The Need to Develop English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Reading Syllabus for Students of Islamic Education Department – Islamic Higher Education Institution

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Abstract

The teaching of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) has been criticized for having some negative impacts on marginalization of local languages, infiltration of English (Western) culture, and the spread of Christianity. For this reason, in Islamic institutions especially for students of Islamic Education Department (IED), English should be taught by incorporating Islamic values. This can be done by teaching English as English for Specific Purposes (ESP). This research is an educational Research and Development (R and D) aimed at developing an ESP reading syllabus for students of IED. The research was conducted in three phases: exploration phase, model development phase, and model testing phase. In the exploration phase, a descriptive research was conducted to describe the existence and quality of the present syllabus. During the model development phase, the draft of ESP reading syllabus was developed, revised, and tried out. In the model testing phase, the draft was experimentally tested to see its effectiveness in developing the students' reading comprehension skill.   The experiment proved that the students taught using the reading materials taken from the designed syllabus performed better in reading comprehension test compared to the students who were taught using the materials taken from the present syllabus.

Keywords: ESP, Islamic education, reading syllabus, English matriculation

Introduction

Language and culture are inseparable. Language is considered to be the product and representation of a culture. Byram (1991) claims that language is not simply a reflector of an objective cultural reality but also an integral part of that reality through which other parts are shaped and interpreted. This close relationship between language and culture has brought an effect to the teaching or learning of a language. It is claimed that learning a foreign language also means learning the culture of the language. According to Byram (1991) children acquire culture when they acquire the language. Consequently, to teach a language means to teach the culture.

The influence of culture in the teaching of language is also supported by other experts such as Valdes (1986) who claims that it is impossible to teach a language without teaching the cultural contents and Kramsch (1993) who perceives that teaching a language means teaching its culture.

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So influential is the role of culture in the teaching and learning of a language that its competence obviously determines the ability to use the target language. For this reason intercultural competence is one of the competences in communicative competence (Martinez-Flor&Uso-Juan, 2006). This means that the mastery of the target language culture is, to a certain extent, the same importance as the other four language skills: speaking, writing, listening, and reading. However, other educators suggest to disconnect a language from its culture when it is learned as an international language such as English. Gonzales (1995) and MacKay (2002) argue that non-native learners of a language may not need to internalize the norms and values of the native language of the learned language especially when the language is an international language such as English. This might be due to the fact that as an international language English will be used internationally and not related to the specific culture such as the U.S. or the U.K.

The divisions of culture proposed by Cortazzi& Jin (1999) seem to be appropriate here to represent the relationship between culture and language learning and teaching. They classify culture associated with a language as source culture, target culture, and international culture. Source culture refers to the culture of the language learners, target culture refers to the culture of the target language, and international culture refers to the culture of the nations that use the language as an international language. In line with this idea, Martines-Flor&Uso-Juan(2006) point out that learning a second language interrelates learners' culture (source culture) and the target culture.

Bearing all these in mind, learning English as a second or foreign language will certainly have effect on the culture of the learners. This is as analogized by Ha (2008, p. 27) in commenting the language as a social practice that "the more we use a language, the more familiar it becomes, and the more familiar it becomes the more likely it turns into a habit. This means that when it becomes a habit it will be culturally part of the learners."

The teaching of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) has gained an ultimate achievement. The term TESOL itself has become an independent field of study which interest considerable numbers of teachers and students all over the world. However, its success is not without suspicion. Anwarudin (2011, p.47) mentions that the characteristic features of TESOL curriculum which prescribes learning techniques, classroom activities and behavior for both the teachers and the students have resulted in the "marginalization of the-non-native speakers of English around the world". He even claimed that the legacy of TESOL methods has become "a part of the USA-led neo colonial enterprise". This claim is basically based on the four dimensional approach of liaison between globalization, empire, and TESOL proposed by Kumaravadivelu (2003): scholastic, linguistic, cultural, and economic.

