CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

What is English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and how is it different from General English? Various definitions and perceptions have been contributed by ESP practitioners since the 1960s when it was first introduced. The term ESP, which is described as 'the newcomer to English language education' (Orr, 2001) has been substituted with more specific terms which are directly related to the content of courses or subject matters for different areas of learning and professions such as English for Law, English for Nursing and English for Engineering. Therefore, the general concept of ESP is to cater for the different needs of learners according to their purpose of learning. Different ESP programmes are designed with different syllabi to meet the English language needs of learners who want to be proficient in the specific contexts of their studies rather than the exposure to General English which does not cater to the real purpose of English usage in those contexts. In the next section, the definition of ESP will be discussed based on the two key notions of ESP – the characteristics of ESP and the types of ESP by addressing the differences or changes of views of earlier and current researchers.

In the view of Strevens (1988), the definition of ESP has to be discussed according to its absolute and variable characteristics. He proposed four absolute and two variable characteristics of ESP with regard to the issues of learner needs, language contents, language activities, language skills and teaching methodology. For the absolute characteristics of ESP, the English language teaching is (i) designed to meet specified

needs of the learner; (ii) related in content (i.e. in its themes and topics) to particular disciplines, occupations and activities; (iii) centred on the language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics, etc and analysis of this discourse; and (iv) in contrast with General English. On the other hand, for the variable characteristics, ESP may be, but is not necessarily (i) restricted to the language skills to be learned (e.g. reading only); and (ii) not taught according to any pre-ordained methodology (Strevens, 1988:1-2). Based on the above characteristics, it is noted that Strevens places a lot of emphasis on the relevance and appropriacy of ESP contents by drawing upon the real contexts of particular disciplines. Also, the English language in ESP programmes has to be 'special' to make it different from General English.

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) revised Strevens' definition of ESP after ten years. Their revised version proposes three absolute and five variable characteristics. The absolute characteristics are (i) ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learner; (ii) ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves; and (3) ESP is centred on the language (grammar, lexis and register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities. On the other hand, the variable characteristics are (i) ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines; (ii) ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English; (iii) ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be for learners at secondary school level; (iv) ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students; and (v) most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998:4-5). Fundamentally, Strevens, Dudley-Evans and St. John agree that ESP is designed to meet the learners' specific needs and the language focus has to be

appropriate to the activities underlying the specific disciplines. However, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) disagree with Strevens' statement that "ESP is in contrast with general English' as they believe that ESP could be used with even young adults in a secondary setting. Another conflicting idea between them is while Strevens postulates that ESP's content has to be related to particular disciplines, Dudley-Evans and St. John put it as a variable characteristic where ESP is not necessarily related to a specific discipline. In spite of their differing views, they still share a similar notion with Hutchinson and Waters (1987) that ESP is grounded in the learners' objectives of learning the language where ESP is seen as an approach instead of a product. For this, Hutchinson and Waters state that:

> ESP is not a particular kind of language or methodology, nor does it consist of a particular type of teaching material. It is an approach to language learning which is based on learner need. The foundation of all ESP is "Why does this learner need to learn a foreign language? (1987:19)

Although Strevens, Dudley-Evans and St. John hold a different thought on the issue whether ESP is similar to General English, they do not provide detailed explanation to justify their points of view. Orr (2001) makes an effort to differentiate the both where he points out that what makes ESP different from General English is the language task learners have to handle according to the complexity of contexts encountered and both also serve a different purpose according to the complexity of the tasks where:

> General English language education can help learners acquire English for general contexts (e.g. ordering food at a restaurant), ESP is needed to train learners for special contexts (e.g. courtroom debate) which can be far more complex and difficult to pick up one's own…uniquely tailored programmes are far more efficient and effective for learners who require special skills to carry out highly specialised tasks for which general English may not prove sufficient. (2001:207)

As General English or English for General Purposes (which has also been named 'TENOR' – the Teaching of English for No Obvious Reason') is designed with no obvious reason to the learner (Jordan, 1997), ESP therefore is seen as English language instruction specially designed to meet the specific needs of a specific group of learners and the outcomes of ESP is different from General English. Orr (2001) explains that this type of English language is 'unfamiliar to an average speaker' because it is designed mainly for learners who have to carry out specific academic or workplace tasks, such as dissertation writing for academic purposes, doctor-patient dialogue for medical purposes, technical documentation for engineering purposes, or hazardous substance labelling for safety purposes. Thus, the 'specific purpose' of this type of English language can be either 'academic' (English for Academic Purposes) or 'occupational' (English for Occupational Purposes) or both at the same time depending on the learner's current and/or future needs. EAP, thus, deals with the use of English language in a study setting where the main goal is the ability to cope in the student's chosen academic 'specialism'; whereas EOP deals with the language needed in the workplace environment of a job or profession (Johnson & Johnson, 1998 cited in Qi, 2008). After discussing the definitions of ESP, the underlying concepts of EAP, which is also the main focus of the present study, will be reviewed in the following section. This includes the development, types, characteristics of EAP courses and the types of EAP situation at tertiary level.

2.2 English for Academic Purposes

EAP was called English for Educational Purposes (EEP) in the past. This term was used when the concept was first introduced and it is seldom used now after being replaced by the term EAP. Coffey (1984, cited in Sager, 1998), describes EAP as a student's need

for "quick and economical use of the English language to pursue a course of academic study" (p.4). Whereas for Wei and Flaitz (2005), EAP is a 'key responsibility' in assisting English as a Second Language (ESL) students to develop the kind of English language proficiency that will lead to success in their academic endeavours.

The growth of EAP is derived from the awareness of ESP practitioners that all the tertiary level students possess different learning needs and this cannot be fulfilled by teaching them the same type of English language – ESP and General English. In a needs analysis conducted in Hong Kong to find out the tertiary students' English language needs , Evans and Green (2007) found out that most Hong Kong undergraduates "not only require language support at university, but also that this support should be oriented towards academic rather than general English" (p.5). In addition to that, Hyland (1997), in the research "Is EAP necessary in the Hong Kong tertiary context?" realises that students generally see the value of EAP classes as they recognise that proficiency in English is an important determinant of academic success in an English-medium environment. Sabariah and Rafik-Galea (2005) see the development of EAP as a result of dissatisfaction with the lack of generalizability of the ESP courses.

