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English Language Skills for Islamic Economic Students: Expectation versus Reality

Abstract. This study focuses on the English language instruction provided to students majoring in Islamic Economics, aiming to equip them with the necessary skills for successful engagement both in the classroom and the workplace. The research conducted for this purpose had a dual objective: firstly, to investigate the perspectives of both students and lecturers on the types of English language skills required for an Islamic Economics major, and secondly, to assess the relevance of the current English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course in meeting the students' actual needs. The participants in this qualitative descriptive study included three lecturers and 219 students enrolled in the third and fifth semesters of the Islamic Economics Study Program at a State Islamic University in Indonesia. The study employed qualitative research methods, utilizing two data collection methods: an online survey addressing student demographics and perceived language skill needs, and interviews with participating lecturers. The findings reveal disparities between the perceptions of instructors and students regarding essential linguistic abilities. While the majority of students prioritize speaking and writing, instructors emphasize reading and proper grammar. The study recommends a redesign of the existing ESP syllabus to better align with the identified needs of the students.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes, Islamic economics, ESP syllabus, students' needs.

1. Introduction

As the most widely spoken language in the world, with approximately 1.75 billion speakers (Neely, 2012), English had firmly established itself as the dominant language of global communication (Fithriani, 2018), particularly for commerce, education,

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business, and tourism. The continuous globalization of markets over the past several decades had increased the importance of English proficiency, particularly in the business sector. Studies had demonstrated a direct correlation between the English proficiency of a country's population and its economic prosperity. Those with a high level of English proficiency also had a significant advantage in terms of salary and job market competitiveness (McCormic, 2017; Tran & Burman, 2016).

Due to its importance as a global language, English courses were widely available in official and non-formal educational contexts in a number of countries, including Japan, Thailand, and Indonesia, where it was not commonly used in ordinary interactions. In Indonesia, only English had to be taught as a foreign language from junior high school through higher education, regardless of whether the institution was public or religiously affiliated (Fithriani, 2017). The purpose of English language instruction (ELT) in higher education was to equip students with the language skills necessary for academic or professional environments. This statement was supported by Zulfah and Mujahidah's (2018) study, which indicated that Sharia Bank employees had to acquire English in order to be adequately prepared for the English-speaking employment market before entering the workforce. Unfortunately, in actuality, a large number of bank personnel lacked adequate English language skills, preventing them from reaching their full potential (Mohammadzadeh, Barati, & Fatemeh, 2015). This disparity between expectations and reality suggested that the process of designing and selecting materials for the context of English language teaching and learning (ELTL) required more attention. This specific purpose of ELTL was known as English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which emphasized the role of requirements analysis in the design and development of effective English courses and materials.

Despite the importance of needs analysis, numerous studies indicated that, in the context of Islamic economics, ESP course design for higher education students did not appear to consider students' needs as the basis for designing the offered courses. This was the case despite the significance of analysis (Fabianto, 2018; Madker, 2018; Zulfah & Mujahida, 2018). According to Madkur (2018), the Islamic Banking department's English class curriculum did not accurately reflect the department's objectives. This was because the majority of the curriculum focused on subskills rather than learning objectives. In addition, this disparity could be the result of a number of additional factors, such as a lack of time and resources, limited resources and references, and restricted access to facilities. Therefore, in order to create an efficient English course curriculum for Islamic economic students, it was necessary to undertake an inquiry into the students' expectations about the course, which had to then be contrasted to what really occurred in practice inside the class. The results of the investigation may have aided lecturers and/or those designing course syllabi in determining which topics to include or exclude from their respective syllabi. This study was conducted to address two research queries in light of the aforementioned objectives:

1. What are the necessary English language skills, according to the students and the lecturers?

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2. Has the applied syllabus of English course met the students' expectations?

