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School of Humanities

An Investigation into the Language Needs of Saudi Students Studying in British Postgraduate Programmes and the Cultural Differences Impacting on them

By

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Abstract

It is well understood by international students who are studying in an English speaking country that proficiency in English is crucial to success. English for Academic Purposes has conventionally aimed to focus on a blend of language skills and study strategies to support students before and during their postgraduate studies. It is apparent from anecdotal information that the needs of Saudi Arabian students are not being met, as they continue to encounter problems with the academic culture of the British higher education system.

This study investigates the needs of Saudi students. It draws principally on present situation analysis and target situation analysis to explore the extent of students' needs. It exceptionally introduces a new element, referred to as cultural aspects of learning analysis, to assess new areas that preparation courses can usefully focus on.

A mixed methods approach is used in this study (Questionnaire, Interview, and Observation), and three groups of participants were approached for the purpose of data collection to determine precisely what elements of academic study in the UK uniquely pose problems for Saudi students. The questionnaire was distributed to 62 Saudi students (male and female) studying at postgraduate level at Southampton University; from this, deductions could be drawn that should apply across the whole Saudi community of graduate learners in the UK. Interviews were composed of three sets: with postgraduate students; with students studying on the English for academic studies programme; teachers teaching on the English for academic studies programme. The observations centred on different English for academic studies classes. Therefore, the data have been analysed qualitatively and quantitatively.

The research examines traditional methods of English teaching in the KSA within the context of the Saudi education system, and surveys attitudes towards the difficulties of studying in the English language, in terms of language differences and the academic cultural demands of British postgraduate study programmes. It also examines the area of English for Academic Purposes to ascertain why Saudi students report that these courses do not meet their target situation needs.

The results of this study reveal that there are indeed specific needs that relate only to Saudi students studying in the UK, and that a number of these do relate to cultural difference. The recommendations assist in three major areas: (a) to outline suggestions for the provision of preparation courses in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; (b) to improve the provision of programmes of English for Academic Purposes; and (c) to provide advice to Saudi students in their studies in the United Kingdom.

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Majed Alqahtani

declare that the thesis entitled [enter title]
An Investigation into the Language Needs of Saudi Students Studying in British Postgraduate Programmes and the Cultural differences Impacting on them

and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;

- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;

- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;

- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;

- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;

- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;

- parts of this work have been published as:

Alqahtani, M, and Archibald, A. (2010). Teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) for International students in the UK. *2ⁿᵈ Paris International Conference on Education, Economy and Society. In the peer-reviewed volume (1), 217 – 225.*

Signed: ………………………………………………………………….

Date:………………………………………………………………….

Dedication

To my Father and Mother who never ever stopped helping me since I was born. They have been my source of moral support and motivation since I began my education at primary school. They set an ideal example by their actions.

Acknowledgment

Thanks to be to Allah, Lord of the Universe, for giving me support and patience to carry out this study. Without His help and guidance, the completion of this work would not have been possible.

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I would fail in my duty if I did not remember here my closest friend Mr Yosef Al-Sumairy, for helping and encouraging me to study in the United Kingdom. Yosef was not just a friend; he was very supportive throughout all the personal difficulties that I have faced. I am also grateful to all those who helped and encouraged me to achieve this study: my uncles, Abdullah, Saed, Ahamed, and my brothers, Morya and Mosfer.

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Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

BA	Bachelor Degree
CALA	Cultural Aspect of Learning Analysis
ESL	English as a Second Language
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EGAP	English for General Academic Purposes
ESAP	English for Specific Academic Purposes
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
EBE	English for Business and Economics
EFL	English as a foreign language
ELT	English Language Teaching.
EOP	English for Occupational Purposes
EPP	English for Professional purposes
ESL	English as a Second Language.
ESS	English for Social Science
EST	English for Science and Technology
GE	General English
KFU	King Fahad University
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
LA	Language Skills Analysis
L2	Second Language
LGP	Language for General Purposes
LNA	Learning Needs Analysis
MA	Means Analysis
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
N	Number
NA	Needs Analysis
PG	Postgraduate
PSA	Present Situation Analysis
S	Student
SA	Strategy Analysis
SELMOUS	Special English Language for Overseas University Students
T	Teacher
TLC	Target Language Community
TSA	Target Situation Analysis
UK	United Kingdom
USH	University of Southampton
UG	Undergraduate

Chapter one: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the central questions and aims of this study and the current situation with regard to the experiences of students from Kingdom of Saudi Arabia studying for degrees in British Universities. After the providing background to the previous educational experiences of Saudi Arabian postgraduate students, it will detail the problems that they and other international students typically face in the UK context. The debate and potential solutions to those problems within the field of EAP will also be identified, prior to an explanation being given of how the research procedures undertaken in the course of this study will fill the gap in our understanding of the needs of Saudi students. The data were acquired, by means of a mixed methods approach, from Saudi students who have chosen to come to the United Kingdom as their tertiary study destination on postgraduate and EAP programmes at the University of Southampton and their EAP teachers. The research focused on collating information from the sample group about the language and cultural learning needs of those students, and the impact of cultural factors, to reduce the knowledge vacuum in this area. The ultimate goal of the research is to provide an understanding of how English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses can best be tailored to suit the needs of Saudi students.

This study provides a more concrete understanding of the problems faced by Saudi students when studying in the UK, in their academic programmes, namely Master, PhD and EAP courses, which will be beneficial to a variety of stakeholders, including the students, British EAP tutors, EAP tutors in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, academic course tutors and, of course those who provide funding for overseas study. Indeed, only by providing students with effective methods of learning in EAP can the collaboration between academic institutions in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom be a fruitful one. By identifying current failings and obstacles to success in this area, the research findings will include recommendations to British academics concerning the application and appropriate delivery of teaching and learning pedagogy to Saudi students. This focuses not only

on the teaching of language and problems with study strategies, but also on how to best provide support in the area of cultural learning differences to ease students' transition into the British academic environment. This research will identify the problems faced by students on arrival in the UK, in the form of a present situation analysis (PSA) (2.5.6), which will be designed to inform a programme of EAP study that also takes into account the needs of the students when they make the transition to their master and PhD degrees, in the form of a target situation analysis (TSA) (see 2.5.7). The TSA and PSA in this study were used as tools to diagnose the Saudi learners' weaknesses and strongest skills before commencing their postgraduate programmes, namely Masters and PhD, and the difficulties that they might have when they start their programme.

1.2 Background to the Study

Globalisation and the internet have altered the way in which the countries of the world do business, and it has become clear that the language of commerce and education is currently English (Graddol, 2000). Some researchers (see, Hyland, 2005, Park, 2006, Kuar, 2006) claim that students from non-English speaking countries have become increasingly eager to improve their level of English and even to be educated in an English speaking environment. Hofstede (2005) suggested that the educational and cultural context of the English speaking environment can best be understood by becoming a part of the educational process, as learning styles and the approach to business are both highly dependent on cultural factors.

As a country which can offer insight and education in these areas, the United Kingdom, over the course of the last decade, has become an important international education provider for students from countries such as China, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Japan, Qatar, etc. (United Kingdom Council for International Students Affairs, 2010). Currently, the British higher education system ranks among the top international educational providers, competing with the US, Australia, and Canada. In 2008, Nomnian claimed that it is ranked second amongst the English speaking countries, following the US in terms of attracting international students. In 2010, the swiftly developing economy and the political situation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia resulted in 13,000 Saudi students aiming to study for British degrees(see The

Royal Embassy of KSA, Cultural Bureau Attaché, London). The background to this, and some of the reasons behind the unique problems faced by this group of students, are briefly outlined here.

1.2.1 The Situation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

On the political stage, in 2005, when King Abdullah became King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Saudi government realized the critical importance of education in general and higher education in particular (for both individuals and society as a whole) as a basis for unification and the building of a strong economy (see Ramady, 2010). In addition to that, the Saudi government realized the need for a knowledgeable people who would participate in the development and growth of the state, a phenomenon which was initially accelerated by the Saudi Government's advocacy of King Abdullah in 2005, which encouraged Saudi Arabian students to realize the great importance of studying abroad in English speaking countries (Ministry of Higher Education, Saudi Arabia, 2010). Motivation for this centred on the widespread use of English in the academic arena worldwide and in the global financial market place. Zughoul (2003: 106) identified English as the working language of international organizations and conferences, with Crystal (2003) reporting that around 85% of international organizations now use English as one of their working languages. This also explains why Saudi students study in the UK and the reasons behind government funding. The Saudi Government now has a formalised education policy regarding Saudi students studying overseas.

In 2005, the Saudi Government implemented a sponsorship system called the 'King Abdullah Scholarship' for Saudi students who wished to study abroad (Ministry of Higher Education, Saudi Arabia, 2006)). Under this policy, graduates from all higher educational institutions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia who had been able to achieve good academic results were allowed to study overseas and were supported with all expenses paid. The Saudi Government's efforts in initiating these policies were targeted at better international cooperation and also at dealing with international competition (Ramady, 2010). As a result, according to the Ministry of Higher Education, Saudi Arabia in 2010, nearly 75,000 Saudi students were studying abroad. Most have preferred to go to the United State of America, the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada. This is why, at present, a large number of

international Saudi students are enrolled in university programmes in the United Kingdom in particular, across all sectors of higher education, vocational education, school education (see 1.2).

1.2.2 The Saudi Arabian Education System

Prior to 1930, education in the Kingdom simply involved some lessons which took place in Mosques in order to teach the Qur'an and Arabic text, and there was nothing that was recognisable as a national education system, such as uniform classes or a curriculum (Al-Zaid, 1982). Therefore, education was previously based on religious instruction and has been available to only some of the people since 1930. However, in 1963, the Saudi Government prioritised the organisation of a universal education system by founding the Ministry of Education, to provide a legislative framework for the development of a school education system. The education policies developed by the Ministry of Education were designed to put into practice all matters relating to schools and higher education programmes (Al-Mashary, 2006).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a structured system of education for children from age 4 to 22; 4-6, pre-school; 7-12, primary school; 13-15, elementary school; 16-18, secondary school; 18-22, higher education (consisting of academic and vocational institutions) (see Alansari, 1995). After the establishment of the first University in the Kingdom in 1957 others swiftly followed and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia now has 24 universities (see Ministry of Higher Education, 2010). Despite this explosion of formalized education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Al-Mashary (2006) sees that the style of teaching is rooted in its culture, prioritising the memorizing of knowledge rather than the analysis of facts. In addition, an early study by Al-Shammary (1984) claims that the education system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is highly competitive, and this has an influence on the level of pressure experienced by Saudis studying abroad. These factors and the role of English in the curriculum throughout the school system (and society in general) are key to understanding the challenges faced by Saudis studying abroad.

1.2.3 English and the Saudi Arabian Education System

The introduction of the English language to Saudi education has divided opinion in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Those who are in support of learning English see the English language as a necessary and appropriate tool to the benefit of society (Al-Sudais, 2004). From an Islamic perspective, learning English as well as other foreign languages can be employed in any society to endorse sound moral, ethical and social values (Al-Shammary, 1984). On the other hand, such languages, if exploited inappropriately, could be a channel for the collapse of all basic and fundamental social principles and beliefs, and this other faction deeply believes that learning English threatens to destroy the morality of the individual and the cultural values of the nation. This dispute has been resolved to the extent that the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has now integrated the teaching of English into comprehensive schools.

Alansari, (1995) claims that the Saudi school education system aims to foster a fundamental understanding of a more open globalized world through the school curriculum, including the social sciences, science, world history, geography, ethics and foreign languages (the English language in particular). Therefore, from the researcher's perspective, mastering English provides an opportunity to identify new developments in all fields, not only in the sciences. According to Park (2006: 28), education in foreign languages is not just seen to be a significant tool for understanding foreign cultures; it is also a fundamental catalyst for introducing Saudi culture to the outside world.

Currently in the Saudi system, English is the only foreign language being taught, because, as in the global context Crystal (2003) claims, it is the major and most commonly used international language. Before 2004, English language was a compulsory subject at both elementary and secondary school stages, where it was taught four times a week with each session lasting around forty-five minutes. In 2004, the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia recognised the importance of learning English from an early age and introduced it as a compulsory subject in the fourth year of primary schools, at age ten (Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia, 2010). Although it is taught, it is viewed as a foreign language with little application in everyday life; the current English language teaching methods emphasize

instruction in grammar and vocabulary, an approach driven by the examination-centric education system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Al-Oadi, 2000). Arabic is the official language in the Government offices and Saudis use their native language (Arabic) among themselves. Only expatriates who do not speak Arabic use English, although some non-Arabic expatriates try to learn Arabic in order to communicate with Saudis (e.g. Al-Shammary, 1984; and Al-Mashary, 2006). Doctors in hospitals, for example, try to speak in Arabic with their Saudi patients, because the latter do not speak English. The environmental factors lead to the assumption amongst some students that English is not an important aspect of their educational life, particularly if they are not going to study at a university in which English is used as the medium of study.

The English proficiency of public school graduates is generally very low (see Al-tuwaijri, 1982; Alansari, 1995; Al-Oadi, 2000 and Al-Mashary, 2006); therefore, all the post-secondary educational institutes in which English is the medium of instruction, such as King Fahad University (KFU) in western Saudi Arabia, place newcomers in an English language teaching programme before they start their academic courses. According to King Fahad University, these students cannot proceed to their academic course of study without passing the English language course. The advantage of this programme is that it makes students aware of the importance of English because they will spend the rest of their studies and their future career using English (KFU). This programme has been successful: for example, graduates from these universities speak fluent English and usually they find a job very easily.

Historically speaking then, ELT in Saudi Arabia has been undertaken since almost the beginning of the new education system. The method employed for teaching English involved selection of materials at intermediate and secondary school level as the basis of a curriculum. These materials were taken from books which had not been designed for use as a curriculum, and therefore were not useful or appropriate (see Al-tuwaijri, 1982). In 1980, the Ministry of Education recognised the need for a specially designed curriculum, and asked the publisher Macmillan to design materials specifically for the Saudi education system at both intermediate and secondary stages. The Ministry of Education required that these new books should

meet the specific needs of Saudi students, including the appropriate presentation of Saudi costumes and culture, and Saudi students' attitudes. Eight years later, the Ministry of Education asked King Fahad University (KFU) to design further new materials as the Macmillan materials were discovered to be not fit for purpose. According to the Ministry of Education, in 2005, there was a request for a re-evaluation and redesign of educational courses across the subject spectrum and of English in particular. A key element of the process of educating Saudi nationals in the English language is the provision of opportunities for studying abroad; as can be seen below, this has consequences for British academic institutions.

King Saud University, located in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is an example of how this phenomenon has been linked to the growth in the discipline of English for Academic Purposes. Founded in 1957, the language centre at this institution now has more than 2000 students enrolling in any given year, as these students need English for their future academic studies, e.g. Medicine or Engineering. The demand for English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses has increased in the last five years, as most of the Saudi universities have begun to provide students with courses in English for Academic Purposes before they start their first degree (see Ministry of Higher Education, Saudi Arabia, 2010). In what follows, this chapter will focus on discussing the development and importance of EAP from a language, study and cultural learning perspective; therefore it has been divided into two main sections. The first focuses on defining EAP and outlining its role in British institutions. The second focuses on discussing the British academic culture in light of the differences between the educational systems of the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia.

1.2.4 Studying EAP in the United Kingdom

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom maintain a strong and mutually beneficial relationship as important trading partners (e.g. Long, 2005), and the United Kingdom plays a key role in providing educational services for Saudi students: e.g. the Bell trust is working alongside King Saud University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to teach English to newcomers who intend to study at University (Times Higher Education magazine, 2008: 12-13), the University of Leeds and another Saudi university have signed research agreements in Nanoscience,

Technology, and Engineering; and since 2006, there has been a sharp increase in the number of Saudi students in British education programmes, particularly in English for Academic Purposes (Ministry of Higher Education, Saudi Arabia, 2010). The role of the English for Academic Purposes programmes is, as mentioned above, to provide international students with the required level of English at university (see UKCGE, British Council, 1980; Nomnian, 2008; Krishnamurthy and Kosem 2007: 365).

In this thesis, a present situation analysis (PSA) will be presented focusing on the problems faced by students upon arrival in the UK, as, despite the success with English teaching in the Saudi curriculum, many Saudi students face difficulties when using their English abroad. As stated above, this is especially the case for those Saudi students who wish to study at postgraduate level in the UK, as they have often to join an EAP programme first. The purpose of these programmes is to identify the gaps in the students' English through the use of a present situation needs analysis on arrival, and to ensure that, on completion of the programme, the students are positioned so that, as postgraduate students, they are prepared for the demands of the target situation based on the target situation analysis (TSA). Thus, EAP courses teach English for university studies, as well as the academic skills required to perform well in an English speaking environment. As will become apparent during the course of this thesis, English ability is only part of the picture, with cultural issues also playing a large role in the experiences of Saudis studying abroad. Indeed, according to some researchers (Blue, 2000; Kaur, 2006; and Cheng, 2000), the cultural differences in higher education systems could have an effect on international students coming from different cultures who are studying in English-speaking countries.

1.3.1 Saudi Students Using English in the U.K.

Since the start of EAP, particularly in the United Kingdom and US, there have been many changes in terms of materials and methods. Hyland and Hamp-Lynos (2002) and Benesch (2001) claimed that this represents a raised awareness among the EAP teaching community of the need to conduct research into the needs of international students. The differences between the backgrounds of international students and the need for nation specific needs analyses must be very important elements of this

research, as most if not all EAP teachers are aware that the problems they face vary. It is hoped that an understanding of these needs will allow them to deliver their teaching goals in an effective way, and the drive behind this research is based on this belief. Indeed, by analysing the needs of Saudi students, this research will contribute to the database of research that has been conducted globally.

As is the case with many of their fellow international students, Saudi students are from a language and cultural background that is very different from that of the native English students. Both language proficiency and the ability to adapt to a new culture are vital for their successful completion of academic studies in the western setting (Edward and Ran, 2006). These elements contribute to the problem that needs to be addressed to prepare them adequately for study in the various university faculties. In addition to the problems they face, Saudi students are under considerable pressure, not only to succeed in tertiary study, but also to be proficient in English, in order that they can return home with an appropriate qualification and obtain a good job. As many researchers (Blue, 1991; Ferris and Tagg, 1996; Ferris, 1998; Park, 2006; Evans and Green, 2007; and Nomnian, 2008) suggest, English for Academic Purposes is of paramount importance for bridging the gap between English level and educational style on arrival and the level required for studying higher education in English-speaking countries.

In the academic vocabulary research literature, researchers such as Nation (2001) and Coxhead (2006) differentiate between general, academic, technical and low frequent vocabulary. In 2000, Coxhead wrote about the Academic Word List (AWL) which is the focus of this study. This Academic Word List (AWL), containing 570 words, is important because Casanave (1992) claims that acquiring the culture of a disciplinary community involves learning the community's specialised language. The Academic Word List (AWL) covers at least 8.5 percent of the commonly used words in a wide variety of academic texts (Nation and Ming-Tuz, 2004). The AWL was created from a corpus of 3,600,000 words which are called an academic corpus, from 28 subject areas equally distributed over the four disciplines of Commerce, Law, Sciences, and Arts, which are made up of word families.

Coxhead used a computer programme called RANGE in order to analyse the data. This programme had faced criticism by Nation and Ming-Tzu (2004) as it counts word forms with no consideration of the meanings of these forms. Despite this criticism and that of others, AWL, from the researcher's point of view, is the best list of vocabulary researched and the most recently up-dated list. Many researchers (e.g. Meara, 2004 and Lessard-Clouston, 2008) have suggested EAP teachers should use this (AWL) when teaching students EAP, partly because this will help their students to acquire the EAP qualification easily. Therefore, AWL can guide the selection of academic words, bearing in mind the limitation of time for learning and teaching EAP. On the other hand, Nation (2001) warns that the knowledge needed for the use of words in listening, writing, reading and speaking - for example, knowing a word to use it in writing - involves understanding and expressing meaning in a range of context, spelling, formalities, etc. (Coxhead, and Byrd, 2007).

Many EAP courses currently focus on language and study style, but this thesis will argue that cultural factors also need to be integrated, as there is no doubt that the differences between cultures can affect the ability of international students to cope. In some societies, e.g. Saudi society, gender roles are primarily dominated by males. Also, family pressure in an academic-oriented society such as that of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is different from that in the British education environment. The academic culture has an impact on international students when adjusting to life in an English speaking country (e.g. Bloor, 1995; Gajdzik, 2005; Park, 2006; Marigne and Carter, 2007). EAP courses are, in some measure, arenas in which these cultural differences can be mediated and adaptation taught.

1.3.2 Research into English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

The limitations in the research which has taken place in the United Kingdom to identify the problems faced by EAP students primarily relate to the lack of understanding of Saudi students, and this gap in the data will be filled in part by this thesis. One early study in the EAP context was conducted by Jordan and Mackay in 1973, and investigated the problems international students in general, at Manchester and Newcastle Universities, experienced with spoken English. The main findings of that study were that the students' biggest problems on arrival were, first,

understanding spoken English and, second, speaking English. Six months after arrival, writing was the biggest problem, because as the course progressed students were required to start producing it. It was apparent from this study that not all students have problems with writing, but we should recognise that this may well relate to the language learning culture and academic system from which they originate.

There have been several interesting surveys focusing on the views of teachers and the nature of the challenges international students face. One was conducted by Johns (1980), who questioned 100 EAP teachers from different countries. He asked them to rank five problems in order of importance. The results were: (1) low priority in timetabling; (2) lack of personal contact with subject teachers; (3) lower status/grade than subject teachers; (4) isolation from other teachers of English doing similar work; and (5) lack of respect from students. As can be seen, the lack of contact with subject teachers was second, showing that it was felt that there should be more contact between the subject teachers and the EAP teachers. In addition, as students respect their EAP teachers, this is indicative of their attitude towards learning EAP being relatively high as well as their motivation. Another survey, targeted at BALEAP members, was conducted by Jordan in 2000; he distributed a questionnaire among 73 EAP teachers from 32 universities. The respondents listed their greatest difficulties in rank order as follows: (1) aspects of teaching, 62%; (2) aspects of materials, 18%; (3) professional status, 15% and (4) co-operation with subject departments, 5%. The comments on 'professional status' refer to the lack of recognition and resources for EAP at some institutions. Also mentioned was a lack of job security and prospects for some of the teachers. Only 3% of respondents referred specifically to timetabling difficulties.

From the first survey discussed above, we can see that the lack of contact with subject teachers was a considerable problem; however, this was not the case with the second survey which shows that EAP teachers and subject teachers became aware of the necessity of collaborating with each other. Another notable result is that in 1980 EAP teachers found timetabling was a problem for them, while in 2000 timetabling was a lesser difficulty for EAP teachers. Jordan's survey would have been far more useful if he had included the students' respect for their teachers, because that would

have given us the opportunity to look at changes in attitude over the twenty years. Also, Johns' study could have more usefully included aspects of teaching and aspects of learning for the same reason as above. It is the aim of this thesis to make proposals along these lines (see chapters four and five). Moreover, Storch and Tapper conducted a study in 2009 in order to see the impact of an EAP course on one area, namely postgraduate writing. Their study involved 69 students from different backgrounds, although the majority were from China. They found that the course did not meet the students' needs in terms of writing, as they discovered that students have difficulties with three major issues: text structure, using academic vocabulary, and using accurate language. This study yielded positive results in terms of this survey, as it found that EAP type courses can have a positive impact on students' writing and that this impact is measurable in quantitative terms.

A recent study by James (2010) used semi-structured interviews with 52 students who were enrolled in several sections of a university EAP writing course and who were concurrently taking other academic courses in various disciplines. The interviews focused on students' perceptions of (a) instructors' support for learning transfer, (b) peers' support for learning transfer, and (c) personal outcomes resulting from learning transfer. He found that students were not happy with the activities that have been provided to them in the EAP course. The results also revealed that students complained about the limited resources because of the large number of students in the classroom. Others complained that they did not have time to practise or use what they learned in their studies. In addition, students expressed their anger that they had spent some time on lessons which were not related to their academic subject. In the study, James claimed that the main goal of EAP is to transfer knowledge about learning; however, he did not explain how this transfer could be achieved. He further suggested that there was a misunderstanding between transfer climate and actual learning transfer, although he did not include examples of these relations. In addition to these gaps, there was no questionnaire to provide more authority to his quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Thus, James' study, whilst informative, lacked the evidence gathering scope and therefore provides only general information.

Many of the recent studies have chosen to focus on one area of EAP or one group of learners, or both. This is mainly because of the sampling abilities of individual researches and is also the case with this study. Research into EAP has revealed that currently most international students, especially Asian students, who are studying in a native English speaking country have two major problems: language and adapting to a new academic culture (Park, 2006; Kaur, 2006; and Nomnian, 2008). The research conducted here will focus on Saudi students studying in the United Kingdom, but will aim for greater breadth and purpose than displayed in the studies outlined above, by combining the areas of EAP, study skills and relevant differences in academic culture, with the aim of providing strategic recommendations for future programmes of study.

1.4 Academic Environment in the U.K.

The increase in the number of international students choosing to study in the United Kingdom should not be seen to imply that international students do not have problems in adjusting to the United Kingdom higher education system while they strive to achieve their academic goals (United Kingdom for International Students Affairs, 2010). It has been suggested by Blue (2000), Marigne and Carter (2007) and James (2010) that in order for international students to become academically successful they have to accommodate themselves within their new academic environment. The researcher would agree with Mostafa (2006) that they have to work harder than native-speaking students because of the need to adjust to the different requirements of British institutions. It may be presumed that most international students, especially at graduate level, have developed most of their academic skills to the point where they can handle the new responsibilities of graduate degrees (Kaur, 2006). But the crucial question here is: are these skills adequate for a new academic environment, particularly in the United Kingdom? The answer to this is 'certainly not', because there is evidence from many studies that international students need further improvement to succeed in their academic studies. For example, the previously mentioned study conducted by Nomnian (2008) found that Asian students need to be more critical in their writing and this is almost certainly true of other nationalities.

There is an argument that adaptation by international students to the academic environment in the institutions of the United Kingdom has not been investigated as intensively as it has been in other countries, such as the US. It is the case, as claimed by Gajdzik (2005) and Huang (2010), that international students are often familiar with the academic expectations and environments of their home countries. When these students come to the United Kingdom, despite intensive preparation for some international students in their home or their host country to achieve their academic goals, they still find themselves insufficiently prepared, and face considerable challenges in adjusting to the educational system of the host country (Trice, 2007). It should be remembered that not only does the educational profile of students of specific nationalities differ, so does that of their host country. Recent studies on international students studying in the British education environment, for example, Kaur (2006), Edward and Ran (2006), Leonard and Morely (2008), Nomnian (2008), Marigne and Carter (2007) focused on the problems experienced by international students, mainly from language backgrounds other than English, and attempted to explain their difficulties. Most of these researchers agreed that international students faced two major language problems, EAP and academic culture, e.g. writing critically, etc.

Marigne and Carter (2007) suggested that one of the differences between British students and international students is that British students implicitly understand the underlying principles, values, language, and practices common in British higher education. Those standard procedures are not always explicitly communicated to incoming foreign scholars, as British students and teachers unconsciously share many assumptions and expectations about classroom conduct and everyday practice (Mostafa, 2006). For example, international students may lack the understanding to participate effectively in the classroom. They are often surprised that British tutors, lecturers, and professors expect students to ask critical questions and challenge their existing knowledge (Nomnian, 2008). International students who are used to a lecture method of delivery in the classroom often refrain from class discussion and comments because they are apprehensive that the professors, lecturers, and tutors will judge them or that they might give the wrong answer (Edward and Ran, 2006). This in turn often leads to a perception held by British professors, lecturers, or tutors that international students are uninterested or uncommitted.

Therefore the proposition outlined later in this thesis is that international students who are studying at British universities need to be given explicit instructions in several additional academic process areas in order to be successful in their academic studies. These include conducting independent research and assuming individual responsibility for academic progress (Marigne and Carter, 2007). Overall, a much greater amount of initiative and independence is required of students at a British university, compared with those at non-Western universities (Bernat, 2002). Often the informal nature of student-teacher interactions can be confusing and sometimes even troubling to international students who are used to the greater power distance in student-professor interactions which exists in their home countries (Benesch, 1999). British professors or lecturers sometimes ask their students to address them using their first names, and have a very open and friendly manner. One danger is that "this may falsely lead international students to believe that there are no boundaries when, in fact, there still exist clear status differences, although these are displayed in more subtle ways" (Gajdzik, 2005: 26). As observed by Flowerdew and Miller (1995), many of the key cultural differences that are observed in U.K. programmes of study represent a clash between Confucianism and Western values, especially in the area of interaction between students and staff. Their findings are shown in the following table:

Table 1.1: Confucian vs. Western

Confucian	Western
Respect of authority of lecturer	Lecturer valued as a guide and facilitator
Lecturer should not be questioned	Lecturer is open to challenge
Students motivated by family and pressure to excel	Students motivated by desire for individual development
Positive value placed on effacement and silence	Positive value placed on self expression in ideas
Emphasis on group orientation to learning	Emphasis on individual development and creativity

From studying the table above, it is clear that the Confucian roles outlined above or culture values are shared by many non-Western international students, e.g. Saudi students, not just those from China or South-East Asia. The present study will consider the differences of culture values held by Saudi students. Some of these points certainly represent a challenge to international students, e.g. working

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independently, relations with supervisors, participating in discussion and extended writing (Ballard and Clanchy, 1984). International students' problems are not new but as yet remain unclear to most researchers. It is intended that the data analysis chapters (chapters four and five) will further highlight these problems.

It is thus quite clear to researchers in the field that international students bring with them the expectations and rules of the educational system they are accustomed to in their home countries. Jordan (1997: 98) argued that academic culture consists of shared experiences and outlook with regard to the educational system, the subject or discipline, and the conventions. Therefore, learners would benefit if they learned all of these conventions in an EAP course, because that would help them to succeed in their academic study. Differences between the educational system of the United Kingdom and other education systems, however, may include aspects such as class attendance, classroom dynamics, class discussions, debates, quizzes, assignments, presentations, examinations, and student-instructor relationships (Edwars and Ran, 2006). Jordan (1997) claimed that, for students who are studying EAP in an English L1 situation, there might easily be a conflict between their customary learning style and that presumed or expected in the target situation. It is therefore difficult for both teachers and learners, because both need time to establish a relationship between them and to be familiar with each other's different cultural aspects of learning.

1.4.1 Critical Thinking

As is apparent from Table 1.1, a significant challenge for international students when studying in British higher education is critical thinking. In recent years, critical thinking has become a prominent area of discussion in language teaching. This especially affects the EAP language learning setting, where the goal of the instructor, as Evers (2007) states, is to ensure that learners will have acquired or learned all of the skills necessary to succeed in their university career. Difficulties can also arise with the efforts to introduce critical thinking into EAP courses, as critical thinking remains very difficult to define. Critical thinking in the Western context is associated with academic studies, and Cardew (2004) ascertains that critical thinking as a social practice is embedded in a particular academic context. It may be true that this is one of the factors that distinguish Western universities, especially British institutions,

from some universities in Asia. Furthermore, as Barnett (1997: 78) points out, "the modern concept of critical thinking derives from its anchorage in the disciplines, and each discipline's notion of critical thinking differs based on a set of objectives or criteria particular to that discipline".

According to Pally (2001), the definition of critical thinking for EAP can be divided into two sections: analytical thinking and critical thinking. Critical thinking includes noting the social, economic and political contexts of claims and support, questioning or challenging them, evaluating them, using one's understanding, synthesis, and questions as a basis for formulating ideas of one's own and presenting (orally and in writing) ideas/positions of one's own using appropriate rhetorical conventions, while analytical thinking involves understanding fully the claims or perspectives of texts and lectures, understanding the methods of proof used to support those claims/perspectives and synthesizing claims and support from a range of sources (Evers, 2007: 98).

However, Evers (2007: 31) criticised the teaching of critical thinking, saying it does not make sense to teach critical thinking as a general, explicit course across the academic community within a university, because learning will be minimal. It is difficult, nevertheless, to deny that most of the British universities provide a programme on their website, or even in-sessional classes to improve the students' level of criticality, although it is doubtless difficult to meet the needs of each individual. Critical thinking is a concept that professors and students alike believe is a fundamental defining feature of a Western university education (Evers, 2007). However, the fundamental question is: do these programmes meet the needs of the international students? One way of answering this question is to ask the students what they believe/think, which the discussion chapter aims to do (see chapter six).

It apparent that not only Saudi students, but many other international students, especially those from Asia, also encounter this problem. All the studies reviewed for this thesis, e.g. that of Jin and Cortazzi (1996), suggested that students find it hard to express their view in the required academic manner. According to Woodward-Kron (2002: 123), the concepts of critical analysis and critical thinking have been traditionally discussed in the disciplinary domains of the philosophy of education

and cognitive psychology. With the focus on cognitive processes, critical analysis and critical thinking are often framed as transferable skills and educational ideals. What is emphasised by many is the link between critical thinking and writing; it is, however, the experience of this researcher that this is wrong, because it is crucial to all language skills.

1.4.3 Classroom Interaction

The teacher-student relationship and interactions within the classroom pose challenges for Saudi students and with some international students, possibly avoiding discussing work or disagreeing with their teachers, assuming that their teachers are always right (Todd, 1997: 177 and Wisker, 2005; and Mostafa's , 2006) study found that Arab graduate students do not interact with their teachers at Canadian universities. Students assume that their role is merely to follow the instructions of their peers. This is not true in the western education system in general and in the British system in particular; indeed, Todd (1997) suggests native students frequently argue with their teachers' opinions at postgraduate level. Mostafa (2004: 108) asserted that the role of the supervisor is crucial in helping international students to interact more. He added that international students require a little more attention from their supervisors as they come from different backgrounds; however, many students are able to handle their meetings with their supervisors very well. Abukhattala (2004) indicated that not all of the participants in his survey had difficulties interacting with their supervisor; it was of more significance that they did not know how to be critical in their writing.

Gender is another factor that influences international students in their classroom behaviour, and this will be described in more detail in the discussion chapter (see chapter six). It has been claimed by Fletcher and Stern (1989) that international female students have always found it more difficult than males to adapt to a new environment in the US, while others, such as Trice (2007), see that gender is not a significant factor for international students. Trice's claim seems difficult to believe, as females in some cultures may have problems communicating with males. Another study conducted by Yang *et al.* (1994) in the US, which might support Trice's claim, found that Asian females were more likely to socialize with American males.

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Hoftsted (2005) maintains that there are differences in both genders in terms of expressing opinions. This implies that female students from some cultures could have difficulties with the discussion-based learning system in British higher education.

Gender plays a vital role in Islamic culture, not only in education but also in every aspect of life (Long, 2005). Saudi students come from a very conservative society where male students are segregated from female students. Female students in Saudi Arabia have a completely separate education; i.e. all the teachers and students are female (Al-Zaid, 2003). This helps them to feel comfortable about participating and interacting in their classrooms. Therefore, the classroom atmosphere in the western world is completely new to them, as both male and female students will study together. Some Muslim female students prefer to wear *hejab*, which sometimes is (Abukhattala, 2004: 123-126) misunderstood in the western world, since *hejab* can be seen as an obstacle to integration in society. This is a rather general judgment as most western academics are very well educated and presumably are aware of their students' cultural backgrounds.

1.4.4 Cultural Adjustment Anxiety

Some researchers, such as Li and Gasser (2005) and Selvadurai (1998) suggest that international students are required to adjust themselves to their new environment. In order for international students to achieve this, they have to become familiar with their new culture and try to accommodate themselves. According to Mostafa (2006:38), the cultural adjustment of international students depends on the similarities and differences between the student's culture and that of the host country. In the case of Saudi graduate students in British society, the experiences of these students will be acute because of the huge differences between Saudi Arabian and British cultures. This is to say that Saudi students, like Arab students elsewhere, live closely together and prefer to interact with people from their countries of origin, creating sub-cultural groups.

An initial barrier frequently encountered by international EAP students is the cultural aspect of learning which requires them to make an emotional adjustment. Park (2006: 47) emphasised that "the process of studying in a foreign country requires students to adjust to a different cultural context". Sensitivity in cultural issues is important in EAP because, as Dudley-Evans and St Johns (1998: 66) claim, "language reflects culture and culture can shape the language". For students, this often involves a need to adapt to different study patterns as an essential requirement for international students; e.g. Saudi university systems rarely include tutorial classes (which are typical of British and Western pedagogy), and when they do they are given almost no chance to participate or interact with their peers.

1.4.5. English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and Study Skills

Identification of the problems faced by students has always in EAP, to some extent, defined the parameters of an effective programme of study. Although later in this chapter and elsewhere in the thesis, we will argue that there is scope for improvement, this section details the crucial debate over the relevance of integrating study skills into EAP. A key area that will be addressed in the target situation analysis (TSA) relates to study skills issues, and the reason for this is heavily influenced by the literature reviewed below.

Robinson (1980: 7) and McDonough (1984: 4) use EAP and study skills synonymously and explain them in terms of studying through the medium of English, regardless of subject matter. Others, e.g. Hyland (2005), view study skills as components of EAP. Jordan (1989: 171) reported that "a questionnaire had been distributed to SELMOUS members asking whether EAP is a synonym for study skills. The results revealed that the majority of respondents, i.e. 27, disagreed, while only three agreed that it is a synonym of EAP". Study skills as seen by Jordan (1989: 171) are more explicit: "abilities, techniques and strategies which are used when reading, writing or listening for study purposes". On the one hand, Jordan (1993) claims that international students may already have study skills in their own language and simply need to transfer those skills to English. On the other hand, Robinson (1980: 25, 26) states that too often international students have not mastered adequate techniques for study in their own language, and so have no skills

to transfer to English; however, this opinion is debatable and it would be unwise to generalize for all international students. The study situation has been analyzed in some detail by Jordan (1997: 7-8). He has drawn up a list of study modes, as shown in Table 1.2 below:

Table 1.2: Study Skills and activities

No	Study situation/activity	Study skills
1	Lectures/talks	• Listening, understanding and note-taking • Asking questions for repetition, information
2	Seminars/tutorials/ discussions/supervision	• Listening and note-taking • Asking questions as above • Answering questions for explanations • Agreeing and disagreeing; stating point(s) of view; giving reasons and interpreting • Speaking with or without notes; giving paper/oral presentation; initiating comments,
3	Practical/ laboratory work/field work	• Understanding instructions: written and spoken, formal and informal. • Asking questions: requesting help • Recording results
4	Private study/reading (journals and books)	• Reading efficiently: comprehension and speed • Scanning and skimming: evaluating • Understanding and analyzing data, e.g. graphs • Note-making: arranging notes in hierarchy of importance. • Summarizing and paraphrasing
5	References material/ library use	• Using the contents/index pages • Using a dictionary efficiently, • Using library catalogues • Understanding classification systems • Finding information quickly • Collating information
6	Essays/reports/projects/ case studies/dissertation/thesis	• Planning, writing drafts, revising • Summarizing, paraphrasing and synthesizing • Using quotations, foot-notes • Finding and analyzing evidence; using it appropriately
7	Research (linked with 3-6 above)	In addition to 3-6 above • Conducting interviews • Designing questionnaires • Undertaking surveys

The above list of study skills has facilitated the researcher in the drawing of conclusions and the methodology for the present study in building a framework to pass on the necessary skills to Saudi Students. It should be noted here that the above skills are not specific to international students, but can also be applied to native

students, as many researchers, e.g. Robinson (1991), claim. This list of skills and activities assisted in the design of the majority of the questionnaire elements (see appendix 8). The major reason behind employing these skills is that other researchers such as Benson (1989), Blue (1999), Marigne and Carter (2007) and James (2010) have reached an agreement that these generally relate to what students are going to be doing in their target situation (see chapter two).

The studies that the researcher has referenced above, combined with comments from the experienced EAP tutors who were interviewed for this study, and the postgraduate students who were surveyed, confirm that international students experience difficulties with their studies on account of an inadequate background in those study skills most appropriate to their studies. This is particularly so when taking part in seminars, writing in appropriate academic style, note taking etc. (Benson, 1989; Blue, 2001; Park, 2006; and Nomnian, 2008), and is owing, for the most part, to their academic background.

1.4.6 Outline of British English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Courses

The term English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is thought to have first been used by the British Council in 1975, and in 1976, the British Council Teaching Division Inspectorate in London organized a training seminar on EAP for its English language teaching (ELT) staff; by 1977, the term EAP had extended to the United States of America (Jordan, 2002). EAP apparently emerged as a branch of ESP (English for Specific Purposes). It is concerned with those communication skills in English which are required for study purposes in the formal education system (ETIC, 1975). EAP is generally defined as teaching English with the aim of facilitating a learner's study, or research, using English (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001; Jordan, 1997; Hyland and Hamp-Lyons, 2002). EAP is taught through a variety of means, "which are a reflection of the number of ways instructors view the needs of their students, and therefore, how they choose to teach their class" (Evers, 2007: 6). The main aim of EAP is to satisfy a student's need for quick and economical use of the English language in pursuing a course of academic study (Coffey, 1984).

Coffey (1984) claimed that EAP has two divisions: common core or subject-specific. In 1988, Blue classified these two divisions into English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP), and English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP). The latter could be defined as the general skills which all international students need when they commence their academic study, while ESAP can be seen as the specific language for specific subjects; for example, English for Chemistry requires students to be familiar with the vocabulary and structure, etc., relating to Chemistry. EAP can be defined as the formal academic register and style that international and native speakers need to use in their academic studies, regardless of the discipline. Thus in terms of the research question, we can see that EAP can encompass elements to address all needs as identified in a present situation analysis and a target situation analysis. This support of students' specific needs has led to widespread agreement among researchers, authors and writers that EAP is a branch of ESP (Robinson, 1980; Blue, 1988; and Jordan, 1989).

Most British Universities provide an EAP course, and there are generally three distinct types of EAP course: a long EAP course which normally starts in October every year and lasts from 6-12 months, a pre-sessional course which would normally take place in the summer time and lasts five, ten or fifteen weeks in some institutions, and the third, an in-sessional course (Nomnian, 2008). For example, EAP programmes at Southampton University, which are similar to those of most of the other British universities that are accredited by BALEAP, are normally provided to international students; these qualify them for entrance to British tertiary postgraduate courses, and address their special needs. In addition, many British institutions offer other options alongside the EAP programme, including other types of EAP classes, such as Legal English, Business English and IELTS test preparation classes. EAP is a tertiary preparation programme that is specially designed to help students make a successful transition from their previous school environment to British tertiary institutions.

1.5 The Importance of the Study

The researcher has been involved in EFL teaching since 2004: as an EFL teacher in a secondary level school and as an ESP teacher at the Institute of Medical Studies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, before becoming a tutor of EAP at the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom. Therefore the researcher is aware, from personal experience as a Saudi student studying abroad, of the complaints expressed by Saudi students studying in the United Kingdom and by EAP teachers of the low levels of students' language proficiency. In an attempt to resolve areas of conflict and improve the experiences of Saudi students and their teachers, whilst adequately preparing them for postgraduate study, this research will seek to provide a comprehensive and exhaustive analysis of the needs of the students both on arrival and in their Masters and PhD studies. The complaints are often concerned with the lack of information provided to the EAP teachers about the background of the Saudi students and the absence of an EAP programme which would prepare them in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In an interview with an Al-Riyadh newspaper, the Saudi Cultural attaché in London, Professor Gazy Makky, said:

"I have been an advocate to this [language course in order to prepare the student before coming to the [United Kingdom] not only for two months but for at least six months, until the students reach the level which is required by the university by doing one of the major international exams, e.g. IELTS or TOEFL, because most of the scholarship holders - when they arrive at their destination of study - start from the beginning. Therefore, because of this, they can learn the language back home, which will save them time and money; this could be given to other students to study abroad and commence his/her study level. In fact, there are some students who have studied English here for two years, but they could not achieve the language level required by the universities because they came here [United Kingdom] without a basic level which could lead them to success".

This quotation highlights the fact that there is currently a debate surrounding the issue of how to prepare Saudi students before they come to the UK. It is necessary that an adequate EAP programme be developed in order to improve the students' proficiency of English and academic performance, fully considering their cultural differences. All the factors mentioned above provided the momentum behind the present research.

By reviewing the literature, it appears that no studies have been identified that deal specifically with Saudi students; they are usually included with other international students (e.g. Benson, 1989, and Blue, 1999). One major reason behind the absence of any investigation into the language needs of Saudi students and their adaptation to the British academic culture is that there were previously far fewer of them studying in the United Kingdom. It would not be surprising if Saudi students face the same difficulties as other international students, but it would surely be more beneficial if a study could be conducted for each nationality. In addition, this is not to say that Saudi students are different from students of other nationalities, but presumably they have specific needs which will vary, partly, as Macaro (2001) asserts, since learning style and cultural norms play an important part in the learners' engagement and researchers in the field of ESP have realized the importance of identifying the students' learning strategies and style. For example, Griva and Tsakiridou (2006) carried out their study of 301 university students in order to identify the range and types of learning strategies employed by the students while reading, listening, writing, and speaking for academic purposes. They claim that knowledge about the learners' preferences is necessary for teaching a specific text. In addition, they found that students use some cognitive strategies less frequently and often select those that are inappropriate, either for a particular type of text or for a certain task. Thus this study will help EAP teachers who are not familiar with Saudi culture to interact with Saudi students more effectively inside the EAP classroom, as it has been argued that cultural norms could affect the students' engagement inside the classroom. Furthermore, this study will raise the EAP teachers' awareness of Saudi students' preferences inside the classroom, to enable them to facilitate meaningful and enjoyable learning. Data will be collected by interviewing the Saudi students and observing them in the EAP classroom.

The gap that this study fills was identified when an investigation of Saudi literature revealed that no major study has been conducted recently on the language needs of Saudi students and the impact of cultural variations on them in British postgraduate programmes, nor had any proposal to solve the current problems been produced. Although internationally there are some studies concerning the language needs of international students and the impact on their culture (e.g. Benson, 1989; Evans, 1998), none of these studies focus on Saudi students in particular. It is true that there

are similarities amongst students from Arab cultures, but there are differences as well. For example, education systems differ from one country to another, e.g. mixed gender in schools (Griffin, 2006; Brock and Levers, 2007). Therefore this research will be valuable to educational planners in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as well as in the United Kingdom. It will help them to understand Saudi students' language needs and cultural difficulties, and to plan adequate preparation for those students to enter the British higher education system. From the above needs analysis, it will be possible to offer an overview of the exact needs of Saudi students. The importance of conducting a thorough 'needs analysis' (NA) has made a significant impression on ESP researchers, and more recently on those in the area of EAP, and this will be the focus of the next chapter.

The primary goal of this research therefore is to evolve a method through which the needs of Saudi students may be investigated in order to solve any problems that they may encounter with English for Academic Purposes, including the cultural differences when they study at tertiary level in the British academic context, to ensure that courses in English for Academic Purposes can be enhanced and that appropriate strategies can be employed in the future. As discussed above, the fact that students of all nationalities experience problems studying at tertiary level in a language other than their own is well documented (e.g. Gajdzik, 2005; Park, 2006; Kaur, 2006; and Nomnian, 2008) and there have been broader attempts to assess how to deal with this, yet none have focused specifically on Saudi students. Considering that Saudi students in the last three years have become important clients for many British further education programmes, there is a strong argument for identifying a strategy for reducing the stress on this particular group from within the context of EAP programmes.

1.6 Objectives and Method

The main aim of the present study is to investigate in depth the language needs of, and the impact of cultural variations on, Saudi students in British postgraduate programmes, in particular those who are currently studying for the postgraduate programmes at Southampton University. The key challenges faced by Saudi students learning English for Academic Purposes in the United Kingdom and the Saudi

environment are also identified and discussed in detail, as are the potential strategies that may be used to overcome such problems. Underlying this investigation is the knowledge that Saudi students continue to experience difficulties in these areas in British academic programmes, and yet, to date, there is no clear understanding as to why this is so. Thus the findings of this research taken from the sample of Saudi students will be useful, as they will contribute beneficial results which could assist both future international students when studying English for Academic Purposes, and those institutions in the United Kingdom who teach them. Moreover, this study has both theoretical and practical aims: theoretically, it examines how English language teaching and student preparation courses can best be suited to the present and future academic needs of students; practically, it suggests the future direction for the teaching of EAP for Saudi students.

Teaching is certainly one field in education that is changing; therefore, teachers of English for Academic Purposes must investigate the needs of their students in order to improve the quality of their teaching in the classroom. According to the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia, English is taught as a foreign language in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where it is the only foreign language taught in primary, intermediate, and secondary schools; in spite of this, many studies have shown that the level of English of most of the graduates from the secondary schools who have joined a university in which English is the medium of instruction in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is very low (e.g. Al-Oadi, 2000; Rabab'ah, 2003; Al-Sudais, 2004; Al-Mashary, 2006). If there are problems with this in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, then those students who intend to study for postgraduate degrees in the United Kingdom are also likely to face problems. This is where the teaching discipline, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), becomes relevant.

Those who teach on academic English courses share the same goals as the researcher of this thesis, as can be seen on many of the websites advertising such programmes. Indeed, the currently stated aims of Southampton's EAP courses are: to help students develop the English Language skills they will need to follow a degree course or undertake research; to help students develop the necessary cultural and study skills for effective learning through the medium of English; to introduce students to study; to provide a period of acclimatisation to life in Britain and to British culture before

the commencement of their academic studies at Southampton (adapted from: http://www.soton.ac.uk/cls/english/presess.html accessed 12/05/2010). Despite these common aims, the mixed nationalities of student groups in the United Kingdom and the lack of understanding about the challenges students will face in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia mean that teachers on these courses have a very limited knowledge of the language needs and the relevance of the educational background of Saudi students. This is why this researcher believes that this study is such an important step in making this kind of information available to course designers to enhance course design. The fact that EAP teachers lack information about the language needs of their students will be addressed by the present study, which is an attempt to design a feasible and effective programme of study for those Saudi students who are planning to study in the United Kingdom, and to help the EAP teachers to improve the quality of their teaching in the classroom on the basis of research into the needs of the students. The scheme must, therefore, be based on the real language needs of the students; how these will be determined is outlined in the next section.

