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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

**Perceived English Language Needs of International Graduate Students at
the University of Alberta**

BY



CHUNHUI ZHAO

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education**

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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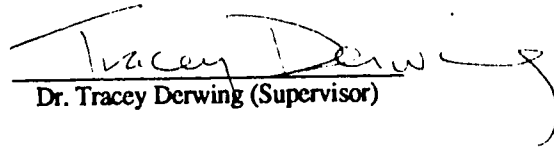
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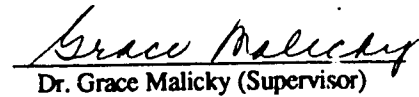
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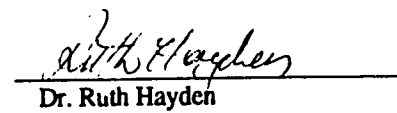
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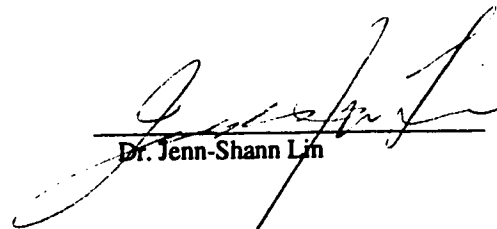
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **Perceived English Language Needs of International Graduate Students at the University of Alberta** submitted by Chunhui Zhao in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.


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This thesis is dedicated to my loving parents, Zhenmin Zhao and Hanying Jin, and my lovely wife and son, Jinrong Sun and Erlu Zhao.

Abstract

For international students studying in Canada, skills in the English language can have a profound influence upon their adjustment to the academic and social life of the new culture.

The dual purpose of this research was to explore the perceived English language needs of international graduate students at the University of Alberta (1992-1993 academic year) whose first language is not English and to determine the relationships of selected independent variables to the language needs. The independent variables included: 1) previous experience in English, 2) field of study, 3) gender, and 4) participation in preparatory training programs.

A representative sample of eighty-five foreign students participated in this study by completing an English Language Needs Survey Questionnaire. The data were then analyzed by means of descriptive and inferential statistics.

The results indicated that there are priorities for the perceived language needs for each of four categories of English skills: 1) language for daily living, 2) language for social interactions, 3) listening and speaking for daily studying, and 4) reading and writing for daily studying.

Subjects' previous experience in English had no effect upon social English skill needs; but such experience did make a statistically significant difference in the perceived language needs for some academic English skill areas among the respondents. The examination of fields of study in relation to the perceived English needs among the respondents revealed similar results.

Gender was found to have an impact upon some social English skill needs, but not upon any of the academic needs surveyed in this research.

Lastly, the study was not able to demonstrate statistically that participation in a preparatory training program prior to embarking on a degree program at the University of

Alberta would result in differing English language needs between respondents who had such experience and those who did not.

From the findings of the study, implications for English as a foreign/second language (EFL/ESL) teachers, the university faculty, the University of Alberta International Centre, and future research, were drawn and presented.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Statement of the Problem

In recent years, considerable numbers of international students have been travelling to study at Canadian centres of higher education. A recent statistical report indicates that 60,648 international students from around the world came to study in Canadian post-secondary educational institutions in the 1990-1991 academic year (Education in Canada, 1991). The number of these foreign students enrolling in universities stood at 35,187 (58%); the 25,461 remaining students were enrolled in community colleges (42%). Most of these students were from developing countries and English was not their first language. Given that foreign student enrollments in Canadian colleges and universities have shown an upward trend since 1988, it is expected that more international students will be present on Canadian campuses in the years to come.

While it is true that they may have spent years learning English and have achieved acceptable scores on either the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP) to meet the language requirement for admission to most Canadian academic institutions, many foreign students discover after their arrival in Canada that the English language skills they possess are rather limited for what is actually needed to allow them to function adequately in real situations. Due to a lack of sufficient English language proficiency, these international students are often observed to experience additional challenges in terms of adjusting to a different culture and academic system. Shepard (1970), cited by White and White (1981), maintained that English proficiency is a basic factor in the adjustment process. "Both academic progress in the classroom and social adjustment outside the classroom are dependent on skills in the use of the

English language. Anxiety, timidity, and the confrontation known as 'culture shock' are all heightened by weaknesses in language skills" (p. 82). Several writers agree that such adjustments are painful and difficult to make, typically under the circumstances of sharing the same academic pressures as other students while having to simultaneously endure multiple losses of culture, family, familiar surroundings and their primary language (Cho, 1988; Grisbacher, 1990; Klein, Alexander, & Tseng, 1971; Reinicke, 1986). The resulting vulnerability of international students led Alexander, Miller, Yeh & Workneh (1976) to conclude that "foreign students are a high risk group, under considerable stress" (p. 87). In extreme cases, maladjustment of the students often becomes a major source of subsequent severe problems ranging from mental health to academic failures to premature return, which may in turn jeopardize the students' educational and personal goals.

Since proficiency in English has a profound influence on foreign students' adjustment to an English speaking culture, and common observation reveals that many international students have far from a native-like grasp of their second language, it follows naturally to wonder which aspects of the English language are most essential for foreign students to make a satisfactory adjustment to living and studying in Canada. Research is needed to shed light on this issue.

Over the past decades, adjustment problems stemming from overseas study have received considerable attention. Numerous studies have consistently shown that the most serious problems encountered by foreign students appear to be language barriers, financial problems, academic difficulties, homesickness, and sociocultural aspects of life in the host countries (Deressa & Beavers, 1988; Church 1982; Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986; Lee, Abd-Ella, & Burks, 1981; Parr, Bradley & Bingi, 1992; Payind, 1979; Schram & Lauver, 1988; Xu, 1991; Zelmer & Johnson, 1988). Several studies have also been conducted to investigate the English needs of international students for living and studying successfully in English-

speaking countries (Eid & Jordan-Domschot, 1989; Kroll, 1979; Ostler, 1980; Shoemaker, 1983; Sun, 1987). These investigations have been quite valuable and informative; however, investigators appear to have either limited their investigations of the English language needs to one particular national group or to purely academic needs or to one specific aspect of the language (e.g., writing), or they have made limited distinctions with regards to heterogeneous characteristics of the foreign students when discussing their English language needs. Comprehensive studies that have taken international students as a heterogeneous group and assessed their English needs for both social and academic aspects of life have been few. In order for information about English needs to be of more valuable assistance to international students, it is felt worthwhile and necessary to conduct a comprehensive study investigating the English needs of these students. The present research is motivated by such a desire.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

This study is primarily concerned with the University of Alberta (U of A) international graduate students whose first language is other than English. It has two purposes. First, this study attempts to find out which aspects of the English language are most necessary as perceived by the foreign students in their adjustment to living and studying in Canada. Such language needs are to be assessed along two dimensions -- language for social life and language for academic studies. Second, since these students are heterogeneous with regards to personal and situational backgrounds, the study will further probe into their English needs taking into consideration the following: previous experience in English before entering current degree programs at the University of Alberta, field of study at the University of Alberta, gender, and participation in preparatory training (i.e. an orientation program).

To accomplish this task, two general research questions were posed with each followed by a set of sub-questions that specifically examine the relationships between the students'

language needs and each of the personal and situational variables. These research questions were:

1. Which aspects of the English language do international students perceive as most necessary in order to live a smooth social life while in Canada?
 - 1.1) Is there a difference between the perceived social English needs of the international students and their previous experience in English?
 - 1.2) Is there a difference between the perceived social English needs of the international students and their fields of study at the University of Alberta?
 - 1.3) Is there a difference between men's and women's perceived English needs for social life?
 - 1.4) Is there a difference between the perceived social English needs of the international students who received preparatory training before starting a degree program at the University of Alberta and those who did not?
2. Which aspects of the English language do international students perceive as most necessary in order to succeed academically while in Canada?
 - 2.1) Is there a difference between the perceived academic English needs of the international students and their previous experience in English?
 - 2.2) Is there a difference between the perceived academic English needs of the international students and their fields of study at the University of Alberta?
 - 2.3) Is there a difference between men's and women's perceived English needs for academic life?
 - 2.4) Is there a difference between the perceived academic English needs of the international students who received preparatory training before starting a degree program at the University of Alberta and those who did not?

The eight sub-questions were put into the form of research hypotheses:

Hypothesis--1.1

There is a difference between the perceived social English needs of the international students and their previous experience in English.

Hypothesis--1.2

There is a difference between the perceived social English needs of the international students and their fields of study at the University of Alberta.

Hypothesis--1.3

There is a difference between men's and women's perceived English needs for social life.

Hypothesis--1.4

There is a difference between the perceived social English needs of the international students who received preparatory training before starting a degree program at the University of Alberta and those who did not.

Hypothesis--2.1

There is a difference between the perceived academic English needs of the international students and their previous experience in English.

Hypothesis--2.2

There is a difference between the perceived academic English needs of the international students and their fields of study at the University of Alberta.

Hypothesis--2.3

There is difference between men's and women's perceived English needs for social life.

Hypothesis--2.4

There is a difference between the perceived academic English needs of the international students who received preparatory training before starting a degree program at the University of Alberta and those who did not.

1.3. Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several ways. First, it will contribute to a better understanding of international students and add to the existing knowledge base with regard to their English language needs. Second, findings from this study will benefit prospective international students who plan to get post-secondary education at the University of Alberta. Third, this study will provide information that may be of use to academic staff, student service personnel, and the International Centre staff at the University of Alberta and other Canadian universities. Fourth, the study will also provide information for EFL/ESL text writers, curriculum developers and classroom teachers, and for preparatory training or orientation programs for international students overseas.

1.4. Definition of Terms

To eliminate possible confusing interpretations, the following terms are defined for the purpose of this study:

1. **international student** – An individual student who travels to study in another country where his or her entry into the country requires a valid student visa. This term is also used interchangeably with the terms 'foreign student', 'student sojourner', 'overseas student', and 'visa student' throughout this study.
2. **adjustment** – According to Uehara and Hicks (1989), researchers are concerned about a sojourner's physical, psychological and functional states when discussing the

term "adjustment". Uehara and Hicks considered that, for foreign students, the most important attributes to adjustment to a foreign culture are: a) to get accustomed to the new environment physically and psychologically, b) to perceive acceptance by hosts, and c) to be able to function effectively in everyday activities without severe strain.

3. aspects of the English language -- Since 'English proficiency' is too general a term for fruitful discussion about specific English language needs of international students in this study, the term *aspects of the English language* is adopted to refer to various sub-skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, commonly found and used in social and academic situations. For example, writing a business letter is expected to be different from writing a term paper although both fall under the umbrella term of writing skills.
4. previous experience in English -- The learning and use of the English language (either prior to or after arriving in Canada) before starting current degree program at the University of Alberta.
5. field of study -- A particular academic area which an international student has chosen to study as his or her major for the present degree program.
6. preparatory training/orientation -- Sessions that are held for varying lengths of time for the purpose of orienting students for living and studying successfully in an English speaking setting. As well, some programs of this nature may provide intensive English language training. These sessions may be offered in the students' country of origin or in Canada.

1.5. Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

This study is subject to certain delimitation and limitations. They manifest as follows:

Delimitations

1. The subjects in this study will consist of only a subset of the international graduate student population currently studying at the University of Alberta (1992-1993) for whom English is not the first language.
2. Only the students' needs for aspects of the English language in relation to living and studying in Canada are to be investigated by means of a questionnaire.
3. Only four independent variables (previous experience in English, field of study, gender, and preparatory training received) are included when examining the English language needs of these international students.

Limitations

1. Because of time and cost constraints, the total population cannot be surveyed. The study involves a representative sample of 85 students out of the total population of 684 University of Alberta international graduate students (1992-1993) whose first language is not English.
2. The study employed a self-administered questionnaire as the research instrument for data collection subject to the limitations usually associated with written questionnaires.
3. Since the data are based on University of Alberta international graduate students only, the information may be limited for generalization to other Canadian college and university situations. However, it is believed that this information should have relevance to certain international students and other interested parties.

1.6. Assumptions

The following general assumptions are made with regard to the formulation and operation of the study.

1. There are English language needs among the international students whose first language is other than English and who are now living and studying in Canada. The English needs of these students vary according to certain personal and situational variables. The students themselves are in a better position to provide information about their perceived English language needs.
2. Because the nature of the study requires a relatively large number of subjects, the use of a questionnaire is considered to be an appropriate approach for data collection.
3. The random sample of this study is representative of the international graduate students currently enrolled in the University of Alberta by country of origin (1992-1993).
4. The subjects of the study comprehend the purpose of the study and understand all question items in the questionnaire.
5. The questionnaire responses from the subjects are true, accurate, and complete.
6. Analysis methods employed are appropriate for the purpose of this study.

Chapter Two

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A review of the literature indicates that most research on international students has focused on either the admission and academic performance of foreign students, comparisons of various nationality groups of foreign students and interactions between national and international students, the psychological and social impact of the sojourn experience on foreign students, the relationship of academic achievement to attitudes and adjustment, or on foreign students' experience on their return home (Marion, 1986). Few research studies have been conducted to investigate the perceived language needs of international students for adjusting to a linguistically and culturally different environment. This section will review insights from related literature which have implications for possible language needs of these students and will present the few studies specifically directed at examining foreign students' language needs for social and academic life in a host country. This section is divided into four parts: 1) host language and social adjustment, 2) host language and academic adjustment, 3) background variables and host language needs, and 4) language needs studies of international students.

2.1. Host Language and Social Adjustment

Social adjustment may be no less important than academic arrangements for increasing the likelihood that foreign students will learn and successfully complete their studies (Schutze, 1989). A central ingredient crucial to the quality of social adjustment is proficiency in the host language. Poor language proficiency impedes social interactions of foreign students with host students, professors, and other members of the academic community as well as the society at large, which may then lead to possible social and psychological problems and negatively contribute to academic achievement.

Sewell and Davidson (1956), in a study of a group of 40 Scandinavian students at the University of Wisconsin, explored a number of relevant variables that were speculated to have a bearing on the outcomes of the students' sojourn, particularly their adjustment, attitudes and images of the United States. From the interview protocols obtained from the subjects and several other sources, the researchers developed an "Index of Contact" which was centered around "contacts with the American community (homes, churches, commercial recreation, etc.), participation in campus activities and events, proportion of time spent in the company of Americans, and extent of travel in the United States" (p. 11). It was found that there was a significant relationship between English speaking facility and the Index of Contact, i.e. foreign students who had better English speaking skills reported a more favorable sojourn experience.