2. Literature Review

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) was defined by Hutchinson and Waters (1987:19) as "an approach to language teaching in which the content and method of language instruction were based on students' reasons for learning." ESP was a method of language instruction in which the content and manner of instruction were determined by the pupils' motivations for learning. They operated on the presumption that learners were aware of what they needed as a result of their learning when they comprehended the reason why they were studying a certain language. Dehand et al. (2010); Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998); Hutchinson and Waters (1992) were among a large number of researchers who asserted that conducting a needs analysis for students was of the utmost significance when designing an ESP curriculum. It was useful to those who designed curricula in the generation of materials and syllabi, as well as in the selection of teaching strategies for students in a variety of settings.

In the context of Islamic economics specifically, the acquisition of English language skills was anticipated to facilitate the vocations of higher education students studying Islamic economics as specialists, practitioners, or laborers (Darmadji, 2014). They had not only been able to acquire information (through reading and listening), but also communicate (through speaking and writing) in Islamic economic English. Therefore, in order to achieve this specific objective, English classes and programs had to be designed based on an analysis of the students' needs in order to achieve their long-term goals.

2.1 English for Specific Purposes

Foreign language proficiency, particularly in English, was one of the fundamental job skills that graduates of higher education were expected to possess, as it played a crucial role in the global economy for professionals at the national and international levels. This was due to the fact that foreign language proficiency was one of the essential work skills that college graduates should possess (Rajprasit et al., 2014). In modern times, the English language has been regarded as a tool enabling individuals to engage in the global market (Lauder, 2008). Consequently, it has become a prerequisite for employment. As Gatehouse (2001) pointed out, effective communication in a professional setting demanded three key elements: proficiency in occupation-specific terminology, general academic skills, and fluency in everyday informal conversation. This necessitated tailoring English instruction to each student's proficiency level.

Starting from the 1970s, a method called communicative language instruction emerged, marking a shift towards more meaningful language education (Boroujeni & Fard, 2013). Learning a language now meant not only acquiring the four distinct language

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skills sequentially but also developing them simultaneously, assigning equal importance to each. This transformation led to the development of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), even though, at the time, it was taught using methods considered outdated in the field of language education. The term "English for Specific Purposes" (ESP) referred to the process of imparting English to a subset of the population in order to meet their specific needs. Consequently, the form of English taught in ESP classes was distinct from standard English, which was not bound to any particular dialect (Far, 2008; Richards & Schmidt, 2002; Strevens, 1988). (Friedenberg & Bradley, 1984:3; Strevens, 1988) ESP provided specific English components and skills related to particular disciplines, vocations, and activities, such as engineering, computer science, architecture, business, and finance. ESP consisted of three characteristics: genuine content, purpose-related situations, and self-direction. Authentic material was defined as material created by humans (Carter, 1983). The majority of ESP users were educators in higher education, and most ESP learners were students in college, vocational, and technical settings, where their needs could be promptly identified (Johns & Price-Machado, 2001). In fact, the vast majority of ESP practitioners recognized the necessity of innovative instructional approaches within the classroom to facilitate effective learning. Furthermore, classroom materials had to align with the professional standards expected of students (Milosevic, 2014). Consequently, ESP instruction had to embrace a constructivist approach to aid students in enhancing their communication skills, which were pivotal for success in both academic and professional pursuits (Taha & El-Sakran, 2014).

2.2 Needs Analysis

The communicative function was utilized in ESP by incorporating perspectives on students' English-learning requirements and linguistic abilities. Before devising the curricula for ESP and general English classes, it is essential to conduct a needs analysis to collect the information necessary to meet their needs (West, 1994). The term "normative assessment" referred to the systematic collection and analysis of all subjective and objective information necessary to define and validate defensible curriculum purposes that satisfied the language-learning requirements of students within the context of particular institutions that influenced the learning and teaching situation (Bachman & Palmer, 1996:102). Needs analysis was defined as "the systematic collection and analysis of all subjective and objective data required to define and validate defensible curriculum objectives" (Brown, 1995:36). In a similar vein, Bachman and Palmer (1996) asserted that needs analysis involved the systematic collection of specific information about the language needs of learners and the analysis of this information for the purpose of language curriculum design. Needs analysis was implemented for the first time in the middle of the 1970s when the communicative approach was believed to be the most effective (Boroujeni and Fard, 2013). It was still extensively utilized because it played a significant role in the development of instructional materials for foreign language programs (Tzotzou, 2014) and curriculum development.