Therefore, as well as concentrating on language, this thesis will be unique in introducing a framework for a cultural element to be introduced into preparatory courses. This element is to be devised based on a Present Situation Analysis (PSA) and Target Situation Analysis (TSA) needs analysis, an outline of which appears in the following section. The study took place in the UK and involved 84 participants. 62 participants were enrolled as postgraduate students and had previously studied on EAP courses at Southampton University; 28 of these were studying for Masters degrees and 34 were studying for their PhD at that time. The majority of the questionnaire participants were male, and 8 of those also participated as interview subjects. Only 6 of these students, three male and female, were enrolled on the EAP programme when they took part in the interview. In addition to the students, 8 EAP teachers at Southampton University (6 female and 2 male), were also interviewed. These teachers had been involved in teaching Saudi students for at least 3 years. All the interviews were conducted by the researcher himself. There were some cultural difficulties when interviewing female students, but the researcher overcame these by interviewing them in a public space (see chapters three and four for more details). The study focuses on two analytical contexts: study within the English for Academic Studies programme (EAP) which required a present situation analysis; this focused

on the Saudi students' situation when studying EAP in the UK and provided some background information about how they learnt English. A second context was analysed and this was within the academic departments (e.g. Education, Management, Social Sciences, Health, Chemistry, Physics, Oceanography, and Mathematics) and required a target situation analysis focusing on requirements of the programmes for Masters and PhD study. These analyses focus on the teachers and students in terms of their understanding of the purpose of the EASP and the language, strategic and cultural needs of learners for their academic studies. It also explored the learner satisfaction with the language course in the context of the purpose, objectives, and language needs of EAP. The satisfaction and dissatisfaction of teachers and students with the EAP relating to areas such as content, teaching material organisation and methodology were also examined.

1.6.1 Research Aims and Questions: Present Situation Analysis (PSA) and Target Situation Analysis (TSA)

As explained above, the main areas to be highlighted by this thesis are the language needs of Saudi students and the impact of cultural variations on them in British postgraduate programmes in order to find the best strategies to prepare them before entering the British higher education programme. These deductions were based on the situation exemplified at Southampton University according to the following research questions, which have been set for the study:

RQ1. What is the present situation of Saudi students intending to enter a postgraduate programme at British Universities, concerning language and culture? This will be answered with regard to:

- Language skills
- Academic skills
- Contrasting teaching methodology
- Student/teacher/peer interaction and participation
- Course duration

RQ2. What is the target situation of Saudi students attending a postgraduate programme at British Universities concerning language and culture? This will be answered with regard to:

- Language skills
- Academic skills
- Contrasting teaching methodology
- Student/teacher/peer interaction and participation
- Research skills
- Critical thinking

RQ3. How can Saudi students best be prepared for a British postgraduate programme of study?

The frameworks for the above questions and analyses are largely based on Hutchinson and Water's proposals (1987) regarding effective target situation analysis, which are discussed in depth in Chapter 2.

1.6.2 Outcomes of the Present Study

It is anticipated that this research provides a significant overview of the current English for Academic Purposes courses followed by Saudi students, and the reason(s) for their difficulties in adjusting to using English for Academic Purposes. It is intended that the research identifies the students' needs and the reasons underlying the range of difficulties Saudi students encounter while they are attending English for Academic Purposes programmes. The implications for the Saudi students were addressed, and appropriate teaching and learning strategies have been proposed, based on the results of the mixed method, focusing not only on British tertiary institutions, but also on the teaching and learning of English for Academic Purposes in Saudi Arabia. Policymakers and teachers will be made more aware of the academic demands on the Saudi students. The research findings will also help Saudi English teachers who want to investigate the best methods of teaching EAP and the ways in which Saudi students learn EAP in order to enhance their ability to cope with the problems they will meet, to improve the EAP teaching practices and pedagogy.

In relation to British tertiary academic programmes, the results obtained from this research highlight the need for cross-cultural understanding about the perspectives of the higher education systems of Britain and Saudi Arabia. It provides an impetus for the British tertiary education industry to further enhance academic support services for Saudi students and all international students who study EAP. It is the aim of this study that it should contribute to the current research in the field and also provide useful practical information with regard to the following:

- Guidance for policymakers in both countries of Saudi students' needs (see 7.3.1).
- Guidance for teachers to consider when teaching Saudi students (see 7.3.2).
- Guidance for Saudi students who are studying EAP to learn more effectively (see 7.3.3).

1.7 Chapter Outline

Chapter One: Introduction: This includes a brief outline of the theoretical and situational background to the study; the main aims of the research; the purpose of the research questions; identification of the sample group; a historical profile about English teaching and education in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; an introduction to current EAP practice and debate within the context of the thesis through a literature review; and finally an outline detailing the purpose, structure and content of the thesis.

Chapter Two: This is the literature review and outlines the literature most relevant to the questions posed in the research, presenting the reader with a comprehensive overview of the theory of Needs Analysis (NA), its divisions and the possible gaps. It also introduces the cultural analysis framework (CALA) that will be used in the data analysis to provide the most unique elements of this research.

Chapter Three: This describes the research methodology and design of the study. It presents the framework, the method of sample selection, data collection techniques,

(qualitative and quantitative to complement and supplement each other), and describes the system used for data analysis.

***Chapter Four*:** This chapter provides the data analysis to answer RQ1 and partly RQ3, focusing on the Present Situation Analysis (PSA), including both the language and cultural needs. It also identifies the participants and their background as students who have learned English in Saudi Arabia.

***Chapter Five*:** This chapter provides the data analysis to answer RQ2 and partly RQ3, focusing on Target Situation Analysis (TSA), which includes both language and cultural needs. This chapter contrasts the two education systems to highlight the cultural learning elements, and then discusses how students currently adjust to the system over time, and the factors which help them with this.

***Chapter Six*:** This discusses the data analysis and the implications for EAP courses. This chapter is divided into three main sections: to answer the research questions and present needs analysis, target needs analysis, and determine the necessary approach to best prepare Saudi students for entering the British higher education system.

***Chapter Seven Conclusion*:** This concludes the thesis, with a summary of the study, key recommendations based on the data and a brief discussion of the study and its limitations and recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two: Needs Analysis

2.1 Introduction

The key to understanding the relevance and importance of the data collected for this study is a thorough appreciation of the role of Needs Analysis (NA) in the classroom. Needs Analysis is a dynamic and multi-dimensional tool, the methodology for which has been extensively documented in previous research; some examples are: Chambers (1980) published in the Journal of English for Specific Purposes, ESP books such as those of Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), EAP works, e.g. Hyland (2005), and empirical research, for example, that of Al-Husseini (2004). The literature has been developed over the decades since its emergence in the 1960s, and the scope and approaches to it have also evolved. The purpose of this chapter is to develop a theoretical framework for needs analysis based on a best practice, deduced from previous research, and then to detail the procedure that will be employed in this study. The framework for this procedure is constructed by reviewing and highlighting the development of needs analysis through literature on TESOL, ESP, and EAP. The chapter will be divided as follows: 3.2 provides a background to NA; 3.3 reveals the importance of NA; 3.4 defines NA; 3.5 details approaches to NA including target situation analysis (TSA), present situation analysis (PSA), lacks and strategy analysis (SA).

2.2 History of Needs Analysis

The term 'needs analysis' was first applied to language learning in India in the 1920s (West, 1994: 5), but it became prominent as a topic for discussion during the 1960s and 1970s. This supports the assertion of the majority of writers and researchers in the field (Stuart and Lee, 1972; Jordan and Mackay, 1973; Munby, 1978; Mackay, 1978; Richterich, 1979; Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Tarone and Yule, 1989; Robinson, 1991; West, 1994, 1997; Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998; Tajino *et al.,* 2005 Cowling, 2007), who consider the 1960s to be the era which represents the emergence of needs analysis. Since that date, needs analysis has evolved quickly. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) assert that one difference between now and the 1960s lies in what we understand by the concept of needs and needs analysis. According to Cowling (2007: 2), needs analysis at that time focused mainly on

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course design. A practical example of that is the start of SELMOUS, as we have seen in the previous chapter.

According to West (1994: 1-2), needs analysis has gone through four stages. The first stage was in the early 1970s, when needs analysis focused on ESP, especially English for Occupational Purposes. At this stage, Jordan and Mackay (1973) and Stuart and Lee (1972) focused on target situation analysis. In the second stage, Richterich (1979), Mackay (1978) Pilbeam (1979) and Allwright and Allwright (1977) moved into needs analysis in EAP; in this later stage, needs analysis was also concerned with target situation analysis. In the third stage, from the early 1980s, the scope of needs analysis broadened to include target situation analysis, deficiency analysis, strategy analysis, means analysis and language audits (see Allwright, 1982; Holliday and Cooke, 1982; Tarone and Yule, 1989). In the fourth stage, Jones (1991) and Nelson (1992) emphasised that needs analysis should be the centre of attention in integrated/computer-based analysis and the material section; this was the case in the last decade of the 20th century. It is possible to discern a fifth stage which occurred in the early 21st century, when there was a significant change in terms of needs analysis. For example, Benesch (2001) moved further and designed and constructed 'right needs analysis', which she later replaced with 'critical needs analysis' (see, 3.5.5).

Needs analysis has always been associated with English for specific purposes, although that is not to say that needs analysis would not be useful for general English, or that some teachers do not use it in this way. Seedhouse (1995), for example, outlines a procedure of needs analysis which enables the researcher to improve the language teaching curriculum in a general English classroom. However, according to Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 53), needs analysis initially arose mainly in the field of ESP. Nevertheless, they argue that, as far as needs analysis is concerned, there should not be any difference between ESP and general English (GE). They state that: "it is often argued that the needs of the general English learner, for example the schoolchild, are not specifiable". This is the weakest of all arguments, because it is always possible to specify needs; even if it is only the need to pass an exam at the end of the school year there is always an identifiable need of some sort. It can be said that what distinguishes ESP from General English is not the

existence of a need as such but rather an obvious awareness of that need. Consequently, it seems plausible to argue that any course should be based on an NA of the learners, as this is how the procedures of ESP can be tailored so as to be beneficial to general English.

Very few books have been devoted solely to needs analysis since that of Munby (1978). One notable exception is that of Long (2005). One advantage of Long's edited book is that it explains the rationale behind conducting a needs analysis. This book focuses not only on the academic sector, but also on both public and vocational sectors. Another advantage of Long's book is that most of the authors in this book deal with the methodology that they have used to conduct their research, and in some cases they have presented very useful findings from their research. However, in the 21st century, it is difficult to deny that needs analysis is a rich area of research. A large number of ESP/EAP books do, however, include chapters about needs analysis (see, e.g. Robinson, 1980, 1991; Hutchinson and Waters 1987; Jordan, 1997; Howard and Brown, 1997; Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998; Carter and Nunan, 2001; Nunan, 1988). These books focus mainly on needs analysis in the ESP context in general rather than EAP in particular. Besides, in terms of research, there have been many doctorate research studies around the world, particularly in the United Kingdom, about needs analysis in the Saudi context in particular and in other contexts (see Al-Otibi, 1994 and Al-Saudis 2004). One of the limitations of these two works in the Saudi context was that they focused on ESP for military purposes. The studies of Al-Otibi (1994) and Al-Sudais (2004) would be more useful if they had included EAP and explained it in detail.

In addition, from a review of both ESP and EAP journals and other specialist journals, and through reading the literature, it is clear that over the last two decades needs analysis has been discussed in depth from many perspectives, e.g. present situation needs analysis, target situation analysis, etc. However, according to Robinson, the matter of learners' needs analysis is a tricky business (Robinson, 1980: 27), because, as teachers, researchers and material developers, and course designers, we should be aware of the actual learners' needs: not what we think they should be, but of skills or areas about which they are unaware.

Since needs analysis was first developed, all types of needs analysis have frequently been used by scholars; these include target situation, and present situation - not only in EAP but in all branches of ESP. It should be emphasized that there are many more areas which still need to be investigated in greater depth. One of these, as Jordan (1997) claims, is the cross-cultural difference needs of international students studying in other countries such as the United Kingdom. Although the present study focuses on EAP only, that does not mean cross-culture communication is not important in ESP. In the EAP context, it has been observed by Benesch (2001), Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), Ferris and Tagg (1996), Hyland (2005) and Jordan (1997) that academic culture is an area which has had the least attention paid to it among other studies researched by practitioners of ESP in general and those of EAP in particular.

It is important to note that needs analysis has always been associated with course design, and this trend has continued in recent decades with researchers such as Al-Husseini (2004: 88), Al-Sudais, 2004 and Benesch (2001). Cowling (2007: 5) asserted that the role of needs analysis in course design may be in conflict with the learners' expectations of how English language courses should be developed. Recently, Hyland (2005) moved to contend that, in the 21st century, needs analysis should be associated with teaching methods, because international students usually come from diverse backgrounds and education systems which are different from the British education system. Thus, this study will explore the Saudi learners' expectations of how English for Academic Purposes should be taught, and the best strategy that should be used in order for them to be taught effectively.

We have seen that needs analysis is not new, but has been an established part of language teaching for almost five decades. As has been highlighted, needs analysis has gone through four stages. It should be noted that the generality of much of the published research on this issue is problematic. It is believed by West (1994), however, that needs analysis is an important factor which often differentiates ESP from general English. In addition, many scholars distinguish needs analysis as always having been conducted for English for Specific Purposes (Al-Sudais, 2004; Kim, 2006; Taillefer, 2006; Cowling, 2007). Therefore, it can be said that needs analysis is an important part of EAP. The possible success or failure of English for

Academic Purposes (EAP) courses and teaching could depend on the way needs analysis is conducted, as we shall see in the following section. What should be noted here is that needs analysis and needs assessment usually have the same meaning. However, this study is specifically described as a needs analysis, as it is a more widely accepted term than needs assessment.

2.3 The Importance of Needs Analysis

Hamp-Lyons (2001: 126-131) asserts that EAP is a branch of applied linguistics consisting of a significant body of research into effective teaching and that needs analysis is fundamental to EAP. Needs analysis can be a vital element in enabling EAP teachers to uncover their learners' key requirements and determine the areas in which they are lacking skills. There have been major debates among scholars of needs analysis regarding the main focus of needs analysis. For example, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) explain learning needs as what the learner needs to do in order to learn, while Benesch (2001: 72) perceived that needs were associated strictly with target situation demands. Al-Otibi (1994: 62) emphasised that learners' needs should not be seen as the sole factor. The empirical evidence shows that a successful teaching and learning process in EAP relies on needs analysis, as some researchers have claimed (Taillefer, 2007; Cowling, 2007).

In addition, Al-Khatib (2005: 14) indicated that needs analysis will help the EAP teachers to find the best ways to motivate learners, to identify which activity they prefer, to find which skills are important and to accommodate them with the best course. Meanwhile, most ESP and EAP studies, such as those of Flowerdew and Peacock (2001: 178), Jordan (1997) and Robinson (1991), believed that needs analysis is the essential point of departure for teaching and learning in English for Academic Purposes. With its concern to 'fine tune' the teaching to the specific needs of the learners, needs analysis will be a precursor to subsequent interest in "learner centeredness." To put this more simply, Flowerdew and Peacock (2001: 178) explained that needs analysis in EAP will help teachers of EAP to recognise their learners' needs. One of the limitations of this explanation is that does not make clear how needs analysis could be conducted and by whom.

It should be emphasised here that needs analysis is an ongoing process; it could be pre-course, mid- course or even after the course. It should also be remembered that the EAP classroom will include students from different educational and cultural backgrounds and with different levels of language proficiency. With this in mind, needs analysis will help EAP teachers to use a wider range of activities according to their learners' learning needs, and to choose appropriate materials to cater to their students' needs. As students will be part of the teaching process, EAP teachers should inform them all of the goals of the course and of each lesson, which may be done via needs analysis (Nunan, 1988). Naturally, it would be better if the students, as Robinson (1991) suggested, become involved in choosing the teaching materials, because they are arguably the most important stakeholders of the whole process.

It has been suggested by Harmer (2005) that the link between teaching and needs analysis in order to develop the learners' language effectively is quite clear, because needs analysis will explore the exact needs of the learners and help the teacher to meet these needs. For example, a hypothetical needs analysis has revealed that one of the competencies needed by international students is the ability to write academically to express their views effectively (Horowitz, 1986 and Johns, 1991). Needs analysis in this case will help the teacher of EAP to choose a topic that will interest learners from different disciplines; this is acknowledged by Flowerdew and Peacock (2001: 181).

It would be helpful if teachers know about their learners' backgrounds: for example, the learners' expectations about a course, and what they want from it. Have the learners studied a similar course before? If so, for how long, what have they achieved so far and, more important, what is the main reason for attending this course? According to many researchers, such as Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), this will allow us as teachers of EAP to assess the next stage. Also, the best way of effecting language learning skills should be identified; this is also called learning needs.

We have seen from the above that researchers, writers and scholars of needs analysis believe that it will offer EAP teachers information and guidance about how to proceed and what to emphasise. Furthermore, it will provide useful guidelines for the

learners to learn effectively. Needs analysis will help the learners to adapt to the new learning system when their teachers recognise their needs of the learning process (Braine, 2001; Carkin, 2005 and Chamot, 2007). One obvious benefit from needs analysis is that, by identifying the learners in general and in this case Saudi learners in particular, needs analysis will identify the weaknesses and strengths of the skills that the students use in academic environments; e.g. reading, listening, writing and speaking are important. Needs analysis can be seen as an entirely pragmatic and objective endeavour to help teachers of EAP identify the best methods of teaching that are truly relevant to their learners.

Thus, the present study is concerned about language, mainly English for Academic Purposes. Consequently, needs analysis here would be, as Richards *et al.* (1992: 242 - 243) state, the process of determining the needs for which a learner or group of learners requires a language, and arranging the needs according to priorities. In doing this, they illustrate how needs analysts gather subjective and objective information about the learner in order to discover the objectives for which the language is needed, the situation in which the language will be used, with whom the language will be used, and the level of proficiency required, etc. Nunan (1988: 13) argues that needs analysis focuses more on the information-gathering process; he states that "techniques and procedures for collecting information to be used in syllabus design are referred to as needs analysis".

2.4 Toward a Definition of Needs Analysis

Munby (1987), West (1994, 1997), Robinson (1980, 1991), Hutchinson and Waters (1987), Jordan (1997), Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) all played a role in developing present day needs analysis, and, before moving on to look in more detail at the research practices and analytical approaches which have developed out of this work, it is appropriate to highlight some contemporary definitions of NA. It is difficult to find a rigorous definition of needs analysis on which ESP/EAP researchers have reached agreement. This is partially explained by the problem posed by the combination of two essentially subjective terms: "need" and "analysis". A "need" can refer to a basic physical requirement, i.e. survival, or to something more ethereal, such as a requirement for spiritual or mental well being. "Analysis" is

the way in which these needs can be quantified, so as to suggest appropriate action for a useful purpose. In terms of EAP, this study focuses on how to best meet students' communication needs in terms of both language and culture and then aim to analyse precisely what they are and how they have arisen.

The needs of English for Specific Purposes/English for Academic Purposes have not previously been identified accurately or definitively, as most researchers provide definitions in order to suit their situations. This is a point supported by Richterich (1983: 2): "the very concept of language needs has never been clearly defined and remains at best ambiguous". According to Richterich and Chancerel (1987: 9), needs are not fully developed facts. They claim that identifying them as such would require gathering certain amounts of information concerned with a certain situation and then translating that information into a precise expression. Needs as described by Hyland (2005: 73) are "actually an umbrella term that embraces many aspects, incorporating learners' goals and backgrounds, their language proficiencies, their reasons for taking the course, their teaching and learning preferences, and the situations they will need to communicate in." It is this categorisation of needs that has led to the clearest explanations and guidance for how needs analysis might be conducted.

By dividing needs into a plethora of potential requirements, Trim (1980: 63) cited by Al-Sudais (2004), suggests that the identification of objectives can embrace the whole cluster of techniques and lead to an understanding of the parameters of the learning situation: fellow learners, teachers, administrators, course-writers, producers, social agencies, career expectations and job satisfaction, social-dynamics, learner–type and resources analysis, etc. are relevant factors in addition to the original predicted communicative behaviour. According to Trim, needs can be described as objective and subjective, target situation and learning, process-oriented and product-oriented. Moreover, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) define needs as necessities, wants and lacks; these will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. In addition to that, Brindley (1989: 56) defined needs as "the gap between what the learners' actual needs are and what should be taught to them". Therefore, it can be said that needs are what learners will be required to do with a foreign language in a

target situation, and how learners might best master the target language during the period of training (West, 1994: 1).

Al-Otibi (1994) sees needs analysis essentially as the analysis of communicative tasks, that is, what the learners need to do with the target language, while Uzpaliene and Kavaliauskiene (2003: 35) go further by describing needs analysis as the process guiding the selection of course materials teaching/learning a course, and evaluation. To explain this further, Jordan (1997) describes needs analysis as a tool used to help to prevent the bias that may be caused by imported teaching methods that may clash with the features of the language context. Also, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 122) define needs analysis as the corner stone of ESP; this leads to a much more focused course.

All the previously mentioned definitions support the claim that needs analysis is employed when English for Academic Purposes learners encounter a problem in learning a specific language. In terms of needs analysis in EAP, Benesch (2001: 100) proposes an approach to needs analysis consisting of gathering data about the target situation as the basis for designing EAP courses. In support of this, Robinson (1991: 9) defines needs analysis as a combination of target situation analysis and present situation analysis (see below for details). Finally, the term 'needs analysis', according to Hyland (2005: 73), refers to the techniques for collecting and assessing information relevant to course design: it is the means of establishing the *how* and *what* of a course. The contradictions and similarities in the above definitions can be confusing for course designers and researchers; this is acknowledged by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 122) who claim that the definition of needs analysis within ESP has broadened (altered) with experience and research. Therefore, the definition of needs analysis for the purpose of this study is: the process of determining aspects of language proficiency and cultural awareness that learners will be required to demonstrate in the new context for which they are preparing.

2.5 Approaches to Needs Analysis

Although there are various approaches to needs analysis, just as there are many researchers in the field, the most common approaches include deficiency analysis, means analysis, language audits, target situation analysis (TSA), present situation analysis (PSA) and strategy analysis (SA). For the purposes of this literature review, all types of needs analysis will be described below, in part to explain why they are not relevant for the study in question. It is also important to recognise that, whilst the approaches discussed may not be directly employed in the methodology of the study, the considerations and proposals outlined by those who endorse them will be considered, and where relevant incorporated in the data collection tools that seek to identify the needs of the specific group of students surveyed for the purposes of this research.

2.5.1 Means Analysis

Means analysis is also seen as an ecological approach, and first appeared in the late 1970s and early 1980s (see Allwright and Allwright, 1977). This approach concerns everything that happens in the classroom; Chamberlain and Flanagan (1978) claim that the main aim of using this approach is to help course designers to design their courses. Blue (2000:78) concurred with this, saying that means analysis is more to do with practicality and the constraints of implementing a needs-based language course. To illustrate this, all the students would have to be available for certain periods of time to teach them the course, because it would not be practical if the course time were not suitable for all learners. Therefore, course organisers have to be careful with the timing of the class. Normally this type of needs is conducted with a certain group with a specific course aim. For instance, if a group of students from the ARAMOCO Company want to improve their English business and approach the University of Southampton, then the people who are going to deliver the course for them should take into the account the practicalities involved in delivering the course.

Means analysis, as Holliday and Cooke (1982:134) claim, assesses the capability of the local institution in taking the innovation required by the project in the question, and the means for implementing such an innovation. It can be said that means analysis aims to evaluate the organizations' classes, teaching quality, materials etc.

Although learning environments differ from one institution to another, means analysis can be used to ensure that the equality of the learning space is appropriate to the students. This type of needs analysis is concerned with the teaching environment. West (1997:71) argued that means analysis is related to the place in which the courses are conducted. He encompasses four main areas:

a) classroom culture/learners' factors
b) staff profile /teachers' profiles
c) status of language teaching/institutional profiles
d) change agents/change management

The importance of the above to this study relates to the need for researchers to reach a determination regarding what is and is not possible within British educational culture and tradition, and what would best suit Saudi students studying EAP. In addition, it is apparent that teachers' profiles are vital to the students for improving their level of proficiency. To illustrate this, it is widely believed that teachers with higher qualifications and more experience of teaching are strongly recommended in order to teach English for Academic Purposes. The kind of resource allocations available for the students should also be taken into account.

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) suggested that these factors are not oriented in a negative way but are relevant features. In addition, means analysis is an acknowledgement that what works well in one situation may not work well in another (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998: 124). For instance, banking staff around the world may share some similar language needs concerning how they learn the language, but the conditions in which they are learning and where and how they apply the language are not the same. Thus their needs, how they are prioritised, ordered and then met will necessarily be different. Researchers in ESP/EAP recognise the importance of investigating learners' present needs by measuring different variables, such as the selection of materials, and identification of appropriate teaching and learning activities.

A major drawback of the means analysis approach is that it is designed to collect sensitive cultural data in order to highlight in-depth issues such as educational

culture (Al-Hussein, 2004:59). In addition, Holliday (1994: 411) suggested that means analysis is an "ongoing survey of the cultural, socio-political, logistical, administrative, psycho-pedagogic, and methodological features of the host educational environment as it changes in time before and during the process of innovation". Therefore, it would not be practical for this study to use this approach as it has been already discussed within the issues of cultural difference as described in the previous chapter. Also, using this approach would unnecessarily raise sensitive issues with both learners and teachers, as the study's participants come from a very conservative culture (see chapter four). Furthermore, this approach would require a lot of time to be spent observing students and teachers, and would also require access to the analysis of teachers' portfolios. In addition, a more practical approach (CALA) has been developed for this study which will involve some of the features of means analysis.

2.5.2 Strategy Analysis

According to Brown (1994), learning strategies have been under investigation since 1970; in the 1980s, strategy analysis in needs analysis, as West (1994:10) pointed out, "focused on what teachers should know about their students' preferences in learning a language". It should be noted here that, in the 1980s, considerable attention was paid by some authors (e.g. Wenden, 1987; Oxford and Niykos, 1989) to learning strategies in learning English. Allwright (1982) was a pioneer in this field; he has always seen strategy analysis as being associated with the learners' perceptions of their own needs. The major aim of strategy analysis is to establish an idea about the learners' preferences of learning style, strategy and teaching methods (Al-Husseini, 2004). In addition, Brew (1980: 123) suggests that it is "important to create an atmosphere of dialogue in which students can be helped to articulate and explore for themselves their attempts to make sense of their learning environment. Learning strategies could be defined as what learners believe in order for them to improve their learning".

Researchers in the field of ESP have realized the importance of identifying the students' learning strategies and style. For example, Griva and Tsakiridou (2006) carried out their study of 301 university students in order to identify the range and

types of learning strategies employed by the students while reading, listening, writing, and speaking for academic purposes. They claimed that knowledge about the learners' preferences is necessary for teaching a specific text. In addition, they found that students use some cognitive strategies less frequently, and often select those that are inappropriate, either for a particular type of text or for a certain task. Stern (1982) argued that a successful learner uses a personal learning style or positive learning strategies to cope with any problem that s/he might face when learning a second language. It could be argued here that knowing and being aware of the Saudi students' preferences will help teachers to perform and deliver the lessons in a very effective way.

There are many advantages of Strategy Analysis (SA). For example, some international students appear to have encountered problems with learning strategies or styles. Thus, it has become important for EAP teachers to be aware of the' academic culture conventions, differences in learning strategies and methods of teaching preferred by international students, and this is could be done via SA. This awareness, as Jordan (1997: 27) asserts, will assist in preventing the frustration of expectations when students are studying in a different environment, as many international students come from a situation that is completely different from the British one. Another factor is that the students should realize their own learning strategies and style of learning in order to be good language learners, as many studies have reported (see Wenden, 1987; Oxford and Niykos, 1989; Grenfell, 2007).

This view is supported by Rubin (1990: 282), who says that often poor learners do not have a clue of how good learners arrive at their answers, and feel they can never perform as good learners do. She added that, by revealing the process, this myth can be exposed. In addition, students would be better if they employed the most suitable strategies for them (Chamot *et al.,* 1989). Stern (1982) argued that a successful learner uses a personal learning style or positive learning strategies to cope with any problem that s/he might face when learning a second language. It could be argued here that knowing and being aware of the Saudi students' preferences will help teachers to perform and deliver the lessons in a very effective way.

Therefore, the concept of strategy analysis begins with helping students to become aware of what strategies are and which strategies they are already using (Rubin *et al.,* 2007: 143). This aims to help the students to be more aware of the learning process. Rubin *et al.* (2007) claim that it helps the students to be conscious of learner strategies, because the students might previously have felt that the topic is too difficult or abstract to understand. Teachers first elicit the students' prior knowledge about strategies and then help them to identify their current learning strategies for different tasks. It is not clear, however, when teachers should carry out their investigation: before, during or after the course? It is generally felt that strategy analysis could be conducted at all three stages: before, during and after the course. Therefore, although elements of strategy analysis appear in the study, it was not employed as the methodological approach.

2.5.3 Deficiency Analysis

Despite all the criticism discussed below (see 3.5.7), Mundy's work on needs analysis was a milestone in the field of ESP, and many researchers have built upon the foundations provided by his model. This led to the emergence of deficiency analysis and was first debated in the 1980s byTarone and Yule (1989), Allwright (1982), Holliday and Cooke (1982). West (1994: 10) defined deficiency analysis as a type of needs analysis which developed to take account of learners' present needs/wants as well as the requirements of the target situation. According to Smith and Arun (1980: 210), this type of approach aims at determining the gap between trainees' present ability and the requirements of the situation they will encounter in the future.

West (1994) claimed that deficiency analysis included two central components; an inventory of potential target needs expressed in terms of activities, and a scale that is used to establish the priority that should be given to each activity. For example, if a group of engineering students were to visit the United Kingdom, their host institution might give them a list of the activities most frequently needed by the field of engineering, and request that they rank the order of their importance to them. The major drawback of this type of needs assessment is that it can differ significantly from one student to another; e.g. one student may say that writing a report is of the

utmost importance whilst another might think that reading an academic article ranks most important.

From the researcher's point of view, deficiency analysis represents the origin of the method of using a questionnaire in order to determine a learner's actual needs. Several researchers, e.g. Shaw (1982) and Bheiss (1988) conducted their studies by using different scales in their questionnaires to identify the most important activities for their participants. Shaw (1982) asked them to establish whether or not each potential need is an actual need, and then to present the level of difficulty experienced when performing each activity on a *none/ some/ a lot* scale. Bheiss (1988) went further by using a formal procedure for establishing syllabus priorities. This system utilises a list of potential target skills provided by specialist informants. The scale used in the study was 0 = unnecessary and 4 = essential for the target situation; and for present situation 0 = of no difficulty to 4 = very difficult.

It can be concluded that the deficiency analysis approach is designed to list the kinds of activities that the learners might require in their target situation. Most needs analysts (e.g. Robinson, 1980, and Alderson, 1980) have agreed that this approach attempts to investigate learners' future and present needs, which could be done by target situation analysis (TSA) and present situation analysis (PSA).

Deficiency analysis will not be employed for this study as it has a major drawback, which is that it is a combination of the target needs analysis (TSA) and present situation analysis (PSA).

2.5.4 Language Audits Analysis

Language audits appeared in 1979 and were discussed by Pilbeam who defined them as the analysis of needs based on the job task. Reeves and Wright (1996) describe them as a lengthy procedure that researchers should follow; i.e. researching the field where language should be used and then including everything that indicates the type of language which has been used in the target situation. Coleman (1988) suggested that a language audit precede a needs analysis in large institutions to investigate the individual whose needs should be targeted for analysis.

West (1994: 12) argues that language audits can include 'any large-scale exercise forming the basis of strategic decisions on language needs and training requirements carried out by or for individual companies, professional sectors, or countries or regions'. This means that this approach is used by large organizations in order to describe their clients' needs. Therefore, West suggested that such an audit might take months or years to implement. This clarifies why using this approach is inappropriate for our study, as it is better suited to a large scale research project involving a number of researchers.

One example of this type of study was that conducted by Vandermeern (2005) in the business field in order to assess the business worker's actual needs. A one-page questionnaire was written in Finnish and it consisted of closed questions that were sent to a random sample 300 Finnish companies of which 112 were completed after one mail-shot. The outcomes of this study suggested that most of the participants lack the ability to speak German with their customers. Vandermeern (2005) reported after the study that it was difficult to study the target situation and also that the approach required a lot of time. In fact she also had help. This is not to say it is simply difficult but rather that it requires considerable experience in the field that researcher wants to investigate. For instance, if someone wants to investigate the language of engineering, then he/she should be familiar with actual language or ask for assistance from the special informant who is quite familiar with those language requirements.

Long (2005: 41) claimed that language audits take institutions as the unit of analysis and that they are usually conducted through a quantified general survey. Therefore audits produce three elements, namely target situation analysis, language training and learner level of language. To illustrate this further, any researchers using this approach should spend time studying the target situation first and assessing the learners' ability to use the language. They would then make a recommendation to the course designer. One drawback of this approach is that it sounds feasible but would in practice be very difficult for one researcher to conduct alone. In addition, this approach is very difficult in the field of EAP in particular because each academic discipline uses language differently. As a result, this approach was not employed for the purposes of this study.

2.5.5 Critical Needs Analysis

In 1996, Benesch proposed critical analysis in the field of ESP in response to the fact that most approaches to needs analysis are descriptive. Therefore, to illustrate the terms of critical needs, Benesch (2001: 44) defines critical needs as a way of finding some areas in which target needs might be supplemented and modified. The term *critical needs* relates to the integration of EAP as a discipline, and the EAP teachers themselves at other university faculties. For example, professors or lecturers from law faculties should co-operate with EAP teachers in order to improve students' English for Legal Purposes.

Benesch (2001: 75) discussed critical needs in terms of 'right analysis.' She claimed that this would "allow for a two-pronged strategy of addressing target needs, through traditional needs analysis and exploring possibilities for changing them, through right analysis" to achieve a goal. She defines right analysis as the search for alternatives to the strict adherence of target goals and requirements. Therefore researchers should not simply describe target goals but work harder to find other solutions for those requirements. Therefore, as Hyland (2005: 79) claims, rights analysis involves evaluating the findings of needs analysis, recognizing the challenges that students face and analysing the results to create more democratic and participatory involvement by students in the decision-making process.

Benesch (1996) conducted a study in order to develop a syllabus which was linked to a 450-student psychology lecture class taught by two faculty members from the psychology department. Her critical needs analysis revealed that the target needs were not a unified set of goals or a clear destination for the EAP class to reach but, rather, requirements from different levels of the academic hierarchy, some of which were contradictory (Benesch, 2001: 41). For example, the psychology department thinks that it is the purpose of the EAP course to train students to integrate their personal experiences with psychological concepts. The researcher believes that it is difficult for an EAP programme to teach the precise elements required by each discipline. It is predominantly the students' responsibility to increase their own knowledge of their subject. However, Benesch (2001: 43) holds that individual EAP teachers should investigate their students' needs rather than always following

institutional demands.

Benesch (2001) suggested that needs analysts should not describe the situation itself; instead they should answer the following questions: 1) who sets the goals, 2) why they were formulated, 3) whose interests are served by them, and 4) whether they should be challenged. To do this would be impossible, for needs analysis is unrealistic as it would involve meeting the policy makers at the university and reading all the previous agendas of meetings previously carried out during the process of organising the EAP course at the University of Southampton. The researcher would also have to involve the subject tutors which would entail too much time for a lone researcher in a study such as this. Thus it was judged for the purpose of this research that critical needs would be dealt with in the target situation analysis, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

2.5.6 Present Situation Analysis (PSA)

Present Situation Analysis, as Jordan (1997: 24) describes, ascertains the state of the language development of the students at the beginning of their language course. Correspondingly, Hyland (2005: 74) argued that Present Situation Analysis is concerned with starting where the students are, and refers to information about learners' current proficiencies and ambitions: what they can do and what they want at the beginning of the course, their skills and perceptions, their familiarity with the specialist subject, and what they know of its demands and genres. This kind of data can be both objective (age, proficiency, prior learning experiences) and subjective (self-perceived needs, strengths and weaknesses). PSA could be defined as a tool for diagnosing the learners' weaknesses and strongest skills before they commence their courses. From the above, it may be seen that present situation analysis seeks all the information about the learners, e.g. level of language, gender, and their previous language learning.

As with TSA, there are many approaches that PSA analysts can use, but the main approach is that developed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) to determine the current level of students' ability (Uzpaliene and Kavaliauskiene, 2003: 36).

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) provide an excellent approach to investigating PSA for learners. This is as follows:

Present situation analysis framework:

- *Why are the learners taking the course?*
  Compulsory or optional
  Whether obvious need exists
  Personal/academic goals
  Motivation and attitude
- *What they want to learn from the course*
- *How do the learners learn?*
  Learning background
  Methodology and materials preferences
  Preferred learning styles and strategies
- *Who are the learners?*
  Age / sex / nationality / L1
  Subject knowledge
  Interests
  Sociocultural background
  Attitudes to subject or discipline
- *What do the learners know?*
  L1 and L2 literacy abilities
  Proficiency in English

The list above details an appropriate and comprehensive approach to carrying out the PSA, and it has been adapted for this study for various reasons. First and foremost, most empirical studies employ it, and this provides invaluable information about their participants (see Al-Khatib, 2005; Al-Otibi, 1994; Al-Sudais, 2004; Cichocki and Lepetit, 2005). For example, Al-Hussine (2004) described it as simple and straightforward, because it covers most of the necessary background information about the learners to help them in the learning process. In addition, this approach pays attention to knowledge about the students' subject of study, which is important for learners who are going to study for a postgraduate degree, whether a Masters or a PhD; they must have knowledge about their subject to cope with the relevant specific language, e.g. language for business purposes.

It is obvious that the EAP learners are attending the course for one of two reasons: optional or compulsory and this is the crucial to understanding the question: Why are the learners taking the course? Generally most international students join EAP courses in order to meet their academic goals, e.g. writing essays, reports, theses, etc.

The learning background of the international students is an important issue which will help with the learning process (Jordan, 1997). For this reason, choosing appropriate materials will help the students to focus on learning, as stressed by Nunan (1988). This approach also raises two other important factors, gender and age, as several researchers showed in their studies (Park, 2006; Hofested, 1991). In the case of the Saudi students, gender plays an important role in their learning, as we will see in the cultural aspect of learning later in this chapter. It could be argued that one of the main drawbacks of the work of Hutchison and Waters (1987) is that they have neglected to discuss learning style and learning preferences, although these are surely vital for learners, as shall be seen later in this chapter.

Jordan (1997) suggested that testing could be done by various means, e.g. through a sponsoring body or by the students themselves. However, some might criticize the reliability of the sponsoring body's test, because the criteria of testing will differ from one institute to another. It is tempting to say, as has been suggested by Blue (2000), Basturkmen (2006), Braine (2001), Cichocki and Lepetit (2005), Hamp-Lyons (2001) and Hutchison and Waters (1987), that PSA testing could be conducted before the beginning of the course. The crucial question then is: How could that be done? It could be done with the placement test, which is frequently used by most schools; however, the placement test, as West (1994: 7) argues, "can only estimate the approximate language level of students". Therefore, the question that needs to be put here is whether it is enough to diagnose the students' weakness and strengths. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 124) claimed that "PSA measures strengths and weaknesses in language, skills and learning experiences. The researcher believes that we still need to conduct needs analysis to determine the students' strengths and weaknesses" (Hamp-Lyons, 2001; Johns, 1981). The University of Southampton, for example, normally routinely tests the new students on their arrival to find out their level of English. This test includes assessment of the four skills: writing, reading, listening, speaking. Therefore, it could be argued here that knowing the English language information about the learners - their current skills - is vital for helping them by use of appropriate teaching methods and suitable materials for learning EAP.

It is, then, necessary for the host institution to have a rough idea of the learners' level of language, and one might then ask: Which test is the most reliable determiner of level? There is no clear answer to this, because there is a major debate about which is the best in terms of language tests. Currently most, if not all, British universities recognize IELTS or TOEFL (British Council and UKCISA). Some scholars prefer IELTS while others opt for TOEFL. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, TOEFL is more widely used than IELTS, because most of the private English schools there provide a preparation course for TOEFL. It should be stressed that having a clear idea of the level of ability of the students before they arrive will help the host institution to make the most ideal arrangements for them (Read, 2008). Therefore, this study will also investigate whether the Saudi students have sat any official test before arriving in the United Kingdom, and if so, when, where, and which test was used, and how that will help them and their host institution in the United Kingdom. Although EAP students should take an internationally recognized test such as IELTS or TOEFL, these are not diagnostic tests; they just tell us the learners' level of English. Unfortunately, most of Saudi students arrive in the United Kingdom without having taken any official test, and so they have to take a placement test upon arrival at their host institutions.

A study that was conducted among Saudi students was that of Benson in 1989. The study was ethnographic, and the major concern of his study was to investigate the experience of an Arabic-speaking student in an English-speaking country. Benson had discovered that this student was silent during the whole period of study (15 weeks). He posited four principles of learning: the need for learning to take place, the need for content to be related to both past and anticipated experiences, the need for all the skills to be practised and the need to encourage participation. One of the limitations of his study was that the findings cannot be generalised to all Saudi students, because we do not know about the learner's background, e.g. when he started learning English, or which city the participant came from, because if the learner had come from a big city then he would have had the opportunity to practise his English language with foreigners such as British, although not many international students take advantage of such opportunities. Thus this study aims to find all the necessary information about the Saudi learners' background, e.g. learning experiences, academic goals, learning preferences and teaching styles.

By using a PSA approach it should be possible to find out more about the background, learning experiences etc., of all the international students, but the focus here will be Saudis, so as to provide more in-depth information about the learners. It will be helpful if teachers know about their learners' backgrounds: for example, the learners' expectations about this course, and what they want from it. Hence, as many researchers such as Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) have found, this will allow us as teachers of EAP to assess the next stage. Until then, we focus on what the learners know.

2.5.7 Target Situation Analysis (TSA)

The target situation analysis approach is one of the most common approaches to needs analysis in ESP, and in EAP in particular. It was first developed by Munby (1978), although the first researcher to call it TSA was Chambers (1980). Al-Husseini (2004) believes that Munby's Communicative Needs Processor (CNP) model was a response to the growing need in ELT for a model that would provide practitioners with all the information they would require about their learners' communication needs. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) identify TSA as the context in which learners will need to use the language. Notably, Hyland (2005:74) agreed to some extent with Hutchinson and Waters (1987), by claiming that TSA concerns the learners' future roles and the linguistic skills and knowledge they will need in order to perform competently in their disciplines. He emphasises that this relates to communication needs rather than learning needs, and involves mainly objective and product-oriented data: identifying the contexts of language use, observing the language events in these contexts, and collecting and analysing target genres.

When identifying TSA, Chambers (1980) and Dudley-Evans, (2001) suggested that it takes place when teachers need to conduct an analysis of what students' language needs will be in the future. From another angle, target needs are understood by Uzpaliene and Kavaliauskiene (2003: 36) as what learners need in order to perform in the future. Similarly, Al-Otibi (1994) sees needs as communicative needs, that is, what the learners need to do with the target language. Therefore, it can be said that needs analysis is what learners will be required to do with a foreign language in a target situation (West, 1994: 1). This research study will combine both the linguistic

and cultural aspects of learners needs, as Saudi students come from a different background and so have different needs.

There are many approaches to TSA which analysts can use, and, in the mid 1980s, many studies relating to target situations were conducted in the US (Benesch, 2001: 9). These studies aimed to identify the difficulties that ESL students face in their academic classes. The most well-known studies of this type of analysis were those of Horowitz (1986), Johns (1981) and Ostler (1980). They investigated the language skills needed to operate successfully in an academic environment. Some of these studies (Horowitz, 1986) focused on academic writing and the different faculty requirements, and some focused on listening and note taking. Horowitz (1986) reported that students had a problem with the information process. He also suggested that teachers of EAP should teach all writing elements. Johns (1981) reported that her participants ranked reading and listening as the highest among the four skills.

All of these studies seem to have used survey techniques, mainly among students but sometimes also involving academic staff. This means that target situation analysis may operate at various levels, for instance, establishing priorities in terms of skills in language; e.g. speaking could be when students give a presentation or even concerning the learners' problem with pronunciation etc. Unfortunately, from the point of view of this researcher, none of the studies included the differences among the candidates; they would have produced more usable data if they had tried to find out how Arabic students perceive their needs, compared with students of other nationalities, e.g. Chinese.

Two major approaches have been devised by Munby (1978) and Hutchinson and Waters (1987). The concept of target needs analysis is based on Munby's work, called the Communication Needs Processor, the aim of which was to establish the following:

1. Participant: identity (sex, nationality)
   a. Language (mother tongue, target language, etc.)
2. Purpose of learning: educational, occupational.
3. The target setting in which language will be used
4. Interaction
5. Instrument of communication: e.g. speech
6. Dialect: national/standard
7. Target level: six dimensions of level are determined (size of utterance, complexity of text, range of forms, delicacy, speed, flexibility)
8. Communication key: e.g. tone
9. Communicative events
10. Language skills

The above model can be used as a checklist for syllabus design. Al-Hussseni (2004) describes it as a comprehensive data bank. There is no doubt that Munby's work is a landmark for needs analysis (Al-Otibi, 1994; West, 1994; Al-Husseini, 2004; Bosher, and Smalkoski, 2005; and Belcher, 2006), but his work has been criticized by others. For example, Munby's model is very time consuming to employ (Jordan, 1997: 22). It could be argued that Hutchinson and Waters (1987:54) agree with Munby's work to some extent, but they conclude that needs analysis should not focus exclusively on the linguistic features of the target situation and that one serious limitation of Munby's work is that he did not focus on study skills.

It is accurate to say that, in order to define the target situation, we ideally need cooperation amongst students, EAP teachers and other university teachers/lecturers. For example, professors or lecturers from law faculties should ideally co-operate with EAP teachers in order to define the target situation for English for Legal Purposes students. In a seminar presentation paper, Hauge (2007) reported that she and her colleagues had visited the school of Law at Southampton University to ask the academic staff what they wanted from their students, especially international students, in order to provide them with the most appropriate course for their needs. After completing the course, Hauge (2007) interviewed the students to find out whether they had benefited from the course. The result was very satisfactory, as most of the students were satisfied with the course and when they started their academic

subject courses, they had little difficulty with the language. In fact, they were quite familiar with legal terminology and their learning processes were very effective.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) noted that there are three main categories of TSA: *Lacks, Wants* and *Necessities*. With regard to TSA and PSA, it would seem that *lacks* are better classified to represent the gap between TSA and PSA (Jordan 1997; and Blue, 2000). *Wants* can be defined as the learners' views of what they should learn. This leads Hutchinson and Waters (1987) to say that *Necessities* can be defined as a kind of need related to the target situation, and, moreover, what they must achieve in order to operate effectively in the target situation; e.g. a student might need to understand a presentation or lecture in order to obtain the necessary information from the lecture. This necessity could be defined by EAP teachers or someone from outside, e.g. a lecturer.

Similarly, 'subjective' and 'objective' could be part of TSA. According to Brindley (1989: 70), 'objective' refers to needs which are derivable from different kinds of factual information about learners, their use of language in real-life communication situations as well as their current language proficiency and language difficulties. 'Subjective' refers to the cognitive and affective needs of the learner in the learning situation, derivable from information about affective and cognitive factors such as personality, confidence, attitudes, the wants and expectations of learners with regard to the learning of English, and their individual cognitive styles and learning strategies. Robinson (1991) adds that teachers very often perceive the objective needs and the learners will perceive their subjective needs.

Hutchison and Waters (1987: 59-63) presented a practical checklist of questions to be asked in analysing target needs that can guide the researchers to analyse the students' target situation. This includes:

Target Situation Analysis Framework:
- *Why do learners need the language?*
  Examination, postgraduate or undergraduate course, etc.
- *What genres will be used?*
  Lab reports, essays, seminars, lectures, etc.
- *What is the typical structure of these genres?*
  Analyses, salient features, genre sets, etc.

- *What will the content areas be?*
  Academic subjects, specialisms within discipline, secondary school subjects
- *Who will the learner use the language with?*
  Native or non-native speakers
  Relationship: peer, teacher, examiner, supervisor
- *Where will the learner use the language?*
  Physical setting: school, university, conference
  Linguistic context: overseas, home country

The approach outlined above offers a useful guide which can be applied in this study. For example, the question "How will the language be used?" is relevant, as the students will use English in different media, e.g. writing an essay, report or a thesis. If, as Nomnian (2008) claims, EAP is crucial for the success of international students in their academic studies, then target needs analysis seems even more important as it helps to clarify the EAP student's needs. It is therefore hardly surprising that this will provide the Saudi students in this study with the English skills necessary to enable them to succeed in their academic courses.

The approach taken by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) has been influential, and has been employed in a number of studies relating to needs analysis. Most studies, e.g. that of Al-Husseini (2004), investigate the language content. Saudi students may face challenges, for example when giving a presentation, reading academic texts and so on in their academic field, because they may have not acquired the appropriate language to use or they lack the specific vocabulary and therefore consider themselves bad at English. According to Hyland (2005), this problem is magnified in academic departments. Recently, Basturkmen (2006: 26) has claimed that needs analysis in ESP often focuses on the skills learners need to study or work efficiently in their target environments. The question that remains here is: what is the difference between reading, listening, writing and speaking in general everyday situations and in an academic environment? Basturkmen (2006: 27) explains this by saying that the difference is not the nature of the micro skills being utilized, but rather the type of text involved (in this case, a lecture or story). It is not possible to include language for specific academic purposes in this study, and, as the present study does not focus on one particular subject, it will focus on EGAP; indeed, the present study covers

most academic subjects, as the participants are studying in a variety of disciplines e.g. education and business.

We have seen that TSA could be conducted to ask the question: what do learners need to know in order to function effectively in a given situation? This information may be recorded in terms of language items, skills, strategies, subject know–how; learners will learn the language items, skills, strategies that are necessary. One of the major advantages of the TSA approach is that it will explore the target needs when designing a syllabus for English for Academic Purposes, as has been pointed out by, e.g., Chambers (1980), Hutchinson and Waters (1987), Brindley (1989), West (1994, 1997), Robinson (1991) and Blue (2000), partly because that will help the learners to focus more and make the learning process easier for them. In addition, it is necessary to know, if possible, what students have in mind to achieve, and what they have already learned.

