CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents background of study, statement of problem, purpose of study, significance of study, scope and limitation, and definition of key terms.

1.1. Background of Study

English is a window to the world (Manivannan, 2006). This statement may be able to represent the explanation of why do English is necessary to be learnt. Since it is part of universal communication, English has been spoken and learnt by almost people in the world. People use English not only for their daily communication, but also for business, industry, travel, medical, science, engineering, advertising, education, politics, and technology. Whenever we want to travel anywhere in the world, the first language which we will use is English. Moreover, when someone applies for a job, he is expected to speak at least one foreign language and it is always English. It is also impossible nowadays to use a computer without the knowledge of this language, especially when we want to communicate with people from different country. In addition, the label on each product that we buy is written, if not in our own language, it must be in English. These, can illustrate how important English is.

Later on, people begin to have much more attention to English. One of the results is that English is learnt as a second language and becomes a compulsory school subject in almost all developing countries in the world. Furthermore, when someone feels that his knowledge of English from his school is not enough, he will
join another English course outside the school. It shows that people, as a learner, begin to find many ways and approaches to learn English briefly and effectively. Therefore, to make an equal situation, teachers also have to find something new, interesting, and appropriate to the learners. So that learners can have the best result after the course and have a good impression of English during the course.

Indeed, recognizing English by learning the four skills is not enough. People are forced to know English deeper and more specifically based on their field of study. This situation then becomes the beginning of learning English not only as a foreign language, but also as a part of “competition” in this globalization era. Then, ESP (English for Specific Purposes) has started to grow to be one of the most famous part of EFL teaching today.

Robinson in Dudley-Evans (1998) said “ESP is ‘normally goal-directed’, and that ESP courses develop from a needs analysis, which aims to specify as closely as possible what exactly it is that students have to do through the medium of English”. From this definition, we can presume that ESP is one way to master English specifically towards the learners’ needs to achieve a certain purpose. In this case, purpose is based on the learners’ background of study, such as science, medical, engineering, etc. That is why, in teaching and learning process, teacher should explore more and more his background of knowledge in teaching language, especially in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). He has to be able to recognize which teaching skills can be adapted for the ESP teaching and learning process. It becomes very important considering that ESP differs from General English.
The most important differences between ESP and general English are in the matter of the learners with their purposes for learning, and what will be focused on during the course. Students of ESP are usually adults, who have already familiar with English. They have learnt about all four English skills; reading, listening, speaking and writing. Furthermore, they also bring different purposes in learning English. When people decide to take an ESP course, it means that they want to specify their English ability based on what they are working in. A business man may have to learn more about business letter in English and the way how to negotiate by using the right word choice. Students of teacher training and education field will be given a material of how to design teaching and learning instruments. Yet, for engineers the focus may be in understanding parts of a certain machine and how to operate it, taking into consideration that the instructions are usually written in English.

However, ESP and general English diverge not only in the matter of learners, but also in the matter of what will be learnt during the course. While general English will stress in all four language skills: reading, listening, writing, and speaking equally, the ESP main point will be more on language in real context. It means, the course might emphasize, for example, the development of reading skill in students who will work in business administration, writing skill for those who will work as a journalist, or speaking skill in students who are studying English in order to become tourist guides. It reveals that the word “specific” in English for specific purposes refers to the specific purposes in learning English.

Realizing these phenomena, University of Muhammadiyah Malang tries to facilitate the students with ESP (English for Specific Purposes) in improving their
mastery in their field of study. ESP is a compulsory subject to be joined by all students in University of Muhammadiyah Malang whatever their department is. ESP has been taught in this university for more than a decade. The execution of the teaching and learning process is under the responsibility of Language Center (LC). This course is obligated for the first and second semester students and 16 credits are offered to be finished.