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Therefore, prior to commencing the process of developing instructional materials for the Islamic Economics Study Program, a needs analysis had to be carried out (Rokhaniyah & Utama, 2019). This analysis encompassed various considerations, such as the learner's preferred teaching style, level of proficiency, and learning objectives (Hyland, 2003). Similarly, the outcomes of this needs assessment aided in determining the appropriate subject matter for the curriculum (Rokhaniyah & Utama, 2019). Alongside the course outline, the resources employed to help students catch up on any neglected learning should align with the curriculum. The materials needed to exhibit both relevance and consistency. Relevance denoted that the degree of difficulty of the materials should be commensurate with the level of intellectual development of the learners, whereas consistency denoted that there should be a consistent connection between the skills and the degree of difficulty of the materials.

The learners' objectives and backgrounds, language proficiency, motivations for enrolling in the course, teaching and learning preferences, and communication contexts were all key elements that emerged from the students' perspectives in needs analysis, which was one of the most essential aspects of the method. Because 'needs' was such a comprehensive concept, needs analysis was required to conduct an analysis of the students' needs from the diverse perspectives of all individuals familiar with the situation. This could be accomplished using a variety of research methods, such as observations, interviews, and surveys (Long, 2005). Therefore, when the demands of the students were well understood, it was possible to construct an effective ESP curriculum, allowing the ESP course to easily attain its objectives (Theeb & Albarawi, 2013).

Prior research had examined the applicability of needs analysis for ESP within the Islamic Economy department. Jaya (2017) began by conducting research on the needs analysis of Islamic Economics students' desire to study ESP. She determined that the course material did not meet the needs of the students and suggested modifications. However, the course placed equal emphasis on both oral and written communication. The students believed that oral communication was the skill that would help them accomplish the most success in their future professions. Moreover, he identified a few additional issues that contributed to the ineffectiveness of the ESP course. These issues included a limited vocabulary, a low level of student competence, and an ineffective lecturer. It was possible to conclude that needs analysis was important in the development of an ESP course to ensure that the instructional materials and learning objectives were appropriate for the demands that students would encounter in their future professions.

In Indonesian institutions, English classes emphasized both oral and written communication skills, as well as linguistic aspects that facilitated accurate and fluent English speech. This was one of the objectives of EFL study (Aradhanawaty & Madjid, 2016). So far, English curricula for senior high schools had attempted to meet the needs of students who were studying a foreign language to thrive in this era of globalization. At the conclusion of the course, students were expected to be able to communicate effectively in English at a level of proficiency commensurate with their current needs. They may have wished to pursue an academic degree at a university or college to be

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qualified and competent in particular fields, to influence others in prospective workplace social interactions, meetings, presentations, and discussions, or to participate in teams. They may have also wished to pursue academics at a college or university.

To attain an effective educational objective, a range of preparatory steps had to be taken. As outlined by Barroso (2005), a vital initial stage in any process, including education, was the establishment of a well-defined course of action capable of efficiently accomplishing goals and objectives. This principle extended beyond education to encompass all processes. In the realm of education, the lesson plan served as the key tool for educational planning. It provided a thorough outline of an instructor's instructional session, specifically crafted to facilitate student achievement of specific learning objectives (Ahmad & Nur, 2016). Lesson plans included both the subject matter that students would study and the grading criteria that would be applied. In addition, lesson plans helped teachers coordinate the classroom material, resources, time, instructional strategies, and assistance they provided to students.