Scholastic dimension according to Kumaravadivelu (2003) refers to the effort to maximize the interests of the western scholars by spreading their knowledge and marginalizing local knowledge. The knowledge here of course related to the knowledge of the language (English) and the knowledge of teaching methodology. Their superiority in this knowledge enables them to enjoy certain privileges compared to the non-native English language teachers. Anwarudin (2011) states that the scholastic superiority of the western scholars empowers them to serve the interests of the two main English speaking countries in the world; the U.S. and the U.K. He provides some examples of the programs established by the U.S. Department of State such as English Language Fellow Program, E-Teacher Scholarship Program, English Access Microscholarship Program, and English Language Specialist program. These programs, certainly promote not only English language but also American values and interests.

Linguistic dimension according to Anwarudin (2011) is closely related to scholastic dimension which regards to the use of local languages in the teaching of English as irrelevant and even detrimental. This is supported by the prescription made by the native ELT experts to use direct method and communicative language teaching which require the learners to automatically use English during the teaching and learning process. The teaching of English in second or foreign language environment is suggested to be in monolingual which prohibits the use of native language as it is practiced in direct method. However, this condition is different when students in the U.K. learn foreign languages. Howatt (1997) reveals that students in Britain learn foreign languages in a bilingual manner using Grammar Translation Method while English is taught to colonized people in bilingual. According to Anwarudin (2011) the condition where western English language teachers emphasizes the use of monolingual manner in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language is due to the fact that most of them do not speak languages other than English. This is the way they maintain their linguistic superiority to monopolize the TESOL industry.

One of the cultural dimensions in the teaching of English is the use of English language teaching to support missionary. Historically, English language teaching has long been associated with Christianity particularly since the start of missionary work (Anwarudin, 2011). This is admitted by Snow (2001) in his book English Teaching as a Christian Mission: An Applied Theology that teaching English is an act of Christian service and should be seen as a mission itself. Howatt (1997) also admits that knowledge of English was an essential pre-requisite for Christianization. For this reason, Johnston & Varghese (2006) reveal that today, a significant number of ESL and EFL teachers are evangelical Christians for whom faith and professional work are inextricably intertwined.

The fact that English language teaching is also used as the vehicle for spreading Christian faith has been responded by some ELT professionals in the Middle East. They establish an organization called TESOL Islamia. According to Kumaravadivelu (2006, p.14) the main mission of the organization is "… to promote ELT in ways that best serve the sociopolitical, sociocultural, and socioeconomic interests of the Islamic world". They also intend to promote and defend Islamic values in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language in the Muslim World.

Economic dimension refers to the economic effects of the teaching of English as a second or foreign language. Anwaruddin (2011) mentions some examples of the economic dimension such as the selling of TESOL materials in the forms of books and DVDs and the hiring of western English teachers. These two have become a billion dollars business. The idea of teaching English in a monolingual manner results in a high demand for native English teachers. Qiang and Wolff (2007) provide a data that every year China hires around 100,000 English teachers to teach English as a second or foreign language. This certainly is an economic advantage for Western English teachers.

From these four dimensions (scholastic, linguistic, cultural, and economic) it is obvious that the teaching of English as an international language can be both beneficial and harmful to other languages and culture or even religions. For this reason, the need to develop ESP for Islamic education by incorporating Islamic teaching and values is becoming more crucial. This idea is also supported by the following theories:

1. Philipson, (1992) and Pennycook (1995) perceive English Language Teaching (ELT) as linguistic imperialism from the context of economic and political dominance of the rich. Since English is viewed as the representation of western culture, learning English unquestionably means learning western culture. This can lead to resistance from English language learners coming from different culture such as for students from Islamic countries. From pedagogical perspective, the resistance can create affective filter (Krashen, 1982) that is claimed to be the factor that influences the success of language learners. People acquire a second language only if their affective filters are low enough to allow them to receive adequate input.

2. Cognitive psychology claims that better learning result can be achieved when the three components are involved: attention, perception, and memory (Martinez-Flor and Uso-Juan, 2006). With the negative perception of the learners towards English it is difficult to expect that the learners will have good motivation in their learning.

