



Teaching English for Specific Purposes in Sharia Economic Law: A Pedagogical Approach for Students of UIN Jurai Siwo Lampung

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Abstract

This study explores the design, implementation, and impact of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction tailored to the needs of students in the Sharia Economic Law Program at the Faculty of Sharia, UIN Jurai Siwo Lampung. Recognising the importance of English proficiency in legal and economic contexts within Islamic frameworks, this research aims to identify the linguistic demands of the field, analyse students' proficiency levels, and evaluate a context-sensitive instructional model. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys, classroom observations, and analysis of instructional materials. Findings indicate a significant gap between general English skills and domain-specific language proficiency, underscoring the need for a curriculum that bridges this divide. The paper concludes with pedagogical recommendations for integrating legal and economic English in Islamic law education.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes, ESP Curriculum, Legal English, Islamic Finance, Sharia Economic Law

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1. INTRODUCTION

The mastery of English has become a strategic skill in various academic and professional fields, including the domain of Sharia Economic Law. At UIN Jurai Siwo Lampung, students of the Sharia Economic Law program are increasingly expected to navigate academic texts, international references, and even collaborative research in English. As Islamic finance continues to grow globally, the ability to access, interpret, and produce knowledge in English has become not only advantageous but necessary for academic and career advancement (Richards, 2015).

Despite the wide implementation of General English (GE) courses, they often fall short in addressing the specific communicative demands faced by students in specialised programs such as Sharia Economic Law. Legal and economic terminologies, when combined with Islamic jurisprudential concepts, create a complex linguistic terrain that requires targeted pedagogical strategies. English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly in the form of Legal English and

Economic English within Islamic contexts, offers a viable framework to bridge this gap (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

However, the application of ESP in Islamic higher education in Indonesia remains underdeveloped. There is a lack of structured curricula, appropriate materials, and trained instructors who understand both ESP methodologies and the particularities of Islamic legal discourse. As a result, many students struggle to engage meaningfully with English-language materials related to Sharia law and economics, limiting their participation in wider academic and professional arenas (Basturkmen, 2010).

This study, therefore, aims to investigate the current practices of English language instruction for students of Sharia Economic Law at UIN Jurai Siwo Lampung and to propose practical improvements. It focuses on the integration of ESP principles into the curriculum, evaluates learner needs through qualitative and quantitative data, and recommends context-sensitive approaches that align with both linguistic theory and institutional realities (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). This article contributes to the growing literature on ESP in Islamic legal education, offering practical insights for curriculum developers, instructors, and policymakers.

The foundation of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) lies in the idea that language learning becomes more effective when it is relevant to learners' needs and contexts (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). ESP is characterised by its focus on specific disciplines, needs analysis, and tailored materials, often situated within professional or academic fields such as law, medicine, business, or engineering (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

Legal English, a subfield of ESP, encompasses the specialised vocabulary, syntax, and discourse structures used in legal settings. It is often marked by its use of modal verbs, passive constructions, archaic terminology, and formal register (Bhatia, 1993). Within Islamic contexts, this language is further shaped by Arabic loanwords, religious references, and the integration of Sharia principles, making it distinct from Western legal English. Economic English, likewise, includes technical vocabulary, data interpretation, and argumentative structures common in economics and finance. In the context of Islamic finance, these features are overlaid with concepts like *riba* (interest), *mudarabah* (profit-sharing), and *zakat* (almsgiving), requiring learners to not only understand the English terms but also the underlying Islamic concepts (Abdullah, 2020).

Sharia Economic Law sits at the intersection of these domains, demanding a hybrid form of ESP that encompasses both legal and economic English contextualised within Islamic jurisprudence. Recent studies in Indonesia and other Muslim-majority countries emphasise the need for localised ESP curricula that reflect the dual nature of these disciplines (Rahman, 2021; Yusof & Halim, 2019). At Indonesian Islamic universities, English instruction has historically focused on general English with limited integration of disciplinary content. However, a growing body of research advocates for ESP-based approaches to better equip students for their future careers. Needs analysis emerges as

a critical step in this process, guiding curriculum development and material selection (Basturkmen, 2010). This study contributes to this discourse by providing an empirically grounded model for teaching ESP in the Sharia Economic Law program at UIN Jurai Siwo Lampung, informed by both theoretical frameworks and real-world classroom dynamics.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design aimed at exploring the English language needs of students in the Sharia Economic Law Department at the Faculty of Sharia, UIN Jurai Siwo Lampung. The primary focus was to investigate learners' perceptions, needs, and challenges in using English for academic and professional purposes in legal and economic contexts. A needs analysis framework was used, inspired by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), integrating both target situation analysis (TSA) and present situation analysis (PSA).