3. Methodology

In this extensive study, a total of 219 students were thoughtfully chosen to take part, comprising 112 students in the third semester and 107 students in the fifth semester of the prestigious Islamic Economics Research Program at a state Islamic University in Indonesia. The deliberate inclusion of these two participant groups was aimed at extracting valuable insights into the English language competency needs of both students and educators. The core objective of this research was to conduct an in-depth exploration of the English language skills essential for success in the field of Islamic economics. To achieve this goal effectively, a qualitative approach was chosen, as it best suited the study's need to uncover specific and varied responses.

Within this study, the researcher combined content analysis and thematic analysis techniques to reveal rich insights within the realm of the English language. This descriptive thematic qualitative approach was dedicated to identifying, analyzing, and articulating the various phenomena present within the collected data, as elegantly described by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The pivotal variables under examination within this research encompassed the perceptions and requirements of students and instructors in relation to English language skills, encompassing facets such as reading, writing, and speaking, all within the unique context of Islamic economics.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

	Item (s)	Participants
Age	18–20	219
Gender	Male	87
	Female	132

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	Item (s)	Participants
Year of the study	Third Semester	112
	Fifth Semester	107
English Proficiency	Intermediate	38
	Upper Intermediate	181
	Advanced	0

Table 3.2 Background Information of Three Lecturers

Anonymous Name	Tittle	Teaching Experiences	Course Offered
Lecturer 1	Associate Professor	Over 10 years	English for economic study
Lecturer 2			
Lecturer 3	Professor		

This study also enlisted the participation of three English instructors from the same study program. The data collection process for this study was multifaceted, involving three key methods: observation, an online survey, and in-depth interviews.

The observation occurred during a series of three meetings, each comprising a total of three sessions conducted in a classroom from August 7th to 9th, 2021. These observations were conducted within the classes of all three participating instructors, three sessions within each instructor's class. In order to gather insights from the students, we administered an online survey via Google Form. This survey had the purpose of gathering valuable demographic information, assessing their desired English proficiency levels, and eliciting their opinions on the current English course being provided. Concurrently, in-depth interviews were conducted with the instructors to glean their perspectives on the most critical English language skills for their students to master, as well as to understand their teaching methodologies at the time. These interviews were recorded with the participants' consent and subsequently transcribed, albeit not verbatim, in preparation for analysis. With data from these three distinct instruments in hand, a comprehensive analysis was undertaken to evaluate the necessity of English language skills.

To dissect the student responses to the online survey, a frequency count was employed to scrutinize their answers to closed-ended questions, while content analysis was utilized to delve into the responses to open-ended questions (Elo et al., 2014). This data was then organized through a systematic coding process.

Furthermore, Neuendorf (2019) employed thematic-content analysis to decipher textual data derived from two distinct sources: the online survey and in-depth interviews. This method allowed for the conceptualization of the underlying phenomenon, with a focus on categorizing the data based on students' and instructors' perceptions of the requisite English language skills.

To tackle the research inquiries and pinpoint the root causes of the English language skills challenge within the Islamic economics major, a subsequent analysis stage involved a comparative examination of the data collected from both students and in-

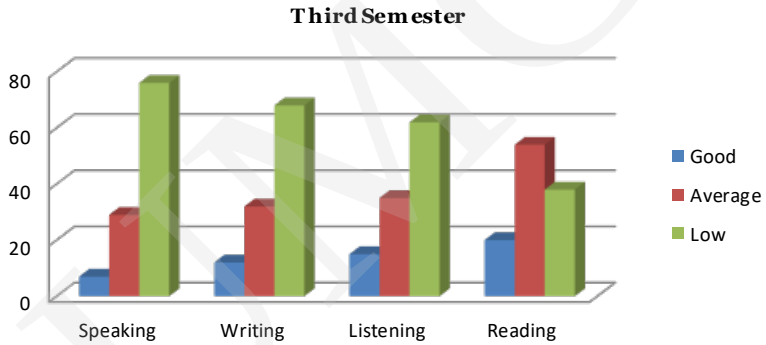
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structors. In an effort to ensure the data's reliability, member evaluations and peer debriefing were thoughtfully incorporated into the process.