One drawback of the TSA approach, especially that invented by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), is that it does not emphasise cultural differences in the target situation. For example, when international students study at British universities, they must adopt the new academic culture. From the above approach, it is obvious that target situation analysis is vital for both international students and EAP teachers: for the former, because that will enhance their motivation to learn more effectively by discovering what they are actually learning English for. For EAP teachers, it will assist them in delivering their lessons in a very functional way which will suit and meet their students' needs. Research into needs analysis using TSA has been conducted before. For example, Al-Otibi (1994) has conducted studies in which he made use of target situation analysis, seeking to help students in order to meet the university's academic demands.

2.6 Identifying the Gap between Present Situation Analysis (PSA) and Target Situation Analysis (TSA)

One major problem of the PSA is that it would not be useful for it to be conducted alone. It is most useful when combined with TSA. That is to say, PSA is associated with TSA, and they should be carried out together (Al-Sudais, 2004). TSA is not adequate to determine the needs of students in EAP without considering their PSA.

Taken together, TSA and PSA may explain the importance of how the learners want to learn and which method(s) should be used in order to teach the learners (Robinson, 1991). That is true, as international students come from a different culture, and some of them, e.g. Saudi students, are used to the teaching-centred approach instead of the learning-centred approach.

It is vital to have an understanding of the learners' background: what they already know about the subject they want to learn (Hutchinson and Water, 1987). According to them, it is possible to understand exactly what the learners lack, partly because knowing this will influence the role of the teacher, which is to provide help to enable the learners to achieve their goals. Thus, the learners should be conscious of their purposes as well. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) explain *Lack* as a vital factor to have an understanding of the learners' background: what they want or need to learn. In addition, West (1994) sees *lacks* as the language learning skills which he considers as the necessities that learners lack. To put it more simply, *lacks* mean the language activities that learners need to carry out when they move to the target situation, but do not have the proficiency to do at the present time. Therefore, learners need instruction in the target language in order to obtain what they lack. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) have suggested that measuring what these learners know about the necessities can help the course provide learners with what is missing.

Flowerdew and Peacock (2001: 178) argue that more than just the target use of language needs to be addressed when conducting a needs analysis. They claim that what the language learners lack, as well as their needs, should be addressed; it could be argued here that this means what the learners actually require, taking into account what they already know- and their wants- i.e. what they themselves wish to learn: TSA may discover that learners need to be able to read academic textbooks, but learners, on other hand, may feel that grammatical accuracy is what they need, or they want to improve their social English. It is clear from the above that needs analysts should be aware of what students' actually lack, not what they should be learning the language for.

2.7 Needs Analysis for the Present Study

The needs analysis approaches and frameworks discussed above each look at needs analysis from a particular perspective. The traditional classification of needs analysis into the present situation analysis and the target situation analysis is inadequate, because they do not provide a precise picture of needs analysis. This can in part be resolved by combining them with strategy analysis and a cultural learning approach analysis. Another reason is that, throughout the literature, it is suggested that needs analysis has always been associated with language needs while neglecting the non-language needs, namely the cultural aspects of learning. To be fair, several studies have been conducted, particularly in the West in countries such as the United Kingdom, US, and Australia, in order to investigate the needs of international students. Yet none of these studies has focused on the Saudi students in particular. Therefore, this study will focus on the language and non-language needs of the Saudi students. That is not to say that Saudi students will have different needs from those of other international students, but rather the study will attempt to find their precise needs. All the previous studies investigated the general needs analysis of the international students, but now we should focus on each individual group.

The concept of needs analysis in the present study considers three approaches but will focus particularly on TSA and PSA (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998: 125). This is the case because all the other approaches can be incorporated within the umbrella of these two major methods. They are also judged to be the most appropriate in the field of ESP (Blue, 1991; West, 1994, 1997; Jordan, 1997; Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998; Ferris, 1998; Hamp-Lyons, 2001 Dudley-Evans, 2001) and have been endorsed by previous needs analysts, including Al-Husseini (2004) and Al-Sudais (2004), who found them very useful for understanding their students' needs in detail. Finally, they have been chosen in view of all the drawbacks of each of the other approaches discussed above. Needs analysis refers here to the techniques for collecting and assessing information relevant to the course design: it is the means of establishing the 'how' and 'what' of a course (Hyland, 2005: 73).

English language information about learners, e.g. their level of language and language use, is PSA. More important, what the learners lack, as we have seen

above, forms the gap between TSA and PSA. Furthermore, it is assumed that we need to know what the learners want from the EAP course. The contribution of the present study to the field should be emphasised here. First, it focuses on Saudi learners, partly because needs analysis in the Arab world has not yet received sufficient attention. Students' needs are rarely analyzed; they are rather intuited for them (Johns, 1991). Second, as far as the researcher is aware, the cultural aspects of learning systems have not been thoroughly investigated before in the field of EAP. It has always been a secondary priority of previous investigations (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998: 125; Hyland, 2005; West, 1994, 1997; Jordan, 1997; Benesch, 2001). It should be noted that Benesch, (2001: 100 – 108) discussed the rights analysis of the learners. She provides a practical example of a situation that she and a professor from the department of psychology experienced. It would have been useful if her investigation had included some of the learners' previous learning experiences of English, e.g. discussion group, etc., and personal information about the learners.

This research prompted some serious considerations about what approach to follow to determine a useful methodology, as discussed in the following chapter. Although Munby's approach seemed to provide a quite a lot of data about the TSA, it was decided not to include it because of the disadvantages mentioned above, and it is also quite out of date. In addition, researchers have realized that it requires more time and effort than is practically possible for the majority of learners and teachers alike. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) have been chosen for the present study because of the advantages stated above and the value of it for the pilot study. The concept of the TSA for this study, therefore, enables us to recognize the target needs of Saudi students. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of Saudi students' target needs, it is important to explore the difficulties of students who are now studying in their disciplines using English for academic purposes. However, TSA alone is not adequate to determine in depth what exactly the Saudi students' needs are, so it is combined with the PSA approach.

The present situation appeared to be the second most important of the needs analysis process, after the Target Situation Analysis. It could be argued that PSA is associated with TSA, and that they should be carried out together (Al-Saudis, 2004). TSA is not adequate to determine the needs of students in EAP without considering their PSA.

Present situation analysis is therefore necessary so that course providers may know and consider the level of the learners' ability in English - or lack of ability – within a group of learners, whether they are the same or different, and, if so, what the weakest and strongest skills of each student are (Dudley-Evans, 2001). Here, the aim of learning is an important issue: in other words, what exactly do the learners need to achieve? To put it more simply, do the learners need more vocabulary, for example, to improve their language (Coxhead, 2000; Coxhead and Nation, 2001), or do they need more listening practice to correct their pronunciation? All these issues should be taken into account when teaching Saudi students who are studying EAP in the United Kingdom.

The Cultural Aspect of Learning Analysis (CALA) emerged as the third most important approach in this study. The concept of CALA is to find out the background of the students' learning of English, i.e. when they started learning, how they used it, with whom they used it, what language they used - academic or general language, etc.; this is because of the differences between the Saudi and British educational systems. Halliday (1994: 9) claimed that learning might be affected by the attitudes and expectations that people bring to the learning situation which are influenced by social forces within both the institution and the wider community outside the classroom, and which in turn influence the way in which people deal with each other in the classroom. Therefore, it is not only the classroom that is targeted by CALA but also the environment surrounding it.

We have seen that strategy analysis can be very important and perhaps especially in the EAP context; Tudor (1996) believes that strategy analysis is vital in the EAP context for both teachers and learners. According to Tudor, learners come from different backgrounds; therefore, they have different approaches to language learning. Acknowledging this will help teachers to identify the preferred learning style of their students, and it will also assist learners to adapt very easily to their new teaching environment. It should be borne in mind that the EAP classroom will have students from different cultures and different levels of language. Certainly, Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) suggested that is very likely the EAP class will contain students of different levels of proficiency. With this in mind, strategy analysis will help EAP teachers to use a wider range of activities according to their

learners' learning style, and to choose appropriate materials which will cater for their students' needs.

The two main approaches to the needs analysis in this study were Target Situation Analysis (TSA), and Present Situation Analysis (PSA). However, the study also aims to develop a framework for assessing and prescribing on cultural issues; this new approach is referred to as the Cultural Aspect of Learning Analysis (CALA) and was derived from the gap identified when conducting the literature review and the pilot study. This approach includes identifying the previous learning background, e.g. length of time learning English, gender, learning environment, relationship with supervisor, tutor, lecturer, and differences in the education system (see chapters five and six). In addition, it includes aspects of TSA, PSA and SA, as language learning strategies have much in common with study and knowledge acquisition strategies. For this study, all of these approaches are important, partly because they are complementary to each other. Information gathered from Saudi postgraduate students (TSA, PSA and CALA) is used alongside that gathered from Saudi students who are studying EAP to complete the picture of Saudi students' needs in an academic setting, and to rethink the EAS course to make it more effective in fulfilling its purposes. It could be argued here that the present study of needs analysis is a comprehensive one in the field of EAP, as it involves four approaches: TSA, PSA, and CALA. In addition, CALA was integrated into both the present situation analysis (PSA) and the present situation analysis (TSA).

Focusing on the reasons why learners need to learn the foreign language will better enable language teaching professionals to cater for their learners' specific needs and avoid expending unnecessary energy on pointless tasks (Johns, 1981; Horowitz, 1986; Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, 1987; West, 1994; Seedhouse, 1995; Benesch, 1996; and Ferris, 1998). By combining the four approaches - TSA, PSA, SA, and CALA - to analyse the needs of Saudi students, one can obtain detailed information about the linguistic and cognitive challenges students face in an academic setting. Benesch (2001) claimed that doing this will help students to perform well in their academic classes.

The question that also needs to be addressed at a more fundamental level is how interaction inside the EAP classroom can be helpful in understanding the students' study skills, e.g. speaking with peers, giving presentations, difficulties with pronunciation, reading academic texts, writing assignments, and searching for information etc, (Jordan, 1997, 1998; and Park, 2006). All of those factors are relevant to this study about how Saudi students use EAP. In this respect, it is important to note that Saudi students, for example, speak formally to their tutors and cannot criticise them, as has been pointed out by Carty *et al.* (2007) and Al-Oadi (2000). Partly for this reason it was essential that the researcher should observe some of the EAP classes where most of the Saudi students are studying. It is important to realize, as Cowling (2007) asserts, that this could be associated with cultural differences between the learning systems of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom, as we shall see later in this thesis.

2.8 Conclusion

The discussion on the approaches to and frameworks of needs analysis reveals the philosophies and educational values that stand behind each of them. It has also shown us the scope and focus of each approach/framework. This study focuses on the non-language and language needs, defined as the activities and sub-activities, skills and sub-skills which are required to support students' academic use of English language in their academic courses, e.g. Education, Management, Humanities, Chemistry, etc. These needs can be classified as the necessities and objective needs of these students. Finally, these needs are analysed by conducting a combination of TSA, PSA, SA and CALA in which information about the learners, teachers of academic courses and EAS courses is gathered. Thus needs analysis is an essential process for gathering information about learners' needs and their situation. No matter what method is used in gathering information, it is clear that identifying needs in EAP has always been a crucial and central issue. The methods of needs analysis will be explained in the methodology chapter. Whilst it is not necessary for needs analysis to accommodate all students at the university in a particular class, it has to be professional (West, 1997). That is to say, the researcher used the most appropriate approach to needs analysis. Needs analysis in the EAP setting is a process of collecting data from the stakeholders, namely learners and teachers, in order to make

informed decisions that will enhance the learners' learning and the teachers' teaching. The next chapter will focus on providing details about research design, source of information, data collection and data analysis etc.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, it was important to define an appropriate framework in line with the theme and central questions of this study. This chapter focuses on the precise design structure of the research methodology and is divided into the sections that outline the framework for determining upon the course of the data acquisition process. First, it focuses on research aims, questions and design, in particular the development of the qualitative and quantitative research methods used for the mixed methods approach. Second, it describes the research participants and the researcher's approach to obtaining valuable data from them. Third, it details recommendations and useful discoveries from the pilot study. Fourth, it examines the data collection instruments which involved interview, questionnaire, and observation. Fifth, how methodological triangulation was achieved is discussed. Sixth, a discussion of the validity and reliability of the data is provided. Seventh, the procedure for the data analysis is outlined; finally the ethical issues are briefly detailed. All aspects of the research design were informed by the issues discussed in the literature review combined with observations provided by the pilot study concerning the language and study skills needs of Saudi Arabian students.

3.2 Research Aims Questions and Design

The research investigates the language needs and cultural differences of Saudi students studying in British Universities. Saudi students moving to enter higher education in the United Kingdom, which to them is another culture of learning, may require more than familiarity with another language. Currently, EAP courses intended to prepare international students for participation in higher education in the United Kingdom focus on observable features of texts and related study skills, and are normally aimed at several different nationalities instead of one nationality. The main aim of the present study is to investigate in depth the language needs of Saudi students who are currently studying on a postgraduate programme or EAP course at the University of Southampton, and also to establish the challenge(s) faced by Saudi students in learning English for Academic Purposes. This includes identification of

the nature of the difficulties Saudi students experience when using English for Academic Purposes, and the strategies that may be used to overcome such problems. Since the main focus of the study is the Saudi students' language needs and the impact of academic cultural variations on them in British postgraduate programmes in order to find the best strategies to prepare them before entering the British higher education programme as exemplified in Southampton University, the following research questions have been set for the study:

RQ1. What is the present situation of Saudi students intending to enter a postgraduate programme at British Universities with regard to language and culture? This will be answered with regard to:
- Language skills
- Academic skills
- Contrasting teaching methodology
- Student/teacher/peer interaction and participation
- Course duration

RQ2. What is the target situation of Saudi students attending a postgraduate programme at British Universities with regard to language and culture? This will be answered with regard to:
- Language skills
- Academic skills
- Contrasting teaching methodology
- Student/teacher/peer interaction and participation
- Research skills
- Critical thinking

RQ3. How can Saudi students best be prepared for a British postgraduate programme of study?

3.3 Research Design

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches, which means that in each case it takes into account whether the research instruments fit the theories,

assumptions and research questions. To achieve this most successfully, previous researchers have found pilot studies useful and therefore one was conducted here (see below for details). Also, it was very important to check the quality of methods; this was done in consultation with a PhD supervisor and two specialists in the School of Education, to determine who is best positioned to help with answering the research question by allowing data collection from various sources. Furthermore, there has been logical questioning of the methods to ensure using the appropriate methods, because every research study should contain an element that interprets what emerges from the analysis of data into finding the conclusion(s). The final questions asked before designing the research were: who is the target community? When will the data be collected? Where is the target community? How much time will the interview or questionnaire take? Why choose Saudi Arabian students in particular?

3.3.1 Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

Qualitative researchers like Lankshear and Knobel (2003) assert that, in order to understand the world, one should focus on context, which involves paying attention to history, to the language of the participants during a particular event and/or other events happening concurrently. Qualitative research could be defined as characterised not by the use of numerical values but by the use of text (spoken and written words) to document variables and the analysis of the information collected (Hitleman and Simon, 2002: 37-38). Henn *et al.* (2006: 150) state that qualitative approaches are normally carried out in real life settings to understand how people experience the world around them, attempting to study action and speech as it naturally occurs. By contrast, quantitative researchers such as Oppenheim (1994) assume that the world can be measured and that numbers accurately capture the probability of truth about something. Quantitative research, as defined by Hammersley (1993: 37), refers in large part to "the adoption of the natural science experiment as the model for scientific research, its key feature being quantitative measurement of the phenomena studied". This type of research, as claimed by Hittleman and Simon (2002), is characterised by the use of statistical analysis.

In terms of methodology, as explained above, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were applied to the present study. Qualitative research in particular can

be carried out by using interviews, documents or observation, while quantitative research can be done by using questionnaire surveys or tests. However, when deciding on one approach or another, one does not necessarily limit oneself in methodology as there is never one instrument per approach; in fact, there are many. Interview, observation, and questionnaire were used in the mixed methods approach of this study, as explained above. In terms of the research type, the present study is descriptive in its method and policy-oriented in its purpose as it aims to describe the current and future needs of Saudi students. It is policy-oriented insofar as it goes further than simply describing the current and future needs of students; it attempts to produce alternatives for the policymakers to consider, whether in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia or the United Kingdom. This study, however, will not tell the decision makers what decisions to take; rather it will seek to identify the alternative decisions which are available and explain the implications of making choices from those alternatives.

Therefore, by identifying the Saudi students' needs in both Present Situation Analysis (PSA) and Target Situation Analysis (TSA), the present study was able to inform the EAP programme which Saudi students are attending in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom. The researcher is aware of the differences between EAP programmes from one country to another and from one institution to another and has accordingly tried to make recommendation(s) feasible to the largest group of consumers possible. The target consumers for this study are the institutions in the United Kingdom and in Saudi Arabia.

3.3.2 Mixed Methods Research

The research method is an important factor for any study, as many writers on research methodology claim (e.g. Oppenheim, 1994; Bell, 1998; Sarantakos, 2005; Punch, 2005; Seidman, 2006; Dörnyei, 2007). The mixed method of questionnaire, interview and observation is an appropriate research method for this study, because it enables identification of those factors; both inside and outside the classroom, which contribute to Saudi students' language needs analysis and their problems with British academic culture. In addition, mixed methods would be the most appropriate way to produce clear, valuable, and credible analytical findings in relation to the central questions addressed in this research. There is some agreement about what constitutes

a mixed methods approach to research. Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007: 123) defined mixed methods thus:

> *"Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g. use of qualitative and quantitative view points, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of the breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration."*

Reams and Twale (2008) state that using mixed methods allows for a complementary counterbalance of the strengths and weaknesses of each technique. It therefore assists in overcoming the weaknesses or biases of a single method. With regard to this study, mixed methods enable us to investigate a group of Saudi students, in a way which strives for a depth of understanding regarding their language needs and their problems with British academic culture. Another unique feature of this study is that it looks to the participant using different instruments and is thus able gradually to reveal various struggles with EAP which are elaborated upon by certain participants.

There are three further benefits relating to the use of mixed methods. First, it can deal with the complexities of a particular education setting as a whole, and thus offers an opportunity for the researchers to discover how different factors affect one another (Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007). Secondly, according to some specialists in mixed method research, such as Dörnyei, (2007) and Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007), it is valuable to use mixed methods, comparison analysis, and convergent validity checks to enhance the quality and credibility of findings. Thirdly, the mixed methods approach is an appropriate method for applied linguistics research because it is flexible and adaptable to changes in evolving educational circumstances (Dörnyei, 2007). Despite these inherent benefits of conducting mixed methods, there are some limitations; for example, Reams and Twale (2008) point out that it can be time consuming for the researcher to use more than one research tool. The mixed methods approach has in this case enabled concentrated focus on a particular group, namely the Saudi students who were the subject of the investigation, to attain in depth valuable and unique insights about their experience. To do this it was necessary to have clear aims and objectives for the study, and to have a clear idea in

advance of which methods were most appropriate for addressing each of the research questions.

3.3.3 Research Participants

As this study requires a thorough needs analysis, it seeks to achieve this as accurately as possible by gathering data from a number of different sources. According to Brown (2000), a needs analyst should consider the groups of participants carefully. Some researchers in this field (Al-Otibi 1994; Zang, 1995; and Al-Sudias, 2004) claim that learners themselves are the main source of information; for example, Al-Sudias (2004) focused on the English course students at the King Khalid College, and Al-Husseine (2004) gathered information from both students and teachers. Therefore, it was necessary to involve Saudi students from a range of different disciplines and from the EAP course at the University of Southampton (Dudley – Evans and St John, 1998; and Sesek, 2007). For the present study, information was gathered from two key sources within the university; these were the students themselves and a selection of EAP teachers who had taught the students.

As the present study is an attempt to identify the language needs of Saudi students and the impact of British academic culture on them in British universities, the study population of this research is Saudi students studying at the University of Southampton, namely EAP students and teachers and MA and PhD students, as they are the best community from which the information could be provided. The choice of students and teachers was made according to those who were most accessible. It would have been possible to find other Saudi students from other universities in the United Kingdom. However, as each university has a different EAP programme in terms of the syllabus, etc., this would not have been very useful, and it is important in a study this size to limit the data to produce highly accurate results for a sample group rather than to create an expansive database that incorporates an excess of irrelevant variables.

It was important to include all the Saudi students who are studying at Southampton University for this study, in case some of the participants decided to withdraw from the research. Initially, the students and teacher were rather unsure about taking part in this study because they did not know what to expect. In order to enhance the

response rates for questionnaire, the procedure was explained verbally to all students by the researcher, as had been done in the pilot study (see, 4.4), regarding the risks and benefits of participating in this study. As it would have been difficult to pay the respondents because of the culture, they were invited, sometimes as a group and sometimes individually, to have coffee with the researcher, so that the purposes of the survey could be explained clearly. Eventually, they agreed to participate in this study after learning of the importance of the study and the vital results that would, it is hoped, help Saudi students in the future. Sarantakos (2005) claims that planning the study very carefully, taking appropriate measures and being vigilant can improve the response rate. It was the intention of the researcher to use proven techniques in order to increase the response rate.

At the outset of this study, the researcher aimed, as several researchers such as Nominan (2008) have suggested, to build a close relationship with the participants, to enable them to feel sufficiently relaxed about discussing their language needs and their cultural difficulties. As a Saudi student who had experienced living and studying in the United Kingdom and a member of the Saudi club in Southampton, it was possible for the researcher to welcome some of the students when they first arrived, and to give them advice about their living conditions and studies. We share the same language and often gathered together for special occasions, such as Eid festivals and parties. At the same time, the researcher has a good relationship with EAP teachers as they usually congregate for frequent seminars in the Centre for Applied Language Research.

3.4 Piloting

Some research methods scholars, such as (Corbetta, 2003) claim that the pilot study is a crucial element for any study before collecting the main data. Sapsford and Jupp (1996) state that "the pilot is to devise a set of codes or response categories for each question which will cover, as comprehensively as possible, the full range of responses which may be given in reply to the question in the main investigation". Furthermore, Sarantakos (2005) claims that the pilot is a pre-test to help researchers to solve any problems in their design, which could prevent similar problems occurring in the main data collection. It was extremely important to test the study

instruments (questionnaire, interview, observation and learning diary). The overall aim of the pilot study here was to prepare for the main data collection, by which the Saudi students in the English for Academic Study Programme at the University of Southampton would be investigated. The pilot study intended to explore the mechanics of data collection as well as the desirability of different introspective investigative techniques. The main aim of the pilot study was to test the validity and reliability of the present study instruments (questionnaire, interview, observation and learning diary). It is important to note that it was originally intended to use a learning diary as one of the research instruments, but because of the poor data gained from the pilot study (and the considerable workload for students it represented), it was considered best to exclude the diary from the main study.

Prior to the pilot study and even before designing the questionnaire, interview, learning diary and observations, the researcher met with some of the students from the sample study to seek their views and feedback. For instance, on 22 May, 2008, he met a group of students - Farid, Faris, Mohammed and Majed - who were attending the EAP programme. The researcher asked them about their views on the course, language needs and the differences in the academic culture between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom. In addition, two of the researcher's colleagues at the School of Education (Abdulhameed on 24 June, 2008 and Mariam on 26 June, 2008) were approached for their feedback on the questionnaire and the interview. There was also an appointment with the Director of Centre for Language Study on 26 June, 2008; this lasted for twenty-five minutes. The Deputy Director with responsibility for EFL was also present, and during that time permission was sought and granted to conduct the study. Fortunately, the director was very supportive of the ideas and the purpose of this study so it was possible to obtain her recommendations in terms of interviewing the teachers, which of course would help with understanding the cultural background of the teachers. On 30 June, 2008, 3 July, 2008 and 4 July, 2008, the researcher met with three tutors from the Centre for Language Study who were teaching on the EAP, in order to seek their comments about the questionnaire and interview. These interviews helped to the researcher to identify the most appropriate methods for approaching both students and teachers, in particular, in terms of the time and effort needed to allow the respondents to complete the questionnaire and the best time to observe them.

The pilot study was carried out in Southampton between 13 and 24 October, 2008. The interviews (see previous page) were conducted by the researcher; the interview with the EAP teacher lasted around 30–40 minutes, and the student interviews each lasted 40 minutes. Each of the interviews was audio-recorded and the questionnaires were distributed to the participants at the same time. In terms of the learning diary, this project was introduced to the students the weekend before the piloting, and the three instruments described. For the pilot study, candidates similar to those for the main study were sought, for example, those sharing a similar culture and educational learning background. It was the aim to distribute the questionnaire to a large number of students to maximise the opportunity for testing the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, and the questionnaire was distributed to seven students who were similar to those in the main study sample: one came from the School of Education, two were from the School of Management, two came from the Engineering School and two were from the foundation year. In terms of interviews, one EAP teacher who has experience of teaching Saudi students was interviewed, and two students, one student who had come from Egypt and was from the School of Education, and the other, who came from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and was from the School of Management.

The purpose of a pilot study is to allow experimentation with data-gathering techniques to determine which produces the most fruitful data; in this case it also helped to identify the different types of data and to work out the mechanics of data analysis, e.g. transcribing the data and identifying problems of systematising transcription. This also helped with the coding of the data, for example initial categorisation of the data, and the substantive and mechanical problems of coding. In addition, the decision was made with regard to which computer programmes were appropriate for analysing the quantitative data, e.g. SPSS or Excel. Also, at this stage the participants were asked to write their feedback about the questionnaire freely in either Arabic or English, and fortunately they provided very useful feedback e.g. avoiding some jargon words and abbreviations.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure and Instruments

3.5.1 Procedure

The data collection took place at the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom, from 18th December 2008 to 2nd February 2009. The three research instruments - interview, questionnaire, and classroom observation - were implemented. The postgraduate students, namely Masters and Ph.D. students, and EAP teachers and their students, were approached. The procedure for data collection was in two stages: the first was identifying those people who were willing to participate in the present study. The second stage was obtaining permission from them to participate in the questionnaire, and permission from the Centre for Language Study for the investigation to be carried out.

3.5.2 Interview

As a research instrument, the interview is considered one of the most useful techniques, as acknowledged by many researchers, such as Cohen *et al.* (2005). This is considered to be the case for many reasons; for example, if researchers are conducting their research in Applied Linguistics, like the researcher himself, they need to investigate the subject in great depth to gain more information from the candidates. In order to do so, according to Seidman (2006: 7), "the best means of collecting such data is to use the interview, because telling stories is essentially a meaning-making process. When people tell their stories, they select details of their experience from their stream of consciousness".

By means of an interview, it is possible to gain certain information from respondents in relation to their beliefs about learning (Mertens, 1998). For example, according to the researcher's research, if the respondents answer "yes" in one section, the author is able to ask for justification. On the other hand, if the answer is "no", the researcher would then find the opportunity to ask for a reason. Al-Sudais (2004: 105) explains that, in general, one of the advantages of using the interview is that researchers can gather information which would normally be difficult to obtain via questionnaires. An additional reason for using the interview is that sometimes a researcher will require explanations from the respondent in order to yield more information. Banister *et al.* (1994: 50) believe that, if researchers want to explore roles and

relationships with a particular professional group, it is unlikely that they will gain a sufficiently sensitive and incisive grasp of their participants' concerns by administrating a questionnaire with rating scale strategies.

The views mentioned above reveal why the interview was used; it is one of the most useful qualitative data collection techniques for gathering information about students' language needs and the impact of British academic culture on them. Of the three types of interview possible - structured, unstructured, and semi-structured - the semi-structured interview was judged best suited to this study. The structured interview offers no flexibility in the questions and no opportunity to vary questions according to the interviewees, which restricts the kind of information that can be gathered. Also, according to Sarantakos (2005), this approach provides quantitative data and we are seeking in-depth qualitative data. In addition, the data from this type of interview is essentially the same as that obtained from questionnaires and these are already being used in the study. The unstructured interview is also unsuitable as this is best suited to acquisition of ethnographic data based on an open conversation in which the researcher tries to develop one area. Thus the semi-structured interview will fit the aims of the research best, as explained further below.

As discussed in the preceding chapter; the semi-structured interview is best suited to a mixed methods study, when attempting to acquire needs analysis data, because the researcher can adapt the questions to suit different people's present and target situations (Cohen *et al.,* 2005). Lankshear and Knobel (2003) define this as falling between a structured and unstructured interview in that it has some of the elements of a structured interview, but is not as strict. Robson (1993: 230-231) states that:

> *"The interviewer has worked out a set of questions in advance, but is free to modify their order based upon her/his perception of what seems most appropriate in the context of the conversation; he can change the way they are worded, give explanation, leave out particular questions which seems inappropriate with a particular interviewee or include additional ones."*

On the issue of preparing questions, Fraenkel and Wallen (1996) do maintain that researchers should use a list of pre-prepared questions as a guide. One major advantage of using a semi-structured method is that it allows the researcher to probe the responses of the participants (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995; Lankshear and Knobel, 2004) which makes it particularly useful for this study.

For this research, a series of semi-structured interviews was conducted and each participant was interviewed individually. During the EAP course, EAP teachers and students were interviewed after the observation, as the interview could then be used to clarify some issues noted during the observation. Interviews with postgraduate students from different disciplines were conducted at different stages of the study, and the process of transcribing and translating the transcripts took place as soon as possible after the interviews to ensure that the interviewer was able to remember the non-verbal cues that informed the verbal interaction (see, 4.2).

3.5.2.1 The Role of the Interviewer

It was a key aim to find comfortable and suitable surroundings in which to conduct the interviews and it was a top priority to make the respondents comfortable. The main reason for this is that the target community (the students in particular) were very reluctant to take part in this study, because of fear of the researcher in the culture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as has been pointed out by several researchers in the field of applied linguistics (e.g. Al-Sudais, 2004; Alansari, 1995). The researcher was also very careful not to direct the respondents' answers, nor to persuade them to give any specific answers (Cohen *et al.,* 2005). Richards (2003) emphasises two things of which the interviewer should be aware when listening and prompting. In terms of listening, s/he should not interrupt and should be attentive so as to give the respondents the freedom to express themselves. For each candidate, the researcher began with a suitable warm-up question for each individual participant on a topic familiar to him/her.

The interviews with the students were conducted in Arabic, because the students in the pilot study seemed more relaxed when they answered in Arabic. The interviews with EAP teachers were conducted in English. The process of conducting the interview began by confirming the time and the location. Prior to the interviews the

researcher ensured that the recording equipment (the tape, recorder, batteries) was working, and prepared some refreshments. The interviewees were informed about the purpose of the study and the length of the interview, and that the responses would be confidential. Finally, the interviews were closed by thanking the respondents for their much appreciated time. In selecting participants for the interview, honesty, friendliness, trustworthiness and the ability to concentrate were all taken into account, as their answers are very important for the study.

3.5.3 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire is one of the most commonly used methods in social science research, and in applied linguistics research in particular, as it is the best tool for gathering written information from particular respondents. The questionnaire is also one of the simplest techniques by which a researcher can elicit information from respondents; Fife-Shaw (1995: 182-183) states:

> *"The questionnaire can be used to gather a variety of types of information. You can ask about people's background and other factual, demographic information. You can ask about their behaviour or their attitudes, beliefs, knowledge or their intentions and their aspirations. Each sort of information is associated with particular difficulties."*

It is increasingly common to find disagreement among researchers (McDonough and McDonough, 1997; Weir and Roberts 1994: 140) on the definition of a questionnaire, but the definition most relevant to the present study is: "that the questionnaire investigates the experience of different individuals with a programme which will enable one evaluator to collect information efficiently from a large number of people" (Weir and Roberts, 1994: 140).

The questionnaire used for this study was carefully considered, and went through several stages in its construction. First, in preparation, previous studies in the field of ESP/EAP were examined to see whether there were any questions to adopt as a guide in constructing the new questionnaire (e.g. Al-Sudias, 2004; Park, 2006; Al-Husseini, 2004). Secondly, several questions were formulated, which represented more than the number required, considering all the important issues in the design of questionnaires. Thirdly, a personal critique was carried out to ensure the logic of the

questionnaire. Fourthly, as previously indicated, some experts in the field from both the School of Education and from Modern Languages, whether lecturers or postgraduate students, were approached for their suggestions and opinions. In light of these suggestions, there was a further examination of the questionnaire, as step number three. As explained above, the pilot study took place within a group similar to the main target community, and the results were then analysed. Lastly, the spelling and layout were checked, and the final result was sent to the main target community. Therefore, it may be deduced from the above that the questionnaire would aid in the collection of information about the needs of the target community.

3.5.3.1 Type of the Question: The Open-Ended Question

This kind of question is used to give the respondents the freedom to answer without the researcher providing any answers for them to choose from; for example, "What do you think of the English teachers?" Merriam and Simpson (1995) described open-ended questions as being less structured. There are, according to Sarantakos (2005), some distinct advantages to using open-ended questions, as such questions give the respondents the freedom to express their views on a complex matter. Another advantage is that it provides more in-depth information. For example, if the respondents want to be taught by a native speaker language, they will give justification for that answer. It is practical for researchers to gain important information which may have been neglected, as it allows the researcher to draw a conclusion about the respondents' way of thinking. McDonough and McDonough (1997) point out that, by using this method, the researcher could collect more details from respondents than by using the closed questions.

On the other hand, there are disadvantages, such as their being time-consuming for respondents. Another disadvantage of using open-ended questions is that the respondent will provide a large amount of information which is not relevant to the purpose of the study. One more disadvantage of the open-close question form is that it does not allow the researcher to guide participants along pertinent lines of thought associated with the phenomenon. Two common problems have been identified with this type of questionnaire. The first is lack of clarity. Some questions may be ambiguous or confusing: for example, "How far is Bournemouth from Southampton?" Is this to be answered in miles or in kilometres? Or it could be about

parameters; such as "How do you count part-time staff?" Do you count the number of individual workers or the full-time equivalent? Does this mean today or when you started the business? Does it include the workers here and abroad? Second, lack of knowledge could mean that the respondent does not have the answer.

3.5.3.2 Type of Question: Closed Questions

This type of questionnaire is quite different from the previous one. It is hard to design because it requires experience and practice (Bell, 1993), but it is easier to analyse than a questionnaire which uses open-ended questions. This type has been used to ascertain gender or age, for example. Yes/No questions could sometimes be difficult for respondents to answer. Multiple-choice questions are sometimes followed by the responses 'Never', 'Rarely', 'Sometimes', 'Often', and 'Always'. Scaled questions are similar to the last type but are sometimes followed by 'Strongly agree', 'Agree', 'Neutral', 'Disagree' and 'Strongly disagree'. A further advantage is that they can be answered more quickly by the respondents. In addition, it is easy for the researcher to draw comparisons between answers from different respondents. Providing respondents with multiple choice answers will help the respondent to understand the meaning of the question. In addition, Corbetta (2003) suggests that closed questions are very useful in eliciting answers from respondents about sensitive topics.

What is more, respondents are more likely to answer all the questions. Despite the advantages of this type, there are disadvantages. For example, if the respondents do not have an accurate answer, they may choose any answer or they may become angry if their best answer is not included. It is more likely that respondents may choose the wrong answer or more than one answer at the same time. In general terms, closed questions can have different types, such as factual questions which could be followed by multiple choice questions.

3.5.3.3 Formatting the Questionnaire

Designing the format of the questionnaire is vital when seeking to produce reliable and valid results (Oppenheim, 1992; Gorard, 2001; and Sarantakos, 2005). The layout of the questionnaire is, therefore, a crucial element when attracting respondents. Corbetta (2003) claims that a questionnaire is a working document.

Therefore, it is important to give extra attention to the layout to make it easily readable for respondents. In this study, every part of the questionnaire will have a title which enables it to be readily identified. The questionnaire will also make provision for the respondents to record their names, and the respondents will have the choice to do so at either the beginning or the end (Munn and Drever, 1996).

Corbetta (2003), suggest that dividing the questionnaire into sections will make it logical for the respondents to complete; therefore the layout of the question and choices of answers are attractive and neat. In addition, Corbetta (2003) warns against switching between landscape and portrait layouts for the text. The researcher was careful not to over-fill the page; for example, the questionnaire was not written in large font. The number of pages was also considered, to make the questionnaire more attractive and not confusing. The layout contained clear instructions about how to answer the questions: for example, "tick the right box" (Sarantakos, 2005). The length and wording of the questions were also very important issues. Therefore, the researcher tried to make the length and the wording as logical and simple as possible (Oppenheim, 1992). In addition, Oppenheim (1992) suggests that the researcher should use wording which will make it easy for the respondents to answer the questions fully. Thus, it has been suggested by Sarantakos (2005) that questions should be as simple as possible because that will encourage the respondents to become involved in the study; otherwise they will not provide full answers. It is the case that participants do not want to spend an abundance of time trying to understand the questions; therefore the wording is the key to understanding the questions, since otherwise the respondents would surely be discouraged from providing truthful answers. It happens too often that researchers pay little attention to the different education levels of their respondents; therefore care was taken to avoid this failing.

There are some rules for questions which were taken into account when designing the questionnaire. For example, the difficulty of using academic words was considered and even some expressions which might be unknown to some of the respondents, as they come from different disciplines. In addition jargon, slang and abbreviations were avoided as this is an academic study and it is necessary to be formal and careful with the target community to show them the importance of the study. Care was also taken to avoid ambiguity, confusing phrasing and vagueness

because it often happens that researchers' questions are not as clear and precise as they need to be. Emotive language was avoided as were complex grammatical structures, such as asking about distant future intentions and use of double negatives, as these might confuse the respondents (Punch, 2005). It is important to avoid double-barrelled questions and leading questions because the respondents should perceive the question as being simple and uncomplicated (Bell, 1987). Questions beyond the respondent's capacity to answer were also avoided; for example, asking questions about which respondents do not have any knowledge. Thus, as much as care as possible was taken to ensure the questionnaire would be clear and easy to answer.

There are advantages and disadvantages when using the questionnaire method. One of the advantages of the questionnaire, as stated by Weir and Roberts (1994: 152), is that questionnaires are a more cost–efficient form of enquiry than interviews. In addition, they cover a wider field of investigation. In terms of equality, a questionnaire asks everyone the same questions without any differences. What makes questionnaires more efficient is that they provide anonymity. Also, questionnaires give the participants enough time to think of the answer because, in the researcher's view, there are differences between participants: some of them are quick to think of the answers while others need more time to make their decisions when answering the question. Another advantage of the questionnaire is that it is very useful for collecting data which is known or about which the respondents have knowledge. For example, respondents can give their views about the methods of teaching. In addition, the survey could prove very helpful if a researcher wants to collect data quickly from the respondents.

One major disadvantage of the questionnaire, which is acknowledged by many researchers, such as Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) and Weir and Roberts (1994), is that the response rate might be low for various reasons: the participants could be children, or those who do not care about honesty when answering the questions. In summary, questionnaires may sometimes, but not always, be answered by respondents in a hurry, perhaps because they are used to answering some of these questions. Some of the questions may require respondents to write their opinions, if

the questionnaire includes open questions. Furthermore, questionnaires could allow some collusion between participants.

Considering the above, both close and open-ended questions were employed in this study. The questionnaire was one of the principal means applied in the current study to collect information from the academic students (a full copy of the questionnaires can be found in appendix 8). The researcher sought guidance from Hutchinson and Waters (1987), Blue and Archibald (1991), Al-Otibi (1994), Al-Busairi (1995), Ferris and Tagg (1996) Ferris (1998), Cheng (2000), Al-Husseini (2004), Al-Sudais (2004), Al-Khatib (2005), Cichocki and Lepetit (2005), Kim (2006), Park (2006) and Cowling (2007).

3.5.3.4 Covering Letter

In order to encourage participation, the questionnaire had a covering letter attached. Benni (2000) and Sarantakos (2005) suggest that the covering letter should start with "Sir" or "Madam"; they go further by recommending the use of coloured paper to enhance the response rate. The covering letter should be worded so as to help the respondents to provide meaningful answers. The main purpose of this letter then is to provide motivation for completing the questionnaire (Mertens, 1988). To this end the main objectives and social significance of the study were discussed. Furthermore, the sponsor was identified. The participants were told that their answers would be kept confidential as only the researcher would be administrating the questionnaire. The letter also gave instructions for the completion and return of the questionnaire (see appendix 7).

The questionnaires were distributed to most if not all the Saudi students at the University of Southampton who are studying for a postgraduate qualification, namely Masters and PhD; an English version of the study was available and was delivered personally to all participants (see appendix 8). Therefore, the instructions for filling out the questionnaire were delivered verbally in both English and Arabic to all participants. This ensured that they could fully understand the questionnaire. The content of the questionnaire is as follows:

- Section 1: Background and general information.

- Section 2: Saudi students' experience in learning English language in Saudi Arabia.

- Section 3: Current Saudi students' preparation for entering tertiary institutions in the United Kingdom.

- Section 4: English language difficulties in the British academic environment.

- Section 5: Cultural experiences and difficulties in the British academic mode.

3.5.4 Observations

Classroom observation was useful for this study because, as Al-Husseini (2004: 179-180) notes, this method of research tool helped in overcoming the subjectivity of the other tools, namely questionnaire and interview. Observation of EAP classes in different subjects took place, e.g. Reading, Listening, and Speaking (see table 4.1); normally the classes had 12 students, of whom the majority were Saudi. The main purpose of the observation is to take notes of what actually happened in the EAP classroom, as the questionnaire and interview cannot provide the kind of information that observation would provide (Al-Sudais, 2004).

Table 3.1: EAP classroom observation

Subject	Length of the time
Reading	95 minutes
Reading British culture	90 minutes
General English	60 minutes
Speaking	100 minutes
Speaking	100 minutes
Listening	90 minutes
Listening	90 minutes
Writing	90 minutes
Independent study	60 minutes
Independent study	60 minutes
Grammar	85 minutes

From the interview, verbal data on students' views and language needs, academic cultural differences, etc. were acquired, whilst the use of the observation technique helped to uncover what actually happens in the classroom. The ultimate objective of observation in the classroom is to help in trying to understand the most typical classroom atmosphere in the EAP programme. Thus the classroom observation aims to answer the following questions:

- What teaching material(s) was/were used in the classroom?

- What teaching method(s) was/were used in the classroom by the teachers?

- What was the behaviour of the teachers/students?

- What was the non-verbal communication of the students/teachers?

- What were the instructional aides?

- To what degree did the observed classroom practice agree/disagree with students' and teachers' responses to the interviews and questionnaires?

The classroom observation also provided first-hand information about the setting, activities, etc. and helped the researcher to compare and contrast what was seen and heard in the classroom with the information provided by the participants through the other data collection approaches, namely questionnaire and interview, as suggested by Benesch (2001), Basturkmen (2006) and Belcher (2006). It was important for the researcher to use a method which allowed some flexibility, at the same time as providing him with rich and appropriate information.

The EAS programme was approached with two purposes in mind. The first purpose was to observe the nature of the current EASP, paying particular attention to items such as time, venue, teaching methods; in other words, to validate what had been ascertained by other methods of investigation (i.e. questionnaire, and interview). The second purpose was to gain information about participants' behaviour, in order to gain more in-depth data and obtain a fuller picture (Al-Husseini, 2004 and Dörnyei, 2007). In order to achieve the two aims, a record sheet (see appendix 9) was designed to record details about the most interesting behaviour noted; a tape recorder was also used, because it is widely believed that a tape recorder will help researchers to fill in details which have been missed (Dudley – Evans and St John, 1998).

Classroom observation allowed for note taking regarding the participants' classroom engagement and oral participation. The role as an observer was not to intervene or participate in any classroom activities with the Saudi students in order to avoid affecting their classroom behaviour. The researcher always sat quietly in the back corner of the EASP classroom and took notes which were then used to develop the interview questions for the EASP teachers and their students and to gain their

reflections in their interviews. The field notes were carefully checked and analysed to discover the salient classroom behaviours of each participant and those of their teachers and classmates in particular sessions, which included the moment when they participated and did not participate in group, whole class discussions, their setting arrangements - whether within the same or different groups from other Saudi students or different gender, - teachers' instructions and gestures, and classmate participation. Although classroom observation was time consuming, it meant that the researcher was able to observe and explore the kind of interpersonal relationships Saudi students had with their tutors and peers.

3.5.5 Students' Diary

Some researchers have found learning diaries to be insufficiently useful, e.g. Nominain (2008), but the researcher nevertheless felt it to be valid and important to explore this method during the pilot study. After the pilot study; the feedback and results led to the abandonment of the proposal that students write a diary to detail their learning experiences in the United Kingdom. The main reason for this research tool being judged inappropriate was the time-consuming nature of diary keeping and the strain that it would place on the research participants.

3.5.6 Methodological Triangulation

This study employed three instruments, namely questionnaire, interview and observation, in order to illustrate the extent to which methodological triangulation could potentially strength both the reliability and validity of the study, and also to confirm the emerging findings (Nomnian, 2008: 71). Cohen *et al.* (2000:12) define methodological triangulation as the use of two or more methods of data collection to study the same phenomena. Therefore using more than one method is strongly recommended in needs analysis research (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998: Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). Methodological triangulation helps to explain more fully the students' language needs and the impact of British academic culture on them. This is done in two ways: first, using different instruments helps in obtaining information which cannot be gathered by using a single method. Second, using different instruments leads to the acquisition of more information about the same topic.

The interview questions and the questionnaire survey were derived from the theoretical categories established in the literature review, and partially from the observations. It is important to try to blend and integrate the use of the three research methods by not simply designing a study that comprises distinct, mutually exclusive approaches, but by addressing issues from the participants' classroom observation and questionnaire, which needed further clarification during the semi-instructed interviews. In order to triangulate its sources of information and research tools, the current study involves data from the students who are studying masters and PhDs, EAP teachers and EAP students. The data were collected by means of three types of research instruments: questionnaire (masters and PhDs), interview (masters and PhDs, EAP teachers and EAP students), and classroom observation (EAP classes).

3.5.7 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are key elements in terms of methodology (Dörnye, 2007). Sarantakos (2005) claims that validity is a measure of precision, accuracy and relevance. He also points out that validity is a measure of the quality of measurement. It will also test the capability of the study to produce findings that are in agreement with theoretical or conceptual values. Moreover, validity will also measure accuracy, which refers to the ability to identify the true value of the items in question (Sarantakos, 2005). In addition, Zeller (1988: 322) claimed that a measure is valid if does what it is intended to do. Alternatively he stated that "an indicator of some abstract concept is valid to the extent that it measures what it purports to measure". Therefore, Al-Saudias (2004) suggested that one of the most common ways of measuring content validity is referring the instrument to a group of experts in the field. Therefore, the researcher referred the entire research instrument (questionnaire, interview, and observation) to a group of teaching staff in the School of Education who specialised in research methodology.

In terms of reliability, Oppenheim (1992: 144) said "… in trying to assess how well each question, or group of questions, does its job, we shall need to use the concept of reliability". Sarantakos (2005) describes reliability as the capacity of measurement to produce consistent results. Therefore, if the instrument produces the same results each time it is used, then that means the method is reliable. The main purpose of reliability is concerned with stability, consistency and accuracy (Gorard, 2001;

Sarantakoas, 2005). It is well known to some researchers that reliability is concerned with determining whether their instruments have been employed in groups other than the original group of subjects, and also to see consistent results across the indicators. Therefore, the test-retest method was used to check on reliability, as De Vaus (1986) suggested. This process has been done via the pilot study, as explained above.

3.6 Tools for Analysis

Data analysis for needs analysis can be undertaken in many different ways (Al-Husseini, 2004; West, 1994; Al-Otibi 1994; Al-Saudias, 2004; Dudley–Evans, and St John, 1998). This study employed both quantitative and qualitative analysis, and these two types of data would be analysed separately to take account of the differences between them. The initial concern upon completion of the questionnaire based data collection was to choose a suitable statistical programme to analyse the numbers it had generated. Two major programmes have been widely used in the Social Sciences empirical studies: SPSS and Excel. The SPSS programme is one of the more reliable programmes used in order to obtain accurate answers, as some researchers claim (e.g. Pallant, 2005). It is thought the Excel programme is very useful for drawing a diagram. Both tools were employed here: Excel in order to make the graphs look more attractive and informative for the reader and SPSS to analyse the numbers.

The questionnaire analysis took place in seven stages: 1) creating a data file; 2) changing the SPSS options; 3) defining the variables; 4) entering data; 5) modifying the data file; 6) screening and cleaning the data which involves checking for errors, finding the errors in the data file and correcting the error in the data file; 7) choosing the right statistical test, namely descriptive, partly because it provides support to the other tools observation and interview. In addition, using other statistical tests such as T-test requires fairly equal numbers. Therefore, as female students were lesser in number than male students and PhD students numbered more than Masters students, Excel was used to draw the graphs and tables because it was thought from the first draft that SPSS was not suitable. For the interviews and classroom observation, there were seven analytical stages: 1) organising the data; 2) immersing myself in the data; 3) generating categories; 4) coding the data; 5) offering interpretation and themes; 6)

searching for alternative understandings; and 7) writing up the findings (Nomnian, 2008: 71-72).

