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**Designing an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Curriculum  
for Islamic Scholars in Pakistani Institutions: A Framework for  
Academic and Global Engagement**



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**Abstract**

The current work presents an ESP instructional model that would address the linguistic and academic requirements of the Islamic scholars in Pakistan. For today's scholar, fluency in the English language is not just advantageous, but crucial to academic investigation, communication, as well as contributions in the global academic community. Islamic scholars of the traditional university education in Arabic and/or Urdu languages are especially vulnerable to considerable obstacles when attempting to interact within the academic and research settings dominated by English. For this reason, this particular study aims to fill this gap through undertaking a comprehensive needs analysis and an evaluation of the practices currently in use when using English language teaching in the Islamic institutions. The recommended curriculum complement including Islamic studies and academic skills in writing research and translating Islamic literature. Its objective is to prepare the Islamic scholars in terms of language essential to write researches and has capability to join the international society and the world talks about Islamic knowledge. Thus, the article addresses questions related to particular language, academic, and professional programs of these scholars and provides practical implications to facilitate the effective implementation of this curriculum for Islamic schooling in Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Designing, English, Specific Purposes, Islamic Scholars Institutions: Academic and Global Engagement

**Introduction**

Education in Islam has strong roots in Pakistan, with the \*madaris\*, or Islamic seminary playing the main role of dissemination of Islamic knowledge of the Quran, Hadith, and Fiqh. Such institutions have in the past acted as great centres of Islamic learning and have produced students who have a sound knowledge of Islamic law. However, in the recent years as the global academic environment has shifted to a higher gear, English has taken the leading role as the medium of academic communication and as a medium of knowledge sharing. Knowledge of English has become paramount for scholars in many disciplines, in order to review copious current literature, cooperate, and engage in discussions with colleagues around the

world.

At a linguistic level, scholars in Pakistan are particularly constrained in their choice of religious discourse. Pursuing a traditional education in most instances represents an instruction given in Arabic and Urdu; hence, they absorb deep and vast knowledge of Islamic studies and related sciences but leave them ill-prepared to perform according to present academic requirements or effectively participate in the global academic society where English is the medium of communication. Therefore, development of an ESP programme targeted for the academic and professional context of Islamic scholars in Pakistani contexts becomes highly imperative. An ideal curriculum in a school that prepares students for university would one that teaches English language to be used in research, writing academic papers, translating Arabic Islamic texts, and for interaction with peers in international academic forums and conferences.

This article looks at the justification for developing a special ESP curriculum for Islamic scholars. It analyses the mismatch between the nature of the traditional Islamic school and the need to thrive in a current academic world that requires English fluency. Thus, based on the analysis of the identified theoretical frameworks in ESP and needs analysis provided in the present study, the detailed curricular plan for integrating Islamic content with the practical development of the aforementioned linguistic competencies is outlined. Based on the above highlighted challenges the article also prescribes ways of putting this curriculum into practice taking into consideration the Pakistan's Islamic educational institutions and also ways of making this strategy sustainable.

## **Literature Review**

### **ESP Theories and Models**

ESP hence kicked in as a sub specialty of language teaching in so far as teaching and learning of English is concerned as a result of having discriminating learners with specific requirements of language based on certain academic, professional or vocational needs. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), ESP is focused on the needs of the learners and the programs are usually organized with regards to the professions or course subjects. Explaining about the ESP curriculum in the context of the Islamic scholars, the academic English that will be taught in the context will focus

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on the ESP context of Islamic scholars encompassing religious studies, translation of religious text and interaction with the scholars of the world.

The theories of ESP insist on the contextual and functional nature of language learning. ESP courses are based on real aim and practice of the learners, and that is why they are quite different from standard practising of the English language. For academicians, the curriculum would concern improving competencies in reading academic articles, writing papers, translating Islamic texts and engaging in discussions and conferences. This is in agreement with Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) who opine that needs analysis is core business in ESP. They postulate that for an ESP program to be successful there is need for understand learners' linguistic, academic and professional context. Conducting needs analysis is therefore central to the development of an ESP Curriculum which as mentioned earlier simulates language learning with the tasks that Islamic scholars must accomplish in their professional or academic domains.

ESP, therefore, is not about teaching English per say but to empowering learners to use English effectively in their areas of specialization. For Islamic scholars, it might be mastering how to read research work that is written in English language, presenting ideas before an international audience and how to accurately, express some tenets of the religion from Arabic into English. Islamic scholars are engaged in the intersection of religious knowledge and academic pursuit; their language requirements are even more specialized, and, thus, the language curriculum, the focus of this study, must be both demanding and informed by context.