The research was conducted in the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year at UIN Jurai Siwo Lampung, specifically at the Department of Sharia Economic Law. Participants included:

- a. Three English lecturers teaching legal English and ESP courses.
- b. Fifty undergraduate students (25 male and 25 female) from the third and fifth semesters.
- c. Two alumni currently working in Islamic banking and the judiciary system, to provide insight into real-world language needs.

The participants were selected using purposive sampling, considering their active engagement with English in academic or professional domains. Three instruments were utilised to collect data: is questionnaire, **semi-structured interviews**, and **document analysis**. The data were analysed using qualitative and quantitative approaches:

- a. **Quantitative Data** from the questionnaire were tabulated and analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, mode, percentage). Data were categorised under four core competencies: reading, writing, speaking, and listening, as well as grammar, vocabulary, and legal-economic terms.
- b. **Qualitative Data** from interviews and documents were coded thematically. An inductive approach was taken to identify patterns and themes related to instructional needs, language barriers, and content gaps. Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process: familiarisation, initial coding, theme development, review, definition, and reporting.

To ensure credibility, the study used triangulation of data sources (students, lecturers, alumni) and methods (questionnaire, interviews, document analysis). Member checking was conducted by allowing participants to review their interview transcripts. Peer debriefing with colleagues was also applied to minimise researcher bias. The instruments were validated by two ESP experts and piloted with 10 students not included in the main study.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional review board of UIN Jurai Siwo Lampung. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, and written informed consent was obtained. Confidentiality was guaranteed, and all participants were assured of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. This section presents the results from the needs analysis, curriculum evaluation, and the proposed ESP instructional model, followed by a discussion of their implications for English language teaching in the Sharia Economic Law context.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Students' Language Proficiency and Challenges

The needs analysis, based on a questionnaire distributed to 50 undergraduate students in the Sharia Economic Law program, revealed a significant gap between general English proficiency and the ability to use English for domain-specific purposes. While 68% of students rated their general English proficiency as "intermediate," only 24% reported confidence in using English for legal and economic discussions. Three major language challenges emerged:

- a) **Specialised Vocabulary:** 82% of students struggled with terms commonly used in Islamic finance, such as *murabahah* (cost-plus financing), *takaful* (Islamic insurance), and *sukuk* (Islamic bonds), indicating a clear need for targeted vocabulary instruction.
- b) **Reading Comprehension:** 75% found legal and religious texts (e.g., contracts, fatwas, and regulatory documents) difficult to understand, primarily due to their complex syntax and dense terminology.
- c) **Speaking Skills:** 60% of students experienced anxiety when required to present legal-economic case analyses in English, citing a lack of confidence and limited exposure to speaking tasks in their coursework.

Table 1: Students' Self-Assessment of English Skills (N=50)

Skill	High Proficiency (%)	Moderate (%)	Low (%)
General English	12	68	20
Legal English	8	24	68
Economic English	10	30	60

2. Workplace Language Needs (Alumni Interviews)

Semi-structured interviews with five alumni currently working in Islamic financial institutions provided insights into real-world English language demands. Two key themes emerged:

- a) **Document Drafting:** Alumni emphasised the need to draft legal documents in English, such as *ijarah* (lease) and *mudarabah* (profit-sharing) contracts. One interviewee stated, "We

need templates for ijarah agreements in English because some of our clients are from overseas” (Alumni 1).

- b) Client Interaction and Negotiation: Fluency in explaining Sharia-compliant financial products to both local and international clients was considered essential. *“Client meetings require fluency in explaining Sharia-compliant products clearly and convincingly,”* noted another alumnus (Alumni 2).