Deutsch and Won's (1963) study was designed to examine the personal characteristics, social interaction, and adjustment of a group of 94 foreign technical trainees from 29 countries in training in the United States. Data were obtained from questionnaires. Results confirmed English language facility as an important factor in determining degree of satisfaction expressed by trainees with their training program and with their social experiences in the United States, the relationship being that "those persons who reported greater fluency in English also reported the greatest amount of satisfaction" (p. 121). Hence, the findings supported their hypothesis that a positive correlation exists between language proficiency and general adjustment.

Spradley & Phillips (1972) presented a 33-item Cultural Readjustment Rating Questionnaire (CRRQ) to 83 American Peace Corps volunteers, 34 Chinese students in the U.S. and 42 American students with no cross-cultural experience. The authors then compared cultural stress between the three groups. Subjects were asked to imagine themselves living in another culture for one year or more and rate items on the amount of readjustment that is needed. Results from an analysis of CRRQ responses showed that all three groups rated language as the most anxiety-producing element in readjustment.

Pruitt (1978) reported on a questionnaire study of adjustment of African students to American society. The study involved 296 African students from 25 different countries who were studying at eight different U.S. universities and one community college. Statistical analysis revealed that students with initial difficulties in the English language were poorly adjusted to the American academic, social and cultural environment.

Lee et al.'s (1981) national survey examined needs of foreign students from developing countries at U.S. colleges and universities. The 1,857 respondents, representing 102 nations, were drawn from 22 U.S. post-secondary educational institutions. Lee and colleagues found that proficiency in English showed highly significant and substantive relationships with the students' broader experiences and satisfaction in the United States. They concluded that English language skills were "a strong predictor of satisfaction with needs, particularly those of an informational and interpersonal nature" (p. 81).

Surdam and Collins (1984), in a study of a group of 143 international students from 35 countries who enrolled in a major public university in the United States, investigated the students' intercultural contact with hosts and peers, and their adjustment to social life in the U.S. The study sought to determine possible relationships between intercultural contact and adjustment in these international students on eight independent variables. The students were interviewed and completed an extensive questionnaire adapted from Pruitt's *African Student Questionnaire* (1976). With regard to English language facility, a major finding of the study indicated that "students who believed their English was adequate were significantly better adapted (fewer problems on a checklist) than those who believed it to be inadequate" (p. 243).

Zelmer and Johnson (1988) obtained data from 28 Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)-sponsored graduate students from Tanzania, Zambia, Nigeria, and Ghana formerly studying at the University of Alberta. The survey was to study the students' employment and educational backgrounds prior to coming to study at this university,

the university and Canadian experiences, and employment after return home. The study indicated that adjustment to life in Canada did not seem to impose unreasonable demands on the international students (p. 48) and their overall experience of Canadian study was overwhelmingly judged to be a positive one (p. 44). All the subjects in this study came from "English-speaking backgrounds into a university which uses English as the language of instruction" (p. 36). It seems reasonable to attribute their positive Canadian experiences largely to their English language facility.

A qualitative research study completed by Heikinheimo and Shute (1986) was designed to investigate the nature of foreign students' adjustment by examining the students' perceptions and analyzing their interactions with Canadian students. Forty-six international students from African and Southeast Asian countries at a Canadian university were given questionnaires, interviewed, and observed in several settings. Heikinheimo and Shute identified four kinds of social adjustment patterns with Southeast Asian students ('isolated and dissatisfied', 'isolated', 'somewhat integrated', and 'merged') and two patterns with the Africans ('somewhat isolated' and 'somewhat integrated'). The findings suggested that the first three social adjustment patterns for the Asian group were closely tied to problems in English. The Africans, on the other hand, mainly emphasized cultural differences and academic pressures as barriers to interaction with Canadians. English was not problematic for them.

2.2. Host Language and Academic Adjustment

Schutze (1989) stated that there can be no doubt that among the many possible barriers that foreign students face, lack of language proficiency is the gravest one. In addition to social integration, having a good command of the language of the host country is also of pivotal importance for the academic success of foreign students. The acquisition of a solid language proficiency is hence seen as a crucial prerequisite for successful academic studies.

Halasz (1969) analyzed academic performance data of 177 international graduate students from Indonesia, Korea, Pakistan, and Thailand studying at the University of California, Los Angeles from the fall of 1959 through the spring of 1967. Variables examined relating to academic achievement included previous scholarship, post-baccalaureate study, English proficiency, and financial support. One of the findings of the study revealed that English proficiency correlated highly with scholastic achievement of these students. A similar study was done by Spinks and Ho (1984) at the University of Hong Kong, an English-language and Western-oriented university, for the purpose of predicting academic performance. They examined academic records of a sample of 190 social science students admitted into the university in 1977 and graduated in 1980. Scores in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination, Matriculation Examination, and the university examinations were analyzed. The researchers found that ability in English language provided a good and reasonably independent predictor of academic success of the students.

Han (1975), in his attempt to identify problems of foreign graduate students from the Far East studying at the University of Southern California, administered a 62-item questionnaire to 118 foreign students. Analysis of the data from the 78 completed questionnaire responses showed that "difficulty with the English language was identified as the most serious problem by every one of the subgroups of foreign students from the Far East in this study" (p. 68). Typical language difficulties encountered by these students were participating in classroom discussions, writing term papers, making American friends, joining in group activities, taking notes, comprehending lectures, writing exams, and completing class assignments.

The study by Lee et al. (1981) reported that foreign students who had a greater command of English skills, as measured by TOEFL scores and student self-evaluation of language ability, appeared to adjust more successfully to U.S. academic environment on a

number of factors such as "understanding the grading system and course requirements, having opportunities to discuss course work with faculty members, getting advice from academic advisors, and being respected as a fellow human being by U.S. students..." (p. 80). In general, higher TOEFL scores and higher self-ratings both correlated with better adjustment; however, TOEFL scores were not as strongly related on as many adjustment factors as self-evaluations of language ability in this study.

The objective of Payind's (1979) study was to analyze the nature and extent of the academic, personal and social problems of Afghan and Iranian students in the United States on the basis of eight factors: country of origin, sex, age, marital status, academic classification, major field of study, duration of stay in the United States, and financial sponsorship. One hundred and twenty students on nine American campuses were surveyed. Payind found that academic problems experienced by these students were largely related to poor English language proficiency and, to a certain extent, to the differences between the educational systems of home countries and those of the United States. In particular, the most severe academic problems reported by the subjects in relation to English were: completing written examinations in the same length of time as American students do; improving English to the level necessary to pursue academic work; communicating thoughts in English; presenting oral reports; competing with Americans for high grades; taking notes; and writing reports.

Using structured interviews with a sample of nine international students (six undergraduate and three graduate students) from eight countries who were studying at the National College of Agricultural Engineering, Silsoe, Britain, Keech (1980) reported on the students' English language difficulties in order of severity as follows: writing technical reports, special study projects and lecture notes; expressing ideas in spoken English; understanding lectures and seminars; and reading textbooks and journals.

Woodhall (1989), quoting a 1988 study by the United Kingdom Council for Overseas Student Affairs (UKCOSA), listed a number of academic and language problems commonly encountered by foreign students as follows:

- 1) not understanding lectures because of speed of delivery or accent;
- 2) not understanding colloquial or idiomatic English and not recognizing switches from the formal to the informal register;
- 3) not understanding technical and subject-specific vocabulary;
- 4) lack of confidence in seminar discussions;
- 5) lack of expertise in experimental or practical laboratory sessions, due to unfamiliarity with equipment, etc.;
- 6) inability to read quickly, in order to identify the main points of a book or article, combined with excessive reverence for the printed word and excessive thoroughness in reading and summarizing. Scanning and skimming for content and sense are unfamiliar practises for many;
- 7) misunderstanding about the purpose of a reading list; students may believe it is necessary to read all the books listed or even to memorize parts of them, whereas teachers may give a very wide list and expect students to read only a selection;
- 8) difficulties with writing essays or other assignments (p. 108).

In the study referred to earlier of African and Southeast Asian students at a Canadian university, Heikinheimo and Shute (1986) found that African students had fewer problems adjusting to the Canadian academic setting than did Southeast Asians, partly because the African students communicated more easily in English. As indicated in the study, "many Asian students reported language difficulties as their major academic problem. Insufficient English, along with shyness and a pattern of apparent passivity in the classroom setting, combined to impede severely the class participation of the Southeast Asian students" (p. 402).

While the above studies indicated that poor language proficiency negatively affects academic adjustment partially reflected in the form of academic achievement, there are some research findings showing little relationship between them. Hwang and Dizney (1970) investigated the predictive validity of the TOEFL as predictor of first term GPA for 63 Chinese graduate students and of grade in English as a second language (ESL) for 20 of the 63 subjects who were taking an ESL course during their first term of graduate study at the University of Oregon. It was found that there was a significant correlation between total TOEFL scores and grades in the ESL course for the 20 students. However, total TOEFL scores and first term GPA for the 63 subjects failed to yield a significant relationship.

With limited empirical evidence, the researchers concluded that "TOEFL is a relatively good predictor of grades in ESL for Chinese graduate students at the University of Oregon. However, its use to predict the academic success of Chinese graduate students is doubtful" (p. 477).

Similar results were also found in a study by Richard, Xu, and Jonathan (1987), who analyzed records of 376 international graduate students at the State University of New York at Albany for relationships among TOEFL score, GPA, course load, and academic major. Their findings indicated that a TOEFL score was not an effective predictor of academic success, as measured by GPA, for this group of international students. "Indeed, on the average, their [students with TOEFL scores below 550] GPAs were higher than those of students with TOEFL scores of 550-569" (p. 259).

2.3. Background Variables and Language Needs

Several background variables have been discussed in the literature in relation to the language needs of international students for social and academic adjustment.

Previous Experience in the Host Country's Language

Heikinheimo and Shute's (1986) findings also revealed that Asian students had serious problems in understanding lectures, taking notes, answering questions, and writing essays while the African students were generally reported to be much more confident of their English skills with the exception of a concern about differences in accents. The researchers explained that all the African students in the sample had studied English in secondary and undergraduate school and had considerably more practice using English before they came to study in Canada.

Deressa and Beavers (1988) reported that there were no significant differences found between intensive English studies in the home country, previous experiences in a foreign country, and academic and non-academic needs among a sample of 70 international students enrolled in the College of Home Economics at a large mid-western American university. Yet there was a strong relationship between intensive English studied in the United States and effect of English language when taking examinations.

Field of Study

Chongolnee (1978) of Iowa State University, reported by Lee, et al. (1981), conducted a study to determine selected factors affecting the academic achievement of foreign graduate students at that university. Chongolnee found that the academic performance of the foreign students differed by field of study. The engineering majors had the highest performance, followed by physical science majors, then biological science majors. Social science majors had the lowest academic performance.

In Payind's 1979 study, mentioned above, the researcher also uncovered that foreign students whose major fields of study were humanities and social sciences had significant higher 'academic problem' scores than those who were studying in sciences and engineering. Yet there were no significant differences found between the students' fields of study and their personal

problems and social problems. He attributed the discrepancies in academic achievement among different major fields of study to the fact that the terminology and formulae of the sciences are almost universal whereas the intensive reading, large vocabulary and extensive library research necessary in the humanities and social sciences require relatively higher proficiency in English than in the sciences or engineering.

Robertson (1984), relying on a 72-item questionnaire with a population of 1,481 foreign students at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign campus (57% return rate) and two interview schedules with 60 students and faculty members and staff, investigated the extent to which foreign students' reported use of English, their perceptions of the importance of English language skills, and their proficiency in English was related to their membership in groups based on academic discipline, academic level, and teaching assistantship status. As far as major field of study is concerned, differences in the reported use of speaking skills and writing skills were observed; differences in perceived importance of English language skills in general and of writing skills in particular were observed; and differences in perceived ability in listening skills and reading skills were also observed.

Gender

Manese (1988) explored differences in the needs and perceptions between male and female international students at the University of Maryland. Ninety-six international students attending a required fall orientation program at the university completed a 68-item questionnaire on their background, perceptions, and needs. The researchers found that females indicated greater needs for improving note taking and classroom speaking skills than males.

With regard to perceived importance of English skills, Lee, et al. (1981) found that the only significant difference in terms of sex categories was that female students placed higher importance than male students on the English skill composite: understanding spoken English,

giving an oral presentation in class, reading (textbooks, journals, etc.), writing papers and a thesis, taking tests, taking class notes, participating in class discussions, and conversing with faculty members and other students.

Orientation Experience

Dunnett (1981) carried out a study to investigate the effects of an English language training and orientation program on social and academic adjustment of foreign students attending State University of New York at Buffalo in 1975-1976. Questionnaire responses were gathered from two groups of foreign students: one which had completed a six-week intensive English language training and orientation (ELTO) program and then entered an academic degree program (experimental group), and one which had not gone through an ELTO program but entered their degree program immediately upon arrival in the United States (control group).

Significant differences showed up between the two groups' adjustment. Those who attended the ELTO program were found to have a greater information gain than those who did not. In the area of English language proficiency, the findings revealed that the experimental group exhibited greater superiority in English skills such as reading assignments and writing term papers than the control group. In addition, the experimental students showed fewer signs of chronic maladjustment and depression (p. 101). However, there was little difference with regard to the difficulties in understanding lectures and listening comprehension between the two groups.

The study by Woodhall (1989) showed that about a third of the students had attended a special course in English language or study skills before or during their main course of study and the majority reported that this was helpful.

2.4. Language Needs Studies of International Students

Kroll (1979) carried out a survey investigating writing needs of 35 University of Southern California foreign students from ten countries and with nine different linguistic backgrounds, who were in freshman English sections specifically restricted to international students. The survey was also given to 20 American students enrolled in a regular freshman English course for native speakers of English.

Probing writing needs for past, present, and future situations, Kroll found that the international students and American students expressed rather similar kinds of writing needs for many of the items listed in the survey. As for current writing needs, the results suggested that most of the American students consider term papers to be challenging while the majority of the foreign respondents, all but four, tended to indicate that writing tasks that are far removed from their major fields of study are challenging. This puzzling result may be due to the differences in academic studies since more international students in this study were majoring in scientific subjects than were American students. Twenty-four out of the 35 international students reported having no difficulty with courses. All but one of the 35 international students reported taking notes in English either exclusively (71% of respondents) or mostly (14%).

Ostler (1980) reported on a survey of academic language needs of 133 University of Southern California foreign students who were in advanced English language classes while taking regular university courses. The advanced English language program was designed to teach English rhetorical patterns and research paper techniques to foreign students so that they could compete on a fairly equal basis with American students.