3. The fact that English language teaching has long been associated with Christianity has become a serious threat to Islamic education. Islamic educators tried to propose the use of Islamic teaching materials for teaching English to Muslim students such as Asraf (1997), Rohmah (2012), and Mclennan (2013). They argue that, to a certain extent, cultural resistance emerges in Moslem students regarding the use of English teaching materials containing western culture, values and norms. This can demotivate the students which consequently hinder their language skills development.

Based on these facts, to reduce the affective filters of the learners result from the imperialism of the English language, to provide positive perception based on the view of English adherent to western values, and to prevent the students from the negative effect of missionary works through English language teaching, it is urgently required that in an Islamic institution especially for Islamic education department, English is taught by incorporating Islamic values. This becomes the rationale or theoretical framework of this research as visualized in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Generating English Islamic materials into ESP reading syllabus
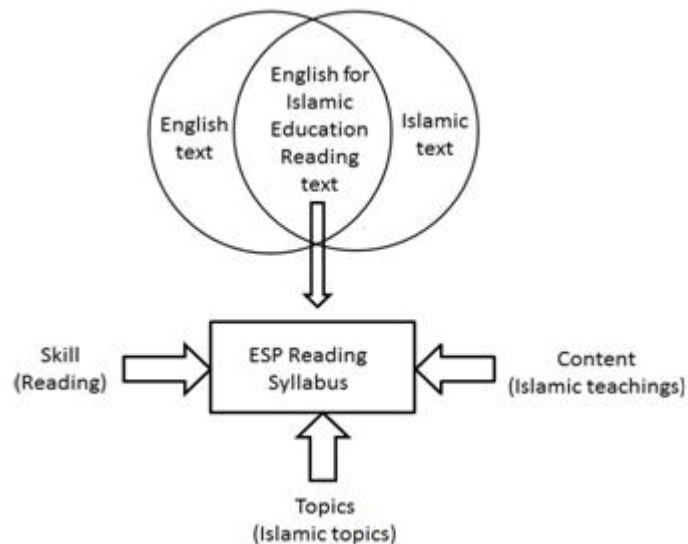
English as a language is not free from values as it is a product of a culture. The values can be suitable or unsuitable with the culture of the learners. Conflict will occur when the English values and norms are not acceptable with the culture of the learners. This can be the case for Moslems English learners when the English culture, values, and norms are contradicted to Islamic values. For this reason, suitable values, norms, and culture of the English language should be selected as the materials to be learned by Moslems students. Hence, English for Islamic education needs to be developed. As it is in the form of ESP reading course, it therefore should be in the forms of reading text. To comply with the Islamic values, the texts will be taken from Islamic teaching materials such as Islamic law (syari'ah), Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), Islamic belief (aqidah), Islamic education, Islamic history, etc.

English for Islamic education which is in the form of English for specific purposes is then generated into a syllabus to be able to be applied into classroom teaching and learning. To be more specific, as the objective of this research, the syllabus is called ESP Reading Syllabus for Students of Islamic Education Department. This syllabus was developed in a mixed-typed syllabus which combined three types of syllabus: skill syllabus, content or topical syllabus, and structural syllabus.

Methodology

This research was intended to develop ESP Reading Syllabus for students of Islamic Education Department, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, Mataram State Islamic Institute (IAIN Mataram). For this reason, the most suitable research design is Research and Devlopment (R and D) as defined by Borg and Gall (1983): "Educational Research and development (R & D) is a process used to develop and validate educational products" (p.772). In this design of research Borg and Gall (1983) proposed ten stages of research activities: 1) Collecting research information, 2) Planning, 3) Developing a prototype (preliminary product), 4) Preliminary field testing, 5) Main product revision, 6) Main field testing, 7) Operational product revision, 8) Operational field testing, 9) Field product revision, and 10) Final product.