### **Current Practices in English Language Teaching in Islamic Educational Institutions**

Described by many working in \*madaris\* (seminaries) and Islamic universities across Pakistan, English is by and large relegated as the second language. The major concern often found in these institutions is Arabic and Urdu, two languages that form the basis of the study of Islam. Arabic is common for passages like the Qur'an, Hadith and \*fiqh\* which means Islamic jurisprudence while on the other hand Urdu is easy for religious subjects as a medium of instruction.

English if taught is usually only presented as simple language academicians or first – level communicative competence rather than as higher language/academic or

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business for going global. This limited emphasis placed on English in Islamic educational forums is a problem for scholastic minded Islamic scholars who wish to compete competitively in the worldwide community or to go abroad for postgraduate studies. Many scholars, particularly those of non-English-speaking origins, may find themselves in this position because English has become the medium of instruction in academic circles and various professions, and they are unable to grasp or use latest literature in their areas of specialization, cannot get their articles published in international journals, or are unable to present papers in various academic conferences.

Research comparing the current teaching of languages in the \*madaris\* of Pakistan to the most basic contemporary perception of academic language proficiency identifies a significant mismatch between the two (Rahman, 2008). Scholars can sometimes speak and understand Arabic and Urdu but they lack proficiency in English studying skills especially comprehension of written material at university level. This is regrettable because a significant number of outputs in Islamic studies along with present day research is available in English. The scholars can barely apply such knowledge or productively participate in the generation of such knowledge if they have poor English skills.

Further, scholars experience difficulties as they are translating from religious language to English language. Lately, I have developed an interesting idea of translating socio-cultural topic from Islamic periodize texts cannot be an easy task it has been done by specialists in translation but rather a complicated task when the expertise in both the source and target language is needed. This because academician do not have the right English training and as such they have difficulties in translating the religious scriptures to accurately and meaning that can be understood by people from all over the world.

Increased awareness of these concerns has resulted in a demand for the linkage of English language teaching to Islamic education. If English language skills are introduced into the educational curriculum of Islamic institutions in a more systematic and focused manner then scholars stand better chance to meet challenges that come with international academic experience. ESP curriculum linking translated Islamic texts with practical development of academic English language would assist in bridging the gap between conventional Islamic education and the contemporary global

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academic demands in order to facilitate better participation of Islamic scholars in international scholarship.

## **Challenges Faced by Islamic Scholars in Learning English**

The following and final section briefly identifies practical and learnable problems Pakistani Islamic scholars encounter in learning English and its major sources of problems rooted in institutional, cultural, and pedagogy realms. Highly relevant to this issue is the lack of sufficient stock of quality language teachers for learning foreign languages. Even in many of the Islamic schools there is still a lot of emphasis on Arabic for religious purposes and Urdu to cater for regional needs. Therefore, English Language instruction when offered is barely sufficient for the academic /professional requirement of scholars; as the English as Second Language taught, stresses on abilities at lower levels than the ones required in scholarly discourse.

Moreover, there is a fair amount of opposition to the introduction of English in religious instruction too. Most scholars and educators consider English as a secular language meaning that it defies religious stance; the language bears influences from the Western world can be felt to hinder the Islamic context of their learning. This perception is a reason for people to avoid using English as a language medium in their academic interaction especially when it comes to religious practices. This cultural barrier produces an inhibition in knowing English completely that restricts the students of Islamic scholars for their academic development, as well as their communication with the global world.

Another area of difficulty is that there are few ESP programmes for Islamic scholars in particular. This paper makes the argument that the general English language courses available in most Islamic institutions fail to meet the specific language and academic needs of these scholars. Consequently, most learners are faced with challenges of mastering the specialized language skills required in their academic work, researching, translating classic works and engaging in international scholarly interactions. This lack of access to specific instruction in language leads scholars to insufficient or inappropriate levels of practical competence that are desirable in academia and workplace situations when interacting with the wide world.

## **Needs Analysis**

Before beginning construction of the ESP curriculum, it is pertinent to conduct a

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needs analysis that can act as a map in the overall development of the ESP curriculum to meet the Islamic scholars linguistic and professional needs. When these characteristics or needs of these scholars have been defined, what is taught becomes relevant and empowering on the language approach they will use in religious and academic realms.