The survey was originated from the contradictory phenomenon that foreign students often complained about the language training program; on the other hand, when real writing tasks in English called upon, such as writing critiques and research proposals, there were

frequent requests for help from the students. To know if the problem indicated a need for changes in the advanced class syllabus and if so, what to add and what to remove, Ostler administered a 56-item questionnaire to investigate actual language needs of the international students.

The results revealed that the greatest needs overall were the ability to read textbooks (90%), take notes in class (84%), and ask questions in class (68%). Other language needs varied. Majors in Soft Science (73%) and Public Affairs (88%) showed a greater need for skills in writing research papers than did those in Hard Science (40%) and Engineering (56%). Help in reading academic papers and journals was needed particularly by Soft Science (77%), Public Affairs (75), and Engineering (64%). Majors in Soft Science (59%) and Public Affairs (88%) showed greater needs for conducting oral activities in class, although 41% of the students expressed needs to perform oral tasks in class.

Sun (1987) examined the English language needs of a group of 70 Chinese graduate students and visiting scholars at a Canadian university by means of questionnaires. The questionnaire had three sections, two of which were related to language skills that are commonly found and used in social and academic situations. The English needs of the subjects were assessed according to the roles of the respondents at the Canadian university (e.g., students vs. visiting scholars) and fields of study.

The study found that no significant differences except 'writing exams' which had no relevance for visiting scholars. However, there was an indication that the visiting scholars were particularly concerned about oral and receptive skills, whereas graduate students expressed equal needs for all language skills surveyed. Most social language skill items were rated as very important by all the respondents. There were slight differences in perception between the respondents' needs for some language skills and their fields of study.

2.5. Summary

This section has reviewed selected studies related to the present research. The studies appeared in four different sub-sections -- Host Language and Social Adjustment, Host Language and Academic Adjustment, Background Variables and Language Needs, and Language Needs Studies of International Students.

From an examination of the research on the social adjustment of international students, it became apparent that proficiency in the host language is crucial and positively related to the quality of social adjustment. As for the relationship between host language proficiency and academic adjustment of foreign students, most research findings showed positive correlations, although there were some exceptions. One obvious implication of these studies is that there are language skills, under the umbrella term of host language proficiency, which foreign students need in order to make smooth social and academic adjustments.

In this review of studies concerning background variables (previous experience in the host country's language, length of stay, field of study, gender, and orientation experience) and language needs, the findings were in agreement with the assumption that these variables have a bearing on language needs of foreign students.

Of the limited number of studies on language needs of international students, the literature suggested that there were some needs common among the students. Other language needs tended to be either field-specific or personal-specific.

In addition, although both qualitative and quantitative approaches have been used in exploring language-related issues of international students, the review of the literature indicated that most studies have been quantitative in nature.

Chapter Three

RESEARCH METHOD

The dual purpose of this research was to ask international students about their perceptions of most necessary English language skills for living and studying in Canada and to examine the relationships between their perceived English language needs and selected personal and situational variables of 1) previous experience in English, 2) field of study at the University of Alberta, 3) gender, and 4) participation in preparatory training. This chapter presents the method and procedures used in this study, beginning with the research design. This is followed by a description of the subjects, the research instrument, the data collection, and finally the data analysis procedures.

3.1. Research Design

In an attempt to obtain descriptive and explanatory information to achieve the purposes of the study, a written survey was used to collect data from a representative sample of the international graduate students at the University of Alberta in the 1992-1993 academic year. The survey was based on a quantitative research paradigm; the data were analyzed by means of statistics.

The rationale for selecting the survey method for the study was that the present study was dealing with a relatively large population of 684 international graduate students. It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to arrange interviews with all the international graduate students and locate varieties of social and academic situations to observe them. Furthermore, time and cost constraints were additional considerations in the selection of this research method.

3.2. Subjects

The subjects in this study were drawn from the total population of 684 University of Alberta international graduate students enrolled in the academic year 1992-1993. Two criteria were applied in determining the acceptability of the subjects, and both were met. The two criteria were: 1) the subjects in this study must be international graduate students and 2) English could not be their first language.

In the design phase of the study, a sample size of 195 subjects was determined on the basis of the percentage of students from each foreign country present on the University of Alberta campus. This sample size was about one third of the population surveyed. However, the final sample for this study, based upon the questionnaire mail-back responses, consisted of 85 subjects obtained from two mailings of the questionnaires (a response rate of 44%).

3.3. The Instrument

The data collection instrument used in this study is a 75-item self-administered questionnaire consisting three sections (see Appendix II). The first section asks for demographic information about the subjects. The second section concerns subjects' spoken and written English needs for academic life while studying in Canada. The third section deals with English language needs for social purposes. This section was further subdivided into two categories: language needs for daily living and language needs for social interaction. The questionnaire items in the second and the third sections were from several sources available in relevant studies by different authors. Some items were my own creation. All items in these two sections appeared in the form of Likert-type rating scales from 1 to 6. The subjects were asked to indicate their needs for each language skill listed in the questionnaire by using either "1=Not applicable", "2=Not at all important", "3=Somewhat important", "4=Fairly important", "5=Important", or "6=Very important". Responses from the questionnaires were subsequently

analyzed statistically. However, for the purpose of convenience in the statistical analyses of the data, a few changes were made regarding the numbering of the rating scales and a new category was added for non-response items. The changed rating scales were: "1=Not at all important", "2=Somewhat important", "3=Fairly important", "4=Important", "5=Very important", "6=Not applicable", and "7=No response".

3.4. Data Collection

As the researcher was unable to gain direct access to the personal files of the international students at the University of Alberta for the purpose of locating prospective subjects, the director of the International Centre at the university was contacted. He agreed to provide assistance with this matter. The researcher provided guidelines as to how the 195 questionnaires were to be distributed according to a country coded list. The International Centre staff then located the students and mailed out the questionnaires.

All out-going questionnaires had a coded return envelope and a cover letter in them, explaining the nature of the study and promising ethics guarantees. The University of Alberta campus mail system was used exclusively for the entire questionnaire distribution and collection in this study.

The initial mailing took place in the beginning of February of 1993. Seventy-two questionnaires were returned by the deadline at the end of February, a mail-back return rate of 37%. A follow-up mailing was undertaken in the beginning of March of 1993 to those who had not responded. Once again the second mailing was sent out through the assistance of the International Centre staff. Thirteen more questionnaires were returned by the second mailing deadline in March. The final sample size for this study consists of 85 subjects, a return rate of 44%.

3.5. Data Analysis Procedures

As stated in Chapter One, the current investigation posed 10 research questions. In order to answer these questions, the data were analyzed by means of both descriptive and inferential statistics.

In particular, descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were used to report demographic information. Frequency counts of responses to the English skill items were also conducted, calculating the means of responses to the five levels of importance on a Likert scale and ranking these items.

The inferential statistical analyses were employed with the eight hypotheses. Specifically, in determining the relationship of the subjects' perceived English needs to 1) their previous experience in English, 2) gender, 3) major field of study, and 4) participation in an orientation program, *t*-tests of independent samples and one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were used. The criterion level for significance was set at .05 (two-tailed) for all calculations, unless otherwise noted.

3.6. Summary

This chapter has described the method and procedures used in this study. The research design was stated and the subjects were described, as were the research instrument and the data collection procedures. Finally, the data analysis procedures were presented. The next chapter will present the results from the statistical analyses of the data.

Chapter Four

RESULTS

To provide ease in following the presentation of the results from the current investigation, this chapter is divided into four major sections—demographic information, descriptive analyses, relationship analyses, and open-ended responses. The first section is a description of the demographic information of the subjects in this study. Next is a presentation of a descriptive statistical analysis of the subjects' responses to the English skill items in relation to the two general research questions. The third section is devoted to the results from statistical tests pertaining to the research hypotheses. Finally, responses to open-ended questions are summarized.

4.1. Demographic Information

Eighty-five subjects from 41 different countries and regions around the world participated in this study. The overwhelming majority of the subjects came from developing countries. They reported using 48 languages other than English as a mother tongue.

The subjects' ages, at the time of this study, ranged from 23 to 49 years old, with 47 (or 55.3%) of the subjects in their thirties, 28 (32.9%) in their twenties, and 8 (9.4%) in their forties. Two data points (2.4%) on age were missing (one subject did not respond, and the other responded to age as "adult"). The mean age of these subjects was 32.25 years.

The subjects in this study were all graduate students in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research; but in terms of major academic concentrations, these subjects were studying in 40 different academic departments across seven faculties on the University of Alberta campus. They are the Faculties of Science, Education, Engineering, Arts, Medicine, Business, and Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences.

Table 1 is a presentation of the frequencies and percentages of the demographic variables. The data summaries of these independent variables are presented in the order that they appear in the questionnaire.

Table 1
Distributions of Demographic Variables

Variable	Frequency	%
<u>Gender</u>		
Female	21	24.7
Male	64	75.3
 <u>Major Field of Study by Faculty</u>		
Faculty of Science	32	37.6
Faculty of Education	18	21.2
Faculty of Engineering	17	20.0
Faculty of Arts	7	8.2
Faculty of Medicine	5	5.9
Faculty of Business	3	3.5
Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences	2	2.4
Missing	1	1.2

Table 1 - continued

Variable	Frequency	%
<u>Length of Stay in Canada in Months</u>		
2-6	16	18.8
7-12	9	10.5
13-24	22	25.9
25-48	27	31.8
49-144	10	11.8
Missing	1	1.2
<u>Previous Academic Pursuit in an English Speaking Country</u>		
Yes	23	27.1
No	62	72.9
<u>Previous Level of Education Pursued in an English Speaking Country</u>		
High School	3	3.5
Undergraduate	5	5.9
Graduate	13	15.3
Not Applicable	64	75.3

Table 1 - continued

Variable	Frequency	%
<u>Length of Stay While Studying in an English Speaking Country in Months</u>		
5-12	9	10.6
13-50	12	14.1
Not Applicable	64	75.3
<u>Visited an English Speaking Country Before</u>		
Yes	23	27.1
No	59	69.4
Missing	3	3.5
<u>Length of Visit to an English Speaking Country in Months</u>		
2 or less	10	11.8
3-6	6	7.1
7-24	7	8.2
Not Applicable	62	72.9
<u>TOEFL/Michigan Test</u>		
TOEFL	70	82.3
Michigan	2	2.4
Not required	13	15.3

Table 1 - continued

Variable	Frequency	%
<u>TOEFL Scores</u>		
550-585	20	23.5
586-615	30	35.3
616-700	20	23.5
Not required	13	15.3
Other	2	2.4
<u>Michigan Scores</u>		
80	1	1.2
98	1	1.2
Not required	13	15.3
Other	70	82.3
<u>Status of English in Home Country</u>		
An Academic Subject in School	52	61.2
A Medium of General Education Only	9	10.6
A Medium of Wider Communication in the Society at Large	24	28.2

Table 1 - continued

Variable	Frequency	%
Emphasis of Listening Skills in English Studies		
Little Emphasized	25	29.4
Emphasized	16	18.9
Most Emphasized	11	12.9
Not Applicable	33	38.8
Emphasis of Speaking Skills in English Studies		
Little Emphasized	30	35.3
Emphasized	13	15.3
Most Emphasized	9	10.6
Not Applicable	33	38.8
Emphasis of Reading Skills in English Studies		
Little Emphasized	2	2.4
Emphasized	14	16.5
Most Emphasized	36	42.3
Not Applicable	33	38.8

Table 1 - continued

Variable	Frequency	%
Emphasis of Writing Skills In English Studies		
Little Emphasized	15	17.6
Emphasized	25	29.4
Most Emphasized	12	14.2
Not Applicable	33	38.8
Emphasis of Grammar Skills in English Studies		
Little Emphasized	4	4.7
Emphasized	6	7.1
Most Emphasized	42	49.4
Not Applicable	33	38.8
Emphasis of Vocabulary Skills in English Studies		
Little Emphasized	4	4.7
Emphasized	15	17.7
Most Emphasized	33	38.8
Not Applicable	33	38.8

Table 1 - continued

Variable		Frequency	%
Opportunities to Use English Outside of School			
Yes		74	87.1
No		11	12.9
Participation in Activities Using English in Home Country			
Listening to English programs over the radio	Yes	66	77.6
	No	19	22.4
Watching English language movies or programs on TV	Yes	53	62.4
	No	32	37.6
Reading English language books, magazines, etc.	Yes	71	83.5
	No	14	16.5
Talking regularly with native speakers or learners of English	Yes	27	31.8
	No	58	68.2
Writing in English for various purposes	Yes	53	62.4
	No	32	37.6
Participation in a Preparatory Training Program(s)			
Yes		18	21.2
No		67	78.8

4.2. Descriptive Analyses

To query the subjects' perceptions of the aspects of English which are most essential to social and academic life while studying in Canada, descriptive statistical analyses of the subjects' responses to the English skill items were performed. The items were analyzed under the categories of: (1) Language for daily living, (2) Language for social interactions, (3) Listening and speaking for daily studying, and (4) Reading and writing for daily studying.

For each category, frequencies and percentages of subjects' responses to the English skill items were tabulated. Also, calculations of mean scores were made for all items in that category on the basis of response frequencies to a five-point scale. The maximum mean score possible for each item is 5.00. Items in each category were then ranked in descending orders on the basis of the mean scores. The ranking order was used to determine subjects' perceived English needs. Since there are five levels of importance on the scale, ranging from "1=not at all important" to "5=very important", subjects' perceived English needs may be examined in a quantitative manner based upon the five-point scale. In this study, items with a mean score below 3.00 are suggestive of subjects' perception of need of less importance. Items having a mean score between 4.00 and 5.00 indicate a perception of strong needs. Items receiving a mean score between 4.00 and 3.00 show moderate needs.

In addition to calculating a mean score for every item in each category, Grand Means were also calculated. The Grand Means were used to assess how important each category of items as a whole was perceived by the subjects.

All items were labeled with "V + a numeral" for convenience. A complete list of the items can be found in Appendix IV.

4.2.1. Analysis of Language for Daily Living

This category consists of 13 English skill items from V1 to V13. These items survey the subjects' English skill needs for daily living purposes while studying in Canada. Table 2 shows the frequencies and percentages of subjects' responses to these items. To determine subjects' perceived needs for these English skills, a table listing of their ranking order was made. The results of the ranking are reported in descending order of importance in Table 3.

