University system can be complex. For someone unfamiliar with American education, it can be daunting. Four participants (P2, P4, P8, P11) wanted to establish themselves with a new career in the U.S. While they all acknowledged the need to receive additional training, and in every case a University degree, the participants did not seem to understand what is required first to be admitted to the University in their degree program, secondly what is required to earn a degree, and finally how the degree will lead them to employment in their chosen field. All attended the University in their home countries. There are certainly some differences between their respective University systems and the American system. While some universities have support systems such as advisors, learning centers and resources for non-traditional students, the University of Alaska Fairbanks offers very little to aid part-time students who are not formally admitted to the University.

In addition to understanding what is required to navigate the system, participants also need to achieve college-level proficiency in English—first, to pass the TOEFL, and secondly, to be successful in their courses. As well as never having had the “chance to study,” P4 felt that her writing ability and Spanish accent were inhibiting her from attending higher education. Standardized tests such as TOEFL or COMPASS (a pre-requisite placement test) may act as gatekeepers to University access. Critics of standardized tests (Benesch, 1993) argue that these may act to further weed out students and limit access. She explains, “It also shows that testing, like all aspects of education, is political because it determines who will have access to academic credentials and who will be denied them” (p. 710). Participants would then need to fulfill academic requirements for the degree programs in which they enrolled. They

may have no idea of the demands of these programs. After completing a degree program, participants may need assistance with job placement as a four year University degree does not automatically guarantee a job.

Furthermore, participants wanting to reestablish their careers (P7, P3, P5, P10) need specialized knowledge to do so. They felt they needed to learn the “American” way of performing essential duties, learn specialized English vocabulary or refresh their knowledge in a particular subject. P3, whose field has evolved since she was last employed, felt like she needed to update herself on what she has missed as explained in Excerpt 21.

#### **Excerpt 21**

I want to start to do something here at the University because I think when I came here I did not do anything. I think I have to study if I want to get a job in my area.

Like others establishing a career, P3 needs to understand what classes are available, how to enroll in them, how to pay for them and what is required in order to pass them. Also important is that P3 understands how the classes will lead to employment in her desired field and which classes she needs. Participants must have the appropriate social capital to gain access to the resources that they need to meet their goals,

#### *Employment*

Another goal directly related to establishing a career is the aspiration to become a small business owner. P2 and P4 both expressed an interest in being small business owners. They identified several benefits in this venture; the ability to work from home was one. While three other participants (P7, P8, P12) were successful small business owners, none of them work from home. In order for P2 and P4 to be successful, they must first identify what marketable product they could offer in the capacity they desire. Both need to have a firm understanding of financial and small business principles and practices. Both thought that they will have more time for themselves and their families, P12

talked at length about her hectic work hours. Only after roughly 20 years of building up clientele and saving money she was finally able to take more time for herself. This was clearly not what P2 and P4 have in mind, and they need to have realistic expectations about what small business ownership means.

Participants did not have a clear picture of what is needed to improve their employment situation. The most logical conclusion for the participants was that they need to improve their English language proficiency. This was expressed by seven participants (P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P11) in particular, as well as P11 in Excerpt 16.

#### **Excerpt 16**

Learning English is very important. If you want to continue with your life and to progress, the first thing is to learn English ... I have a problem with my back. And my brother told me you want to go to work in the hotel like a housekeeper, it's too hard {P11} for you, for my problem my back. And then he told me you have to learn very well English and then you find another kind of job. This is true because people came to other country and do not learn the English, work in that kind of job.

P11 believed that improving her English was the key to better employment—a belief that had been reinforced by her family members. While higher levels of proficiency will undoubtedly be beneficial for P11, she did not acknowledge that there may be other competencies she would need to acquire. This is understandably confusing since many participants were gainfully employed in professional positions in their home countries, and they brought those same skill sets with them which now do not serve them in the same way in this country.

For many participants, improving proficiency consists of learning grammar, pronunciation and doing exercises — how many have traditionally studied language. Realistically, improving proficiency includes acquiring not only linguistic capital, but cultural capital that is necessary to navigate the environment. This is an abstract concept and one that most probably have not

considered. The whole issue is rife with conflicting ideologies. Participants need English to obtain employment in a professional position; participants improve English language proficiency by studying in the traditional ways they have been taught.

## **5.5 Ideology**

Participants do not exist in a vacuum; many other factors affected how their goals are shaped. Most of these factors were shaped by either competing or compatible ideologies, all the while impacting participants' needs and goals. Ideology appeared in several different subtopics. The variety of ideologies and their implications follow. While ideology is not a need, it impacts needs and the goals that determine them. I begin with discussing ideological ideas that participants expressed and follow with ideologies impacting participants and their choices. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of participants' identities.

Many participants' remarks in their interviews suggested a belief that rote memorization and grammar instruction were not only valid language learning methods, but the most pedagogically sound. In contrast, Krashen (1992) says that too much focus on grammar can leave learners with less confidence, slower speech rate, inaccurate utterances and overall less competent in the language. Additionally, communicative-type second language learning methodology does not subscribe to this belief. Krashen (2002) contends that relevant input is needed in order to acquire language. Words and rules out of context do not suffice as comprehensible input. According to Lantolf (2000), whose idea of language acquisition goes a step further, the concept of learning grammar and vocabulary needs to be accompanied by a mental or physical representation. Typically, rote memorization and explicit grammar instruction are characteristic of the grammar translation method and do not fulfill these parameters. Bourdieu (1977) argues that grammar in a linguistic sense is limiting and that participants must also learn all the possibilities in which

grammatical forms may be applied. In fact, he goes further to proclaim that acquiring grammar does not equate to acquiring language that can be communicatively employed. That learners believe that there is only one way to learn language, in this case explicit and persistent instruction of grammatical structure, is an example of language learning ideology. Through grammar instruction, students may feel that they are getting what they need to learn language. Since they are not able to acquire the context in which social capital should be used or the accompanying social capital itself, in reality, they are being marginalized simply by the methodology.

Another example of ideology prevalent throughout the study, sometimes explicitly described and at other times merely influential in participants' responses, includes the concept of the American Dream. Perhaps the strongest illustration of the American Dream is small business ownership discussed in Excerpt 15. P2 and P4's somewhat unrealistic expectations about what they could accomplish as small business owners was rooted in the idea that in America anyone can do anything. This was echoed by P12 who described how she worked her way up the socioeconomic ladder.

### **Excerpt 36**

If you work hard, work, work hard you can do anything. That's one thing I find out about America. You have opportunity. If you want to work, if you want to work, you can you have opportunity. It's not like some 3<sup>rd</sup> world country where you want to, but there are not too many opportunity out there so they are struggling. But here you know, if you want to work, if you want to earn money, you can get a job, two jobs working seven days a week like I did.

The concept of equal opportunity associated with the American Dream is strictly ideological (Edwards, 1991; Tollefson, 1991); however, the value of "equal opportunity" could be inferred as commonsense for many since it is an inherent component of American nationalism. However, P12's claim is not feasible for all immigrants. Although those like P12 who are able to assimilate into the mainstream middle class usually enjoy success, according to Garcia

(1995) and Edwards (1991), this does not occur equally for all groups. Others who are unable to assimilate are further marginalized and oppressed as a result (Garcia, 1995).

One common thread throughout the study is that participants believed that there is universality throughout learners' experiences in language learning. This reveals underlying ideology surrounding language, language learning and the role of immigrants in society. The ideology promotes the idea that all immigrants can expect the same experiences from learning language to employment. Hegemony (Tollefson, 1991) is perpetuated since the ideology is self supporting; if all immigrants' experiences are the same, then there is no reason to question the status quo.

Participants' current views of language learning were reflected in what they prescribed for others who also learn English as an L2 and in their belief that there is a universal experience for language learners. For example, P2 described how her son will learn English studying with a tutor:

**Excerpt 37**

She's a nice lady and he keep to speaking and she only speaking English and he can say 'I do not understand, I do not know the word to understand' he makes the faces and pointing. Say 'I do not know' maybe he say 'I do not know' and she maybe try to explain anything what he needs to learn—English, yeah. This is my experience.

P2 projected her own learning experiences onto her child and did not differentiate between the differences in their circumstances. She was already in her thirties when she began learning English and he was only 12. While she had relatively little contact with native speakers, her son had been attending school every day. Her approach to language learning was that one size fits all. This is apparent from the strategies she had employed to help her son learn English.

Other beliefs about language learning that participants expressed were taken from others' experiences. This again reveals the theme of universality in

language learning. P10 discussed the length of time required to live in U.S. to take classes rather than level of proficiency required. In other words, levels of proficiency are measured in length of time lived in the L2 country rather than individual learning experiences.

**Excerpt 38**

Some friends from the University say “ah but you have to go to the Literacy Council. This is more for you because you really do not know much English.” That class was for persons that live here for maybe five years or more. At that time I had three months...

Although it may be logical to assume that a person’s proficiency would increase the longer they live in the L2 environment, what is less certain is the amount of time required for them to be proficient. In the previous excerpt P11 implied that proficiency is reached after five years in the country. This is an interesting contrast with what P2 was told by her husband described in conjunction with Excerpt 25.

This universal approach is also comparable to the attitude toward the rite of passage experience many participants described when obtaining minimum or low wage employment despite the skills they brought with them as described in Excerpt 16. Along with accepting the idea that immigrants must begin in minimum wage jobs as the status quo, it is ideological to assume that immigrants must become fluent in English to be successful. However, many participants expressed such attitudes. I attribute this in part to ESL programs in which participants may have taken part that perpetuate this ideology. Since many programs are funded by outside entities, those entities have some control over the objective and tone of programming. Additionally, some of the programs stem from ideological foundations and resultantly this ideology spills over into the language instruction. P8 described her beliefs about the responsibility of immigrants to learn English.

**Excerpt 39**

you cannot be successful in this country if you do not have good

English. If you want to get a better job, you need better English.

Although this belief is consistently expressed by other participants, it was not necessarily true for P7 and P8 who chose small business ownership as an alternative to the low-wage jobs they felt were their only options with their limited English proficiency. They are examples of L2 English learners who have been successful and have been able to meet some of their goals such as home ownership.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Garcia (1995) conducted a study which showed that despite a low degree of assimilation, a specific Latino community had high levels with socioeconomic success. This suggests that it is not always necessary for groups to assimilate, yet acquisition of American linguistic culture is being promoted as the only path to success in the U.S. Although for many L2 English speakers, minimum wage employment may be a viable option, I feel it is not the only option and a purely ideological one when presented alone.

The belief that there are universal experiences is in itself ideological. Members of the dominant culture and the learners themselves both view the situations described above as commonsense. Believing that all learners experience the same challenges and encounter the same barriers means that learners are less likely to question the unjustness or inequality of a situation. This is significant because this ideology affects participants' goals and needs. Furthermore, it allows the ideology to persist and the same barriers to marginalize others and thereby sustain the existing power structure (Tollefson, 1991).

### **5.5.1 Identity**

The theme of identity was pervasive throughout the study. The goals of establishing or defining identity were stated explicitly by a few participants, but

---

<sup>30</sup> They also acknowledge sacrificing other goals in order to be successful. P8 explains that she does not feel that she can begin any type of degree program or training because she needs to work to support her family. P7 and P8 both admit that this environment is not the best for learning language.



all desired to some extent to establish an identity for themselves in the U.S. More significantly, participants' identities influenced their goals and needs. All participants were struggling to recreate themselves within the confines of the new L2 environment. Many participants not only wanted to restore themselves materialistically, but psychologically to the way they viewed themselves in their home countries. This was evidenced by those who wanted to reestablish their careers. In any case, identity is reconstructed through occupation, participation in capitalism or parenthood. The notion of identity in this study is comparable to that put forth by Norton Peirce (1995): identity is multifaceted, is a site of struggle, can be contradictory, and is ever changing. Additionally, identity is never fixed; it is always changing based on learners' perceptions of themselves and the world and their fluctuating role in it (Norton Peirce, 1995; Swain & Deters, 2007).

Multifaceted identities ranged from that of wife and mother and included what those roles look like as a L2 English speaker, to that identity associated with the L1 culture. The identities of wife and mother or parent and the roles that participants felt they should play were readily apparent. For example, P4 discussed in Excerpt 12 how she wanted to help her son more with his homework. She also elaborated that she did not feel that her language skills were sufficient to help her son as well as she would like. Since her husband, an L1 English speaker, worked out of town, the role of helping their son with his homework fell to P4. In the context of identity, her goals were shaped in part by her identity as a wife and mother. She may not have viewed her own goals as separate but intertwined with those of her family.

All participants are defined by their identities as second language learners and members of a certain class or social structure (Bourdieu, 1977; Tollefson, 1991). Their use of language was both defined by this identity and regulated by this identity. Bourdieu (1977) explains that those who occupy non-

dominant social classes are expected to use certain forms of language and are limited by those forms simultaneously.

