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## **The Needs of English for Islamic Studies (EIS) in Traditional and Modern *Pesantren***

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### **Abstract**

This research aims to analyze the needs, English skill levels, and necessities of students in English language learning when undertaking Islamic studies. Designed as quantitative-descriptive, the researchers use surveys by distributing questionnaires to students. The distribution of data collection took place in three schools in two regencies/districts: Simeulue (two schools) and Banda Aceh (one school) in the province of Aceh, Indonesia. The results regarding English fluency show that their English competence needs improvement. Their ability needs to be improved in four skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing). In the context of items necessary for English for Islamic Studies (EIS) courses, the results indicate that the students highlight two skills that they see as needed in EIS: speaking and reading.

**Keywords:** *English for Specific Purposes, English for Islamic Studies, English for Academic Purposes, Islamic boarding school*

## Introduction

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has constructed a new way of studying English. The needs of English have advanced the course to be more specific to the fields the people work in. ESP learning has different English learning objectives. In this regard, there is a possibility that there are differences in the goals of learning English among students. Therefore, teachers are advised to carry out a survey of students' needs in learning English (needs analysis).

As stated by Solikhah (Alfian, 2019), Needs Analysis (NA) gathers data from students regarding what they should know and be taught for the course. Determining what pupils need in order to learn a lesson is called needs analysis. The speaker underscored that needs analysis can be executed through the identification of students' communicative needs, the establishment of general and specific goals, the determination of language skills and the content of learning materials, the creation of a syllabus that outlines the material, and the selection of suitable teaching materials and techniques. Needs analysis, according to Ellis and Johnson (Solehan et al., 2021), is a technique for gathering a summary of a learner's needs (or a set of learner needs). This will take into account the learner's unique goals, the language type to be utilized, the beginning level, and the desired level to be reached. Similar to this, Rohmah's comment in (Cahyo et al., 2019) examined the requirement for English teaching materials for Madrasas, which are Islamic-based educational institutions. The study's findings demonstrate the necessity for stakeholders to create English instruction materials that are grounded in Islamic principles. Books and other resources ought to be enjoyable for pupils, serve as study aids for state tests, and boost their self-esteem.

The systematic method of problem-solving through a course's benefits and drawbacks is called needs analysis. Academic accomplishment and students' requirements for subjects to improve student achievement and embrace academic difficulties and subject standards can be used to determine these benefits and drawbacks (Nurhazana, 1987). Every successful learning process always begins with a needs analysis. By measuring each person's abilities and needs through

this needs analysis, we can create instructional materials that are tailored to the needs of the pupils. The requirements analysis component is also utilized to look into other areas of interest and issues related to language development, teaching, and learning.

English for Islamic Studies (EIS) needs more development since the field is new and lacks references in the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Abudhahir & Ali, 2018). The results of research conducted by Abudhahir and Ali (2018) show that a new set of analysis has been developed as the study examines students' needs, lacks and wants. Other research by Zakaria (2021) demonstrates promising improvements: the researcher has built a new set of designed courses for Islamic purposes. The set of courses includes English skills, language components, and Islamic materials in English adopted from Darwis (1995), such as Islam, the Qur'an, the Prophet, and so on. The study results correlate with Latif (2019), which demonstrates that Islamic subjects can be used in the form of EIS, such as Fiqh, Islamic History, Akhlaq, and so on.

Although the development of English for Islamic studies (EIS) has advanced in recent time, EIS only caters for the needs of post-secondary or university-level students as targets of the field.

However, EIS can target Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) students as they focus on learning Islamic studies as the Islamic studies university students do. Moreover, the growth of Islamic boarding school students has shown significant progress as the number of Islamic boarding school students reaches 3.4 million (Kemenag, 2022). The Ministry of Religion classifies Islamic boarding school education into non-formal and formal Islamic boarding school education. Non-formal education is known as Salafiyah Islamic boarding schools which are based on the recitation of the *Kitab kuning* (based on Law number 18 of 2019 concerning Islamic boarding schools which has defined the *Kitab kuning* as an Islamic book in Arabic or an Islamic book in another language which is a reference for Islamic scientific traditions in Islamic boarding schools). Meanwhile, formal Islamic boarding school education consists of Formal Early Education and the *Mu'adaalah* Education Unit which are for the *Ula*

(equivalent to SD/MI), *Wustha* (equivalent to SMP/MTs), and *Ulya* (equivalent to SMA/MA) levels (Kemenag, 2022).

In Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), students have difficulties in learning English. Cahyati and Madya (2019) point out that there are both external and internal factors that influence the students to experience difficulty. Being synchronous with study, one of the specific factors mentioned is curriculum as it is one of the external factors. At this time, Islamic boarding schools tend to apply two or three curricula, these are: the Ministry of Education-based curriculum (KEMENDIKBUD); the Ministry of Religious Affairs-applied curriculum (KEMENAG); and the *pesantren*-prototype curriculum. Having English language competence benefits students in preaching the understanding of Islam to diverse people, enlightening people about misconceptions of the religion, and excelling in the reading materials authored by Muslim scholars (Abudhahir & Ali, 2018). Since there are no limitations and procedural terms, as in variable characteristics such as targeted students, levels of language, and learning method, to design English courses in ESP (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998), it is possible that English for Islamic studies can be arranged and designed for Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) students, especially for the students at high school and upper secondary grades.

Despite there being no boundaries in constructing curriculum material for Islamic boarding schools as stated, the theories and principles of language acquisition have to be linked with the practice (Nation & Macalister, 2010). Also, it is beneficial to consider the three aspects in what students need to be taught (Nation & Macalister, 2010). In this case, English for Islamic studies in Islamic boarding schools' curriculum possesses a thoroughly conscientious consideration in constructing structured procedures (Sundari & Lutfiansyah, 2021). Likewise, Nation and Macalister portray that needs analysis measures both the future needs of students and students' present acquisition in language learning. Regarding needs, Hutchinson and Waters (1991) divides them into target needs and learning needs. On the other hand,

Abudhahir & Ali (2018) adds present situation analysis to complete target and learning needs.

Following the needs analysis research results and research methods applied in the research of Abudhahir and Ali (2018), this research focuses on needs analyses of target situation analysis (TSA), present situation analysis (PSA) and learning situation analysis (LSA) in relation to Islamic boarding school students in building EIS courses related to the goals targeted. To address the issue, the research is designed to analyze the necessities of English learning and students' English competence and fluency. The study also looks at the present situation of the students. Referring to the problem statements, the research formulates two questions. The research question regarding this research consist of:

- What kind of items have to be included in the EIS syllabus for Islamic boarding school students?

## **Method**

The study aims to be categorized as quantitative-descriptive research. This purposely aims to get portrayals or representations on targeted accuracy about the conditions of those characteristics (Saunders et al., 2015). The researchers apply quantitative research by which they apply surveys in collecting data by having questionnaires distributed. The result of the methodology is to be described as "explanatory" in that Mukherjee (2020) states that explanatory research is purposely applied to demonstrate the influence and connection between variables by analyzing the hypotheses.

### *Participants*

In applying the method, the researchers conducted the study through a survey by taking samples from the population. The sampling technique used in this study is probability sampling. Probability sampling determines the possibility that every individual of the population is the same as each other in being chosen as a sample (Sugiyono, 2014). In regards to the time and financial allocations, the researchers chose 36 eligible respondents of the population as the sample. This is compatible

with Kerlinger and Lee (2000) who suggest that 30 samples are the minimum sample in a quantitative study. The researchers selected 15 to 19-year-old students who originated from three Islamic boarding schools in two regions (sub-districts/regencies) in Aceh. Specifically, the schools include two modern Islamic schools (*pesantren modern*) and one traditional Islamic school (*pesantren tradisional*).