3. Evaluation of Current Curriculum

A document analysis of the existing English curriculum and syllabi, coupled with interviews with English lecturers, revealed several limitations in addressing students’ specific needs:

- a) Insufficient ESP Content: Of the 12 English courses offered in the program, only 2 had components explicitly focused on legal or economic content. Most courses emphasized general English skills with limited relevance to students’ professional fields.
- b) Outdated Materials: Textbooks and reading materials were found to be outdated, with some referencing Islamic finance case studies from the 1990s. These resources failed to reflect the dynamic nature of contemporary Sharia economic law and finance.
- c) Inadequate Assessment Strategies: Approximately 80% of the assessments were designed to evaluate general English proficiency rather than task-based or professional language use. Students were rarely assessed on activities like legal drafting, negotiation, or policy analysis.

Lecturer Interview Excerpt: *“We lack authentic materials like modern fatwas or ICCI [Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry] reports. The textbooks we use do not prepare students for real-world language demands.”*

4. Proposed ESP Model

In response to the above findings, a three-tiered ESP instructional model is proposed to enhance English language learning for Sharia Economic Law students. The model is designed to gradually scaffold students from foundational knowledge to real-world application.

Tier 1: Foundational Layer

- a) Content: Students acquire essential vocabulary related to Islamic finance and legal principles (e.g., *gharar* = uncertainty, *riba* = interest).
- b) Tools: Interactive platforms such as Kahoot! are used for vocabulary reinforcement through games and quizzes.

Tier 2: Skill-Building Layer

- a) Reading: Activities include annotating reports from the OECD or Bank Indonesia on Islamic financial practices.
- b) Writing: Students engage in drafting mock *mudharabah* contracts and legal correspondence.

- c) Speaking: Role-play exercises simulate client consultations and legal negotiations, encouraging the use of persuasive language and technical terminology.

Tier 3: Authentic Application Layer

- a) Tasks: Students analyse contemporary legal texts, such as regulations from Bank Indonesia or fatwas issued by the DSN-MUI (National Sharia Board).
- b) Output: Students prepare group presentations and policy briefs, followed by structured peer and instructor feedback.

Table 2: Sample ESP Activities

Module	Task Example	Language Focus
Islamic Finance	Compare conventional vs. sukuk bonds	Comparative structures, hedging devices
Dispute Resolution	Simulate an arbitration hearing	Modal verbs (e.g., shall, must, may)
Legal Drafting	Draft a lease agreement (ijarah)	Passive voice, nominalisation
Client Interaction	Role-play Sharia banking consultation	Clarification strategies, politeness

DISCUSSION

1. Alignment with Prior Research

The findings of this study align strongly with existing literature that emphasises the importance of contextualised English language instruction, especially in specialised academic domains. Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) framework of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) stresses the necessity of analysing the learner's needs in their target situation, including both professional and academic contexts. This principle resonates with the observed challenges at UIN Jurai Siwo Lampung, where students in the Sharia Economic Law program struggle with field-specific vocabulary and discourse conventions. These difficulties are not merely lexical but are deeply embedded in the sociocultural and religious contexts of Islamic finance, reflecting Abdullah's (2020) observations about the Arabic-English hybridity in Islamic economic terminologies. Students are often confronted with unfamiliar terms such as *mudarabah*, *gharar*, or *riba*, which lack direct equivalence in general English and require domain-informed interpretation. This underscores the inadequacy of generic English language instruction and supports the call for more targeted ESP interventions.

2. Unique Challenges in Sharia Contexts

Language instruction in Sharia Economic Law involves not only the mastery of legal and financial jargon but also a deep awareness of cultural and religious connotations that influence

communication. One prominent challenge is the handling of culturally sensitive terms such as “interest,” which is condemned in Islamic law as *riba*. The translation and explanation of such terms demand pedagogical sensitivity and contextual embedding. Moreover, students frequently engage in English-Arabic code-switching, especially in interpreting bilingual legal documents or fatwas. An illustrative example is the statement, “The fatwa prohibits *gharar* in contracts,” where the Arabic term is retained due to the lack of a precise English equivalent. This bilingual environment presents a cognitive load on learners and demands a curriculum that not only builds English proficiency but also fosters metalinguistic awareness. Teachers must therefore equip students to navigate legal pluralism, where multiple legal traditions (Islamic and Western) co-exist and intersect in discourse.