However, for theses or dissertation research, due to the cost and length of research issues, the ten stages can be simplified into three phases: exploration phase, model development phase, and model testing phase. As an educational R and D, the research procedures should also be consistent with the procedures of R and D as suggested by Gall and Borg. The three phases of research: exploration phase, model development phase, and model testing phase as the simplification of the ten research stages are followed as the research procedures. Each of the research phases has different research activities. The research activities for exploration phase are collecting research information and planning.

For model development phase the research activities include developing a prototype (preliminary product), preliminary field testing, main product revision, main field testing, and operational product revision. The research activities for model testing phase are operational field testing, field product revision, and final product. These stages of research are formulated in operational research activities as figured out in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Operational Research Activities
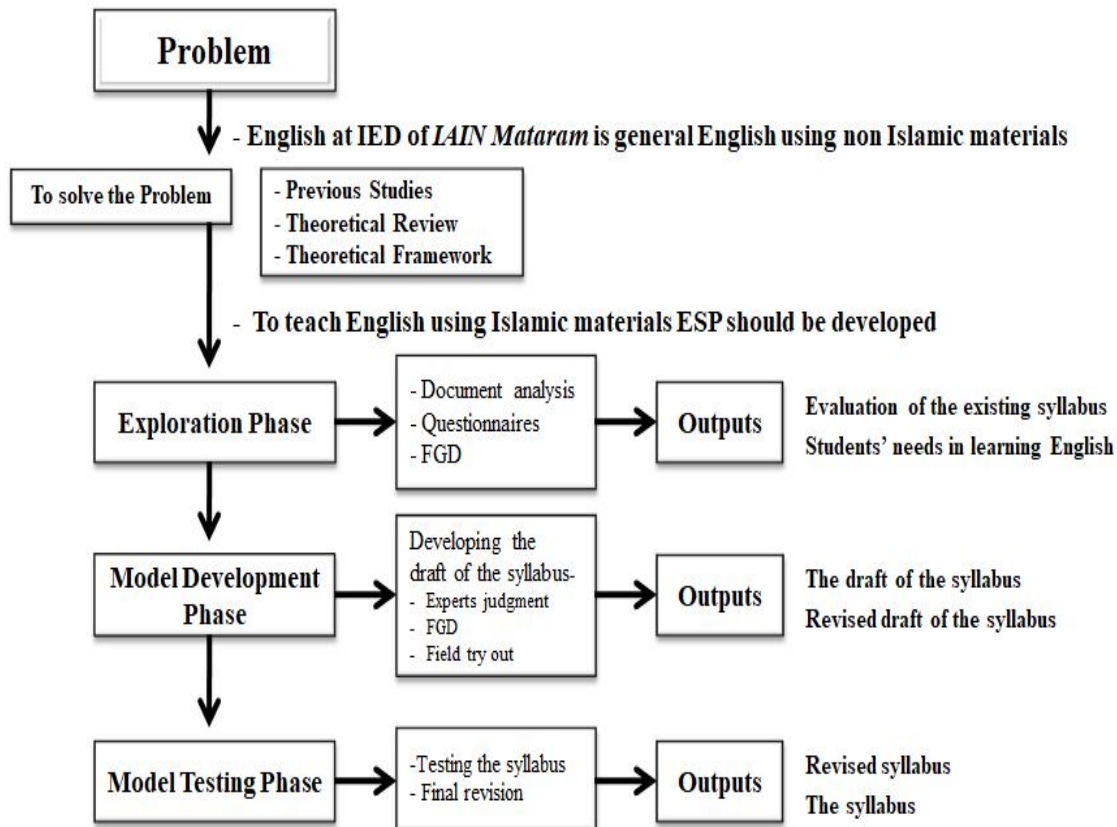
As an educational R and D research, different research strategies were applied in different phases of research: Exploration phase, model development phase, and model testing phase. This was required because each phase of research had different objectives which certainly require different methods and strategies. This, to a certain extent, made an R and D research more complicated in terms of the use of methods and strategies compared to other types of research.