During 1980s, both English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) were grouped together. This is seen when Carver (1983) identifies three types of ESP: (i) English as a restricted language, (ii) English for Academic and Occupational Purposes, and (iii) English with specific topics. It is noted here that EAP and EOP are categorised as the same type of ESP. This idea is in line with Hutchinson and Waters's (1987) view that EAP and EOP is not a "clear-cut distinction as people can work and study simultaneously and it is also likely that in many cases the language learnt for

immediate use in a study environment will be used later when the students takes up, or returns to, a job" (p.16). Therefore, it can be implied that both EAP and EOP are geared towards the same purpose or outcome – to prepare learners for their future professions. However, this idea is not accepted completely by some ESP researchers like Sabariah and Rafik-Galea (2005) and Jordan (1997).

2.2.1 English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) and English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP)

Jordan (1997) defines ESP clearly as two main strands: English for Occupational/ Vocational/ Professional Purposes (EOP/EVP/EPP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Under the strand of EAP, it is subdivided into two sub-strands: 'English for Specific Academic Purposes' (ESAP) and 'English for General Academic Purposes' (EGAP) (Blue, 1988a cited in Jordan, 1997) which were also termed earlier as 'common core' or 'subject-specific' respectively (Coffey, 1984 cited in Jordan, 1997). An example is given to differentiate EOP/EVP/EPP and ESAP. For instance, doctors are put under EOP/EVP/EPP, medicine is listed under EAP or specifically ESAP. In the EOP/EVP/EPP, training for the doctors will be focussing on the practice of doctor-patient interaction during consultation. On the other hand, under ESAP, practice is specially designed for medical students to carry out academic tasks such as reading medical journals and writing clinical reports. Thus, ESP is the language needed in a real working environment; and subject-specific English or ESAP is the language required for a particular academic subject, e.g. medicine and law, and its contents include the language structure, genres, vocabulary, the particular skills needed for the subject, and the appropriate academic conventions (Jordan, 1997).

In describing English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP), Jordan (1997) asserts that "a large proportion of the common core element is more usually known as "study skills" plus other elements of a general academic English register, incorporating a formal, academic style, with proficiency in the language use" (p.5). These study skills include areas such as effective lecture listening comprehension and note-taking, writing in the appropriate academic register, reading effectively for study purposes, participation in discussion and library research. This is not a subject-specific type of English language and its main objective is to equip learners with the necessary skills to complete tasks in a general academic setting, for instance studying the first degree at higher learning institutions and preparing postgraduate students in writing dissertation. In EGAP, strategies for reading, writing, speaking and listening for all academic subjects will be taught in the programme while in ESAP, vocabulary and skills specific to a subject of study will be emphasized. So, in distinguishing EGAP and ESAP, Sabariah and Rafik-Galea (2005) point out that the differences between the two sub-strands lies in the level of specificity and the assumptions made about them. They further explain that, in EGAP, student's performance, whether good or bad, is not dependent on the topics(s) related to his/her discipline while in ESAP, student's performance will be different depending on the nature of the topic(s) included in the course. For this, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) conclude that the difference between ESAP and EGAP is that ESAP courses focus on the actual tasks that students have to carry out while EGAP courses select more general contexts.

Based on the discussion above, the Proficiency English 1 (PE1) and Proficiency English 2 (PE2) courses in the present study match with the EGAP concept as both courses are not subject-specific and they are offered to all the foundation students with the aim to help them to study in a completely academic environment. Nevertheless, these two courses

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are designed without having any needs analysis and thus the present study is carried out to identify the academic English language needs of the students in the tertiary level context.

2.2.2 English for Academic Purposes in Higher Education

The demand and need for EAP has increased immensely in the education sector. EAP is needed not only for tertiary educational studies in countries where English is the native language, but also in the countries where English is the official language and medium of instruction in the higher learning institutions (Jordan, 1997). The concept of EAP is interpreted and implemented differently based on the needs and situation of respective country's educational policy. To further elaborate on this, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998:34) outline four types of EAP situations at the tertiary level: (1) An English Speaking country such as UK or USA; (2) An ESL situation, such as in former British colonies in Africa or in South East Asia; (3) A situation where certain subjects are taught in English and the rest being in the national language; (4) A situation in which all subjects are taught in the national language and English plays an ancillary role. For the Malaysian EAP situation, it is considered to fall within type 3 (Faiz, 2005).

The expansion of the demand of EAP to suit the particular needs of tertiary students and the development of higher education varies according to the particular country's situation. For example, in Malaysia, it is due to the consequence of a gradual shift of the medium of instruction from Malay to the English language in most areas of study. This situation would be different in a country where English is the native language. Furthermore, Liyanage and Birch (2001) state that if English language is not the native language of the students, EAP classes are often attended and needed by almost all the

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students who are from a range of different academic disciplines. They also reveal that EAP in such countries are usually conducted as ESAP courses catering for the needs of individual academic departments and their students. For instance, undergraduates who sign up for accountancy, management and banking programmes will be undertaking different EAP courses although they are from the same faculty. On the contrary, when English is the official first language of the country, the international students who are from the non-English speaking countries or ESL students will be attending EGAP courses instead of ESAP classes. This is because the students are from a range of academic disciplines and the numbers is insufficient for the institution to conduct ESAP courses for the students according to their academic disciplines. To conclude, there is a clear difference between the needs of EAP students in the two contexts mentioned above.

Having either ESAP or EGAP courses by considering the status of the English language in the particular countries is not a fixed idea as the nature of the EAP courses is still dependent on the generalised objective of having it after identifying the needs of the students. Even in an ESL context, if the intention of the institution is to assist the students to study effectively at the tertiary level with the abilities in handling academic tasks such as referencing skills and study skills, EGAP courses would be more relevant to the students instead of ESAP. Thus, Liyanage and Birch (2001) argue that most EAP courses, in most institutional setting, are likely to continue to be of the EGAP rather than the ESAP strand.