Table 2
Frequencies and Percentages of Response to Language for
Daily Living Items

Item	Levels of Importance (LI)							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7*	
V1	asking directions							
	<i>Frequency</i>	4	17	19	18	25	2	0
	<i>Percentage</i>	4.7	20.0	22.4	21.2	29.4	2.4	0
V2	shopping							
	<i>Frequency</i>	6	23	22	21	10	2	1
	<i>Percentage</i>	7.1	27.1	25.9	24.7	11.8	2.4	1.2
V3	using the post office							
	<i>Frequency</i>	5	27	21	17	13	2	0
	<i>Percentage</i>	5.9	31.8	24.7	20.0	15.3	2.4	0
V4	arranging accommodation							
	<i>Frequency</i>	2	13	21	31	15	2	1
	<i>Percentage</i>	2.4	15.3	24.7	36.5	17.6	2.4	1.2
V5	riding public transportation							
	<i>Frequency</i>	10	25	18	15	13	2	2
	<i>Percentage</i>	11.8	29.4	21.2	17.6	15.3	2.4	2.4

Table 2--continued

Item	Levels of Importance (LI)							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7*	
V6	doing banking							
	<i>Frequency</i>	4	18	17	26	17	2	1
	<i>Percentage</i>	4.7	21.2	20.0	30.6	20.0	2.4	1.2
V7	making phone calls							
	<i>Frequency</i>	1	10	9	29	34	2	0
	<i>Percentage</i>	1.2	11.8	10.6	34.1	40.0	2.4	0
V8	reading newspapers and magazines in English							
	<i>Frequency</i>	3	7	17	31	24	2	1
	<i>Percentage</i>	3.5	8.2	20.0	36.5	28.2	2.4	1.2
V9	reading ads, catalogues, posters and bills							
	<i>Frequency</i>	7	17	25	19	14	2	1
	<i>Percentage</i>	8.2	20.0	29.4	22.4	16.5	2.4	1.2
V10	seeing a medical doctor							
	<i>Frequency</i>	1	11	19	21	26	2	5
	<i>Percentage</i>	1.2	12.9	22.4	24.7	30.6	2.4	5.9
V11	using university or public recreational facilities (e.g., swimming pools, etc.)							
	<i>Frequency</i>	9	27	24	12	8	2	3
	<i>Percentage</i>	10.6	31.8	28.2	14.1	9.4	2.4	3.5
V12	understanding radio							
	<i>Frequency</i>	1	13	11	26	31	2	1
	<i>Percentage</i>	1.2	15.3	12.9	30.6	36.5	2.4	1.2
V13	understanding films and TV programs							
	<i>Frequency</i>	0	11	8	30	34	2	0
	<i>Percentage</i>	0	12.9	9.4	35.3	40.0	2.4	0

*Note: 1=not at all important, 2=somewhat important, 3=fairly important, 4=important, 5=very important, 6=no answer, 7=not applicable

Table 3
Rank Orders of Responses to Language for
Daily Living Items

Item		Mean*	SD	Rank
V13	understanding films and TV programs	4.05	1.02	1
V7	making phone calls	4.02	1.06	2
V12	understanding radio	3.89	1.12	3
V8	reading newspapers and magazines in English	3.81	1.07	4
V10	seeing a medical doctor	3.77	1.10	5
V4	arranging accommodation	3.54	1.05	6
V1	asking directions	3.52	1.25	7
V6	doing banking	3.42	1.19	8
V9	reading ads, catalogues, posters and bills	3.20	1.20	9
V3	using the post office	3.07	1.19	10.5
V2	shopping	3.07	1.15	10.5
V5	riding public transportation	2.95	1.28	12
V11	using university or public recreational facilities	2.79	1.14	13
		3.47**		

* Maximum Mean Score=5.00, meaning "very important"

** Grand Mean (GM)

As can be determined from Table 3, the most important social English skills perceived by the respondents were items V13 --"understanding films and TV programs"--with a mean score of 4.05. Also high on the list were English needs for item V7, which is "making phone calls", M=4.02.

Of the 13 English skill items in this category, V11-- "using university or public recreational facilities"--was identified as the least necessary (M=2.79). V5--"riding public transportation"--came as the next lowest item on the list (M=2.95).

All nine remaining items in this category had a mean score ranging from M=3.89 to M=3.07. A Grand Mean of GM=3.47 was also obtained for the category, indicating that on the whole the respondents in this study perceived this category of English skill items as being of moderate importance in relation to adapting socially while studying in Canada.

4.2.2. Analysis of Language for Social Interaction

Table 4 reflects the subjects' responses to the 10 English skill items (V14 through V23) in the category of language for social interactions. The 10 items were ranked in an identical manner as those in the first category. The subjects' overall perceptions of most essential English skills for social interactions are found in Table 5.

Table 4
Frequencies and Percentages of Response to Language for
Social Interaction Items

Item	Levels of Importance (LI)						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7*
V14 participating in daily conversations with your English speaking friends							
<i>Frequency</i>	0	6	16	33	27	2	1
<i>Percentage</i>	0	7.1	18.8	38.8	31.8	2.4	1.2
V15 chatting with English speaking friends at a party							
<i>Frequency</i>	0	9	17	32	24	2	1
<i>Percentage</i>	0	10.6	20.0	37.6	28.2	2.4	1.2

Table 4--continued

Item	Levels of Importance (LI)						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7*
V16 chatting with members of a host family in a Canadian home							
<i>Frequency</i>	0	5	18	29	20	2	11
<i>Percentage</i>	0	5.9	21.2	34.1	23.5	2.4	12.9
V17 knowing how to talk about personal or other issues in a sensitive way							
<i>Frequency</i>	2	3	6	34	38	2	0
<i>Percentage</i>	2.4	3.5	7.1	40.0	44.7	2.4	0
V18 making Canadian friends							
<i>Frequency</i>	4	12	10	28	28	2	1
<i>Percentage</i>	4.7	14.1	11.8	32.9	32.9	2.4	1.2
V19 introducing yourself to a new acquaintance							
<i>Frequency</i>	1	12	21	25	23	2	1
<i>Percentage</i>	1.2	14.1	24.7	29.4	27.1	2.4	1.2
V20 using church services where English is used							
<i>Frequency</i>	1	17	13	15	8	2	29
<i>Percentage</i>	1.2	20.0	15.3	17.6	9.4	2.4	34.1
V21 participating in recreational activities held by the International Centre							
<i>Frequency</i>	3	22	21	16	13	2	8
<i>Percentage</i>	3.5	25.9	24.7	18.8	15.3	2.4	9.4
V22 understanding slang, idioms and swear language							
<i>Frequency</i>	4	16	12	21	28	3	1
<i>Percentage</i>	4.7	18.8	14.1	24.7	32.9	3.5	1.2
V23 understanding jokes and humor							
<i>Frequency</i>	2	11	13	23	33	3	0
<i>Percentage</i>	2.4	12.9	15.3	27.1	38.8	3.5	0

*Note: 1=not at all important, 2=somewhat important, 3=fairly important, 4=important, 5=very important, 6=no answer, 7=not applicable.

Table 5
Rank Orders of Language for Social Interaction Items

Item		Mean*	SD	Rank
V17	knowing how to talk about personal or other issues in a sensitive way	4.24	.92	1
V14	participating in daily conversations with your English speaking friends	3.99	.91	2
V23	understanding jokes and humor	3.90	1.15	3
V16	chatting with members of a host family in a Canadian home	3.89	.90	4
V15	chatting with English speaking friends at a party	3.87	.97	5
V18	making Canadian friends	3.78	1.21	6
V19	introducing yourself to a new acquaintance	3.70	1.07	7
V22	understanding slang, idioms and swear language	3.65	1.28	8
V20	using church services where English is used	3.22	1.11	9
V21	participating in recreational activities held by the International Centre	3.19	1.16	10
		3.74**		

* Maximum Mean Score=5.00, meaning "very important"

** Grand Mean (GM)

The ranking data (Table 5) show that the most important English skill item in this category, as perceived by the subjects, was V17--"knowing how to talk about personal or other issues in a sensitive way" (M=4.24). The least important item was identified as item V21, which is "participating in recreational activities held by the International Centre", with a mean score of 3.19.

As evident in Table 5, only one item in this category had a mean score above 4.00 (item V17) and there was no one item rated below a mean of 3.00. The Grand Mean (GM) for the entire category was 3.74, suggesting that in general the respondents considered these items as being moderately important in relation to subjects' social life while they were studying in Canada.

4.2.3. Analysis of Listening and Speaking for Daily Studying

Items V24 through V37 include 14 questions representing typical academic activities that require listening and speaking skills. Table 6 presents frequencies and percentages of subjects' responses to these listening and speaking for daily studying items. Subjects' perceived needs for these items are ranked in Table 7.

It is clear from a visual inspection of Table 7 that items V29 and V26, -- "understanding your professors' lectures", "discussing issues with your classmates and professors in class"--were perceived as the most needed items and subjects expressed equal needs for them, both with a mean score of 4.59. Items V33, V25, V34, V27, V31, V24, V36 and V35--"giving instructions/explanations as a teaching assistant", "understanding discussions in class", "giving presentations at professional conferences", "giving talks at seminars", "making presentations in class", "understanding discussions with your professors outside class", "understanding talks in your field, given by guest speakers or given at conferences", and "discussing academic issues over the telephone"--also drew considerable attention from the

Table 6
Frequencies and Percentages of Response to Listening and
Speaking for Daily Studying Items

Item	Levels of Importance (LI)							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7*	
24	understanding discussions with your professors outside class							
	<i>Frequency</i>	2	6	3	21	46	3	4
	<i>Percentage</i>	2.4	7.1	3.5	24.7	54.1	3.5	4.7
25	understanding discussions in class							
	<i>Frequency</i>	0	0	5	23	51	3	3
	<i>Percentage</i>	0	0	5.9	27.1	60	3.5	3.5
26	discussing issues with your classmates and professors in class							
	<i>Frequency</i>	0	1	6	18	55	3	2
	<i>Percentage</i>	0	1.2	7.1	21.2	64.7	3.5	2.4
27	giving talks at seminars							
	<i>Frequency</i>	0	2	9	17	52	3	2
	<i>Percentage</i>	0	2.4	10.6	20.0	61.2	3.5	2.4
28	understanding discussions in group-work assignments							
	<i>Frequency</i>	3	6	12	26	32	3	3
	<i>Percentage</i>	3.5	7.1	14.1	30.6	37.6	3.5	3.5
29	understanding your professors' lectures							
	<i>Frequency</i>	0	1	6	18	55	3	2
	<i>Percentage</i>	0	1.2	7.1	21.2	64.7	3.5	2.4
30	discussing issues with fellow students out of class							
	<i>Frequency</i>	1	9	18	23	30	3	1
	<i>Percentage</i>	1.2	10.6	21.2	27.1	35.3	3.5	1.2

Table 6--continued

Item	Levels of Importance (LI)							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7*	
31	making presentations in class							
	<i>Frequency</i>	0	4	9	18	47	3	4
	<i>Percentage</i>	0	4.7	10.6	21.2	55.3	3.5	4.7
32	understanding class presentations given by fellow students							
	<i>Frequency</i>	2	9	19	17	33	3	2
	<i>Percentage</i>	2.4	10.6	22.4	20.0	38.8	3.5	2.4
33	giving instructions/explanations as a teaching assistant							
	<i>Frequency</i>	0	1	8	14	54	3	5
	<i>Percentage</i>	0	1.2	9.4	16.5	63.5	3.5	5.9
34	giving presentations at professional conferences							
	<i>Frequency</i>	0	1	8	15	50	3	8
	<i>Percentage</i>	0	1.2	9.4	17.6	58.8	3.5	9.4
35	discussing academic issues over the telephone							
	<i>Frequency</i>	2	6	12	15	40	3	7
	<i>Percentage</i>	2.4	7.1	14.1	17.6	47.1	3.5	8.2
36	understanding talks in your field, given by guest speakers or given at conferences							
	<i>Frequency</i>	1	3	13	23	42	3	0
	<i>Percentage</i>	1.2	3.5	15.3	27.1	49.4	3.5	0
37	requesting assistance in the library							
	<i>Frequency</i>	3	15	24	18	21	3	1
	<i>Percentage</i>	3.5	17.6	28.2	21.2	24.7	3.5	1.2

*Note: 1=not at all important, 2=somewhat important, 3=fairly important, 4=important, 5=very important, 6=no answer, 7=not applicable.

Table 7
Ranking Orders of Listening and Speaking for Daily Studying Items

Item		Mean*	SD	Rank
V29	understanding your professors' lectures	4.59	.69	1.5
V26	discussing issues with your classmates and professors in class	4.59	.69	1.5
V33	giving instructions/ explanations as a teaching assistant	4.58	.73	3.5
V25	understanding discussions in class	4.58	.61	3.5
V34	giving presentations at professional conferences	4.54	.74	5
V27	giving talks at seminars	4.49	.80	6
V31	making presentations in class	4.39	.89	7
V24	understanding discussions with your professors outside class	4.32	1.04	8
V36	understanding talks in you field	4.24	.94	9
V35	discussing academic issues over the telephone	4.13	1.12	10
V28	understanding discussions in group-work assignments	3.99	1.10	11
V30	discussing issues with your fellow students out of class	3.89	1.07	12
V32	understanding class presentations given by fellow students	3.88	1.15	13
V37	requesting assistance in the library	3.48	1.17	14
		4.26**		

* Maximum Mean Score=5.00, meaning "very important"

** Grand Mean (GM)

respondents as these items all had a mean score of over 4.00. Interestingly, V33 and V25 were also ranked the same, after the top two items V29 and V26. Among the four remaining items in this category, item V37--"requesting assistance in the library"--was rated the lowest (M=3.48).

The data presented in Table 7 also reveal that the Grand Mean for the whole category was GM=4.26. Thus, it can be concluded that most items were highly valued by the respondents in this study.

4.2.4. Analysis of Reading and Writing for Daily Studying

The last category consists of 16 items (V38 through V53) that require reading and writing skills in English for conducting daily studying activities. Table 8 shows the frequencies and percentages of subjects' responses to these items. Table 9 ranks the subjects' perceived English needs for these items.