Analysing data, especially qualitative data, is not primarily about description but more about making sense of the data in terms of the research project. To this end the data was sorted into manageable units, to make it easier to analyse, as Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) suggested, by breaking the data down into units of meaning or categories. When coding and categorizing the data, comparisons were drawn between participants' responses and they were fully reviewed; Miles and Huberman (1994: 56) describe the importance of this, "to review a set of field notes, transcribed or synthesized, and to dissect them meaningfully, while keeping the relations between the parts intact, is the stuff of analysis". The process of coding involved careful explanation of categories and focused on elements that facilitate easier sorting. In the coding process, the researcher manually transcribed all the interviews and listened to the classroom observation, highlighting the main ideas which have helped with answering the research questions and dividing them into categories and themes. The Nvivo programme was not useful as it did not support Arabic. In addition, all categories that would not be used in the final research were deleted. (Sarantakos, 2005). The following table (3.2) illustrates the categories and themes of the qualitative data:

Table 3.2 Categories and Themes:

Category	Theme
Category 1: Language problems	**Theme 1**: Reading difficulties **Theme 2**: Writing difficulties **Theme 3**: Listening difficulties **Theme 4**: Speaking difficulties
Category 2: Academic adjustment problems	**Theme 1**: Critical thinking **Theme 2**: Academic research **Theme 3**: In-class participation **Theme 4**: Approach to education
Category 3: Adjustments made over time	**Theme 1**: English Accent **Theme 2**: Presentation of the learning material
Category 4: Factors that helped academic adjustment	**Theme 1**: Listening, observing, and communicating with British peers **Theme 2**: Diversity **Theme 3**: Fewer students in class **Theme 4**: Talking to senior students and the Saudi club **Theme 5**: Interaction with British peers **Theme 6**: Use of computer laboratory and the library
Category 5: Suggestions for the host institution	**Theme 1**: Understanding the background **Theme 2**: More frequent contact with previous students in the same field
Category 6: Suggestions for future Saudi students	**Theme 1**: Come academically prepared **Theme 2**: Come culturally prepared

3.7 Ethical Considerations

As Mertens (1998) suggests, ethics in research should be considered in the research and planning stage and then applied throughout the research process. The researcher has an obligation to respect the needs, rights, desires, and values of the participants; to this end, in the present study, informed consent was given in written form for all the research instruments. Johnson and Christensen (2004: 111) discuss ethics specifically in relation to educational research, and emphasise that it varies from that regarding other social disciplines: "fortunately, studies conducted by educational researchers seldom if ever run the risk of inflicting such severe mental and physical harm on participants. In fact, educational research has historically engaged in research that imposes either minimal or no risk to the participants and has enjoyed a special status with respect to formal ethical oversight". There were no foreseeable risks for the participants in becoming involved with this study, because the results will be used purely to further educational research and not to design a tool to assess them as they may have feared.

In respect of the crucial issue of confidentiality and ownership of the data, the questionnaire was administered and the interviews conducted solely by the researcher. As well as the ethical implications of involving more people in administering the research, it was also deemed useful that the researcher should meet and engage personally with the participants, as the goal of this study is to attempt to identify the Saudi students' language needs and the impact of British academic culture on them. It was made clear to the respondents that their responses would be kept confidential, and would be used for the purpose of this study only. The respondents were informed verbally of the above in both languages - Arabic and English - and also in writing. They were also informed that the data would be owned by the researcher and no-one else would have access to the data.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has scrutinized the importance and the requirements of the methodology, and justified the research design for conducting this study. The study is based on a mixed methods approach to achieve an in-depth understanding of Saudi students' language needs and the impact of cultural variation on them in a British

university. The participants were Saudi students enrolled on EAP courses (the English for academic study course) in the Centre for Language Study and Saudi Masters and Ph.D. students in different schools, as well as EAP teachers at Southampton University, which was the main research site. The tools used have been detailed above and the results obtained will be presented in the next two chapters.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis; Identifying the Sample Groups and Present Situation Analysis (PSA)

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter was concerned with the field procedure and the collection of data serving the present study, and a rationale was provided for the employment and design of the questionnaire, interview and the observation. The data collection process described in the previous chapter took place at the University of Southampton. Where applicable, the results have been extrapolated to make general observations about Saudi students throughout the United Kingdom. As the data were bulky and abundant, the data analysis is divided into two chapters to make it clearer for the reader to follow. This chapter presents the analysis of the data relating to the present situation analysis (PSA). Chapter five is concerned with the analysis of data related to the target situation analysis (TSA). Following the data analysis, there will be a more detailed chapter discussing the implications of the data in greater depth (see chapter six).

To understand fully the information provided in this chapter in terms of the PSA, it is necessary to contextualise it further within the EAP programme at the University of Southampton. Some of the elements of this course are common to all such courses in the UK, but aspects such as constitution of the student body and level of English on acceptance to the course are more specific so need to be highlighted here. In the case of typical function, the course has three aims: first, to raise proficiency in English (covered here by LA); secondly, to develop cultural and study skills (referred to in this thesis as SA and CALA); thirdly, to provide an opportunity for students to settle into British culture and British academic culture in particular (this area is also covered by CALA). The data relating to the PSA is to be assessed in terms of both the requirements of the course and the way these blend with or contradict the expectations of the students.

Southampton students in particular often arrive with relatively low scores on international tests: IELTS 4.5, TOEFL 477 or ibTOEFL 53. Courses are offered over the summer, or more usually over the course of a two-semester term, depending on

the extent of the input needed to meet the requirements of academic courses. The students are expected to attend around 21 hours of classes per week and to produce assignments etc. during independent study. As with most EAP courses across the British University spectrum, key areas focused on in sessions are listening and note taking, reading, grammar, pronunciation, and speaking skills. As mentioned above, the course also concentrates on study techniques, the purpose of seminars, how to write essays, suggestions for efficient note taking and use of the University library (for more details see http://www.soton.ac.uk/cls/english/eap.html). Typically at Southampton, Saudi students find themselves in EAP groups with other Saudi or other Arabic-speaking students, and the ratio of non-Arabic speaking students is relatively low, so this brings unique challenges to both the students and the staff as it not only contradicts the students' expectations: it also raises issues of cultural appropriacy in the classroom, specifically in terms of communication between the genders.

To enable us to measure the data collected and deduce from it useful facts about the PSA, this chapter has been divided thus: first, background and general information in 4.2; second, present situation analysis (PSA) which involves relating data to Saudi students' background, particularly considering language skills (LA); related strategy issues (SA) will be covered in 4.3; and finally, data relating to the cultural aspect of learning analysis (CALA) and related strategy issues (SA) appear in section 4.4. The focus of the data analysis in this chapter is on present situation analysis (PSA) and this will incorporate aspects of language skills analysis (LA), learning strategy analysis (SA) and cultural aspects of learning analysis (CALA) to reveal the complexity of the learning situation. The data presented in this chapter will answer the first and third research questions posed by the thesis, the first being: What is the present situation analysis (PSA) of Saudi students intending to enter a postgraduate programme at British Universities with regard to language and culture? The third is: How can Saudi students best be prepared for a British postgraduate programme of study? The data provide a brief background to the students' situation (their preparation and their English language proficiency and cultural awareness upon arrival here in the United Kingdom), and analyses their former and current experiences of learning English by combining the results from all three research instruments to reveal respondents' perceptions of the learning situation.

4.2 Background: Identifying the Sample Groups

This section provides details of the backgrounds of the study participants. These data relate to the results, and highlight the issues of validity and reliability discussed in the preceding chapter. The background data reveal some issues of relevance to the question of the influence of culture on learning and language level at admittance (see chapter one); it highlights age, gender, marital status, parents' level of education, period of time spent studying English, accommodation, current field and the stage of the study. This helps us to understand the complexity of the situation and the very specific cultural requirements of the students. Finally, this section discusses students' initial experiences learning English within the Saudi education system, considering language skills analysis (LA) in particularly. It includes their views on learning English in schools

4.2.1 Interview Sample: Students and EAP teachers

It was important that PG students be interviewed to provide the TSA sample and that EAP teachers and their students provide the information for the PSA. Therefore, six students who were studying on an EAP programme and eight postgraduate students who were studying for a Masters degree and PhD at the university were chosen for the interview. It was hoped that they would answer accurately without reservation, as the researcher shares their culture and background. The interviews with the students were conducted in Arabic and their gender was mixed, as shown in the table (4.1) below (please note for purposes of anonymity each student was given a code to protect his / her identity):

Table 4.1: EAP and PG students (N=14)

No	Name	Gender	Field	Stage
1	S1	Female	Education	EAP
2	S2	Male	Management	EAP
3	S3	Female	Education	EAP
4	S4	Male	Management	EAP
5	S5	Male	Management	EAP
6	S6	Female	Management	EAP
7	S7	Male	Education	PhD
8	S8	Female	Management	MBA
9	S9	Male	Chemistry	PhD
10	S10	Male	Education	PhD
11	S11	Male	Management	PhD
12	S12	Male	Computer Science	Msc
13	S13	Male	Management	Msc
14	S14	Male	Management	Msc

The EAP teachers' sample was very difficult to organise as it was imperative to include teachers who had been involved in teaching Saudi students over a long period of time, as their understanding of the unique challenges faced by students of this nationality would be greatest. Using information provided by the Deputy Director of the Centre for language Studies, it was possible to find teachers who had been teaching English to Saudi students for at least three years; in addition, some also teach different subjects to the students. The table (4.2) below details the information about the teachers:

Table 4.2: EAP teachers (N=8)

N0	Name	Gender	Number of years teaching Saudi students	Teaching subject
1	T1	Female	4 years	Listening + speaking
2	T2	Female	3 years	Writing
3	T3	Male	3 years	Writing
4	T4	Female	5 years	Speaking
5	T5	Female	6 years	Grammar
6	T6	Female	4 years	British culture
7	T7	Female	5 years	Reading
8	T8	Male	5 years	Deputy Director of the Centre for Language Studies

4.2.2 Questionnaire Sample: Postgraduate Students (Masters and PhD)

4.2.2.1 Age

The first question in the questionnaire asked respondents about their ages as this pertains to understanding the cultural aspects of learning analysis (CALA) element of the research questions. Age can determine students' ability to learn, their style of learning and their ability to adapt to new situations. The age range is varied, since British institutions do not impose an age limit in order for the international students to study for postgraduate programmes. The data describing the age range is distributed into four groups, as shown in table (4.3).

Table 4.3: Age distribution of Saudi Students (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
22-26	11	17.7
27-31	19	30.6
32-36	23	37.1
37-above	9	14.5
Total	62	100.0

The above table shows that the majority of respondents were aged between 27 and 36 years (67.7%). These findings were not surprising, as the majority of Saudi students who are attempting to pursue their postgraduate study arrive in the United Kingdom a few years after their undergraduate graduation. For the purposes of understanding student expectations, it is important to recognise that many of the older students have considerable professional and life experience. Therefore, their age may be a problem in terms of respect for, and ability to adapt to, the British learning environment. In view of this, it is important that EAP courses teach the reasons behind the methodologies they employ to encourage older students to be more accepting of them and to recognise their potential value for their future academic learning environment. The fact that the students are older is also important (see 4.3.2), because in the literature there are major debates about language learning for adults and about the appropriate age of introduction to a foreign language (Chomsky, 2009). Thus, the Saudi students' language acquisition skills may need more attention when they are being taught in the EAP classroom.

4.2.2.2 Gender

In the EAP classroom in the UK, some Saudi students encounter members of the opposite gender in an educational setting for the first time in their lives. This is something that needs to be handled carefully by staff, and it is apparent from the data collected that whilst this is often the case at Southampton, it is unfortunately not uniformly so, perhaps suggesting the need for more careful guidelines in this area. Indeed, gender is an issue that goes to the heart of many of the cultural adjustment problems that Saudi students experience, as illustrated by the fact that the researcher, as a male, encountered some issues with data collection from females (see chapter one). As a result, more males are included in the study and this cannot be seen to reflect any limitation imposed by the researcher on his own data collection. Of the total of 62 Saudi students who participated in this survey, 77% were male, and the rest were female (23%). These outcomes are not surprising, for two reasons. As well as the rejections of the invitations to participate in the study by female students, there were further cultural reasons for the bias, in particular the fact that those females who wish to study outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia must travel with a relative and this reduces the ratio of Saudi male to female overseas students. There are other cultural consequences of the Saudi differentiation between the sexes that impact more directly on study, and they will be addressed later in this chapter (4.4.2.2)

4.2.2.3 Parents' Education Status

The respondents were asked about their parents' level of education, as learning attitudes in people who are from the first educated generation are uniquely different from those of the majority of European students. As the education system in Saudi Arabia is in its infancy, this question was of particular relevance to this study. Historically speaking, when the culture of valuing knowledge is being established the acquisition of that knowledge is prioritised over the capacity to question it, and it is this valuing of knowledge over critical thinking that goes to the root of the problems faced by the Saudi students. The criterion for answering this question was based on basic literacy skills; i.e. reading and writing. Of the total participants, only 21 students (33.9%) answered that their parents were not educated, while 41 students (66.1%) indicated that their parents were educated. The objective of this question was to ascertain whether the respondents' parents had influenced them regarding studying abroad, and thus establish to what extent their parents' level of education

affected learning. There was an expectation that educated parents would understand the importance of English because of the higher possibility that students will have the chance to learn English more than those parents who were uneducated. Thus, whilst our sample is reflective of Saudi students currently studying in the UK, it does not necessarily reflect those who may do so in future years.

4.2.2.4 Marital Status

In the case of the Saudi students at Southampton, there is a strong and supportive Saudi community, which helps the students to balance their experiences in Saudi Arabia with those in the UK, as there are many lifestyle differences between British (and other European) students and the Saudis. The fourth question on the questionnaire asked students about their marital status, as this is one cultural difference that separates them from their British classmates in the academic environment. The Saudi students come from a culture in which many marry at a young age and this is a factor that can also have a significant number of study-related issues. As predicted, the majority of students in this survey were married (88.7%). As well as a cultural and religious expectation to marry young, this statistic also relates to the fact that the Saudi government gives overseas students a family allowance for the duration of their study. Therefore, many married students who come to the United Kingdom to study bring their family with them. This again sets them apart from the traditional demography of British Universities, and it is likely that the pressure of family life contributes to problems that many Saudi students experience with time management (see 5.4.3), prioritising study and the pressure to succeed. The percentage of students in the study who have their families with them can be seen in figure (4.1) below.
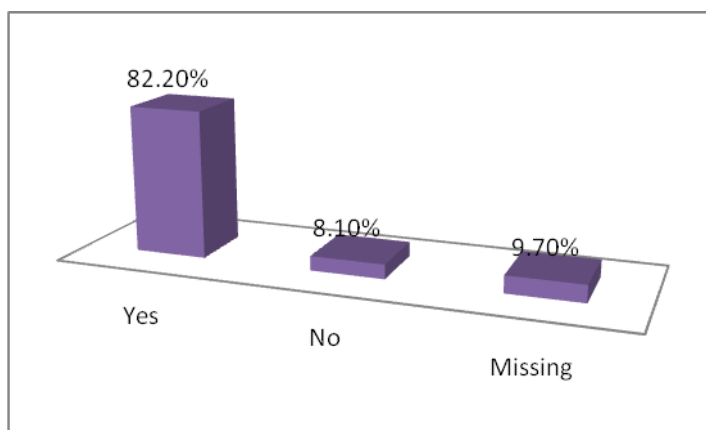
Figure 4.1: Respondents with family in the United Kingdom (N=62)

More than half of the respondents, 51 students (82.20%), indicate that they have their family in the United Kingdom. Again, this result is an important aspect of cultural aspects of learning analysis (CALA), as it not only sets them apart from the majority of their British peers, but also adds to the time pressures they are likely to experience (see chapter six).

4.2.2.5 Accommodation

The seventh question concerned the respondents' accommodation in the United Kingdom, to determine their opportunities for using English outside their academic studies, thus affecting successful language acquisition. Figure (4.2) illustrates their responses in percentages. The largest number of the respondents, 54 (87%), live in private accommodation, e.g. flats or houses. The second largest number, 7 (11%), live in the halls of residence that are provided by the university.
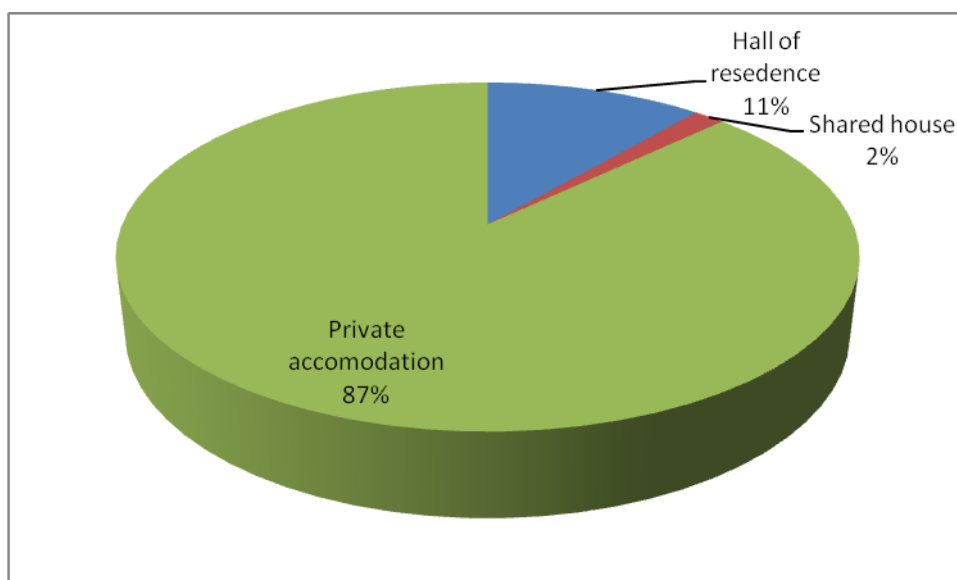
Figure 4.2: Students' accommodation (N=62)

The fact that Saudi students live in private accommodation can be positive or negative: positive in terms of having their own space where they can study whenever they want, sleep and get up without any noise, etc.; however, this might prevent them from participating in life in the outside world, which is especially the case for those who are doing a PhD, as they do not need to attend the university every day. The researcher believes that it would be more valuable and have a positive effect on both language skills analysis (LA) and cultural aspects of learning analysis (CALA), if they could live in shared accommodation or with a host family. It is not necessary

that they reside with native speakers, but it would be helpful if they were to stay with people whose first language is not Arabic as this would help them in two ways: first, with practising their English language, and second, they will learn a new culture which will help them to cope with the British way of life. With the situation as it is currently, the emphasis placed on teaching cultural difference and the British way of life in the EAP curriculum should be heavy.

4.2.2.6 Field of Study

The questionnaire sought to determine the percentage of Saudi students who were enrolled in the various fields of study offered by Southampton University. This was relevant when the data gathering involved students who had already embarked on their postgraduate programme at the time of the survey. These data are particularly useful for the target situation analysis (TSA) which will be conducted in the following chapter. The students were all studying in one of the university's three faculties, which are the Faculty of Engineering, Science and Mathematics which includes eleven schools, the Faculty of Law, Arts and Social Sciences which involve nine schools, and the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences which include five academic schools (for more details, see: http://www.soton.ac.uk/about/academicschools/index.html). The outcomes of the responses are provided in table (4.4).

Table 4.4: Current field of study (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Education	10	16.1
Management	19	30.6
Humanities	5	8.1
Engineering	2	3.2
Art	2	3.2
Social Science	2	3.2
Chemistry	5	8.1
Health	2	3.2
Psychology	1	1.6
Oceanography	2	3.2
Physics & astronomy	1	1.6
Biology	3	4.8
Electronics & computing	6	9.7
Geography	1	1.6
Mathematics	1	1.6
Total	62	100.0

These results clearly indicate that the Saudi students studying in the field of Management are the major group of respondents in this survey, and the field of Education came next. This is in line with the researcher's expectations in view of the reasons for sending Saudis overseas to study that were detailed in the introduction. Therefore, the data showed that a large number of the students are studying social sciences in general. This would help the EAP organisers and teachers in both countries to recognise that EAP courses need to be focused more on social language needs, with the possible addition of a programme focused to a greater extent on targeted language.

4.2.2.7 Saudi Student's ESL Experience in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

With reference to the language skills analysis (LA), this part of the data analysis provides detailed background information relating to the Saudi students' experiences of learning English as a second language in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This is very helpful for identifying why their language may be unsuitable for the EAP environment. The initial question on this issue related to when English was first taught in the Saudi school system. These data are illustrated in figure (4.3) below:
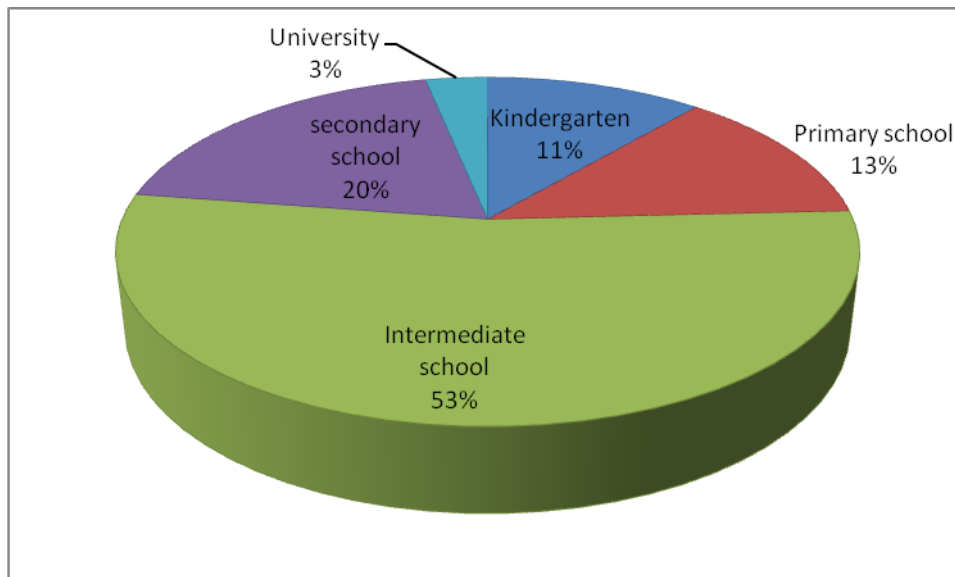
Figure 4.3: Age respondents began learning English (N=62)

More than half of the population of the study, 33 (53%), responded that they started learning English when they first went to intermediate school in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (13-15 years old). Eight students (12%) answered that they started learning English in primary school; presumably these students were studying in

private schools because English was not part of the primary school curriculum until 2004 (see chapter one). Seven students (11%) reported that they had begun to learn English when they first went to kindergarten. Twelve students (20%) indicated that they first started to learn English when they went to secondary school. For the purposes of present situation analysis (PSA), it is useful for EAP course teachers or organisers to know this information to better understand the learning styles and needs of the students (see chapter two). Therefore, this result shows that Saudi students start learning English quite late, as discussed above.

4.2.2.8 English as Second language in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Students Satisfaction

This question asked students about the English language courses which are provided within the Saudi education system. The outcomes from this particular question were not surprising; previous studies such as that of Alansari (1995) have found similar results. 58 students (93.5%) stated that the English language programme provided by the Saudi education system is not sufficient to meet international demand, while only 4 (6.5%) indicate that it is sufficient. In terms of the English language learning experiences of Saudi students, the interview questions asked about the differences in their experiences of learning English in the Saudi Arabian school system and the use of the English language in Britain. Initially, with regard to the description of their experiences in learning English in the Saudi Arabian school system, most of the students interviewed explained the negative aspects of their experiences. The following comments were made by students:

> *"I learned English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for six years during my study at intermediate and secondary school but when I tried to practise my English I did not find people who spoke English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia."* (Extract 1: PG S7, English translation)

> *"You know we have to study English 4 times per week when I graduated from my secondary school I could not understand anybody speaking English in the real world."* (Extract 2: PG S10, English translation)

> *"I loved English ever since I entered school but I could not speak it with anybody out of school, even at*

the hospital where you supposedly find that most of the doctors speak English. In fact they prefer to speak Arabic than English to learn it" (Extract 3: EAP S2, English translation)

From the above extracts, the common theme shared by these students is that their experiences of learning English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were described as not useful; this clearly accounts for their disappointment with their experiences of learning English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It seems that they had difficulties in applying their knowledge of English as a second language, as taught in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to a real English-speaking environment (see chapter seven). This result may be explained by the fact that the English language they were taught should be applicable to a real English-speaking environment. However, respondents in these interviews stated that their English proficiency did not meet their expectations.

" I was not happy at all with my level of English that I gained from learning English in Saudi Arabia, because when I tried to speak to a nurse in Saudi Arabia I could not explain what I wanted from her, I know there is medical terminology, but even the general language." (Extract 4: EAP S1, English translation)

This indicates that the people who are involved in English language learning in the Saudi Arabian education system need to consider this issue and develop more practical English, which would be more appropriate for a second language learning environment. In addition, it is inaccurate to blame the course alone, since the students and their parents share the responsibility for failing the English programme. The researcher believes that if students take their studying of English seriously, they will achieve far better results than they had done previously. In addition, the results obtained from the interview showed the low quality of teaching, whether because of teachers or the facilities, such as language laboratories etc., as two students stated below:

"You know that most of the English teachers in Saudi are from another country who hardly pronounced some letters correctly e.g. th and z or s" (Extract 5: PG S13, English translation)

> *"I used to study in a school where there was no equipment that could aid us in learning English e.g. cassette recorder"* (Extract 6: PG S14, English translation)

This gap in the education system in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is mainly owing to inexperience and funding, is at the crux of the problem of establishing effective consistent language teaching throughout the Kingdom. Some researchers (see Alansari, 1995) have argued that even the Saudi English teachers are not sufficiently qualified to be teachers. Perhaps they need more training, as most of them have graduated from Saudi universities rather than spending some time learning teaching skills in a country such as the US or the UK (see 7.3.1.1).

In the case of the absence of EAP skills in the Saudi learning environment, it is important to highlight that this is the result of a lack of understanding of strategy analysis (SA) and CALA on the part of the educators, resulting from the fact that Saudi students studying abroad in an English speaking context are a new phenomenon. Therefore, whilst students are quick to blame the gaps in their English language education on the course designers in Saudi Arabia and the quality of the teaching, we should remember that this is one of the first studies of its kind and as such is intended to help redress some of the difficulties experienced by Saudi students abroad, as these are not yet fully understood. For more on what can be proposed as a result of these findings, refer to Chapter 6. In the interim, EAP training will remain more effective in the UK, and the University of Southampton can further seek to understand the extent and character of that usefulness.

To conclude this section, the three essential resources for this study aimed to provide the reader with an understanding of the student's background and a sense of where they experience difficulties that could be addressed by the EAP course at Southampton. The major finding of this section was that the majority of the students who participated in this study were studying for a PhD, as explained above. It was also found that most of the participants were in the group aged 32-36 years. Regarding their marital status, the majority of them have their family with them in the UK because of the funding given to them by their sponsors. The results also reveal that, because they are accompanied by their family, they have excellent

private accommodation for cultural reasons. Regarding the language issues, the participants' judgement of the language course provided by the Ministry of Education was that it did not satisfy them.

4.3 Present Situation Analysis (PSA): Language-based Needs

This section investigates whether Saudi students studied English specifically taught for the purpose of preparing them to enter British postgraduate programmes; if yes: Which course? And: What was their level of achievement in that course? More important, this section also requires information about whether they took any internationally recognised test(s) before coming to the United Kingdom and if so, then which one(s). In addition, students were asked whether they had attended classes on, or read about British culture in general, and British academic culture in particular, before leaving Saudi. Finally, students were asked to estimate their level of English when they arrived in all the four skills areas. The key purpose of such self-assessment is to ascertain in which areas the respondents experienced problems, as it is recognised to have limitations as a tool for definitive analysis. Information gathered on the problems identified can ideally be applied to EAP course design at Southampton, as discussed in the discussion chapter and conclusion to this thesis. In addition, it is heartening to note that students were able to assess their language within the context of academic language task requirements, i.e. in terms of listening to extended speech, discussing topics in class and writing essays; as this suggests, they had already gained considerable understanding of university requirements from the course that is currently available.

4.3.1 Academic English Preparation Course in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The questionnaire posed a question to see whether the students had attended any extra language courses in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to judge whether there were any language suitable courses currently available. The results demonstrate that more than 51.6% of the total respondents had attended an English course in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (other than their schooling) before coming to the United Kingdom, whilst 48.4% had not attended any courses apart from the language courses provided within the Saudi education system; this confirmed that there were courses which

students can attend privately e.g. courses provided by the British Council. In view of the fact that additional courses do not appear to satisfy students with their language skills on arrival in the U.K., their value is deemed limited as has been revealed by the EAP teachers in the United Kingdom, and from the students' self estimation of their level upon arrival (see 4.3.6). To further understand this issue, students were also asked about the nature of the English course they had taken in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in order to prepare them to enter the British higher education programme. The results are shown in table (4.5) below.

Table 4.5: Programme that students attend before entering the postgraduate programme in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (N=62)

	Frequency	Percentage
General English	24	38.7
EAP	3	4.8
IELTS preparation	4	6.5
None	31	50.0
Total	62	100.0

In response to the question, half of the respondents (50.0%) answered that they had taken an English course, although only 3 (4.8%) students responded that they had attended an EAP course; whilst four (6.5%) had attended IELTS preparation classes, and twenty four (38.7%) answered that they had attended general English courses. This result suggests that most courses that are provided in Saudi Arabia aim to teach general English rather than English for specific purposes, e.g. EAP. The only explanation for this is that most students just want to learn English for general purposes in order to find a job, but as many students are planning to go abroad in order to pursue their studies, they need to improve their level of English in a way that is targeted at academic purposes. These findings support the stated aims of the University in terms of running a targeted academic English course, as given above.

4.3.2 Testing

The survey posed a question to determine if the students had a standardised and recognised English Language level on entrance to their U.K. study programme. They were asked if they had taken any official English test or any other test in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia before coming to the United Kingdom. This will help in

identifying the students' present level for the present situation analysis (PSA), instead of waiting until the students arrive to start their EAP course. The results show that a total of 37 students (59.7%) responded that they had not sat an official test, while only 25 (40.3%) students answered that they had sat an official test before coming to the United Kingdom. Students were asked the above question because it was important to establish whether they were familiar with any of the tests. Also, EAP teachers were asked whether taking an internationally recognised test, e.g. IELTS or TOFEL, is necessary and their answers were interesting. For example, the extract below from two teachers showed that students in general and Saudis in particular should take these kinds of tests before they arrive in the United Kingdom to afford clear information about their level of English.

> *"Well, I suppose we have a procedure when they arrive, they all bring a test with them, get them to write an essay, in October we interview them; we didn't manage to do that with the latest intake. But that gives us a reasonably good picture. I would prefer that they all arrived with an internationally recognised qualification e.g. IELTS".* (Extract 7: EAP T8, Original in English)

> *"I would prefer them to come having done an IELTS test, and I would like to impose a minimum level for writing".* (Extract 8: EAP T7, Original in English)

The purpose of these types of test is also to give a clear indication about whether they know general English, because some of the EAP courses in the United Kingdom required at least intermediate level for most of their student intake, as discussed in chapter one and as revealed by the deputy director of the language centre, quoted below:

> *"Well, I think I should know the level they're at before they come here, as I said earlier. We should have some indication that they've reached a certain level in general English at least, that we can start to put academic English on top of???, and in fact we're getting people who are complete beginners in general English and not ready to take part in an academic English course".* (Extract 9: EAP T8, Original in English)

Teachers pointed out that, if students sat an international test before undertaking a programme of study in the United Kingdom, doing so would help to save time and money and also, more important, manage student's expectations. In addition, it would prevent any disappointment for the students, and they will be better able to plan their future studies, for example whether they need to study English for a further year or perhaps longer. Also, one of the EAP teachers stated:

> *"I don't think that you're ever in a position to know entirely. When they come here, we make an assessment, so before we start teaching we have certain information about a student and I think that's probably about as good as it can get. In terms of level, obviously, it could get far better if they could have some sort of grade before they arrived, because then the ones who were too low a level could be given a clear message that they needed more than a year and that would be built into their expectations".* (Extract 10: EAP T7, Original in English)

Obviously there are different types of test, not only IELTS or TOEFL, and each university or language school has its own battery of assessments e.g. Reading University, but the question which should be asked here is: how reliable are those tests which are provided by language centres in the UK? One piece of evidence for the accuracy of the IELTS or TOEFL examinations is that most universities around the globe ask students when they apply for places to prove that they have a good level of English, and these two examinations are judged to hold primacy in terms of reliability. In addition, the survey aimed to be precise by asking a question about the name of the English test(s) completed in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The responses are shown in table (4.6) below.

Table 4.6: Tests taken by Students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
IELTS	11	17.7
TOEFL	12	19.4
Other	4	6.5
Missing	35	56.5
Total	62	100.0

Of the total 62 respondents, only 4 (6.5%) indicated that they had sat another official test different from the IELTS and TOEFL. Twelve (19.4%) students specified that they had selected TOEFL as their official English test in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This is because TOFEL is more popular than IELTS in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (presumably throughout the Gulf region, as most of the institutions require TOEFL and most of the English language institutions provide a preparation programme for it). Eleven (17.7%) respondents answered that they had taken an IELTS test. It is clear that a basic language requirement before coming to the United Kingdom should be to sit an internationally recognised test, and for the purpose of answering the third research question this is a valuable judgement. It is also necessary to point out that it is important that students should determine the entrance levels required of them by the institution they plan to study at, and if possible (or applicable) also which qualification is preferred.

An additional problem that some students face on arrival is, as Bloor (1994) suggests, that some international students do not recognise their own lack of proficiency in English because they did not sit any kind of test, e.g. IELTS, before coming to the United Kingdom. Compounding this problem is the fact that most international students are unaware of the new cultural style of learning that will be required of them prior to commencing their academic courses in the United Kingdom. This is something that this research addresses, by proposing that, before they leave their own countries, international students should be made aware of the cultural and strategic learning practices used in the United Kingdom system. Upon arrival, international students would ideally be more familiar with their new academic environment, including lectures and tutorials; differences noted by students also include methods of research and presenting academic papers. For instance, as Al-Oadi (2000) noticed, Saudi students in the Saudi academic context are accustomed to relying heavily on their lecturers or professors to provide them with everything they need. This mismatch leads to problems for both students and tutors, especially so as one key to cultural disparity lies student/teacher relations (see 6.2.7). Thus it is imperative that, when designing courses EAP tutors in the UK take into account these kinds of disparities and areas of potential miscommunication and build them into the courses provided to these students. Finally, according to the UK

Border Agency it is compulsory that students should have at least 3 in IELTS in order to get a studying visa.

4.3.3 Proficiency upon Arrival: Four Skills

Students were asked in the questionnaire to estimate their language level to assist in the analysis of their language skills at the time they left the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. These figures are provided in view of the fact that the students have already had the opportunity to experience the demands of academic writing, listening and speaking, as presented by the EAP course at Southampton. The levels they were asked to identify in terms of themselves were provided according to those widely used by most teaching language institutions. This is illustrated in table (4.7) below:

Table 4.7: Students' level when arriving to the UK (N=62)

	Very bad	Bad	Moderate	Good	Very good	Excellent
Writing	25.8	24.2	21.0	17.7	6.5	4.8
Reading	17.7	14.5	29.0	16.1	14.5	8.1
Listening	16.5	17.7	17.7	17.7	14.5	16.1
Speaking	12.9	16.1	22.6	22.6	9.7	16.1

The rating scale for each English language macro skill ranged from very bad to excellent, as can be seen above. The self-estimation of the proficiency level of their English speaking indicates that there were eight (12.1%) students who estimated that they regarded their prior proficiency level of speaking English as very bad, whereas ten (16.1%) students responded that they were regarded as having a good level of spoken English. Moreover, in accordance with expectations, the interview revealed that speaking is the strongest skill for Saudi students, as EAP teachers said:

> *"they are commonly quite fluent in their speaking"*
> (Extract 11: T4 Original in English)

> *"Well, there is no doubt that by talking to my colleagues speaking is the strongest skill of Saudi students"* (Extract 12: T7, Original in English)

> *"Well, the most striking and obvious difference, if you like, between the balance of their skills, we're talking about their reading, writing and listening and*

speaking, is that in most cases, the vast majority of cases, Saudi students have relatively good speaking" (Extract 13: EAP T2, Original in English)

Saudi students' self-estimation of the proficiency level of their listening English and its results are presented in table (4.9) above; these show the students' perspective that the highest frequency of students' listening estimation is bad, moderate and good at 17.7%. Nine (14.5%) students answered 'very good'. Also, the extracts below illustrate that their listening was not good:

"Their listening skills are relatively weak" (Extract 14: EAP T6, Original in English)

Despite this, in the L1 environment Saudi learners find the listening skill to be one of the easiest skills in terms of improving it. Therefore, after experiencing EAP programmes delivered in the United Kingdom, their level of listening had improved; one EAP teacher said:

"Their listening is not as good, but it improves quite quickly, I think" (Extract 15: EAP T4, Original in English)

"Just increasing familiarity and confidence, you know. When they arrive, you talk to them and I have real problems finding out very basic information, because they can't understand what I'm saying; a lot of them can't. But give them a month in the English speaking environment and their ears are tuned in and they're usually significantly better." (Extract 16: EAP T1, Original in English)

Saudi students' self-estimation of the proficiency level of their reading in English and the results demonstrate that the least frequent ranking was excellent, with just 5 (8.1%) students, while the most frequent ranking was moderate at 29%. This indicates the low level of students when they arrived to join the EAP programme. Also, EAP teachers were less impressed with the students' reading level:

"Their reading is all right," (Extract 17: EAP T7, Original in English)

Saudi students' self-estimation of the proficiency level of their writing English and its results are presented in table (4.7) above, illustrating that the students' perspective the highest ranking was very bad when they left the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This indicates that, as expected, the writing skill is judged the weakest amongst Saudi students; some of the EAP teachers were not happy with students' writing when they first arrived, as one of them stated:

> *"Their writing is a serious, serious problem for the vast majority of them. It's almost as though when they're learning English in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, nobody teaches them to write. I can't believe that's true, but their writing tends to be very poor".* (Extract 18: EAP T3, Original in English)

Generally speaking, it seems that the Saudi students arrive at Southampton University with a range of levels and different needs. The interview results showed that not all the students were struggling when they arrived, but the majority of them were not good enough to commence their postgraduate courses without further language instruction, as EAP teachers claimed:

> *"I have a few top groups, so they're generally pretty good. I think they're at a good level to be doing the course. Some of them are where they could be doing a postgraduate degree and very, very strong and others still have a way to go"* (Extract 19: EAP T1, Original in English)

> *"Well, when they came, all but that handful would not have been in a position to start a postgraduate degree. Their language level was just not high enough and their knowledge of academic conventions wasn't at the right level. So I think the vast majority of them needed to join the course".* (Extract 20: EAP T5, Original in English)

> *"I would say it was absolutely essential. Of course, they ... the students that are coming to us are arriving with a very wide range of levels of proficiency in language and I guess at different stages in their kind of academic or professional careers".* (Extract 21: EAP T8, Original in English)

Overall, based on the evidence above and comparing the results from both the questionnaire and the interview, it has been found that proficiency levels in reading and writing display a larger difference than those of speaking and listening. According to the outcomes, it can be said that the Saudi students had not been granted sufficient time or opportunity in Saudi Arabia to improve the proficiency level of their writing and reading. Therefore, this suggests Saudi students were not sufficiently prepared to commence their postgraduate programme without attending an EAP programme; one of the EAP teachers stated:

> *"Well, I think it does. I think the problem is that in a way, we're trying to deal with students who aren't at the level they need to be to start the programme and then go on and do postgraduate programmes, so I think if students are at the right level, there's the ability on the programme to give them an excellent preparation for that".* (Extract 22: EAP T7, Original in English)

Thus it is a key recommendation, in line with RQ3 (see 7.2), that students should undertake some kind of EAP course, either in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia or in the United Kingdom. The following chapter asks a similar question of students in the target learning situation, and for the most part a comparison of the results reflects favourably on the value of the EAP course offered at Southampton University.

4.3.4 English for Academic Purposes in the United Kingdom

To validate the results of the language element of the present situation analysis (PSA), the questionnaire asked the respondents whether they had attended EAP courses in the United Kingdom before commencing their studies. Of the total 62 respondents, more than half of them (82.3%) answered that they had taken an EAP course in the United Kingdom before starting their academic study. Eleven (17.7%) students responded that they had not taken any EAP courses in the United Kingdom. This is because some of the students had studied for their first degree in English, or possibly some of them are specialists in English. After asking the students about their preparation in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the questionnaire posed a question about their preparation in the United Kingdom. Their responses are provided in table (4.8) below.

Table 4.8: English preparation course attended previously (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
GE & EAP	28	45.2
EAP	24	38.7
IELTS prep	6	9.7
None	4	6.5
Total	62	100.0

The questionnaire asked those who had taken an EAP course about the duration of that course. The responses to this question are given in table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9: Duration of EAP study in the United Kingdom (N=62)

	Frequency	Percentage
1-3 months	9	14.5
3-6 months	11	17.7
6-9 months	16	25.8
9-12 months	10	16.1
more than a year	4	6.5
Missing	12	19.4
Total	62	100.0

Apart from the missing data, only 4 (6.5%) students answered that they had spent more than a year studying in the United Kingdom. The majority of the students indicated that they had spent between 6 and 12 months, while 20 students had indicated that they spent less than 6 months. There is some benefit to attending EAP courses here in the UK (see below). For example, it is very helpful for students to adapt to their new academic culture, as found by (Nomnian, 2008). Therefore, not only Saudi students should attend EAP courses but most international students should do so; however, whether this is long enough is certainly a question for debate, and the answer will be provided in the discussion chapter (chapter six).

This part of the questionnaire provides data about Saudi students' current preparation, whether in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia or the United Kingdom, before entering the postgraduate programme in the United Kingdom. At the outset, the survey posed a question about the importance of EAP for study. The results showed that the majority of the students (93.5%) indicated that EAP was important for success in their academic field. Just four (6.5%) students answered that EAP does

not seem important for their academic studies. From the outcomes obtained from the questions above, it seems that most of the students realised the importance of EAP for studying in their field in general. What is more, the interview results showed that the majority of the EAP teachers and students were in favour of this kind of course, for varying reasons. For example, it helps the students by preparing them so that they can cope with and manage the new education environment, as the extracts below illustrate. Their responses revealed what this research seeks to highlight: i.e. their language needs are intrinsically linked to their need for strategic and cultural understanding:

> *And I think this kind of course is pretty much essential, if you have the language skills, in order to help you manage that transition from the kind of educational background that you're coming from to the educational learning and teaching environment here, you're going to experience here in Southampton, which as I say is very different and which will help you with the kind of transition and adjustment phase.* (Extract 23: EAP T8, Original in English)

> *"Attending this programme (EAP) is very crucial for us as it prepared us to commence our postgraduate level next year; I think we badly need it to learn more about the academic language and how to conduct a research etc."* (Extract 24: EAP S4, English translation)

> *"The main reason behind taking this course is to learn how to conduct research e.g. doing interview, designing questionnaire etc."* (Extract 25: EAP S6, English translation)

Another reason that students should attend an EAP course is the low level and poor preparation of Saudi students (see 4.3.4 and 4.3.6) when starting their postgraduate programme in the United Kingdom, as explained above, and the extract below from two of the EAP teachers confirms this:

> *"The vast majority of them badly need the course. We've got probably 5 or 6 who could have missed doing this course, I would say, but other than that I think it is meeting a real need".* (Extract 26: EAP T2, Original in English)

"Students did not prepare well in order to start their postgraduate programme straight away: We don't really believe that anybody in this class will actually be ready to go on to a postgraduate programme".
(Extract 27: EAP T3, Original in English)

It was apparent from the attitudes of both students and teachers that sending students abroad to study on a postgraduate course in a foreign language that they are not very familiar with is likely to be a costly endeavour, which will frequently prove frustrating and demoralising for those involved on both sides. The researcher believes that EAP courses in the UK could benefit students in their present situation in two ways: first, to improve their level of English in general and their academic English, which they badly need in order to succeed when commencing their postgraduate degree master and PhD, in particular; secondly, this will help them to adapt easily to their new academic life with minimum culture shock (see chapter six for more details).

To conclude this section, regarding the language issue, the participants' level of English was low as a result of the poor preparation that the Saudi students had undertaken before coming to the UK, not only in language terms but also with regard to cultural differences. Thus most of them had to attend a language course in the UK, whether general English or EAP. It could save the students a lot of money and time if they had studied English in SA before they arrived. This is not to say that students do not need to study EAP, because the results of the interviews showed that both teachers and students thought that studying EAP in the UK was crucial, even if they had already met the required level of English, as this would help them get to know the British academic system. It is unsurprising, therefore, that students reported that they were not satisfied with the English course provided by the Saudi education system, as has been discovered in earlier studies (e.g. Al-tuwaijri, 1982).

4.4 Present Situation Analysis (PSA): Cultural Aspects of Learning Analysis (CALA)

In the previous section, language-based needs were discussed in the light of present situation analysis (PSA). This section focuses on the specific issues posed by the different classroom cultures in the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to determine in what areas students identify themselves as critically affected

by those differences, based on cultural aspects of learning analysis (CALA). This cultural aspect of learning, as discussed in this chapter, relates partially to strategy analysis (SA) as it is most significantly influenced by the transition from a teacher-dependent to a student-centred learning environment (see chapter one).

4.4.1 Cultural Aspects of Learning Analysis (CALA): Previous Knowledge about Cultural Differences

This data identifies whether students had attended courses or studied British culture before coming to the United Kingdom, with the purpose of informing EAP course designers of students' areas of lack in respect of cultural knowledge. Multiple aspects of British culture differ from that the students are familiar with, as described in the introduction, and it is important that the aims of the EAP course are to emphasise not only what is present in British culture, but also how that differs from Saudi culture, and to suggest strategies the students might employ to manage the impact of these differences both psychologically and practically. The questionnaire posed the question about studying British culture in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the results showed that fifty-seven (91.9%) students responded that they had not studied British culture in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, while just five students (8.1%) had studied it. The following question asked whether they had read about British culture in SA, and the results showed a total of 39 (62.9%) students had not read about British culture. 21 (33.9) students answered that they had read about it, perhaps suggesting that they had some awareness of its importance before leaving the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The outcomes reveal that Saudi students seemed to be unfamiliar with British culture in terms of reading about it or attending any course that provides necessary information. This would therefore be indicative of their poor preparation in terms of the British academic culture. However, to follow up on this, in the interview, a question was posed and one of the students stated that:

> *"As a student, who has a scholarship from the university, I had to attend a three-day course about British lives and culture but it was not enough"*
> (Extract 28: PG S7, English translation)

This reveals that there is some recognition in the Saudi University system of the differences between what the students travelling to the U.K. have previously experienced and what they will experience in the British academic environment. Also, the results from the data above illustrate Saudi student may have difficulties in dealing with the British education system.

4.4.2 Cultural Aspects of Learning Analysis (CALA): Differences in Education System

The element of learning in another country is supposedly one of the most difficult and challenging problems that international students face (see Park, 2006; Kaur, 2006; Mostafa, 2006; and Nomnian, 2008). This is even more difficult for Saudi students who come from a very conservative society, which is in multiple ways opposite to the permissive, questioning and liberal society of Britain. This has been recognised by both teachers and students; however, one teacher usefully commented:

> *"I think this applies not just to Saudi students but to many others as well, but even if you have the… good level of language proficiency, so you've got a high 6.5 or local equivalent score, for example, if you're coming here into the United Kingdom from a background of having had your education up to that point in Saudi, you'll find that the education, the learning and teaching sort of culture in this country is very different to the kind of culture you've experienced up to now".* (Extract 29: EAP T4, Original in English)

In the UK, students are required to work independently and this is sometimes difficult for non-native students. During the observation, it was noted that the majority of students did not know what to do in the independent class. It seemed that this was the first time they had had this experience as the researcher noticed when observing that the students felt bored and were unwilling to work. This caused some discord between the students and the EAP teachers; one of the EAP teachers said:

> *"I think that they're not used to … they're not used to the degree of independence which is expected of them, here".* (Extract 30: EAP T7, Original in English)

The only explanation for this is that students may be do not understand the aim behind working independently, which is to help them to cope when studying for their

masters and PhD degrees; it is a slow learning process for them and one that needs to be explained to them in terms of the learning rationale behind it (see the discussion chapter). Some students prefer to work alone and so complained about the independent classes; one female student said:

> *"My biggest wish is that they leave it (the independent class) as optional because I can work from anywhere"*
> (Extract 31: EAP S3, English translation)

From the extracts above, it seems that both students and EAP teachers have difficulties in understanding each other's cultures in terms of the way of learning. With respect to this comment, CALL and internet-based language learning forums are starting to fulfil this need for many people and this is certainly something to consider with respect to RQ3 (see 7.2). Not all the students have the same problems, because some students did express a positive attitude about learning independently, perhaps because they were accustomed to it; another female student stated:

> *"I didn't find any difficulty in working during the independent study, as I taught for nearly ten years"*
> (Extract 32: EAP S5, English translation)

4.4.2.1 Group Work

A key learning method which can be described as a cultural aspect of learning and is new to Saudi students is working in a team, and the results illustrated in the table (4.10) below indicate that nearly half of the Saudi students (48.4%) have difficulties with this. From experience, however, the researcher would suggest that problems in this area can be heavily influenced by both group composition and teacher organisation, so these criteria should also be considered in further analysis of these results.