The future development of EAP in higher education has been widely discussed by ESP practitioners. For instance, Mo (2005) predicts that more attention will be paid to EAP at pre-tertiary levels in the future as there are already many researches on EAP needs that concern students at undergraduate and postgraduate level. Early exposure of EAP skills is

believed to be useful for the pre-tertiary or pre-university students to build a strong academic English language background which then assist them to learn effectively at a higher level.

When reviewing the present development of EAP in both EFL and ESL contexts, Hamp-Lyons (2001) asserts that the English language skills of non-native English speaking academics will develop as the demand is getting higher. Besides that, Liyanage and Birch (2001) comment that there has been little attention given in EAP research which with regard to the problems and complexities of EGAP instruction in English-speaking contexts. While they are encouraging the study of EGAP in English-speaking context, the present study is undertaken to examine the present EGAP courses (PE1 and PE2) for the students who are studying in an ESL context and to investigate if it is necessary to address any discipline-related language elements in the EGAP courses.

2.2.3 The Focus of English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

The content of EAP courses largely relies on the students' English language needs in a particular learning context. Hence, in order to know what kind of content area of EAP courses that would closely match with the students' needs, it is necessary to review the different ideas of EAP experts or practitioners. Liyanage and Birch (2001) strongly stress that any English courses that are designed to prepare students to cope with the demands of university study has to focus on what Cummins (1982, cited in Liyanage & Birch, 2001) refers to as 'context-reduced' language which is rather more abstract and rely less heavily on an immediate context; and it has to be different from the content of general ESL courses that focuses on the 'context-embedded' language which emphasizes mainly on everyday

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interaction. They conclude that general ESL and EAP are two different modes of curricula in terms of student clientele, course content, objectives, and instruction.

Jordan (1997) asserts that the academic curricula of EAP courses which are to cater for students who are taking courses of advanced study at university level has to be academic-oriented and presuppose solid 'literacy abilities'. This is very much similar to Liyanage and Birch's (2001) claim that the EAP curriculum has to build on student awareness towards a particular language of the academy, and certain ways of talking, reading and writing about ideas and texts. This implies that language and study skills are two important components in any EAP course. The inclusion of various language and study skills in the content of EAP would help the students to develop the 'literacy abilities' and that the 'academic literacy' will continue to be applied to the complex set of skills, not only to those relating to the mastery of reading and writing (Mo, 2005).

The language component of EAP is still very much on the teaching of grammar. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) reveal that if grammatical difficulties interfere with language skills, EAP instructors should spend time to concentrate on the difficulties by teaching both the language form and usage. The grammatical forms here include tenses, voices, modals, articles and logical connectors. In addition to that, the usage of grammar that is beyond the sentence level in various contexts has to be highlighted too. Hutchinson and Waters (1987), on the other hand, emphasize on discourse analysis which they believe can raise learner's awareness of the underlying structure of a text and the way in which the language is organized to construct the structure. Besides grammar and discourse analysis, genre analysis is another important language skill (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). This

skill can help learners to understand the organization and the language forms of different genres.

The instruction of study skills is an important component of EAP courses as they are not something instinctively acquired but something consciously learnt (Mo, 2005). Jordan (1997) outlines a reasonably comprehensive list of study skills in the study situations which are likely needed in EAP programmes: lecture / talks, seminars / tutorials / discussions / supervisions, practical / laboratory work / field work, private study, reference material, etc. Thus, all these skills need to be taught to the native speakers of English as well as the non-native (Robinson, 1991). Teaching the students various study skills so that they are able to handle their study well is actually an idea which is derived from the practice of 'Learner Training' or 'Learning How to Learn' (LHTL). This is an area of methodology where students are encouraged to pay attention and be conscious of their learning (Benson, 1995). EAP courses, based on this understanding, must highlight the features which are also included in the LHTL programme such as consciousness-raising, explicitness, use of task-appropriate strategies, learner-centredness, self-directed learning and learner autonomy (Ellis & Sinclair, 1989). By promoting learner training or emphasizing on study skills, the students will become better and more independent learners and able to take more responsibility for their own learning (Teoh, 1995).

While some view study skills as central to EAP (Beard & Hartley, 1984; Robinson, 1980 cited in Liyanage & Birch, 2001), some researchers maintain that EAP does not entirely rest on study skills (Jordan, 1997) but on the things like general academic English register, incorporating a formal, academic style with proficiency in the language use in addition to study skills. However, he also mentions that in contexts where it is necessary to

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address the linguistics needs of specific disciplines, the focus on non-specialised language may not be adequate for students to handle functions and notions of discipline-specific language.

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), in deciding what should be included in ESP/EAP syllabus, the awareness of the need of a target situation will determine what is considered as acceptable and reasonable content in the language course. Orr (2001) also claims that the content for ESP is not fixed but in turn is enriched according to the requirements of the learning contexts. It is not "a monolithic whole, which can be acquired in totality, but rather it consists of countless components and combinations that have evolved over time to fulfil communication needs situated within a wide range of social, academic, and work-related contexts." (p.207). In conclusion, an ESP/EAP programme should not be misunderstood as consisting of limited language of words and expression selected from the whole language.

2.3 The Concept of Language Needs

Language curriculum planning or course design without addressing learners' academic language needs can be considered incomplete as it might lead to a diverged focus of the initial planning and implementation of the programme. This might then cause a total failure to the programme and consequently the predicted learning outcomes of the students cannot be achieved upon their completion of the programme. Thus, assessment of learners' language needs is an important part of any instructional programme design and it can benefit both teachers and students by avoiding fixed and/or linear curricula especially when the students involved have specific and individualised learning goals and needs

(Santopietro & Peyton, 1991 cited in Liyanage & Birch, 2001). To illustrate what are the essential aspects of language needs and how these aspects are taken into practice, it is a crucial step to understand how the concept of language need is actually conceptualized or defined.

The word "need" can be described, in a general term, an item or an ability which is important to a person and which he does not have or is not very good at (Kavaliauskiene & Uzpaliene, 2003). In a language pedagogic context, the term "need" is defined and implied diversely by different researchers based on various aspects as in Widdowson (1981), Hutchinson and Waters (1987), Brindley (1989) and Berwick (1989).