## Data Analysis

The technique of collecting data in this research refers to formulation of needs analysis. Most of the construction of ESP courses develop from analyzing needs which are adopted by Abudhahir and Ali (2018). However, this construction has had several modifications, as these needs analyses are tailored from Abudhahir and Ali's (2018) and Dudley-Evans and St. John's (1998) framework. The framework consists of questions and structural sections that represent Target Situation Analysis (TSA), Present Situation Analysis (PSA), and Learning Situation Analysis (LSA).

The formulation of the framework consists of four sections. Every section has distinguished questions and is differentiated from each other. Section A enquires about the personal information of students (PSA). Section B searches for the language information the students use and their perspectives towards the importance of English (PSA). Then, Section C asks for detailed information about the language competence of students (LSA). Lastly, section D looks for the needs of students' learning information (TSA).

The study applies data analysis which is compatible with variables and research patterns. The causality model is a model used for investigating hypotheses in this research. Hence, the technique of data analysis that researchers implement is quantitative data analysis through SPSS version 26.

## Results

The study looks for the data results regarding the needs analyses of Islamic boarding school students in learning English in the context of EIS. Results are explained in detail by explaining the answers to questions from each section.

### 1. Section A: Students' Personal Information

Section A looks for students' personal information. This consists of names of respondents, ages, and schools where they study at. Since most students requested privacy in regard to this information, there is no detailed information to be described.

### 2. Section B: Language Information of Students

#### *Question 1: First language of respondents?*

| Description                   | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| <i>Bahasa Indonesia</i>       | 27        | 75%        |
| <i>Bahasa Daerah</i> (local)  | 9         | 25%        |
| <i>Bahasa Lainnya</i> (Asing) | 0         | 0%         |
| /Other languages (foreign)    |           |            |
| <b>Total</b>                  | 36        | 100%       |

**Table 1.** Student's First Language (Source: Analyzed data, 2023).

Table 1 describes the mother tongue of students. This is a part of present situation analysis (PSA) according to the theories. The table shows that *Bahasa Indonesia* is on the top of respondents' answers as their first language. Twenty-seven students or 75 % of a total of 36 respondents state that they prefer *Bahasa Indonesia* as their mother tongue. Meanwhile, nine students (25%) answer that they use local

languages as their first language. None of the students chooses other (foreign) languages to be their first language.

**Question 2: The use of other languages?**

| Description   | Frequency | Percentage  |
|---|-----------|-------------|
| <i>Bahasa Indonesia</i>                                     | 9         | 25%         |
| <i>Bahasa Daerah</i> (local)                                | 25        | 69%         |
| <i>Bahasa Lainnya</i> (Asing)<br>/Other languages (foreign) | 2         | 6%          |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>36</b> | <b>100%</b> |

**Table 2** Other Languages Used on Daily Basis (Source: Analyzed data, 2023.)

Table 2 above shows the use of other languages besides their mother tongues. This indicates part of the PSA. As a result, 25 respondents of 35 students, or 69 %, admit local languages as their other languages used to speak with people. In the meantime, only nine students chose *Bahasa Indonesia* as their other language used. Surprisingly, 6 % of the respondents (2 students) cite foreign languages as their other used languages.

**Question 3: Opinion about the importance of learning English?**

| Description          | Frequency | Percentage  |
|----------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Important            | 19        | 53%         |
| Interesting to Learn | 17        | 47%         |
| Not Important        | 0         | 0%          |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>36</b> | <b>100%</b> |

**Table 3** Opinion on the Importance of Learning English (Source: Analyzed data, 2023)



Table 3 seeks the respondents' opinions on the significance of learning English as this is part of the PSA. No students show disinterest in learning English as the responses show (0%). Otherwise, more than half of the entire number, 53% representing 19 students, state that English is important to be learnt. The rest, or almost half (47%), show interest in learning English.