## **Linguistic Needs**

Islamic scholars require proficiency in several key areas of English, each of which is critical to their academic and professional success:

### **Reading Skills**

Comprehending educational documents in English is an important academic competency for Islamic academics who require to analyze academic works, journals, and books as well. Because of this, scholars need to be able to understand the findings of the research, challenge the theories, and analyze the argument of a work. This skill is especially relevant for scholars who interested in the further extension of knowledge about Islamic scholarship of the majority of which is published in English.

### **Writing Skills**

Academic writing has been recognized as a kind of language use critical to any scholar in the contemporary world in general and Islamic scholars in particular who want to participate in the international community of scholars. Academic authors have to write in English research papers, journal articles as well as for conferences and other presentation formats with proper academic style. This involves organizing arguments coherently, presenting study results clearly and formatting references in the manner expected on an academic context. These skills fosters enable scholars to write and put out their publication in English speaking journals and participate in international academic discourse.

### **Listening and Speaking Skills**

Muslim scholars have to engage in discourse, presentations, debates within the framework of conferences, seminars that are conducted in English. This entails listening skills in English when following classes and presentations and consequently the capability to engage in scholarly discussions withvention with scholars whose first language is not English. The ability in oral English is also crucial during social connections, when presenting the outcomes of the research in conferences or when

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responding to the inquiries for other academic conferences that create the basis for the international academic recognition.

## **4. Translation Skills**

There are many Islamic scholars who spend their time with the translation of the original Arabic Islamic texts to English. This is a specialized process which therefore demands expertise in both languages of the two individuals involved in the interaction. Researchers have to be able to report the message and the spirit of religious writings together with the theology context professionally and without distorting the original sense of the message. This led me to conclude that the knowledge of making correct translations is central to place an Islamic scholarship in a position where it stands to be read and understood by a wider member of English readership and thus to contribute to the discourse of present-day Islamic studies.

## **Professional Needs**

In addition, to language skills, Islamic scholars will also have other professional requirements that will correlate with their academic and religious profession. These include:

### **1. Research Collaboration**

Islamic scholars spend a lot of their time conducting researches in collaboration with scholars from various parts of the world. Fluency in both written and oral English is important in these collaborations in that, they easily involve use of emails, video conferences, and joint writing of research articles. The potential to handle these professional interactions in English allows scholars to become proponents of global collaborative research inquiries.

### **2. Conference Participation**

I believe that attending international conferences is an organic practice in the academic process: an author can share his ideas and findings, discuss recent trends, and interact with peers. As most academic conferences are conducted in English, Islamic scholars must be able to explain their research outcomes, defend them under questioning as well as engage in further discussions with other people from around the world. Communication within these contexts improves their recognition and impact in worldwide academical networks.

### **3. Publishing in Academic Journals**



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To be part of the global context of academic production Islamic scholars are required to write in internationally accredited English language journals. This involves a high degree of academic writing, skills in troubleshooting, skills in responding to editor's and reviewer's comments, and skills in writing according to the journal's standard. English language is quite important because only being published in international journals allows acquiring an international recognition and the development of the Islamic sciences.

## **Curriculum Design**

The presented curriculum of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) is going to prepare the Islamic scholars for the successful perspective performing in the global academic community while keeping the Islamic studies focus. This curriculum superimposes Islamic content on the linguistic and professional specifications as identified in the needs analysis while providing the overall structure to satisfy the scholarly and practical Islamic requirements as a scholar in the contemporary academic environment.

## **Structure of the ESP Curriculum**

The content of the lessons will be divided into a set of smaller, progressively complicated sections known as 'Modules.' The formal language of academic English of these modules would empower the Islamic scholars to effectively take part in international scholarly discourse, research and in an accurate and culturally sensitive translation of Islam.

### **1. Reading Module**

This particular module shall focus on the improvement of the scholars' competence to read and understand academic texts in English particularly the religious studies journals, scholarly books and research papers. Key actions pertaining to the course content which include skimming and scanning as well as critical reading in order to evaluate arguments and interpret research findings will be in practice by learners. Particular emphasis will be placed on the task of explaining complicated second language used in academic writings, unfamiliar words, and phrases as well as references to other scholarly works. The practices in the module will also include exercises in identifying arguments, evaluating evidence and understanding the structure of academic texts which is important to scholars who require research in

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their area of specialization.