Identity is also a site of struggle (Norton Peirce, 1995). Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) found similar results in their examination of L2 learners' reconstructions of their identities within the confines of the new culture. In the context of this study, participants expressed conflicting views about maintaining their L1 identity but identifying themselves as American. For example, P7 and P8 both spoke expressively about their adoption of American identity; however, they both had strong L1 accents—a clear accommodation identity marker (Giles et al, 1991). Speakers may maintain unique linguistic features to maintain identity. In some cases, speakers may make a conscious effort to adopt or maintain subtle linguistic features that mark group identity (Spolsky, 1998). An example of this is clearly illustrated when P4 discussed her accent at length. For example, she explained that she needed to “get rid of some of the accent.” However, she also detailed many of the characteristics of Hispanics and how being Hispanic defined her. These seem to be conflicting components of P4's identity. On one hand, she wanted to participate in American culture; on the other, she remained steadfastly Hispanic. The latter likely had a direct influence on her inability to “lose” her accent. Bourdieu (1977) recognizes that accent regulates social interaction by marking speakers as being members of a certain social class.

Participants also discussed reconstruction of identity to either match their home country or learn to fill a new role. This may be by establishing a career or small business or through pursuing hobbies. For P7 this meant reestablishing himself by obtaining all the things he had in his home country such as a home, career, hobbies and a savings account. While these are largely materialistic, they are also symbolic of what it means to be middle class. However, as discussed above in conjunction with cultural capital and ideology, learners are often denied access to the resources that would allow them to become middle

class. This conflict is a struggle for learners and is perpetuated language use. Consistent with sociocultural theory (Norton Peirce, 1995; Swain & Deters, 2007), the engagement of social interaction with language relegates speakers to a certain class (Bourdieu, 1977).

Participants' goals of wanting to be "happy" and increased self confidence and self-esteem I feel can largely be met with increased proficiency through understanding of language learning, a participatory approach to language acquisition among other concepts discussed in Chapter 6. This leads to increased independence, self-sufficiency and flexibility in employment and quality of life choices. Many participants identified that they would feel better about themselves if they had higher levels of English language proficiency as discussed in conjunction with Excerpt 8 and Excerpt 9. Although all had relatively moderate to high levels of proficiency, most subscribed to the belief that native-like proficiency was required in order to be a legitimate friend and communicator. Bourdieu (1977) explores an expanded definition of communicative competence that would apply to the participants in this study. It includes the capacity of the speaker to command an audience. It is not enough for ESL speakers to have proficiency in the linguistic system of a language; though that too is required, speakers must also convince listeners that they are worth an audience and what they contribute is valid and valuable. In addition, ESL speakers must present their message in a context that is viewed as legitimate and to an audience who is willing to be legitimate listeners. In the current power structure, language is only recognized as legitimate if it is used within the parameters of legitimacy. It is important to note, however, that a speakers' legitimacy may vary between domains.

To be a legitimate language speaker, interlocutors have to have the appropriate cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977; Norton Peirce, 1995). For this reason, participants in this study struggled with the identity of being legitimate speakers of the language. As described in Section 5.3.1, participants with fairly

high levels of proficiency still felt inadequate when it came to communicating with native speakers. Bourdieu (1977) attributes this low self-esteem to the subconscious anticipation of speakers' devalued cultural capital. Through awareness of the market system, possibilities for language use, and practical application, participants may begin to acquire capital and renegotiate their perceived identities.

Another important distinction in defining identity is that it can be conflicting (Norton Peirce, 1995). If we accept the idea that learners have more than one identity such as mother and language learner, then it is also important to realize that identities are not always compatible. P4 represented this paradox: she felt that to improve her proficiency she must seek outside training or study, but she felt guilty about leaving her son.

#### **Excerpt 40**

So it really, really has to be something for me to leave him to go to take a class.

She also stated that she wanted to improve her proficiency, so that she could help him with his academics. She was torn between the two choices. Her identities of mother and language learner in this case had competing objectives and it was clearly difficult for participants to compromise between the two. Rather than sacrificing two or three hours a week to become more proficient, and in the long term, better aid her son, P4 chose to place her identity as a mother first. P4 may not recognize the irony that her son could be greatly benefited if she accommodated her identity as a language learner.

#### *Conclusion*

Participants' needs as determined by their goals are complex and contradictory. While improved written and oral linguistic proficiency will certainly meet participants' needs, solutions are often more complex than that. In addition to overlapping in the taxonomy, both proficiency and tools are more

greatly influenced by ideological forces. Ideology is influential over the social and cultural capital that participants need to meet their goals as well as the ideas that participants have about how language is learned. Finally, ideology influences the ideas of identity that participants have constructed. In Chapter 6, I explore how programs could meet the identified needs of participants in light of the conflicting ideologies.

## **Chapter 6**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I discuss and analyze the final research question: “How could programs meet learners’ needs?” and comment on implications for future language programs and research. Program objectives are based on participants’ identified needs presented in Chapter 5. A number of factors contributed to the limitations of these findings. Participants involved in this study had a wide range of goals, so it was difficult to categorically say that one program fits all.

Table 7. Summary of Services Participants Used summarizes the services that participants used in the area. While not every service is explicitly identified below, the reader can infer how participants' experiences shaped their responses. When asked about their favorite courses in Fairbanks, many participants were hesitant to designate one as "their favorite." This could have been for a number of reasons. Participants often stated that they had found all classes useful and interesting and that they always learned something in the classes they took. Some said they enjoyed meeting other people, and that experience alone was worth the course. However, participants may have been hesitant to label a class their favorite for fear of appearing ungrateful, uncooperative with what was asked of them in class, or unwilling to learn English. For this reason, participants did not offer much feedback on how they felt their needs were met. I discuss below the more significant responses from participants and what this contributes toward answering the research question.

**Table 7. Summary of Services Participants Used**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Services Used</b>
P1	UAF
P2	ALPA, UBC, LCA, UAF/TVC
P3	LCA
P4	LCA, ALPA
P5	UAF Summer Sessions, UBC
P6	UBC, UAF
P7	LCA, UBC, ALPA
P8	LCA, UBC
P9	LCA
P10	LCA
P11	UBC, LCA
P12	None

ALPA=Adult Learning Programs of AK

LCA=Literacy Council of AK

TVC=Tanana Valley Campus

UAF=University of Alaska Fairbanks

UBC=University Baptist Church

## **6.2 Linguistic Needs**

As discussed in Chapter 5, all participants had linguistic needs, that when met, would help them achieve their goals to improve language proficiency. This need, however, does not exist in isolation just as language without context is essentially meaningless. In the previous chapter, I described how improving language proficiency is interconnected with the other identified needs of understanding language learning and access to social and monetary resources. Furthermore, linguistic needs were varied for individual participants. There was not one particular class that could possibly meet the needs of all and it was beyond the scope of this study to determine every linguistic need for every participant. Instead, I found that potential ways in which programs could meet the linguistic needs of participants, could be integrated in the other identified themes: understanding of language and access to monetary and social



resources. Discussions of linguistic needs are thereby included in the subsequent findings.

### **6.3 Tools: Understanding of Language Learning**

Many participants overtly stated that they needed formal instruction to learn language. However, not all language is learned through formal instruction. Often language is efficiently and effectively learned through native speaker interaction, hands-on trainings, dialogs and exploration of social structures. This, along with other myths about language learning described in Chapter 4, is the reason that participants need an understanding of language learning as detailed in Chapter 5. What follows are the different implications for programmatic implementation. I begin first with a general discussion of misconceptions about language learning and then lead into specific circumstances in which language learning theory would be beneficial for learners.

I feel that there are parts of several theories that are relevant to second language acquisition, such as Krashen's (1982) comprehensible input theory ( $i+1$ ), Long's (1996) interaction hypothesis and Schumann's (1978) acculturation. The most pertinent theory is that which includes an essential social component. Sociocultural theory, described by Lantolf (2000) is particularly relevant because of its holistic approach to language acquisition. The idea that learners need input, output, a mental representation of language and a social context to use it in completes the process. I am especially attracted to the Poststructural framework of SLA as described by Norton Peirce (1995) which was informed by SCT. Poststructuralism pays special consideration to the idea of negotiated, and constantly fluctuating identity which was consistent throughout the study. Although it may not be the most applicable in every language learning situation, it was especially significant to this study because of the challenges that these learners faced. Also significant is the idea that learners must convince their audience that they are legitimate speakers of the

language, just as they must view themselves as legitimate speakers of the language. With this in mind, I feel that language learning programs of every level should include some type of explicit instruction for how language is learned. Furthermore, program methodology should adhere to, and be characteristic of, the type of language acquisition theory it promotes.

While I feel that there is no place for lessons built around explicit grammar instruction, there are still classroom opportunities that present themselves as teachable grammar moments. This is significant because so many participants identified grammar as an area they wanted to improve. I agree with Canale and Swain (1980) in their recommendation for the use of a functional syllabus in a communicative-type approach to language instruction. The functional syllabus, also known as the functional-notional syllabus (Savignon, 1991), is characterized by the use of communicative situations based on actual types of activities that learners may encounter. I feel that although different types of syllabi may work better for different groups of learners based on their goals, this one is particularly relevant to the participants in this study because of the types of goals they identified. These goals, detailed in Chapter 5, are less academic in nature and more pragmatic. They include communicating with a monolingual spouse, obtaining employment, and making friends. The functional-notional syllabus is particularly useful for learners who may not do well in grammar exercises, but have an easier time participating in real-life activities. Additionally, students who are instructed in courses that follow the function-notional syllabus model are shown to have more positive attitudes toward native speakers (Savignon, 1991). In my analysis below, I focus largely on communicative classroom activities that follow a functional-notional syllabus model.

Another common misconception that participants expressed was that instructors should explicitly correct learners' pronunciation. However, there is a difference between incorrect pronunciation that leads to a breakdown in

communication and pronunciation that more closely resembles phonological features from the L1, yet is still comprehensible. The prior situation, I believe, should be addressed by instructors in some way. For example, instructors may use recasts or ask a question clarifying meaning. The latter is more complicated. An imbalance in error correction may lead to low communicative competence, or ability to function in a real-life situation (Krashen, 1982). The opposite is true, Ellis (1990) explains, for classrooms that focus on accuracy: students may be able to produce correct grammatical forms, but cannot complete simple real-life tasks.

Rather than explicitly correcting learners' pronunciation, instructors could explain where sounds originate in human mouths, from a phonological perspective. This would include a greater understanding of how language is and can be learned, and students could use this knowledge to enact change in their own utterances if they felt it was important. However, as described in the discussion of accommodation theory (Spolsky, 1998), accent is more complicated than to be merely explained by a simple understanding of language learning. It includes a complex combination of language acquisition and ideological ideas about identity.

First, instructors should discuss the implications that pronunciation has for identity. For example, when speakers feel more comfortable in an L2 environment, they may sound more like native speakers and the inverse is true when they feel uncomfortable (Spolsky, 1998). Notably, students may feel like more legitimate speakers and less marked with more American sounding pronunciation, so inclusion of Bourdieu's (1977) definition of a legitimate language learner is particularly relevant and could start the dialog about this complex topic.

For many, aiming for native-like pronunciation is neither a good use of time nor necessarily achievable. In Chapter 5 I discussed the differences between retaining L1 phonological features, which I call accent, and a

breakdown in communication—pronunciation. Learners need to understand that for reasons including the affective filter, acculturation, accommodation theory, the age at which they acquire the language, detailed in Chapter 2, they may never and obtain a native English accent. Furthermore, it is important that learners also understand that there is no one “correct” way to speak English. Within the language, there are a variety of majority<sup>31</sup> dialects that have accent variations.

Since many participants are so strongly convinced of the importance of accent, they will need to be persuaded otherwise. One place to start would be to use prominent L2 English-speaking individuals as examples of successes. On a national level, the class could discuss immigrants like California’s governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, who has a marked non-English accent. A guest speaker, like Participant 12, could also discuss her success despite maintaining L1 phonological features in her spoken English.

Instead of focusing heavily on accent, courses should more centrally focus on repairing conversations in which a breakdown in communication occurs, rather than trying to acquire English phonological features when their speech is otherwise comprehensible. Some examples of this may occur when instructors provide learners with phrases that they could comprehend and use in situations where a breakdown in communication happens. Learners could practice these phrases with each other in pairs. Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin (2005) conducted a study in which they found that learners naturally become aware of the uses for language through employment of conversation repair strategies, but recommend that specific instruction in pragmatic use of language would further help learners hone their language abilities. Most importantly realistic expectations of acquiring accent will also help learners set realistic goals. In sum, I feel that an understanding of language learning would help learners

---

<sup>31</sup> Majority here refers to the segment of society that has the control over language policy and by which standards for acceptable use of language are judged.

refocus their efforts on more realistic goals while building their confidence in language learning ability.