The data were collected through document analysis, questionnaires, and other relevant techniques. Document analysis was done to gather information about the profile and contents of the present English syllabus. The questionnaire was used to gather information about the students' background, the students' language skills, the students' native and English literacy skills, the students' academic reading strategies, the students' reading experiences, habits, and attitudes, the students' genre preferences, the students' content preferences, and the students' classroom work styles. The questionnaires used were developed and adopted from the assessment questionnaire for a reading course designed by Hedgcock& Ferris (2009). To evaluate the present English syllabus, an adaptation of questionnaire designed by Fichburg University (2013) was used. To evaluate the reading comprehension strategies used in the teaching reading materials, a checklist was designed based on the comprehension strategies developed by Moreillon (2007). All of the data gathered were required to prescribe the need to develop a new syllabus which accommodated the needs of the students.

The data were analyzed using some relevant techniques of data analysis such as descriptive statistic, Bivariate Correlation, and Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test. Descriptive statistic was used to analyze qualitative data collected from analyzing the existing English syllabus.

Bivariate Correlation was used to see the validity of the questionnaire items, and Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test was used to see the reliability of the questionnaire. The data analysis process was done using SPSS version 22.

Results and Discussion

Results

The result of this research is the ESP Reading Syllabus for Students of Islamic Education Department, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, Mataram State Islamic Institute (IAIN Mataram) as the final product of this educational R and D. This syllabus has several distinctive features which make it different from the existing syllabus. The specification of this product related to the syllabus and the reading materials are described below.

1. The Syllabus

1.1 English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

This is an ESP syllabus which was developed based on the results of need analysis. This was done to teach the materials focusing on the learners. Compared to the general type of syllabus, this ESP syllabus is also beneficial for the students where they learn specific content of language related to their own field of study. In this context, students of Islamic Education Department can learn English related to Islamic education. They do not need to learn general topics that they might not need or be interested in. Thus, this enables them to develop their English and at the same time enrich their knowledge about Islamic education.

1.2 Mixed-type of Syllabus

This ESP Reading Syllabus is designed in a mixed-type of syllabus or which is also called proportional syllabus or multi-strand syllabus. This mixed-type of syllabus integrates three types of syllabus: skill syllabus, content or topical syllabus, and structural syllabus. This integration is unavoidable because one type of syllabus cannot be applied to answer the demands of the learners as gathered from the questionnaire.

1.3 Focus on Reading

ESP can be focused on one specific language skill such as speaking, writing, reading or listening. This is in line with the absolute characteristics of ESP postulated by Dudley-Evans & John (1998) who claim that ESP can be focused on one specific skill or language aspects. . Among the four language skills, reading is the most frequently skill incorporated with ESP because of the important role of reading in language development. Here, the learners are expected to develop reading ability in ESP to acquire the content knowledge instead of the language.

1.4 Methodology

This ESP reading syllabus required the use of eclectic teaching methods which combine some language teaching methods such as Grammar Translation Method, Audio Lingual Method, Direct method, and Communicative Language Teaching Method. The use of several tasks and activities make it impossible to apply one single method. Therefore, eclecticism is the choice.

2.   The Reading Materials

2.1 Islamic Materials

The use of Islamic materials as the content for the reading texts is the specific characteristic of this product. There are some critical factors underlying this consideration. First, to filter the negative cultural effect of English as representation of western culture embedded in ELT course materials. Second, to provide students of Islamic education department opportunity to read Islamic materials that are written in English. Third, to increase the students' motivatation in reading the text because they have already been familiar with the topics.

2.2 Authentic Materials

The use of authentic materials in teaching reading is very important to introduce the learners with the use of language outside the classroom. As proposed by Berardo (2006) that the use of authentic materials in the classroom is

to familiarize the learner with the real language. In this product, the reading materials were taken from authentic Islamic resources such as books and journal articles written in English.