3. Practical Implications for Language Pedagogy

To effectively address the aforementioned challenges, targeted curriculum reforms and pedagogical strategies are necessary. Material development should prioritise collaboration with Islamic financial institutions to incorporate authentic texts such as Sharia-compliant contracts, fatwas, and legal opinions. These materials not only enhance the relevance of learning but also expose students to genre-specific structures and lexical bundles that they are likely to encounter in professional settings. Furthermore, teacher training initiatives should focus on familiarising instructors with the stylistic features of legal and financial English, particularly in the Islamic context. Workshops can be designed to cover common structures like passive voice in legislation, modal verbs in legal advice, and the use of hedging in fatwa writing. These competencies are essential for producing effective legal writing and for understanding the nuances of courtroom or boardroom communication. A more nuanced understanding of the linguistic features of Sharia English will empower educators to design instruction that is not only linguistically sound but also contextually appropriate.

4. Toward a Sustainable ESP Ecosystem

Sustainable improvement in ESP for Sharia Economic Law cannot be achieved through isolated interventions. It calls for an ecosystemic approach involving curriculum designers, language instructors, subject-matter experts, and industry practitioners. Institutional policy must support the integration of ESP courses into the core curriculum rather than treating them as peripheral or remedial. Furthermore, research-based feedback loops should be established to monitor student outcomes and adapt teaching strategies accordingly. Periodic needs analyses—both of students and of market demands—can ensure that the program remains responsive to the evolving landscape of Islamic finance and legal practice. Ultimately, the goal is to cultivate graduates who are not only

proficient in English but are also competent communicators in the intercultural and interdisciplinary arenas of global Islamic economic law.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the urgent necessity of implementing a robust English for Specific Purposes (ESP) framework within the Sharia Economic Law program at UIN Jurai Siwo Lampung. As global engagement in Islamic finance and law increases, so too does the demand for legal and economic professionals who are linguistically equipped to operate across borders. General English instruction, while valuable, does not suffice to prepare students for the lexical, discursive, and pragmatic complexities found in legal and financial documents grounded in Sharia principles. Hence, a curriculum tailored to the linguistic needs of these learners is vital to ensuring both academic development and future workplace readiness (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

Three key recommendations emerged from this research. First, a revision of the curriculum is necessary to incorporate more domain-specific language tasks. These include drafting Islamic financial contracts, analyzing fatwa texts, or simulating courtroom proceedings in English. Such activities would cultivate not only technical vocabulary but also syntactic and pragmatic competence required in legal-economic reasoning (Basturkmen, 2010). Second, it is recommended that the faculty build stronger partnerships with Islamic financial institutions. These collaborations could provide access to real-life texts, such as bilingual Sharia bank prospectuses or sukuk documentation, which serve as authentic teaching materials and help contextualise learning (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). Third, the university should consider launching longitudinal studies to trace how graduates apply their English skills in various professional settings, thereby informing the iterative improvement of ESP syllabi.

Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations. The primary limitation lies in its small sample size and its restriction to a single institutional context. The findings, while insightful, may not be fully generalizable to other Indonesian higher education institutions offering Sharia Economic Law programs. Future research should broaden its scope by including participants from various regions in Indonesia and possibly comparing practices in both private and public Islamic universities. Doing so would offer a more comprehensive understanding of ESP needs and practices in this growing academic field.

In conclusion, the incorporation of a carefully designed ESP curriculum for Sharia Economic Law students is not merely a pedagogical enhancement but a strategic necessity. It empowers students to access global scholarship, collaborate with international stakeholders in Islamic finance, and contribute meaningfully to national economic development. The future of ESP in

Islamic higher education thus lies in its responsiveness to disciplinary discourses, institutional collaboration, and learner-oriented innovation (Richards, 2015).

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