Table 4.10: Problems with group work (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Always	1	1.6
Often	4	6.5
Sometimes	25	40.3
Rarely	18	29.0
Never	14	22.6
Total	62	100.0

Nevertheless, it was interesting to discover during the observation of some classes that some students were not interested in working as a team as the teachers did not necessarily identify or address this issue. Again, this is because of their previous education system (CALA). Therefore, the researcher asked a female student about this and she said:

> *"I really did not find it useful to work with a team; I always prefer to work alone"* (Extract 33: EAP S1, English translation)

There are several possible explanations for this difference. For example, perhaps the PG students have - arguably - become used to working in group as they have been here in the UK for quite a long time. EAP teachers probably find that Saudi students are very cooperative when they are given a task, but generally require assistance and encouragement because Saudi students are not independent learners when they first arrive in the UK (see 4.4.2). The interview also proved that teachers were, however, happy with students when they were working as a team, although some difficulties faced them, as the extract below illustrates:

> *"Again, as I've already said, there's this big weakness in actually putting things into practice, so as learners they are fine so long as you're holding their hand all the way down, but the moment they suddenly have to go off and put it all together on their own, there seems to be an awful lot... I know that's the most difficult point for any student, but they do seem to have big difficulties in putting what they've learnt into practice".* (Extract 34: EAP T2, Original in English)

4.4.2.2 Gender Issues

As mentioned above, the mixed classroom environment in the United Kingdom is a cultural difference that presents a challenge to many Saudi students; in particular, the women seem to have difficulties as they are not used to expressing their opinions in front of men, and even debating with them. For male students, being taught by a female teacher is frequently a new and in some cases unsettling experience; there is a similar issue for female students who have never been taught by a male teacher. This has caused problems; two female students said:

> *"I found it really hard to interact with male teachers. This not to say they were not helpful, but rather because of my culture."* (Extract 35: EAP S6, English translation)

> *"When I first studied in the United Kingdom, not in this centre, I was a bit shy to look at or speak to a male teacher."* (Extract 36: EAP S1, English translation)

From a cultural perspective, in Saudi Arabia, women are not expected to make contact with men other than their relatives (see chapter one). This puts more pressure on female students to talk to male students and to try to express their views. On the other hand, it is considered very impolite for a man to talk to a woman and try to argue with her. This is partly because women should be treated in a very respectful way, as Saudi males would expect other men to respect their female relatives. This huge difference sometimes slows the process of learning for both genders. In spite of this, the results revealed that there were some students who did not have any problems interacting with the opposite sex. One female student stated that:

> *"It depends on the person, I came from the western part where it is normal to interact with a male on some occasions e.g. hospital or taxis."* (Extract 37: EAP S3, English translation)

> *"Well I knew that I was going to be taught by a female before I came to the United Kingdom because some of my family told me."* (Extract 38: PG S11, English translation)

From the above, it seems that responses vary from one student to another, depending on which region they come from. Most students understand that the relationship between them and their teachers is something that happens inside the school, although there is no doubt that it is quite difficult for Saudi students to accommodate themselves to this situation as they come from a very conservative society. In addition, during the observation the researcher noticed that many of the teachers did not ask students to work in pairs; instead they asked them to work as a group. One teacher commented about this:

> *"I don't find it an issue at all. The only time when I find it difficult is if it restricts the activities that I can do in the class, so yesterday ideally we would have had half the class working together – because it's not a big group – half the class on one topic, half the class on another topic, but because I've only got three women and the rest are guys, it makes it really hard sometimes to sort out activities with pair work activities; it interferes with what you can do, and I find I don't do as many different types of group or pair work as I'd do if I could, if I didn't have to think about people remaining in separate… in one of the classes they don't seem to mind."* (Extract 39: EAP T2, Original in English)

Furthermore, it was noticed during the observation that women sat on one side of the room and men on the other side (and not only Saudi women, but also those from other countries). This showed that students' culture comes into practice in the classroom situation. One of the EAP teachers commented:

> *"They will tend to automatically sit in two sides of the room, but if there's no seats, the women go and sit with the guys or the guys sit with the women, but I think that's partly because the group is much more multicultural and I think when they are, more multicultural, it's easier to"* (Extract 40: EAP T6, Original in English)

That does not mean that Saudi female students are not willing to participate, but that it is their culture and custom not to talk with a male unless it is necessary, e.g. for assessment. In fact, following observation of different groups the outcomes were

different, as some female students participated more than the male students. The extracts below are from one female student and a male EAP teacher:

> *"I did not think wearing (hejab) prevented me from learning in a mixed class, but there are lines which I should not cross e.g. talking with a male student about anything which is not related to my study"* (Extract 41: EAP S1, English translation)

> *"In most of the groups the women are reluctant to speak, act and stage an opinion. Again, in a higher group, very confident women give the men a run for their money! They don't seem to bother at all about saying to the guys, No, you're wrong! Which is great. I've developed ... I go and check, to go over to the women and do a certain amount of extra checking with them, because I'm aware that sometimes they're reluctant to check".* (Extract 42: EAP T4, Original in English)

Given the cultural norms in the UK, it was surprising from the observation that EAP teachers became accustomed to these circumstances and let the students work with whom they choose in the classroom. There were some teachers who were experienced in teaching Muslim students in general and Saudis in particular, and they are aware of this sensitive issue. One female student said:

> *"There are some teachers who understand this matter. For example one of the male teachers today assigned us to work as a pair but he realised that there would be one male and one female. So, he said to us he would leave it for us to decide which group to work with"* (Extract 43: EAP S3, English translation)

Cultural differences are always important, not only for students but for EAP teachers as well. Therefore, it was not surprising that EAP teachers knew a little about their students' cultural background. When teachers do not have enough information about the students' cultural background, they generally try to find out about it themselves at the beginning of the course. One of the male EAP teachers said:

> *"I think it's always necessary to know something of any student's background, so I tend to try and find out what a student's academic background is. In terms of*

cultural background, again I think it's a process of talking to students and getting to know them at the beginning" (Extract 44: EAP T1, Original in English)

As a result of this, some students were not happy with the behaviour of some teachers towards female students in particular when they did not participate during the lesson, nor did they try to challenge the male students. It is important that teachers be sensitive to these issues, especially as they pertain to students from other Muslim countries, not just those from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. That is not to say EAP teachers offended the students, but one female student interviewed stated that:

> *"Some teachers do not respect our culture of wearing (hejab) by asking us to speak aloud to for them to hear us, but I can't because I am not happy to talk in a class where most of the students are male" (Extract 45: EAP S3, English translation)*

4.4.2.3 Teaching Method

Teaching methods are very crucial elements that are associated with cultural aspects for learning analysis (CALA) because they determine the student's ability to learn. Saudi students come from a completely different background in terms of teaching (see chapter one). Therefore, the results showed that the process of the teaching in the UK was slow and material was often repeated. In addition, many students felt that there was a need to emphasise all four skills together rather than separating them in a somewhat artificial way:

> *Teachers are teaching us as if every skill functions alone; they did not make a link between them"* (Extract 46: EAP S5, English translation)

> *"The difference I found here and in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is that in the United Kingdom the teaching is slow and makes you think more while in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia it is fast and relies on memorizing"* (Extract 47: EAP S2, English translation)

> *"To be honest I think when I first started the programme (EAP) I felt that I am improving my language quite fast but when as time passes the level*

of improvement slows" (Extract 48: PG S7, English translation)

"I find it hard that teachers repeat the same things that other teachers taught us last semester" (Extract 49: EAP S6, English translation)

The above extracts also suggest that teachers need to be aware of the Saudi students' considerable abilities in terms of recalling information (see chapter one), and in making an extra effort on this account not to reproduce activities (especially as this is a characteristic of Asian learners in general, not just Saudis). Also, during the observation, it was apparent that some of the students did not like the teaching method of some of the EAP teachers. The researcher felt that some students were not happy with EAP teachers' methods of teaching. This has been understood by the students' body language or sometimes when they whisper amongst themselves in Arabic. The reasons for this may be that perhaps they did not understand some of the jokes made by the teachers or that they spent quite a long time on one task. EAP teachers should be aware of this and try to improve their teaching skills.

4.4.2.4 Teacher-centred to Learner-centred

In terms of cultural aspects of learning (CALA), one of the major problems discovered in this study is that Saudi students find it culturally difficult to cope with students rather than teachers leading the lesson (see chapter six). Some students think it is bad that teachers do not micro-manage their students inside the classroom. This misunderstanding by the students leads to their thinking that teachers are not in control. One female student expressed her anger at this, saying:

"I am deeply disappointed that most of our teachers did not control the students in the discussion task because there are some selfish students who want to talk all the time" (Extract 50: EAP S1, English translation)

From the observation, it was noted that some Saudi students tended not contribute unless they were asked to do so. Therefore, teachers should be aware of this cultural difference, as Saudi students think it is polite to be quiet in the class unless they are asked by teacher to participate (see chapter one). This might be a good way of preventing students from behaving badly, but this policy is for young children, not

for adult students such as EAP students. Teachers in the United Kingdom use a strategy of learning through doing, and in view of this it is crucial that they encourage participation from all members of a group; this is another point which relates to RQ3 (see 7.2). In addition, the interview results showed a similarity of what had been observed in the class: that Saudi students like teachers to direct them and give them all the information they need without doing research, as illustrated in the extracts below from two EAP teachers:

"I think you can see a difference, if they're suddenly put in a position which they didn't expect to be in, or they feel they didn't expect to be in, and then they're suddenly… they're maybe not used to being suddenly, actually, you're more in the teacher role now; I'm wanting you to direct it, I want to see what you can do. Maybe they're more used to … the teacher says something, interact back with the teacher, rather than when they're put… a lot of teaching in the United Kingdom is student-led" (Extract 51: EAP T4, Original in English)

"I assume that students are used to being told to do everything" (Extract 52: EAP T5, Original in English)

The research data here suggest that teachers are at odds with students because they expect an active learning style and yet do not teach the relevant strategies to develop this with their students (see 5.4). The questionnaire results in table (4.11) revealed that a total of 21 (33.9%) students found it difficult to adapt themselves to a new teaching method, while 17 (27.4%) said they had not found this to be a problem.

Table 4.11: Teacher-centred to student-centred style (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Always	2	3.2
Often	8	12.9
Sometimes	21	33.9
Rarely	14	22.6
Never	17	27.4
Total	62	100.0

While observing students during the independent class, it was noted that the students spent most of their time checking emails and reading Arabic newspapers. This could in part be related to their inability to work independently. What exacerbates the problem is that most of the teachers observed by the researcher did not talk about the importance of being independent, assuming that students might adapt themselves quickly to the new environment. One surprising finding is that one of the female teachers spoke for a great deal of the time inside the class and it appeared that most of the students were happy with this teaching method, perhaps because they did not want to participate, or perhaps because they are accustomed to this type of teaching methodology.

4.4.2.5 Class Size

Regarding the cultural aspects of learning analysis (CALA), as a result of the shift to a new learning style, teachers and students agreed that the smaller number of students in the class provided a better learning environment. Classes at Southampton typically consist of 12 - 15 students, and whilst for some this was not a problem, others felt that they were getting lost in larger groups. Smaller class sizes are very helpful in terms of meeting their language needs but also in helping students to adapt to their new academic environment. Teachers in this situation provide more individual attention to students, whereas it is very hard for teachers of large classes to give individual attention to students. One of the (EAP) course students was very happy with the individual attention she received from her teacher when the numbers of the students were small, and she commented:

> *"When most of the students are absent from the class, especially on Friday when most of the Saudi students have to go to the mosque to pray Algoma, I have a chance to have a lot of attention from my teachers as it is just a few students in the class".* (Extract 53: EAP S6, English translation)

On specialist courses where the numbers tend to be lower, students felt that they had more satisfactory interaction with their tutors. EAP course students in particular said that teachers in the United Kingdom are more open to listening to their problems in class and encourage and appreciate their involvement, whereas in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia they were not given much opportunity to speak in class as

there were so many students and the teachers could not attend to the questions of individual students. Also, there is less psychological distance between the teachers and the students in the United Kingdom than in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, so students were not afraid to speak their minds (Al-sheri, 2003). In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, students have to maintain a distance between themselves and the teachers, and do not have much opportunity to contradict teachers; as a result they have fewer opportunities to interact with instructors in class (see Al-Mashary, 2006). Nevertheless, it did take them some time to understand that the system of education in the United Kingdom is different from that in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; once they realised this they did take advantage of it where possible. This suggests that the ideal environment for students to learn to adapt comfortably to British academic culture when they arrive in the United Kingdom would be in very small groups (ideally consisting of one gender). In addition to the above student comments, the questionnaire results in the table (4.12) below illustrated that the highest number, twenty-nine (46.8%) students, strongly agreed with the idea of having a small number of students inside the classroom, while only one (1.6%) student strongly disagreed.

Table 4.12: Learning in a class of 6 – 10 students (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	1.6
Disagree	2	3.2
Neutral	14	22.6
Agree	16	25.8
Strongly agree	29	46.8
Total	62	100.0

4.4.2.6 Student Participation

Student participation in the class was an important issue as this is crucial in British academic programmes and is also a problem in cultural terms for Saudi students. The results were surprising, as the students came from an education system in which teachers do talk all the time in the classroom (see 4.4.2.1). From the observation, it was noticed that most Saudi students tend to be very active in the class and try to

answer most of questions posed by their teachers. This was confirmed by one of the EAP teachers when she commented:

> *"... that's why I like teaching Saudi students! Because you don't generally have a quiet lesson with them; I mean, they'll tell you what... they'll have a go, you know; it might not be the right answer, but at least they'll try and you know what's going on in their heads."* (Extract 54: EAP T1, Original in English)

The results of the questionnaire confirm this point, as the survey posed a question about whether students want to do the most of the speaking inside the classroom. The results are illustrated in the table (4.13) below. It appears that they are uncertain, with twenty two (35.5%) students answering 'neutral'. The results suggested that most of the students are willing to participate and speak in the classroom.

Table 4.13: Students do most of speaking inside the class (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	1.6
Disagree	4	6.5
Neutral	22	35.5
Agree	21	33.9
Strongly agree	14	22.6
Total	62	100.0

What is more, the results from the questionnaire could suggest that Saudi students like to take part in discussion inside the classroom. The table (4.14) below shows that twenty two (35.5%) students agreed with the value of taking part in the discussion. Sixteen (25.8%) students strongly agreed and only two (3.2%) strongly disagreed.

Table 4.14: Taking part in discussion (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	2	3.2
Disagree	2	3.2
Neutral	20	32.3
Agree	22	35.5
Strongly agree	16	25.8
Total	62	100.0

From the above, we can conclude that this aspect of study skills is generally not a problem for Saudi students; teachers also commented that Saudi students could often not be prevented from participating in the classroom, even if their answers were not correct. This also could suggests this type of confidence is one of their strengths. However, it was apparent from the observations that generally the male students lead the discussions. Two of the EAP teachers stated:

> *"In one way, they're very good students in that they don't just leave things, if they don't understand something, they'd ask you, and keep pursuing it until they're satisfied with their answer, and I think that's a real strength. However, again, I see a difference in the men and the women at this point. And the male students will really pursue it and they'll ask, but the women students tend in my group, they tend not to".*
> (Extract 55: EAP T1, Original in English)

> *But I have noticed this difference between the men and the women in that respect sometimes, and it varies from class to class, but I think quite often the women are quite shy of pushing themselves forward in those classes, to ask the questions, whereas the guys, once they've settled down…*(Extract 56: EAP T2, Original in English)

It seems that Saudi students speak more in the class than students of other nationalities, since it has been found during the observations that the percentage of the Saudi students in the classroom was the highest, but they were participating more than students of other nationalities, as confirmed by one of the EAP teachers:

> *"I think that the Saudi students, compared with other nationalities, but certainly compared to all the Asian students . . . Saudi students are great, they want to know something, and they ask it. It's easy to check whether they, in theory, have learnt something".*
> (Extract 57: EAP T1, Original in English)

During the observation, the researcher noticed that students were not motivated sufficiently to interact with their classmates. This finding was expected because the majority of students were Arabic native speakers. In terms of gender, female students were not willing to speak to other male students. The extract below explained that

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most of the students inside the classroom can speak Arabic, which removes their motivation to interact with their classmates in English.

> *"another problem that we are facing is that all of the students are Arabic speakers, in fact all of them are from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and there is only one student who is not an Arabic speaker and all of us want to speak with him in English"* (Extract 58: EAP S4, English translation)

However, the outcomes from the questionnaire were relatively positive; as illustrated below in table (4.15), these contradict what has been observed and reported by students. 29 of the respondents, which was the highest percentage (46.8%), strongly agreed. Just two students were negative and strongly disagreed or disagreed.

Table 4.15: Interacting in English with Classmates (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	1.6
Disagree	1	1.6
Neutral	11	17.7
Agree	20	32.3
Strongly agree	29	46.8
Total	62	100.0

4.4.2.7 Punctuality and Classroom Manners

Concerning cultural aspects of learning analysis (CALA), during the observation, many students arrived five minutes after the class started. Whilst it is normal to come late in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, it is not the case in British culture. As a result, some teachers were unhappy about this lack of punctuality. Also, regarding students' behaviour, some of them put their mobiles on 'silent' and some did not, which caused some disruptions for the teachers and other students. If students and teachers are to work well together, such issues of cultural politeness need to be understood by the students.

The major findings in this section were that students faced difficulties in familiarising themselves with the British academic system. First, the participants stated that they found it hard to work in a group, for a variety of reasons. One of these reasons, as stated above, is gender: female students had serious problems

interacting in the class or working in pairs with male students. Teaching methods were another issue that students could not understand, and sometime students felt uncomfortable with the teaching methodologies as they did not understand them. Self-study skills are a significant new element in the move from teacher-centred learning to student-centred learning. In addition, some students would come late to class, as this is considered normal in Arabic culture and this was found to unsettle teachers.

4.5 Conclusion

Based on the data collected for the needs analysis, this chapter presents the findings of the study, focusing mainly on the present situation analysis including language, academic and cultural needs. The findings suggested a number of important issues: first, Saudi students came unprepared to start their course in terms of both language and culture; second, the students were not happy with the courses that they had attended in the Saudi education system. Third, most of them had not attended any private courses in order to improve their language or cultural awareness. Fourth, they seemed unfamiliar with international testing systems, e.g. the IELTS test, because they had not sat any examination, which makes it hard for the host institute to assess their level. Fifth, students agreed that EAP is important for their academic success, but admitted that they had not realised this until they commenced their academic studies. Sixth, students spent too much time studying English in the United Kingdom (that is more than the limited time allowed by their sponsors). Seventh, Saudi students encountered serious problem regarding the teaching here in the United Kingdom, either with regard to materials or teaching methods. Finally, regarding gender, female students seem to have difficulties regarding participating in the classroom where they are mixed with male students.

In conclusion, the present situation analysis revealed a number of areas in which the students differed from students of other nationalities in terms of language capabilities, learning skills and cultural knowledge. It also revealed that, whilst the EAP course in question clearly teaches the students about the British academic setting, it lacks in the area of sensitivity to the extent of the differences between the students on arrival and their classmates. Although these findings will be discussed

in more detail in chapter seven, it is certainly clear from the data presented above that students do require more guidance in terms of all three areas, LA, SA and CALA as they continue on their academic journey. To further highlight this, the following chapter (chapter five) will highlight the students' needs analysis as it relates to the target situation analysis.

Chapter Five: Data Analysis of the Target Situation Analysis (TSA)

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the relevance of the data collected for the present situation analysis, and formed the first part of the data analysis. This chapter is in some ways the most crucial section of the data analysis, as it concerns the target situation analysis of the data focusing on the actual details of students' experiences whilst studying for their British postgraduate qualification (Masters and PhD) at Southampton University. It reveals exactly what difficulties students are facing and the strategies they have adopted themselves to overcome them. Thus, it answers research questions two and three: What is the target situation analysis (TSA) of Saudi students attending a postgraduate programme at British Universities with regard to language and culture? Also, how can Saudi students best be prepared for a British postgraduate programme of study? The research, which focused on those students who had undertaken an EAP course and then been admitted to one of the various postgraduate programmes offered by the University of Southampton, is divided into three sections. The first focuses on the remaining language gap Language Skills Analysis (LA) identified by the data; the second on the academic adjustment, specifically relating to the cultural aspects of learning (CALA); and the third highlights details of how Saudi students are currently learning to adjust over time to these knowledge gaps.

The issues concerning Saudi students can become more apparent and complex upon their transition from an EAP course to a postgraduate programme (Masters and PhD) as the new environment makes little allowance for their non-native background. Although the EAP classroom sought to prepare them in part for this move, many seem to have new and unexpected challenges when they enter their postgraduate programme; these include differences in lecturers' teaching styles and methods, the greater linguistic diversity of their classmates, larger classroom spaces, the greater number of students, extended language requirements and in some cases demanding assignment deadlines. This chapter will examine the data acquired from the student questionnaires and interviews in the context of the general requirements of academic postgraduate courses at Southampton University.

It was not possible to observe the students in their academic learning environments owing to the limitations of time and space placed on this study (see 7.4.3); therefore the student's own experiences of their language and cultural preparedness to handle the challenges of the academic environment provide the basis of the findings. It is important to note that, whilst the requirements of particular courses and academic tutors vary, the materials the student is expected to decipher and produce and the learning resources are similar. Situations that challenge language skills are: giving presentations, working in groups and communicating with tutors (speaking skills); summarising and paraphrasing written texts (reading skills); producing essays, reports, dissertations etc. (writing skills); taking lecture notes and extracting useful information in seminars and tutorials (listening skills). Cultural adaptation is expected in the areas of communication with class mates and tutors, managing deadlines for multiple courses and conforming to an independent and learner centred approach to knowledge acquisition. The extent to which students felt they were ready for this environment are revealed in the data provided below and the implications of these results are discussed in the next chapter (Chapter six).

5.2 Target Situation Analysis (TSA): Language-based Needs

This section concerns the language needs of Saudi students studying in British postgraduate programmes to reveal a thorough target situation analysis (TSA) from which it is possible to make recommendations. As mentioned previously, Saudi students do not necessarily have very different needs from other international students, but they do have specific needs which will be presented below. All the participants - EAP students, PG students, and EAP teachers - highlighted the issue of language because they may felt it to be very important for students to arrive with good English language knowledge to avoid any excess disappointment or stress (see 4.3.60) which could result in poor academic performance. One PG student commented:

> *"I would advise all the new comers from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to study English before coming to the United Kingdom, because that has helped me a lot, even if they have to pay for it themselves". (Extract 59: PG S12, English translation)*

The above extract contradicts what has been found in (4.3.4); perhaps this student was fortunate, as he had come very well prepared in terms of language. Therefore, it can be said that, a good level of English language is necessary, as language problems may distract students' concentration from their academic subjects. In all the areas highlighted by both the present situation analysis (PSA) and target situation analysis (TSA) undertaken for the purpose of this research, it was evident that language failings can contribute disastrously to the plight of students and even lead to the inability to complete their academic studies successfully. Despite the general understanding that English needs to be of a high level to undertake a programme of postgraduate study, some students, upon commencement of such programmes, fail to see the potential consequences of limitations in specific areas until they are faced with reading to research a written assignment or sit in a seminar which they struggle to follow. An EAP teacher outlined the scale of the problem thus:

> *"Adults, properly trained adults, I would like them to have realistic expectations which require somebody to sit down and talk to them before they come. I mean, I am constantly amazed that people will arrive in October almost unable to communicate in English believing that by next October they'll be writing an essay or thinking about doing a Master's thesis, you know. I say to them, most of the native speaking population cannot write at the level required to write a Master's thesis and for them to think they can go from beginners English to that level in one year is completely unrealistic. I think we're going to have a lot of very disappointed students at the end of this year".* (Extract 60: EAP T7, originally in English)

The assessment provided here, of the extent and nature of the language difficulties faced by students coming out of EAP programmes when pursuing their academic studies, will make it possible to answer RQ3 (see 7.2) in terms of the areas upon which preparation should be targeted.

5.2.1 Language Skills Analysis (LA): Comparison of the Four Skills

Questions relating to the Saudi students' perceptions of their proficiency in the four skills, speaking, listening, reading and writing, were posed in the questionnaire in

order to determine not only the strongest and weakest skills, but also how those strengths and weaknesses manifest themselves during their postgraduate studies. The results from the questionnaire can be seen in table (5.1) and illustrate that Saudi students perceive that writing and reading are the weakest, whilst they are strongest in the areas of listening and speaking; this was confirmed in the previous chapter (see 4.3.5) when teachers were asked about the students' weakest and strongest skills. Below we shall identify how a lack of ability in each skill directly relates to the tasks students are being asked to perform in the academic context, to gain a clearer understanding of how EAP programmes could better address students' problems.

Table 5.1: Skill Difficulty Level (N=62)

Skills	Difficult	Not difficult
Reading skills	35.5%	64.5%
Writing skills	59.7%	40.3%
Listening skills	16.1%	83.9%
Speaking skills	24.2%	75.8%

It was surprising to find that the students' perspective from the above table (5.1) stated that they do not have difficulties when reading, as EAP teachers claim. Perhaps they had become accustomed to reading quickly and for information by the time they have started their academic programme (Masters and PhD). As was expected, students still have difficulties with writing skills, even when they have already started their postgraduate programme; despite attending preparation courses, many students do not know the differences between a report, a reflection and an essay and have not previously had to write or plan such lengthy pieces of work in English. This is a serious problem, as will be explained later in this chapter.

5.2.1.1 Speaking, Presentations, and Discussion

Presumably, in the academic situation, students are asked to use their language ability from the outset to communicate orally in English for a variety of purposes (see chapter one); for the students, the fact that they are often assessed (explicitly and implicitly) for these contributions leads to a level of heightened apprehension about performing well during speaking-based tasks. Some of the tasks that provoke concern for Saudi students and other international students alike include the following: giving presentations whilst using visual aids, speaking from notes, asking

questions, participating effectively in discussion, presenting and communicating ideas effectively and confidently, answering questions, speaking clearly (pronunciation), speaking accurately (grammar) and speaking relevantly whilst using a wide range of academic/subject focused vocabulary.

> *"Well, I certainly have a problem with standing before audiences and talking, in Arabic. So, it would be even more difficult for me to stand and talk in English."* (Extract 61: PG S9, English translation)

> *"I am a non-native speaker and I know that when I speak to native speakers I do not speak in an accurate way using the right words for the right context but they still understand what I mean."* (Extract 62: PG S7, English translation)

The two students in the examples above commented that they did not feel confident with either their speaking proficiency or the requirement to present ideas verbally in a group; this may be the case because the use of language in the academic environment requires quick thinking (not easy in an L2) and a formal vocabulary. The problems students experience are in part owing to their lack of experience communicating in spoken English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and also relate to having been less pressured in the EAP classroom to produce instant, accurate, subject-focused speech. However, the comment made by the second student could be interpreted as a positive aspect of the United Kingdom EAP preparatory course, since he feels that his fluency and overall comprehension is adequate, and he seems confident that he can be understood. In addition, it was clear from the observations undertaken by the researcher that Saudi students tend to be nervous when talking in front of people generally, and this is in part a cultural phenomenon in terms of the Confucian dynamic discussed previously (see chapter one).

The questionnaire also posed a question on the issue of confidence, asking students directly how confident they feel when speaking. This is important because, although confidence does not necessarily reflect an accurate and relevant contribution, in the British academic environment the ability to confidently state one's own opinion is valued for itself. The results shown in the figure 5.1 below illustrate that 24 (38.7%) of the students do feel confident whilst only 7 (11.3%) felt uncomfortable. This

suggests fluctuations in terms of their speaking competency and may also represent gender-related cultural issues, although this was not uniformly proven by the data.
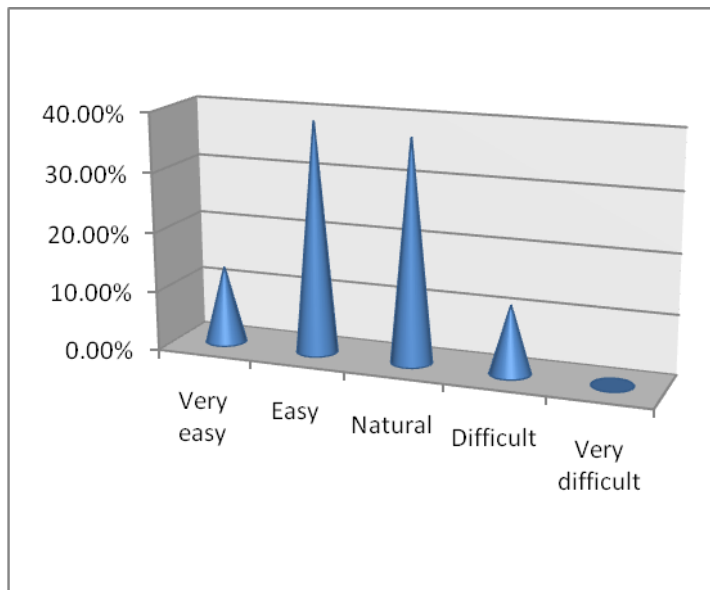
Figure 5.1: Communicating ideas confidently (N=62)

It is interesting, however, on this point that the Saudi students interviewed reported greater confidence when speaking with non-native speakers who would not identify their errors and the limits of their vocabulary so readily:

> *"I feel more comfortable when I speak to non-native speakers than native speakers because they can't immediately figure out my mistake."* (Extract 63: PG S9, English translation)

> *"Before I have a meeting with my supervisor I have to prepare myself, in terms of speaking clearly and slowly, but I always find it difficult and that puts more pressure on me."* (Extract 64: PG S11, English translation)

There is certainly a question about whether local British students and academics can understand what Saudi students are speaking about, and this pressure must contribute to their confidence and willingness to speak English. EAP teachers generally admitted that Saudi students were not always accurate, although they did not see this as a problem:

> *"Well, their speaking is not perfectly accurate, even among the best of them, but it doesn't need to be; I don't see that as a problem; inaccuracy in speaking is not a problem if you are conveying meaning. And they are very good at conveying meaning, most of them, they can get over what they want you to understand, and they get better; they have some pronunciation problems, particularly p and b, but I don't think that impedes understanding. They have some trouble with intonation, but that improves over time..."*
> (Extract 65: EAP T1, originally in English)

In the above extract, the teacher pointed out that the speaking difficulties of Saudi students are mostly the result of inaccuracy and sometimes also pronunciation, but these are not significant problems as they can still deliver the message. Although it was not possible to confirm this impression directly with subject tutors (see 7.4.3), it is the case at Southampton that there is good communication between the academic staff and the EAP teaching faculty, and their opinions can be accepted as broadly reflecting the lecturers' experiences in the target situation. Also, EAP teachers are generally convinced that Saudi students have the skills they require to improve their speaking skills easily. This is because the Saudi nation is a talkative nation, rooted in oral traditions and therefore comfortable with expressing their views fluently (see Long, 2005).

The research revealed that the key issue with speaking is certainly confidence, as the students themselves admit; the key language weakness in terms of speaking is one of grammatical accuracy. Although this may not impede their studies, it can create the impression that their language level is too low for the academic environment in which they find themselves, and this could leave a negative impression on subject tutors and potentially affect grades. During one observation by the researcher, when the teacher asked about absent students, a Saudi student answered *"she do not come yesterday and because his child is ill."* EAP teachers confirmed that grammatical errors are characteristic of many Saudi students' speech:

> *"...they're still; yeah they've still got areas to work on. Pronunciation, still struggling with the grammar, how we organise an idea, and then also I think it's quite a shock if they start postgraduate courses with the amount of work they're expected to do by themselves."* (Extract 66: EAP T4, Originally in English)

The answers given in the questionnaire assessed how the students view their own accuracy when they speak. As mentioned above, any issue with spoken accuracy can affect both confidence and the students' ability to achieve the highest mark when giving presentations or arguing their case in a group discussion. According to the students' perspective the results (table 5.2), it appears that around a third of students (33.8%) felt accuracy problems had impeded their success in situations where they were expected to speak.

Table 5.2: Speaking accurately (grammar) (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Very easy	4	6.5
Easy	18	29.0
Neutral	19	30.6
Difficult	18	29.0
Very difficult	3	4.8
Total	62	100.0

On the issue of pronunciation accuracy, touched on by the EAP teacher quoted above, it can be seen from the results shown in figure 5.2 below that the majority of students had not found their pronunciation provided a barrier to understanding when they were speaking with classmates and tutors as part of their postgraduate studies (more research as to whether academic tutors concur with this impression would be valuable (see below and conclusion).
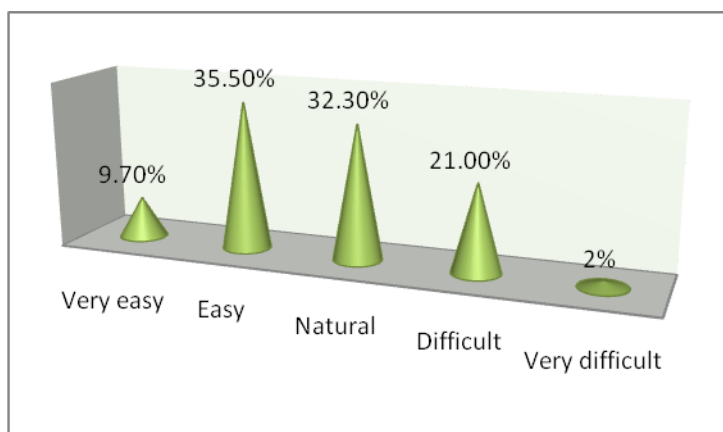
Figure 5.2: Speaking clearly (pronunciation) (N=62)

In the case of pronunciation, it is known that students themselves are not necessarily the best judges, as their impression is based on how often they are corrected or

asked to repeat words. There is little doubt, then, that a problematic area in terms of speaking is the content of what they say during presentations, class discussions and interactions with tutors. Some students failed to understand appropriate language use for giving presentations when they commenced their postgraduate studies; one PG student commented:

> *"I wish they [EAP teachers] had taught me that I have to speak using academic language when I give a presentation for my Masters degree."* (Extract 67: PG S14, English translation)

After this comment, it was possible for the researcher to observe some classes in which students were asked by their EAP teachers to give a presentation in mimicry of tasks expected in the target situation. It was apparent that this was a new experience for them as they come from a different education system where students are not accustomed to giving presentations in front of a class. One male student struggled with the practical requirement of using the projector and was not confident in using the computer to assist him when delivering his presentation. However, in support of including this type of activity in the EAP course, the results from the questionnaire revealed (table 5.3) that half of the respondents (50%), answered that they found it easy to use visual aids to deliver their presentation by the time they began their academic course.

Table 5.3: Speaking using visual aids (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Very easy	14	22.6
Easy	31	50.0
Neutral	15	24.2
Difficult	2	3.0
Very difficult	0	0
Total	62	100.0

In the EAP classroom observation, it was apparent that students did seem to be considerably more confident when using notes to remind them of the major parts of their presentations. This is not only the case with Saudi students; native speakers also find it easier to speak from notes. The questionnaire results, illustrated in the

table 5.4 below, suggested that only one (1.6%) found it difficult to speak from notes.

Table 5.4: Speaking from notes (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Very easy	12	19.4
Easy	30	48.4
Neutral	15	24.2
Difficult	4	6.5
Very difficult	1	1.6
Total	62	100.0

As would be the case with all learners, this kind of finding is not especially surprising, as speaking from notes makes it possible for students to produce a grammatically accurate, effectively structured and rehearsed presentation, minimising the prospect of being judged negatively. Whilst structured and assessed speaking performances are anxiety-provoking for all (regardless of nationality), unstructured oral class participation is not anticipated or found to be a problem for Saudi students, as mentioned above (see Ferris, 1998). Interviews with EAP teachers certainly suggest that the students did not have difficulty asking questions and participating effectively in the discussions, which was the opposite of what Edwars and Ran (2006) found with Chinese students. This was confirmed by both questionnaire and EAP classroom observations. During the speaking class which was observed, Saudi students asked questions and, despite problems with their pronunciation, were understood by their listeners. The questionnaire in table 5.5 showed 53.2% of students reported that they participate effectively in classroom discussion, although it should be remembered that this is the student's impression and not necessarily that of the academic tutors.

Table 5.5: Participation in discussion (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Very easy	10	16.1
Easy	23	37.1
Neutral	23	37.1
Difficult	6	9.7
Very difficult		
Total	62	100.0

Although the speaking skill is generally accepted to be the strongest of the four, for Saudi students, the issue of low confidence based on language difficulties has been shown to be relevant here. It is important for students to build confidence and become undaunted by any language errors if they are to be successful academically in the British system (see Kaur, 2006). The EAP preparation course seems to have been adequate in encouraging students in this area, but the discussion chapter (chapter six) will discuss how this can be further improved upon.

5.2.1.2 Reading Methods and Vocabulary

The element pertaining to language in this section relates to the issue of Saudi students' difficulties in reading, and will focus on reading to develop an in-depth critical understanding of material; it focuses on reading for information, reading for gist, using a dictionary and the limitations of students' academic vocabulary (see chapter one). The lack in the area of vocabulary, in terms of both the academic wordlist and subject-based wordlists, can be seen as a failing of the EAP courses that the students had attended. Academic vocabulary in general should be covered by English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) courses, and these should aim to provide students with sufficient breadth to maximise their reading abilities. These courses generally also seek to teach the skills required to read fast, i.e. scanning and skimming; however, in practice they do not teach them so much as provide exposure to them, after assuming that students already possess those abilities to a certain extent. A notable lack in EAP courses is that, as they are general academic preparation courses, they fail to provide reading skills targeted on the specific materials that the students will be required to read. Therefore, it is to be expected that, unless students have independently familiarised themselves with books and articles written in English from their field of study, they will experience problems with their reading.

Although vocabulary is an aspect of concerns over reading, it is certainly the skills of reading for gist and scanning for specific information that the majority of Saudi students seemed to find most problematic. These skills are both intrinsic to academic study; reading for gist is required to produce summaries and to ascertain whether articles are useful and relevant, and reading for information is required when seeking out quotations and ideas for writing essays. During the observation of

the EAP classes to assess the effectiveness of the methods for preparing students for these tasks were, the students were observed performing a task which required them to find certain information from a paragraph. Unfortunately, the Saudi students waited for the EAP teacher to give them a clue; this was not unexpected as they are used to being given everything by their teachers in Saudi Arabia. However, the fact that help was forthcoming can be seen as a problem; in the target situation, students will be expected to read, summarise and identify important information from texts without help. In addition to that, during the interview, the PG students said:

> *"to be honest there is no doubt that I benefitted from studying EAP here in the United Kingdom, but I realised when I started my Masters that I have difficulties with reading because EAP teachers did not pay much attention to all the skills that we need."* (Extract 68: PG S10, English translation)

> *"when I studied reading in the EAP course in the United Kingdom they just asked us to read, I wish they had trained us how to skim or scan the passage, etc."* (Extract 69: PG S14, English translation)

From the two quotations above, it seems that students were having difficulties not only with language but the basic reading skills. This show us how poorly the students were prepared, even for the simple skills which should be required in earlier stages in their education. In addition to that, it is clear that the EAP course that they had attended did not meet their actual needs. The only explanation here is that the EAP teachers had assumed that the students already had the basic skills for reading, namely scanning and skimming. Unfortunately, for roughly half of the students interviewed, this was not the case, as can be seen from the data results (table 5.6).

Table 5.6: Reading for Gist (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Very easy	13	21.0
Easy	19	30.6
Neutral	20	32.3
Difficult	9	14.5
Very difficult	1	1.6
Total	62	100.0

In addition to that, students reported not having the opportunity to learn basic reading strategies for reading an article or a book, or for identifying quickly if a text is useful. The predominance of reading as a means for acquiring information as postgraduate students means that if students have not acquired reading strategies and skills, they will struggle. The EAP teachers who were interviewed had noted that Saudi students did not have good reading skills. One EAP teacher commented:

> *"Saudi students seem to have problems with reading skills*
> *especially when they are asked to search for information."*
> (Extract 70: EAP T7, originally in English)

This is because in Saudi Arabian culture people do not read as much as people of other nationalities, e.g. Chinese. It also the case that students were not expected to read while studying in the KSA, as teachers delivered all the information to them (see chapter one). Therefore, students were not familiar with reading tasks as they perceived this to be a very difficult task in the classroom. Regarding dictionary use, which relates to identification of unknown words encountered in written texts, it was observed that, although the language centre had distributed dictionaries to the students, they looked unused and students seemed to find them difficult to use. This is likely to be because the majority of students nowadays use electronic dictionaries for various reasons, e.g. they are fast, readily available, etc. The results from the questionnaire provided a positive result relating to the use of dictionaries to find the meaning of new words:

Table 5.7: Dictionary Usage (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Very easy	24	38.7
Easy	21	33.9
Neutral	16	25.8
Difficult	**0**	**0**
Very difficult	1	1.6
Total	62	100.0

As expected, the students' vocabulary was very low. This is not only the case with Saudi students but has been found elsewhere with international students (see Holme

and Chalauisaeng, 2006). EAP teachers need to be aware that students were not used to reading for their classes in Saudi Arabia, which raises the issue of culture. One of the EAP students commented:

> *"The reading skills teacher gave us an article to read at home. Frankly, I could not understand most of the words, it was very difficult"* (Extract 71: EAP S6, English translation)

This extract represents how difficult that article was for him because of the limitations of his academic vocabulary. The questionnaire results seen in table 5.8 below do not seem to support this opinion, as 31 (50%) answered that they were neutral on this issue, whilst just one (1.6%) responded that it was very difficult to understand academic vocabulary.

Table 5.8: Vocabulary Limitations (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Very easy	9	14.5
Easy	15	24.2
Neutral	31	50.0
Difficult	6	9.7
Very difficult	1	1.6
Total	62	100.0

Therefore it is apparent from the data that the key problem regarding reading ability for academic study relates to reading skills such as skimming and scanning more than to limitations in the academic vocabulary. There is little doubt that reading preparation would be best carried out using academic texts that are similar to those the students will encounter, as the time spent perfecting these skills could then usefully include an introduction to academic writing skills. In summary, for the purposes of academic study, reading skills are crucial, not only for Saudi students but for all international students who are studying for postgraduate degrees in the UK; they will have to read in order to enhance their knowledge of their subject.

5.2.1.3 Writing Appropriately

Continuing the analysis of students' language skills, this section provides information regarding the issue of Saudi students' difficulty in writing. This section will consider students' difficulties regarding writing reports, summaries and assignments, expressing ideas, organizing ideas in a logical sequence, writing brief clear notes, structure of the writing as a whole, explaining how to write the content of the graphs, tables etc., and writing accurately (grammar). One of the EAP teachers stated that:

"Their writing is a serious, serious problem for the vast majority of them. It's almost as though when they're learning English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, nobody teaches them to write. I can't believe that's true, but their writing tends to be very poor." (Extract 72: EAP T3, originally in English)

As a result of their present situation analyses, and their subsequent teaching of Saudi students, EAP teachers have often found that the main problem for Saudi students lies with writing. This probably illustrates that the Saudi students' previous learning environment was not easily transferable to the British academic context. Also, the lack of familiarity with every day English is a crucial problem that Saudi students have to face in their writing. The crux of the problem is identified below:

> *"Let us be honest, when I did my first degree in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia we did not need to write an assignment or an essay. In fact we just used to come to the mid and final exams and choose from multiple choices."*
> (Extract 73: PG S11, English translation)

This explains why writing assessments given to Saudi Arabian students in the United Kingdom challenge them, as they are an entirely new task. Their lack of previous experience in writing in general and writing in English in particular, in the Saudi Arabian universities' system, is a major reason for the difficulty they have with written English assessments, such as essays, etc. It is reasonable to suggest that this problem is shared in the main by other international students, as (Timm , 2009) found with Indian students. The Saudi student quoted below, who had previous experience of writing when he did his Masters degree in the Kingdom of Saudi

Arabia, stated that the writing difficulties Saudi students face are the result of a lack of experience in writing:

> *I did not face any difficulties with writing on the whole but yes I have difficulties with structure etc. When I studied my masters in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia we used to write assignments, reports, summaries etc. but the difference is we had plenty of time to write assignments, but here in the United Kingdom I found hard to finish within the time they give me."* (Extract 74: PG S9, English translation)

His response seems to be more positive than that of the previous student, as he argued that writing difficulties can be overcome if adequate time is available and students are familiarised with the writing task. This suggests that they have a problem with writing structure as whole, but the results from the questionnaire revealed in the table 5.9 below showed that only one (1.65) answered 'difficult' and the majority of the 21 (33.%) respondents answered 'neutral'.

Table 5.9: Structure of writing as a whole (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Very easy	10	16.1
Easy	19	30.6
Neutral	21	33.9
Difficult	11	17.7
Very difficult	1	1.6
Total	62	100.0

Unfortunately, in addition to the difficulties of writing in a foreign language, Saudi students also have difficulties in managing their time, as will be explained later in this chapter. Therefore, they struggled with handing their assignments in on time, and sometimes even did so at the last minute. In Saudi Arabia, students are used to asking their teachers for more time and this may be one of reasons for Saudi students tending to spend more time finishing their written tasks than other students. In the U.K., whilst deadlines can be extended in special cases, it is not advantageous for students to take too many extensions as they can swiftly fall behind with their other work and as Master's courses are generally only twelve months this can lead

to failure to complete the degree. A further issue for Saudi students and their writing has been identified as their inability to check their written tasks by themselves. One of the EAP teachers commented:

> *"They need to be able to proofread their own work and check their accuracy. Spot it themselves."* (Extract 75: EAP T1, originally in English)

An aspect of this checking is that writing accurately remains a problem for students in their target situation, as revealed by the results. One PG student commented:

> *"Frankly, I faced a serious problem with my grammar, especially with the articles 'a' and 'the'. Also, when I tried to write long sentences I knew there would be grammar mistakes"*. (Extract 76: PG S14, English translation)

This extract is interesting because it shows that the student was aware of his problems, raising a question concerning why he still has this problem. This is may be because EAP teachers did not focus sufficiently on his mistakes, providing adequate general English language grounding as part of the course. From the questionnaire, it was apparent that recognising inaccuracies and other written errors was a serious problem for a high proportion of the students interviewed (32.3% see Table 5.12).

Table 5.10 Written Accuracy (N=62)

Frequency		Percent
Very easy	7	11.3
Easy	12	19.4
Neutral	23	37.1
Difficult	19	30.6
Very difficult	1	1.6
Total	62	100.0

The limitations of specific terminology and expression were also a major problem faced by students when writing. The phenomenon was found elsewhere by Ferris (2001) with other international students. A student who was studying accounting

stated that his writing difficulty was a result of a lack of accounting terminology and expression, i.e. subject-specific English:

> *I studied English for many years. I do not think I have a big problem with my grammar or even my spelling as the word processor can correct these mistakes. My main problem is my lack of specific vocabulary and the way I express my subject."* (Extract 77: PG S10, English translation)

He argues that may be the main difficulty in writing English for Saudi students is the nature of the specific English vocabulary which they need to adapt to using. This is likely to be one reason for Saudi students not being good at English writing tasks. In relation to this situation, one of the EAP teachers described the academic writing skills of Saudi students from personal experience:

> *"I noticed that most of my students did not use a wide range of vocabulary, perhaps they need to read more in their subject."* (Extract 78: EAP T2, originally in English)

She argues, in other words, that Saudi students seem have difficulty in using their vocabulary in an appropriate form of written English, and that this problem can only be resolved effectively by reading material in their subject area in English. If the students complain that they do not have the required terminology in their specific subject, then teachers should tell the students to read more in their academic subject, as claimed above, and not leave students without any guidance (see chapter six). EAP teachers were asked to give an overview of Saudi students' writing, and two of them stated:

> *"I mean, writing's the one which people particularly say, for Saudi students, is the, is a challenging one. And I'd say you can see that in note-taking, as much as you can see it in essay writing."* (Extract 79: EAP T2, originally in English)

This was also revealed by the questionnaire results, as can be seen in table 5.11 below. 26 (41.6%) students answered 'neutral' and 7 (11.3%) answered 'difficult'. This confirms the EAP teacher's comments above, and is a major problem because it

supposes that the responsibility for teaching writing was that of the Saudi education system and that little attempt to resolve this is being made by EAP programmes.

Table 5.11: Effective Note taking (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Very easy	11	17.7
Easy	17	27.4
Neutral	26	41.9
Difficult	7	11.3
Very difficult	1	1.6
Total	62	100.0

There are different types of writing, e.g. writing an assignment, report etc. Therefore, the researcher also asked a student studying in the Chemistry department about his experiences when writing reports based on data in the laboratory. He commented:

> *"I studied at the language centre for nearly six months and they did not tell us the difference between writing an essay and a report; as a consequence of that I really have problem with it and sometimes my supervisor is cross with me because I cannot write the report in an appropriate way"* (Extract 80: PG S9, English translation)

This extract suggests that the student's understanding of report writing seemed unclear to him. This made him feel angry because it had made his supervisor feel negatively about his abilities in his field. In addition, the results from the questionnaire, as illustrated in table 5.12 below, revealed that some students have problems with writing reports: 26 (41.9%) answered 'neutral', 6 (9.7%) answered 'difficult' and 3 (4.8%) answered 'very difficult').

Table 5.12: Writing reports (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Very easy	6	9.7
Easy	21	33.9
Neutral	26	41.9
Difficult	6	9.7
Very difficult	3	4.8
Total	62	100.0

5.2.1.4 Listening and Note Taking

The final skill considered in the area of language analysis is listening. This includes responding appropriately, either by spoken response or by note taking, listening to understand key vocabulary, recognizing supporting ideas, following discussion, identifying different views, understanding lecturers' accents, taking notes, understanding the organization of lectures, the main ideas of lectures, questions and classmates' accents. One of the primary problems that Saudi students face in the target learning situation is listening and note taking, and it is also worthy of mention that the skills needed to take effective notes during listening activities require the same selective abilities as making notes from reading. Students in this study and elsewhere (see Ferris and Tagg, 1996) find it difficult to listen and write. This is not just because they are using English; they find it difficult in their own language. One student said:

> *"I always find it difficult to listen and take notes at the same time because I have not done that before."* (Extract 81: PG S13, English translation)

This suggests that problems have arisen because of the students' lack of experience in taking notes; however, it seems also be the case in general that limits are experienced as a result of their low level in writing. This student states clearly that he has not had experience taking notes before, even in Arabic. Another problem, undoubtedly one that could be addressed in the EAP classroom, is that they are unclear about what the important information is, i.e. what they should write down. It is worth mentioning that this is problem for most international students, as found by Ferris and Tagg (1996). The task appears unclear to students, as two EAP teachers

commented:

> *"If you ask them to take notes, it would be difficult for a lot of people."* (Extract 82: EAP T1, originally in English)

> *"They find it very, very difficult to write it down. It's difficult to do two things at once, because it's quite hard, so obviously the listening and speaking are often stronger than their writing, for example, but it's stronger if they answer comprehension questions, but if you ask them to take notes and then summarise it, that's quite difficult for a lot of people, and that's something that's still to be worked on."*
> (Extract 83: EAP T2, originally in English)

In addition to this, the results from the questionnaire related to taking clear and brief notes, shown in table 5.13 below, reveal that 26 (41.9%) students answered 'neutral' and 7 (11.3%) students answered 'difficult'. This suggested that this is one of the main problems that Saudi students encounter with their listening skills, presumably because it is very difficult to do two things at the same time. It should be noted here that this is also an area in which students' own impressions of their success or failure are especially accurate, as it is they who know precisely what notes they have taken and how useful and easy to understand they are.