### 3. Section C: English Competence Information of Students

#### Question 1: English language competence (four skills in English)?

| Language Competence | Speaking    | Listening   | Reading     | Writing     |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Not At All          | 8%          | 0%          | 3%          | 3%          |
| Poor                | 44%         | 50%         | 42%         | 36%         |
| Average             | 31%         | 33%         | 36%         | 33%         |
| Good                | 17%         | 17%         | 17%         | 19%         |
| Very Good           | 0%          | 0%          | 3%          | 8%          |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> |

**Table 4.** Student's Language Competence (English Skill Levels) (Source: Analyzed data, 2023).

Table 4 displays the English language competence of respondents as this is considered as part of the learning situation analysis (LSA). As shown on the table, in speaking skills, more than half of the students tend to lack English. As the numbers illustrate, 44 % of respondents show "poor" competence in speaking, while 8 % of respondents do not understand English at all. On the other hand, 31 % of respondents have average ability at speaking skills, followed by 17 % of students who are good at speaking English. None of the students are at a very good level in English speaking.

On the other hand, in listening, half of the total respondents have poor ability. Meanwhile, 33 % of students possess an average level, followed by 17 % of students having a good understanding in listening. No student has a “very good” level in listening.

In reading and writing, 3 % of all respondents do not understand English. This is followed by 42 % and 36 % who have poor knowledge at reading and writing. The rest show positive responses as their competence in reading is categorized as “average” (36% in reading, 33% in writing), “good” (17% and 19%), and “very good” (3% and 8%).

### **Question 2: English competence in English videos and articles?**

| Language Competence | Text        | Video       |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Not At All          | 0%          | 0%          |
| Poor                | 53%         | 44%         |
| Average             | 31%         | 31%         |
| Good                | 14%         | 19%         |
| Very Good           | 3%          | 6%          |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> |

**Table 5** English Ability in Understanding Videos and Texts  
(Source: analyzed data, 2023.)

Table 5 shows the learning situation analysis (LSA) about video and text understanding. The students possess the same abilities at average level in understanding videos and texts (31% each). Otherwise, a significant percentage display poor levels of English in understanding the content of videos and articles (53% in understanding text; 44% in comprehending videos). The rest are at good and very good levels as demonstrated on the table.

**Question 3: Students’ experiences in learning English related to Islamic studies?**

| Description           | Percentage  |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Having experience     | 14%         |
| Not having experience | 86%         |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>100%</b> |

**Table 6** Students’ Experiences in English Taught Connected to Islamic Understanding (Source: Analyzed data, 2023).

Table 6 demonstrates respondents’ experiences in learning English associated with Islamic studies in accordance with LSA. As the data records, only 14 % of respondents are “experienced” in learning English related to Islamic studies. Specifically, the material of English commonly taught related to Islamic studies, according to the students’ experiences, is about prophecies in Islam, such as the life journey of 25 must-known and the most recognized prophets. Meanwhile, the remaining 86 % of respondents do not learn English in accord with Islamic understanding.

**4. Section D: Students’ needed skills for improvement**

**Question 1: Skills need information?**

| Description      | Speaking    | Listening   | Reading     | Writing     |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Not Agree At All | 3%          | 6%          | 3%          | 6%          |
| Not Agree        | 6%          | 22%         | 22%         | 25%         |
| Fairly Agree     | 0%          | 6%          | 0%          | 8%          |
| Agree            | 42%         | 53%         | 42%         | 28%         |
| Definitely Agree | 50%         | 14%         | 33%         | 33%         |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> |

**Table 7.** English Skills Importance (Source: Analyzed data, 2023).

Table 7 shows respondents' needs in regard to skills in English. This is part of TSA or needs analysis for students to learn English in the future. For the importance of each skill in English, the majority of students have great responses at four levels. Speaking skills dominate "positive" answers as 92 % (in total of "agree" and "definitely agree" responses) of respondents want to improve and increase their speaking skills. On the other hand, reading skills become the second-most needed skill as 75 % (in recapitulation of "agree" and "definitely agree" responses) students prefer it to be advanced. The other percentages, as crucial as the two top skills, display the results of listening (42% agree and 33% definitely agree; 67% in total) and writing (28% agree and 33% definitely agree; 61% in total).