## **2. Writing Module**

The writing module is intended on refining the learners' skills in developing coherent and structured academic writing. This module will also address the practices of formal writing as well as research writing practices, such as writing research papers, abstracts, research papers, conference presentations and book reviews. Learners will exercise more concern in the way they arrange their arguments, the manner that they present research data and results and most importantly how they cite references. It will also focus on the issue of how to write clearly and coherently ensuring that learners present complicated ideas in a simple manner. Essays and research papers will be written on the subjects connected with the Islam, this way the learners will be able to write term papers and student's articles within the scope of their subject of study while being informed about the requirements of the academic English.

## **3. Speaking and Listening Module**

This module aims at enhancing learner's speaking and listening competency in academic domain particularly in contexts such as conferences seminars and discourses. Islamic scholars will be relieved in their opportunities to speak in English, to post-emphasise their results, and to discuss with colleagues. Special focus will be made on the answering of questions, organization of ideas in the actual discussion, and handling of discussions with scholars in other languages. Through facility with the kind of language used in academic lectures, conference presentations and scholarly debates, listening abilities will have been developed in learners for comprehending spoken English in formal academic situations. Some of the assessments assigned in this module include a facsimile of conference presentations or panel discussions.

## **4. Translation Module**

The translation module is an important component of this venture and will embrace the expertise of translating classical Islamic texts from Arabic to English. Academics will perform the task of translating several Islamic sources, including the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical interpretations, so that the meanings are not only scholarly and accurate but also comprehensible to non-Arabic speaking readers. This module will also address issues to do with the difficulties of including and excluding meaning,

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with special focus on the formal theological and cultural content, the need to retain religious meaning while at the same time localizing the text for the intended audience in terms of both language and culture. The aim is to help scholars to provide as accurate translations as possible to ensure an English-speaking scholar or reader to get as close as possible to the original Arabic text.

## **Integration of Islamic Content**

In this ESP curriculum, a significant element in English teaching is the Interconnection between Islamic education and ESP teaching. The curriculum will replace conventional teaching aids by the Quran and other Islamic literature, as well as relevant research findings, as the main teaching tools. For instance, learners will read English translations Qur' an, Hadith, and other traditional Islamic texts. Besides advancing in the use of language, it also helps scholars gain further insight into Islamic material while reading it in English.

There will be compositions based on Islamic themes such as articles on Tafsir , Islamic law or Hadith . These assignments will afford scholars an appropriate chance to hone their writing and thesis formulation skills when writing the papers, with an additional helpful feature of the assignments – the subjects selected will be those core to scholars' academic and religious educations. Similarly with speaking activities, learners will present on Islamic research at academic conferences. This dual approach makes sure that scholars are not only practicing English but practicing English in as far as it is applicable to their scholarly or Colportage religious productions.

## **Implementation and Challenges**

As much as the proposed curriculum was found to cover all the aspects of need in preparing Islamic scholars, ensuring that all the elements in the curriculum when implemented is agreed on would need the support of other fields. The following is a breakdown of the process of realizing this curriculum together with the risks that are likely to be encountered.

## **Teacher Training**

The first and perhaps the most important strands, which need to be executed when attempting at implementing this curriculum is adequate preparation among the teachers. It is expected that teachers will need both EFL and or ELT and knowledge

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and understanding of Islamic studies to teach the subjects. It is this combination of competencies which is crucial for supporting learners' learning related to both language proficiency and the religious content of texts. Teacher education programs will need to be redesigned, in order to equip teachers with strategies for incorporating English as the medium of instruction for, alongside, and within the context of the Islamic texts and scholarly pursuits.

### **Curriculum Development**

Cooperation with ESP specialists will be also crucial while defining the specific curriculum and relevant set of the educational materials at the Islamic educational institution. Many of the centres which Islamic universities, \*madaris\* and other related educational bodies are associated will require consultation with language experts to ensure that, the syllabi are relevant to the needs of Islamic Scholars and at the same time meeting the international academic standards. With the help of this collaboration, care shall also be taken that the curriculum is conducive to being adopted to different institutions and setting in Pakistan.

### **Pilot Programs**

Before applying the curriculums at the large scale, certain experimentations should be carried out in a few selected institutions of Islamic studies. These pilot programs will enable the educators to implement the curriculum as begins to be developed in real context featuring Learners and Educators together with other stakeholders cooperating to make appropriate adjustments to the structure, content, and methods of delivery of the formulated courses. This way, a number of existing obstacles to the main implementation of the curriculum could become apparent from the pilot programs alone, which would then still remain the easy part as the next phase would be to find solutions to the barriers to piloting the curriculum on a wider basis.