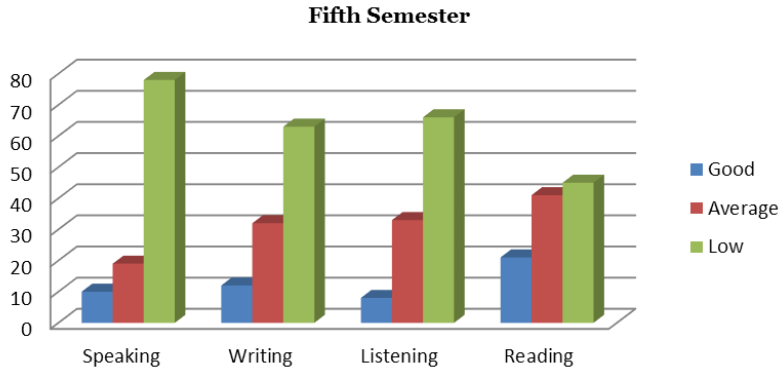
4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Result

In this section, the focus shifts to the presentation of the results obtained from students' self-assessment of their English language skills. The findings are categorized based on their academic year levels. Figure 1 illustrates the outcomes of the data analysis,



derived from an online survey distributed to 219 participants in the third and fifth semesters. The analysis reveals a consistent pattern, with most respondents ranking their



speaking skills as the least proficient, followed by writing, listening, and reading skills, in that particular order.

Figure 1. Distribution of English Language Skills Based on Students' self-assessment

Figure 2. Distribution of English Language Skills Based on Students' self-assessment

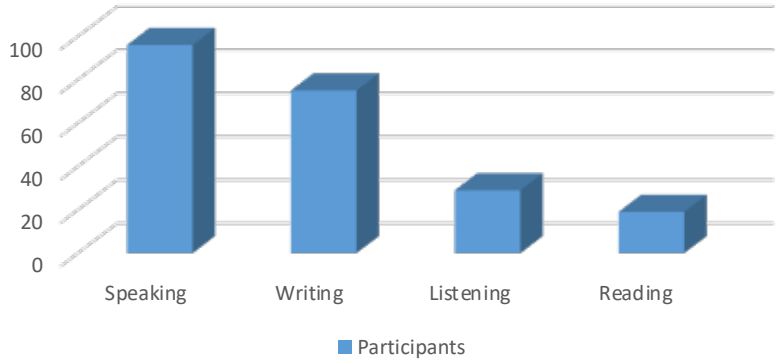
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A closer examination of the data in Figures 1 and 2 revealed that the second and third language skills that were challenging to master varied marginally between the two categories. Figure 1 indicated that the majority of third-semester students rated their speaking ability as the lowest (n = 76), followed by their writing ability (n = 68), listening ability (n = 62), and reading ability (n = 38). However, for the fifth-semester students, despite the similarity in speaking skill, which was named as the lowest skill to have (n = 78), listening was found to be in the second position (n = 66), followed by writing (n = 63), and reading (n = 45).

In summary, the results suggest that participants from the Islamic economics program in this study perceived their English language skills as lacking. They deemed their proficiency to be insufficient. As a result, it is plausible to hypothesize that these students expect English language courses to furnish them with a comprehensive range of language abilities, particularly those essential for academic advancement and future professional responsibilities. This hypothesis will be further explored in the following section, where we delve into what students anticipated from their English classes.

4.1.1 Students Expectation of the Necessary English Language Skills

The process of preparing and crafting ESP course syllabi, especially tailored for students specializing in Islamic economics at the higher education level, necessitated a close alignment with their specific requirements. In theory, the foundation of ESP curriculum design rested on anticipating the skills these students would need as they ventured into their professional careers. However, in practice, numerous cases of course design and development fell short of meeting the expectations and demands of



economics students. The findings from the needs analysis underscored that, according to the Islamic Economics students involved in this study, the pivotal skills for their future careers revolved around speaking and writing abilities.