Table 5.13: Taking brief, clear notes (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Very easy	11	17.7
Easy	17	27.4
Neutral	26	41.9
Difficult	7	11.3
Very difficult	1	1.6
Total	62	100.0

However, some EAP teachers feel positive about Saudi students' skills in taking notes while listening. The following comment was made by one of the EAP teachers:

> *"there are some of them [Saudi students] who are pretty good at writing down the information that they need. In fact when looking at some of their note taking it seems pretty accurate."*
> (Extract 84: EAP teacher, originally in English)

It is likely these are students came with a good level of language, or had perhaps studied degrees in English before joining the EAP course in the United Kingdom. Understandably, there is clear evidence that students who arrive with a good command of the language will benefit more from the EAP courses that are provided by British universities. It is arguable that the problem of note taking is related to writing skills, as we shall see later in this chapter. This problem is associated with both male and female Saudi students; in fact, most international students face the same problem, as one of the EAP teachers commented:

> *"note taking varies but men and women find it very, very, difficult to take notes now."* (Extract 85: EAP T2, originally in English)

Another difficulty that Saudi students face is that they do not concentrate and find it difficult to focus on what exactly the task is, as exhibited in observations where they rush to answer without paying much attention to what is required from them. This was confirmed by one of the EAP teachers:

> *"I think that most of them can understand quite well –I think often they rush and they do not understand what it means, need to check, need to work on not just hearing what they think they hear but trying to see what is actually said."* (Extract 86: EAP T1, originally in English)

She highlighted the fact that students have to pay more attention when they listen if they are to provide an accurate answer. This problem could be owing to their lack of experience in listening to native speakers. Thus students should make themselves familiar with different accents, especially the British accent, as part of their preparation for study in the United Kingdom, because this would help them to make progress in their academic studies. Following the discussion was another problem that students encounter with listening skills; this was a problem relating to word choice. This lack of understanding of vocabulary contributes to general engagement in activities requiring listening, as revealed by the questionnaire results (Table 5.16), which reveal that 10 (16.1%) found following discussions 'difficult' and 15 (24.2%) answered neutral. On this issue, during the interviews one female PG student stated:

> *"Sometimes when the lecturer speaks I cannot understand what he says especially if discussing some issues regarding my subject"* (Extract 87: PG S8, English translation)

The explanation for this, as the researcher found from the actual learning environment inside the EAP classroom, was that the students talked to each other while performing listening tasks. Sometimes they asked their classmate about a meaning of the word which they had heard (requesting an Arabic translation). It would have been helpful if the teachers had advised them not to stop listening to the tape for any reason until the completion of the task.

Table 5.14: Following Discussions (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Very easy	11	17.7
Easy	26	41.9
Neutral	15	24.2
Difficult	10	16.1
Very difficult		
Total	62	100.0

In addition, it is interesting to note that students faced difficulties with all types of academic listening. This could be owing to new accents, a lack of understanding of the key vocabulary, problems identifying different views, difficulties with recognition of supportive ideas or understanding the organization of the lectures; the questionnaire results are shown in table 5.15 below.

Table 5.15: Difficulty with Academic Listening (N=62)

	Very Easy	Easy	Neutral	Difficult	Very difficult
Understanding key vocabulary	24.2	46.8	24.2	3.2	1.6
Recognising supporting ideas/examples	24.2	41.9	27.4	6.5	
Identifying different views/ ideas	19.4	37.1	35.5	8.1	
Understanding the organization of lectures	27.4	41.9	22.6	8.1	

5.2.1.5 Conclusion

After investigating the students' difficulties with each language skill, their opinions and those of their EAP teachers, information regarding the most important skill was sought. The survey asked PG respondents about the criterion they used to judge the importance of each of the skills. The level of importance attributed to each relates to how much the skill is used in the academic context and the extent to which students find difficulty with the requirements of performing well in each area. It can be said that the findings of this section are similar to those of Blue (2000), Braine (2001), Evans and Green (2007). EAP teachers were also asked what they see as the most important skills for students to work on to succeed in their academic studies. One of them stated:

"Well, I think for most students the key skill is writing, I mean in terms of all the language skills, reading and writing, all are important, but again this doesn't apply simply to Saudi students but to many others as well, writing is absolutely the key".
(Extract 88: EAP T3, originally in English)

This extract implies that writing is not a problem for Saudi students only but for most international students who are studying in the British postgraduate programme. For example, Nomnian (2008) found that Thai students have the same problem. Saudi students in particular encounter this problem because when they come to the United Kingdom to study at university level they have had a very limited experience of writing academic texts in their own language (Arabic) and certainly in English.

Therefore, it is important that they are taught key writing skills as well as academic writing skills if they are to succeed in their chosen programme of postgraduate study. It was expected that writing is very important for students when they are studying in their academic programme, as the majority of academic assessment involves evaluation of the writing students produce. Figure 5.3 below shows the perceived importance of writing skills for respondents, which is very high, with 60 (96.9%) of respondents answering that it is 'very important' and none choosing 'not important'. Moreover, the challenges involved in writing need to be overcome somehow, as both Masters and PhD degrees require students to write a thesis, which forms the largest element of the assessment process.
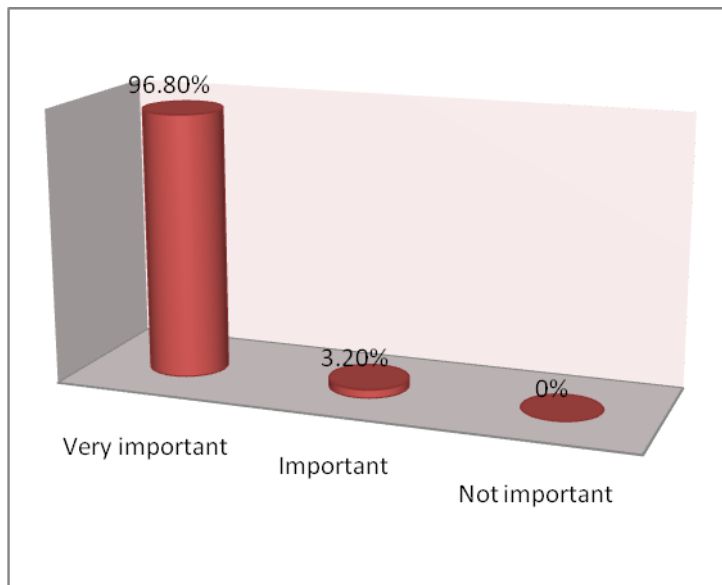
Figure 5.3: Importance of Writing (N=62)

In terms of reading skills, Figure 5.4 shows that 82.3% of the respondents rank reading skills as important, with none saying that they are not important. This is primarily because in order for students to write or organise spoken presentations, they have to read first in their specific subject; this requires a lot of reading, particularly for PhD students.
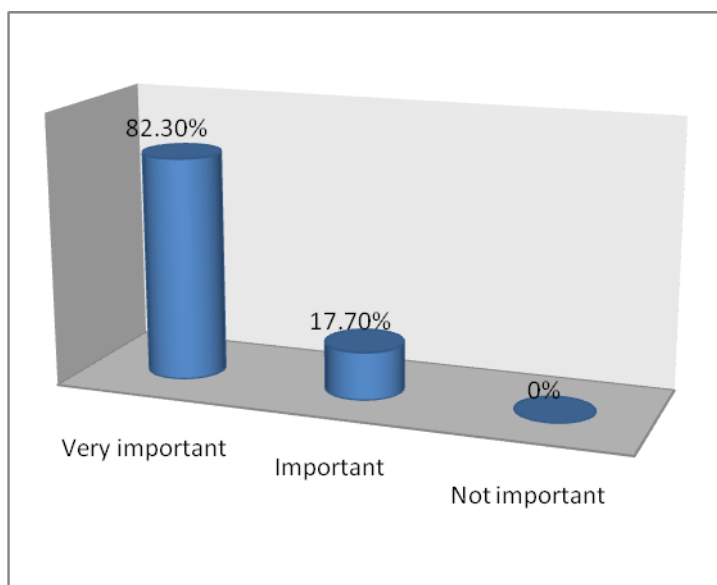
Figure 5.4: Importance of Reading (N=62)

The listening skill, as illustrated in figure 5.5, is also regarded as very important for a majority of students (53.2%) and just 2 (3.2%) students answered that listening is 'not important'. The most likely explanation for this is that students initially struggle with listening skills considerably as they have limited opportunity to perfect them in the EAP classroom. The reason more students selected important rather than very important lies with the fact that gaps in understanding whilst listening can potentially be filled after seminars, or by asking for clarification, or by supplementary reading.
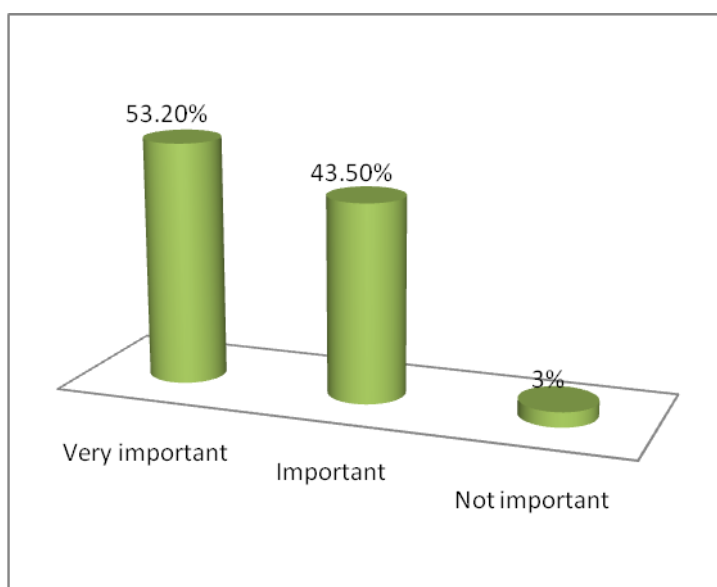
Figure 5.5: Importance of Listening (N=62)

Speaking was also deemed to be an important skill, as shown in figure 5.6 below, and students appeared to recognise that the best way to demonstrate their knowledge to their tutors was through speaking; therefore they focused on presenting themselves as well as possible through the use of this skill. Although fewer students identified the skill as being very important, this can only be seen relative to the other skills and does not reflect that speaking skills are unnecessary in the British academic environment.
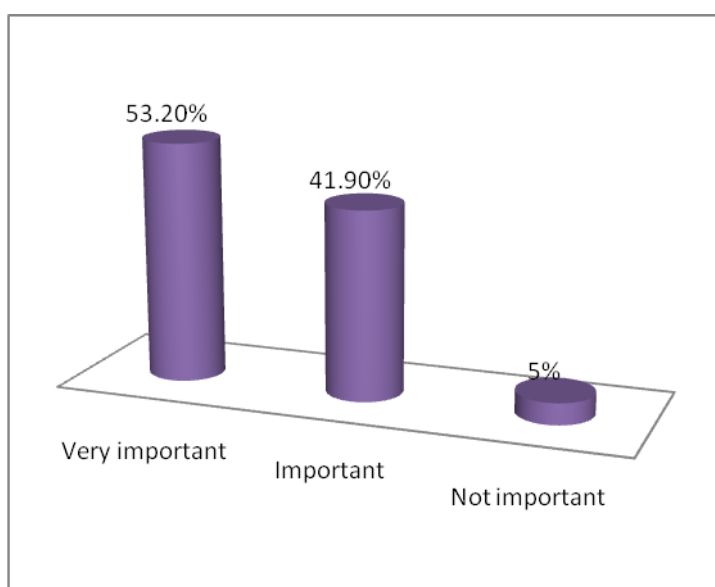
Figure 5.6: Importance of Speaking (N=62)

5.2.1.6 Level of English at Time Sampling

In the previous chapter, the data from the questionnaire asking students to estimate their level before coming to the United Kingdom (see 4.3.5) were analysed. Those students selected for this chapter had studied EAP in the United Kingdom and were currently studying on their postgraduate programme; in order to detect a general improvement the questionnaire asked again that the participants estimate their level of English today after roughly less or more than a year studying as postgraduate students. Table 5.18 below reveals that some students are still having considerable problems with writing; this is represented by the fact that students have answered 'very bad' and 'bad'; indeed it is the only skill described as 'very bad'. Recognition and sensitivity to the lack of necessary writing skills could have increased when compared with their assessment on arrival, as a result of their involvement on postgraduate programmes. Overall, the majority of students answered positively

regarding all four skills; listening seemed to be causing the least problem: (40.3%) of students answered that they thought their listening capabilities were 'very good' and (35.5%) students answered 'excellent'. It can therefore be predicted that students will perform better if they have previously attended an academic English course.

Table 5.16: Students' current level of English (N=62)

	Very bad	Bad	Moderate	Good	Very good	Excellent
Writing	1.6	1.6	12.9	43.5	32.3	8.1
Reading			34.8	40.3	32.3	22.6
Listening				24.2	40.3	35.3
Speaking		1.6	34.8	24.2	45.2	24.2

The major finding in this section was that students have serious problems with writing skills, and that these problems are echoed (in descending order of importance) in the other three language skills, reading, speaking and listening. To summarise, the major problems associated with language skills concerned students' lack of vocabulary; difficulties with the structure of writing; grammar difficulties, affecting both writing and speaking skills; reading speed and general lack of reading techniques or strategies; pronunciation issues; and finally, loss of concentration as a result of being constantly in a high pressure L2 environment. In addition, this section revealed a huge difference and improvement in the students' level of English when they arrived (see previous chapter) and their level at time of sampling (see 6.3.1).

5.3 Target Situation Analysis (TSA): Cultural Aspects of Learning Analysis

This section focuses on the problems with British academic learning style that have been faced by Saudi students. From the findings of the questionnaire, interviews and observations, it was possible to identify six major problems (see 6.3.2) that affect Saudi students while studying in their postgraduate programme. These problems relate to contrasts in the educational style in each system and are detailed below: passive vs. active, reproduction vs. originality, rote learning vs. critical thinking, absorption vs. contribution, competition vs. co-operation and dependence vs. independence. These six contradictions in learning style form the basis of the

cultural aspects of learning analysis that this thesis seeks to bring to the attention of course designers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom, and to future students.

5.3.1 Passive vs. Active

The participants all found that the British approach to education was more practical (research based) than they had been previously accustomed to. Most governmental educational institutions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, e.g. universities, do not have sufficient resources to educate students using a practical approach to learning, and hence they rely mostly on textbooks, whereas in the United Kingdom students had to accustom themselves to a more practical approach to education; one EAP student said:

> *"English teaching in the United Kingdom is completely different from that in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia we have to study from the textbook lesson by lesson but here they gave us a book but they did not teach us from it; in fact they give us more and more handouts which confused us".* (Extract 89: EAP S5, English translation)

Students then had to learn how to visualize their problems, and to think more practically rather than just look at a problem from a theoretical perspective. Saudi students felt that the students in Britain were more knowledgeable because they not only used textbooks but also referred to other resources. One of the students said that the knowledge of Saudi students is limited within the boundaries of textbooks, whereas students in Britain have a wider range of knowledge, and he commented:

> *"I was surprised that British students rely not just on the textbook but also refer to other resources e.g. Internet"* (Extract 90: PG S7, English translation)

Owing to limited resources and facilities, teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia spend more time with students, because they have to explain everything in words from the books. As a result, students generally spend more time in the classroom when compared with those in the United Kingdom. In the United Kingdom, students do not rely solely on their teachers, and they are expected to use other

resources e.g. libraries. Saudi students are expected to familiarise themselves with using facilities like computer laboratories, the library, and other resources in addition to textbooks, and they need to be taught to be less dependent on their instructors and textbooks for learning. To support the observational and interview data, the questionnaire asked students if they found differences in educational practices compared with those of the Saudi education system. Although twelve students responded that they 'never' had problems with the variations in educational style, table 5.17 suggests that the majority of students do experience varying levels of difficulty as a result of those variations. The students had had some preparation for the variations in educational style in the EAP classroom, which explains why the problems were not as marked as might have been predicted.

Table 5.17: Problems with Variations in Educational Style (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Always	5	8.1
Often	17	27.4
Sometimes	21	33.9
Rare	7	11.3
Never	12	19.4
Total	62	100.0

The nature of these problems relates not just to the research requirements of the British system but also to the many rules and regulations surrounding protocol for citing research in written assignments. From the above, we can see the huge cultural differences which exist between the two cultures in terms of learning and teaching. These differences cause a divergence of opinions between British teachers and students; the students think that their teachers should explain everything to them, while British teachers believe that they should give students guidance so that they can develop the ability to look for the information themselves.

5.3.2 Reproduction vs. Originality

A problem for students, posed by the requirements of British academic culture, was the importance of the academic code of integrity, which is very strictly followed in the United Kingdom as opposed to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This code was very confusing and problematic for students, and their unfamiliarity with the system posed constant challenges. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, it is customary for students to refer to their textbooks to do their assignments, and during exams they just reproduce their textbooks from memory and do not have to worry about citations. The learning system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia focuses on the knowledge of the content and not on the originality of their writing or ideas; this is similar in most Arab countries (see Mostafa, 2006). One of them said:

> *"Saudi students in particular are inclined to be very descriptive with no analysis"* (Extract 91: EAP T7, English translation)

In the United Kingdom, students have to spend time working alone and they need to be extra cautious when handing in assignments and during exams, continuously reminding themselves to use citations and follow set procedures and standards for their projects and assignments, to ensure against being accused of plagiarism. This difference in learning systems has caused a cultural clash between Saudi students and their British educators, as students assume it is their teachers' job to give them information and direct them to the right resources without spending time in the library or elsewhere to find the information.

5.3.3 Cultural Aspects Learning Analysis (CALA): Rote Learning vs. Critical Thinking

In the introduction chapter, critical thinking was defined as questioning or challenging the information (see chapter one). Most of the participants, both teachers and students, viewed the critical thinking approach required by graduate work to be a new approach to which they had to adapt upon arrival in the United Kingdom, as they were used to rote learning or memorizing. They firmly believed (and there is certainly some truth to this) that rote learning helped them build their basic foundation and that it was necessary to understand basic concepts to be able

to think critically. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, they mostly used textbooks, reference guides and teachers or lecturers as their main sources of information. The curriculum was developed in such a way that they were mostly tested on the content they had memorized rather than on the actual knowledge and application of that content. They had had to memorize their notes and textbooks. One of the EAP teachers commented:

> *"they (Saudi students) are not very good critical thinkers. They find it very difficult to discuss issues, to come up with original ideas, to disagree, to question; I think all of those things are reflecting something about your education system".* (Extract 92: EAP T7, originally in English)

This is also apparent in the results from the questionnaire, in which students were asked how they managed with the discussion-based system in the British university. The answers, as can been seen from table 5.18 below, varied. Slightly over half the students (51.6%) surveyed claimed to experience difficulties with the discussion-based approach. Problems the researcher has observed from experience relate to turn-taking, dominant students taking over group work and a failure to understand the basis of the teaching methodologies behind the approach. This is a key concern of this research as, despite the importance of knowledge, the application of it is a skill which needs to be ingrained from childhood as it is in the United Kingdom. The Saudi system does not encourage free and independent thinking in the educational context as it is based on a more traditional model of knowledge acquisition.

Table 5.18: The free discussion-based system is a problem (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Always	1	1.6
Often	11	17.7
Sometimes	20	32.3
Rarely	14	22.6
Never	16	25.8
Total	62	100.0

After coming to the United Kingdom, students are automatically expected to have the ability to learn fast to approach problems in more depth rather than just to look at them from a theoretical perspective. For example, one of the PG students commented:

> *"When I did my first degree in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia I used just to memorize everything that was given by the lecturer; in fact some teachers do a revision session before the exam in which we have to memorize it, so if you asked me one month after the exam I do not think I would be able to remember"*
> (Extract 93: PG S12, English translation)

This clearly shows the vast differences in the culture of teaching between the British and Saudi system. Saudi students are used to relying on their teachers, as argued elsewhere, but British peers could and should help them to understand the British methods of learning and teaching, and thus help them make a smooth transition. The questionnaire also posed a question to see how students deal with critical thinking. The results are illustrated in table 5.19 below: 3 (4.8%) students answered that they 'always' find it a problem, 11 (17.7%) students 'often' and the majority, 20 (32.3%) students, responded 'sometimes'. These results showed this to be one of the major problems that Saudi students encounter when studying in British institutions.

Table 5.19: Critical Thinking is a Problem (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Always	3	4.8
Often	11	17.7
Sometimes	20	32.3
Rarely	13	21.0
Never	15	24.2
Total	62	100.0

It is fair to say this is a problem not just for Saudi students; in fact, it has been found elsewhere (see Park, 2006; Kaur, 2006) that most international students have the same problem. This extract below perhaps implies that critical thinking is a common problem amongst many of the international students. One EAP teacher commented:

> *"I think, going back to what I was saying before, I think it's quite clear that aspects, this applies not just to Saudi students but to students from many other cultural backgrounds, is a lack of such things as critical thinking, the ability to think critically, which is a key concept in our university education in the United Kingdom, but is not such a key element in education systems in other countries."* (Extract 94: EAP T8, originally in English)

5.3.4 Absorption vs. Contribution

The cultural expectation that students should contribute orally during classes and work with others to prepare assignments for written or oral assessment is a further problem for Saudi students, as has been discovered from the observation (see chapter four). One PG student stated that:

> *"In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in class we have to listen to teachers all the time, and that had an effect on me even when I taught in public schools and the university, so I am sure when I go back and teach at the university I will use the British system of engaging students in the class"*. (Extract 95: PG S8, English translation)

It seems that, Saudi students, upon arrival, were not unaccustomed to class participation because in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia students are not typically required to participate, nor is it a part of their grade. Moreover, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, students are required to maintain a quiet atmosphere and listen to their teachers as they are the sole authority in the classroom, not only in an English class but for most classes e.g. history. Students do not have the opportunity to debate with or contradict their teachers. As a result, the focus group participants had not participated in any kind of discussion in their classes in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and so were not accustomed to the role of in-class participation. Once in the United Kingdom, Saudi students have to learn to take part in classroom debates and discussions because not only is active participation required, but it also constitutes a part of the grade. This element of the education system is a strategy that is prepared for in the EAP classroom. Participants noted that the expectations

of teachers were completely different in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom. One of the teachers commented:

> *"I would guess something that is encouraged in the Saudi education system. Whereas, you go into a typical British classroom, you will find …. you will find children, students sitting in groups around tables and they are talking and discussing and the teacher is going around from group to group, with relatively little of the teacher standing out the front telling them the information that they need. Now… and if he does give them, or she does give them the information, they will then ask them to do something with that information, you know. 'If this, then what?' You know, what do you think about…? Do you agree? And that is a very big feature of British education"* (Extract 96: EAP T6, originally in English)

This is an area that must be addressed by EAP preparation courses in both the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom. How this may best be achieved is discussed in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

5.3.5 Competition vs. Co-operation

An area of cultural difference that proved challenging for some students was their concern over the less competitive academic environment in the United Kingdom. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, families, friends, peers, relatives and society as a whole are concerned about the academic performance of students. This concern creates pressure, making students work harder to be the best amongst the other students in class. This determination to be the best results in a very competitive environment. One of the PG students stated:

> *"In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia everybody is asking you about your study and shares your stress about the study especially if you are studying for a postgraduate programme, because I remember when I did my Masters in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which took me four years people never stopped asking me whether I had finished or not until I completed my degree, so…"* (Extract 97: PG S7, English translation)

The academic performance of the student is not just his or her individual concern: it is a concern of the society as a whole. Because the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a developing nation there is more competition in every aspect of life, and students have to work very hard to obtain a good position when they return home. The high expectations of parents, other family members and society force students to work harder to secure a suitable position, in order to attain a better life for themselves. After coming to the United Kingdom, participants felt pressured to work even harder because they have been given an opportunity to study abroad but they were not as confident as they were in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, although there are many Saudi students studying abroad, in the United Kingdom in particular. Moreover, the questionnaire asked students to rate their difficulties when moving from a competitive learning context to one of greater cooperation. The results, as shown in table 5.20, suggest that cooperating with a group was difficult for them, perhaps because Saudi students were used to working for individual advantage when they studied in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Table 5.20: Co-operative Learning is a Problem (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Always		
Often	9	14.5
Sometimes	24	38.7
Rarely	15	24.2
Never	14	22.6
Total	62	100.0

Studying abroad also has an impact on students in a positive way because they do not feel restricted or pressured, since they have the opportunity to learn at their own pace without being overly concerned with pleasing their family, friends or other members of society or of being belittled for not performing well. One of the PG students talked of commitment thus:

> *"To be honest studying here (United Kingdom) gave me the chance to focus on my study. You know in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia there are too many social commitments visiting friend, inviting my relatives, my*

wife's relative etc. So, I think I am having my own
space here just for studying". (Extract 98: PG S9,
English translation)

Thus, although some adjustments are required to recognise the value of co-operative learning, many felt that it was a positive factor that they generally felt more autonomous over the progress of their learning than they had previously. Whether this is good or bad, the researcher believes that students should focus only on their study, whether in Saudi Arabia or in the UK. This is not to say that students should not enjoy themselves with their relatives and friends, but rather that they should allocate enough time for their study.

5.3.6 Dependence vs. Independence

A further aspect of cultural difference that students felt uncomfortable about was the lack of availability of their teachers. For some of the Saudi students, the autonomy expected of them in terms of learning meant they felt isolated from their lecturers and found it very hard to approach them to discuss their questions and concerns with them. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, lecturers are normally present to answer questions and provide help. In the United Kingdom, students had to make appointments to speak to the lecturer during specified office hours and this was a problem for those students who felt they needed an immediate answer to their question and that by the time they could get an appointment it was too late. This situation frequently left the students with unanswered questions and concerns relating to their assignments and projects; one PG student said:

> *"There is no doubt that lecturers here [United*
> *Kingdom] are more open than lecturers in the*
> *Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, but there is a big a problem*
> *with formality because I have to book an appointment*
> *to see them before approaching them which*
> *discourages me to ask questions after the class*
> *finishes, and if I did so they would say sorry I am in a*
> *hurry" (*Extract 99: PG S7, English translation)

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, because they did not have to make appointments with an instructor to talk about academic questions, whenever they had questions or concerns, they simply spoke with the instructor after class. This meant that they

received answers to their questions immediately while the questions were still fresh in their minds. The practicalities of the situation in the United Kingdom may not be ideal, yet the students need to be able to adapt and find solutions to this type of problem.

To conclude, this section has revealed students' problems with British academic teaching styles and methods. Participants found it difficult to work alone, as they were accustomed to lecturers in Saudi Arabia giving them all the information that they needed to complete their courses. Students also reported that there were sufficient and comprehensive resources in the UK compared with the KSA in terms of books, etc. The findings also revealed that the students were descriptive in their writing and speaking, rather than critical. Finally, students could not participate well in the discussion, both because of their level of language and because of their custom of passively listening to lecturers. These findings in terms of the culture show that cultural discrepancies are resulting in uncomfortable learning situations for both Saudi students, their British peers, and the British academic staff; therefore, strategies should ideally be put in place to resolve these issues (as will be explained below and in more detail in chapters six and seven).

5.4 Adjustment Strategies

This section discusses some of the factors that have helped the Saudi students who took part in the survey to adapt to the British academic environment. The information collected on this subject will prove invaluable to the author, and to future researchers in this field, as it provides data describing firsthand experiences of strategies that have proved effective in smoothing the transition between studying in Saudi Arabia and studying in the United Kingdom. The students have a valuable insight to offer as they have all made adjustments to the English accent, living away from their families and coping with the fast pace of life and the foreign learning environment. There are three main tactics that were identified to help them adjust successfully: first, listening, observing, and communicating with their British peers; secondly, acclimatising to the different backgrounds of the students in the classroom, e.g. China, India, Denmark etc.; thirdly, as soon as possible after arrival in the United Kingdom, seeking help and advice from Saudi students who had been in the

United Kingdom for some time. Throughout this section, the issues the students themselves introduced as pivotal to successful adaptation both in terms of language and cultural difference will be discussed.

5.4.1 English Accent

Some students highlighted their specific problems in the area of understanding British accents, particularly lecturers who come from the north of the United Kingdom. The Saudi Arabian education system is based on the American education system, and most Saudi students had been exposed to American English. However; one PG student said:

> *"When I finished my pre-sessional course and I started my Masters degree the first lecturer was from the north of the United Kingdom. I could not follow him because of his accent and he was speaking very fast, I was bit angry because I thought I do not understand English but when I asked my classmates especially foreigners they had the same problem, mind you after three or four lecturers I started to get used to his accent and I liked it"* (Extract 100: PG S13, English translation)

Students noted that, although they had problems understanding their teachers and peers, their problems were not so severe when compared with other groups of international students and they generally tune in to the accent quite quickly, as the student cited above reported. One teacher made the point that, even though Saudi students had a problem with the British accent, it was less severe than that of other nationalities. One PG student said:

> *"...had problems with the British accent because some professors and students spoke very fast and it was hard to understand them".* (Extract 101: PG S11, English translation)

It seems that, Saudi students who had problems with the British accent noticed that the problem was severe when they first arrived but eased over time. Also, it was observed during observation of an EAP class that Saudi students seem to speak more clearly than those of other nationalities which enables their teachers to understand them more clearly. In addition to this, it is not an easy task for any

student to get used to the British accent unless their level of English is good, as commented by one of the EAP teachers:

> *" I think the British accent takes time to get to know, but I think that generally people after about a term, people get quite familiar with that if we make an effort to listen to that during the term, and often by the second term they're better with the British accent than the American accent, so you can flip the other way. But it's not a particularly hard area to improve if you've already got quite a good background."* (Extract 102: EAP T2, originally in English)

From the questionnaire results, it was clear that Saudi students did not have a major problem with the accents of their British peers. This is perhaps because speaking and listening have been found through the data analysis to be the strongest skills. The results in table 5.21 illustrated that just one student had difficulty with understating his British peers' accents while the majority of students (35.5%) seem to find it easy.

Table 5.21: Problems Understanding Lecturers' Accents (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Very easy	13	21.0
Easy	19	30.6
Neutral	22	35.5
Difficult	7	11.3
Very difficult	1	1.6
Total	62	100.0

This leads us to conclude that, although exposure to more British accents could be valuable in listening tasks in the English language classroom, this may not be as fundamental to solving Saudi students' listening problems as it would those of other international students.

5.4.2 Living Arrangements

The aspect of the students' lives that seemed to have the most influence upon their stress, outside of the study environment, was living away from their families. Living away from family was very difficult for many of the participants in the study because in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia children usually have very close family ties and do not move out of home until they become self-sufficient; sometimes they remain at home even after marriage. In addition, it is culturally unacceptable for students, especially for females, to live by themselves or move out of home until they are married. One female student commented:

> *"I was not allowed to travel abroad to continue my study until I got married"* (Extract 103: PG S8, English translation)

Participants said that in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia they did not have to worry about paying for their education as their parents paid their expenses and took care of everything. This is not to say that all participants belonged to elite families but most of them were not used to cooking, cleaning, washing or doing household work as they previously had maids who did this type of work for them. In addition to that, the questionnaire results, as demonstrated in table 5.22, suggested that just over half the students surveyed do not find too much difficulty adapting to an individualist culture, as 18 (29.0%) answered that they 'never' have problems and 15 (24.2%) answered 'rarely'. Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of Saudi students cope very well with being away from their family, presumably because the majority of families in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia teach their children to be independent.

Table 5.22: Problems with an Individualist Lifestyle (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Always	5	8.1
Often	8	12.9
Sometimes	16	25.8
Rarely	15	24.2
Never	18	29.0
Total	62	100.0

On further questioning, it was apparent that when they came to the United Kingdom they had found it quite difficult, at least for the first few weeks, to live and do everything on their own. Male students expressed more concerns about living by themselves than did female participants:

> *"In the United Kingdom I have to live on my own. I had to look for accommodation and a car. I have to go shopping myself; it has been really hard for me"*
> (Extract 104: PG S14, English translation)

Living away from one's family, along with taking responsibility for themselves, was a significant adjustment for the participants, especially for some of the students who had never lived away from their parents before. Therefore British academics should understand the new learning situation that Saudi students face when they first arrive in the UK, partly because it will have an impact on their learning process as they sometimes arrive late for initial sessions during their academic study. This is not an excuse for the students to arrive late for class, or to avoid assignment deadlines, etc., but rather provides a potential opportunity for Universities to offer more support to Saudi students during the early weeks of their study programmes.

5.4.3 Time Management

As well as taking on more domestic tasks, Saudi students have to adjust to the fast pace of life in the United Kingdom. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, most students are very easy going, whereas, in the United Kingdom, students operate within strict time parameters and greatly value their time. Some students had problems meeting the deadlines for their assignments. They acknowledged a lot of stress because of deadlines for projects, assignments and exams. Meeting deadlines sometimes becomes difficult for students; one Masters student said:

> *"you know a Master's degree here [United Kingdom]) is just one year and it was very very difficult to cope with the entire deadline e.g. all the assignment deadlines come close to each other. Also, because I did not have enough time I asked my supervisor for an extension for my dissertation".*
> (Extract 105: PG S12, English translation)

Another PhD student was uncomfortable at the beginning of his PhD course, because he did not know how to manage his time. After coming to the United Kingdom, he noticed that the British greatly value time and that taking a short course in time management helped him learn how to manage his time more effectively. From his comments, it appears that the course he describes would be useful for all Saudi students; he commented:

> *"I am grateful for the courses that are provided by the university for PhD students because they have taught me to do everything and not just focus on a single thing for a longer period of time, which helps me with my PhD"* (Extract 106: PG S10, English translation)

Students were required to learn to adjust to a different lifestyle and manage their time in the United Kingdom. Overall, learning to adjust to the fast pace of life was one of the major factors expressed by participants, and they had to learn how to operate within a time frame, how to be consistent with their work, and how to become more serious about utilizing their time effectively. Students can learn time management skills from more experienced Saudis, or from their British peers, but there is no reason why they could not be part of preparation courses for students (see 4.2.2.4).

5.4.4 Learning from British Peers

The majority of the students found listening, observing and communicating with their British peers had been of considerable help to them in coping with the new academic environment. The practical and direct approach to life here in the United Kingdom had been a revelation for them. Sitting in class, listening to other students and observing the academic environment both inside and outside the classroom helped them to understand the different facets of the educational system in the United Kingdom. One PG student commented:

> *"When I came here I did not join any courses before commencing my Masters degree. So, I found difficulties in understanding the British academics but by observing and listening to my lecturers I started to get used to it."* (Extract 107: PG S8, English translation)

Listening helped them with concerns such as how to talk to lecturers, how to ask a question in class, and also to learn about other in-class behaviour expected by instructors in the classroom. Observing other students helped the participants with discussions, quizzes, and assignments. Communicating with them helped them to improve their English spoken skills and boost their confidence in the academic setting. The students interviewed for the research viewed listening, observing and communicating as helpful skills in enhancing their academic qualities. What is more, listening, observing and communicating with British peers also helped the Saudi students to become more independent and direct, and they learned to maintain a balance between their academic and personal life. One of the postgraduate students was amazed that some British and other non-British students worked alongside their studies, but noted that they had a balance between their working and academic life and did not seem to be stressed; he commented:

> *"I noticed that there are so many students working part time in order to help themselves with their living expenses and I just wonder how they can manage'*
> (Extract 108: PG S7, English translation)

Also, the questionnaire results show that students have few problems consulting their academic peers, as illustrated in the table below which supported the interview data.

Table 5.23 Problems with Peer Communication (N=62)

	Frequency	Percent
Always	1	1.6
Often	5	8.1
Sometimes	20	32.3
Rarely	24	38.7
Never	12	19.4
Total	62	100.0

5.4.5 Cultural Diversity

Students considered different nationality students in the class to be a positive factor that helped to develop their understanding of British academic culture. These students observed that other international students and lecturers in the class

and on campus who had come from different parts of the world belonged to different cultures, ethnic groups, and were of both genders. This gave them encouragement to deal with their own language, academic and cultural problems. It also reduced feelings of isolation and incongruity, especially when it was obvious that other international students also shared some of the problems and issues with language and the British academic environment. One of the PG students was fascinated by the fact that there were so many other international students from various parts of the world. It made him feel happier and gave him encouragement to deal with academic challenges as he realized that he was not the only one having to adjust to a new academic environment. There were other students who were also struggling with the English language and with adjusting to the new academic environment; one commented:

> *"During my study for my Masters degree I have had less stress with my language and participating in the class, because in my course we have to work as a group in the library; I noticed it is not only me who has difficulties with English and even native speakers do not understand the task some time. Actually we have a student who was very good at grammar and the native students ask him sometimes to correct their grammar."* (Extract 109: PG S11, English translation)

Diversity also helped the students to learn about other cultures, religions, and ethnic groups; this enriches their knowledge about other countries, and adds to their academic growth. One of the PG students thought that the international diversity in the student population had played a very positive role in helping him with adjusting not only to his academic environment, but also to his language problems, and that it had greatly relaxed him. He commented:

> *"Being a student in a multicultural university helped me to learn a new culture not only in the classroom but also in the mosque with Malaysian students etc. I think that has also given my wife and I the chance to speak more in English."* (Extract 110: PG S7, English translation)

In the EAP classroom, it was observed that most of the students were from Saudi Arabia, which restricted their opportunity to learn from students of different backgrounds. This perhaps will explain why some Saudi students were demotivated to work in pairs inside the classroom. The researcher believes that students come to the UK because they want to learn about other things, such as culture, etc., not only language. This will help them to speak in English and it will also improve their English.

5.4.6 Saudi Community Support

Some PG students had approached other Saudi students who had been in the United Kingdom for some time, for both academic (mainly language and British academic culture) and non-academic advice. As they share the same language, the same religion, and the same cultural values and are also familiar with the Saudi Arabian educational system, they found it much easier and quicker to explain their problems and get them resolved. They asked their seniors for help with English language problems and academic problems, e.g. finding textbooks. Some PG students approached their seniors rather than approaching other students because they felt more comfortable about asking questions, or perhaps because their English language level was not good enough. One PG student stated that:

> *"Before I came to Southampton I asked whether there is a Saudi club or not. Fortunately there was a Saudi club and then I got in touch with director of the club who was doing a PhD in medicine; he directed me to someone who had studied the same course as mine last year as I felt more comfortable talking to Saudi students because I think it is easier for me to explain in my own language (Arabic) than it is using English".*
> (Extract 111: PG S14, English translation)

This confirms that, before arriving in the United Kingdom, students are willing to make contact with others with a view to easing their transition into their new environment, and this is something that might be usefully put in place in a more official way. Whilst studying, Saudi students normally prefer to approach Saudi students rather than British students or their lecturers, because of the fear that they would underestimate their compatibility with studying in the United Kingdom. One of the PG students said that he approached his seniors for help

with power point presentations, and commented:

> *"I mostly approach one of my Saudi seniors for help regarding power point as he is a specialist in computer science, and I approached him because I am not quite familiar with technical terminology."* (Extract 112: PG S10, English translation)

This support offered by the senior Saudi students is invaluable to many when they first arrive and they would potentially suffer far more difficulties than they do now without it. This underlines the importance for students of retaining a strong Saudi community or club within the university context. This particular student group at Southampton University could therefore be seen as a model for other universities where no such groups yet exist.

5.4.7 Students' Support Networking

Some of the PG students reported that they interacted often with their classmates, both inside and outside class, and asked them questions relating to assignments. They found that British and non-British classmates were very helpful and some even made extra efforts to help. Participants approached their fellow students mostly when they first arrived, since many of them did not know much about the other Saudi students on the course. This kind of communication seemed to be beneficial to the students later on when group work was required; one PG student said:

> *"I was quite lucky because when I first arrived I did not know anybody in Southampton so I had to communicate with my classmates very often."* (Extract 113: PG S14, English translation)

During group projects for their coursework (as in the School of Management), it was very necessary for them to interact and feel at ease with each other, so those students who had built up a relationship with their classmates when they arrived tended to find this easier. They felt that interacting with their classmates had made them more productive and allowed them to share ideas and get suggestions:

"Interacting with my classmate is very very important as it is one of the criteria that our lecturers would evaluate for us, so I do not want to lose marks for not engaging with my classmates". (Extract 114: PG S7, English translation)

5.4.8 Computer Laboratory and Library Facilities

Although the students were new to research-based learning, they all reported that they used the library and the computer laboratory extensively for doing their assignments, answering other academic questions and seeking information on the Internet in the United Kingdom, more than they did in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Easy access to the library and the computer laboratory greatly helped these students with their academic adjustment because they could be used at their own convenience. Free access to the Internet in the computer laboratories was seen to be one of the greatest resources by the participants. One PG student was very pleased with the service, and he commented:

I am very satisfied with the service that was provided by the ISS in the university because with the VPN service I was able to access my work from anywhere whether on or off-campus." (Extract 115: PG S12, English translation)

In Saudi universities, owing to the scarcity of resources, not every student has easy and free access to computers and the Internet, and sometimes they have to travel significant distances and search widely to buy the required textbooks for their courses. The availability and easy access to books, journals, and articles in the United Kingdom were very much appreciated by one female PG student and she commented:

"One good thing about the library is that as Masters' student they will bring any book you want from anywhere, articles and theses as well." (Extract 116: PG S8, English translation)

To conclude, this section has revealed findings regarding students' adjustment. For example, students did not adjust to the English accent easily because they were used to listening and being taught in American English. In addition, some lecturers spoke very quickly in the classroom and some students found it very difficult to adapt to their living arrangements as they were used to having help. Time management seemed to be a serious problem raised by the findings of the research: students are expected to manage their own time, which can include taking other students to school or to hospital, although some of these commitments can be dealt with by their wives. Cultural diversity in the classroom could be an advantage for students, allowing them to learn about other cultures and practise their English. Moreover, students received a huge amount of support from the Saudi community in Southampton, especially regarding academic issues. It was understandable that students reported feeling more comfortable talking about their difficulties with each other. Finally, as students had rarely used libraries in KSA, they had to adjust themselves to spending most of their time in the library as they have to work independently (see 6.4).

5.5 Conclusion

Based on the needs analysis, this chapter presented the findings of the study by focusing on target situation analysis which included both language and academic needs. The findings identified three important facts: first, Saudi postgraduate students still encounter serious problems with their writing and reading; second, students have difficulties in adapting to the new academic environment but most of them overcome this with time; third, the students themselves had identified a number of ways that they could best adapt to the academic environment. The first two points are focused on in the next chapter, which comments extensively on how EAP programmes might best identify and address these issues by further examining the implications of the Present Situation Analysis (PSA) and Target Situation Analysis (TSA) data. The third point is used as a foundation for some of the recommendations given by the researcher in the conclusion to the thesis.

Chapter Six: Discussion and Implication of the Data

6.1 Introduction

This study complements and extends research (e.g. Benson, 1989; Bloor, 1994; Jordan, 1997; Benesch, 1999; Ferris and Tagg, 1996; Braine, 2001; Basturkmen, 2002; Nomnian, 2008; Carkin, 2005 and Park, 2006) that has investigated the challenges international students face in EAP and their adaptation to a new academic environment by examining Saudi students' present situation and target situation needs. The two previous chapters presented the data collected by the researcher and demonstrated the importance of exploring Saudi students' needs and the academic culture that they encounter while studying at British Universities, relating to their English learning experience in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, including their views about learning English in the United Kingdom and studying in a British postgraduate programme, and revealed individual needs and struggles in learning EAP. To highlight these issues in terms of the three research questions, this chapter focuses on discussing the key areas with which students identify the need for significant academic adjustment. To this end it is divided into three main sections: 6.2, Present Situation Analysis (PSA); 6.3, Target Situation Analysis (TSA); and 6.4, advice for student preparation.

It was deemed crucial to investigate Saudi students' perspectives pertaining to their needs analysis from the outset (after their education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during their EAP course) and then again after their EAP course in the United Kingdom (during their period of postgraduate study). Without this contrasting information, it was believed that it would not have been possible to make any relevant connections between the EAP and postgraduate context or show how their views and behaviours vary in terms of language needs and academic needs over time. This discussion chapter examines the gaps left by their current preparation, in terms of language and cultural learning needs, and identifies areas to focus on to improve the support that is offered to Saudi students.

This chapter will contextualise the data in terms of existing research in the field, and aims to provide direction upon how to tailor EAP and other preparation courses to

fulfil the needs of Saudi students. The information given provides the foundation for the recommendations that appear in the concluding chapter of this thesis and focuses on the aim stated in the introduction: to contribute to the current research in the field and also to provide useful practical information with regard to the following; guidance for policymakers in both countries of Saudi students' needs; guidance for teachers to consider when teaching Saudi students; and, guidance for Saudi students who are studying EAP to learn more effectively. Thus the findings from this study are intended to be relevant to research and theory as well as to instructional practice.

In relation to other research that has examined international students' perspectives of their needs, the findings of the current study are especially useful in the following ways: first, this study investigated Saudi students' present needs, including the cultural issues encountered while studying EAP in the United Kingdom, thus elaborating upon the findings of other research that has focused more narrowly on students' perceptions of language and non-language needs. Previous research has shown that students often have problems studying by themselves and find interacting in the EAP classroom relatively difficult (Nomnian, 2008, Park, 2006), identifying specific areas of difficulty to include teaching methods (Flowers, 2001) and teaching materials (Evans and Green, 2007). Secondly, it examines students' target needs in terms of language, academic skills, academic culture and this provides useful findings. For example, Saudi students may view interactions with instructors or peers as uncomfortable (Bosher and Smalkoski, 2002), and students find it very hard to be critical in their writing (Jame, 2010). The findings of the current study draw attention to the transitional problems and the academic and practical adjustment issues faced by Saudi students at British Universities and by extrapolation, throughout the United Kingdom.

6.2 Research Question One: Present Situation Analysis (PSA) and Transitional Problems

The first research question of the thesis enquired: What is the present situation analysis (PSA) of Saudi students intending to enter a postgraduate programme at British Universities with regard to language and culture? This analysis focused on language skills, academic skills, contrasting teaching methodology and student/teacher/peer interaction and participation. This section will discuss the

findings of the PSA utilising the Present Situation Framework proposed by Hutchison and Waters (1987), as well as the topics of language and academic cultural needs, in order to answer and explain the implications of the data in terms of this first research question. In addition, students' experiences of learning English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the successful and absent elements of any preparation courses (including studying EAP in the United Kingdom) will be discussed. This will serve to highlight the main problems that students encountered when making the transition from the Saudi Arabian educational system to the British one.

6.2.1 Transitional Problems: Situational Context

Recent data, since the announcement of King Abdullah's scholarships in 2005 from the Ministry of Higher Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the numbers of Saudi students studying abroad, reveal that the United Kingdom is the second most visited country for study after the US. This explains why it is deemed so important to conduct research into the area of identifying the support Saudi Masters and PhD students might need in the British academic context.

At present, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the focus is on English language skills both for study and future application in a business environment. Therefore, a good level of English and its wider utilization are now crucial requirements for all working and academic areas in Saudi society. According to some departments in KSA, e.g. the Ministry of Work, the proficiency level in the English language is a major requirement when judging students' eligibility to enter tertiary institutions, as well as in the recruitment of human resources throughout the Kingdom. This enthusiastically supported phenomenon has become a major issue nation-wide, leading ultimately to more Saudi students undertaking overseas studies, resulting in the enhancement of Britain's position as a key provider of further education for Saudis.

6.2.2 Language Skills Analysis (LA): Transitional Problems: ESL Experience in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

According to the findings from the questionnaire (see, figure 4.3), the Saudi students sampled in this study had begun to learn English as a foreign language at an inappropriate age, in terms of their cognitive development as second language learners. They were between childhood and adulthood when they began studying English, whereas, according to Park (2006), learning the English language at the age of 13 is rather late in terms of experiencing the most effective development of second language learning skills. It would be helpful if students started learning English at the age of 6, as is the case in some private schools in Saudi Arabia. It seems that Saudi students have previously not been fully cognisant of why they were expected to learn English, and this has limited how far they could progress in terms of their English proficiency level. The results in chapter one revealed that Saudi students were taught English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by unqualified English teachers who required them to learn in a passive, top down way. This meant that Saudi students received constant feedback from their English teachers about their mistakes during the learning process, eroding their confidence.

The investigation into the characteristics of Saudi students' experiences in learning English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia focused on how they felt about the teaching they received in the Saudi education system. The Saudi students sampled in this study indicated that they had been dissatisfied with the English course that was provided by the Ministry of Education, as can be seen in (5.3.3). These results were unsurprising; a previous piece of research conducted by Al-Tuwaijri (1982) asked a group of Saudi students who were studying in the United States of America at that time how satisfied they were with the English curriculum and teaching methods, and the results showed that the majority of his participants were dissatisfied. The approach to language learning in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is based on a teacher-centred learning pedagogy, and this was also discussed with the research participants.

The results from the data showed that students' previous knowledge of English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had not significantly helped them to survive and to achieve success in their transition to the British learning environment. As is the case

with other subjects, English language classrooms in Saudi schools rely on a reproductive style of learning, treating the English language as static rather than living.

In addition to the lack caused by this relatively passive style of learning, the majority of Saudi students sampled in this study reported that they had not had an opportunity to learn or practise the English language with native English speakers whilst in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as can be seen in extracts (1, 2, 3 in chapter four). Even though some of them had experience with those who speak English as their first or second language, the main focus of the teaching pedagogy as it pertained to their speaking abilities did not seem to help their development of English language proficiency. Additionally, owing to the dominant exam-based environment, speaking English in a communicative context is not a priority of language learning. There is currently no opportunity within the current language learning environment in the Saudi education system for Saudi students to demonstrate oral proficiency.

6.2.3 Language Skills Analysis (LA): Transitional Problems: Academic English Preparation Course in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The results from the study showed that a large number of students had taken extra courses before coming to the United Kingdom. Most of them had attended a general English course and seemed to be unaware of the different types of English specialism. It is accepted, as suggested by many ESP authorities (Jordan, 1997 and Hyland, 2005), that students should at least attain intermediate level before they start any specific English course such as EAP. It can be said that most if not all of the private schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia where English is taught do not currently provide any specialist courses; rather, they focus on teaching general English. Therefore, it would be helpful for students to be provided with an opportunity to learn EAP within their home environment before coming to the United Kingdom.

With regard to the aim their preparatory English studies, the Saudi students sampled in this study mainly cited TOEFL preparation courses which dominate in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as can be seen in (chapter four). They were mostly unaware of the IELTS test, owing to this bias towards TOEFL, although the British

Council in Riyadh provides IELTS test centres in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Unfortunately, the data suggest that there are not any specific tertiary preparation programmes for domestic Saudi students seeking to study in English speaking countries like Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, the US and New Zealand. Naturally, there are differences between these two tests, but students who are going to study in the UK are advised to take IELTS as most British universities prefer it.

