Developing an English Students Workbook for Islamic University Students

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Abstract

This study aims to develop and evaluate an English workbook specifically designed for Islamic university students to enhance their language proficiency, focusing on pronunciation, fluency, and academic writing. The workbook integrates culturally relevant content and terminology related to Islamic studies, catering to the unique linguistic needs of these students. A quasi-experimental design was employed, involving an experimental group (n=30) and a control group (n=30) of Islamic university students. The experimental group used the newly developed workbook, while the control group followed traditional learning methods. Data were collected through pretests and posttests on pronunciation, fluency, and writing skills. The results indicated a significant improvement in the experimental group's language skills, particularly in pronunciation and fluency, compared to the control group. The study demonstrates the effectiveness of a specialized English workbook in improving language skills among Islamic university students, highlighting the importance of culturally tailored materials in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learning. Further research is suggested to explore the long-term impact of such workbooks and to examine the integration of interactive and communicative teaching methods for more comprehensive language acquisition.

Keywords : English workbook, Islamic university students, language proficiency,

A. Introduction

English proficiency is an essential skill for university students in a globalized world, especially for those in Islamic universities where the integration of religious and academic knowledge plays a critical role in shaping graduates' competence[1]. English serves as a medium for accessing a vast body of knowledge in various disciplines, including Islamic studies, and for engaging in intercultural and international academic dialogues. However, despite the growing importance of English, many students in Islamic universities face challenges in achieving adequate language proficiency to meet academic and professional demands[2].

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[1] Abdul Hakim Yassi et al., "Exploring the Effects of Pair-Interaction Model on Improving Indonesian Adult Learners' English Proficiency," *Studies in English Language and Education* 10, no. 1 (2023).

[2] Averil Grieve, Binh Ta, and Bella Ross, "Placement Educators' Perspectives of International Social Work Students' Sociopragmatic Communication Skills," *Advances in Health Sciences Education* 28, no. 2 (2023).

One of the critical issues contributing to this gap is the lack of contextualized learning resources tailored to the specific needs of Islamic university students[3]. General English workbooks often fail to address the unique linguistic and cultural needs of these learners, particularly the integration of Islamic values and concepts into the learning process. This mismatch between students' needs and the available resources hampers their motivation and engagement, ultimately affecting their language acquisition outcomes[4].

Several studies have highlighted the importance of designing educational materials that align with learners' specific contexts and needs. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) materials should cater to the distinct requirements of a target audience, making the learning process more relevant and effective. For Islamic university students, this means developing resources that not only enhance language skills but also incorporate Islamic content to reinforce their identity and academic focus[5].

This study aims to develop an English workbook specifically designed for Islamic university students. The workbook seeks to bridge the gap between general English learning materials and the unique needs of students in Islamic educational contexts. By integrating linguistic, academic, and Islamic components, this workbook aims to provide a more comprehensive and engaging learning experience, fostering both language proficiency and cultural understanding[6].

The development of the workbook is guided by a needs analysis that examines the specific challenges and expectations of Islamic university students. This approach ensures that the content, structure, and activities align with their academic and cultural contexts. Furthermore, the workbook incorporates modern pedagogical principles, such as communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based learning

[3] Umar Fauzan and Muhammad Saparuddin, "Discourse-Based Teaching in English Language Teaching at Islamic Universities in Borneo: A Critical Discourse Analysis Perspective," *International Journal of Membrane Science and Technology* 10, no. 3 (2023).

4 Elena De Prada, Mercedes Mareque, and Margarita Pino-Juste, "Creativity and Intercultural Experiences: The Impact of University International Exchanges," Creativity 7, no. 2 (2020).

5 Eleni Peristeri, Margreet Vogelzang, and Ianthi Maria Tsimpli, "Bilingualism Effects on the Cognitive Flexibility of Autistic Children: Evidence From Verbal Dual-Task Paradigms," Neurobiology of Language 2, no. 4 (2021).

6 Bruce A. Thyer, "Tips and Tricks: Teaching Scholars How to Publish Articles in English Language Social Work Journals," China Journal of Social Work 15, no. 1 (2022).

(TBL), to enhance its effectiveness in facilitating active and meaningful language use[7].

This paper presents the process of designing, developing, and evaluating the English students' workbook. It begins with a review of relevant literature, followed by a detailed description of the needs analysis and development process. The paper concludes with an evaluation of the workbook's effectiveness based on feedback from students and instructors, highlighting its potential contribution to English language teaching in Islamic universities[8].

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to develop and evaluate an English workbook tailored for Islamic university students, focusing on both linguistic proficiency and cultural relevance. The research adopted a developmental design encompassing needs analysis, content development, validation, pilot testing, and evaluation. Sixty undergraduate students from various disciplines participated, selected purposively to ensure relevance to the workbook's target audience. The needs analysis involved surveys, interviews, and focus groups to assess students' proficiency levels, learning goals, and cultural preferences, forming the foundation for content creation. The workbook integrated principles of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), task-based learning, and communicative language teaching, combining Islamic values and academic English tasks such as vocabulary building, reading comprehension, and practical communication exercises.