Debunking myths about language learning is just as important as teaching learners how they learn language. In a sense, instructors must create a new learning reality. A program should offer participants an understanding of language learning theory and methodology to influence learners' preferences and expectations, such as the use of grammar instruction and determining reasonable goals.

### **6.3.1 Independent Strategies**

Since there are sometimes limited options for participants to learn language in a formal context, and participants have constraints (i.e. childcare, monetary cost, schedule) on their availability, one option would be for programs to help students become self-sustaining language learners. This sustainability would include more autonomy via an understanding of language learning. Learners will better understand which situations promote improved language proficiency while discontinuing those strategies that impede it. As such, learners could adopt and employ strategies on their own that are conducive to language learning. Examples of this might include blogging about their experiences or collaborating to provide a resource for other language learners.

Students could work on individual blogs to describe language learning challenges, specific positive or negative situations, provide lists of resources for other language learners, discuss language learning beliefs and more. Similarly, learners could collaborate on a wiki to explain or explore concepts not covered in depth in class. For example, these might include grammar points and additional vocabulary. While this is an out-of-classroom activity, participants are able to have meaningful interaction in the target language. What they write would be based on prior language interactions (i.e. input). Their mediation and understanding of the experience would shape their response (i.e. output) in the

blog or wiki. This format would also allow others to comment, perhaps in a forum, which further provides a social context, input and mediation. Learners would also have the ability to respond to comments, further perpetuating the language acquisition process. Although in a communicative classroom, there is less of a written emphasis and more of a verbal focus, this may be one method for participants who wanted to improve their written language proficiency. In order to incorporate verbal output, learners could also record podcasts to post on their blog or wiki. As described above, these could be in response to another learner's podcasts. While these strategies may be valuable, it is also important to recognize that one would probably not acquire language alone with them. Their use is one of many language learning situations that would prove to be very significant.

Also important is that learners feel respected. By capitalizing on participants' past learning experiences and practices, instructors validate and empower participants. One example of this was described in Chapter 5 and includes participants acknowledging that more exposure and interaction with the target language increases their proficiency. Since it is essential to consider learners' past (historical) experiences (Norton Peirce, 1995; Swain & Deters, 2007; Tollefson, 1991), programs could begin building strategies based on what participants already do correctly, rather than focusing on what they may be doing wrong. Essentially, instructors are teaching strategic and discursive competence, all components of communicative competence, described by Canale and Swain (1980). Strategic competence refers to "verbal and non-verbal communication strategies" that are needed in situations in which there is a breakdown in communication or when a learner's linguistic ability is not developed enough for a particular situation (p. 30). Discursive competence, a subset of a broader type of sociolinguistic competence, refers to essentially the subliminal rules for discourse in a particular language. These rules focus specifically on the social appropriateness of what someone has said and

whether it is grammatically understandable. As discussed above, Canale and Swain (1980) recommend that these types of competence should be instructed through a communicative approach. This type of situation, in which learners can reflect, accomplishes that.

For example, many participants in this study have shown accurate insight into language learning, not necessarily based on what they have been told, but on their experiences. Using this as a starting point in a discussion about language acquisition would also be convincing to learners. For example, instructors could begin by asking “What happens when you are around other English speakers a lot? How can this experience be helpful to you as a learner?” Instructors will be able to connect to learners and to create teachable moments that can be linked to how language is learned. As a result, learners become more connected to the learning process.

While this may be the first step in promoting autonomy, students must also want to be independent learners. Participants in this study described a variety of situations, suggestive that they are willing to learn on their own. Littlewood (1996) identifies this motivation as a key component of autonomous learning. When asked what they did outside of formalized classes to help themselves learn English, five participants (P1, P2, P6, P7, P8) said that they watched TV. P7 and P8 said they found that using closed captioning on the TV helped improve their comprehension. Three participants (P1, P7, P8) also cited listening to the radio in English for additional exposure. P6 and P12 said that they read to help themselves learn English.

While these efforts alone are not enough to vastly improve learners' proficiency, participants were doing what makes sense to them to increase input and create context or artifacts for linguistic representations (Lantolf, 2000). Although the opportunity to use the language in this context is missing, both the willingness and the strategies as part of a larger system are promising. Instructors could incorporate the strategies that learners are already employing

in the classroom by introducing the engagement needed to promote language acquisition. For example, instructors could hold discussions in class regarding what learners are already watching. If learners watched the news and then each discussed one segment or news feature, their classmates are provided with a domain conducive to language acquisition and are learning about current events. This also gives participants an opportunity to explore inequalities and cultural differences.

Similarly, if participants already are reading to learn English, the class could read a book together. This is similar to what was being done at the Literacy Council of Alaska at the time of the interview. Five participants (P2, P8, P9, P10, P11) were taking a class that was reading the book *When I was Puerto Rican*. During the class meetings, they reported discussing what happened in the book and new vocabulary. With this nature of guidance and application of language acquisition theory, these types of opportunities can be more purposeful and less subconscious.

In order to achieve autonomy, Littlewood (1996) describes how learners must be given opportunities to use language in domains in which they feel are safe. Put into practice in the classroom, this confidence could be applied to their real lives. P3, who had attended the conversational English class I taught, commented on the safeness of that domain.

**Excerpt 41**

Was casual, it was like we are between friends talking. I do not feel like I have to answer right because something bad is going to happen.

In contrast, other participants also described domains in which they harbored apprehension about speaking English. One example includes P10 who described her anxiety at not being able to “correctly” speak in English to native speakers in public.



**Excerpt 9**

... Sometimes I do not do because I am afraid to do....I feel scared and afraid a simple question I do not sometimes I cannot do a simple answer. Oh a big problem in my mind to look at the correct word. I need to feel better with myself.

Confidence is another component of autonomy. Participants in this study described how they needed to feel more confident in their language abilities. The development of a safe domain for language use is the first step to creating autonomous learners, another goal expressed by participants. By understanding that using incorrect applications of the language is normal and a natural part of the acquisition process, learners may feel more at ease. Littlewood (1996) advocates instructors' encouragement of learners to take risks with language use, make errors and feel secure with those utterances. Some examples of types of risks that learners may take include using language creatively and the use of cognitive strategies such as guessing from context. Use of these strategies will help learners become more confident when interacting with target language speakers.

Examples of risk taking situations include role plays in which learners practice saying new things. They would be encouraged to try to express ideas that they have no vocabulary for and to be comfortable doing so. Learners could also practice short exercises in which they were shown a picture of a scene and they would describe it to a classmate. To enforce strategies of guessing from context, explicit examples could be instructed, like the meanings of common prefixes and suffixes, for example. Learners would use this background knowledge to deconstruct information that was unfamiliar to them. Another type of instruction might include giving learners only carefully selected partial information about a particular scenario and ask them in groups to create some type of summary of what occurred. Groups would then compare their summaries to the complete scenario and a discussion would follow about how learners could employ this in other contexts.

Autonomy in language learning is related to other areas of autonomy in participants' lives. As participants become more confident about their language proficiency, they will become more proficient in other skills such as communication and personal goals. An example of this is evidenced by P2 who detailed her journey to becoming more autonomous in Fairbanks—a goal that she had apparently already met. She talked about her apprehension about driving in Fairbanks:

**Excerpt 42**

I can take the bus it's so easy to me, somebody drive for me because I have the accidents and snow is coming and is so dark and I'm feeling so nervous to driving because I never drove back in Columbia.

She followed up later in the conversation by explaining

**Excerpt 43**

But now I'm feeling a lot better, I'm feeling familiar, I'm feeling I'm from here, I'm feeling I want to stay here.

She juxtaposed her personal feelings about being an immigrant, learning English and contending with a different culture with her gradual adaptation to driving in the Fairbanks area. She started out being relatively unfamiliar with both and at the time of the interview could negotiate both. Learning to drive in Fairbanks was used almost metaphorically for her experiences learning English and learning about American culture.<sup>32</sup> When participants feel better about language production, they may be more likely to run errands on their own (in the case of P10) or to sign up for a community event, for example. Although there was probably no specific form of language that could have helped P2 become a better driver in Fairbanks, a classroom should provide a venue for open discussions about learners' insecurities. By verbalizing their fears and concerns, participants use language and feel less alone. This would also provide an opportunity to share knowledge of resources which could be either

---

<sup>32</sup> No particular language program can be attributed toward her success.

initiated by the instructor or shared by other classmates. This relates to another of Littlewood's (1996) findings that learners need to use language in a personal context rather than in preformulated situations. Understanding that language acquisition occurs in more personalized contexts will help learners come to expect nothing less. Learners are then able to own what they say, strengthening the mediation process and creating stronger connections to the artifacts used to acquire, understand and produce language (Lantolf, 2000).

### **6.3.2 Workshop for Spouses**

As discussed in Chapter 4, much of what participants believed about language learning was influenced by what their spouses told them. As native English speakers without training in second language acquisition, the spouses—though well-meaning—provide naive information about language learning. To counter this, language programs could offer an introductory one or two session workshop that presents different theories of language learning and practical strategies that spouses could employ to help their non-native English speaking spouse.

In Chapter 4, I discussed how some participants were placed in submersion type situations by their spouses as a “way to learn.” The course should then cover for example, the differences between immersion and submersive situations (Hoffman, 1991). Part of the course could be a simulated submersive experience for the native English speaking spouse so that he/she understands the difficulty of learning language in that way. For example, spouses may be given a task to complete by a speaker of a language other than English. For the entire time, the person directing the exercise uses only the non-English language and does not modify his or her speech to the benefit of the spouses. The spouses must work together to solve this task, but the only resources they have are in this non-English language that they do not know. After a specific time period, the class switches back to English and reflects on

the emotions they experienced during the exercise and their reactions. This short exercise would be a valuable step toward helping the native English speaking spouse “walk a mile” in their husband/wife’s shoes and hopefully promote more understanding and empathy.

Another topic the workshop could cover might be strategies for raising bilingual children, which was identified as a goal in Chapter 4. The different strategies, such as one parent one language (Rosenberg, 1996), could be described, as could the benefits of bilingualism. Spouses may have different ideas about the benefits or detriments of raising bilingual children. It is important that factual information be presented. This would include the idea that bilingual children have academic, cognitive and social advantages (Cummins, 1981). It is often a misconception that bilingual children are “confused” by the two languages because of codeswitching or that a delay in speech is a sign of larger problems, when on the contrary these are normal characteristics of language acquisition in children (Hoffman, 1991). Both parents, but especially the native-English speaking spouse, should understand that there will be some differences between adult and children’s acquisition, but that children benefit long-term from being bilingual. An important take-away from the workshop would be a short handout of bulleted points and resources for more information to include a local expert in bilingualism.

Finally, and importantly, participants in this study were given varying perspectives on how long it would take them to learn English. There is really no set length of time it takes learners to acquire a new language as there are many variables. Some of these include quality and quantity of interaction with the target language and a learners’ intended use for the target language. The workshop should explain to spouses what to expect. They should understand the difference between learning and acquisition, and that language is not acquired through error correction (so do not do it) but through engagement and practice. Practice might include talking about a variety of topics. P5 commented

that she became too familiar in speaking with her husband, and this gave her a false sense of confidence in her language ability. Because they always discussed the same range of topics, she was unable to creatively use the language in new domains. To avoid this, the native-English speaking spouses should be encouraged to discuss a wide range of topics with their L2 English spouses including work, politics, the news, hobbies, sports, etc. thereby promoting the widest range of creative applications for language. Hopefully spouses gain a better appreciation for those learning a second language and learn to limit progress not to months or years but be open minded about and an asset to the learning process.

### **6.3.3 Instructor Contribution**

In addition to promoting an understanding of language learning to benefit participants and their spouses, programs that are instructing ESL learners also need a cohesive approach to language learning. Based on participants' responses regarding the programs they have participated in, programs do not always adhere to an informed variety of language acquisition methodology—sociocultural theory or a communicative-type approach, in particular. Learners are acutely aware, though they may not be able to describe their experiences in terms of second language acquisition, of the shortcomings this presents.

To begin with, participants need to buy into the validity of the curricula and the instructors themselves in order to get the most out of it (Cotterall, 1995). For example, participants in this study who took classes from volunteers rather than trained instructors remarked on the difference in quality, either perceived or real, that the classes displayed. P7 cited the instructors' volunteer status at one program as a result of the classes not meeting his expectations

#### **Excerpt 44**

That classes are people who are volunteers give us classes that are is not high level classes they are not teachers, just volunteers. These are good classes, but not the best.

P5 also felt that the volunteer nature of the instructors did not contribute what a trained instructor would.