Figure 3. Distribution of English Language Skills According to Students

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As shown in Figure 3, most students specializing in Islamic Economics considered speaking and writing to be the essential English skills they needed to excel in, making these skills the primary focus of ESP courses (96 and 75 participants, respectively). In contrast, listening and speaking were deemed less crucial, with only 29 and 19 participants expressing a strong desire for improvement in these areas. These findings underscored the importance of speaking and writing for students enrolled in the Islamic Economics program, aligning closely with our initial discoveries. However, as we will delve into in the upcoming section, it becomes evident that their expectations were not fulfilled by the existing circumstances.

4.1.2 The English Course in Reality

Upon observing the English courses conducted by three lecturers at a State Islamic University in Indonesia, it is evident that their emphasis primarily revolved around refining students' subskills. Specifically, there was a notable focus on mastering grammar and vocabulary, especially words pertinent to business and finance. However, this emphasis appears to prioritize these subskills over the preferred learning areas of the students, namely speaking and writing skills. This initial assumption was subsequently confirmed by the data collected from the interviews, during which the three lecturers asserted that grammar was highly crucial for English proficiency. This assumption was supported by the following excerpt from Lecture 1:

> *Interviewer (I): "What are the challenges for students when learning English?"*
> Lecturer 1 (L1): "Most of my students feel difficult to learn grammar, they think it is weird, because the arrangement and the changes of the sentences. I also agree with that, and Grammar become my focus of my learning."
>
> *Interviewer (I):* "What does it mean that grammar is the main important skill to master?"
> *Lecturer 1 (L1): "I believe that grammar is very important components that students have to learn, especially because understanding the word order and memorizing vocabulary is too much to be able to do in mastering language skills."*
>
> Interviewer (I): "What are the next challenges for students after grammar skill based on your perception?"
> Lecturer 1(L1): "I think speaking, because if you can speak English, you can understand what you want to speak, then followed by listening, and reading skills to complete your English. The three of them are the next important. They are the whole and the complete component in English if you want to speak English fluency."

Based on the excerpt from the interview with Lecturer 1, the researcher concluded that grammar had been the primary focus in teaching English to students majoring in

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Islamic economics. Furthermore, Lecturer 1 explained that speaking, listening, and reading were the next essential skills for Islamic economics students to master. Similar perspectives were shared by Lecturer 2, as indicated by the following excerpt:

> *Interviewer (I): "What are the challenges for students when learning English?*
> Lecturer 2 (L2): "Grammar is a challenge for my students, and it is first basic knowledge for my students to master in English before learning the other skills."
>
> *Interviewer (I):* "What does it mean that grammar is the main important skill to master?"
> *Lecturer 2 (L2): "Grammar is very important skill, and I have to repeat my explanation to make sure that my students really understand about the material."*
>
> *Interviewer (I): "What are the next challenges for students after grammar skill based on your perception?"*
> *Lecturer 2 (L2):"Speaking, listening, and reading are the perfect skills to complete Islamic economic students' knowledge in English."*

The lecturer's statement strikingly shows that he focused on grammar as the main language skill to teach to his students compared to any other language skills. These beliefs were different with another lecturer, as shown in the following excerpt:

> Interviewer (I): "What are the challenges for students when learning English?
> Lecturer 3 (L3): "Grammar is always a challenge for my student I think. I just want them to have better foundation for grammatical knowledge. That's why I always include it in my explanation.
>
> Interviewer (I): "What does it mean that grammar is the main important skill to master?"
> Lecturer 3 (L3): "I think so. Besides, reading of course since it gives students many additions to their vocabulary"
>
> Interviewer (I): "What are the next challenges for students after grammar skill based on your perception?"
> Lecturer 3 (L2): "I believe that listening, speaking and reading are the next skills that my students have to learn, to make them easy to understand in mastering language skills. The reason listening is the second skill because if you understand and familiar with the spelling word, it can make you easy to understand what you are talking about."