2.3 Provided with Teacher's Guide

This reading material is complemented with teacher's guide. This is aimed at offering teaching method alternatives for English teacher. The teacher's guide is also a means for the teaching materials writer to control the presentation of the materials in the classroom (Shkedi, 1995). Thus, the teachers' guide is a manual provided by the material writer for the teacher as the user.

2.4 Student-centered

The activities in the teaching materials were designed to enable the students to be active in the process of teaching and learning. The learning is focused on the students where the teacher acts as facilitator. This is possible because the activities were designed in the forms of tasks where the students can do the tasks individually, in pairs and in groups.

2.5 Integrated Skills

The focus of this material is developing reading comprehension skill. However, in the teaching and learning process other related skills are also developed. For example, speaking skill is developed in "the building background knowledge activity" where the teacher leads the discussion and requires students' answers orally. Vocabulary knowledge is developed through "vocabulary preview and write your sentence". Grammar knowledge is developed through "grammar practice". Writing skill is developed through "set purpose for reading and write your reading". This integration of skill during the teaching and learning process is due to the fact that language skills cannot be learned and developed in isolation. They should be integrated to gain the maximum result of language development.

The specifications and the different formats of the products (the syllabus and the reading materials) were the results of the revisions made during the model development phase. The revisions were made based on the inputs from experts, FGD, and results of the observations made during the tryout of the products. This process was done to make sure that the product of this research can be beneficial, theoretically, pedagogically, and practically to the teaching of English especially in Islamic higher education institution.

Discussion

This research was aimed at developing an ESP reading syllabus which required need analysis. The need analysis was done through questionnaire to obtain background information and preferences of the learners related to several aspects of syllabus and reading material. The background information needed was related to English language skills, English literacy skills, reading experiences, and academic reading strategies. The learners' preferences covered genre preference, content preference, and classroom work styles.

Based on the results of the questionnaire and the evaluation of the present syllabus, a draft of new syllabus was designed. The design of the new syllabus was based on the adaptation from a model of syllabus designed by Hedgecock& Ferris (2009). The format of the syllabus covers the headings, course description, objectives, teaching methods, teaching media, required course materials, classroom policies, assessment and grading policies, scoring guide, and course outline. The reading materials as part of the syllabus were also designed based on the needs of the students as revealed from the questionnaire. The contents of the reading materials covered Islamic law (syari'ah), Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), Islamic belief (aqidah), Islamic education, and Islamic history.

The syllabus draft was evaluated by expert and English teachers through FGD. An adaptation of questionnaire designed by Fichburg University (2013) was used as the instrument of evaluation. The aspects of evaluation covered syllabus heading, course description, learning outcomes or objectives, instructional strategies or methodology, course requirements, evaluation or grading policy, course content, and reading or resource list.

The mean score of the evaluation results conducted by the expert was 3.0 out of 4.0 and the mean score from the FGD evaluation was 3.2 out of 4.0. These mean scores indicated that the draft of the designed syllabus was acceptable and considered to be a good syllabus which provided adequate elements of syllabus requirements. However, to refine the syllabus draft some revisions were made based on the inputs given by the expert and English teachers through FGD especially on the aspects that had not been fulfilled from the syllabus evaluation.

These aspects included instructional strategies and course requirements. The revised version of the syllabus was then considered to be the second draft of the designed syllabus. The reading materials as the core part of the designed syllabus were also evaluated by experts and English teachers through FGD. As for the reading materials, two experts were requested to conduct evaluation – one focusing on the Islamic teaching contents, and the other one focusing on the presentation of the reading materials. Based on the results of the evaluation made by the experts and the teachers, some revisions were made to the draft of the designed syllabus.

After the draft of the designed syllabus was revised, the try out was conducted to see how the reading materials as the main part of the syllabus could be implemented in the classroom. The try out was conducted twice. The first try out was a small scale try out organized in one class of IED students. The larger scale try out was conducted in two classes of IED students. During the try out, the researcher worked together with the English teachers who were teaching in those classes. The researcher provided teacher's notes as the guidance for the English teacher to teach the materials. During the 16 meetings of each try out, the researcher observed the class to see the teaching and learning process. The focus of the observation included the students' involvement in the lesson, interaction among students, interaction between teacher and students, and the time allotted for the lesson.