Widdowson (1981) views language needs as goal-oriented needs and process-oriented needs. In the goal-oriented view of needs, students' predicted learning outcomes are to be accomplished within the language course. It is assumed that after taking the course, the learning process is considered complete and the students are expected to apply the knowledge learnt in the real situation like in a working place. On the other hand, the process-oriented view of needs marks a long-term learning outcome in which students' learning is seen as a continuous process. Students will be taught 'learning how to learn' strategies with the aim to develop their ability to learn after taking the course. These two different views of 'language needs' plays a part in determining the approach of teaching and the design of course curriculum. From here, two types of language courses can be developed depending on the intention of the institutions. If the course aims at helping the students to acquire the whole knowledge of language within the course and in which it is transferable to future use (goal-oriented), the language items are fixed and selective according to the kind of situation the students may probably face. In contrast, if the course

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aims to equip the students with the knowledge to learn in the future (process-oriented), the course contents will contain language items which are more to skill or strategy training. In short, the goal-oriented type of curriculum is relevant to EOP context and the process-oriented type of curriculum matches with the EAP context.

Richterich (1983), with the influence from Widdowson's (1981) views, classifies language needs into two types: 'objective needs' and 'subjective needs'. 'Objective needs' concerns the factual information for the purposes of setting goals related to language content. This is similar to Widdowson's 'goal-oriented needs' where the knowledge of language that a learner needs to have in order to perform is put on top of all the considerations in course design. 'Subjective needs', on the other hand, looks at individual learners' background with relevance to their learning process. These include learners' preferable learning styles, instructional methodologies and learning materials. Despite the different focus between the two views of language needs, Richterich (1983) points out that both play a distinctive role in programme design. The information obtained from 'objective needs' is considered as the initial phase or the first step in program design and then followed by the input from 'subjective needs'. Ali (2003) notes that 'objective needs' will form the broad parameters of programme design but "when learning starts, this language-related needs would be altered, and some sort of learning needs which were not specified pre-course will appear" (p.43). Thus, the analysis of learner's 'subjective needs' is required in the latter step (after the analysis of 'objective needs') to examine factors other than language-related ones that contribute to language learning. To conclude, learners' language-related needs cannot be seen solely as the only input in developing any ESP/EAP courses.

Another two major conceptions of language needs which have been widely explored in literature are Hutchinson and Waters's (1987) 'target needs' and 'learning needs'. The distinction between the two is understood as 'what the learner needs to do in the target situation (target needs) and what the learner needs to do in order to learn (learning needs). The analysis of target needs involves identifying the linguistic features of the target situation or learner 'necessities' (what is English needed for), 'lacks' (what a learner does not know), and 'wants' (what a learner feels he or she needs). To further elaborate on the three aspects of target needs, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) explicate that 'necessities' is the type of language need determined by the demands of the target situation or more specific what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in that situation. This view is in line with Richterich's (1983) 'objective needs'. For instance, a postgraduate student who needs to write research papers requires the knowledge of academic writing such as using the right academic lexis and sentence patterns. Thus, the linguistic items needed have to be matched with the situations in order to optimize the student's performance. The aspect of 'lacks' is about the gap between the learner's present proficiency and the target proficiency in order to perform in the target situation. This can be featured when a postgraduate student who knows how to construct ideas but having difficulty in organizing sentences or paragraphs cohesively and coherently. On the other hand, the aspect of 'wants' is about learners' own view as to what their needs are or what they intend to learn. This is based on the students' own interest of learning in a situation but which might not be relevant to their actual needs. In other words, they might want to learn something that will not contribute to their self-advancement.

The other view of needs of Hutchinson and Waters (1987) – 'learning needs' is looking at the conditions of the learning situation that can facilitate learning such as

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learner's attitude, learning strategies, resources, classroom setting, learners' background and so on. This is also very similar to Widdowson's (1981) process-oriented view of needs where learners will be taught skills and strategies of learning the target language. Thus, analysis of target situation needs is concerned with the important area of language use, while learning needs cover circumstances of language learning (Kavaliauskiene & Užpaliene, 2003).

Brindley (1989) adopts Richterich's (1983) 'objective' and 'subjective' needs and specifies them with a more specific interpretation of language needs – 'narrow' or 'product-oriented' interpretation of needs and 'broad' or 'process-oriented' interpretation of needs. In the 'narrow' or 'product-oriented 'interpretation of needs, learners' needs are seen solely in terms of the language they will have to use in a particular communication situation – be it occupational or educational situation for which the target language is required (Munby, 1978; Widdowson, 1981; Richterich, 1983; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Strevens,1988; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Jordan, 1997). For the 'broad' or 'process-oriented' needs, Brindley (1989) sees the learner as an individual in the learning process. The analysis of this type of needs takes into account a diversity of affective and cognitive variables which affect learning such as the learner's attitudes, motivation, awareness, personality, want, expectation and learning styles.

When looking at the interpretation of language needs in the EAP context, Liyanage and Birch (2001) assert that the needs of ESAP students vary from those of EGAP students. They points out that this situation is caused by the issue of homogeneity of the learners' academic background as to their academic disciplines where:

ESAP classes comprise students whose academic disciplines are homogenous…the students require and the teacher can provide the specific skills and the awareness of the genre demanded by their particular academic discipline. The lack of academic discipline homogeneity in EGAP classes makes catering for the students' needs a complicated task as opposed to ESAP classes where students share the same academic background. (2001:3)

After reviewing the different interpretation of language needs, Wei and Flaitz (2005) have insightfully observed one weakness in those interpretations. They comment that academic language needs, in most of the situation, have been implicitly interpreted as language needs related to classroom tasks and students' language needs in the larger university setting are not examined. Thus, students' needs which are related to specific classroom tasks only form a partof the real needs and the remaining is from the students' needs to participate in tasks outside of the classroom such as using communication skills to socialize with people in different contexts. This view is also shared by Dickinson (1991, cited in Kavaliauskiene & Uzpaliene, 2003) that needs cannot be conceptualised too rigidly based on one perspective because if needs are only understood as specific requirements for the foreign language, then the majority of learners will not have any.