Widodo (2004) states, “The teaching of ESP at UMM until today is still referring more to the ESP textbook”. The ESP textbook here means the book that is developed by Language Center staff and teachers from each department. It covers all English skills (reading, speaking, writing, and listening). However, the percentage of teaching those skills could be different for each department, depend on the need. Writing might be more important for medical and business students because later on they will have to write many reports. While for those who will have a career in tourism (tour guide), learning speaking will be stressed. Otherwise, reading is considering important for engineers, especially in mechanical engineering, since they will have a lot of readings tools’ operating instructions. They must have a good understanding in reading to avoid miss operating for certain tools, which might have a fatal effect.

The problem usually happens in teaching ESP is the heterogeneous of the learners. They come from different cultural background and level of language mastery. Consequently, teacher should create a comfortable learning situation to attract the students’ interest. Teacher also must have awareness that learners are part of teaching and learning process, which needs to be served very well. Anwar in
Widodo (2004) states that the materials development is based on teachers assumption, not based on what is actually needed by the students. From this statement, we can say that teachers might think that the material is good for the students but they forget that students may have their own opinions, motivations, interests, necessities and levels of understanding. Teacher should not ignore these factors, or they will give a negative impression to the students.

In another case, the big numbers of students with different experiences related to English also need to be considered. Teachers must find a good strategy in treating the students. It will be an ineffective teaching if teachers just talk and talk in front of the class., while the main purpose of teaching ESP is to give a real experience to the learners. Learners also need to be given an opportunity to perform their ability, but the time division must be equal during the time allotment. And it is not an easy job.

From the explanation above, we can conclude that one of the important considerations in teaching ESP is conducting need analysis. Istikharoh (2007) found that “Selecting and developing materials and activities in teaching learning can improve the students’ skill which is suitable with their potential, need, course, and future life.” It means that as material designer, teacher should be able to recognize and explore the class situation so that they can organize a good, appropriate, acceptable and reasonable materials and activities during the course. If students’ need is fulfilled in teaching activity, it would increase their motivation in mastering certain subject of study.
1.2. Statement of Problem

Based on the explanation above, the statement of the problems can be formulated as follows.

1. What are the target needs in ESP course for the first semester students of Mechanical Engineering department in University of Muhammadiyah Malang?
2. What are the learning needs in ESP course for the first semester students of Mechanical Engineering department in University of Muhammadiyah Malang?

1.3. Purpose of Study

From the statement of the problems above, the purposes of the study are:

1. To know the target needs in ESP course for the first semester students of Mechanical Engineering department in University of Muhammadiyah Malang
2. To know the learning needs in ESP course for the first semester students of Mechanical Engineering department in University of Muhammadiyah Malang

1.4. Significance of Study

The results of this study are expected to provide some important information related to the needs of mechanical engineering students in learning ESP reading for ESP teachers. After knowing this information, teachers are expected to pay attention
to the students’ need before designing the course. Hopefully, this can help to create a favorable situation during the learning process and optimize the result in the end of the course, especially in ESP Reading course.

1.5. Scope and Limitation

This study is confined to the identification and description of students’ need in ESP Reading course. This study is merely limited on the second semester students of Mechanical Engineering department in Muhamadiah University of Malang, academic year 2010/2011, while the area is focused in students’ reading skill in learning ESP.

1.6. Definition of Key Terms

The researcher defines the key terms to avoid misunderstanding which is related to the study, as follows:

1. ESP (English for Specific Purposes)

An approach to language learning which aims is to prepare the learners to carry out a specific task or a set of tasks (Richard: 33). In this study, ESP is a program offered by Language Center, University of Muhammadiyah Malang, which is oriented to fulfill the students’ need.
2. Need

Need in general is usually used to refer to wants, desires, demands, expectations, motivations, lacks constraints, and requirements. But need in language teaching means the language skills needed to be mastered for certain purposes (Richard: 55).

3. Need analysis

Need analysis is procedures used to collect information about learners’ need. (Richards: 51)

4. Learning needs

Refer to what knowledge and abilities are the learners will need in target situation (Waters and Hutchinson: 1987)

5. Target needs

Target needs deal with what the learner needs to do in the target situation. It is more useful to look at the target situation in terms of necessities, lacks and wants (Waters and Hutchinson: 1987)