The reading materials as part of the syllabus were tested experimentally among the third semester students of Islamic education department. Two groups of students were assigned as experimental group and the other two as control group. These groups of students were assumed to have the same level of English knowledge because the distribution of students into different classes was based on the students' identification numbers not on students' academic achievements. The experimental groups were taught using the materials taken from the designed syllabus and the control groups were taught using the materials taken from the existing syllabus. The same reading comprehension test was administered to the two different groups of students at the end of the lesson. However, before the test was used, it was tried out first to 15 students of IED to see its validity and reliability. From the result of the statistical analysis it was found out that the value of each r-item of the test was higher than the value of r-table (.388). This statistically indicated that the test was valid. The reliability of the test was analyzed using Alpha Cronbach's Test. The results of the analysis indicated that the value of Alpha Cronbach's for the multiple choice test and the essays was higher than the value of r-table (.514 > .388 and .456 > .388). Statistically, this meant that the test was reliable.

The technique used to analyze the data which were in the forms of scores as the result of the test was t-test. This was done to see the effect of the different learning materials given to the students' learning outcomes. The result of the test was analyzed using Bivariate Correlation Test. Because the application of t-test required normality and homogeneity of the scores distribution, prior to the use of t-test, other statistical analyses were conducted: One Way Anova and Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test. One Way Anova was used to see the homogeneity of the scores distribution, and Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test was used to see the normality of the scores distribution.

The result of the test of homogeneity was .179. This value was higher than the level of significance score .05 (.179 > .05). This statistically means that the distribution of scores was homogenous. For the normality of the scores distribution, the result of the test proved that the distribution of the scores was normal because the scores for groups A and B was higher than the scores of the level of significance .05 (.312 > .05, .203 > .05). After the distribution of scores was homogenous and normal, the t-test analysis could be applied. The results of the statistical analysis using SPSS 22 is presented in Table 1.

Table1. Statistical analysis of the test results

		Levine's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Scores	Equal variances assumed	1.821	.179	7.341	152	.021
	Equal variances not assumed			6.582	148.676	.011

The output table shown that the Sig. (2-tailed) is .021 which is smaller than the level of significance scores .05 The output table shown that the Sig. (2-tailed) is .021 which is smaller than the level of significance scores .05 (.012 < .05).This statistically indicates that there is a different mean between the test scores result between experimental and control groups. This can be claimed that the different learning outcomes between the groups were the result of the different treatment given to the two groups. Hence, the use of reading materials taken from the designed syllabus significantly increased the reading comprehension skill of the experimental groups. Other indicator of the effectiveness of the reading materials taken from the designed syllabus was the mean score of the test results of the experimental groups was higher than the mean score of the control groups.

Conclusion

From the research, it can be concluded that the development of ESP Reading syllabus for students of Islamic education department of Islamic higher education is urgently needed as an alternative to reduce the conflict between English as a representation of western values and Islamic values. This was proven by the result of the questionnaire where most of the respondents (97.9%) agreed to have Islamic-based reading material in learning English. The experimental research conducted to see the effectiveness of the reading materials taken from the designed syllabus revealed that the mean scores of the experimental groups were higher than those of the control groups. Statistically, this means that the differences between the two mean scores were significantly the result of different treatments given to the two groups. In other word, the students who were taught using the Islamic reading materials taken from the designed syllabus performed better in reading comprehension test compared to the students who were taught using the non-Islamic reading materials taken from the present syllabus.However, this syllabus development did not follow the Indonesian National Framework as it is required for all higher education institutions in Indonesia because when the research was conducted in academic year 2014/2015, Mataram State Institute (IAIN Mataram) had not implemented Indonesian National Framework. Therefore, this can be the area of future research to develop ESP reading syllabus for Islamic education department by integrating Indonesian National Framework.

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