### **Challenges and Strategies**

#### **Resistance to English in Religious Education**

Hussin (2003) argues that one of the major problem areas facing the current efforts to incorporate English into Islamic education is the likelihood of opposition that may emanate from scholars/educational institutions which regard English as secular language which conflicts with Islamic teachings. This opposition is due to fear that the introduction of English into religious curricula may dilute the Islamic education

being provided, or decrease the relevance of Arabic and Urdu languages, which have been widely used in knowledge Islam in Pakistan.

**Strategy**

In order to solve this problem, one needs to change the paradigm one more time and look at English as a tool that adds value and help spread Islamic knowledge to a wider audience. Institutions should increase awareness of the increasing significance of English in the global academic environment and in engaging with the global literature, contributing Intellectual discussions, and consequently promoting Islamic sciences to the global academic community. Thus, showing how English can help Islamic scholars communicate in terms referenceable to broader academic communities and actively participate in theoretic discussions of Islamic studies, a number of institutions can use adpoe-forcive arguments to persuade the target students. Further, successful models of A'iumma using English appropriately in their academic careers could be used in order to promote the acceptance.

**Lack of Qualified Teachers**

The qualifying criteria for being an ESP teacher has already been defined earlier but another problem which threatens the successful implementation of an ESP curriculum is lack of teachers who are qualified both in English and Islamic studies. The teaching of such a curriculum needs professionals who understand the English language as a subject together with Islamic learning. However, there might be a scarcity of qualified human resources having the capability to teach both disciplines hence such constraints may be most conspicuous in the more conventional Islamic universities.

**Strategy**

To this end, institutions should fund ESP teacher training capacity building programs to produce teachers with the potentiality to teach the ESP curriculum. Such training courses should concentrate on improving their English language skills of teachers trained in Islamic studies while at the same time familiarizing teachers in English language with Islamic content. It is possible to develop such programmes with the support of universities and teacher training colleges locally and internationally. Also, the employers can motivate the candidates can motivate more teachers to gain the dual certification in both English and Islamic studies by providing them benefits like tuition reimbursement, staff development, or promotion opportunity.

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## **Limited Resources for Curriculum Implementation**

A majority of the Islamic schools and especially the \*madaris\* in the rural or in areas with less funding probably lack the materials or the capital to facilitate the implementation of a proper ESP course. These institutions could struggle with reaching for appropriate contemporary study materials, employing qualified teachers, as well as with preparing the correct technical support for modern language learning, for example, access to scientific journals or tutorials.

## **Strategy**

These is where institutions can often struggle to find the necessary resources to support their language learning and educational institutions; however, funding can be received from governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, and educational charities that support the learning of languages and general education. Most of the grants that exist for education are usually given out by the various government ministries of education, religious bodies and international organizations such as the British council or the UNESCO. Institutions can also search for collaboration with Universities and NGOs for curriculum development or language teaching in order to get the professional know-how. To understand how English can be incorporated for teaching and learning, collaboration can be made with other international institutions that offer Islamic education and those which have conditioned the incorporation of English in their systems can be used as models for emulation at the local level.

## **Conclusion**

The ESP curriculum under proposed for Islamic scholars in Pakistan is thus a creative approach to the present linguistic, academic, and professional contexts of scholars working in a transnational academic world. The integrated Islamic content with English language helps the curriculum to prepare scholars to achieve skills in research, translation of Arabic text of Islamic Classics and to be active participants in International Inter Religious Dialogue. It not only helps improves their language skills but also helps them to become positive change makers within the Islamic as well as the international academia.

However, despite some significant difficulties as potential barriers to the implementation of this curriculum, they are not fatal, and concern such points as the

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resistance to the inclusion of English into religious education, the shortage of qualified teachers, and the problem of a lack of resources in some schools and colleges. In fact, some of the barriers are such as through well designed teacher training programs, targeted resource development and pilot testing the barriers can easily be overcome especially through developing some special testing programs in selected institutions. However, the awareness among scholars of the uses of English in enriching ones' academic circle and extra-virtuosity of Islam's scholarship through the language could gradually modify the attitude.

Thus, the use of this ESP curriculum can also greatly contribute to improvement of the academic and, consequently, the profession of Islamic scholars in Pakistan. The curriculum prepares them for research and international collaboration and guarantees that their voices, in Islamic studies specifically, are embraced, heard, and valued in English speaking academic space. For this reason this curriculum is crucial on the road toward fulfilling the agenda of connecting between classical education of Islam and the advanced demands of the academic discourse of today, thus creating a more open window towards the global world for Muslims scholars of Pakistan to improve their academic achievements.

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