Rank orders for the reading and writing for daily studying items show that respondents perceived V43 and V42, which are "answering exams" (M=4.56) and "understanding exams" (M=4.54), as the most important items. Greater needs were also expressed for 10 other items in this category, bearing a mean score of over 4.00. These items were: V46--"writing papers to be presented at professional conferences" (M=4.51), V50--"writing articles for publication in scholarly or professional journals" (M=4.51), V38--"reading textbooks and course handouts" (M=4.49), V39--"writing short papers for course assignments (1-8 pages)" (M=4.44), V45--"writing long papers for course assignments (9-25 pages)" (M=4.38), V40--"reading professional journals" (M=4.31), V41--"taking notes in English in class or in other academic situations" (M=4.21), V44--"reading reference books other than your textbooks" (M=4.13), V53--"writing long reports of lab experiments for courses (9-25 pages)" (M=4.12), V49--"writing summaries/critiques for books, book chapters, and journal articles you read"

Table 8
Frequencies and Percentages of Response to Reading and
Writing for Daily Studying Items

Item	Levels of Importance (LI)							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7*	
V38	reading textbooks and course handouts							
	<i>Frequency</i>	0	4	6	18	55	2	0
	<i>Percentage</i>	0	4.7	7.1	21.2	64.7	2.4	0
V39	writing short papers for course assignments (1-8 pages)							
	<i>Frequency</i>	0	2	6	27	45	2	3
	<i>Percentage</i>	0	2.4	7.1	31.8	52.9	2.4	3.5
V40	reading professional journals							
	<i>Frequency</i>	0	2	13	25	43	2	0
	<i>Percentage</i>	0	2.4	15.3	29.4	50.6	2.4	0
V41	taking notes in English in class or in other academic situations							
	<i>Frequency</i>	1	4	14	19	42	2	3
	<i>Percentage</i>	1.2	4.7	16.5	22.4	49.4	2.4	3.5
V42	understanding exams							
	<i>Frequency</i>	0	1	8	17	53	2	4
	<i>Percentage</i>	0	1.2	9.4	20.0	62.4	2.4	4.7
V43	answering exams							
	<i>Frequency</i>	0	2	7	15	55	2	4
	<i>Percentage</i>	0	2.4	8.2	17.6	64.7	2.4	4.7
V44	reading reference books other than your textbooks							
	<i>Frequency</i>	0	3	16	31	33	2	0
	<i>Percentage</i>	0	3.5	18.8	36.5	38.8	2.4	0
V45	writing long papers for course assignments (9-25 pages)							
	<i>Frequency</i>	3	2	5	22	48	2	3
	<i>Percentage</i>	3.5	2.4	5.9	25.9	56.5	2.4	3.5

Table 8--continued

Item	Levels of Importance (LI)							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7*	
V46	writing papers to be presented at professional conferences							
	<i>Frequency</i>	0	4	5	16	52	2	6
	<i>Percentage</i>	0	4.7	5.9	18.8	61.2	2.4	7.1
V47	writing resumes							
	<i>Frequency</i>	3	5	11	25	36	2	3
	<i>Percentage</i>	3.5	5.9	12.9	29.9	42.4	2.4	3.5
V48	writing business letters (e.g., asking for information, requesting for assistance with academic activities, etc.)							
	<i>Frequency</i>	3	7	14	24	33	2	2
	<i>Percentage</i>	3.5	8.2	16.5	28.2	38.8	2.4	2.4
V49	writing summaries/critiques for books, book chapters, and journal articles you read							
	<i>Frequency</i>	4	2	10	28	35	2	4
	<i>Percentage</i>	4.7	2.4	11.8	32.9	41.2	2.4	4.7
V50	writing articles for publication in scholarly or professional journals							
	<i>Frequency</i>	2	2	6	10	54	2	9
	<i>Percentage</i>	2.4	2.4	7.1	11.8	63.5	2.4	10.6
V51	writing short reports of lab experiments for courses (1-8 pages)							
	<i>Frequency</i>	0	5	10	27	28	2	13
	<i>Percentage</i>	0	5.9	11.8	31.8	32.9	2.4	15.3
V52	filling out applications or forms							
	<i>Frequency</i>	5	8	23	21	24	2	2
	<i>Percentage</i>	5.9	9.4	27.1	24.7	28.2	2.4	2.4
V53	writing long reports of lab experiments for courses (9-25 pages)							
	<i>Frequency</i>	1	3	12	23	29	2	15
	<i>Percentage</i>	1.2	3.5	14.1	27.1	34.1	2.4	17.6

*Note: 1=not at all important, 2=somewhat important, 3=fairly important, 4=important, 5=very important, 6=no answer, 7=not applicable.

Table 9
Rank Orders of Reading and Writing for Daily Studying Items

Item		Mean*	SD	Rank
V43	answering exams	4.56	.76	1
V42	understanding exams	4.54	.73	2
V46	writing papers to be presented at professional conferences	4.51	.84	3.5
V50	writing articles for publication in scholarly or professional journals	4.51	.95	3.5
V38	reading textbooks and course handouts	4.49	.83	5
V39	writing short papers for course assignments	4.44	.74	6
V45	writing long papers for course assignment	4.38	.99	7
V40	reading professional journals	4.31	.83	8
V41	taking notes in English in class or in other academic situations	4.21	.99	9
V44	reading reference books other than your textbooks	4.13	.85	10
V53	writing long reports of lab experiments for courses	4.12	.96	11
V49	writing summaries or critiques for books, book chapters, journals articles	4.11	1.06	12.5
V51	writing short reports of lab experiments for courses	4.11	.91	12.5
V47	writing resumes	4.08	1.09	14
V48	writing business letters	3.95	1.13	15
V52	filling out applications or forms	3.63	1.19	16
		4.26**		

* Maximum Mean Score=5.00, meaning "very important"

** Grand Mean (GM)

(M=4.11), V51--"writing short reports of lab experiments for courses (1-8 pages)" (M=4.11), and V47--"writing resumes" (M=4.08). Two pairs of items for which subjects expressed equal needs were V46/V50 and V49/V51.

Only two items (V48 and V52) in this category had a mean score below 4.00, but greater than 3.00. The mean score for V48--"writing business letters"--was 3.95, and 3.63 for V52--"filling out applications or forms". The 16 items in this last category yielded a Grand Mean of 4.26, indicative of a high level of importance that the respondents attached to them (items).

4.3. Relationship Analyses

The results from the descriptive analyses of the responses to the English skill items revealed only global perceptions of the subjects' English needs for social and academic life while studying in Canada, not taking into consideration the respondents' heterogeneous backgrounds. The purpose of the analyses discussed in this section is to investigate the relationships between potentially specific English needs and certain influencing variables. These variables include 1) previous experience in English, 2) major field of study, 3) gender, and 4) participation in preparatory training programs.

To pinpoint the relationships, each of the variables will be examined for its impact upon English needs for social and academic life, under the respective headings of 1) analyses of perceived English needs for social life and 2) analyses of perceived English needs for academic life.

For each variable, the corresponding hypothesis is stated, followed by results from pertinent statistical tests. The statistical tests employed in this study were *t*-tests of independent samples and one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA). For each statistical test in this section, the level of significance was set at less than or equal to .05.

4.3.1. Analyses of Perceived English Needs for Social Life

Hypothesis--1.1

There is a difference between the perceived social English needs of the international students and their previous experience in English.

The status of English in the home countries of the subjects was chosen as a measure of students' previous experience in English. It refers to whether respondents came from countries where English is an academic subject to be learned in schools, or a medium of general education only, or a medium of wider communication in the society.

In order to test whether respondents from different English status backgrounds differ significantly in their perceived social English needs while studying in Canada, subjects were divided into three groups. Group 1 consists of subjects from countries where English is an academic subject to be learned in schools. Group 2 consists of subjects from countries where English is a medium of general education only (e.g., several academic subjects are taught in English). Group 3 consists of subjects from countries where English is a medium of wider communication in the society.

One-way ANOVAs were then used to compare social English needs of the respondents from the three different English status backgrounds. The results from the ANOVAs on all social English skill items with the three groups of subjects demonstrated no statistical evidence of differing needs in these regards.

Hypothesis--1.2

There is a difference between the perceived social English needs of the international students and their fields of study at the University of Alberta.

Subjects in this study reported studying in 40 academic departments. The 40 departments were identified as belonging to seven teaching faculties--Arts, Business, Education, Engineering, Medicine, Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Science, and Science.

However, only six of the faculties were examined in this study (the Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical were collapsed). Because the number of respondents from the Faculty of Business (3 respondents) was too small to stand as a single group for meaningful statistical test, those respondents were excluded from the analyses. Likewise, there were insufficient numbers of subjects from the Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Science (2 respondents); it was decided to combine those two respondents with the Faculty of Medicine to form a new category: Medical Fields.

In order to test Hypothesis--1.2, one-way ANOVAs were performed on the social English skill items. The results of the ANOVAs show, however, that there were no significant differences in social English skill needs among subjects from the five groups of fields of study (Arts, Education, Engineering, Medical Field, and Science).

Hypothesis--1.3

There is a difference between men's and women's perceived English needs for social life.

For this hypothesis, male respondents were defined as Group 1 and female respondents were defined as Group 2. In order to see if there were significant differences in the perceived social English needs between the two groups, *t*-tests of independent samples were performed on the social English skill items. The results are shown in Table 10, in which only those items that indicate statistically significant differences are reported.

As was revealed in Table 10, male and female respondents in this study differed significantly in the following eight aspects of social English needs: V2--"shopping", $t(80)=-2.4$, $p<.05$; V3--"using the post office", $t(81)=-2.5$, $p<.05$; V4--"arranging accommodation", $t(80)=-2.08$, $p<.05$; V5--"riding public transportation", $t(79)=-2.48$, $p<.05$; V6--"doing banking" $t(80)=-3.9$, $p<.01$; V7--"making phone calls", $t(81)=-2.37$, $p<.05$; V14--"participating in daily conversations with your English-speaking friends", $t(80)=-2.0$, $p<.05$;

Table 10
t-test Comparing Men and Women on the Social English Skill Items

Item	Group	N	M	SD	t	p
V2 shopping	1	62	2.90	1.14	-2.4	.018
	2	20	3.60	1.05		
V3 using the post office	1	63	2.89	1.14	-2.5	.012
	2	20	3.65	1.18		
V4 arranging accommodation	1	62	3.40	1.01	-2.08	.041
	2	20	3.95	1.05		
V5 riding public transportation	1	61	2.75	1.29	-2.48	.015
	2	20	3.55	1.10		
V6 doing banking	1	62	3.15	1.14	-3.9	.000
	2	20	4.25	.910		
V7 making phone calls	1	63	3.87	1.10	-2.37	.020
	2	20	4.50	.761		
V14 participating in daily conversations with your English-speaking friends	1	62	3.87	.877	-2.0	.040
	2	20	4.35	.933		
V15 chatting with members of a host family in a Canadian home	1	62	3.74	.957	-2.09	.040
	2	20	4.25	.910		

and V15--"chatting with members of a host family in a Canadian home", $t(80)=-2.09$, $p<.05$. What the t -test results indicate is that female respondents perceived a greater need for eight of the social English skill items than did the male respondents while studying in Canada.

Hypothesis--1.4

There is a difference between the perceived social English needs of the international students who received preparatory training before starting a degree program at the University of Alberta and those who did not.

In testing this hypothesis, respondents who received preparatory training prior to embarking on a degree program at the University of Alberta were categorized as Group 1 and those who did not as Group 2. In order to compare differing social English needs between the two groups of respondents, t -tests of independent samples were performed on the social English skill items.

The results of the t -tests comparing the two groups of subjects (received preparatory training vs. not-received preparatory training) indicate that there was no statistical evidence of differences in English skill needs for social purposes between the two groups.

4.3.2. Analyses of Perceived English Needs for Academic Life

Hypothesis--2.1

There is a difference between the perceived academic English needs of the international students and their previous experience in English.

Previous experience in English in this study concerns the status of English in the home countries of the subjects, which consists of: 1) English is an academic subject to be learned in schools, 2) English is a medium of general education only, and 3) English is a medium of wider communication in the society.

In examining whether there are significant differences in academic English needs among respondents from different English status backgrounds while studying in Canada, subjects were divided into three groups. Group 1 consists of subjects from countries where English is only an academic subject to be learned in schools. Group 2 consists of subjects from countries where English is a medium of education only (e.g., several academic subjects are taught in English). Group 3 consists of subjects from countries where English is a medium of wider communication in the society.

One-way ANOVAs were then performed to compare the three groups of subjects. Table 11 depicts the scores of social English skill items by status of English groups. The results of the ANOVAs are given in Table 12. Only those items which showed significant differences in perceived academic English needs among the three groups of subjects are reported.

Table 12 reveals that there are eight significant differences in perceived academic English skill needs among the subjects with different English status backgrounds. The eight academic English skills were items V28--"understanding discussions in group-work assignments", $F(2, 76)=6.70, p<.01$; V29--"understanding your professors' lectures", $F(2, 77)=3.26, p<.05$; V32--"understanding class presentations given by your fellow students", $F(2, 77)=3.49, p<.05$; V36--"understanding talks in your field, given by guest speakers or at professional conferences", $F(2, 79)=3.46, p<.05$; V37--"requesting assistance in the library", $F(2, 78)=3.32, p<.05$; V40--"reading professional journals", $F(2, 80)=3.95, p<.05$; V44--"reading reference books other than your textbooks", $F(2, 80)=3.32, p<.05$; and V50--"writing articles for publication in scholarly or professional journals", $F(2, 71)=4.90, p<.05$. To find out where the differences exist among the three groups of subjects, a Scheffé procedure was undertaken which shows that the mean scores for Group 3 (English is a medium of wider communication in the society) were all significantly higher than the means for Group 1

Table 11
Academic English Skill Item Scores by Status of English Groups

Item	Group	Count	Mean	SD
V28	Group 1	49	3.67	1.16
	Group 2	8	4.13	.99
	Group 3	22	4.64	.66
V29	Group 1	50	4.44	.76
	Group 2	8	4.88	.35
	Group 3	22	4.82	.50
V32	Group 1	50	3.66	1.19
	Group 2	8	3.75	1.04
	Group 3	22	4.41	.96
V36	Group 1	51	4.12	1.03
	Group 2	8	3.88	.64
	Group 3	23	4.65	.65
V37	Group 1	50	3.28	1.13
	Group 2	8	3.25	1.04
	Group 3	23	4.00	1.21
V40	Group 1	51	4.22	.88
	Group 2	8	3.88	.99
	Group 3	24	4.67	.48
V44	Group 1	51	3.98	.91
	Group 2	8	4.00	.76
	Group 3	24	4.50	.66
V50	Group 1	43	4.51	.80
	Group 2	7	3.57	1.62
	Group 3	24	4.79	.83

Table 12
 One-way ANOVA Comparing Status of English Groups on Academic English Skill Items

Item	Source	df	SS	MS	F	p	Scheffé sig. different pairs
V28	B. Grps.	2	14.25	7.12	6.70	.002	Grp.3>1
	W. Grps.	76	80.74	1.06			
	Total	78	94.99				
V29	B. Grps.	2	2.92	1.46	3.26	.044	Grp.3>1
	W. Grps.	77	34.48	.45			
	Total	79	37.39				
V32	B. Grps.	2	8.71	4.36	3.49	.035	Grp.3>1
	W. Grps.	77	96.04	1.25			
	Total	79	104.75				
V36	B. Grps.	2	5.74	2.87	3.46	.036	Grp.3>1
	W. Grps.	79	65.39	.83			
	Total	81	71.13				

Table 12--continued

Item	Source	df	SS	MS	F	P	Scheffé sig. different pairs
V37 requesting assistance in the library	B. Grps.	2	8.64	4.32	3.32	.041	Grp.3>1
	W. Grps.	78	101.58	1.30			
	Total	80	110.22				
V40 reading professional journals	B. Grps.	2	5.02	2.51	3.95	.023	Grp.3>2 Grp.3>1
	W. Grps.	80	50.84	.64			
	Total	82	55.86				
V44 reading reference books other than your textbooks	B. Grps.	2	4.56	2.28	3.32	.041	Grp.3>1
	W. Grps.	80	54.98	.69			
	Total	82	59.54				
V50 writing articles for publication in scholarly or professional journals	B. Grps.	2	8.07	4.03	4.90	.010	Grp.3>2 Grp.1>2
	W. Grps.	71	58.42	.82			
	Total	73	66.49				

(English is an academic subjects to be learned in schools) on items V28, V29, V32, V36, V37, and V44: "understanding discussions in group-work assignments", "understanding your professors' lectures", "understanding class presentations given by your fellow students", "understanding talks in your field, given by guest speakers or at professional conferences", "requesting assistance in the library", and "reading reference books other than your textbooks", respectively.