Judging from the various concepts of language needs by different researchers or ESP/EAP practitioners, it can be said that no particular interpretation is over and above others, and these just serve as references in determining students' language needs and they are adjustable according to the learning contexts. This point is agreed by Faiz (2005) where learners' language needs have been "variously interpreted and defined by assessors and curriculum planners on the basis of what they see as being the dictates of a particular situation of assessment" (P.207). He also suggests that a new operational definition of 'needs' be constructed for each assessment as the elements will change according to the values of the assessor with the influence of certain educational system. Richterich (1983)

also realizes the difficulty of defining the term 'language needs' as "the very concept of language needs has never been clearly defined and remains at best ambiguous' (p.2). This is due to the fact that needs vary too much from person to person and in general, the learner is little aware of his needs, and in particular, the learner is unable to express them in a very clear terms (Richterich & Chancerel, 1987 cited in Ali, 2003).

While it is not an easy task to concretize the meaning of 'language needs' pertaining to students' language learning, Faiz (2005) proposes a broad one that could reflect the various dimensions constructed by the different researchers and which would set as a guide for the purpose of curriculum design. He categorises the concepts of needs into two main groups: "necessities or demands" (objective, product-oriented or perceived needs) and "wants" (subjective or felt needs). To further compress these two concepts, they are generally called 'goal-oriented needs' and 'process-oriented needs'. For the present study, the researcher seeks to examine the target needs (necessities & lacks) and learning needs of the target learners. It is hoped that an understanding of the students' academic English language needs can be developed and the present English courses can be revised.

2.4 Needs Analysis in EAP

The design and implementation of any curriculum for EAP courses should take into consideration the different language needs of the target learners. Undoubtedly, by determining learners' language needs, a strong foundation pertaining to the whole idea of conducting the particular language courses could be formed. With that preliminary knowledge, the whole process of designing curriculum, from the construction of course objectives to the selection of course contents and learning activities can be made easier.

This could provide assurance in the quality of the courses especially with the aim to help the learners to achieve the expected learning outcomes. To start collecting information on the learners' language needs, a needs analysis has to be carried out. Before looking at the procedures and approaches in needs analysis, the definition or the concept and the role of needs analysis will be discussed first in this section.

In clarifying what 'needs analysis' is, basically, all the ESP/EAP researchers and practitioners share a similar notion. For Weddel and Duzer (1997), needs analysis is just like a tool used to examine the kinds of English and literacy skills required by the learners and at the same time to identify the literacy contexts of the target language in which the learners will function, what the learners want and need to know to function in those contexts and what they expect to obtain from the instructional programme. It can be observed here that besides the identification of the linguistic items, what the learners need to do in order to use those items and how those items will be used in the predicted context will be explored also in needs analysis.

On the other hand, needs analysis is referred as 'the activities involved in gathering information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum that will meet the learning needs of a particular group of students" by Brown (1995:35). With reference to what should be focused in needs analysis, Wei and Flaitz (2005) perceive it as something which is subjective as learners' needs in several skills or only a specific skill can be examined. Wei and Flaitz (2005) also report that in conducting needs analysis to identify students' academic language needs, researchers can collect data to identify the tasks students will encounter in university content classrooms and also to analyse the skills the students need to perform those tasks successfully. The latter focus is actually concerned

with the student learning styles and strategies which is seen as an important aspect in needs analysis as well by Kavaliauskiene and Uzpaliene (2003). Thus, needs analysis can be regarded as the process of establishing the "what" and "how" of a language course (Mo, 2005).

To look more closely into this issue, Dooey (2006) speculates needs analysis as a very practical and the most effective way of identifying specific English language needs. It is considered practical because it is context specific and therefore the information used to design the curriculum is reliable which will then definitely match with the real needs of the learners. Additionally, it is considered an effective way of assuring the value of the language programme because both students and lecturers will contribute in the needs analysis and this step could provide a more complete and comprehensible picture when deciding on the language course content. Therefore, the designing of any language programmes with needs analysis being conducted will help both instructors and learners to clear some doubts on the effectiveness of the language course. To further discuss this, some issues on needs analysis in curriculum design will be explained in the next section.

After being aware of the fact that every individual, in the process of language learning, has certain needs to be fulfilled, the institution or to be more specific the language course developers, should not take things for granted by just putting in their own assumptions only to predict what might work best for the students. It is believed that the hassles that one might face while conducting needs analysis is the main reason that cause those involve in programme design to abandon this important step. With such a concern, needs analysis is a good platform to elicit information on what the students want, need and already know using their perspectives. Due to this reason, Liz Hamp-Lyons (2000, cited in

Jordan, 2002) notes that needs analysis is "fundamental to an EAP approach to course design and teaching" (p.74).

In commenting on the above issue, Cowling (2007) observes that there is often a lack of awareness of the existence of needs analysis as a tool in EFL course design and many have overlooked course planning as an area in syllabus design. He criticises that although:

> such an outlook eliminates the need of a time consuming and often expensive syllabus design process…such an approach ignores the specific learning needs of the target students, something that could be examined through a needs analysis process…One area that has a higher regard for needs analysis is ESP as students' needs are often clearer and of such a nature that a published textbook would not adequately fulfil their needs. (2007:427)

As a result, using such a short-cut approach of determining course syllabus will pose risks to both the instructors and students because the quality of learning might be questioned. Therefore, in developing curriculum for any language courses, little effort must be put in to conduct a needs analysis so that any doubts pertaining to the quality of the curriculum could be avoided.

In discussing the roles of needs analysis in language curriculum design, Mackay and Mountford (1978, cited in Muhammad Nadzri, 2004) speculate four main purposes. Firstly, lecturers will be more acquainted with the sponsoring institution and the requirements of the course. Secondly, needs analysis is able to identify how learners will use English in their technical fields. Thirdly, needs analysis gives the instructor initial insights about the prospective students' current level of performance in English and fourthly, needs analysis provides an opportunity to collect samples of authentic texts,

spoken and written, which will be used by them in the target environment. To sum up here, Muhammad Nadzri (2004) holds the view that needs analysis will enable the instructors to translate the language needs into linguistic and pedagogical terms which in turn develops good curriculum for the courses and offers effective guidance to the instructors who are teaching the courses. With these four strong justifications, needs analysis can be certainly viewed as an integral part in language curriculum development especially in EAP.