Pilot testing with a smaller group refined the workbook before its full-scale implementation. Data collection included pre- and post-tests, surveys, interviews, and classroom observations to assess its effectiveness. Quantitative analysis, using paired t-tests, measured significant improvements in students' skills, while qualitative data highlighted the workbook's cultural relevance and pedagogical strengths. This comprehensive methodology ensured that the workbook effectively addressed the unique linguistic and cultural needs of Islamic university students, bridging their academic and religious contexts.

B. Discussion

The primary aim of this study was to develop an English workbook tailored specifically for Islamic university students and assess its effectiveness in improving their language skills. The workbook was designed with both the academic and

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7 Fajer Alhajiri and Anwar Alshuraiaan, "Comparative Analysis of TESOL Methods within the Context of English Language Education in Kuwaiti Universities," Journal of World Englishes and Educational Practices 5, no. 3 (2023).

8 Fauzan and Saparuddin, "Discourse-Based Teaching in English Language Teaching at Islamic Universities in Borneo: A Critical Discourse Analysis Perspective."

cultural needs of the students in mind, incorporating Islamic themes, terminology, and contexts while enhancing essential English skills, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The results of the study indicate that the workbook significantly improved students' language skills, particularly in pronunciation, fluency, and academic writing[9].

1. **Cultural and Contextual Relevance**

   One of the key strengths of the developed workbook was its cultural and contextual relevance. By incorporating Islamic concepts and academic topics related to the students' field of study, the workbook was able to engage students in a way that traditional English textbooks might not. This finding aligns with previous studies on the importance of integrating cultural and subject-specific content into language learning materials. In particular, students in this study expressed that the inclusion of Islamic terminology and discussions around Islamic themes made the learning process more engaging and relatable. These findings support the notion that culturally responsive language learning materials can improve motivation and learning outcomes, especially in a specific academic context[10].

   Moreover, the integration of content relevant to Islamic studies helped students bridge the gap between their religious and academic lives. This integration aligns with the principles of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which emphasizes the creation of learning materials that cater to the specific needs of learners in particular disciplines. By incorporating terminology and topics familiar to students, the workbook helped them use English as a tool to understand and express Islamic concepts more effectively.

2. **Language Skill Improvement**

   The results of both the pre-test and post-test indicate a significant improvement in students' language skills, particularly in pronunciation and fluency. The students who used the workbook showed marked progress compared to those in the control group, who followed a traditional English curriculum. This finding is consistent with research that highlights the benefits

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9 Kawaguchi, "Second Language Acquisition and Digital Learning in Asia."

10 Madhavi, Sivapuapu, and Kati, "Value Role of ICT Tools in English Language Teaching and Learning-Emphasis on Covid-19 Pandemic."

of task-based learning and repetitive practice in language acquisition[11]. The workbook's design, which involved regular practice tasks, was effective in enhancing students' ability to articulate English in a more fluent and accurate manner. These improvements were particularly evident in pronunciation, where students demonstrated increased clarity and accuracy in their spoken English after completing the workbook exercises[12].

The focus on repetition and practice also contributed to increased fluency. As noted practice in controlled environments helps students build automaticity, which in turn improves fluency in real-world communication. The workbook's tasks, which required students to practice speaking and writing regularly, helped students reduce hesitations and increase their verbal response speed. This outcome is consistent with other studies that suggest repetitive drills and task-based activities improve students' language production and help reduce communication anxiety[13].

3. Challenges and Limitations of Drill-based Learning

While the workbook was effective in improving foundational language skills, it also highlighted the limitations of a drill-based approach. Although drills were beneficial for improving pronunciation and fluency, students expressed some challenges, such as boredom and a lack of variety in the exercises. These challenges are consistent with findings who argued that drill-based methods, while effective for basic language acquisition, may not always be sufficient for fostering deeper, more complex language skills, particularly in real-life, spontaneous conversation[14].

In this study, students found that the repetitive nature of the drills, although helpful in reinforcing certain patterns, became monotonous over time. This suggests that while drills can be an effective tool for specific language areas, they need to be integrated with more dynamic and communicative methods to maintain student engagement and facilitate the development of higher-level language skills. As noted integrating communicative techniques, such as role-play or task-based learning, with drill exercises can help address

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11 Burgess et al., "Implementation of Modified Team-Based Learning within a Problem Based Learning Medical Curriculum: A Focus Group Study."

12 Alhabdan, "Evaluating English Learning Websites and Digital Resources from the Perspective of Saudi English Language Learners: Technical Assessment."