It was also found that for items V40 and V50--"reading professional journals" and "writing articles for publication in scholarly or professional journals"--the mean scores for Group 3 were significantly higher than the means for Group 2 (English is a medium of education only). The Scheffé procedure results indicate that students from countries where English is a medium of wider communication in the society showed a perception of more needs for the English skill items of V28, V29, V32, V36, V37, and V44 than those from the other two English status backgrounds. The subjects in Group 1 also showed more needs for items V40 and V50 than subjects in Group 2. (Note: Because of the conservative nature of the Scheffe procedure, the level of significance was set at .10 as suggested by Scheffe (1959).

Hypothesis--2.2

There is a difference between the perceived academic English needs of the international students and their fields of study at the University of Alberta.

Once again fields of study to be examined in relation to this hypothesis consist of Arts, Education, Engineering, Medical Field, and Science.

To test Hypothesis-2.2, one-way ANOVAs were performed on 29 academic English skill items surveyed in this study, with the five groups of fields of study. The scores of the academic English skill items by fields of study groups appear in Table 13. The results of the ANOVAs are presented in Table 14. Only those items with statistically significant differences are reported here.

Table 13
Academic English Skill Item Scores by Field of Study Groups

Item	Group	Count	Mean	SD
V27 giving talks at seminars	Arts	4	4.75	.50
	Edu.	17	4.71	.59
	Engi.	17	4.47	.72
	Medi.	8	5.00	.00
	Sci.	31	4.16	.97
V28 understanding discussions in class	Arts	4	4.00	2.00
	Edu.	17	4.65	.49
	Engi.	17	3.88	1.05
	Medi.	8	4.63	.52
	Sci.	31	3.48	1.15
V30 discussing issues with fellow students out of class	Arts	5	4.60	.89
	Edu.	17	4.24	.83
	Engi.	17	3.76	1.25
	Medi.	8	4.50	.76
	Sci.	31	3.52	1.03
V35 discussing academic issues over the telephone	Arts	5	4.60	.55
	Edu.	16	4.44	.73
	Engi.	16	4.00	1.26
	Medi.	8	5.00	.00
	Sci.	28	3.68	1.28

Table 13--continued

Item	Group	Count	Mean	SD
V37 requesting assistance in the library	Arts	6	3.50	1.38
	Edu.	17	4.00	1.00
	Engi.	17	3.00	1.22
	Medi.	8	4.13	.99
	Sci.	30	3.30	1.12
V49 writing summaries/ critiques for books, book chapters, and journal articles you read	Arts	6	3.83	.75
	Edu.	17	4.59	.51
	Engi.	16	4.38	.50
	Medi.	8	4.75	.46
	Sci.	29	3.55	1.43

Table 14
 One-way ANOVA Comparing Field of Study Groups on Academic English Skill Items

Item	Source	df	SS	MS	F	p	Scheffé sig. different pairs
V27 giving talks at seminars	B. Grps.	4	6.46	1.62	2.72	.036	Grp.4>5
	W. Grps.	72	42.71	.59			
	Total	76	49.17				
V28 understanding discussions with students and professors in class	B. Grps.	4	18.68	4.67	4.47	.003	Grp.2>5
	W. Grps.	72	75.26	1.05			
	Total	76	93.94				
V30 discussing issues with fellow students out of class	B. Grps.	4	12.12	3.03	2.95	.026	Grp.2>5 Grp.4>5
	W. Grps.	73	75.06	1.03			
	Total	77	87.18				
V35 discussing academic issues over the telephone	B. Grps.	4	14.65	3.66	3.22	.018	Grp.4>5
	W. Grps.	68	77.24	1.14			
	Total	72	91.89				

Table 14--continued

Item	Source	df	SS	MS	F	p	Scheffé sig. different pairs
V37 requesting assistance in the library	B. Grps.	4	12.81	3.2	2.52	.048	Grp.2>3
	W. Grps.	73	92.68	1.27			
	Total	77	105.49				
V49 writing summaries/ critiques for books, book chapters, etc.	B. Grps.	4	17.78	4.45	4.55	.003	Grp.2>5 Grp.4>5
	W. Grps.	71	69.37	.98			
	Total	75	87.15				

As it appears in Table 14, six academic English skill items were found to be significantly different in perceived need among the five groups of subjects (Arts, Education, Engineering, Medical Field, and Science). The six items were V27--"giving talks at seminars", $F(4, 72)=2.72, p<.05$; V28--"understanding discussions with your fellow students and professors in class", $F(4, 72)=4.47, p<.01$; V30--"discussing issues with fellow students out of class", $F(4, 73)=2.95, p<.05$; V35--"discussing academic issues over the telephone", $F(4, 68)=3.22, p<.05$; V37--"requesting assistance in the library", $F(4, 73)=2.52, p<.05$; and V49--"writing summaries/critiques for books, book chapters, and journal articles, etc.)", $F(4, 71)=4.55, p<.01$. All but one involve oral interaction. To determine where the differences exist among students in the five fields of study, Scheffé pairwise comparisons were undertaken. The outcomes of the Scheffé procedure indicate that the mean scores for subjects in the medical field were significantly higher than the means for those in science for items V27--"giving talks at seminars", V30--"discussing issues with fellow students out of class", V35--"discussing academic issues over the telephone", and V49--"writing summaries/critiques for books, book chapters, and journal articles, etc."

The mean scores for education students were also significantly higher than the means for science students for items V28--"understanding discussions with your fellow students and professors in class", V30--"discussing issues with fellow students out of class", and V49--"writing summaries/critiques for books, book chapters, and journal articles, etc.". Lastly, the means for education students were found significantly higher than those for engineering students for V37--"requesting assistance in the library".

The results of the pairwise comparisons among subjects in the five fields of study reveal that significantly different pairs were largely observed between science students and medical/education students. The results imply that subjects in science are the most different in

their responses. Science students are the ones who perceived themselves as having fewer needs in those academic English skill areas than did students in other fields of study.

Hypothesis--2.3

There is a difference between men's and women's perceived English needs for academic life.

In testing this hypothesis, subjects were divided into two groups according to gender. Male subjects comprise Group 1 and female subjects comprise Group 2. To find out whether the two groups of subjects differ significantly in the perceived academic English skill needs while studying in Canada, *t*-tests of independent samples were then carried out on the academic English skill items. The results of the *t*-tests indicate that there were no statistically significant differences in the perceived academic English skill needs between male respondents and female respondents.

Hypothesis--2.4

There is a difference between the perceived academic English needs of the international students who received preparatory training before starting a degree program at the University of Alberta and those who did not.

In testing this hypothesis, subjects were again divided into two groups on the basis of whether or not subjects had received preparatory training prior to entering a degree program at the University of Alberta. Subjects who received preparatory training were designated as Group 1. Subjects who had no such training experience were designated as Group 2. To determine if preparatory training makes a significant difference in perceived academic English skill needs between the two groups, *t*-tests of independent samples were performed on the academic English skill items. However, the results of the *t*-tests failed to indicate statistically significant differences in the perceived academic English needs between those who received

preparatory training before starting a degree program at the University of Alberta and those who did not have such experience.

4.4. Open-ended Questions

Four questions in the survey allowed for open-ended responses. Question #11 asked the respondents to list any non-academic language skills which they considered to be important but which were not mentioned in the questionnaire. Only two people answered the question, the first of whom said that she had difficulty with implicit meaning (e.g., euphemisms). The student gave the following example: 'Having a good time with someone (opposite sex)' is quite different in meaning from 'Having a nice time'. The second student cited sociolinguistic competencies as being very important (specifically proxemics, greetings, inappropriate comments and behaviors etc.). In addition, this student felt that understanding songs is moderately important.

Question #12, which asked for additional comments on English language needs of international students, elicited replies from 16 students. Seven people stressed the importance of particular language skills (e.g., They should teach us how to think in English. The best way is certainly to force us to read in English.). Another two people talked about the socio-cultural component of being an international student (The most difficult part for me was the banking, shopping, transportation. In social situations, it was the humor that took me longer to understand.). The remaining seven responses were broader in nature and encompassed both sociocultural and linguistic aspects (e.g., 'I think listening skill is the most important part. Because if I don't understand what other people say I can't respond them. It means my speaking is not going to be improved. Accordingly, people won't talk with me. Making friends is getting difficult. It will be very difficult to adjust in foreign country.' 'The TOEFL scores do not really indicate your real capacity. You need more adjustment to help with in the

context, i.e., in the country where you are studying. It is important that the university look into this matter and provide more help instead of letting students live with their frustration with all problems—study, social, surviving in the cold climate. 'I am convinced that language is a very important tool in every area of our life. I have given it a prime place in my life.')

Ten people responded to question #17, which asked for a listing of important academic language skills not noted in the questionnaire. Each respondent indicated that this skill he/she listed was of paramount importance. The following is the complete list of responses, which are quite varied: 'writing proposals and projects to submit to agencies within and outside of the university', 'A foreign student should try and intone Canadian English to facilitate hearing and understanding by Canadians. Speak slowly and enunciate each word. Emphasize the difference between American and British English, e.g., washroom (American) and toilet (British)', 'Thinking in English. Praying in English', 'Writing field notes. Transcribing interviews', 'Speaking and communicate with technical staff', 'Social communication language skills are also important to the success of academic work, e.g., getting support, cooperation, etc.', 'Reading skills in French', 'The use of computers', 'Interpretation, Communication skills', and 'Communication in small groups, and writing (not necessarily academic papers): journals, free writing, short summaries of things one has read, response statements, etc'.

Finally, students were asked what advice they would give to incoming international students at the University of Alberta. Sixty-eight subjects (80%) responded to this question. The answers ranged across a number of areas and were quite informative. To summarize, these areas include advice on gaining a good command of English, making social/cultural contacts with Canadians and other international students, preparing for the climate in Canada, and some other miscellaneous concerns.

The largest single piece of advice from the respondents (42%) had to do with the importance of a good command of English, especially oral communication ability in English

(i.e., listening and speaking skills). Another 28% of the subjects encouraged involvement in social interactions with Canadian and other overseas students. The University of Alberta International Centre was almost exclusively recommended as a place for making social contacts. The comments which mentioned the International Centre were all very positive. Some respondents (8%) gave advice on securing financial sources before coming to the University of Alberta. An equal number of the respondents advised that prospective University of Alberta overseas students should be prepared to work hard in their academic studies and should become informed about the university system (i.e., academic requirements, course delivery styles, course offerings, etc.). Some subjects (6%) mentioned preparing for the climate in Edmonton. Finally, 12% of the subjects offered advice on miscellaneous concerns such as complaints about foreign student differential fees, suggestions that international students take the TOEFL test in Canada, a desire for a period of orientation sessions longer than four days, the need for high motivation, and so forth. Some negative attitudes were also identified in the miscellaneous category, for example, 'I hate giving advice', 'Keep your skin warm, but heart cool', 'Expect nothing more than your education', and 'Don't expect everything to be good', but on the whole, the advice was neutral or positive in tone.

Chapter Five

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

This study set out to determine which aspects of the English language were perceived as being most essential for living a smooth social and academic life by the University of Alberta international graduate students whose first language is not English. The study also sought to discover whether certain student demographic variables influenced their perceived English needs. This chapter summarizes the major findings of the study. It also contains a discussion of the major findings and implications for educational practice and for future research.

5.1 Summary of the Major Findings

The summary of the findings consists of three components organized around the research questions posed earlier in this study. The first component summarizes the findings for general question one: 1. Which aspects of the English language do international students perceive as most necessary in order to live a smooth social life while in Canada? The second component focuses on summarizing the results for general question two: 2. Which aspects of the English language do international students perceive as most necessary in order to succeed academically while in Canada? Finally, the third component summarizes the findings for the eight sub-questions aimed at discovering the relationships between student demographic variables and English needs. These sub-questions are: 1.1) Is there a difference between the perceived social English needs of the international students and their previous experience in English? 1.2) Is there a difference between the perceived social English needs of the international students and their fields of study at the University of Alberta? 1.3) Is there a difference between men's and women's perceived English needs for social life? 1.4) Is there a

difference between the perceived social English needs of the international students who received preparatory training before starting a degree program at the University of Alberta and those who did not? 2.1) Is there a difference between the perceived academic English needs of the international students and their previous experience in English? 2.2) Is there a difference between the perceived academic English needs of the international students and their fields of study at the University of Alberta? 2.3) Is there a difference between men's and women's perceived English needs for academic life? 2.4) Is there a difference between the perceived academic English needs of the international students who received preparatory training before starting a degree program at the University of Alberta and those who did not?

5.1.1 Language for Social Purposes

The results from the descriptive statistical analyses of the data suggest that, for daily living purposes, English skills which involve highly unpredictable language were perceived as most necessary by the subjects. Such English skills typically represent complex linguistic activities such as "understanding films and TV programs", "making phone calls", "understanding radio", "reading newspapers and magazines in English" and the like. English skills which are relatively routinized were perceived as less demanding for daily living activities by the general respondents, for example, "using the post office", "shopping", "riding public transportation", "using university or public recreational facilities", "reading ads, catalogues, posters, and bills" and so forth.