The inclusion of needs analysis in language curriculum development should be as early as possible where Keita (2004) suggests that it should be in the first step. This can be seen also in the systematic curriculum development model (refer figure 1) proposed by Brown (1995).
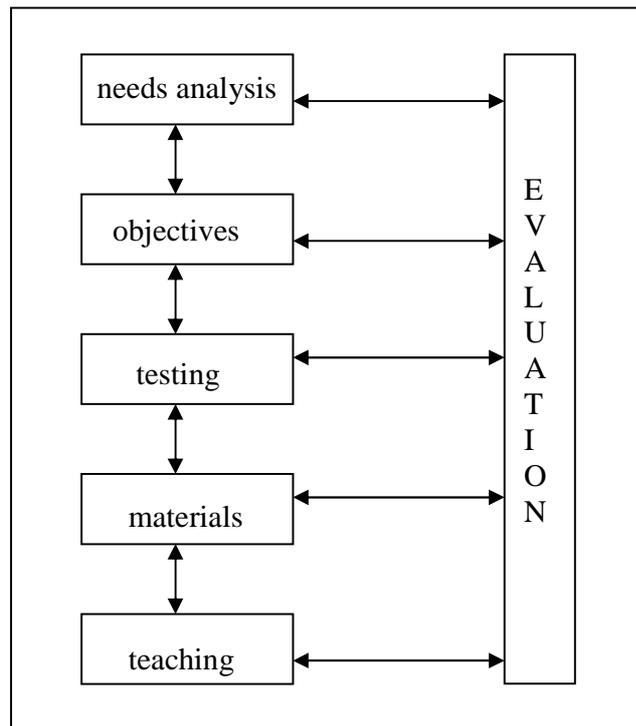

Figure 2.1: The systematic curriculum development model (Brown, 1995)

In this model, it is noted that needs analysis is placed as the first phase in the whole system. This is then followed by the other five phases: objectives, testing, materials, teaching and evaluation. Kumazawa (2006) states that it is in this initial phase that administrators collect and analyse all the necessary information about students' language needs in order to develop the course objectives, testing methods, instructional material and teaching methodologies. It is also noted in the model, after the fifth phase or a course has been implemented, a needs analysis has to be re-conducted. This shows that curriculum development, therefore, is actually a cyclical system and needs analysis is also an on-going activity.

In conclusion, needs analysis can be described as "what learners will be required to do with the foreign language in the target situation, and how learners might best master the target language during the period of training" (West, 1994 cited in Cowling, 2007:427). Needs analysis, as observed by Grognet (1996), is the most crucial of all the steps in curriculum design because the remaining steps are based on it. In this study, needs analysis is carried out to examine the students' weaknesses and strengths in using English language in their academic studies and also their preferable learning methods. In the next section, the procedures for needs analysis will be discussed.

2.4.1 Procedures in Needs Analysis

The answers to the question "How should a needs analysis be conducted?' can be obtained by looking at two important aspects in the needs analysis design that is when needs analysis can be conducted and what kind of methods can be used to collect the necessary data. To start with the discussions of when needs analysis should be carried out,

the different views of researchers will be highlighted here. Orr (2001) perceives that needs analysis should be the first step to identify the specific needs of the learners with the reason to provide information for the instructors or lecturers so that they can specify the appropriate teaching content. In addition, Jordan (1997) also suggests that needs analysis should be the "starting point for devising syllabus, courses, materials and the kind of teaching and learning that takes place (p.22). This is to avoid the problem of misconduct in the courses which may end up in wasting of time and resources if the learners fail to learn what are expected to learn. Besides that, Liz Hamp-Lyons (2000, cited in Jordan, 2002) also observes that needs analysis is fundamental to an EAP approach to course design and teaching. Thus, in general, most of the researchers possess the same view that needs analysis should be conducted before anything else.

In fact, needs analysis can be carried out before, at the beginning, during and after a course in EAP class context. The analyses at these various stages serve for different purposes in the whole curriculum development. As mentioned by Santopietro & Peyton (1991, cited in Liyanage & Birch, 2001), if the analysis is conducted at curriculum planning stage or before the course starts, the result can be used to determine the appropriate programme types, objectives, course content and learners' resources. It can also be undertaken during the course as a continuous process to ascertain whether the programme's objectives and the learners' requirements can be attained and whether the methods of teaching, assessment and learning materials are appropriate. This stage is considered important because the curriculum which is initially developed for the programme may not be adequately addressing what the learners want and need (Liyanage & Birch, 2001). If needs analysis is conducted at the end of the course or after the course, the outcomes would be helpful for future planning. This stage is also important because it

can review the whole curriculum if there are changes that have occurred over time. Therefore, when needs analysis is a continuous process, the learners' language needs will have to be reanalysed from time to time so that changes can be made to the curriculum when necessary.

With regard to the methods employed to conducting EAP needs analysis, Faiz (2005) states that it would depend on the availability of some resources such as time, money, expertise and experience. There are various ways of collecting the necessary data for analysing students' language needs. These include language tests, questionnaire surveys, interviews, observation, case studies, learner diaries, previous research, participatory needs analysis, review of reading materials, class discussion and self-assessment (Weddel & Van Duzer, 1997; Jordan, 2002; Orr, 2001; Faiz, 2005). Besides these methods, it is also crucial to know who should participate in the needs analysis. For this, Faiz (2005) reports that a number of parties may participate in making decisions about what are the learners' language needs. These include the former students and a lecturer/tutor in the student's institution. For this study, the data are obtained via questionnaires which are administered to the students, English language lecturers and the subject lecturers. The study is carried out after the course with the reason to examine the students' English language needs as there was no needs analysis was done prior to the commencement of the programme.