#### **Excerpt 45**

I took [Program X's] English class, [Program X]. But they are not professional, they are just normal people. So then when I ask about grammatical stuff, they do not understand. So then 'it's just like this,' just 'you should remember.' Of course English has lots of that kind of thing, but they were just not professional. There's just no comparison with the professional teachers.

The “normal” people P5 referenced presumably do not have any background in language acquisition theory or methodology. Learners are aware at some level, as voiced in the above excerpts, when their instructors do not have the background knowledge necessary to teach a course. As demonstrated with participants' native speaking spouses, knowing the language does not make one an expert in teaching it. Instructors need to have a background in theories such as Krashen's (1982) Monitor Model and Sociocultural Theory (Lantolf, 2000) to appreciate and put into practice the importance of input, affective filter and engagement in the target language. Programs owe it to the learners to employ, train or sponsor instructors who have some understanding of language learning. The instructor's language instruction credentials should also be shared with the learners. It is dignifying to give learners the courtesy of knowing that they are being provided with trained instructors. As a result, they will be more apt to “buy in” to whatever methodology the instructor uses. To ignore this is simply marginalizing the learners and sends the message that they are not worth enough to provide trained instructors.

At the same time, an understanding of language learning would empower students to self-censor in courses that may or may not be meeting their needs. If a learner is aware that, for example, grammar translation exercises are not conducive to communicative language learning and he/she is enrolled in a course that has students largely translating sentences or conjugating verbs, then the learner will be able to make an informed decision on

whether the course is worth his/her time and effort. Likewise students may be encouraged to seek out courses that promote language learning including those rich in interactive situations.

Even with this understanding, instructors should be prepared to justify their instructional style. Without a firm basis of why something is being presented in a particular way, learners are more likely to disregard (or essentially raise their affective filter) the content and have less tolerance for the message or objective the instructor is trying to convey. In addition to understanding how they learn language, participants have to be sold on an instructor's language learning methodology. Some of the participants commented on what they perceived or heard was unhelpful about a particular course at the University. For example, P6 described taking a course from one program in the area, and although she said it made her feel more confident about her language abilities, she did not feel it was a particularly valuable course because the course was largely communicative in nature. Although the instructor's methods may have been completely sound, P6's lack of background in the importance of conversation and interaction versus her ideas about how language is learned (i.e. thorough explicit grammar instruction) influenced her perception of the course.

At the same time, programs need some continuity between courses. Courses that fail to adhere to a uniform standard of objectives within the same institution, fail to empower learners and instructors. This is problematic because ESL courses in higher education are typically marginalized and a lack of cohesion further places the discipline at a disadvantage. Benesch (1993) and Auerbach (1991) attribute this at the University level to the low status of ESL within the institution. An example of this may be seen with P6 and P5's contrasting experiences with the same course at the University. In this case, although both took the same course, each encountered a very different curricula, set of learning objectives and variety of language. As discussed in the

prior paragraph, P6 felt the course was less than worthwhile. Whereas P5 described taking the same course with a different instructor and she had a vastly different experience. In Chapter 5, P5 described the personalized attention she received and how worthy she felt as a result. In particular, she found the instructor's responsiveness to meeting her needs very welcoming and helpful. Her goal was to take a placement test to place into a higher level English class and to enroll in a nursing course. She also wanted to improve her reading abilities. She explained that it was difficult to discipline herself to do this on her own, but she found the instructor's encouragement and tailoring of the course to meet her needs motivating. This course was truly a learning experience for P5. The response and resourcefulness of the instructor was very important to her and it changed her perception of instructors.

Most apparent from P5 and P6 contrasting experiences is that the inconsistency in instructors' philosophies and teaching styles across courses offered at the same agency can lead to a wide range of experiences for participants. While neither instructor may have been marginalizing, the lack of unity is marginalizing in and of itself. Because these courses have low academic status, apparent from the non-standardization of the course, it does not serve to challenge the status quo (Auerbach, 1991; Benesch, 1993).

An understanding of language learning would be beneficial for language learners many times over. It would not only empower their learning capacity and practices, but it would inform those around them. Most importantly, it would allow them to begin to examine, comprehend and dismantle the ideology that accompanies language learning and language learners.

#### **6.4 Tools: Access to Social and Monetary Resources**

As identified in Chapter 5, participants need access to various social and monetary resources in order to achieve their goals. However, this access is heavily influenced by very powerful ideologies also discussed in Chapter 5. To



meet this need, participants require programmatic courses that will help them explore these ideologies, engage them in participatory approach to language learning, and meet their peripheral needs in terms of childcare, cost and schedule. I begin by discussing which types of programs could deliver such courses and continue by describing different approaches that programs could take to improving access.

There are several models of programs that could offer courses to participants. In some communities, this is done by a newcomer center. In others, the Cooperative Extension Service, the outreach branch of land-grant universities, provides English language instruction services and guidance. One participant has a specific model in mind, in particular at an institute that he describes below. For P7, there was no place in Fairbanks that offered courses which satisfy his language needs.

#### **Excerpt 46**

Well there is no place like with a good English class—

*There's not?*

No there's not, specific I mean kind of institute only English for beginners or people who is no English speakers so we—I took classes were small place and the kind of classes are not enough to learn English and you do not have the opportunity to choose your class so you have to take the classes that they have but you cannot choose classes.

P7 continued a little while later that his ideal situation would be “One place where you can choose your schedule and your level.” This type of program would serve as a clearinghouse of sorts for a variety of participants' needs. To begin with, such a program would offer affordable childcare. Many participants in the study, especially those with younger children, bemoaned the lack of available, affordable childcare in Fairbanks. A couple of language learning agencies offer childcare to their constituents; P11 described how LCA was one of the few places she could receive childcare while learning English. This could be used as an example for the institute model. Ideally, parents would

be able to learn English throughout the day while their children learn English in day care. Language learning agencies would be duly serving their populations with childcare options, perhaps in conjunction with an already established childcare agency. Another option would be a low-cost, parent co-op in which parents trade time for language instruction.

Another significant component of the language institute would be a variety of times in which courses were offered. Participants responded that one restriction was on their schedules and as a result course offerings proved almost impossible to attend. P7 described the limitation of one program's schedule including the times at which courses are offered.

**Excerpt 47**

In [Program Y] most of the class are at noon and nobody working can go there at noon so.

Programs need to offer courses at a variety of times to accommodate both working individuals and stay-at-home spouses. Weekend offerings would also accommodate those who work multiple jobs or have non-traditional work schedules. To determine the best times to offer courses, institutions could begin by polling potential participants.

In addition to the times, courses need to be offered for speakers at a variety of levels, contrary to survivalist curricula which often promotes fast-tracking. Participants in this study complained that there were not courses accessible to them at the levels they needed. P3 and P4 both felt that the level of English taught at one local program was for beginners and not for more intermediate or advanced speakers such as themselves. As a result, they felt that there was no place for them there. Additionally, learners still need to be welcomed even if they have met the goals of traditional fast-tracking programs such as employment. For example, P4 felt that already employed ESL learners were less of a priority at Program Z.

**Excerpt 48**

But the more you know the less you become important. Because they have to help the people that does not know much, so then second priority because you already have a job and you can express yourself somehow enough to keep up with that job, and then that's it.

Although P4 had exceeded the level of the courses available, she still wanted to learn language. This is a clear example of marginalization, though perhaps unintentional as the program may have limited capacity to serve learners. In any case, it is important to have language courses available to participants who want to learn, no matter what the level.

Finally, learners need to have affordable language courses available to them. Participants in the study expressed discouragement with attending the University in part because of the high cost. Examples of this are shown by Extension outreach which is delivered at little or no cost to the community, and newcomer centers which are funded by grants and cost constituents little or nothing. Therefore it is possible for this service to exist.

In addition to the characteristics of this type of program which include affordability, convenience, accessibility, on-site childcare and multi-leveled instruction, it is also important to consider as different types of resources that an ESL institute would have to offer. To begin with, the program would have a participatory approach to language learning which I discuss next. Additionally, the program would bring resources identified in Chapter 5 within reach of participants.

**6.4.1 Participatory approach to language acquisition**

One of the main tenets of the study is that applications of language acquisition that are being used are not always effective for participants. This includes grammatically-oriented lessons, rote memorization and limitations on speech production. Instead, programs need to take a participatory approach to

language learning. Learners need to be presented with interactive situations in order to facilitate language learning in and outside of the classroom.

Linguistically, learners need to be given the opportunity to use language spontaneously. Littlewood (1996) recommends allowing learners to choose the context, themes and goals of language learning courses. In this way, learners have more authority in areas that have traditionally been at the discretion of the instructor. Finally, learners need to be able to use language in a context and manner of their choosing to encourage spontaneous language production outside of the classroom. Norton Pierce (1995) describes Classroom Based Social Research (CBSR), a model based on the poststructuralist theory of second language acquisition. In this model, language learners become ethnographers. An example of this methodology may include participants reflecting on their language learning experiences. First, learners explore domains in which they may use the target language with native speakers. Learners then reflect on these situations and contexts. These reflections and any observations are recorded in writing by journaling. Special mention is made of any extraordinary occurrences. Finally, learners collaborate and share their data.

Similar to critical pedagogy, this model focuses on issues of power relations, the identity of the learner in social context, and awareness of the legitimacy of the learner to speak and learn in an L2 domain. Norton Peirce (1995) explains, "It may help students understand how opportunities to speak are socially structured and how they might create possibilities for social interaction with target language speakers" (p. 26). One participant was acutely aware of underlying ideology in one of her language courses. She felt, among other things, that one agency had ulterior motives in offering ESL courses. Since she did not agree with that ideology, she decided not to attend any longer. A program that used CBSR would give P5 a domain in which to discuss her experiences and reflect on the disparate power relationship between language

learners and that agency. Throughout this process, according to Norton Peirce (1995), instructors help students explore the existing power relationships and their place within it. With this understanding, students are able to begin to change and challenge their social status.

Another “participatory approach” that cannot go unmentioned and would also allow learners to explore the disparate power relations they face—the theory that informed this study—is that of critical pedagogy. Although this can be integrated with CBSR, it deserves its own recognition because of its historical importance and powerful implications. Any language course presented by a program for learners should take a critical approach. Although I had hoped to hear more from participants about critical theory in the courses they have taken, the concept is both abstract and unfamiliar to them. Additionally, some may not have had the language proficiency to explain critical theory. As a result, I quickly abandoned my focus on learners’ experiences with critical pedagogy. One notable example, however, includes P4 who really appreciated her instructor explaining bad words to the class after one of her classmates misinterpreted an obscene gesture.

#### **Excerpt 49**

...the teacher was like ok I have to show you, I got to tell you guys that’s not good, that’s not the only way. So I have to tell you these things that you know that are not good so that you do not respond well to those things. I thought that was really—There is not a class that is set up for that, but this is a new setting with strangers so I thought that was a really good class.

This approach was critical since the instructor explained what the gestures meant rather than uncritically dismissing them (and promoting subservience) or treating them as if they were taboo. Although courses may begin with explaining “bad” words critically, they certainly do not end there. The most important aspects of participatory language learning are the engagement of learners in realistic use of language, and that methodology serves to help learners explore and challenge ideology.

### 6.4.2 English for Parents

While many parents wanted to learn English to aid in their children's academics, what is perhaps more relevant and realistic is that parents have access to resources that will help them better understand the education system. As discussed in Chapter 4, participants' goals of achieving in a year or two, what native-speaking parents achieve in 12 or more, is not practical. Instead, it is important for parents to have access to resources, including knowledge that will help them guide their children through school. Such a program could introduce activities that would get parents involved in the system thereby giving them more interaction with the structure and with the English language. These may include joining the PTA or volunteering in their child's classroom. By embarking on these activities together, participants would have a support network. It would be up to the program to forge a working relationship with the school that would make the parents, who are otherwise apprehensive, feel welcome and valued.

Many participants wanted to raise their children bilingually, but experienced obstacles doing so. One challenge was their lack of understanding of the concept of bilingualism. A language learning program that addresses language learning with ESL learners could add a segment on first language acquisition and bilingualism in children. With a base of knowledge in second language acquisition theory, discussion could easily segue into language acquisition for children. Topics might include various types of bilingualism such as balanced compound versus coordinate bilingualism (Romaine, 1996) and additive and subtractive bilingualism (Hamers & Blanc, 1989). Another important distinction to make would be different strategies for raising bilingual children, such as "one language, one parent" or different domains designated for language use. In this instance, other parents who have previously or who are currently raising bilingual children could lead discussion or a panel to discuss learners' concerns. Finally, there are some negative myths commonly

associated with bilingualism that should be proactively addressed. These may also alleviate parents' fears. These include delayed speech production, common in children exposed to two languages, which is considered typical and not detrimental in the long term. The program should also address the importance of parents using their fluent L1 rather than the L2 in which they have limited proficiency.