### **Question 2: Islamic resources' fit to English materials?**

| Description      | Role Play   | Article/Text | Ins. Activities |
|------------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Not Agree At All | 6%          | 6%           | 6%              |
| Not Agree        | 6%          | 14%          | 17%             |
| Fairly Agree     | 8%          | 6%           | 11%             |
| Agree            | 56%         | 56%          | 58%             |
| Definitely Agree | 25%         | 19%          | 8%              |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b>  | <b>100%</b>     |

**Table 8.** *Islamic Resources' Fit to EIS (Source: Analyzed data, 2023).*

Table 8 shows the need of resources that are applicable to EIS based on TSA theory. Eighty-one percent of respondents (a total of 56% who agree and 25% who definitely agree) preferred role play as their resource, followed by article/text, (75 % agree and definitely agree), and then instructional activities.

### Question 3: Students' Goals in EIS?

| Description      | Speaking    | Reading     | Writing     | Vocabulary Dev |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| Not Agree At All | 3%          | 6%          | 8%          | 11%            |
| Not Agree        | 8%          | 22%         | 25%         | 22%            |
| Fairly Agree     | 6%          | 11%         | 11%         | 14%            |
| Agree            | 33%         | 44%         | 33%         | 17%            |
| Definitely Agree | 50%         | 17%         | 22%         | 36%            |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b>    |

Table 9. Goals in EIS (Source: Analyzed data, 2023).

Table 9 represents goals for students as a part of TSA. The table shows four different skills that students want to achieve. However, there is a modification on the table: listening skills are represented by vocabulary development. As shown on Table 8, speaking dominates the primary number (83% comprising 50% definitely agree and 33% agree) of positive responses rather than other skills. Reading takes place at number two as 71 % of respondents (a combination of 44% agree and 17% definitely agree) choose reading as a goal in EIS.

### Question 4: Time allocation?

| Description      | Two Times a week (exc) | Once a Week (exc) | Two Times a Week (inc) | Once a week (inc) |
|------------------|------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Not Agree At All | 3%                     | 6%                | 6%                     | 6%                |
| Not Agree        | 11%                    | 29%               | 28%                    | 29%               |
| Fairly Agree     | 17%                    | 26%               | 11%                    | 23%               |
| Agree            | 58%                    | 29%               | 28%                    | 23%               |
| Definitely Agree | 11%                    | 11%               | 28%                    | 20%               |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>100%</b>            | <b>100%</b>       | <b>100%</b>            | <b>100%</b>       |

**Table 10.** *Time Allocation* (Source: Analyzed data, 2023).

Table 10 exhibits time allocation in TSA for students. It is divided into “excluded from general English lesson”, short term “exc”, and “included in general English lesson”, shortened “inc”. “*Excluded from general English*” means that there is an additional schedule of English subjects in terms of EIS. Meanwhile, “*included in general English lesson*” explains that there is no additional schedule regarding EIS, but its material and syllabus are added in the general English schedule.

As Table 10 shown above, students prefer to choose a two-times-a-week schedule rather than a once-a-week schedule for English for Islamic studies. In terms of exclusion and inclusion comparison from general English, students mostly intend to have an additional schedule in EIS excluded from general English.

## Discussion

### 1. Present Situation Analysis (PSA)

In this study, PSA comprises students’ personal information, languages used, and their perspectives towards the importance of English. In addition, there are students’ English competence and understanding, as their experiences in English are related to the theory of EIS by Latif (2019) in considering the circumstances and student’s interest as components that can be analyzed in designing ESP material.

In terms of languages used and perspectives, the research data result has been clearly illustrated on Section A: Students’ Personal Information. Therefore, the researchers do not need to explain this.

In the context of English competence among students at Islamic boarding schools, respondents are lacking the four Basic English skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing). As Table 4 presents, the researchers suggest that students should take Basic English courses for learning EIS.

On the other hand, Table 5 supports what Table 4 has displayed. The students’ English ability in reading articles also suggests they begin with a basic course. However, in the context of students’ understanding

of English videos, some of the students just need to improve their ability in watching English videos, while others should start from basic English.