Despite the limited potential opportunities for formal preparation within the Saudi educational system, those students surveyed had realised the importance of taking official English tests and more than half of them had taken them in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The evidence from the questionnaire reveals that the IELTS test is the most preferred by Saudi students entering British postgraduate programmes; this is not surprising because most, if not all, British tertiary institutions emphasise this test as a crucial measurement of international students' ability when determining whether or not they can undertake British postgraduate programmes.

6.2.4 Language Skills Analysis (LA): Transitional Problems: Proficiency Upon Arrival

The questionnaire also asked students to estimate their level of English at the time of sampling. The results (see chapter four) showed a huge variation in their level before and after coming to the United Kingdom. Considerable time and effort on the part of the students upon arrival can be reduced by effective general English tuition in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia before they come to the United Kingdom. Unsurprisingly, the results showed that the students' level of English was not good when they first arrived in the United Kingdom, not only at the start of their academic course but also when joining the EAP programme provided by the University (see 4.3.6). A possible explanation for this might be that they have not undergone sufficient preparation before starting their programme, or that the preparation they had undergone was inadequate - something which needs to be addressed.

6.2.5 Language Skills Analysis (LA): Transitional Problems: English for Academic Purposes in the United Kingdom

As discussed in chapter one, an abundance of previous studies have noted the importance of EAP for international students. The results from this study have revealed that both teachers and student view studying EAP as being useful before commencing academic courses (see 4.3.7). Even if students have met the conditions required for them to start their academic programme, which is 6.5 for IELTS in most cases, EAP helps students to become familiar with the appropriate use of language. Moreover, as Jordan (2002) and Nomnian (2008) claim, EAP courses help international students to acclimatise to the new learning environment. This was confirmed in Extract 29 when one of the students admitted that she had joined the course to learn how to conduct a research project. The research findings from the data show the importance of studying EAP before students commence their academic programme, especially as these programmes go the heart of the important issue of managing students' expectations (see 6.4.6).

The data indicated that many students had to attend a general English course in the United Kingdom, alongside their EAP one, before starting their academic programme. This suggests that the English courses that students had attended in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were insufficient in some way. This is further suggested by the fact that those who attended EAP courses in the United Kingdom had spent a considerable time studying on them (see chapter four). Therefore, it is apparent that if students could learn general English and EAP effectively in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, this could save a lot of money. It is important to understand, however, that this is not to suggest that students should not attend an EAP course in the United Kingdom; rather, that they should arrive in the United Kingdom well prepared and join a short pre-sessional course at their target university.

6.2.6 Transitional Problems: English for Academic Purposes and Cultural Aspect of Learning Analysis (CALA)

Most if not all the participants experienced difficulties with the educational approach to teaching EAP in the United Kingdom. The findings showed that some of the students were struck by the differences between the teacher-student relationships in the United Kingdom and those in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, especially the level

of informality between British teachers and their students. These results mirror those of Abukhattala (2004). According to Edward and Ran (2006), the relationship between teachers and students is important because an effective one will speed up the process of learning inside the classroom by motivating students to try their utmost to make the most of the lessons. In general, the research participants found the closer and more democratic relationship between teachers and students helpful.

With regard to EAP, however, the students were particularly dissatisfied with the course materials and this had a negative impact on learning performance. This is not to say that those materials are not perfect, but that students found it strange to be provided with textbooks which they then had to study and bring to every lesson and yet often did not use. EAP teachers can usefully recognise that, owing to the differences between the Saudi education system and the British education system with regard to textbooks, it is important to explain to students the benefits of using handouts rather than books.

6.2.7 Cultural Aspect of Learning Analysis (CALA): Transitional Problems: Teacher Centered to Learner Centered

According to Alansari (1995), the teacher in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has authority over classroom discussion and students' behaviour. In addition, he/she is supposed to represent the accepted social behavioural model of the educator who is responsible for developing the values and the character of his/her students. The results, especially those from the observations, show that most students are unable to overcome this problem. Students were able to reflect usefully on the differences afforded by the roles of the teacher in the United Kingdom system; they reported that it was only when they started learning English in the United Kingdom that they realised that effectiveness in learning is related to two-way communication in class and is not only dependent upon the excellence of the teacher. An open discussion of the responsibilities of the teacher and the student would perhaps be beneficial in helping students to adapt happily to their new role.

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, by virtue of rank and status, teachers control what goes on in the classroom. Based on their experience in the Saudi classroom, the participants in this study initially felt uncomfortable about asking their teachers

questions in class. They were afraid that questions might be thought of as implications that the teacher does not teach well or does not know about his/her subject. Despite a certain level of residual tension around this type of issue, the participants observed by the researcher generally seemed to be at ease with what they perceived to be a certain type of equality in the power relations between students and teachers in their EAP classes in the United Kingdom.

6.2.8 Cultural Aspect of Learning Analysis (CALA): Transitional Problems: Class Size

In terms of class size, many researchers, (e.g. Flowerdew and Miller, 1995; and Kaur, 2006) have suggested that the smaller the class the easier it is for teachers to deliver their lessons. In the EAP learning environment in the United Kingdom, this is also an issue that relates to the nationality composition of learner groups inside the classroom. According to research findings about Saudi students' experiences of EAP learning in United Kingdom institutions, the groups of learners learning English were composed mainly of Saudis with only two or three non-Arabic students. This means that Saudi students have little opportunity to improve their speaking proficiency level and it is natural for them to speak in Arabic if they have something to ask each other in class. It is necessary for EAP teachers to ask them, or even to force them, to speak in English. To achieve this it is proposed that EAP teachers should tell them that if they do not speak in English they will lose marks. From the observation, it was clear that some EAP teachers were very strict about speaking in English and it would be a positive move if all EAP teachers were to continue this practice towards transforming students' habits to speak in English all the time, certainly at least in the classroom.

6.2.9 Summary of Present Situation Analysis (PSA) and Transitional Problems

To conclude this section, it is fair to say that the students arrived without a sufficient level of English to start their academic programmes, and had been unaware of the differences in the educational system. More important, the PSA of the Saudi students raised the question: *Why are they taking an EAP course?* It was determined that the course is compulsory, although the students themselves do have their own personal and academic goals regarding what they want to achieve from the EAP course. In

addition, the data helped us to understand to a certain extent how Saudi students learn and also their level of English and knowledge of the British academic system on arrival in the United Kingdom.

6.3 Research Question Two: Target Situation Analysis (TSA)

The second research question asked: What is the target situation analysis (TSA) of Saudi students attending a postgraduate programme at British Universities with regard to language and culture? It proposed focusing on language skills; academic skills; contrasting teaching methodology; student/teacher/peer interaction and participation; research skills and critical thinking. This section is divided into two main sub-sections: first, language needs, which deals with all four skills: writing, reading, listening, and speaking; and secondly, academic needs in terms of approach to education, critical thinking, student-lecturer relationship, class participation, less competitive environment, living away from family, time management, and the use of the library.

6.3.1 Language Needs and Academic Adjustment

Saudi students in this study who were currently enrolled in British postgraduate programmes were shown to have difficulties in adapting to using English appropriately in the academic context. With regard to adaptation difficulties, two important findings of this study were a lack of exposure to a real English speaking environment and unfamiliarity with the use of English, particularly for academic purposes. The research findings from sample responses in this study clearly indicated that the most difficult skill for students was writing, followed by reading, speaking and listening (see table 5.1). This finding is similar to that from the research conducted by Park (2006), suggesting the majority of international students studying in the United Kingdom who encounter this problem includes those from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

6.3.1.1 Language Skills Analysis (LA): Academic Adjustment: The Four Skills

Writing is one of the major problems that international students face while pursuing academic study, not only in the United Kingdom but also in other countries, e.g. the USA (see Kaur, 2006), Canada (see Abukhattala, 2004), and Australia (see Park,

2006). A previous study conducted by Edward and Ran (2006) found that Chinese students studying in the United Kingdom have difficulties with writing. This study certainly revealed that the most serious problems that Saudi students have are with writing. Some of the teachers interviewed expressed their frustration, as it seemed to them as if the students had never been taught how to write at all. They may be correct in this impression. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, it is rare for people to write to each other, e.g. to express congratulations or to send letters; they prefer to talk to each other via phone or use another form of verbal communication.

In addition to their problems with writing in general, students find it hard to express themselves in English because they do not have the right words to do so. The results revealed that students are also limited by a limitation in their academic vocabulary and the terminology specific to their field. Unfortunately, EAP teachers teach them how to write an introduction and conclusion, and spend most of the teaching time on these matters. Teachers should focus more on building the students' vocabulary, and make them aware that they must have a huge vocabulary in order to succeed in their academic studies. Teachers have to make sure that students read and understand the words in the academic list (WAL) (see chapter one), and where possible should provide them with access to all the relevant specific terminology for each subject. This will help students to cope with any difficulties they might encounter when they read, write, listen or speak in their specific course situation. EAP teachers at Southampton also give students only one 1200-word assignment each semester, even though as postgraduates they must write at least 2500 words for their academic assignments. These changes may require more time and effort on the part of EAP teachers, but they are important if the EAP course organisers intend to meet the Saudi students' needs.

A further issue that proved upsetting for students related to the failure of EAP teachers to explain the requirements of the various different genres of writing which they would be asked to produce as postgraduates. When students write in Arabic, they do so in a completely different way from how they write in English, e.g. using a passive rather than an active voice. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, most Universities students are not allowed to criticise another scholar, as, in their professors' view, they are not good enough to criticise others. Therefore, EAP

teachers need to teach Saudi students to have the confidence to argue critically in writing and not simply accept the views of others. In addition, Robinson (1980) claimed that there are differences between writing assignments and scientific reports, and science students in particular expressed their anger that they were not taught how to write scientific reports. This is a problem for these students as they are then required to attend further courses to learn how to write reports and generally to improve their writing, as a consequence of this failing in the EAP course. EAP courses tend to prepare non-scientific students better, but course organisers need to take science students into consideration as well.

In this study, reading was found to be the second difficulty. The results revealed that the main problem was with *searching for information*. There are many explanations for this: first, students, particularly those studying science, are not familiar with specific subject-related terminology (see chapter five). Secondly, students might not like reading because they are used to having their teachers give them all the information they need. Jordan (2000) suggested that searching for information in a text needs a lot of practice. Therefore, EAP teachers need to train students in the methods they will need by giving them more reading skills assignments.

Critical reading of academic papers and previous studies seeking for specific information was a problem encountered by Saudi students. Students must be trained to read thoroughly and look for specific information in a very effective way. EAP teachers need to identify their students' needs in reading and then provide strategies to help them. It should be emphasised here that EAP teachers should also provide students with academic journals relating to their specific field of study. This will encourage and motivate their students to read them and will also highlight gaps in their vocabulary. Moreover, EAP teachers should make it clear that students must not spend time reading articles; instead, they should read the abstract and decide from these if the article is relevant to their subject. Such tactics may seem obvious to those raised in the British education system, but they do need to be taught to students of other nationalities.

According to Ferris and Tagg (1996), listening is also important for postgraduate students as they are going to be listening to their lecturers most of the time. The question that should be raised here is: what kind of language are they going to hear? Most scholars referred to in the literature review suggested that lectures are given in academic language, and not in informal language. The Saudi students sampled in this study were having difficulties listening to the lecturers, tutors or professors for various reasons. The first of these relates to accent; the accents from the north of England or Scotland were a major problem for students. A possible explanation for this is that students are used to listening to the American accents, but it is true that regional accents cause problems for the majority of L2 speakers and even in some cases for British students. It would be a useful exercise, therefore, if EAP teachers were to invite one of the university lecturers with a less familiar accent to address the students, so that they will become familiar with that accent.

Problems that students indicated with following lectures related to lack of subject knowledge, the speed at which the lecturer speaks and accent (see 5.4.1). EAP teachers normally talk slowly in order that students can understand, but it would be more useful for them to shift between speaking slowly and speaking fast to highlight to their students the importance of careful listening. According to Fletcher and Stern (1989), taking notes while listening is quite hard. The results of this study support this claim. Students often find it difficult to take notes whilst they listen. There are several probable reasons for this result. First and foremost, English is not the students' mother tongue; therefore they cannot master this skill as easily as the home students might. Secondly, Saudi students did not have to listen and take notes at the same time in the Saudi school system. Thirdly, the lecturer might speak too fast for them to 'catch' all the vocabulary.

6.3.1.2 Language Skills Analysis (LA): Academic Adjustment: Communication and Pronunciation

One of the main problems that teachers encounter with Saudi students when they are studying in their postgraduate programme is pronunciation (see chapter five). The results indicate that students have a serious problem with pronouncing some English letters, e.g. S and Z, P and B, probably because in Arabic there are no similar letters. Another explanation is that students had previously been taught by unqualified

teachers from another country, and could not pronounce English words such as probably/properly correctly. In addition, Arabic uses a different intonation pattern. To help with this, students could be given more useful and practical advice through a series of self-reflecting questions entailing their specific pronunciation issues, language learning goals, and the use of English in the postgraduate study. According to Flowerdew and Peacock (2001), EAP teachers should also teach their students how to communicate their ideas with an emphasis on confidence. This study revealed that Saudi students were not sufficiently confident when communicating their ideas, mostly owing to a lack in the areas of language and subject knowledge.

Regarding the important skills, the results of this study agreed with those of other studies such as that of Nomnian (2008), that the most important skill for international students in order to succeed in their academic studies is writing. The explanation for this is that most of the British degree assessment is based on writing; e.g. PhD students have to produce a written thesis which has upwards of 75,000 words. This is followed by reading skills, as students have to read other people's work, start from where they stopped, and support their claim(s) from materials they have read. Then comes listening skills, because students have to listen to lecturers and take notes; sometimes students might attend an academic conference in their subject area. Finally, speaking is also important; as postgraduate students they get involved in discussions, and PhD students will be expected to communicate fluently, accurately and confidently in an oral viva.

6.3.2 Cultural Aspects of Learning and Analysis (CALA): Academic and Practical Adjustment Problems

This study indicates that students have a problem with their approach to an education style which requires participation in terms of the tutorials or group activities, and giving a presentation was amongst the more difficult tasks for Saudi students to cope with. The analytical outcomes obtained from the three different methodologies applied to this study, namely the descriptive results of the questionnaire, observation and in-depth interviews, indicated three contributory factors. The first is a lack of confidence with their proficiency level in English as a second language, which was owing to a self-realisation about the inadequacy of their preparation and tuition with regard to the way they were taught English in the

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Many Saudi researchers, e.g. Al-Mashary (2006), have found that Saudi students were taught English in an examination-based and text-based system. These learning experiences have a tendency to make students anxious when they are required to participate in tutorial sessions and group meetings, which is the predominant pedagogy in tertiary teaching. Furthermore, students' anxieties arise from a lack of confidence with all major English language skill categories, including speaking, listening, reading and writing. These anxieties, as Park (2006) claimed, may also lead to students experiencing psychological stress. Consequently, it can be concluded that the shift from a teacher-centred to student-centred learning system and being critical, not only in writing but in all aspects of learning, are the main cross-cultural factors that cause problems to arise.

6.3.2.1 Cultural Aspects of Learning and Analysis (CALA): Academic Adjustment Problems: Passive vs. Active

Saudi students arrive in the United Kingdom from a background of listening to their teachers most of the time. They rarely exhibit the kind of participatory behaviour expected in British classrooms because they have been conditioned to learn via rote learning and drilling and are unaccustomed to a framework in which students are expected to ask questions in front of the class; also, group work is the order of the day in British academic education. There were some complaints from students that some British academic teachers do not always have sympathy for the difficulties they may encounter during educational adjustment. Perhaps this is because these academic teachers want students to become more independent and do everything by themselves.

The data showed that there were many favourable elements to the pedagogical styles used in British classrooms and the emphasis on the student as the focal point of learning. This method of teaching at British universities seems to encourage Saudi students to develop their critical thinking and improve their capacity to make decisions as well. It is clear from the results that co-operative learning and democratic dialogue in the postgraduate programme were frequently cited as the most outstanding components of university education in the United Kingdom. Although students have had many difficulties adjusting to the way British lecturers, tutors and professors teach, they appreciated de-emphasizing memorization in favour

of critical analysis, and the encouragement of wide-ranging classroom discussion, including criticism of the views of lecturers, tutors and professors.

6.3.2.2 Cultural Aspects of Learning and Analysis (CALA): Academic Adjustment Problems: Rote Learning vs. Critical Thinking

The Saudi students sampled in this study had had little exposure to critical thinking before arriving in the United Kingdom. Unfortunately, Saudi teachers, who in many cases are quite uninformed about the science of education, suspect that respect for one's superiors cannot be maintained when critical inquiry encourages questioning them. Therefore, teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia should give students some freedom to express their views about their lessons, and challenge them. In addition, EAP teachers could teach critical thinking to Saudi students as a separate module, as this would help them quite considerably when they begin their academic studies. Teaching critical thinking dialogically allows students to articulate their unstated assumptions and consider a variety of views (Benesch, 1999: 576).

6.3.2.3 Cultural Aspects of Learning and Analysis (CALA): Academic Adjustment Problems: Absorption vs. Contribution

In Saudi society, it is widely accepted that being quiet is appropriate behaviour for a student. In traditional classrooms, learners identify student involvement as disruptive and indicative of a lack of teacher control. The Saudis sampled in this study agreed that they did not have freedom of expression in their previous schools. They all agreed that Saudi classrooms are not democratic, and that interaction is mainly one way from teacher to students. This may well be related to Arabic culture, in terms of respecting teachers. Student participation helps Saudi students to become more independent and could be usefully integrated into the Saudi educational system.

6.3.2.4 Cultural Aspects of Learning and Analysis (CALA): Academic Adjustment Problems: Competition vs. Co-Operation

Memorization and rote learning plays an important role in the content of Saudi students' learning (Al-Sudais, 2004) and this is supported by frequent competitive examinations which emphasise this learning style. Even in situations in which students need to develop independent and critical thinking, teachers rely heavily on memorization techniques. These attitudes and practices indisputably have a noticeable impact on the development of Saudi students' learning styles.

This study indicates that students find it hard to adapt to the lack of a competitive environment inside the classroom. The majority of British students want to pass their course but place little importance on the precise grade they achieve, whereas in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, pupils try to achieve the highest marks at university, and, in some cases, lecturers display students' marks on notice boards. Students are also confused about why the highest mark in the United Kingdom is 70 while in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 70 is classified as a very poor mark. This affects their learning performance, and administrators at British universities should make it clear to the Saudi authorities that 70 is intended to be a good mark, and this will motivate students to give more and study harder.

The Saudi students sampled in this study also discussed examinations and their impact on their learning approach. It is important to know that entrance to a higher stage of education in most of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions is based only on examination scores, and the decision as to what academic discipline one enrols in can sometimes depend simply on how high one's grades are. This is in contrast to the United Kingdom where most British institutions evaluate students in a variety of different ways which may appear unclear to the Saudi students. This has an effect on the students' performance, as they might not trust their academic teachers. Therefore, it would be advisable for British institutions to include examinations as one of their methods of evaluating students.

6.3.2.5 Cultural Aspects of Learning and Analysis (CALA): Academic Adjustment Problems: Dependence vs. Independence

The results of this study indicated that relationships between students and lecturers are a bit formal, which discourages them from questioning; passive acceptance of received wisdom is a part of the traditional Saudi family structure, which is consistent with the traditional religious influence in the Saudi society. It is true that moving from a learning environment in which lecturers are revered and have a formal relationship with their students to a democratic educational system can be sometimes difficult, and students need time to adjust to this (Choi, 1997). For example, as shown in chapters four and five, some participants commented on their confusing and sometimes disturbing experiences in their initial instruction by British

academics. They felt off balance in a classroom environment in which teachers were informal and friendly.

6.3.2.6 Cultural Aspects of Learning and Analysis (CALA): Academic Adjustment Problems: Family Bond

Previous studies (see Nomnain, 2008; Marigne and Carter, 2007; and Kaur, 2006) have shown how living away from home is very difficult for most international students. This has been confirmed in this study, as many of the students found it hard to cope with being away from their family. In Saudi Society, people try to socialise more and spend most of the time with their family and friends. Unfortunately, it is very difficult for them to do the same in the United Kingdom as they are many miles away from their family, and if they do have friends here, they can see them only at weekends, as everybody is busy. Socialising is very important in the Saudi culture; communicating and getting in touch with each other face to face could be classified as being among the top priorities of the Saudi people.

Elmadani, (1997) claimed that, in Saudi Arabian society, it is the family and not the individual which constitutes the social unit. Saudi family affiliation is strong, such that members expect to share responsibilities, achievements, joys and their good reputation. Therefore it can be said that the success or failure of any member of a family group reflects on all the other members. This puts more and more pressure on students who are studying abroad to return home with the degree that they were supposed to achieve. This can place stress on them, thus affecting their academic studies.

6.3.2.7 Cultural Aspects of Learning and Analysis (CALA): Academic Adjustment Problems: Time Management

According to Jordan (1997), managing time is crucial for postgraduate students, and is always regarded as one of the main skills that international students should master. It is a skill which could be developed when students are attending the EAP course; EAP organisers could invite specialists to the university to give students advice about how they can manage their time while studying their academic subject. This will help to reduce the stress caused by the time pressures placed on students, as this is a new experience for them. Time was not as restricted when the

students were doing their undergraduate courses in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, assuming that most of the students do not have family commitments, e.g. shopping, taking their children to the school, etc. This puts more pressure on students to be able to manage all the commitments themselves in addition to their study.

6.3.2.8 Cultural Aspects of Learning and Analysis (CALA): Academic Adjustment Problems: Computing and Library Facilities

The results showed that the difficulties faced by students attending British universities are related to teaching approaches which involve the use of research skills. Since, as the students in this study have noted, the Saudi educational system is based on a strong teacher-centred approach, research based learning is not encouraged or acknowledged as important. For these reasons, students are not trained to use libraries on as regular a basis as are British students. The library has a large collection of textbooks, but some of them are old and for some topics there is just a single book. Librarians should be aware of this and increase the number of textbooks and update them as long as the number of students is increasing. It is true that Saudi students need intensive instruction about using the library and should spend considerable time familiarising themselves with it, because it is a new experience for them. Universities do provide an induction week to explain how to use its research facilities, but that is insufficient for the majority of Saudi students. This lack of research experience leads Saudis to feel unprepared to cope with working in a British university.

6.3.2.9 Cultural Aspects of Learning and Analysis (CALA): Academic Adjustment Problems: Gender

According to Appleby (2009), gender is very crucial in the learning process. Gender was one of the important issues discussed in this study. The results from chapter five show that there are more male students than female students. The key issue identified by the students was how the British idea of gender equality contributes to negative responses to Islamic women wearing the *hejab*. Several women reported that the British look on Muslim women with *hejab* as victims of patriarchal strictures as well as of oppressive male relatives. What is relevant here is that the *hejab* or the misunderstanding of it could directly impact upon female students' learning. Teachers need to accept that wearing the *hejab* does not prevent students from learning and interacting with other students. In fact, as they have been raised in a

Muslim culture where it is normal, it will actually help female students to feel more confident about participating in classroom discussions.

6.3.3 Summary of Target Situation Analysis (TSA) and Practical and Academic Adjustment Problems

It is apparent from the data that students' target needs did not meet their actual needs. More important, the discussion of the TSA of the Saudi students raised a series of questions and answers which will be very helpful in formulating recommendations for improving the preparedness of Saudi nationals to participate effectively in a British academic environment:

Q1. Which language skill areas will be the most problematical?
Writing and reading.

Q2. *What written genres will be used?*
Laboratory reports, essays, dissertations, research proposals, seminar papers and academic conference abstracts.

Q3. *What will the content be in terms of vocabulary?*
Academic vocabulary and that specifically related to their academic subjects, e.g. education, management etc.

Q4. *Who will the Saudi learners communicate with?*
Native and non-native speakers. Their peers, teachers, examiners and supervisors.

Q5. *Where will the Saudi learners use the language?*
They will use it in a physical setting: universities, conferences, workshops, and in non- physical settings: writing reports or assignments.

Q6. *What learning approaches will be used?*
An autonomous, research based, critical thinking, contributory, co-operative and independent approach.

Q7. *What practical concerns will students encounter?*
Comprehension, isolation, time management problems and gender issues.

The recommendations in the conclusion to this thesis will focus on potential solutions to these problems. These will be partly based on the experiences of the students in the study and will go to the crux of the issue of preparedness for postgraduate study, which was highlighted in the introduction to this thesis.

6.4 Research Question Three: Present Situation Analysis (PSA) and Target Situation Analysis (TSA) Preparation

The third research question asked: How can Saudi students' best be prepared for a British postgraduate programme of study? To answer this, the needs analysis and target analysis data are brought together and the factors that have helped the study's participants with practical and academic adjustment are considered. This section is divided into six parts, identifying key areas that require recommendations and resolution to improve Saudi students' experiences of studying in the United Kingdom. These stress the importance of the following: meeting language needs, 6.4.1; explaining teaching pedagogy, 6.4.2; adapting preparation courses in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 6.4.3; adapting EAP courses in the United Kingdom, 6.4.4; facilitating cross cultural transition, 6.4.5; managing expectations, 6.4.6.

6.4.1 Meeting Language Needs

The first issue raised in this research was related to PSA on the theme of learning English. It focused on discourses that might reveal important aspects of English language difficulties through looking at Saudi students' experiences of learning the English language in the two different education systems. According to the research findings here, the Saudi students sampled in this study were accustomed to a teacher-centred learning environment. The development of Saudi students' knowledge about learning patterns in the new system did not equip them well to learn EAP. In brief, the teachers' role in the EAP programme should involve providing the opportunity for students to adapt gradually to the British system of teaching English, as doing so would enhance Saudi students' experiences of learning EAP.

The Saudi approach to learning a second language emphasized the knowledge of vocabulary and grammar (Al-Oadi, 2000), while the British approach to learning stresses communication skills, language use and the process of learning. Therefore,

even though Saudi students arrive in British classrooms with the required level of English for their academic subject, it might be that they lack knowledge of their subjects.

Tutorials are not a formal part of the Saudi education system. There are similar types of sessions offered by the private sector in tertiary Saudi institutions, but these are different from the British education system which regards tutorials as an essential part of the learning and teaching pedagogy. This means that Saudi students are not prepared to participate in cooperative learning activities such as tutorials and team work. They are not good at sharing ideas or discussing the issues that might be raised in class. It is a new challenge for them to undertake this essential task in order to pursue their courses successfully, but it is not something that can be changed in the short term, because Saudi students have not been taught with a discussion-based style involving peers and teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

6.4.2 Explaining Teaching Pedagogy

In the Saudi education system, policymakers need to be concerned that they provide a teaching pedagogy in line with the theme of a cooperative group-learning environment for Saudi students. This is because the findings of this research indicate that students' lack of experience of a co-operative learning environment impacts heavily on their EAP learning and academic success. In addition, British tertiary education providers, and people who are involved in this area, need to pay attention to the fact that the difficulties faced by Saudi students in tutorial participation interfere with the achievement of academic success while studying in British postgraduate programmes.

With reference to interaction with other students, hesitancy by female students to interact with male students is understandable as they come from a gender-segregated educational system. With the exception of the early years in school (kindergarten), male and female students are segregated in all the other schools and universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is the responsibility of EAP teachers to encourage female students and make sure that they socialise with students of other nationalities. This could happen by arranging a trip or a party in the university.

The present study revealed that some students complained that it is not always clear exactly what they are required to contribute. Many of them reported that they initially did not feel comfortable in the framework of what they viewed as unstructured learning situations in their British classroom, where precise instructions about what they need to know are not provided by teachers. It seems that these students are a product of an educational systems where speaking up, having an interchange of ideas and engaging in creative thinking are not appreciated.

6.4.3 Adapting English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and Preparation Courses in the Kingdome of Saudi Arabia

While it is a positive finding of this questionnaire that many respondents had been offered preparation courses before travelling, they were short courses lasting just three days and were only provided by certain universities for their students. This means that the answer to whether they were adequately prepared for study or not is a strong negative. According to Jordan (1997), international students should have a clear idea of the British environment and academic life before coming to the United Kingdom, and the results from this study show that students had read or studied very little about British culture. Many Saudi students arriving in the United Kingdom assume that if they pay fees that alone will be sufficient for them to pass their course. In addition, they think that they can cope with all the cultural differences without facing difficulties. British institutions must recognise the fact that students do not know anything about life and studying in the United Kingdom and that their EAP teachers need to prepare them for the reality of academic study.

This is not to say that Saudi Students are different from other international students in these respects, but, from a search of the literature, no single book has been written in Arabic to guide Arabic students in general and Saudi students in particular. It is true that there is some information written in Arabic on some Universities' websites, but this is not enough to give students a clear idea of what their study experience in the United Kingdom will really be like. It would definitely be useful for them to be introduced to the issues that may affect them before travelling to the United Kingdom.

The research findings indicate that Saudi students' difficulties in reading and writing activities are affected by the teaching and learning methods that were adopted in the Saudi education system. Needless to say, the pedagogy in Saudi is predominantly reliant on an examination-based framework. Despite the efforts of EAP teachers in the United Kingdom, Saudi students still find it difficult to cope with academic reading and writing. The difference between the two education systems in terms of teaching writing and reading are also important factors that were reported to affect Saudi students' ability to cope with EAP in British postgraduate programmes.

More than half of the Saudi students who participated in this study had experienced EAP programmes before commencing their courses in British postgraduate programmes. In particular, a majority of them had attended a course offered by the university programme that was mainly designed to prepare them to enter the university and meet its requirements, but not for the official IELTS test or any other test. The Saudi students sampled in this study are likely to have spent less than 12 months studying in such a preparation programme. Typically, they appeared to be dependent on passing the EAP programme to gain permission to study in British postgraduate programmes once they arrived in the United Kingdom. It would be clearer for students and their sources of funding in Saudi Arabia if courses were assessed by the IELTS test, because the results from the student interviews revealed that they are not confident about the university assessment procedure.

For the present sample of Saudi students, however, it became apparent over time that the IELTS test is only one measure of entry level ability and is not necessarily a predictor for success in tertiary learning. In fact, this research indicates that most Saudi students continue to face English language difficulties and academic cultural challenges in the academic context while undertaking their postgraduate studies. The EAP teachers who were interviewed for this thesis believed that the proficiency level of English acquired by passing the IELTS test differs from the proficiency level of English which would be utilised in the real life situations which arise in the course of academic study (see 4.3.5). A lack of knowledge and skills associated with English for academic purposes is a major reason for failure to achieve optimum results. The Saudi students interviewed by the researcher admitted that the level of English learning and teaching does not meet the level of British postgraduate programme

requirements, because the current Saudi English education system and its learning environment are not sufficiently practical to achieve the high proficiency level of English that is essential for Saudi students.

6.4.4 Adapting English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Courses in the United Kingdom

The research findings clearly indicate that Saudi students who had experienced an EAP programme showed better performance in their academic studies, compared with those students who had not attended any EAP programmes. The results also showed that the Saudi students were, in spite of this, still found to have experienced difficulty in meeting the required levels of proficiency in the English for British postgraduate programmes.

The recognition of the English language problems that students encounter while undertaking their programmes currently is described by informants as characterised by a lack of their knowledge about the target language because of the way it was taught in the EAP programme. However, the research found that, with respect to academic cultural issues, students who had undertaken EAP programmes did subsequently demonstrate more adaptability in most areas of later learning. For example, some students responded that they were satisfied with the proficiency level of their English speaking, and were confident and had less anxiety when required to speak in a class; also, they were likely to have fewer problems than other nationalities when giving a spoken presentation in class. Others reported difficulties in organising ideas in a logical sequence when writing in English.

In general, the research findings indicated that cross-cultural discourses presented fewer problems than English language difficulties. However, the most important finding of this research is that Saudi students are heavily influenced by the change in pattern in their learning environment, particularly moving from a teacher-centred to student-centred system. This was shown to have an impact on Saudi students' difficulties in participating in some tutorials and other in-class activities. The impact of this shift also influenced Saudi students' confidence with the English language, and created anxieties and stress in tutorial sessions.

The Saudi students sampled were affected by the different types of academic activities and cross-cultural differences, as the researcher had expected. In addition, the following three important aspects of the new academic context influenced the Saudi students sampled in this study: Firstly, moving to an independent student-centred system; secondly, moving to a critical thinking environment; and thirdly, the move to contributory and discussion based assessment. According to the results, students who had experience of attending the EAP programme tended to have fewer problems with the discussion-based approaches of the teaching system. Male student participants in this study, in particular, were likely to encounter fewer problems adapting to a different learning system, whilst female students were likely to have some difficulty in adapting to a British individual ability-centred academic environment. Additionally, the study found that the students that undertaken EAP programmes still had difficulty with preparing assignments. In contrast, these students showed a higher adaptability in all other categories with respect to the cross-cultural issues raised by the study.

6.4.5 Facilitating Cross Cultural Transition

The research findings relating to the four skills discussed above revealed that Saudi students' reading and writing problems are the main issues they need to address during their courses. There are several important factors contributing to students' difficulties in these two aspects in the British academic context. As discussed in the background to Saudi students' experience in learning English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, these factors could be related to problems with English language pedagogy and teaching methodology in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia or in the United Kingdom. The background experiences of Saudi students in learning the English language directly reflect the problems of Saudi students' reading and writing difficulties in the British academic context. The findings obtained from this research clearly indicated that EAP programmes did not provide enough opportunities for the development of students' reading and writing abilities.

In terms of the cultural adaptation to the learning environment, as presented in chapter one of this study, it was revealed that the experiences of Saudi students learning English at home and in British postgraduate programmes are different. Saudi students did not have sufficient opportunities to learn about Britain, even

though the United Kingdom is regarded as one of the preferred English-speaking destinations for Saudi students' postgraduate studies. In fact, Saudi English education programmes do not provide enough information about English-speaking countries in general in their curriculum. This also tended to lead to a lack of knowledge and cross-cultural awareness for Saudi students with regard to their target countries. On the other hand, Saudi students' exposure to such knowledge and cross-cultural aspects was likely to be recognised once they arrived in the United Kingdom and commenced their courses in British university programmes. It is argued by this researcher that Saudi students need well organised and fully informed preparation before departing from their home country if they are to adapt effectively to the new academic learning environment.

A multicultural group learning environment, whether in the United Kingdom or the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, would offer Saudi students positive experiences, including more opportunity to interact with students from different countries who speak English as a second language. In these circumstances, students would have to use English in order to communicate with each other, whether or not their proficiency level of English was sufficient to communicate accurately. One piece of evidence to support this argument are the results of this study which showed that Saudi students improved their English language skills once they started conversing with those who speak English as a first or second language. Considering this outcome, the importance of arranging an appropriate environment for learners of EAP should be emphasised. This is why policymakers in the United Kingdom should consider the number of each nationality in the classroom. In addition, the English education system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia should aim to recruit as many native English teachers as possible, especially if a multicultural group learning environment in the Saudi education system is unlikely to evolve. It is the best option for providing an environment similar to that of English-speaking countries.

The last issue raised in this context is that language interference might occur during the process of English language learning in a different environment. The learning environment where Arabic language is dominant (as in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia itself) does not provide specific language interference. However, Saudi students in the United Kingdom are directly influenced by the differences between

their first language, Arabic, and English. For the Saudi students sampled in this study, English is their main priority, so it is natural that the distance between the two different languages would create language interference whenever the students use English in activities that are a part of the British academic context. Nevertheless, both academics and EAP teachers in the United Kingdom should be able to identify this problem in order to improve students' proficiency levels in the English language.

More important, the research findings in this context emphasised a lack of knowledge about the academic context, which is an important issue. The fact that Saudi English education programmes do not encompass the academic context is an extra concern. This may be the most serious cause of current Saudi students' English language difficulties when adapting to the British academic context (as well as other English speaking countries' academic contexts). For this reason, Saudi students begin to realise the importance of the academic context only when they encounter the new or real academic environment.

In light of the general trend of Saudi students choosing English speaking countries for their higher education, it is necessary for tertiary organisations to initiate programmes of EAP as an essential part of the school curriculum. These would better connect with the requirements of the learners in their new academic environment. In addition, awareness about developing a better understanding of academic cultural differences, especially when targeting English-speaking countries, should be examined by both students themselves and policymakers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia prior to making a final decision about who is going to study in which English-speaking countries.

6.4.6 Managing Expectation

The Present Situation Analysis (PSA) and Target Situation Analysis (TSA) in this study have identified the needs of the students based on the environment in which they find themselves. There are, however, also individual needs which are in many ways more significant to the students themselves. These needs can be described in terms of aims and expectations. The researcher would propose the following aims of

students: to finish as soon as they can to return to their home country; to spend minimal time learning EAP in the United Kingdom owing to limitations of their scholarships and being many miles away from their relatives; to achieve their degrees successfully. These aims do not always meet up with the reality, and it is important that students, their families and their sponsors recognize all the issues that often come into play to lengthen the duration of students' time abroad, or lead to a failure to pass academic courses.

According to Ostler (1980), Kaur (2006), Park (2006), Mostaf (2006) and Read (2008), international students appear to have encountered problems with learning needs. Thus, it has become important for EAP teachers to be aware of the international students' academic culture conventions, differences in learning strategies and methods of teaching preferred by them, and this is could be done via Needs Analysis (NA). This awareness, as Jordan (1997: 27) asserts, will assist in preventing the frustration of expectations when students are studying in a different environment, as many international students come from a situation that is completely different from the British one. Another factor is that the students should recognize their own learning needs, learning strategies and style of learning in order to be a good language learner, as many studies have reported (Wenden, 1987; Oxford and Niykos, 1989; Grenfell, 2007).

This view is supported by Rubin (1990: 282), who says that often poor learners do not understand how good learners arrive at their answers, and feel they can never perform as good learners do. She added that, by revealing the process, this myth can be exposed. In addition, students would be better if they employed the most suitable strategies for them (Chamot *et al.,* 1989). Stern (1982) argued that a successful learner uses a personal learning style or positive learning strategies to cope with any problem that s/he might face when learning a second language. It could be argued here that knowing and being aware of the Saudi students' preferences will help teachers to perform and deliver lessons in a very effective way.

Listening, observing and communicating with their British peers have helped the Saudi students sampled in the study to adapt to their new environment. Therefore, an invitation for their British peers to communicate with them more often should be

extended, although Nomnian (2008) suggests that international students are sometimes shy. In the case of Saudi students, as this study reveals, communicating with native and non-native speakers is important.

This study revealed that talking to senior students and the Saudi community has helped the Saudi students sampled in this study to adjust. According to Choi (1997), when students speak with each other regarding their academic study, they are more comfortable doing this with someone from the same culture. To support this, students always talk to each other regarding any matter, whether it is about study or a private matter. In this researcher's experience, there are some issues that students cannot express in English, and they need help from someone who speaks their language to illuminate them.

The findings of this research can contribute to the discussion and formulation of strategies to develop more effective ways for Saudi students to prepare for British postgraduate programmes in terms of their language and academic needs. Successful achievement of their goals and gaining an understanding of their new academic context are real burdens for Saudi students. Currently, these are barriers that prevent them from adapting both academically and linguistically. The Saudi students sampled in this study clearly indicated that they had shown different levels of adaptation depending upon the programmes they had experienced prior to entering British postgraduate programmes.

It is fair to conclude that the Saudi students' accounts of their experiences of schooling in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reveal the effects of blunting methods of instruction: they have had little or no stimulus to think for themselves: sadly, they know little about modern methodologies and diverse research techniques. In addition, they have had little access to knowledge in print and electronic media.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the outcomes from the data analysis and connected them with the theories that were discussed in chapters two and three. It was clear that student language proficiency was not high enough for Saudi students to commence their postgraduate studies at British institutions when they first arrived in the United Kingdom. It was also revealed that students are facing difficulties in coping with their new academic environment. Consequently, the research suggests that the most appropriate ways of preparation for Saudi students as they enter British postgraduate programmes and achieve successful results is to attend EAP programmes where they can achieve early acculturation and pre-preparation by experiencing interaction with native English speakers in real academic situations. This suggested pathway would likely offer future Saudi students a more realistic opportunity to overcome the problems currently faced by Saudi postgraduate students.

These Saudi students are adult learners, and as such, they are likely to recognise the importance of EAP in terms of the academic differences in their new academic environment. It was apparent that their greater realisation of this need was based on their own experience of interacting with the British academic learning environment. They came to realise themselves what preparation they needed and how they might better cope with the unexpected problems faced in British programmes. The openness of the students, as a result of the researcher's tactic (discussed in chapter three), revealed that the Saudi students experienced significant anxiety, stress and lack of confidence with English, which created a psychological difficulty when participating in tutorials. With regard to the data from the research, it is the intention of this researcher that it will prove beneficial in making recommendations to academic bodies in the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as well as to students themselves. The conclusion which follows seeks to identify some recommendations specifically.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This thesis has uniquely highlighted both the language and cultural needs of Saudi students and the impact on them of making the transition into a British postgraduate programme. It is therefore the purpose of this conclusion to make recommendations, based on the research data, for implementing strategies to prepare Saudi graduates effectively for entrance into British higher education programmes. These are based on the situation exemplified at Southampton University through data obtained from a present situation analysis and a target situation analysis collected via interview, semi-structured questionnaire and observations. Preceding the recommendations, a summary of the thesis will be provided; and following the recommendations, the areas of lack in the study are identified and proposals made for future research.

7.2 Thesis Summary

This study examines language needs and the cultural impact on Saudi students who are studying in the United Kingdom, by addressing the gap in the existing body of literature regarding international students in United Kingdom higher education and their needs in two ways: first, by challenging the belief that needs analysis should focus only on present and target situation needs analysis, by integrating the cultural background into these main needs analysis frameworks, and secondly, by focusing on one nationality only.

The three major theories that underpinned this study were Present Situation Analysis (PSA), Target Situation Analysis (TSA) and Cultural Aspects of Learning Analysis (CALA). The PSA and TSA were based on the Hutchison and Waters (1987) model and the CALA were designed by this researcher for the specific study undertaken here. CALA was drawn from different studies by previous researchers, as explained in the second chapter, which suggested an investigation into the academic needs of students studying in English speaking countries. The research aimed to identify the relationships between Saudi students studying in British postgraduate programmes and their adaptation to their new academic environment and the potential conflicts they encounter. It also conceptualised the nature of Saudi students, as a specific

group through their experiences on the various postgraduate programmes offered at Southampton University.

Most of the previous studies which investigated PSA focused only on the students' present situation, when they might usefully have explored further an understanding of their previous learning of English, e.g. when they started, how they learn and who their teachers (native or non-native) were, because all this information helps in addressing their needs in appropriate ways. In addition, previous studies on target needs TSA neglected the actual needs of international students. It is true that all the international students will study and face the same challenges, but they are different from each other in terms of their actual needs. For example, Saudi students here find writing to be the most difficult skill, while another study conducted by Nomnian (2008) found that Thai students classify speaking as the most challenging skill. From the findings of this study, we can see that the concepts of needs analysis are crucial to discovering the language and academic needs of international students.

In the introduction to the study three questions were posed:

RQ1.   What is the present situation analysis (PSA) of Saudi students intending to enter a postgraduate programme at British Universities with regard to language and culture?

This was answered with regard to the following in chapter five: language skills; academic skills; contrasting teaching methodology; student/teacher/peer interaction and participation; course duration.

RQ2.   What is the target situation analysis (TSA) of Saudi students attending a postgraduate programme at British Universities with regard to language and culture?

This was answered with regard to the following in chapter six: language skills; academic skills; contrasting teaching methodology; student/teacher/peer interaction and participation; research skills and critical thinking.

RQ3.   How can Saudi students best be prepared for a British postgraduate programme of study?

This was answered partially in chapter seven and in more detail in section 7.3 below. The questions were answered according to a mixed methods approach, which was discussed in detail in chapter one. The use of mixed methods with students, postgraduate students and EAP teachers made it possible to examine the academic language and cultural needs of international students from a variety of perspectives.

These perspectives both supported and complemented each other. For example, all three groups perceived writing to be a skill that presents a persistent challenge for students, and all three groups indicated that cultural skills are related to language skills. However, each group also offered unique information. For example, the postgraduate students provided detailed information about their difficulties and language needs related to their learning and functioning in the university community. They also provided the insight that students' language needs may change during the course of their studies. That is, although academic skills were seen to pose initial difficulties, students seemed to be able to learn how to cope with these difficulties gradually through exposure.

The EAP teachers who were interviewed focused in particular on students' difficulties and needs as judged from coursework (papers and presentations); they also indicated the specific needs of international teaching assistants. The EAP teachers drew attention to students' difficulties with interpreting assignments and the specific terminology used in the United Kingdom educational system. Thus, an examination and comparison of multiple perspectives assisted in obtaining a fuller understanding of Saudi students' academic language and culture needs.

The results of the mixed methods findings demonstrated the importance of triangulation through different perspectives in students' needs analysis. Often, studies of students' academic language needs and the cultural differences rely largely on information collected either from the teachers only or from students only. Thus both students and teachers were considered here in the language needs analysis, since studies which include only of one these groups may provide a somewhat incomplete picture of international students' language needs and academic culture. The results of the mixed methods approach also indicated the importance of

including the students and teachers in further understanding the academic language needs and cultural differences of international students.

Drawing upon the theoretical frameworks of needs analysis as identified by (Hutchison and Waters, 1987) and integrating the cultural differences (e.g. Park, 2006; Flowerdew and Miller, 1995; Jordan, 1997), three elements were identified to answer the first question. Students come to the United Kingdom with a low level of English which means they have to attend an EAP course before starting their academic studies. The second key factor that students are not aware of is the learning system in the United Kingdom, i.e. the teaching pedagogy and the materials used. The third factor is that EAP teachers are not aware of the students' specific needs, e.g. with regard to teaching methods and cultural sensitivity.

Regarding the second question, there were also three critical factors identified. First, the students' main problem is associated with language failings, inadequate vocabulary in particular. The second key factor is that students have difficulties with writing and reading skills more than other skills. The third factor is that students encounter serious problems with critical thinking.

The results relating to the final question in the questionnaire revealed that there are no preparation courses for Saudi students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and that such courses would be exceedingly beneficial. Such courses might usefully focus on EAP and the cultural issues and academic environment that students will encounter in the United Kingdom. It would also be beneficial if the United Kingdom University were to set aside a special induction week for them to explain how to use library and other research resources and introduce them to some of their future classmates. British academic experts and EAP native and non-native teachers should be encouraged to participate in preparation courses, both in the United Kingdom and in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is difficult to specify the length of each programme, because there are differences from one institution to another, but the research leads to the suggestion that it be at least three months in length.

Any new programme for students must answer the questions identified in the discussion chapter and respond accordingly by focusing on the following: language skill problems; a variety of written genres; vocabulary teaching; communication strategies; language appropriacy; explanation of learning approaches and informing students of potential practical concerns. The recommendations given below are intended to cover all these issues.

7.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are divided into three sections, based on the areas identified in the introduction to this thesis, which need to be developed to ensure successful participation of Saudi students in the British academic environment. These areas are: preparation in Saudi Arabia; additions and alterations to the current EAP framework in the United Kingdom; and actions required from Saudi students. The purpose of the recommendations is to devise appropriate strategies to inform:

- Policymakers in both countries of Saudi students' needs, with specific reference to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (see section 7.3.1)
- EAP teachers of the need to consider cultural elements and learning strategy when teaching Saudi students (see section 7.3.2)
- Saudi students who are studying EAP about how to learn more effectively (see section 7.3.3)

In relation to British tertiary academic programmes, the results obtained from this research highlight the importance of cross-cultural understanding about variations in the higher education systems of Britain and Saudi Arabia. It is hoped that the recommendations will provide an impetus to the British tertiary education industry as a whole (and Southampton University in particular), to further enhance academic support services for Saudi students and all the international students who study EAP.

The recommendations seek to prepare future students to succeed in the areas that the study's participants identified as requiring further attention during the needs analysis process. They centralise needs for improvement in the following areas: teaching writing and reading; explaining the procedure for writing laboratory reports, essays, dissertations, research proposals, seminar papers and academic conference abstracts;

teaching academic vocabulary and that specifically related to academic subjects (EAP); practising strategies for successfully communicating with native and non-native speakers, especially their peers, teachers, examiners and supervisors; providing explanations of language use in tutorials, seminars, conferences, workshops, and for writing reports or assignments; explaining the autonomous, research-based, critical thinking, contributory, co-operative and independent approach to learning; and warning students about problems they may face with comprehension, isolation, time management and gender issues.

7.3.1 Preparation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Adapting the System

The participants in the survey strongly expressed their feeling that they had been inadequately prepared within the Saudi education system for the experience of studying at a tertiary institution in the United Kingdom. The following recommendations will propose ways in which this situation might readily be rectified for the benefit of future Saudi students travelling to the United Kingdom.

7.3.1.1 Native English Teachers should be Recruited

Recruiting native English speaking teachers is not the general strategy in the current English language education system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. For example, in recent years the Ministry of Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been recruiting teachers from India and Pakistan and other non-native speaker countries. This strategy will not allow Saudi students to have opportunities to practise their English language or to experience a real-life situation of an English-speaking environment; nor will it help their problem with understanding a range of British accents. It would be better for Saudi students who wish to study in the United Kingdom to learn English and understand the cross cultural differences they may face from British English-speaking teachers. This would also apply to recruiting teachers from other English-speaking countries where Saudi students intend to study. This targeting of teaching personnel is an issue which needs to be addressed by both public and private institutions involved in recruiting native English teachers for instruction in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

7.3.1.2 Preparation Courses

Saudi students should attend a carefully constructed preparation course in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia before they leave for the United Kingdom. This course should involve English language tuition and tuition about English and the cultural differences between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom. To pass this course, they should achieve at least 5 on the IELTS scale, or equivalent. Native and non-native speakers should participate in teaching English on these courses. These courses should be designed around the idea of introducing students to some of the learning styles they will be required to master in the British academic context. British academics and other experts should be involved, as well as former Saudi students who have graduated from United Kingdom universities. Throughout their participation in such programmes, Saudi students should be offered valuable information about the typical academic and cultural context of the countries that they select for their further studies before their exposure to the new English-speaking academic environment.