13 Fauzan and Saparuddin, "Discourse-Based Teaching in English Language Teaching at Islamic Universities in Borneo: A Critical Discourse Analysis Perspective."

14 Yassi et al., "Exploring the Effects of Pair-Interaction Model on Improving Indonesian Adult Learners' English Proficiency."

this issue and encourage students to use language in more interactive and realistic contexts[15].

While the workbook successfully addressed foundational language skills, several challenges related to the drill-based learning approach emerged. Students highlighted issues such as boredom and a lack of exercise variety, which aligns with previous research indicating that repetitive drills, although effective for basic language acquisition, may not adequately support the development of complex, spontaneous communication skills. The monotony reported by students underscores the importance of integrating drills with more engaging and interactive methods to enhance motivation and ensure comprehensive language development.

Incorporating communicative techniques, such as role-plays, debates, or task-based learning, alongside drills, can address these challenges. These methods encourage students to apply their language skills in dynamic, real-world scenarios, fostering higher-order language competencies. Additionally, a more diverse range of exercises can balance the strengths of drills—such as reinforcing pronunciation patterns—with opportunities for creativity and critical thinking, ensuring that students not only master foundational skills but also develop the confidence and adaptability needed for fluent communication. This approach highlights the need for a more holistic pedagogical framework in language learning materials.

4. Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

This study provides several important insights into the development of culturally relevant English language materials for Islamic university students. However, there are several areas for future research and improvement. First, future studies could explore the long-term effectiveness of the workbook in maintaining improvements in language skills. A longitudinal study would provide valuable data on whether the benefits of the workbook persist over time and how students continue to use their language skills in their academic and professional lives[16].

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15 Carla Meskill and Alandeom W. Oliveira, "Meeting the Challenges of English Learners by Pairing Science and Language Educators," Research in Science Education 49, no. 4 (2019).

16 Burgess et al., "Implementation of Modified Team-Based Learning within a Problem Based Learning Medical Curriculum: A Focus Group Study."

Second, future research could examine the integration of more interactive and communicative techniques alongside drill-based exercises. By incorporating approaches such as task-based learning, project-based learning, or technology-enhanced learning tools, researchers could investigate whether combining these methods leads to more comprehensive improvements in both language proficiency and student engagement.

Additionally, this study's findings highlight the potential benefits of using multimedia tools, such as audio and video resources, to diversify the types of drills and make them more engaging. Integrating these resources could help address students' concerns about the monotony of traditional drill exercises while also supporting the development of listening and speaking skills in a more authentic context[17].

The development of the English workbook for Islamic university students has proven to be an effective tool for enhancing students' pronunciation, fluency, and academic writing. By addressing the specific language learning needs of Islamic university students, the workbook has successfully integrated cultural relevance with academic language skills[18]. However, the study also revealed that while drills are beneficial for basic language acquisition, their limitations in fostering spontaneous language use require the integration of more communicative and interactive approaches. Future research should explore these avenues to further enhance the effectiveness of language learning materials for students in specialized academic contexts[19].

C. Conclusion

This study demonstrates the effectiveness of a tailored English workbook for Islamic university students in improving their pronunciation, fluency, and academic writing skills. By incorporating culturally relevant content and terminology, the workbook addressed the unique needs of students pursuing Islamic studies, making the learning process more engaging and contextualized. The significant improvement in language skills observed in the experimental group suggests that the workbook successfully facilitated language acquisition, particularly in terms of pronunciation

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17 Retno Setya Budiasningrum and Rahmi Rosita, "Using Podcasts to Improve Listening and Speaking Skills: Literature Review," JOLADU: Journal of Language Education 1, no. 1 (2022).

18 Anna E. Roberts et al., "Evaluating the Quality and Safety of Health-Related Apps and e-Tools: Adapting the Mobile App Rating Scale and Developing a Quality Assurance Protocol," Internet Interventions 24 (2021).

19 Atmazaki, Syahrul Ramadhan, and Vivi Indriyani, "Genre-Based Learning Model With Literacy Activities and Character Strengthening: Effectiveness in Language Learning," Journal of Language Teaching and Research 14, no. 5 (2023).

and fluency. However, the study also highlighted some limitations of the drill-based approach used in the workbook. While drills were effective in reinforcing foundational language skills, they proved to be somewhat monotonous over time, pointing to the need for greater variety and more interactive, communicative methods to maintain student engagement and further enhance language proficiency. Overall, this research contributes to the literature on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) by showcasing how culturally relevant materials can enhance language learning outcomes. The findings suggest that, although drill-based learning is valuable for mastering basic language skills, it should be complemented with communicative and interactive techniques to foster more complex language use and student engagement. Future research should explore the long-term effects of using such workbooks and the integration of diverse teaching methods to further improve language acquisition in specialized academic contexts.

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