The researcher determined, based on the interview excerpt with Lecturer 3, that grammar was the most essential skill among others for mastering English in the Islamic economics major. Unlike the other two lecturers, Lecturer three believed that listening, speaking, and reading were the most important abilities for students. He believed

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that if the students understood the common grammar rules, it would be easier for them to comprehend what was being said.

According to the data in the preceding extract, this was inversely proportional to what students anticipated, as speaking was their preferred skill because they believed it was required for administrative and customer service positions. Writing became the second component where students had to use writing as a means to record all their work, while listening and reading became supplementary components. However, professors believed that reading and grammar were the most essential aspects of speaking, writing, and listening.

4.2 Discussion

Based on the outcomes of teacher interviews and student online surveys, it was evident that students' expectations for learning English were inversely proportional to what they received, and they and their teachers held divergent views regarding which language skills were essential for the Department of Islamic Economics. This result was consistent with Alhassan's (2019) conclusion that the majority of instructors needed to learn business terminology. The economic students emphasized the significance of developing oral and aural communication skills. Given that Johns (1981) and Ferris and Tagg (1996a, 1996b) primarily focused on instructors' perspectives and not students' voices in their earliest studies of the field, it was imperative that future research took students' perspectives into account. A requirements analysis determined the most important language skills for a student in ESP, and then the curriculum was designed accordingly (Lorenzo, 2005).

The online survey conducted for this research revealed that the majority of students considered speaking and writing to be the most essential language abilities to develop. This result contradicted the findings of Alhassan (2019), Jackson (2005), and Kim (2006), who discovered that speaking and listening, not writing, skills were viewed as extremely important and necessary for the successful completion of academic and work-related literacy and learning tasks (Conrad & Newberry, 2011; Gray, 2010; Robles, 2012). According to students, writing was the second most important language skill in the academic field (Alhassan, 2019) and the third most demanded skill by economics and business sectors (Doan & Hamid, 2019) after speaking and listening. However, it was well-known that needs analysis and EAP studies, such as those conducted by Ferris (1998), Ferris and Tagg (1996a), and Kim (2006), had predominantly focused on academic writing and reading assignments as opposed to listening and speaking.

A few students believed that other skills contributed more to their academic success than speaking and listening, but the majority of students believed that speaking and writing contributed the most to their academic success. This assertion was supported by the findings of the survey, which indicated how students perceived the relevance of specific skills to their study major. This finding was consistent with Alhassan's (2019) assertion that writing effectively in business courses was essential for learning and

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academic advancement and helped students comprehend and construct subject-matter knowledge. According to the students, the majority of course assignments and responsibilities placed a greater emphasis on speaking and writing than any other activity. Students were required to spend a significant amount of time speaking English outside of the classroom, and it was stressed that they should be able to communicate effectively anywhere. This was supported by research (Daniels, 2013) indicating that non-native English speakers had to practice speaking slowly and distinctly while listening and employing techniques such as repetition and paraphrasing so that audiences could clearly hear the noises and words (Gahungu, 2011). Carter et al. (2007) and Leki (2007) found that students could acquire and develop disciplinary knowledge by reading and interacting with disciplinary materials to complete assigned written tasks.

Oral presentation fluency was a criterion for communication success (Gorkaltseva, et al., 2015) and a significant indicator of language acquisition progress (Chambers, 1997). A high level of proficiency in delivering oral presentations could enable students to share their expert insight, compromise arguments, encourage inquiry, and challenge themselves to achieve greater development.