For social interaction purposes, the data analyses indicate that English skills oriented towards communicative strategies which enhance intercultural and interpersonal communication between Canadians and foreign students were perceived as most essential by the subjects, such as "knowing how to talk about personal or other issues in a sensitive way", "participating in daily conversations with English speaking friends", "understanding jokes and

humor", "chatting with members of host family in a Canadian home", "chatting with English speaking friends at a party", "making Canadian friends", and so on. It is notable that these are all linguistic activities which are highly reciprocal.

The subjects' perceptions of less important English skills for social interaction were those linguistic activities which are relatively less communicative strategy driven and are essentially receptive in nature, that is, "introducing yourself to a new acquaintance", "understanding slang, idioms, and swear language", "using church services where English is used", and "participating in recreational activities held by the International Centre".

5.1.2. Language for Academic Purposes

The results from the descriptive statistical analyses reveal that, in general, all spoken English skills surveyed in this study were perceived as very important academically by the subjects. However, there were distinct patterns in the subjects' perceptions of importance for these language skills. Priority was first given to aural and oral language skills requiring linguistic competence in classroom activities in which professors assume major roles and students' own teaching (TAs), i.e., "understanding your professors' lectures", "discussing issues with your classmates and professors in class", "giving instructions/explanations as a teaching assistant", etc.

Spoken English skills associated with academic activities in which students themselves assume the main roles was given a second priority, e.g., "giving presentations at professional conferences", "giving talks at seminars", and "making presentations in class". Less priority was given to academic activities which call for aural English skills to follow professors and the like in various out-of-classroom situations, e.g., "understanding discussions with your professors outside class", "understanding talks in your field, given by guest speakers or given at conferences", and "discussing academic issues over the telephone". The least priority for

aural/oral language skills was given to those activities which take place among the students themselves or between students and non-academic staff, for example, "understanding discussions in group-work assignments", "discussing issues with your fellow students out of class", "understanding class presentations given by fellow students", and "requesting assistance in the library".

With regard to written English skills for daily studying purposes, the results of the data analyses suggest that, in general, all reading and writing skills surveyed in this study were perceived as being very necessary by the subjects. Priority was first given to written language skills related to exams (i.e., "answering exams", "understanding exams"). Writing professionally was observed as a second priority among the respondents, that is, "writing papers to be presented at professional conferences" and "writing articles for publication in scholarly or professional journals". Course related reading and writing skills were placed in a third position of subjects' perceived written English skill needs, for instance, "reading textbooks and course handouts", "writing short papers for course assignments", etc. Writing skills for conventionalized formats were given lowest priority (i.e., "writing resumes", "writing business letters", and "filling out applications or forms").

5.1.3 Sub-questions

In examining the subjects' demographic variables speculated to have an influence upon their perceived English needs while studying in Canada, it was found that respondents' previous experience in English (i.e., status of English in the home countries of the participants: an academic subject vs. a medium of general education vs. a medium of wider communication in the society) has no effect upon social English skill needs among the subjects; but such experience does make a statistically significant difference in the perceived needs for some academic English skill areas surveyed. Specifically, subjects from countries where English is a

medium of wider communication saw the following language skills as more important than did subjects from countries where English is an academic subject to be learned in schools: "understanding discussions in assignments", "understanding your professors' lectures", "understanding class presentations by fellow students", "understanding talks in your field, given by guest speakers or at professional conferences", "requesting assistance in the library", "reading professional journals", and "reading reference books other than your textbooks". It was also found that English skills for "reading professional journals" and "writing articles for publication in scholarly or professional journals" were perceived as being more important by subjects from countries where English is a medium of wider communication than by subjects from countries where English is a medium of general education. In addition, subjects from countries where English is an academic subject to be learned in schools considered English skills for "writing articles for publication in scholarly or professional journals" as being more important than subjects from countries where English is a medium of general education. The overall trends of these findings suggest that the more experienced the respondents were in English, the more English they realize they need to know.

Of the five fields of study surveyed in this research (i.e., Arts, Education, Engineering, Medical Field, and Science), none was found to have an impact upon the perceived social English skill needs among the participants. Yet, statistically significant differences showed up for some academic English skill needs among the respondents in four of the fields of study examined. Students in the Medical Field reported having a greater academic English need than those in Science for "giving talks at seminars", "discussing issues with fellow students out of class", "discussing academic issues over the telephone", and "writing summaries/critiques for books, book chapters, and journal articles you read". Education students were also found in a greater need than science and engineering students for English skills in "understanding discussions with students and professors in class", "discussing issues with fellow students out

of class", "requesting assistance in the library", and "writing summaries/critiques for books, book chapters, and journal articles you read". The general pattern of these findings shows that students in Science were the ones who perceived themselves as having fewer needs in these academic English skill areas than students in the other fields.

While this study did not identify differences in the perceived academic English skill needs between male and female subjects, the data analyses did reveal that male and female students differ significantly in some aspects of social English skill needs. Woman students in this survey expressed a perception of a greater need for the following social English skills than did male students: "shopping", "using the post office", "arranging accommodation", "riding public transportation", "doing banking", "participating in daily conversations with your English speaking friends", and "chatting with members of a host family in a Canadian home".

Finally, this study found no differences in either social or academic English skill needs between the respondents who received preparatory training prior to embarking on a degree program at the University of Alberta and those participants who had no such experience before.

5.2 Discussion of the Major Findings

This subsection discusses the major findings and relates them to the results of previous research on the language needs of international students.

Under the two general research questions concerning subjects' perceptions of English most necessary for living and studying in Canada, four categories of language skills were examined: 1) language for daily living, 2) language for social interaction, 3) listening and speaking for daily studying, and 4) reading and writing for daily studying.

The findings for the first two categories showed that English skills involving highly unpredictable language (e.g., *understanding radio*) or requiring complex strategies for

interculturally-oriented communication (e.g., *knowing how to talk about personal or other issues in a sensitive way*) were perceived as most necessary by the subjects. These results are not surprising as they are essentially consistent with those of Sun (1987), who found that her Chinese graduate student subjects gave priority to *making a phone call, understanding radio, films, and TV programs, reading newspapers and magazines, having conversations with Canadian friends, etc.* rather than survival skills such as *shopping and asking for directions* (p. 37). The similarity of perceived social English needs among the subjects in both studies seems quite understandable. One obvious explanation for the similarity is that the levels of English proficiency of international students are well above the fundamentals; they may therefore have fewer needs for survival English.

A second possible explanation is that perhaps international students are a somewhat homogeneous group in terms of personal and psychological needs while away from their home countries. A desire to know what is happening both back home and here in the new culture, coupled with attempts to overcome homesickness or loneliness, causes students to turn to news media and to seek new friends. These reactions to living in Canada require the kinds of English for which students expressed strong needs.

With regard to the latter two categories of English skills (i.e., both spoken and written), the findings of this study are not in complete agreement with those of Ostler (1980) and Sun (1987). Ostler's findings showed that "the greatest needs overall [for academic English] were: a) the ability to read textbooks (90%), b) to take notes in class (84%), and c) to ask questions in class (68%)" (p. 492). In Sun's study, the predominant concern of the subjects for academic English skills was the ability to a) *write long reports* and b) *give talks or seminars* (p. 32). However, in the present study, although the majority of the academic English skills surveyed were perceived as very necessary, priority was given to language skills needed to follow professor-led classroom activities (e.g., *understanding your professors'*

lectures, discussing issues with your classmates and professors in class, etc.) and writing exams (i.e., understanding exams and answering exams) or writing professionally (i.e., writing papers to be presented at professional conferences and writing articles for publication in scholarly or professional journals). Although the discrepancies are somewhat puzzling, there are many influencing factors which may have caused the differences among the studies. One methodological issue seems to be at least partially accountable for the differences between the findings of this study and those of Ostler's, namely, the number of undergraduate students, masters students and Ph.D.s in the research samples. In Ostler's survey of academic English needs of foreign students at the University of Southern California, most of the subjects (73%) were undergraduates. The percentages for masters and Ph.D. students were 23% and 4%, respectively. With this sample composition in mind, it is not surprising to see that skills for writing professionally, a conventional academic concern of Ph.D. students—*writing papers to be presented at professional conferences and writing articles for publication in scholarly or professional journals*—were not perceived as most necessary. Also, the need expressed by Ostler's students for textbook-based reading skills stands to reason, given that her sample consisted of mostly undergraduate students.

There is good possibility that diverse styles of academic traditions and requirements at different host universities and home schools also influence perceived English needs. The differences between Sun's findings and those of the present study on perceived academic English needs are perhaps typical in this respect. While the subjects in this study came with a variety of educational experiences, Sun's subjects were a homogeneous group of 37 Chinese graduate students at a Canadian university, who were brought up under an educational tradition which places virtually no emphasis on fostering creative verbal skills in its students. Discussion-oriented course delivery styles and paper-oriented evaluations are hardly known in China. When it comes to EFL learning, skills such as listening, speaking, and formal writing

are the least emphasized in the teaching-learning process. By contrast, however, western educational styles encourage active participation in class and value the incorporation of students' views and ideas on paper. Coupled with the contrast in educational experiences and possible difficulties in the English language, it is not surprising that Sun's subjects perceived *'writing long papers'* and *'giving talks or seminars'* as the most necessary English skills for functioning academically while studying in Canada.

Perhaps the most unexpected results in this study are the reverse relationships found between some of the subjects' perceived academic English needs and the status of English in their home countries (i.e., a medium of wider communication in the society at large vs. a medium of general education vs. an academic subject to be learned in schools). Contrary to the common belief underlying the status difference, this study found that subjects from countries where English is a medium of wider communication in the society expressed a perception of greater need for some of the surveyed academic English skills than did those who came from an environment where English is either an academic subject to be learned in schools or, in several instances, a medium of general education. Puzzling as these findings are, the reverse relationships may in part reflect the fact that the more one knows another language (English, in this case) the more one realizes what one needs to know, and the better one knows that language the stronger desire one has to polish and improve it.

The reverse relationships may be also due to something intrinsic to the measurement scales used in the study (i.e., not at all important, somewhat important, fairly important, important, and very important) and levels of English abilities of the subjects. The use of "importance levels" as a measurement for judging "need levels" of English skills does not always match perfectly, especially with more proficient learners of English. For example, even if a learner of English speaks very well, he or she may still perceive speaking skills as "most

important" when asked to make a choice on the scale. This may be the case in this study, which formed the reverse relationships of some perceived academic English skill needs.

Data analyses on the relationships between the subjects' perceived English needs and participation in preparatory training programs also produced a set of unexpected results, i.e., this study found no relationship between the two on any of the social and academic English skill needs. It can be speculated that either the duration of the orientation programs was too short or the programs did not address the specific language needs.

One of the interesting findings obtained in this study concerning gender difference and perceived English needs is that female students had a greater need for some of the surveyed social English skills (i.e., *shopping, using the post office, arranging accommodation, riding public transportation, doing banking, making phone calls, participating in daily conversations with your English-speaking friends, and chatting with members of a host family in a Canadian home*) than male students did. This may be because females are socialized to be more "role-oriented", and "sociable" than males are. These gender specific identities themselves imply more social needs, the satisfaction of which has to be mediated by language. When coming to study in Canada, the students are largely dependent upon English. Thus, it is only understandable that female students will have more social English needs.

A consistent theme that emerged in this study from the findings in relation to subjects' perceived academic English needs and their fields of study is that the subjects in the field of science perceived themselves as having fewer needs than did subjects in other fields. These findings are essentially in agreement with those of Payind (1979), who concluded that "terminology and formulae of sciences are almost common in every language and in every country; intensive readings, larger vocabulary and extensive library research in humanities and social sciences require relatively higher proficiency in English than the work in sciences or engineering" (p. 7). A similar situation may have existed for the subjects in this study.

5.3 Implications

The findings of the current study point to some practical implications for English as a foreign/second language (EFL/ESL) teachers, the university faculty, the University of Alberta International Centre, and finally, future research. However, since this study focused on perceptions of need as opposed to actual needs, suggestions concerning implications for educational practice elsewhere must be regarded cautiously. These implications are as follows:

1. The finding that English skills involving comprehension of highly unpredictable language (e.g., understanding movies and TV programs) were perceived as most necessary for daily living purposes has an obvious implication for EFL/ESL teachers. Advanced EFL/ESL programs geared towards preparing prospective students should consider providing ample language learning opportunities which will help students develop their English ability for coping with complex linguistic activities of this kind. This is especially important since the data reveal that 48.3% of the respondents in this survey had a very limited emphasis on listening skills in their English studies. Listening materials should be as authentic as possible or they are likely to give very little of the kind of practice needed.

2. Another finding with implications for language instruction is the students' perception that language skills which are highly communicative-strategy driven and reciprocal in nature are most necessary. This may indicate that the respondents have a greater need for the creative oral English skills required for smooth face-to-face communication than the more routinized aspects of spoken language. The data show that 50.6% of the respondents in this study had a very limited emphasis on speaking skills in their English studies and as many as 68.2% of the respondents never had regular exposure to native speakers of English. The implication here for EFL/ESL teachers is that their programs should provide ample opportunities for students to practice their oral language skills; ideally programs will regularly

expose students to authentic communication with native or native-like speakers of English on a variety of topics. In EFL situations, language teachers may have to turn to all possible sources and invite guest speakers into the classrooms (for example native English-speaking teachers/students in the local colleges and universities).

3. In view of the finding that the academic English skills surveyed in this study were generally ranked higher than English skills for social purposes, teachers of advanced EFL/ESL programs may wish to re-examine and adjust course content and reinforce those highly valued classroom activities which are already in practice so as to meet students' needs better. For example, language teachers may wish to organize more classroom activities oriented towards developing spoken English skills for academic purposes (classroom presentations, discussions, etc.). In the area of written language, EFL/ESL teachers may wish to focus more on activities related to reading and writing skills for academic studies (e.g., how to make sense of academic writing in texts and journals, how to write papers for courses or lab reports).

4. The finding that respondents in this study expressed a great need for academic writing (i.e., writing papers to be presented at professional conferences, writing articles for publication in scholarly or professional journals) has an implication for University of Alberta faculty. Professors may wish to assist students in writing academically by providing access to samples of writing which meet their expectations. At the very least, professors should be aware of the writing services offered on campus and they should refer students who are experiencing problems to the writing program.