Another important function of the "English for Parents" course offered by an ESL program would be to provide the venue for a parent forum. This would have many benefits. First, participants would be provided with valuable interaction in English. The context would not be contrived or artificial, but provide i+1 input and the necessarily social context for mediation and language acquisition to occur. Secondly, parents would have access to a support group atmosphere. The context would build much needed camaraderie among participants. Participant 5 described how she felt like she needed to be able to discuss cultural differences frankly with other non-L1 English speakers.

**Excerpt 50**

But I think foreigners like talk about how Americans is lazy or fat or obesity or cultural diverse then because we feel they are kind of, we feel they think we're inferior than them so then kind of if we in that kind of situation then we want feel that they are inferior than us.

This type of English for parents program could provide the support system that many isolated L2 English parents lack. In addition, the support system could allow parents to explore their ideas and self-criticisms of their parenting abilities. Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) describe how one mother lost her ability to parent her daughter in an English dominant environment because she had no confidence in her English language proficiency and her knowledge of the rules of the English speaking culture. With input from native speakers, parents may be able to redefine their expectations for contributing input and assistance to their children's education.

As discussed in Chapter 5, more important than linguistic skills, parents need to be able help their children navigate the school system. One such model to achieve this would be to extend the forum format and allow parents to choose the topics. To address the content, the program would bring in officials from the school, educators and community activities to address the participants and answer their questions. With this arsenal, participants will hopefully gain a fuller, more comprehensive idea of what the school system expects of their students and them as parents.

### **6.4.3 Specialized Knowledge**

The clearinghouse capacity also sets the stage for language institutes to offer courses that cover topics other than explicit language instruction. A starting place would be those resources identified in Chapter 5 that participants need access to in order to achieve their goals. Some of these were already discussed above and include information about the school system and a critical approach to language acquisition. However, there are still other resources that participants need to access. For example, several participants wanted to become small business owners. As P7 explained, he learned about some aspects of small business ownership from a non-profit organization.

#### **Excerpt 51**

There is a place where in downtown, it's about small business. So they help you when you have some questions about taxes about how to build or something like that a small business.

This would be one type of resource that a language center could provide to participants or help participants locate. Although it is unrealistic to expect such a language center to be everything to everyone, it could still meet some thematic needs of participants.

Another significant area that participants needed assistance with was access to the University, first at gaining admission and then later at navigating the system. To begin with, participants need help understanding what the



University can do for them as many expressed only vague understanding about what they could accomplish there. Next, participants need assistance gaining access to the University. For many, this means passing the TOEFL or different placement test. Benesch (1993) explains that in this context, tests may act as gatekeepers to university access; they act to further weed out students and limit access. A program modeled after a federal TRiO Educational Center (EOC) would effectively serve this purpose (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). EOC's provide "counseling and information" regarding admission to a college or University to individuals who qualify under certain criteria. Part of the service that EOC's provide includes assistance filling out the admission application and determining how to pay for post-secondary education.

Once admitted to the University, participants need a strong support system, preferably from within the University such as a Learning Center that will help them navigate the system. The English classes learners have available also should meet their needs and must subscribe to a participatory approach to language acquisition. This contribution of the University should also include broad advising, assistance with study skills and advocacy. An example that would have merited a different language program and more comprehensive advising was found with P1. She provided negative feedback on her experiences in a developmental English course. She explains,

**Excerpt 52**

The first basic classes were not so fun we were just given some studybook and doing it whole class time.

When pressed, she said that there was little or no conversation and perhaps interaction in the course and that she did not feel that it had helped increase her proficiency. I asked her if she wanted to take any additional English courses to improve her English, and she was very resistant to the idea. I suggested perhaps the English for Foreigners class that several of the other participants had taken. However, she replied she was told that the courses she

had taking were for ESL speakers. This response indicated to me that first she was not aware of the difference and secondly, she was already resistant to the idea. P1's incomplete picture of the available courses at the University is proof of the necessity of a more unified approach to assist second language learners achieve their goals.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

As P7 explained, what learners need is a clearinghouse or institute from which adult English language learners can receive language services. Regardless of which agency offers such services, there are some essential components that emerged from talking with participants that should be included. Many participants work, and so the schedule of language classes offered must be flexible and varied enough to accommodate learners. Learners are sacrificing time with their families and potential time away from jobs which could be earning them revenue. So as discussed above, they must be sold on the teaching methodology and the content of the course. They must also be sold on the concept that for short term sacrifice, they will have long-term gain. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a variety of levels of English language courses must be available to more advanced or advanced intermediate speakers. They must also be offered with enough frequency to impact learners' proficiency. Learners commented that they were aware that they were not learning enough in courses that meet merely once a week for an hour.

Keeping with the spirit of the literature that informed this study, elements of critical pedagogy should be included in any language learning course. Originally I had hoped to investigate if critical pedagogy was an integral part of language classes in Fairbanks, but after the first couple of interviews it became apparent that the participants could not speak about what they did not understand. The concept itself is somewhat abstract and none of my research questions directly described or asked about it. There were a few comments

from participants, though, that hinted at elements of critical pedagogy in their language classes. P3 talks about how her ALPA instructor taught the class different “swear” words. In a domesticating domain, learners would be taught to be polite and “bad” words would not be included in the curriculum.

With elements of critical pedagogy, the end product is more self-sufficient, informed and confident citizens. Although ideologically this is what many native-born Americans expect, they are less willing to support the funding and resources that contribute to constructing such a program. For many native-English speakers, there is some imagined ideological rite of passage for immigrants to pull themselves up by their bootstraps without any help. If they succeed, they are valued members of society. If they fail, it is their fault. There are many barriers, however, that prevent access for adult language learners from reaching the proficiency they desire.

Exploring these barriers further would possibly be areas of future research. While this study is a start, it certainly does not close the book on second language learner goals and needs. To begin with, the concepts of goals and needs are not well defined themselves. Within the literature, most goals and needs were framed in the context of traditional needs analysis. Goals were the objectives for the course, and needs were the linguistic competencies learners needed to achieve these goals. Further exploration of needs and goals unconstrained by the definitions of needs analysis must be done. Just as second language acquisition has taken a more social twist, the concepts of goals and needs must also be influenced by a critical look at the relevant social power.

Future studies should additionally involve more triangulation. To determine learners’ goals and needs, it would have been relevant to conduct follow-up interviews to compare subsequent with original the data. Some type of participant observation could also yield useful and insightful data. Even these types of studies would benefit from focusing just on the learners and resist the

temptation to interview employers and instructors for the same reasons I did. An additional recommendation includes focusing on fewer individuals in the future, and spending more time conducting case studies (i.e. gathering data) from three to five exemplary individuals. While these results could not be applied to a broad population, it could provide more micro-oriented data which is rare in needs analyses. Finally, it is important to consider that my findings are not neutral. The lesson to be learned from this study is that everything is ideological and while the results of my study are more macro in orientation, it would also be useful to consider how these ideologies interact in their environment.

There are several classifications for English language learners' goals. These include family, personal aspirations, education and employment. These goals shape the needs of learners and while linguistic needs are important, cultural needs are as equally as important. Learners need an understanding of language learning and access to resources. Ideology is an overreaching influence which is ever-present both in goals and needs. This should be considered when considering the strategies to be taught to learners and suggestions for programs serving them. The complicated relationship between these concepts could be areas of future study, though it is important to stay focused on the learner rather than the institution or funding agency in order to maintain balance of perspectives in the field.

## References

- Adult Learning Programs of Alaska. (2008). *Adult Learning Programs of Alaska*. Retrieved July 8, 2008 from <http://www.adultlearning.org/>
- Auerbach, E. R. (1986). Competency-Based ESL: One Step Forward or Two Steps Back? *TESOL Quarterly*, 20(3), 411-429.
- Auerbach, E. R. (1991). Politics, pedagogy, and professionalism: Challenging marginalization in ESL. *College ESL*, 1, 1-9.
- Auerbach, E. R. (1995). The politics of the ESL classroom: Issues of power in pedagogical choices. In J. W. Tollefson (Ed.), *Power and inequity in language education* (pp. 9-33). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Auerbach, E. R. & Burgess, D. (1985). The hidden curriculum of survival ESL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 19(3), 475-495.
- Bardovi-Harlig, K., & Griffin, R. (2005). L2 pragmatic awareness: Evidence from the ESL classroom. *System*, 33, 401-415.
- Basturkmen, H. (2006). *Ideas and options in English for specific purposes*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Benesch, S. (1993). ESL, ideology, and the politics of pragmatism. *TESOL Quarterly*, 27(4), 705-717.
- Benesch, S. (1996). Needs analysis and curriculum development in EAP: An example of a critical approach. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30(4), 723-738.
- Benesch, S. (1999). Rights analysis: Studying power relations in an academic setting. *English for Specific Purposes*, 18(4), 313-327.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). The economics of linguistic exchanges. *Social Science Information*, 16(6), 645-668.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1, 1-47.
- Chomsky, N. (2006). *Language and mind* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Cambridge.

- Cotterall, S. (1995). Readiness for autonomy: Investigating learner beliefs. *System, 23(2)*, 195-205.
- Cummins, J. (1981). The role of primary language development in promoting educational success for language minority students. *Office of Bilingual Bicultural Education, Schooling and Language minority education: a theoretical framework* (pp. 3-49). Sacramento, CA: State Department of Education.
- Cummins, J. (1984). *Bilingualism and special education: Issues in assessment and pedagogy*. San Diego, CA: College Hill.
- Cummins, J. (1995). Forging identities in the preschool: Competing discourses and their relationship to research. In W. Fase, K. Jaspert, & S. Kroon (Eds.), *The state of minority languages*. Exton, PA: Swets and Zeitlinger.
- Edwards, R. (1991). The politics of meeting learner needs: Power, subject, subjection. *Studies in the Education of Adults, 23(1)*, 85. Retrieved March 01, 2007, from the Academic Search Premier database.
- Ellis, R. (1985). *Understanding second language acquisition*. New York: Oxford.
- Ellis, R. (1990). *Instructed second language acquisition*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.
- Ellis, R. (2008). Learner beliefs and language learning. *Asian EFL Journal, 10(4)*, Article 1. Retrieved October 9, 2009 from [http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/December\\_08\\_re.php](http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/December_08_re.php)
- Finn, P. J. (1999). *Literacy with an attitude: Educating working-class children in their own self-interest*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Garcia, O. (1995). Spanish language loss as a determinant of income among Latinos in the United States: Implications for language policy in schools. In J. W. Tollefson (Ed.), *Power and inequality in language education* (pp. 142-160). New York: Cambridge.
- Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. C. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

- Giles, H., Coupland, J., & Coupland, N. (Eds.). (1991). *Contexts of Accomodation: Developments in applied sociolinguistics*. New York: Cambridge.
- Griffiths, C., & Parr, J. M. (2001). Language-learning strategies: Theory and perception. *ELT Journal*, 55(3); 247-254.
- Guardado, M. (2006). Engaging language and cultural spaces: Latin American parents' reflections on language loss and maintenance in Vancouver. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 9(1), 51-72.
- Hamers, J. F., & Blanc, M. A. H. (1989). *Bilingualality and Bilingualism*. New York: Cambridge.
- Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life and work in communities and classrooms*. New York: Cambridge.
- Hoffman, C. (1991). *An introduction to bilingualism*. New York: Longman.
- Hollerbach, W. (1994). Foreign languages at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, 1960-1994. (Available from University of Alaska Fairbanks Rasmuson Library, P.O. Box 756807, Fairbanks, Alaska 99775).
- Hutchison, T., & Waters, A. (1987). *English for specific purposes*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Jasso-Aguilar, R. (2005). Sources, methods and triangulation in needs analysis: A critical perspective in a case study of Waikiki hotel maids. In Michael H. Long (Ed.), *Second Language Needs Analysis*, (pp. 127-169). Cambridge: Cambridge.
- Jiang, X., & Smith, R. (2009). Chinese learners' strategy use in historical perspective: A cross-generational interview-based study. *System*, 37, 286-299.
- Johnson, M. (2004). *A philosophy of second language acquisition*. New Haven, CT: Yale.
- Kavaliauskienė, G. & Kaminskienė, L. (2009). A complementary approach to lifelong learning strategies. *Ibérica*, 18, 153-170.

- Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. New York: Pergamon.
- Krashen, S. D. (1992). Formal Grammar Instruction. Another Educator Comments. *TESOL Quarterly*, 26(2), 409-411.
- Krashen, S. D. (2002). Theory versus practice in language training. In V. Zamel & R. Spack (Eds.), *Enriching ESOL Pedagogy*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Lantolf, J. (2000). Introducing sociocultural theory. In J. Lantolf (Ed.), *Introduction to sociocultural theory and second language learning* (pp 1-26). New York: Oxford.
- Lantolf, J., & Thorne, S. L. (2006). *Sociocultural Theory and the Genesis of Second Language Development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lichtman, M. (2009). *Qualitative research in education: A user's guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lightbown, P. M., & N. Spada. (1999). *How languages are learned* (Rev. ed.). New York: Oxford.
- Literacy Council of Alaska. (n.d.). *Agency overview: Who we are and what we do*. [Brochure].
- Littlewood, W. (1996). "Autonomy": An anatomy and a framework. *System*, 24(4), 427-435.
- Liu, J. (2004). Confessions of a Nonnative English-Speaking Professional. In L. Kamhi-Stein (Ed.), *Learning and Teaching from Experience*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Long, M. H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W. C. Ritchie, & T. K. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of Language Acquisition, Vol. 2*, (pp. 413-468). New York: Academic Press.



- Long, M. H. (Ed.). (2005). *Second language needs analysis*. New York: Cambridge.
- Mills, G. E. (2003). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Norton, B. (1997). Language, identity, and the ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31(3), 409-429.
- Norton Peirce, B. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(1), 9-31.
- Omaggio Hadley, A. (2001). *Teaching language in context*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.
- Pavlenko, A., & J. P. Lantolf. (2000). Second language learning as participation and the (re)construction of selves. In J. P. Lantolf (Ed.), *Sociocultural theory and second language learning*. Oxford: Oxford.
- Pennycook, A. (1999). Introduction: Critical Approaches to TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 33(3), 329-348.
- Richards, J. C., (2001). *Curriculum Development in language Teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Robinson, P. (1991). *ESP today: A practitioners' guide*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Romaine, S. (1995). *Bilingualism*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Rosenberg, M. (1996). Raising bilingual children. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 2(6). Retrieved November 8, 2009 from <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Rosenberg-Bilingual.html>
- Savignon, S. J. (1991). Communicative language teaching: State of the art. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25(2), 261-277.
- Schiffman, H. F. (1998). *Linguistic culture and language policy*. New York: Routledge.
- Schumann, J. H. (1978). *The piginization process*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Skinner, B. F. (1974). *About behaviorism*. New York: Alfred Knopf.

- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2004, February). The right to mother tongue medium education - the hot potato in human rights instruments. *2nd Mercator International Symposium: Europe 2004: A new framework for all languages?* Symposium conducted in Tarragona, Catalonia. Retrieved November 19, 2009 from <http://www.ciemen.org/mercator/simopsis/2004ML/ponencies-gb.htm>
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. and, Phillipson, R. (1995) Linguistic human rights, past and present in Skutnabb-Kangas, T., and Phillipson, R. (Eds.) Linguistic human rights: overcoming linguistic discrimination. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Skinner, B. F (1957). Verbal behavior. East Norwalk, CT: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Spolsky, B. (1998). Sociolinguistics. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, Fort Worth, TX.
- Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Summers, J. Y. (2002). A Proposed model for Anchorage adult civic education (Master's Thesis, University of Alaska Anchorage, 2002). UMI dissertation services.
- Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. Gass, & C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in Second Language Acquisition*. Rowley MA: Newbury House.
- Swain, M., & Deters, P. (2007). "New" mainstream SLA theory: Expanded and enriched. *The Modern Language Journal*, 91, 820–836.
- Tarone, E., & Yule, G. (1989). *Focus on the learner*. Oxford: new York.
- Tollefson, J. W. (1986). Functional competencies in the U.S. refugee program: Theoretical and practical problems. *TESOL Quarterly*, 20(4), 649-664.

- Tollefson, J. W. (1991). *Planning language, planning inequity*. New York: Longman.
- Yan, J. X., & Horwitz, E. K. (2008). Learners' perceptions of how anxiety interacts with personal and instructional factors to influence their achievement in English: A qualitative analysis of EFL learners in China. *Language Learning*, 58, 151–183.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- University Baptist Church. (n.d.) *Literacy*. Retrieved July 8, 2008 from <http://www.universitybaptistchurch.net/literacy.htm>
- University of Alaska Fairbanks. (2008). *University of Alaska Fairbanks 2008-2009 Catalog*. Retrieved July 8, 2008 from [http://www.uaf.edu/catalog/catalog\\_08-09/index.html](http://www.uaf.edu/catalog/catalog_08-09/index.html)
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2000). *U.S. Census 2000* [Data file]. Available from U.S. Census Bureau Web site, <http://www.census.gov/>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2009). *Educational opportunity centers program*. Retrieved November 12, 2009 from <http://www.ed.gov/programs/trioeoc/index.html>
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. New York: Cambridge.
- Wong, L. (1976). *The Second Time Around: Cognitive and Social Strategies in Second Language Acquisition*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford University.
- Wong Fillmore, L. (1991). Second-language learning in children: A model of language learning in social context. In E. Bialystok (Ed.), *Language processing in bilingual children* (pp. 40-69). New York: Cambridge.

## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

*My name is Ginny Schlichting and I am meeting with you today to ask some questions. The questions in this interview are for research I am doing for a Master's degree at UAF. These questions are about your experiences learning language, your needs as a learner and your goals. In my research I will not use your name but may talk about your employment, education, age, native language and home country. This interview will last about 30 to 45 minutes. I am tape-recording this interview. Remember that if you decide that you do not want to continue during this interview, you may choose to stop and this is ok. I really appreciate you taking time to talk with me today. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

1. *My first questions are about your background. Can you describe what your life was like before you came here to the U.S.?*
  - Where from
  - How long lived: U.S., Fairbanks
  - Languages: which, how long spoken, how long studying English?
  - Work history
  - Education history
  
2. Do you usually use English or \_\_\_\_\_ with your family—like your children or spouse? And what about your friends?
  - When, How, Why
  
3. Can you remember a situation when you were not able to do something because you were not able to use or understand enough English?
  - What, where
  - What is necessary for participant to feel comfortable?
  - How does participant feel about his/her speaking ability?
  
4. What types of things do you do in a typical week?
  - In free time
  - English necessary?
  
5. Do you remember the first time you went to \_\_\_\_\_ (one aforementioned event), what was it like?

- Was this experience similar to \_\_\_\_\_ (another event participant identified)?
6. Did you do similar activities in your home country?
- What
7. Before you came here, what did you imagine life would be like in the U.S.?
- How expectations changed, current expectations

*In order to understand your needs and goals, I would like to find out more about your work at home and here.*

8. Think of all the jobs you've had in the U.S.—which did you like the most? Can you describe a typical day?
- use English?
  - working now? Where? Doing what? Enjoy?
9. You said that you worked as a \_\_\_\_\_ in your home country. What was a typical day like in this position?

*One of the main areas of focus of my research is on education so I would like to hear about your educational experiences both here and at home.*

10. Please tell me about your education in your home country.
- highest level of education in home country
  - use that education in U.S.
11. Please describe your formal education in the U.S. (i.e. college, vocational training)
- Would more education be helpful for your work?
  - How, what

*Now that we've talked a little about education in general, I would like to talk about English language education.*

12. What are your reasons for studying English? Example: like language, travel, teach, talk to family.

13. What do you remember the most about the English classes you've taken in Fairbanks?
- helped English proficiency
  - stopped taking a class?
  - What most helpful? Unhelpful?
14. What do you do outside of class to learn English?
15. Do you have a favorite class? What is a typical class meeting like?
- formal or casual
  - types of activities
  - topics (example: vocabulary, grammar, literature, culture, conversation, history, education, food, work, phrases, situations, travel, academics, media)
16. Did you take English classes in your home country? What was a typical day like in a class in your home country?
17. If you were teaching an English class to 2nd language learners, what would you do?
- Services/classes not offered in Fairbanks
  - What kind of learner
  - How instruction helped English proficiency?

*Now that we've discussed employment and education, I would like to talk about the future and your goals.*

18. What type of job do you hope to have in five years? What about 10 years?
19. What are your goals as a language learner? And personally?
- Personal examples: work, family, education, deciding where to live, community involvement or volunteering.
20. Do you think there is a connection between your professional/personal goals and your language goals?

*That is all the questions I have for you. Do you have any questions for me or would you like to say anything else? Thank you very much for your time and*

*willingness to participate in this interview. Who do you know at a similar English level to you that may be willing to participate in this research? How can I contact him/her?*

## **Appendix B: Informed Consent for Initial Participants**

IRB protocol \_\_\_\_\_  
 Consent form approved for use from \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_.

English Language Learner Project: consent for taped interview

We ask you to help us study the goals and needs of English language learners in Fairbanks. You are being asked to be in the study because you are learning English. Please read this form and ask any questions before you decide.

### **Purpose and Procedures**

This research is for a Master's degree at UAF. The purpose is to understand the goals and needs of people who are learning English, and to find out if there are classes or services that meet these needs. If you decide to join, you agree to let me record an interview with you.

### **Risks and Benefits**

It is important that we find out about language use, and it is possible that you may be uncomfortable about some questions. You may decide not to answer any question and that is OK. If you do not want to be in this study that is OK—we will still meet for tutoring and your decision will not affect any other tutoring or services you receive through Literacy Council of AK. There are no direct benefits to you. There are no costs to you.

### **Private and Voluntary**

You decide if you want to be in the study. You do not have to be in it, and you can stop any time and that is ok. What we find out about language use could be used in reports, presentations, and publications but you will not be identified. Anything you tell us about a specific program—including complaints or problems—will not be connected to you. Your name will not be used. We will only use your profession, education level, age, native language and home country. The recording of our interview will be safely locked up on UAF campus, and only the researcher and her committee of professors will have access.

### **Questions**

If you have any questions now, please ask. If you have questions later, contact:	
Ginny Schlichting (researcher)	or Dr. Sabine Siekmann (faculty sponsor)
PO Box 750767	PO Box 750767
Fairbanks, AK 99775	Fairbanks, AK 99775
907- 474-6435	907-474-6580
<a href="mailto:fncvs@uaf.edu">fncvs@uaf.edu</a>	<a href="mailto:ffss5@uaf.edu">ffss5@uaf.edu</a>



**Any Concerns**

IRB

PO Box 757270

Fairbanks, AK 99775

907-474-7800

[fyirb@uaf.edu](mailto:fyirb@uaf.edu)**Statement of Consent:**

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered, and I agree to be in the study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix C: Informed Consent for All Participants Other than Initial

IRB protocol \_\_\_\_\_  
 Consent form approved for use from \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_.

English Language Learner Project: consent for observation

We ask you to help us study the goals and needs of English language learners in Fairbanks. You are being asked to be in the study because you are learning English and a friend of yours told us that you are a language learner. Please read this form and ask any questions before you decide.

### Purpose and Procedures

This research is for a Master's degree at UAF. The purpose is to understand the goals and needs of people who are learning English, and to find out if there are classes or services that meet these needs. If you decide to join, you agree to let me observe you for up to three days. This means that I will go with you where you go, look at what you do and listen to your conversations for these three days.

### Risks and Benefits

It is important that we find out about language use, and it is possible that you may be uncomfortable when I go with you to observe. There are no direct benefits to you. There are no costs to you.

### Private and Voluntary

You decide if you want to be in the study. You do not have to be in it, and you can stop anytime and that is ok. What we find out about language use could be used in reports, presentations, and publications but you will not be identified. Anything you tell us about a specific program—including complaints or problems—will not be connected to you. Your name will not be used. We will only use your profession, education level, age, native language and home country.

### Questions

If you have any questions now, please ask. If you have questions later, contact:	
Ginny Schlichting (researcher)	or Dr. Sabine Siekmann (faculty sponsor)
PO Box 750767	PO Box 750767
Fairbanks, AK 99775	Fairbanks, AK 99775
907-474-6435	907-474-6580
<a href="mailto:fncvs@uaf.edu">fncvs@uaf.edu</a>	<a href="mailto:ffss5@uaf.edu">ffss5@uaf.edu</a>

### Concerns

IRB  
PO Box 757270  
Fairbanks, AK 99775  
907-474-7800  
[fyirb@uaf.edu](mailto:fyirb@uaf.edu)

**Statement of Consent:**

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered, and I agree to be in the study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix D: Example of Transcribed and Coded Interview

Ok my name is Ginny  
Nice to meet you, hi

*I am meeting with you today to ask you some questions. The questions in interview are for research I am doing for a Master's degree at UAF. These questions are about your experiences learning language, your needs as a learner and your goals.*

Ok, ok, my experience—

*Oh no, I'm not asking you, I'm just telling you about—*

Oh, ok

*You're so ready, thank you ![both laugh]*

*Thank you for answering, hold on one second!*

*In my research I won't use your name but I might talk about your employment, education, age native language and your home country.*

my age?

*But I won't use your name, so noone will know its you. Only I will know its you.*

Oh ok that's fine.