2.5 Approaches of Needs Analysis

It is vital to revisit the broad definition of ESP/EAP to see how it has actually formed an association with needs analysis. Hutchinson and Waters (1987:19) advocate that

"ESP must be seen as an approach and not as a product." They further argue that ESP is not a particular kind of language with special teaching methodology or teaching material but rather an approach to language learning which is based on the target learners' language needs. This basis has then profoundly influenced the development of various approaches used in identifying learners' language needs. The selection of the appropriate approaches depends on the needs analyst's intention with reference to the purpose of carrying out needs analysis and the kind of information needed. The major approaches include Target Situation Analysis (TSA), Learning Situation Analysis (LSA), Strategy Analysis (SA) and Means Analysis (MA).

2.5.1 Target Situation Analysis (TSA)

Faiz (2005:212) claims that TSA is the most influential approach in needs analysis in line with the "pioneering effort towards TSA" by Munby's proposal of 'Communication Needs Processor' (CNP) as the core of the needs analysis model in year 1978 and all the subsequent approaches to the analysis of language needs are developed in reaction to this socio-linguistic model. Jordan (1997) indicates that Munby's approach focuses on the students' needs "at the end of a language course and target-level performance" (p.23) by taking account of the variables that affect learners' communication needs as Munby's concern is on designing communicative syllabus. With reference to this model, Jordan reports that a profile of the students' language needs can be obtained at the end of the analysis. The needs profile can be converted into a 'communicative competence specifications' from which a sequenced syllabus can be drafted. However, West (1994, cited in Jordan, 1997:24) comments that Munby's instrument to needs analysis is "inflexible, complex and time consuming" and "all subsequent systems of needs analysis

have aimed at simplicity". Similarly, Faiz (2005) also remarks that the weaknesses of Munby's needs analysis model are "lacking of theoretical justification for the categorization of macro- and micro-skills, and how the analysis of related needs might be relevant to a heterogeneous group of learners" (p.213).

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) extend the work of Munby with the aim to overcome the identified weaknesses. They sub-divide "target needs" (refer section 2.3 of this chapter) into 'necessities', 'lacks' and 'wants'. For 'necessities' which is also referred as 'objective needs' (what the learners have to know in order to function well in the target situation) is about the situations in which the language will be used e.g. lectures, seminars, etc and this is known as TSA (Faiz, 2005; Jordan, 1997). They develop a TSA framework (p.59) that outlines the kind of information that needs analysts or course designers need to obtain when looking at learners' target needs. This framework contains a series of main questions with some guided information which are useful in developing data-collecting tools for needs analysis especially the most commonly used questionnaires and interviews. Faiz (2005) states that this target needs survey questionnaires can be completed by the learner and the sponsor (the learner's educational institution) and informants (e.g. students in mid-course or who have completed the course). The questions suggested in the framework are (1) Why is the language needed? (2) How will the language be used? (3) What will the content areas be? (4) Who will the learners use the language with? and (5) Where will the language be used? Thus, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) mention that, it is via this target situation analysis approach that professional information about the learners such as the tasks and activities learners are or will be using English for can be obtained.

2.5.2 Learning Situation Analysis (LSA)

LSA is in relation with the third sub-division of Hutchinson and Waters's (1987) 'target needs' – 'wants' (or 'subjective needs'), which takes into account factors like learners' attitudes, motivation, learning preferences, styles, and expectations. In a more detailed explanation, Faiz (2005:219) indicates that the LSA investigates "psycho-pedagogical, methodological and logistic factors which will affect decisions about the design of a course and which may subsequently impede or positively influence the success of a language-learning programme". As a result, LSA has been sub-categorized as Strategy Analysis (SA) and Means Analysis (MA). The 'psycho-pedagogical' and 'methodological' factors will be discussed under the SA and the 'logistic' factors will be under the MA.

2.5.2.1 Strategy Analysis (SA)

Muhammad Nadzri (2004) terms this needs analysis procedure as an extension from 'what' into 'how' which involves the analysis of teaching and learning methodology. Allright (1982, cited in Jordan, 1997) notes that, in this approach, the concern is to help learners to identify the skill areas and their preferred strategies of achieving the skills. Besides all these, learners' previous learning experience, interest, attitudes and expectations in the course content, the roles of the teacher and learner, methods of assessment, etc will be focussed as well (Faiz, 2005). Therefore, to prevent frustration of expectations among the students who are studying in a different environment, and to avoid the problems where students utilise the inappropriate or inefficient learning strategies or styles that are perceived by teachers (Jordan, 1997), it is a crucial step to perform an SA whenever a needs analysis is conducted.

2.5.2.2 Means Analysis (MA)

The third factor in LSA - 'logistic' is investigated under the Means Analysis. MA (Holliday & Cooke, 1982 cited in Jordan, 1997:27) is an attempt to study the local situation i.e. the facilities, teachers and teaching methods to see how a language course can be implemented or adapted within those situations. Robinson (1991, cited in Faiz, 2005) articulates that this approach is always concern the management issues that cover the variables like "logistics, administrative factors and socio-political factors' (p.220). In addition, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) also stress on two key factors that need to be considered while performing MA – the classroom culture and the management of infrastructure and culture. Basically, this is a procedure to assess the physical settings of the learning institutions in which certain language courses are/will be conducted.

To ease the process of designing research method to collect the information of learners' learning needs, a framework for analyzing learning needs has been developed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987:62-63). This framework, like the TSA framework, is constructed in the form of six questions with a few sub-questions and/or important focus underneath each. The questions are: (1) Why are the learners taking the course? (2) How do the learners learn? (3) What resources are available? (4) Who are the learners? (5) Where will the ESP course take place? and (6) When will the ESP course take place?

For the present study, the needs analysis is carried out based on two approaches – Target Situation Analysis (TSA) and Learning Situation Analysis (LSA). The researcher seeks to identify the various language aspects and skills that are essential in helping the students to learn and the ways in which the students prefer to learn

2.6 Review of Related Studies on Needs Analysis of Foreign Context

Several studies on needs analysis have been conducted in foreign countries, and in general the researchers' intentions are to find out the students' language needs in studying.