Then, the study discusses the situation concerning students' experiences in learning English related to Islamic studies. According to the results, EIS courses have to be developed for Islamic boarding school students as the majority of them have not learnt English related to Islamic materials. Also, since few students have only learnt English in the context of Islamic prophecy in EIS, the materials and topics of learning in EIS should be constructed in broader contexts.

## **2. Target Situation Analysis (TSA)**

Target situation analysis divides into some explanatory needs. It includes students' needs for skill analysis and students' goals. In the needs of skills, the researchers argue that many students tend to advance their speaking and reading skills rather than their writing and listening skills. However, writing and listening are also important as a number of students agree they would like to learn the skills. The argument relates to the goals analysis the students want to achieve. In Table 9, a number of percentages are dominant to the speaking and reading skills goals the students want to enhance. In conclusion, the TSA refers to the development of speaking and reading skills in EIS. These results are on the same page as Gabriela (2015) whose research about Target Situation Analysis in Law Enforcement (English for Special Purposes) found that the advantage of a program based on needs analysis proves to be a motivating factor for ESP practitioners who perceive its relevance. Its integration in practice allows them to participate more actively in their work learning process and eliminate fear of foreign language barriers in real-life professional situations.

## **3. Learning Situation Analysis (LSA)**

The learning situation analysis is based on the results of Islamic resources included in English materials. On Table 8 Students mostly appreciate role-play in learning situations as they agree (56%) and

definitely agree (25%). In regards to their opinions on article and instructional activity needs, they also have positive responses. However, the tendency of role play needs has attained the most possible attention among the two needs.

In the time allocated to EIS, most students want to add more scheduled English learning as EIS is given apart as a separate subject to general English. On the other hand, some students also tend to agree to include EIS into general English subjects as material added. But, the second explanation about inclusion of EIS into general English may affect the erasing of some topics in it, so that students will miss some important topics in general English. On top of that, students will feel exhausted because of their busy schedule to complete their English studies.

## Conclusion

This research has identified problems appearing in English for Islamic Studies in English in the context of English for Special Purposes for Islamic boarding school students. As questions come to represent the research problem, here are the findings that the researchers conclude in brief detail.

From their perspective, English is still acceptable among the Islamic boarding students as the researchers asked them about their perspectives on the language. As stated in the discussion, there is no “*rejection*” about the importance of English as a subject of study in Islamic boarding schools. Some of the students see English as an important subject to learn. Otherwise, the others say that English is interesting to learn.

When it comes to the skills of English, the data shows a surprising result. Their English competence is mostly disappointing because their ability needs to be improved in four skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing). However, since the research applied Dudley-Evans and St. John’s (1998) study to determine the needs of students in constructing courses of EIS for Islamic boarding school students, it is important to include some Basic English lessons to achieve the goals of students in EIS.



In the context of items necessary for EIS courses, the results explain several things. In English competence, the students prefer two skills needed in EIS: speaking and reading. This is supported by their goals in learning English in EIS. One of their goals is to become skilled in speaking or speech as a majority result. Reading (text) gains second position as a students' goal in EIS followed by writing and vocabulary development goals, which are also mentioned by Abudhahir and Ali (2018).

Another item included as students' needs is time allocation. Students mostly need a two-times-a-week schedule to learn English. On the other hand, their opinions vary when it comes to the EIS courses' inclusion in general English lessons. Many students want EIS to be apart and be an independent subject from general English, so the English subject schedule should be set to be more frequent. Meanwhile, some others believe that EIS has to be included in general English.

The researchers expect that this study can be a reference in constructing EIS courses for Islamic boarding schools as needs, perspectives and the levels of students have been found. However, the expectation of this study has to be realized by material and course developers to find the strengths or weaknesses of the findings. The researchers also feel confident that the field of EIS will be developed in both research or courses development applied to Islamic boarding schools. Nevertheless, the researchers suggest other researchers or ESP/EIS specialists conduct further research in this field to find broader focuses, other aspects needed, and/or learning material constructions of EIS and its applications to Islamic schools.

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