*This interview will last probably 30 to 45 minutes. I am tape-recording. Remember that if you decide you do not want to continue during this interview, you can choose to stop and that's ok. I really appreciate you letting me interview you. Do you have any questions?*

Oh no

*So my first questions are about your background. Can you tell me what your life was like before I*

I lived in Columbia for my entire life I have six sisters and four—three brothers. I lived in Columbia with my father and stepmother. I went to the school, the high school and later I find the job. And then I joined to the university and studied business administration and *hoteleria* and later human resource too. Then I

keep working for my whole life in the kind of companies who business is to involve the environmental with the things minors {?} I have. [Then I decided to coming to the united states because my best friend she propose to me maybe to \[im\]prove, to change your life to say maybe you can do something \(PG\)](#) because in Columbia over there you are stuck you have almost nothing. You can get a job whatever kind of job you are looking for. I decided to come visit her first. I stayed one month here I took a vacation. I decided that I would stay after that.

So how long have you lived here?

Right now, I have been live here six years.

In Fairbanks?

In Fairbanks, the only place in the United States I am living, yeah.

So do you usually use English

Both, ok I use both because I have my child he is speaking Spanish only for now. [I want him to improve his English \(CG\)](#), but uh in the beginning I will use only Spanish but [in the future I want to learn and study together and speaking English \(CG; LG\)](#) because my husband he is speaking only English. He is speaking a little bit of Spanish but his language is English. [I want to speak only one language because I do not think that we'll forgot the old language, the original language is Spanish we won't forgot. \(LG\)](#)

You won't forget it?

Oh I do not think so because we keep talking with my family on the phone. We have some callings to talk to Columbia to talk to my family on the phone we speak Spanish. The same with my son

So how about your friends?

We use Spanish because it is more easy to communicate we have jokes to say or to say something so fast more easy to communicate in our language.

Can you remember a situation when you weren't able to do something

I remember always I have somebody else with me. I never--In the beginning maybe for one year I do not go outside to meet with somebody also or in the store because maybe people start to have a question for me and I'm feeling so

afraid and embarrassing to say “I do not know, what are you talking about” Maybe I speak Spanish immediately because that’s my reflection [reaction] to say the words in Spanish not in English it was worse I do not like. (IEN; ILN) I do not like to remember because happened always when I go to my husband or my friend “what did he say? what did she say? what did he say? what did she say?” Oh, its hard. (IEN; ILN) I’m starting to feeling headache, I say oh my god so tired to listen to your language I say to my husband, oh you are speaking so much I can’t understand so forced to my head to understand, my brain to understand and I say oh no I do not think so I can do it. (IEN; ILN)

So can you remember one specific instance or one specific example

Maybe immediately when somebody wants to know something about me and I do not understand. The other situation close to when I understand a little bit of English when I say “yes I understand” it was no it doesn’t [I didn’t].

I went to the medical (dis)appointment, and the doctor asked me something personal and I said “yes, I have that problem” it doesn’t because I didn’t understand and my husband said “oh, wait, wait, wait” she doesn’t understand what you are asking. I tried to say “yes I understand, yes yes” it was something terrible. “No she doesn’t, she doesn’t” (IEN; ILN) later I say, oh I do not understand. I tried to be honest by myself and to the other people before to say, yes I understand. Maybe take the time to try to be precautions to be honest to say no I do not understand and thinking and try to talk to the person repeat me please again, something. (LN) The bad situation was in the medical stuff.

So what things to do in a typical week?

Excuse me what?

What things to do in a typical week?

Go to the gym, meet with my friends, go to the movie, staying home, watch the movie, watch TV, clean the house

Go to work?

Oh yes, go to work, try to study, to meet with my tutor at least once in the week, go with my son to soccer game he has Monday and Sunday, Saturday sorry, he has a tutor too and he is keep busy to study English too, because English is his second language too (CLN)

So do you need English to do all those activities or do you use Spanish?

English, normally I need English for all those things except for when I go to meet with my friends its Spanish because they are Spanish too (LN). They are from Columbia.

Do you remember the first time you went to the doctor?

Uh huh hmm it was worse, I try to remember because I told my husband go with me go with me because I am so afraid, really afraid. Oh I remember one time with my first tutor from literacy council she was a woman and I told her "go with me, because maybe I can understand" because it was something really for me was the personal things to looking for me. (LN; EN) I'm feeling sorry, help me because I can't understand what the doctor said and she coming with me, coming inside and sit next to the doctor and she translate to me. She was really nice to me.

That was really nice.

Yeah she was really nice, I say oh my god I can thank to you to do the favor for me. Because my husband no in town he was working and my best friend was working she can to go with me and it was so terrible this is maybe the part-- that's ok to remember but it was really hard its always "help me, help me." Not always people available to do things, always people are busy. But my husband he helped me a lot, a lot.

So is this similar to like when you went to the store? You waited for people to go with you?

Yeah I am always hiding, to change my face, to cross my eyes in different direction because I do not want people to approach to me and ask something and to make the face and [laughs] say "do not ask, do not ask" because I do not know what to say, terrible things and make the face. **IEN** I think so happened for two years

For two years?

I think so for two years happened. After that feeling better. I think so the experience about that when I get a job. Immediately when I get a job because people surround to me are speaking only English and [it] forced to me to understand and speaking., maybe understand a lot. But I'm speaking not at all no not at all, I'm feeling bad. Only to talk to my husband—Spanglish. (LN)

Spanglish? Is that what you call it?

Yeah I call it Spanglish here. He say "oh P2, what are you trying to say" I say it in half – half English and half Spanish. Later when I do not have too much patience, short patience, arghhh, I say it in Spanish only. Because I am so frustrated, I say SPANISH! [laughs] "I do not care that you do not understand, I'm saying it in Spanish." Because you know, you're furious, its hard. Later ok, I need to start over. (LN) I asked my husband "how long before I speak English?" He say "oh I do not know, it depend about you, I think so for maybe in five years you can understand a lot and you can work and you can speaking and reading and maybe writing." "Five years?" I talking when I started in the first year, the second year. "Five years, this is a long time!" But say this is too much, yeah I think so but I think he was right. I'm feeling a lot better. I'm here for six years now and I'm feeling a lot better. I think so that I still need to practice. (LN)

So did you do similar things in your home country that you do here?

You mean like the same activities, yeah kind of. You know they do not have too much opportunity, the things keep doing in Columbia the only maybe share a lot with my family maybe sometimes to go to the movie or to the restaurant or working, studying, home. That's it, not too much activities. Yeah Here I'm feeling I doing a lot.

Before you came here, what did you think life would be like in the united states?

Everything was new, complete new and surprise, surprise everybody for me, surprise, new, different. Different language, different food, style, live, houses because in Columbia the houses are in concrete, cement never in wood. Sometimes in the country people use wood to build the houses but not really in the city and uh was complete everything was complete different. Because we do not have too many cars and busses and transportation and people use transportation I used transportation I didn't have my own car. Here I have my own car because people need, is necessary here. But for me when I start to live here I say I do not need a car. I can take the bus its so easy to me, somebody drive for me because I have the accidents and snow is coming and is so dark and I'm feeling so nervous to driving because I never drove back in Columbia. But now I'm feeling a lot better, I'm feeling familiar, I'm feeling I'm from here, I'm feeling I want to stay here (PG). It is a big difference.

How did you think it would be before you came here? Did you think the houses would be made of wood and the lifestyle would be different? What did you think of the United States?



I didn't have too much information about to live in the united states about to compare with living in Columbia. The only information I had was about the opportunities to study about to whatever you want, to find your husband, including my husband, you find good friend, good people this is the things the real event that people tell me about. (PG?) But later you start to find the different for example dishwasher in Columbia not everyone has a dishwasher in their house. Dishwasher? To wash to the dish? For me this is strange. For you guys I do not think so, for me, phew, I think this is old style for me this is new six years ago for me this is new. And have dry machine, we have wash machine but dry machine too? I do not need it. Because we always hang the clothes out on the part the top to the building we always use this not a machine.

Like a clothesline?

Yeah a clothesline. But we have a lot of difference.

So all the things that people told you about the US, do you think they were true?

True. The other thing that is really amazing here, they say that American people do not like to lie, to lie, to say not true things

Oh to lie?

Yeah to lie and some people maybe do it. But most people I know, no lie.

They're pretty honest?

Pretty honest. Its good I like it. I learned more then not when keep to say something not true for a moment but its something happen frequently everyday in Columbia. I do not know it's the style, its the style you keep lying I do not know, whatever yeah this is happen you're gonna have. In Columbia its oh maybe you gonna have tomorrow a new computer maybe tomorrow in ten years or maybe never. From you, you owner?

Who says that? Businesses or the government or just other people?

Other people, no for your house, for example No, business we have computers, but for your home no. Its expensive and we do not have the money to pay the cable. But its really important to have a computer I'm feeling now I lost my time to have a computer at home. Why you not? I never maybe thinking I need a computer because I use the computer in the office. I think maybe I do not need it. But yeah for information yes. We doing now I coming close to read my news from Columbia. I like to have information about my country.

So you keep in touch?

Yeah I keep in touch, yeah something yeah because my family is there.

*In order to understand your needs and goals for learning language, I would like to find out more about your work at home and here. Think of all the jobs you've had in the united states—*

Ok the jobs at the beginning maybe the style to start to doing whatever you can doing because you have the limit, you do not have the language. What you start to do? Clean. Go to the hotel, go to the housekeeping. Later maybe when you want you decide you want to grow up with your English or you stay there. because you have the opportunity to earn money and you stay there because you have a little bit or you have nothing, but you have a job and the business, they do not care if you are speaking or not in the kind of job the skills you have you can cleaning and you can stay there [do not really need English] or you choose you keep to study at the university (PN) or you can study at home by yourself (PN) and keep to touch with the people speaking English (PN) and go look for another job. If you have a good job in Columbia and say you want to continue and want to do better to change your life why? Because you want to do better in your life.

So which job in the US have you liked the most?

The most? Maybe when I went to the literacy council when I was a volunteer support specialist. I really liked it because it was close to what I did in Columbia. Go to the office, go to learn stuff, go to the style to share what I learn with people to talking to learn things

Can you tell me what a typical day was like?

When I worked there it was keep talking with people, with professionals. I like talking with professionals they are really nice to me and I tried to joined to do the stuff in the computer and tried to support to the programs to helping in different activities they have for the child, for adults, for the community cause this kind of literacy council is helping to poverty people in Fairbanks I think so I went to different things I did in LCA I do not feeling I did one specific thing, for example I answered the phone, no I did different things. Whatever happened, whatever they needed I did.

So you used English at the literacy council?

Yes, yes because it's the only communication with my coworkers—English And listen and listen and try to speaking (LN) and feeling sometimes sometimes embarrassing because I do not have the full sentence to say something sometimes I be quiet and do not say anything and make the face because I do not want to speaking and maybe make the mistake or people “what?” say to me “what? What did you say?” because when accent when you have accent you do not know what people say. Either way happened in FRA my job now, Sometimes when understand to me “Could you repeat please?” I need to slow down speaking, people understand. Its hard (LN). Sometimes you are feeling frustrated. “Oh you have accent, you have really nice accent.” (Grrr)

Do people say that to you?

Yeah, people are really nice to me and say to me “yeah, you are cute you are speaking really nice English, this is so nice the sound is nice.” At the same time good but bad you know (makes groaning noise) It's cute? [laughs]

Do you like it when people say that?

No, I do not like I do not like I need to assume ok ok whatever its cute its nicer, but do you understand what I am trying to say? that's important. Do you understand what I want to say? Sometimes do not say yes or no because they think I am feeling bad. Or the same time I do not want to say “I do not understand” because people explain to me over and over and maybe I can't understand because I do not have the vocabulary. What are you talking about? It was before now I'm feeling better (PG; LG).

Can you tell me what you're doing now at FRA?

What I'm doing, I'm working with people with disabilities doing almost everything for the people. To go to the bathroom to get showers, to feed, to cooking, to transportation, to fill the paper, to answer the phone for clients or people because they sometimes can't respond to somethings you tell them because they have disabilities in their brain and this is the job I do.

How do you like it?

I like it because it is a social service I like to help people because I am feeling somebody help me, I want to help somebody (EN). Always this is my topic I thinking always I am really big on this. When I came here people helped me. I want to help other people. (PG) There are people needing my help too and need somebody else to help because they aren't doing nothing. (EN) Only doing eat and sleeping basically or sometimes to complain when they have pain

or they want sometime. But you need to start to have really nice {} about that you need to guess, for example I have one client sometimes he do not like the beans. For some reason he can't say "I do not like" The only way he can tell you is to throw away the dish and the other situation was for today for a more close example. My coworker made noodle soup for me and her. We sit together and shared the lunch with the client. And the client has vegetable soup or green salad or something and the client was so funny because he start to keep and he looking at my coworkers dish and he start to make the noise. "What are you doing?" He says "ahh ahhh" he acutation{not a real word} something when he do not like it. Uh oh he is ready to throw away the dish and then he did, oh wow and my coworker said "hmmm." And I said "ok go away, you do not want to eat, do not eat" and he started "aah aaah" (whimpering noise) and I said "ok tell me what you do not want" but he couldn't because he can't speak. And later, a few minutes later my coworker said "do you know what he likes? He wants to eat noodle soup." "oh wow" "Do you want to eat noodle soup?" "yeah, yeah" so we set him up with noodle soup and he was happy and enjoyed his lunch. "Wow, that's hard" We do not we can't be frustrated ever, you can't you need to understand. that's a big part. "Ok eat your lunch" Then he was so happy, we need the people to be happy. This is a big {}

{she had been complaining to me that it was getting boring}

You said that you worked in the office in your home country?