Kavaliauskiene and Uzpaliene (2003) carried out an on-going analysis on a group of students aged 22 to 25 years old who studied at the Law University of Lithuania. This study aimed at identifying the learners' needs, wants and lacks to determine the prospective implications for successful language learning. They found out that learners have their own, internal needs (for a specific situation in learning) in addition to external demands imposed by teaching institutions. The result also showed that there were some differences in the needs, wants and lacks among students in the initial and middle of the course. Therefore, the researchers suggested that instructors should conduct an ongoing analysis of learners' needs in order to improve the English course syllabus accordingly based on the students' changing demands.

Wei and Flaitz (2005), on the other hand, conducted a needs analysis to identify international students' academic language needs by using focus group methodology. They took the initiative to gather responses from the learners and the university personnel (faculty and administrative staff). They suggested that academic language was not confined to the classroom as the students are exposed to and need to produce appropriate language as they engage in required on-campus administrative activities and thus, students' language needs and culture needs cannot be easily separated.

As compared to the above, Evans and Green (2007) conducted a larger scale needs analysis which involved almost 5000 undergraduates to investigate the language problems faced by Cantonese-speaking students at Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The findings of the study indicate that a significant percentage of the students experience difficulties when studying content subjects through the medium of English. The findings show that inadequacy in subject-specialist vocabulary, limited ability to express complex ideas in grammatically correct English and lack of fluency in oral presentation are the students' major problem. On this issue, they suggested that both EAP programme designers and front-line practitioners need to encourage their students to develop strategies that foster independence in learning especially in the area of understanding key vocabulary and help the students to apply what they already know in academic contexts as all the students already possess substantial foundation of knowledge in the language before enrolling into university.

2.7 Review of Related Studies on Needs Analysis in the Malaysian Context

Several studies of needs analysis have been conducted in the Malaysian context. The needs analysis was carried out at different institutional settings and the findings also reveal that students possess different language needs and these needs vary in terms of their programmes and learning environment. It is also noted that certain language items that are perceived as important in one context may not be perceived as having the same importance in another learning environment.

Muhammad Nadzri (2004) conducted a study on the needs of engineering students at the Higher National Diploma Level. The study examined the listening, speaking, reading

and writing skills needed by the students who were majoring in Engineering at British Malaysian Institute. Three groups of respondents involved in this study: students, language instructors and engineering instructors. The data was gathered through questionnaires and interview. The researcher found out that there were similarities and differences in opinions between the students and the language instructors in the aspects of ability in the four language skills and the importance of tasks pertaining to the four skills. He mentioned that the results of the analysis have implications on reviewing the present language course syllabus and it can used as guidelines if it is relevant to any similar language courses offered by other institutions.

Besides engineering, needs analysis were also conducted to find out the language needs of students from different academic background such as medicine and law. Saraswathy Ponambalan's (2003) study was concerned with the English language needs of medical students in local institutions of higher learning and to see if these language needs were met by MUET. The samples involved were the second year medical students who had attended two semesters of classes and had been exposed to lectures, seminars and tutorials and practical classes in English language. The researcher's intention was to look at students and lecturers' perceptions towards students' English language ability and also the importance of vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in learning. The findings revealed that the four language skills were important to the students in which listening was perceived as the most important skill. This was followed by speaking, reading and writing skill. Saraswathy suggested that on-going needs analysis is necessary to identify the language needs of students and the difficulties encountered by students in the academic context should be studied in depth because they represent the actual needs of the

students. In addition, she also recommended that critical thinking should be included as one of the components in EAP course.

In addition, Yeoh (2006), in the study "ESP for the law programmes at Taylor's college: a needs analysis", looked into the four different language skills and the corresponding sub-skills needed by the first year law students and also the types of instructional materials preferred by them with the perspectives from students, language teachers and subject teachers. The findings reported some contradicting opinions on the importance of the four language skills between the respondents concerning the students' language needs. To solve this matter, it was stressed that course designers and teachers should not completely generalize or ignore these differences but instead both language teachers and subject teachers should work together and complement each other by teaching the language items and skills involved. Yeoh also advocated an on-going needs analysis to identify the different needs among the students while reviewing a programme.

All the above studies are similar in terms of the language skills investigated where most of the researchers focussed on all the four language skills in their work. However, learners' needs in a particular skill are also examined. For instance, Siti Hamin and Ismie Roha (2005) carried out a survey of writing needs and expectation of hotel management and tourism students from Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), Taylor's College and Institut Teknologi Tun Abdul Razak (ITTAR). The main objective of the study was to reveal whether the courses offered reflect the specific writing needs needed for the workplace in the hospitality industry. The instrument used in the study was a questionnaire. The results indicate that the students were not exposed much to the types of writing genres used in their job functions and they could not apply what they leant when they did their

practical training. Besides that, the need to write formal letters and reports were perceived the highest skills required in performing jobs. Overall, most respondents stated that they were not satisfied with the present syllabus offered at the colleges.

2.8 Conclusion

The growth of EAP is derived from the awareness of ESP practitioners that all the tertiary level students possess different learning needs which cannot be fulfilled by a single language course. In the effort to determine the learners' academic language needs in the target literacy contexts, 'needs analysis' is undoubtedly the most practical and effective platform. The needs analysis can be carried out following the established approaches, procedures and methods. The data from the needs analysis can then be utilized as the main source in designing or reviewing an EAP course. Although needs analysis plays an important role in curriculum development, many higher learning institutions still lack awareness of or have overlooked this component and that the language support that is provided to the learners tend to be on an ad hoc basis. This scenario is similar to the setting of the present study where there was no needs analysis being conducted to find out what specific English language components and skills are required by the students. Based on the literature also, very few local studies have been conducted to find out the EAP needs among the tertiary students with particular reference to the context of EGAP. Most of the researchers' interest lies in the areas of EOP and ESAP which only involve respondents from a specific education or working background. This study, therefore, was carried out to fill the gaps by identifying the academic English language needs of the tertiary students which in turn would provide input to review the current English language courses. To carry out the study, some methods, analytical frameworks and respondents were involved and this is discussed in the following chapter.