5. Based on the fact that many international students are unaware that there are ESL courses (non-credit) free of charge available on campus in the Faculty of Extension, professors who have international students in their classes should convey this information to the students as soon as any serious language problems are detected. Upon identifying language problems experienced by an international student, professors should recommend that the student get ESL

assistance (e.g., Faculty of Extension). Information on the availability of ESL courses offered in the Faculty of Extension should also be included in departmental orientations.

6. In light of the findings in this study concerning various academic English needs felt by the international students, the University Teaching Services (UTS) at the University of Alberta should offer some sessions on working with international students for the academic staff.

7. Given that international students expressed a very strong need for academic language skills, it seems reasonable to suggest that a credit course in academic English be offered to international students in their first term (many universities, [e.g., York University, UCLA] offer ESL for credit). It is also suggested that international students be allowed to carry a reduced course load in their first term while they adjust to their new environment, perhaps by being allowed to audit one or two of their content courses.

8. The finding that female respondents in this study reported needing more social English skills than male respondents has implications for the University of Alberta International Centre. Although the 1992-1993 Foreign Student Handbook provides excellent coverage on these topics, it may be helpful to provide seminars geared to women in these areas. The International Centre may wish to consider making a videotape of real-life situations in the Canadian context and holding a special session for interested female students to view the tape, along with explanations and discussions. Ideally this session should take place soon after the Centre's conventional major orientation session--"Transitions". There may also be a need for more activities that cater to female students, in view of the rising number of women from other countries who now study at the University of Alberta.

9. Finally, a couple of implications for future research on English language needs of international students have arisen from the present study. With regard to the findings (from testing hypothesis 2.1) showing reverse relationships between some of the perceived academic

English skill needs and the status of English in the home countries of the subjects, it may be argued that something intrinsic to the measurement scales used (*not at all important, somewhat important, fairly important, important, and very important*) caused the results, e.g., in judging need levels of English skills, the use of *very important* does not always imply *most needed*. It is perhaps important that future researchers try alternative scales, for example the use of *confidence levels, or need levels* in their plain forms.

A second direction for research emerges from the finding that female students expressed a perception of a greater need for some English for social purposes than did their male peers. Future research should explore whether there are certain distinct subgroups of needs within female students based on age, marital status, companionship of spouse, etc. Although the influence of these variables was reported previously, for example, Payind (1979) found that married students fare better than single students with significant differences being established in all three areas of comparison—Academic, Personal and Social (p. 7), studies specifically directed at social English needs of female overseas students have been limited at best.

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Appendix I
Covering Letter

January 26, 1993

Dear Fellow Student:

Like you, I am an international student at the University of Alberta (U of A). I am conducting research on the experiences of international students for my thesis. I am asking for your assistance by filling out the attached questionnaire.

I want to find out which English language skills are most important for graduate students to function both academically and socially while they are at the University of Alberta. Your experiences studying in English and dealing with the adjustment to a different culture will help me to understand how to plan English language education and orientation programs for international students.

Please complete the attached questionnaire. Your cooperation is the key to the presentation of a final report of the study. The questionnaire should take about 20 minutes to complete.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from this study with no obligations any time you wish. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential; no identifying statement will be quoted. The majority of the results will be reported as group statistics. It will be greatly appreciated if you will complete the questionnaire before the end of February, 1993 and return by Campus Mail to: **Chunhui Zhao, Mailbox #57, Department of Elementary Education, the University of Alberta.**

If you have any questions or concerns, please call me at 421-7134. Thank you in advance for your time and cooperation. I really appreciate your help in my thesis data collection.

Sincerely,



Chunhui Zhao

Appendix II
English Language Needs Survey Questionnaire

English Language Needs Survey

Section A

1. Age_____ 2. Sex: M / F 3. Country of Origin_____
4. What is your first language?_____
5. What was your major field of study in your country?_____
6. What department are you in?_____
7. How long have you been in Canada?_____
8. Have you ever studied in an English speaking country(ies), including Canada, before entering program at the University of Alberta? Yes/No
 If "Yes", please indicate: (1) the country(ies), (2) levels of education pursued, and (3) length of stay.
 (1)_____ (2)_____ (3)_____
9. Have you ever been to an English speaking country(ies) before, including Canada, for reasons other than pursuing your education? Yes/No
 If "Yes", please indicate: (1) the country(ies), (2) length of stay, and (3) language you spoke most often in each country.
 (1)_____ (2)_____ (3)_____
10. Did you take the TOEFL or the Michigan test to enter the University of Alberta? Yes/No
 What was the score on your last TOEFL test?_____
- What was the score on your last Michigan test?_____
11. Circle the answer that best indicates the status of English in your country?
 - (a) An academic subject to be learned only in schools.
 - (b) A medium of general education only (i.e. several subjects are taught in English).
 - (c) A medium of wider communication in the society at large.

12. If you circled (a) above, please rank the emphasis of the following skill areas in your English studies in your country.

1=Not emphasized 2=Little emphasized 3=Emphasized
4=Much emphasized 5=Most emphasized

listening speaking reading
 writing grammar vocabulary

- 13 Did you have opportunities to use English outside school? Yes/No

If "Yes", check the activities you participated in:

listening to English language programs over the radio
 watching English language programs on TV
 watching English language movies
 reading English language books, magazines, and /or newspapers
 talking regularly with native English speakers
 talking regularly in English with other learners of English
 writing in English for personal, academic, business, or other purposes
 other (please list) _____

14. Did you receive any formal preparation (e.g. an orientation program, an intensive English program, a study skill program, etc.) for living and studying successfully in a foreign country? Yes/No

If "Yes", was the preparation program offered in your country or in Canada ?

How did you find out about the program? _____

What topics were covered during the preparation program(s)?

(1) in your country: (topics) _____

(2) in Canada: (topics) _____

How useful would you rate the preparation program(s)?

- (1) not useful little useful quite useful
 very useful extremely useful
- (2) not useful little useful quite useful
 very useful extremely useful

If you were asked to improve the preparation programs, what changes would you recommend?

If responded "No" to question #14, please explain why you did not participate in a preparation program?

- There was not one available I was unaware of it
 I was not interested in it I had no time for it
 Other (please specify) _____

15. If you did not participate in a formal preparation program, do you see a need for attending such a program? Yes/No

If "Yes" where should such programs be run?

- In your country At the University of Alberta

What topics should be covered in such programs?

16. Do you have English speaking friends here in Canada? Yes/No

Are they mostly Canadians or other international students ?

17. Do you belong to any social clubs? Yes/No

18. Do you participate in activities at the International Centre at the University of Alberta?
Yes/No

19. What advice would you give an international student who is planning to come to the University of Alberta?

Section B

This section concerns your English language needs for studying at the University of Alberta. Please indicate how important conducting the following activities in English is in relation to your academic success. For each of the following activities, circle a response from 1 to 6.

Part I: Listening and Speaking for Daily Studying

1=Not applicable

2=Not at all important

3=Somewhat important

4=Fairly important

5=Important

6=Very important

1. understanding discussions with your professors outside class
1 2 3 4 5 6
2. understanding discussions in class
1 2 3 4 5 6
3. discussing issues with your classmates and professors in class
1 2 3 4 5 6
4. giving talks at seminars
1 2 3 4 5 6
5. understanding discussions in group-work assignments
1 2 3 4 5 6
6. conducting interviews with subjects for assignments or research
1 2 3 4 5 6
7. understanding lectures of your professors
1 2 3 4 5 6
8. discussing issues with fellow students out of class
1 2 3 4 5 6
9. making presentations in class
1 2 3 4 5 6
10. understanding class presentations given by fellow students
1 2 3 4 5 6
11. giving instructions/explanations as a teaching assistant (TA)
1 2 3 4 5 6

12. discussing issues with a professor in his or her office
1 2 3 4 5 6
13. giving presentations at professional conferences
1 2 3 4 5 6
14. discussing academic issues over telephone
1 2 3 4 5 6
15. understanding talks in your field of study, given by guest speakers
1 2 3 4 5 6

Part II: Written Language for Daily studying

1=Not applicable 2=Not at all important
3=Somewhat important 4=Fairly important
5=Important 6=Very important

1. reading textbooks and course handouts
1 2 3 4 5 6
2. writing short papers for course assignments (1 - 8 pages)
1 2 3 4 5 6
3. reading professional journals
1 2 3 4 5 6
4. taking notes in English in class or in other academic situations
1 2 3 4 5 6
5. understanding exams
1 2 3 4 5 6
6. answering exams
1 2 3 4 5 6
7. reading other reference books
1 2 3 4 5 6
8. writing long papers for course assignments (9 - 25 pages)
1 2 3 4 5 6
9. writing papers to be presented at professional conferences
1 2 3 4 5 6
10. writing resumes
1 2 3 4 5 6

11. writing business letters (c.g., asking for information, requesting for assistance with academic activities. etc.)
1 2 3 4 5 6
12. writing summaries / critiques for books, book chapters, and journal articles you read
1 2 3 4 5 6
13. writing articles for publication in scholarly or professional journals
1 2 3 4 5 6
14. writing short reports of lab experiments for courses (1 - 8 pages)
1 2 3 4 5 6
15. filling out applications or forms
1 2 3 4 5 6
16. writing long reports of lab experiments for courses (9 - 25 pages)
1 2 3 4 5 6
17. Please list any academic language skills which I may not have asked about, but which are important to you. Then, indicate levels of importance by using the same scale from 1 to 6.

Section C

This section asks for information on your English needs for social activities that you may need while staying in Canada. Please indicate levels of importance for conducting the following activities in English in relation to your social life in Canada by circling a response from 1 to 6.

Part I: Language for Daily Living

1=Not applicable

3=Somewhat important

5=Important

2=Not at all important

4=Fairly important

6=Very important

1. asking directions

1 2 3 4 5 6

2. shopping
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6
3. using the post office
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6
4. arranging accommodation
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6
5. riding public transportation
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6
6. doing banking
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6
7. making phone calls
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6
8. reading newspapers and magazines
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6
9. reading ads, catalogues, posters and bills
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6
10. seeing a medical doctor
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6
11. using university or public recreational facilities (e.g. swimming pools, etc.)
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6
12. understanding radio
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6
13. understanding films and TV programs
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6

Part II: Language for Social Interactions

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1=Not applicable | 2=Not at all important |
| 3=Somewhat important | 4=Fairly important |
| 5=Important | 6=Very important |

- 1 participating in daily conversations with your English speaking friends
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6
2. chatting with English speaking friends at a party
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6

3. chatting with members of a host family in a Canadian home
1 2 3 4 5 6
4. knowing how to talk about personal or other issues in a sensitive way
1 2 3 4 5 6
5. making Canadian friends
1 2 3 4 5 6
6. introducing yourself to a new acquaintance
1 2 3 4 5 6
7. using church services where English is used
1 2 3 4 5 6
8. participating in recreational activities held by the International Centre of the University of Alberta
1 2 3 4 5 6
9. understanding slang, idioms and swear language
1 2 3 4 5 6
10. understanding jokes and humor
1 2 3 4 5 6
11. Please list any other non-academic language skills which I may not have asked about, but which are important to you. Then indicate levels of importance by using the same scale from 1 to 6.

12. Do you have any additional comments about your English language needs as an international student?

Thank You Again For Your Time And Cooperation. Please Mail This Form Today

Appendix III
Follow-up Letter

March 2, 1993

Dear Fellow Student:

In early February of 1993, I invited you to assist me with my thesis data collection by filling out a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was about your English language needs as an international graduate student at the University of Alberta. It was sent to you through the assistance of the International Centre.

It has been a while since the mailing; but I have not received your response yet. However, I am particularly desirous of obtaining your response because your experience in using English to deal with living and studying matters successfully in Canada will contribute significantly toward a comprehensive understanding of the kinds of English skills that are most necessary for academic excellence, daily living purposes, and social activities in the new settings. In addition, other phases of my study cannot be carried out until I have sufficient numbers of questionnaire returns. So please do complete the questionnaire prior to March 26, 1993 and return it by Campus Mail to:

Chunhui Zhao
Mailbox #57
Department of Elementary Education
The University of Alberta

If you have any concerns or need an additional copy of the questionnaire, please call me at 421-7134 or the International Centre at 492-1132. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely



Chunhui Zhao

Appendix IV

A List of Labels for English Skill Items

A List of Labels for English Skill Items

Variable Label	English Skill Item
V1	asking directions
V2	shopping
V3	using the post office
V4	arranging accommodation
V5	riding public transportation
V6	doing banking
V7	making phone calls
V8	reading newspapers and magazines in English
V9	reading ads, catalogues, posters and bills
V10	seeing a medical doctor
V11	using university or public recreational facilities (e.g., swimming pools, etc.)
V12	understanding radio
V13	understanding films and TV programs
V14	participating in daily conversations with your English speaking friends
V15	chatting with English speaking friends at a party
V16	chatting with members of a host family in a Canadian home
V17	knowing how to talk about personal or other issues in a sensitive way
V18	making Canadian friends
V19	introducing yourself to a new acquaintance
V20	using church services where English is used
V21	participating in recreational activities held by the International Centre

- V22 understanding slang, idioms and swear language
- V23 understanding jokes and humor
- V24 understanding discussions with your professors outside class
- V25 understanding discussions in class
- V26 discussing issues with your classmates and professors in class
- V27 giving talks at seminars
- V28 understanding discussions in group-work assignments
- V29 understanding your professors' lectures
- V30 discussing issues with fellow students out of class
- V31 making presentations in class
- V32 understanding class presentations given by fellow students
- V33 giving instructions/explanations as a teaching assistant (TA)
- V34 giving presentations at professional conferences
- V35 discussing academic issues over the telephone
- V36 understanding talks in your field, given by guest speakers or given at conferences
- V37 requesting assistance in the library
- V38 reading textbooks and course handouts
- V39 writing short papers for course assignments (1-8 pages)
- V40 reading professional journals
- V41 taking notes in English in class or in other academic situations
- V42 understanding exams
- V43 answering exams
- V44 reading reference books other than your textbooks
- V45 writing long papers for course assignments (9-25 pages)

- V46 writing papers to be presented at professional conferences
- V47 writing resumes
- V48 writing business letters (e.g., asking for information, requesting for assistance with academic activities, etc.)
- V49 writing summaries/critiques for books, book chapters, and journal articles you read
- V50 writing articles for publication in scholarly or professional journals
- V51 writing short reports of lab experiments for courses (1-8 pages)
- V52 filling out applications or forms
- V53 writing long reports of lab experiments for courses (9-25 pages)