Furthermore, according to the students, a well-developed English speaking talent would be meaningful when paired with outstanding English writing skills. Speaking and writing were complementary acts (Zamel, 1992) and closely related skills for effective written communication (Sadiku, 2015; Kaya, 2015). According to students, written responsibilities and assignments were fundamental to the essence of study; consequently, a high level of English writing comprehension was much more crucial. Students believed that moderate writing skills would aid them in incorporating the information synthesized from the previous speaking activity into writing assignments or written tasks. Given that they drew on a large number of speaking references for their essay, it was presumed that the students' level of English writing proficiency was sufficient for them to demonstrate a novel and compelling idea or argument in their writing.

In light of the fact that major references in the world of Islamic economics were significantly more frequently written in foreign languages, in this case English, than in Indonesian, the survey revealed that students perceived a clear distinction between their English-speaking and -writing classmates and those who were not proficient in the language. They assumed that those who were proficient in speaking and writing English would be able to improve themselves in order to obtain a higher course grade than those with fewer acquired skills. This view was supported by the argument that affluent pupils would have access to an abundance of information, enabling them to have a deeper understanding of Islamic economics.

Nonetheless, the information gathered through in-depth interviews with lecturers in the Islamic Economic Department revealed an alternative viewpoint. The instructors prioritized reading and grammar over numerous other language skills. The professors argued that grammar and reading comprehension could readily measure students' comprehension of course materials. Students' assimilation of learning inputs could be reflected in the grammatical precision of their arguments or opinions, which could provide

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a clear and comprehensible explanation to both lecturers and peers. Similarly, they paid close attention to vocabulary and syntax, allowing them to convey a strong opinion on study-related issues in an elegant and well-structured manner. Richards and Renandya (2002) contended that grammatical knowledge enabled speakers to use and comprehend English grammatical constructions correctly and boosted their fluency immediately.

Furthermore, the lecturers argued that reading comprehension would benefit the students. This belief stemmed from the notion that oral presentation demonstrated the communication skill of using concrete language to demonstrate reasoning, opinion, or value. Reading was considered not only the foundation of education but also the imperial road to knowledge (Vernon, 1971) and the key to academic success in all disciplines (Strange, 1967). Students with increased proficiency in reading English-written course materials would perform better than their peers. According to the findings of Kaya (2015), students who had received training in reading comprehension had a greater capacity than those who had not. Compared to their peers who had less access to English-written reading materials, these students were able to communicate ideas that were more comprehensive and comprehensible during their studies. Moreover, these typical students were capable of presenting more comprehensive approaches to Islamic economics case studies and issues. This was made possible by the materials, which provided them with priceless knowledge. This was doubtful unless they acquired a high level of English literacy proficiency to gain access to the necessary course materials written in English.

5. Conclusions

This study presented an insightful exploration of the English language skills and expectations of students majoring in Islamic economics. The results indicated a significant gap between students' expectations and the emphasis placed on language skills in their English courses.

The findings revealed that the majority of students considered speaking and writing to be the most essential language skills for their academic success. This perspective was supported by the belief that these skills were pivotal for administrative and customer service positions, as well as for recording their work. In contrast, listening and reading skills were viewed as supplementary.

However, the study also highlighted a stark disparity between students' expectations and the focus of their English courses. Instructors, as revealed in interviews, primarily emphasized grammar and reading comprehension as the key elements of English proficiency. They believed that these skills were critical for understanding course materials and conveying arguments effectively.

The findings of the study underscore the significance of harmonizing course content and curriculum with students' expectations and needs. Despite the evident disparity between student expectations and instructor priorities, it is imperative for edu-

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cational institutions to bridge this gap by offering a curriculum that more effectively corresponds to the distinct language requirements of students specializing in Islamic economics.

The findings also contribute to the broader conversation about English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and the significance of considering students' perspectives in curriculum design. The study underscores the need for a more balanced approach that addresses both the practical, real-world language requirements of students and the academic goals of their programs. Future research in this area should aim to bridge this divide and create more effective ESP programs that cater to the language needs of students while ensuring academic success.

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