7.3.1.3 Introducing English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

The research findings from the Saudi students and the EAP teachers who formed the sample group in this study showed that it is important for students to study EAP before commencing their academic study. This could be done by including EAP within the Saudi educational system. Focusing on academic English is necessary not only for Saudi students, but also Saudi academics interested in publishing books or writing journals or articles that should be written in English if they are to be recognized internationally.

7.3.1.4 Introduction to Expectations in the United Kingdom Learning Environment

In this case, Saudi students who have successfully completed their studies in the United Kingdom should become more involved in teaching and curriculum development in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to utilize their experiences in preparing future Saudi students who might be interested in seeking entry to tertiary programmes in an English-speaking environment. Receiving preliminary knowledge about British postgraduate programmes prior to departing from Saudi would be of considerable help in terms of students' abilities to cope with potential difficulties.

7.3.2 Changes to English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Programme

Despite the overall impression that the EAP course students experienced in the United Kingdom was beneficial, there were definite suggestions for areas in which it could be improved. These areas, as would be expected, arose from the Target Situation Analysis (TSA) data and focused on both the English language and the cultural aspects of learning.

7.3.2.1 Language: Reading Skills

The results showed that it is significant for students that the Saudi nation is not a reader nation, as their lack of reading skills and strategies impacts negatively on their studies. Therefore, EAP teachers have to increase students' awareness of reading by requiring that students read more articles and other materials in their academic field, as this will help them to improve their knowledge of their subject. It will also train them to be speedy and critical readers when they commence their academic studies. Scanning and skimming techniques must be focused on, as well as practical advice for minimising the volume of reading required; these techniques should include reading abstracts not articles, seeking for specific words to identify useful content, reading only introductions and conclusions and using internet search engines to find the most relevant data.

7.3.2.2 Language: Vocabulary

Saudi students must be taught more subject-specific and general academic vocabulary because their limited vocabulary is associated with all their language skills problems. Students should also be taught strategies for acquiring new vocabulary in order to enhance their level of language. In view of the fact that Saudis are well trained in rote-learning, it is worth considering such an approach to vocabulary learning by drilling and requiring memorising of the academic word list. Teachers also need to be involved in this process by testing on memorised vocabulary and providing reading activities that focus on identifying academic lexis; this should include looking up words in dictionaries to ensure that students are making progress.

7.3.2.3 Cultural Aspects of Learning Analysis (CALA): Class Participation

The following recommendations are provided to assist Saudi students in coping with the main problems of tutorial participation that are influenced by cross-cultural differences between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom. The results illustrated that students cannot participate for two major reasons: language and culture. The students' level of language was not sufficient to present their ideas and they required encouragement to build confidence and focus on their fluency rather than being inhibited by inaccuracy. Regarding gender and age, students need to be encouraged gently to leave their previous attitudes towards working with the opposite gender at the classroom door and remember that they are here to study. In addition, younger students must be allowed to feel confident about challenging their elders and be prepared to take the lead in discussions.

Saudi students also reported that they were sometimes frustrated by the negative reactions of both British academics and local British students when they presented their ideas in tutorial classes. For example, because of inaccurate expressions in discussions or conversations, they were not able to involve themselves, and sometimes they were ignored. Of course, this is not so in every case, but it is necessary for British academics and local British students to make efforts to understand language difficulties and to make an effort to acknowledge the ideas of the Saudi students, while ignoring grammatical errors or inaccurate pronunciation. The most important thing that needs to be recognized here is that Saudi students, especially female students, can be emotionally affected by reactions or feedback from British academics and local British students.

7.3.2.4 Cultural Aspects of Learning Analysis (CALA): Raising Awareness of Cultural Issues

Regarding this issue, the development of appreciation by local British staff of cross-cultural understanding should be considered as a component of the induction week programme at the beginning of each semester. This would provide knowledge about students having EAP difficulties and making cross-cultural adaptations in the new academic environment. British academic experts in this field, local British students with experience interacting with international students, administrators with experience working with international students, and members of the local

community with a similar understanding could participate in this programme. This would further facilitate the development of a better understanding of Saudi students in British postgraduate programmes.

7.3.2.5 Cultural Aspects of Learning Analysis (CALA): Raising Awareness of Learning Style

British universities should consider that Saudi students have difficulties in adjusting to the British academic context as a result of their different earlier learning and teaching environment. For example, Saudi students who have already completed their British studies and are still studying in the United Kingdom can introduce and prepare guidelines as part of orientation, counselling or teaching activities.

7.3.3 Changing Student's Attitudes

The following recommendations are provided for the improvement of Saudi students' adaptability to and better performance in academic activities in British postgraduate programmes.

7.3.3.1 Early Introduction to English Speaking Cultures

As mentioned earlier in the research findings, most Saudi students have not previously experienced the British academic system; therefore it is not very surprising that they do not have the ability to cope with English language difficulties and cross-cultural differences. The students noted that earlier exposure to the new learning environments would be useful and, with regard to this issue, many young Saudi students in secondary schools and universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are already seeking to travel to English speaking countries for experience in an English-speaking environment during their school holidays. Some of them tend to stay for longer periods (2 to 6 months) because their parents correctly regard this early exposure to a real English-speaking environment as an important factor for facilitating the learning of English as a second language. Therefore, the more students come to the United Kingdom the more awareness there will be in Saudi Arabia of the value of such English-speaking environments for young Saudi English learners.

7.3.3.2 Increase Involvement with the British Community

This recommendation seems to be quite obvious, but in reality there are some difficulties for Saudi students wishing to interact with the British in universities, and in the broader community. In respect to this, British tertiary education providers need to be seriously concerned about encouraging and creating opportunities for Saudi students to meet with local British students, academics, and other people once they commence their courses in British postgraduate programmes. For example, local British students, given some minimal training, can play a role in assisting Saudi students to adapt more readily. This means that the induction week most British universities operate for new international students should involve both Saudi students and local students.

These suggestions would help Saudi students to be become more accustomed to the cognitive knowledge gained under such instruction, and the Saudi students who have undertaken or are currently studying in the United Kingdom, where they have experienced real situations, are best prepared for successful study in the United Kingdom and thus offer an available reservoir of talent for such new arrivals.

7.3.3.3 Language Skills Confidence

The following recommendations relate to overcoming the main English language difficulties (Writing, Reading, Listening and Speaking) that Saudi students currently face in the British academic context. This is because most of the Saudi students sampled in this study reported that they were daunted by a lack of confidence, despite the fact that they had been taught English as a second language, although not EAP, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. However, Saudi students need to realise that overcoming self-conscious behaviour is essential if they select English-speaking countries like the United Kingdom for their studies. Students need to be encouraged and assisted to develop strong confidence in their ability to develop their level of English for Academic Purposes by maintaining optimistic perspectives at all times. In this regard, Saudi students with relevant experience in British postgraduate programmes might particularly help with this issue.

7.3.3.4 Language Skills: Native Speaker Assistance

It is true that most British universities include student academic support programmes to help both local and British students and students from overseas. However, a question remains concerning whether they are providing appropriately tailored services that students require. The most important thing is that they should be assisted and monitored by native English speakers who are familiar with cross-cultural learning until they have a confidence with their speaking and writing proficiency in English. As mentioned above, if there are meetings or functions organized to support Saudi students' adaptation to the British academic context, the next step is to arrange participation by British people from the local community or educational institutions who can interact with each individual Saudi student on a regular basis.

Another possibility is that Saudi students organise their own meetings to discuss how they were assisted or treated in the matters that confront them, and to share their experiences in coping with difficulties through the support of local British people. British host institutions need to make an effort to inform Saudi students of the significance of the local British community's involvement, and raise this issue with these communities. This would build up an effective hospitality situation that might impact on the development of overseas students' confidence, and overcome their speaking and, to some extent, their writing difficulties. For Saudi students, it is a way of correcting English usage and strengthening their ability to cope.

7.3.3.5 Language Skills: Practice in Practice

Saudi students need to practise speaking with their peers as much as they can. It is understandable for some of them who have their family here in the United Kingdom to speak Arabic, but they should at least speak English with their friends at university. The role of EAP teachers is crucial, as the majority of the students in the class are Arabic speakers. In addition, students should focus more on expressions that are related to their academic field, as this will help them to speak confidently in seminars, workshops and during interaction with their supervisors. Saudi students must be motivated to write more while they are studying EAP; therefore, EAP teachers should spend more time with each individual student as this will help them to be more motivated. It is important that what they write relates to their academic

field and that they are given helpful feedback on it.

7.3.3.6 Responding to Feedback

Saudi students need to develop writing, reading, listening and speaking abilities through their own recognition of the feedback or corrections offered by teachers and others. Saudi students should be reminded that local British students, academics, or others from the local community who assist them are only helpers. They cannot write essays for them or create and develop their ideas; they can only be developed by regular discussion-based meetings with supervisors and tutors and by discussing the errors that they are making with regard to language skills. In this context, a student- centred learning pedagogy is more appropriate, because the students would have a chance to become accustomed to the new learning system as well as enhancing how they would cope with those difficulties. This would lead students to more independent learning behaviours and thereby increase their sense of confidence.

7.4 Limitations of the Study

This section highlights the limitations of this study, which include limitations of scale, pertaining to the research participants and the research tools, practical limitations owing to lack of funding for the study and the validity of the generalisability of the study.

7.4.1 Limitations of Scale

Because the researcher worked alone and was affected by time constraints, and owing to the potential volumes of data involved, it was necessary to avoid overstretching resources in terms of sampling. For this reason, the study focused on Saudi students based at one University (Southampton) and not on all the Saudi students in the United Kingdom. There was also the possibility of surveying vast documents and student feedback data about the EAP course in the United Kingdom, but this had to be dismissed because of the likelihood of inherent positive bias in the data, as Saudi students are likely to compliment their teachers rather than criticize them, and again to the unmanageable volume of the data.

7.4.2 Practical Limitations: Video Recording

The second limitation concerns the use of video-recording while observing in the classroom, as no equipment was provided by the university. Using video recording would have assisted in observing the non-language behaviour in more detail. The researcher's sponsor was also approached for funding to rent the necessary equipment but they refused. It would be advisable for a future study to record classroom behaviour, which would also involve assessing the physical classroom space and the number of students, and acquiring specialist recording equipment. However, it is arguable that using video recording is not desirable as it might disturb students and make them act unnaturally, as some EAP teachers have suggested.

7.4.3 Practical Limitations: Target Situation Analysis (TSA) Observation

To support the questionnaire and interview data, it was always intended that the research process would involve observation of postgraduate students in their academic classrooms, but this proved undesirable for several reasons. First and foremost, a cultural issue arose: as the researcher originates from the same culture it was judged insensitive to conduct such observations as the researcher feared any negative sentiment generated may affect the students' openness during the interview phase of the data collection. The second problem was of a practical nature and related to the wide distribution of Saudi students across the University's faculties, which would have meant that numerous time-consuming observations would have to be undertaken.

7.4.4 Generalisability

The final point of the limitation concerns the generalisability of this study. Some researchers (Dörnyei, 2007) claim that generalisability has to cover the entire population of a study; yet, if any readers find points that might be applicable to similar contexts they can compare and contrast the results of this study with their own as a helpful starting point for future research.

Since this study focused on just one university, which might not be representative, the findings of this study cannot conclusively draw accurate parallels between these participants (Saudi students and EAP teachers) and other Saudi students and EAP

teachers in United Kingdom higher education in general. It was also evident that different Saudi students have diverse perceptions of their needs. Therefore, the results of other studies with another group of Saudi students and EAP teachers in British universities might not be the same. Despite the possibility of different results, similar research is encouraged in order to expand better understanding about Saudi students' needs in the United Kingdom. To this end, the following section will provide some recommendations for future research.

7.5 Propose Direction for Future Research

This study suggests new and alternative perspectives for examining Saudi students' language and non-language needs in the British university classroom settings, drawing upon the needs analysis approach. It is not, however, considered to be the end of the research journey, but rather a stepping-stone for other exciting and valuable studies into needs analysis in British universities. Therefore, the following provides some possible directions and recommendations for future studies.

7.5.1 Including other Arabic Students

It would be useful to investigate students from other Arabic backgrounds as this would allow for extrapolation of needs focused on each specific national group rather than simply grouping all Arabic nationalities as the same in terms of culture and learning background.

7.5.2 British Academic Staff Needs

The second recommendation relates to the value that may be obtained from investigating the needs of the British academic staff, namely EAP teachers and academic lecturers, who are responsible for teaching international students. The present study and other studies have always focused on the students' needs. An investigation into the needs of staff could bring issues and problems to the attention of university policy makers, and help to reduce tensions and promote positive collaboration among academics throughout the university in the hope that students would have better learning experiences in United Kingdom higher education establishments.

7.5.3 Investigating a Single Skill

Although the main focus of this study is to establish the general needs of students, it would be useful for a future study (even if it is small) to investigate writing, because it became clear during the course of this study that writing is the most obvious problem that Saudi students face while studying in the United Kingdom. Another skill which may be usefully examined in isolation is reading, as many Saudi students report struggling with this at the moment.

7.5.4 Conclusion Remarks

This study concludes by asking three fundamental questions: Do British Universities need to conduct a needs analysis for international students? How can they best undertake these? What has the researcher learned from the research experience? The answers to the first two questions are open to interpretation, depending upon each university's policies and circumstances. This study, however, offers some insights that might stimulate and create intellectual space for other scholars to reflect upon. It also strongly argues that international students' needs should be met, because this will create a positive intellectual climate and help international students to achieve their goals. Addressing their needs is not easy, but it could be done by collaborating with the students' country of origin before they arrive in the United Kingdom. This would help host institutions to accommodate their wishes. What the researcher has learned from the research is an intellectual and practical understanding of needs analysis and needs analysis research. This theoretical and practical work afforded research skills that were lacking before undertaking the study. It was also the first time the researcher had conducted a study on such a large scale in terms of the multi-research tools used and the time spent. In summary, it has been an exceedingly fruitful experience.

In summary, this is a practical study; therefore, the researcher has contacted policy makers at the Saudi Ministry of Higher education to offer them the opportunity to benefit from the data collected for this study. They were very interested and requested a report detailing the study and requesting that the researcher himself should present its findings to them at some point later this year. In addition, when details from the study were presented at the 44th IATEFL conference, there were

some people from British Universities who were interested in the study, and asked for a report based on it, because they have so many Saudi students and do not know how to meet their specific requirements. The findings were also presented at the 2nd Paris International Conference on Education, Economy and Society in France where the researcher met Professor Ahamed who is working for the Minister of Education in Qatar and Professor Ndia who invited him to give a seminar about the study. Finally, the current aims are to present the study's findings at the Arabian TESOL conference next year, where there will undoubtedly be many people who will be interested in the findings, and to identify a specific journal in order to publish the work.

Appendix 1: Interview Consent Form (Students)

I am at present a postgraduate (PhD) student at the University of Southampton. I am currently conducting my research project, part of which entails interviewing Saudi students who studying on postgraduate programme about their language needs in British higher education programmes and cultural differences, in particular while studying for a Masters or a PhD degree. I would like to invite you to participate in this interview. Your participation will be highly appreciated. Participation is entirely voluntary. It involves completion of an interview concerning your experience of British higher education in teaching Saudi students, and seeks your opinion about English language for EAP and cultural differences in the academic mode in particular.

Your complete anonymity is assured and will be maintained by the use of a pseudonym in place of your name. At the completion of my project, I will be happy to share with you the results of my findings. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask. If you are willing to participate, please complete the permission form below.

Should you need to discuss the interview, I can be contacted on E-mail:
Maaq1a06@soton.ac.uk
Yours faithfully,
Majed Alqahtani
PhD Candidate
University of Southampton

1- I herby agree to participate in the above research project conducted by Majed.
2- I understand that my participation is completely voluntary, that I may withdraw from the project at any time, and that should I withdraw, any data gathered from me will be destroyed immediately.
3- I understand that every effort to protect my anonymity will be made, and that data collected from this project will be securely stored and remain strictly confidential.

Name: …………………………………………

Date: /   /   Signature: …………………………………..

Appendix 2: Students' Interview Questions

1- Warm-up question, e.g. asking about family, etc.

2- What were your fears and expectations before coming here?

3- Do you think that the academic courses need a high level of English?

4- Do you feel comfortable when participating in tutorial classes?

5- Do you think that studying EAP helps you now when studying in the academic department? How helpful is it?

6- What kind of academic skills need to be improved?

7- What do you think are the differences between Saudi Arabia academic life and UK?

8- What will you suggest for new SA students who will study for a postgraduate degree?

9- Is there anything you want to add?

Appendix 3: Sample of the Transcript of an Interview with one of the Students

Majed: *What were your fears and expectations before coming here?*

Respondent: In terms of the language, I have been appointed as assistant teacher at the University of King Khalad. So, I knew that I would be going to travel abroad to do my Masters and PhD in an English-speaking country. In order for me to be able to speak English, I asked someone to teach me English in one-to-one lessons. So, when I first came here I was almost at intermediate level.

Majed: *Were you worried about your language when you first came?*

Respondent: Oh, yes, because the language that I learned in Saudi Arabia was different from here.

Majed: *In what way?*

Respondent: I had been taught by a non-native speaker, so when I came here I struggled a bit with the accent. But generally speaking I was able to get by.

Majed: *Okay. What about the culture?*

Respondent: In terms of the culture, it was quite difficult.

Majed: *How?*

Respondent: Well, because I had never travelled to any other country apart from some of the Gulf States: Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. So, when I first arrived here I was quite shaken about the culture, whether driving etc., but in terms of the academic culture it was hugely different from Saudi Arabia in terms of teaching and learning. Mind you, I tried to read about it before I came….

Majed: *Did anybody ask you or did you do it yourself?*

Respondent: No no no, I wish that someone had advised me to read about it. Let me say something, as someone who is going to be fully funded by the university. Al-Emam University organized a three-day workshop in order to prepare us. This workshop explained the teaching system, etc.

Majed: *Did you attend that workshop?*

Respondent: Yes, because it was compulsory.

Majed: *Do you think that the academic courses need a high level of English?*

Respondent: Without a doubt yes, because I do not think you can manage without a good command of English.

Majed: *What are the most difficult skills that you face?*

Respondent: I think reading. Reading fast is my main problem, and it is the same with my friends. I can say reading, because when I did my MA here in the UK I found it very difficult to manage my time when I read for information; then writing, because it is the main issue.

Majed: *Why reading in particular?*

Respondent: I assume it is because of the limitation of my vocabulary. I know learning vocabulary needs time, but I do not know how to use new words.

Majed: *Do you feel comfortable when participating in tutorial classes?*

Respondent: Well, (laugh) when I study English I spent two years making sure that I would not have difficulties when I commenced my study. That is why I think I did not have any problem speaking and participating in the class, because I am sure that I would not make any silly mistakes in my language.

Majed: *By the way, did you study both years in the UK?*

Respondent: Yes. One year general English and another year academic English, so I do not want to sound arrogant but I did not have a big problem with English as I passed all my master core course with a grade A.

Majed: *Any problem when you give a presentation?*

Respondent: (Laugh, Laugh). You know all the people who attend the seminar are very good about knowing all the academic language that should be used. I think I have a big problem when I see that all the audience are native speakers.

Majed: *Why?*

Respondent: Because they can pick up my mistakes very easily.

Majed: *Any example?*

Respondent: When I did my presentation in Swaziland last year, most of the audience and the presenter were non-native speakers, so I communicated with them very easily. One of the speakers at the same session stopped in the middle of her presentation and continued her speech in French, because she could not speak English very well, which give me confidence

to speak in English all the time. So, it is difficult to speak here in the UK. Yes, we speak English but not a very academic form of it.

Majed: *Why is that?*

Respondent: Because I have to learn all the necessary vocabulary in my field, plus the academic words.

Majed: *What do you mean by academic words?*

Respondent: Well, when I listen to my supervisors they speak beautiful English with a huge amount of academic vocabulary.

Majed: *Any problem with listening?*

Respondent: Accent.

Majed: *Are there any areas of language use that you wish had been given more attention in EASP?*

Respondent: To be honest, I was deeply disappointed with EASP, because it looks like it is more commercial than teaching English.

Majed: *Why?*

Respondent: All of us who are going to study in different academic departments study the same course. I wish they would focus on each different discipline.

Majed: *Do you think that studying EAP helps you now when studying in the academic department? How helpful is it?*

Respondent: To some extent, yes. I study three semesters in this course. In fact, they repeat the something each semester because we have new students. I think that because they do not have a textbook to teach us from. One example is that I submitted the same piece of writing to three different tutors each semester, and each one of them gave me different feedback. Why?

Majed: *Do you think that studying EAP helps you now when studying in the academic department? How helpful is it?*

Respondent: Yes, to some extent. They focused more on writing skills which helped me. But they did not help me with reading; they used to give us a small text to read but they did not teach us the skills, e.g. scanning, skimming reading. What makes the matter worse is that they did not teach us how to research or how to write the references.

Majed: *What kinds of academic skills need to be improved?*

Respondent: Discussion, discussion skills. I found it very difficult here in the UK.

Majed*: How?*

Respondent: Laugh. Let us be honest, Majed. We are not used to this kind of teaching. For example, in Arabic writing we have to give more details and describe; that's all. While in English my supervisor always says to me: "Be simple and clear." Also, I cannot deliver my idea in a simple way when I speak with my supervisors. I think I missed the communication skills.

Majed: *What do you think is the difference between Saudi Arabia academic life and the UK?*

Respondent: Wow! A huge difference because here in the UK they focus on group work. Students must do all the work themselves. In Saudi Arabia we just listen. Look, most of the students in Saudi Arabia ask some people to do the research for them. We have knowledge but we do not have skills, e.g. how to research, write, be independent etc. Teachers in Saudi Arabia never asked me to write something and give it to them in order to get their feedback.

Majed: *What do you suggest for new SA students who will study for a postgraduate degree?*

Respondent: Try to speak with native and non-native speakers. Students should try to live with a host family. But learning English is down to the learners themselves. Also, buy self-study books, e.g. grammar.

Majed: *What kind of support would be useful for international students?*

Respondent: Provide more support for us in terms of language. Also, they have to give us more information on how to use the library. Some people do not like me to use this phrase; we are customers for them, so they have to dig deep to please us and help us to achieve our goals.

Appendix 4: Interview Consent Form (EAP Teachers)

I am at present a postgraduate (PhD) student at the University of Southampton. I am currently conducting my research project, to investigate the Saudi students' language needs in British higher education programmes and cultural differences, in particular while studying for a Masters or a PhD degree. I would like to invite you to participate in this interview. Your participation will be highly appreciated. Participation is entirely voluntary. It involves completion of an interview concerning your experience of British higher education in teaching Saudi students, and seeks your opinion about English language for EAP and cultural differences in the academic mode in particular.

Your complete anonymity is assured and will be maintained by the use of a pseudonym in place of your name. At the completion of my project, I will be happy to share with you the results of my findings. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask. If you are willing to participate, please complete the permission form below.

Should you need to discuss anything, I can be contacted on E-mail:

Maaq1a@soton.ac.uk

Yours faithfully,

Majed Alqahtani

PhD Candidate

University of Southampton

1- I herby agree to participate in the above research project conducted by Majed.
2- I understand that my participation is completely voluntary, that I may withdraw from the project at any time, and that should I withdraw, any data gathered from me will be destroyed immediately.
3- I understand that every effort to protect my anonymity will be made, and that data collected from this project will be securely stored and remain strictly confidential.

Name: …………………………………………

Date: /   /   Signature: ……………………………………..

Appendix 5: EAP Teachers' Interview Questions

1- Many Saudi students attend the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programmes prior to commencing their courses to meet the requirement for entering the postgraduate studies. How would you describe that?

2- How would you describe Saudi students (SA) students' English proficiency level in your class? (Do you think that they are sufficient for the requirement of postgraduate programmes in British higher education)? (If yes, how? If no, why)?

3- Are there any common areas of weakness you have experienced among the SA students?

4- What are the areas of language competence that need improvement for SA students?

5- Do you feel that you need to know the language needs of the Saudi students in their academic studies?

6- To what extent do you think that English for Academic Study Programme (EASP) provides students with skills that meet what they actually need in their academic studies?

7- What will you suggest for new SA students who will study for a postgraduate degree?

8- Is there anything you want to add?

Appendix 6: Sample of the Transcript of an Interview with one of the EAP Teacher

Majed: Many Saudi students attend the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programmes prior to commencing their courses to meet the requirement for entering the postgraduate studies. How would you describe that?

RESPONDENT: I really enjoy teaching Saudi students because I think ** not only do they learn the grammar and vocabulary but also much more than that. They're learning what teaching's like culturally, what to expect from tutors ** what teachers expect from them. Especially in terms of * how they should be *, rest of the class, and also what sort of speaking and listening they should… take a record of what they hear in lectures, it won't be given to them. I'm thinking of … like the * test, it shows you how good their English is, it doesn't show you how they can * (social?) those skills as well, which is more important than the language, the language skill itself.

Majed:: The second question is how would you describe the Saudi students' English proficiency level in your class?

RESPONDENT: Well I teach…

Majed:: I know you have a different role, but …

RESPONDENT: I have a few top groups, so they're generally pretty good. I think they're at a good level to be doing the course. Some of them are where they could be doing a postgraduate degree and very, very strong and others still have a way to go.

Majed:: When you say 'a way to go', what do you mean by that?

RESPONDENT: They're still, yeah they're still got areas to work on. Pronunciation, still struggling with the grammar, how we organise an idea, how we * and then also I think it's quite a shock if they start postgraduate courses with the amount of work they're expected to do by themselves. I think a lot of them still need to self-reflect on things and think about what are their strengths, what to get from that, you know, try to work through those things and * from them.

Majed:: Do you think there are sufficient requirements to graduate successfully?

RESPONDENT: some of them, yes, a few of them yes, at the moment, a lot of them not yet, no. this is in the top group. Not yet, but they're working well or generally they're working well towards it, to get to …

Majed:: OK, how can they get their listening to be able to get the requirement?

RESPONDENT: I think that most of them can understand quite well – they need to work on accuracy, is the main thing, in all aspects of their work. I think often they rush * and they * what it means, need to check, need to work on not just hearing what they think they hear but trying to see what is actually said. Yeah, their preconception of what they think is said… ** note taking, people vary but some people ** take notes .men and women .. find it very, very difficult to take notes now. So ** stronger than their writing, for instance, but it's stronger in comprehension * ; if you ask them to take notes, some find it quite difficult for a lot of people, feel *.

Majed:: Are there any common areas of weakness you have experienced among Saudis?

RESPONDENT: Yeah, very broadly, that would be true. I mean writing is one which people don't do, challenging .. and you see that in note taking, much *, and accuracy as well, in speaking for example, very good fluency * but the accuracy is *, but we really don't worry about that too much, because fluency, once they reach a certain level, * evens things out, actually the writing and the spelling * notice it, but the production of the alphabet, I think that's more…

Majed:: Do you think Saudi students need to attend this course (EASP)?

RESPONDENT: …not quite on the right track, they need to work … not just hearing what they think they hear, but trying to listen even further for what was said. Yeah, sometimes I think their preconception of what someone would say hinders them from actually understanding it a little bit, and also with the note taking, people vary, but some people particularly at the start find it very difficult to take notes, because they're not used to that. It has to be said, more men than women struggle with that!

Majed:: How is that?

RESPONDENT: They find it very, very difficult to write it down. It's difficult to do two things at once, because it's quite hard, so obviously the listening and speaking are often stronger than their writing, for example, but it's stronger if they answer comprehension questions, but if you ask them to take notes and then summarise it, that's quite difficult for a lot of people, and that's something that's still to be worked on.

Majed:: Is there any weakness in Saudi students' English?

RESPONDENT: Yes, broadly, generally, that would be true. I mean, writing's the one which people particularly say, for Saudi students, is the, is a challenging one. And I'd say you can see that in note-taking, as much as you can see it in essay writing thing. And I would come back to this idea of accuracy, again; thinking of speaking, for example, very often Saudi students are very good at fluency, you know, you've got a lot of enthusiasm to * it, but their accuracy and their grammar are sometimes a little bit off. And it's good that they don't worry about that too much, because like the fluency, once they've reached a certain level, beginning to look back at it, at accuracy, but also the noting things down, actually and the writing, the spelling and the letter mistakes, it's hard work with different characters, different letters and things, to notice it in the same way as you do when it's a whole different alphabet, but I think that causes some… detail.

Majed:: I observe some Saudi students in your class are completely reluctant?

RESPONDENT: No, no, generally I find that they are… that's why I like teaching Saudi students! Because you don't generally have a quiet lesson with them; I mean, they'll tell you what… they'll have a go, you know; it might not be the right answer, but at least they'll try and you know what's going on in their heads. I mean, it's interesting to know, if you think that the two lessons that you watched, of mine, the first one you watched was one I was in, the first week I was wanting them to sense something for themselves, and that didn't go very well! I think it's interesting from the point of view of… they hadn't realised the degree to which they were just expecting to present it and I was just going to give them feedback on it, and I think that was quite a steep learning curve. By the end of the term they were doing very, very nicely, but I think you can see a difference, if they're suddenly put in a position which they didn't expect to be in, or they feel they didn't expect to be in, and then they're suddenly… they're maybe not used to being suddenly, actually, you're more in the teacher role now; I'm wanting you to direct it, I want to see what you can do. Maybe they're more used to … the teacher says something, interact back with the teacher, rather than when they're put… a lot of teaching in the UK is student-led and I think that, you know, a wobbler!

Majed: What are the areas of language competence that need improvement for the Saudi students?

RESPONDENT: I think it varies massively, depending on the individual, really. I mean, the writing's the main one, getting the … I think people often avoid writing quite a lot; they feel comfortable with the speaking, something they do very well, generally they communicate well, communicate by speaking, so they try to avoid as much as possible the writing,

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because it's uncomfortable, because they know that they're not as good at it, and they know it's an area they struggle with, so it doesn't improve as much, so I think really they need… need to be writing as much as possible all the time, to practice it as much as they can, taking notes to everything they can hear, writing even when they're not told to write, so they're building up the (*) in a short space of time, they can only write a tiny amount in quite a long amount of time, so they need to be able to write more, quickly, and to check what they're written themselves and not wait for it to be corrected by someone else. They need to be able to proofread their own work and again their accuracy. Spot it themselves.

Majed: Do you feel that you would need to know the language needs of your students before they arrive?
RESPONDENT: I think to a large degree … I know a lot of… the first level of what they're needing to know, I know what's expected within an education in Britain, and I know generally what's expected, what skills you need in higher education in the UK. I think the areas that… it'd be interesting to know even more about the backgrounds of the Saudi education system, so that you could then more appropriately target…you know, you pick bits up from what people say, you know, I've never been educated in Saudi, so I don't know what they're experiences and their expectations are, and what's sort of going on in their heads, so I think that would be really interesting. And then you've got the specific, you know, are you meaning should I teach them more specifically for the management or science students, because obviously we're not particularly teaching them for one specific subject area.

Majed: To what extent do you think that the English for Academic Study programme provides students with the skills to meet what they actually need in their academic study?
RESPONDENT: I think it does to a very large degree provide them with what they need, especially… I think it does, the students… the higher level students, the top group, I think it's really encouraging what it provides them with, I think it's encouraging when you see them later on and how they're doing. Obviously it's not specifically for their discipline, although they can do some courses like MBA*? Pre-sessional or something like that, to be more specific, but I think that's more just a polishing on the top, the general foundation is there for students who start at quite a high level. The people I don't think it's useful for are the people who come at a very low level, you know, people coming with less than * 5, because I think they're then trying to fit academic English, before they've got general English and I think it probably slows down their progress rather than helping them; it's probably holding them back, because they're trying too hard for them, they've not got a broad picture and it's too early.

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Majed: How would you describe the academic listening levels of some of these students?

RESPONDENT: I think on the surface it's one of the stronger areas, perhaps they do quite well on comprehension questions, about a particular… what they've heard, but you start off with the understanding of the British accent compared to the American accents, it's an area to… it's difficult for some people, and sets them back a bit at the start from the level they thought they were, the change in the accents, and then from that the understanding different accents within Britain as well, is obviously a challenge. Again, a lot of people sometimes try to stick to the area they're comfortable with, rather than seeking out … I know I find it difficult to understand different accents, so I will go and make an effort to find them, and picking up overall arguments can be quite hard sometimes, they can, you know, you can pick … they can hear that someone said that, but they get led astray if… sometimes lecturers start with a provocative statement to get someone's attention, and they didn't mean that, and you would… maybe the intonation of how someone said it, or what the words mean, really questioning whether this person really believed that, you would know that they were joking; from the rest of the lecture you would know they were joking. A lot of people get led astray at the start by taking what someone said as very matter of fact, whereas they've actually got sarcasm and humour and sometimes it's confusing in a lecture or something.

Majed: Did they have difficulty with British accent and American accent?

RESPONDENT: Yeah, I think the British accent takes time to get to know, but I think that generally people after about a term, people get quite familiar with that if we make an effort to listen to that during the term, and often by the second term they're better with the British accent than the American accent, so you can flip the other way. But it's not a particularly hard area to improve if you've already got quite a good background.

Majed: What's the most difficult bit, what they're speaking.

RESPONDENT: I mean, I think Saudis generally are, in contrast to Asian speakers, obviously a lot clearer to understand and we're very fortunate in that sort of situation. Weak sounds are sometimes difficult, so all the vowel sounds are often very strong, sometimes I think the r is emphasised more in Arabic, I think using the tongue in Arabic, so if you're trying to say a word going between r and l quite quickly, I think people'd trip over that a bit, and diphthongs, I think the intonation's quite key, because the fluency's generally quite fine, but the intonation, you communicate so much by the way in which you say something, and I think you know, you could unfortunately sound a bit too dominating if you just put something a bit too strongly, or a little bit too enthusiastic, often, and it's meant nicely, but sometimes you need to be ….

Majed: How can they know?

RESPONDENT: A little bit's just raising awareness of the difference, because I think they're generally quite keen to try to improve that, raising awareness and practicing short sections. I look at the weak forms in the listening, as well, and then having got them to listen and to try and hear them, then to try to practise that section to sound like the speaker on the tape, and little bits, and in the third term could be more complicated, but I think yeah, Sarah's been working on that sort of thing, thinking about how you put things.

Majed: What kind of strategy do you think they should use?

RESPONDENT: The best form would be obviously meet as many English people as possible and really get to know them and things like that, through joining clubs or finding some interest that you have, as English people aren't great just to bump into and talk to, so you need to find an interest that you have to have an interest with them; if you can't do it that way, if you can't find native speakers and things, then using on BBC Learning, for example, you've got things you can listen to and then you can see the transcript, and if you then listen to that, read the transcript and then try and record yourself, using the transcript, saying the same thing, then you can compare how you said it to how the person on the tape said it and get a rough idea of words you're having problems with, and you know obviously there's a section of a book with problems Arabic speakers have in pronunciation, which is really key to look at.

Majed: Do you have this at the Language Centre?

RESPONDENT: Yeah, it's in the black folder. Has problems of Arabic speakers. Because I wonder if, often, since Arabic speakers their pronunciation is generally a lot better than some other students, perhaps it could be an area that sometimes gets overlooked. Maybe less so in class where there are a lot of Arabic students, but in for example classes maybe more in the pre-sessional when they are less students, and more Chinese students, I would imagine that the Saudi students would have less input on their pronunciation because in comparison it's quite good, so…

Majed: Do students have difficulties with the British education system?

RESPONDENT: They have a…. I think it's different, but the majority of students I met are really keen to learn and are really keen to try to adapt to it, and actually a lot of them have the confidence to give their opinion and say what they think and to contribute to a group, which is ideal, which is what you need, you need someone who's willing to talk and you know give your opinions, so they're quite well set up, you know, they've got the potential, whether it's there immediately, but I would say most of them had good potential, especially

the ones who come in for higher level English, to really be excellent on postgraduate courses if they just sort of polish up and improve a bit, could be excellent, it's just a matter of shaping, shaping a little bit. But they've got the enthusiasm.

Majed: Do you think the culture has an impact on them? When I talk about culture, I'm talking about academic life culture. Does it impact on them, their learning and teaching?

RESPONDENT: Yeah, I think… I think one thing is that they maybe find it hard to get the most out of the materials and things that we give, because I think, in Saudi do you often have, you'd be given a text book for the course and you follow it? For some people, I think that's quite… we can be more the other way, we pick the best bits from different books to make a course, so for listening they don't have a course book in particular, so I expect them to be keeping the pieces of work that we do each lesson in a folder and they…. I expect they should have that organised neatly and I think that can be a shock to lots of people. That they don't necessarily keep all that stuff. And don't realise.

Majed: As a teacher, how can you help them to get something, to adapt?

RESPONDENT: I think we need to, a little bit, have a sort of half way house and maybe just remember to mention what I'm expecting, because normally I wouldn't say it to a British student, you know, lower down at school the teachers would ask you to bring in your folders to check it, by the time you get to university it's just expected, so I think remembering that that's not necessarily what everybody is expecting to do, to tell people maybe at the start, asking them to bring some things in, and to see how they're doing with it, how they're organising their folders, give some suggestions on that, and then you know as the term goes on, comment less on that and leave it, because I think that they pick this sort of thing up very quickly, and different personalities … personality thing helps, but just at the start, I like to give just a bit more transition, try to point out if there are any books that you'll particularly be using, point that out so if they want to have a book, they can find a book to use, as well.

Majed: And what would you suggest for the new Saudi student, who is going to study for a postgraduate degree?

RESPONDENT: Well… before they start our course, or after they finish our course?

Majed: Before they come to the course and when they go to…

RESPONDENT: So when they finish with us and they're just about to start…?

Majed: Yes.

RESPONDENT: I would say before they come, to try and find as much out about the differences in what's expected; I mean, there are some good websites like Trepidation for Success (?) is a website that has … goes through the different skills of what's expected and like that, try and find that out, in particular what's expected of your study skills and things like that; just start trying to think about things and reflect on things, what are they hoping to get out of the course, what do they think they'll need to achieve that, what do they think they're good at, what do they think they're not good at, what are they going to try to find out about, and also just writing as much as they can, writing their shopping lists in English, writing, I don't know, just a paragraph at the end of each day about what they're learnt in that day, anything, just so that everything they do is written in English, because that's going to be the main area they're going to …

Majed: And while they are studying?

RESPONDENT: People, if they've finished the course, and they're just about to go on? I would say to still see that your English needs to keep improving, you know, you never really reach the end stage and it's a continuous area to work on, process, to try to find out within their department; they'll have the foundation but you need to adapt to things in and change things to that particular department, what's expected, what assignments are coming up, and what will they have to do on those assignments, so are they going to be asked a summary of an article; if they have to do that for an assignment, that's probably an area they're quite familiar with, so be quite confident with, if they see it will be writing a business report or something, they might feel less confident and they should try and find out early on so they can take advantage of different language support that's offered, or get in touch with various tutors to find out how they can adapt to their language and what would be expected of that particular thing, and think of that way in advance, before they're actually given it to do. And just continue on the skills that we've done, not seeing that as sort of finished. Done, now we're on something else, but actually seeing, making sure they do use things they were taught, now, in what they do later, rather than cutting it off in a different world. Keeping notes, as well!

Majed: Just going back to what you said earlier, you said we have to know the Saudi students' background. Do you mean in a cultural way or language or….?

RESPONDENT: I think the more you know in all areas, the better. Language, I don't know, I mean, the more you know how a language is put together, the particular grammar structures they have, the more you can understand the mistakes that they make, and same with pronunciation, you can work out why mistakes are made. I think I was also meaning

more in terms of what's the educational culture, because, I mean, we're told you know some things, which are probably very, huge generalisations, but they're just the things you think to say, but actually other things that you take for granted and the things you assume, like I said, I assume that they're going to put things in their folders; I don't expect to have to tell them that, and I don't think anyone would ever say to them, a difference between Saudi and the UK is that you have to put things in your folder. You won't be given a book. You just don't think to say that. So I'd be interested, if I went to a class in Saudi Arabia, what would I notice that would just be different but no-one had ever thought to tell me, what are the kind of things that are so common, so obvious but no-one ever thinks to tell somebody, because those are the things you need to know.

Majed: Do you think a difficulty would be the classroom setting?

RESPONDENT: Do you mean the set-up? The furniture arrangments and things like that? Yeah, well I mean, they're generally quite… try to be quite flexible,… do you mean in an ideal classroom? In an ideal… I'm not entirely sure what you mean? Do you mean….?

Majed: I mean, for example, in Saudi Arabia they're sat down in behind each other, while here, it's like as you just said....

RESPONDENT: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think they're generally… they're generally…. They don't say too much about that. I think if they have to move the table around, then they think we're mad; 'why do you want me to move the tables all the time?' and they do find it strange when they take quite a lot of getting into… getting up, moving around, talking to other people, moving around, working in groups with other people, I think, you know, they've got their seat and they expect to stay in it, and they don't expect people to be telling them to move, so that can be, I think they find that a bit strange in the classroom management. It depends who you've got; some people are fine with it, and some people don't seem to like it too much.

Majed: How do you, as a female, find the students participate in your classroom?

RESPONDENT: I've never really seen a problem with that. Again, individuals vary greatly, but I've never really felt that it acted, you know, in a different way to me because I'm a female. The main area you see a difference is working between students, and they're happy… they seem happy always to talk to me and interact with me, but between each other, I think people find that a lot more difficult, but that, you know, so that's… I try to pick up who doesn't… who's not comfortable doing that, and if they're clearly not comfortable with that, not try to move them in such a way; they seem happier if the other student is not Saudi, so if they're working with for example a Chinese female, that seems better than working

with a Saudi female, so you know, I think… but it doesn't bother me too much. If people have really strong feelings about that, I don't mind, but that could be in any area.

Majed: Do you want to add anything to this interview?
RESPONDENT: No thank you.

Majed: OK, this is the end of the interview. Thank you very, very much.

Appendix 7: Questionnaire Consent Form

I am at present a postgraduate (PhD) student at the University of Southampton. I am currently conducting my research project, part of which entails surveying Saudi students about their language needs in British higher education programmes and cultural differences, in particular while studying for a Masters or a PhD degree. I would like to invite you to participate in this study. Your participation will be highly appreciated. I would be very happy if you could possibly complete the attached survey questionnaire. It includes completion of a survey of your language needs in higher education at postgraduate level, and seeks your opinion about English language for EAP and cultural differences in the academic mode in particular.

Your complete anonymity is assured and will be maintained by using a pseudonym in place of your name. At the completion of my project, I will be happy to share with you the results of my findings. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask. If you are willing to participate, please complete the permission below.

Should you need to discuss the survey, I can be contacted on E-mail:

Maaq1a06@soton.ac.uk

Yours faithfully,

Majed Alqahtani

PhD Candidate

University of Southampton

1- I herby agree to participate in the above research project conducted by Majed
2- I understand that my participation is completely voluntary, that I may withdraw from the project at any time, and that should I withdraw, any data gathered from me will be destroyed immediately.
3- I understand that every effort to protect my anonymity will be made, and that data collected from this project will be securely stored and remain strictly confidential.

Name: …………………………………………

Date: /   /   Signature: …………........

Appendix 8: Students' Questionnaire

Section 1: Background and general information

Please answer the following questions by ticking (√) the appropriate answer

1- Age:
22-26   27-31   32-36   37 or above

2- Gender: Male   Female

3- Do you consider your parent(s) to have been educated?   Yes   No

4- Status: Married   Single   Divorced   Widowed
If married, is your family with you in the UK?
   Yes   No

5- How many years have you been studying English?
6-10   11-15   16 – 20   21-25

6- Where do you live now?
Halls of Residence   Sharing house   Private accommodation e.g. flat

7- Current field of study:
Education   Management   Humanities   Engineering
Art   Social Science   Chemistry   Health
Law   Psychology   Oceanography   Physics & Astronomy
Biology science   Electronics & Computer science   Geography
Mathematics   Other (please specify): ………………………

8- Stage of studying: MA   Msc   PhD   MBA
Other (please specify): ………………………………………

9- How important are the following skills to you? Please put a tick (√) against each one as applicable to you.

No	Skills	Very important	Important	Not important
1	Reading skills			
2	Writing skills			
3	Listening skills			
4	Speaking skills			

10- Which of the following skills are difficult for you? Please put a tick (√) against each one that is applicable to you.

No	Skills	Difficult	Not difficult
1	Reading skills		
2	Writing skills		
3	Listening skills		
4	Speaking skills		

Section 2: Saudi students, experience in learning English language in Saudi Arabia

Please answer the following questions by ticking (√) the appropriate answer

1- When did you start learning English in the education system?

Kindergarten   Primary School

Intermediate School   Secondary School

University

2- In Saudi Arabia, did you attend any English language course before coming to study in the UK?

Yes   No

If yes, please indicate English proficiency level(s) achieved in that course

Elementary   Pre-intermediate

Intermediate   Upper- intermediate

Advanced

Other (please specify)……………………………………..

3 - Did you take any kind of official English test in Saudi Arabia?

Yes   No

If yes, please indicate the name of the English test(s) you completed

IELTS   TOEFL

IELTS and TOEFL

Other (please specify)…………………………………

4- Please estimate your proficiency level at the time you were ready to leave Saudi Arabia to study in UK

	Very bad	Bad	Moderate	Good	Very good	Excellent
Writing						
Reading						
Listening						
Speaking						

5- Do you think that Saudi English education is sufficient to meet international demand?

Yes   No

Why?...
....

Section 3: Current Saudi students' preparation for entering tertiary institutions in the UK.

1- Do you consider that knowledge of English for Academic Purposes is important for academic performance in your subject?
Yes   No

2- Did you study English for Academic Purposes in the UK?
   Yes   No
   If yes, for how long?
1-3 months   3-6 months   6-9 months   9-12 months   more than a year

3- Which programme did you undertake to prepare for entrance to a British higher education institution in Saudi Arabia? Please select one of the following:
   1- General English
   2- English for Academic study
   3- Preparation for official English test(s) programme e.g. ILTES or TOEFL
   4- Other - please specify
   5- None

4- Which programme did you undertake to prepare for entrance to a British higher education institution in the UK or another country? Please select one of the following:
   1- General English and English for Academic study
   2- English for Academic study
   3- Preparation for official English test(s) programme e.g. ILTES or TOEFL
   4- None

5- Did you attend any course about British culture in Saudi Arabia?
Yes   No
If yes, where: …………………………………………………………….

6- Did you attend any course about British academic culture in Saudi Arabia?
Yes   No
If yes, where: …………………………………………………………..

7- Before you came to study in the UK, did you read about British culture?
Yes   No

8- Please estimate your level of English today

	Very bad	Bad	Moderate	Good	Very good	Excellent
Writing						
Reading						
Listening						
Speaking						

Section 4: English language difficulties in British Academic Mode.

The following statements relate to your experience of study in British higher education. Please put a tick (√) in the box at the appropriate range between very easy and very difficult.

A) Level of difficulty of academic speaking

	Very easy	Easy	Neutral	Difficult	Very difficult
Using visual aids					
Speaking from notes					
Asking questions					
Participating effectively in discussion					
Presenting ideas/information					
Answering questions					
Communicating ideas confidently					
Speaking clearly (pronunciation)					
Speaking accurately (grammar)					
Speaking with a wide range of vocabulary					

Other: ……………………………………………………………………..

B) Level of difficulty of academic listening

	Very easy	Easy	Neutral	Difficult	Very difficult
Understanding key vocabulary					
Recognising supporting ideas/examples					
Following a discussion					
Identifying different views/ ideas					
Understanding lecturers' accent					
Taking brief, clear notes					
Understanding the organization of lectures					
Understanding the main ideas of lectures					
Understanding questions					
Understanding classmates					

Other: …………………………………………………………………………….

C) Level of difficulty of academic of reading

	Very easy	Easy	Neutral	Difficult	Very difficult
Reading to develop in-depth critical understanding of the material					
Reading reports					
Reading for the main information in a text					
Reading quickly through a text to get a general view of the content					
Using a dictionary to find meanings of new words					
Limitation of academic vocabulary					

Other: ……………………………………………………………………….

D) Level of difficulty of academic writing

	Very easy	Easy	Neutral	Difficult	Very difficult
Writing report					
Writing summaries					
Writing assignments					
Expressing ideas					
Organising ideas in logical sequences					
Writing brief, clear notes					
Structure of writing as a whole					
Explaining in writing the content of graphs, tables, charts and diagrams					
Writing accurately (grammar)					

Other: ……………………………………………………………………

Section 5: Cultural experiences and difficulties in the British academic mode.

The following statements relate to your experience study in British higher education. Please put a tick (√) in the box at the appropriate range between always and never

	Always	Often	Some-times	Rare	Never
I have difficulty with tutorial participation					
I have difficulty with presenting ideas					
I have difficulty with preparing assignments					
I have difficulty with consulting academics					
I have difficulty when participating in cooperative groups					

Other: ………………………………………………………………………..

The following statements relate to your experience of cultural variations in British higher education. Please put a tick (√) in the box at the appropriate range between always and never.

	Always	Often	Some-times	Rare	Never
The different education practice in UK, compared with Saudi, is a problem for me					
Moving from a teacher-centred to a student-centred style of learning is a problem for me					
Moving from a family-centred emotional society to an individual ability centred logical society is a problem for me					
Moving from a cramming-based education system to a free discussion-based system is a problem for me					
Moving from a system to that values memorization to one that emphasises critical thinking is a problem for me.					
Moving from a competitive learning context to one of greater cooperation is a problem for me.					

Other: …………………………………………………………………..

Appendix 9: Sheet for Classroom Observation

Time: ……………   **Day**: …………………..   **Date**:   /   /
Course: ……………………………………………………………………………..
No of student: ………….   **No of Saudi student**: …………….
Teacher: ………………………

1   **Classroom behaviour (instructional activity)**
   A) Note the approximate percentage of time given over the activity.
   B) Note the language use (English/Arabic) used
   -   lecture (monologue)
   -   discussion (students to student)
   -   instructions
   -   students questioning students
   -   small group discussion
   -   small group work
   -   presentation
   -   students working with who
   -   other

2   **Instructional aids:**
   -   Overheads
   -   Handouts
   -   Video
   -   Computer
   -   Blackboard text
   -   Tools
   -   Other

3   **Student activity**
   -   taking notes
   -   asking questions
   -   interaction
   -   asking for clarification
   -   giving comments
   -   presentation
   -   other

4   **Students' difficulties**

5   **Other**

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