In the office, yes always in the office.

What was a typical day like in your job, what types of things did you do?

Oh organization, Organize the activities with my coworkers and to documents a lot and checking the document on the computer I think this is the main thing. I think I enjoy everything in the office.

So one of the main areas of focus

Can you tell me about your education in your home country?

Ok my education I went to the college I have my business degree and hotelaria degree and human resource not the whole thing because when I decide to come to the United States I do not continue to study.

What was the first thing you said? Hotel—what?

Uh hotel administration degree and business degree and human resource hmm I do not know how you call it here, after you finish your career is like what I did and when I came here I immediately start to study. I looked everywhere every place to find what is the English class and I absorbed like a sponge. Cause I went to ALPA, I went to LCA--literacy council, I went to university, I went to tanana valley student for—

Tanana valley campus?

Tanana valley campus I took a couple course there and tutors. At one time I had maybe five tutors.

At the same time?

At the same time.

How many tutors do you have now?

[both laugh]

Only have one. Oh my husband he laughing and do not agree with me he say “What are you doing P2?”

“But I enjoy it, I like it if I do not understand something over here I jump over there [to another tutor] and ask it.” I did selection (PN) because I say this guy he can help me with grammar (GN), this person she speaking some Spanish she learn me a lot to translate it (GN), this lady help me with speaking to talking (GN), and the other person can help me with writing (GN) and I’m so excited!  
[laughs]

Did they all know about each other?

No! [laughs]

You were cheating on all your tutors! [both laugh]

I think so I told to the guys but I think so no because it was something for me. It was something for me. I do not share with anybody because it was something for me I say no I want to learn. But I’m so happy (IEN) I say I’m working and everybody gave the homework to me and I did the homework. (PN) Good that one helped I think that one helped me. Really, because decided if I coming home its so hard to study another language, maybe you do not want to do you maybe not (PN) but say if I force me to do this way maybe go to the university

to take the classes so expensive, which I did (PN) but if I force to do maybe that would help to me, I do not know I do not care. (PN) My husband does not agree but I do not care. I did. Maybe for one year, two years maybe. It was good, I am so happy. (IEN) And later no more tutors [laughs] I did say no, no time maybe I run out of time. But I tried to continue to have. Right now maybe I feel like I need to do more by myself and I have somebody else to help me yes, I need. (EN; PN) I'm done no time for many tutors. [laughs] But I plan to do it that way with my son to have many tutors (CLN). [whispers] "You need to have many tutors, come on' {} that one helping, really." I'm trying it right now have two tutors—three, three tutors. Its XXXXXX [in class translator employed by the school], XXXX (?) from school and the literacy council. That one help, really. He's so excited to meet with her on Saturday.

And she's like a friend.

Yeah like a friend and he's feeling I like to see her. She's a nice lady and he keep to speaking and she only speaking English and he can say "I do not understand, I do not know the word to understand" he makes the faces and pointing. Say "I do not know" maybe he say "I do not know" and she maybe try to explain anything what he needs to learn—English, yeah. This is my experience.

So what are your reasons for studying English?

Because I live in this country, my husband is from United States, I want to learn English. Have three reasons. I have to have it to find a good job too. (PG)

So what do you remember most about the English classes you've taken in Fairbanks?

I think so I remember everything: communication, speaking, try to do the speaking, try to do the homework, working in grammar, to meet with my tutors--I have fun with them, with the tutors. Because they help me in different ways not always to sit and say "today you have this homework" no because always I try to tell my tutors no I need to make an appointment, I need help with something else – different way. I do not know what to say I use my tutors but I work like that that way.

You can say you use them.

Oh sorry I thought that was a bad word.

So do you think all your language classes have helped your English language proficiency?

Yeah, yeah they help me. I think so its my goal to try to open my mind to try to have other English class because I want to force me [myself] to study (PG; EG).

(LN) Other way my English is really go back because I do not have physical to sit here and study. What do you improve? Only I improve speaking because I do not use the other words because I do not have them in my mind. This is I need to do I think this is important. I improve now sorry when I study with my tutor. Because I {} new words because I do not want to miss my class every week yeah I am forced to, I like to go because I am really oh god other word I learn, even though I do not writing and remember in that moment I learn other word but I need to really put in my language in my vocabulary to improve my English.

What's been the most helpful do you think out of all your classes?

Communication, immediately with the American people. (PN)

Was there anything you thought was not helpful?

No I really can't say not helpful no everything was helpful for me, everything.

What do you do outside of class to help yourself learn English?

Go to the gym, watch TV in Spanish a little bit, I be honest now, read the news in Spanish and listen to news in English, those kinds of things. Cooking, organize my house to see my family, talk to my husband every night on the phone.

Do you use English when you organize your house?

No, because I'm talking about [to?] myself. When my husband is home, yes I use English. When he is home I always use English, I do not speak Spanish with him.

Did you have a fav eng class

No I think everything now I like, before I didn't like any English.

You didn't like any English classes?

No, I do not like English, I do not like speaking English I feel its so difficult I feeling I can't do it, its so difficult I can't do it. Now I'm feeling I like everything because I need to improve my English (LG; GN), I really like

Can you think of one class that helped you improve more than the others?

Maybe grammar. (GN; PN)

Grammar? Did you have a grammar class?

Yes, I do not like grammar [both laugh]

But you think it helps you?

Yes, because its hard but it helps. I do not like grammar. (PN; GN)

Did you—

Because I can't understand sometimes.

What was a class meeting like when you went to study grammar?

Ummm, the speech the part of the speech that one directly or indirectly sentence part to the speech, to the sentence ugh I hate that one. I do not know how I can I make it that one maybe with practice or study (PN). {Unintelligible} I can make the book. [flips through a book]

The one that you showed me?

Its in my car I think so. Punctuation is a little bit hard for I think so, punctuation. Composition, I need to do the composition, (GN; PN) uh sometimes I have hard time to put together in one sentence what I want to say. That is when I am feeling, I do not know. (IEN)

So you took a class at UAF, Tanana Valley Campus, Literacy Council and ALPA. Out of all those did you have a favorite? Did you like any one better than the other?

Hmm, I think so all the ones were the same. Oh at the Baptist Church I took classes too. I found the book they have for us, I did. I think so everything I did was go, was fine. I think the difficult thing was at the university when I went to take the class the level of English was high. Everybody speaking English, not



me. That was so hard for me because I need to understand, translator and comprehension (PN) and I need to understand everything that she said.

If you want to pick maybe one of those places and tell me what the class was like, what you did in the class?

Maybe when I study at adult program in ALPA. The activities was the teacher write the paragrafo on the white board and say somebody needs to coming to correct. It was nice, it was force to me to understand. (PN) When he wrote I said that's perfect. What I need to change? But later start to find what I need to change. He used to use the music in English to bringing to us to print it out in the paper the song but it missed some words in the song and listen and try to pay attention and write it down. It was fun I like that one helped me. Play bingo too. Vocabulary. Maybe the most fun was writing the paragrafo it was hard and interesting.

So what kind of topics did you cover?

About Fairbanks, about my country, about my dog about my favorite food, my animals about my cat and a lot about the three reasons I'm coming to the united states. I do not remember now, too many topics.

Did you take English classes in your country?

Uh huh yes

What was a typical day like?

To find the instructions in the book, I take many many course I think so. I do that a lot but for the time I say I study that one I do not think so I use. I do not think so because I live in Columbia I think so I do not want to change the country I want to stay here. Ok I did I think so for fun.

You took English for fun?

For fun. Maybe I know something, but maybe I do not pay attention and I think so I lost my time. What happened if I really paid attention?

How long did you take English classes for?

I think so I did it always after I finish my degree, career or something one year, six months, one year or something and then cut and again and go back and cut

and go back. I did it really nice for three months and then say "ah, no more". Later two months "ah no more," something like that. But never speaking.

Oh it was just writing? In the book?

Writing and listening in the book and practice with the teacher and then done. And you finish your class and go home and speak Spanish. Done.

Did you talk to your classmates in English?

Ah, a little bit.

What types of things did you study in that class? Grammar?

Grammar and vocabulary and conversation. Kind of conversational things.

What types of vocabulary did you learn?

Hmmm more the business, kind to more cordial to go to find the job, how you feeling when you have the job, communication skills those kind of things. Or really easy dialogs.

Dialogs?

Yes dialogs, those kind of things. This is what I remember.

So if you were teaching a class to second language learners or people learning English, what would you do if you were the teacher?

All my experience about how to do the better maybe to practice and try to speaking and do to a lot of work (PN; GN). I think so need do a lot of work. Everything, a little bit everything grammar, speak, conversation, writing, everything I think is important to have. (PN GN) Some people think is more important to speaking, that's it. But how you speaking? How you remember to make the sentence for you speaking correctly? You can speaking whatever you have on your mind but I do not think so is nice. Is not, is not nice I do not think so because I think in the United States people say oh this lady doesn't know English, she knows something but do not really know. Or has broke English. I hate that word. You have broke English.

Broken English?

broken English, but its honest. I do not like feeling like that, but its honest argh I hate [laughs] but its happened at the same to you if you speaking Spanish “has broke Spanish” be honest to you. Its funny how you’re speaking That’s funny, that’s nice but its cute. Its funny but you do not say something like that maybe but when something happened. in my language I’m so happy and try to help. Yes, immediately to helping immediately to correct because I want you to say it correct because this is my way. Somebody correct to me, correct to me, this is important (PN). Because keep to say I think its perfect, its fine but nobody say to me to stop to do not say that word like that. (IEN)

So now that we’ve talked about

What type of job do you

I think so have my own business. (PG)

Really [surprised, this is the first time I’d heard about this]?

Yeah, I try to have my own business, but either way I want to try and use the computer because I found in the other day in the computer you can working from your house. I do not know how but I need to learn. I want to have more investigate about that because I enjoy my house, I enjoy to have my own life to share with my family, to go to the gym, to go shopping to do whatever I want and the same time to earn money to buy {?} myself. (PG)

What about ten years? What type of job do you hope to have in ten years?

Ten years, keep working, I like work I like to be busy and learn things everyday. Keep working. (PG)

So what about right now, what type of job do you hope to have?

Involved with business. I want to learn. I want to be successful and useful in a company. Whatever I need to learn or to do. Its my goal.

So what are your goals as L learner?

Uh English that’s it, I do not want to learn any more English [laughs]. I do not know, I do not really interest to learn another language now, no. I really want to learn other language but I do not think so I have memory for that one. So I’m feeling bad. I really like to learn French or Japanese, something but its sad I do not think so I have time because I have to finish to try to learn English it take me time.

What are your goals for learning English?

To study, to sit and study to practice to do more grammar, writing (LG)

Personally, what are your goals?

My goals to have my family together, (PG) to have some of my family from Columbia live here in Fairbanks too. (PG) Its my personal goals. To-- I do not know if my husband is available to live here with us because his job is always out of town. (PG) Its my goal. Be happy. I want to be and be positive. (PG)

Do you think there's a connection between your language goals and your professional and personal goals?

I can't understand

You have goals for learning English and you have goals for your job and for your family. Do you think those two goals are related?

Yes, they go together. Yeah I think they go by hands. Yeah, yeah because I do not separate things, I can't because if I want my son to improve his English (CLG) I can't say do not do it or whatever you can. You can do your homework good or bad, that's ok – no I want to help. (PG) No I want you to do better too. (CLG) For my business I want to do better too. (PG) My knowledge, my experience I feel its good to work. (IEN)

That's all the questions I have. Do you have any questions for me?

No, I hope the interview helped you and your project and you needed something more you can asking me and that is ok.

Do you have anything else you want to say?

When I say maybe is hopefully the companies have to give the opportunities to people want to join the company and to learn a little bit of skills and English. Its so hard people wants to do something for the company and you maybe kind of company its so hard I can't teach you. But what happened if you get opportunity to demonstrate you can do it? If not, ok, fine to go ahhh "no." But its hard to say something because the company do not want to waste time and money. So the other point and because its I am I have hard time to have the job, a job I like. I do not know let me see what happens let me successful to do my goals to be successful. I do not think so I do not have other things to say.