

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY IN FACILITATING HAJJ AND UMRAH PILGRIMAGE: AN ESP PERSPECTIVE**

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### **Abstract**

Hajj and Umrah represent one of the largest recurring forms of global religious mobility, involving complex multilingual interactions across airports, healthcare services, accommodation systems, and ritual sites. Despite this scale, limited English proficiency remains a recurrent barrier affecting pilgrims' access, safety, and service navigation. Grounded in the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) framework, particularly John Munby's Communicative Needs Processor and the needs-based approach of Hutchinson and Waters, this study examines the role of English Proficiency for Pilgrimage Contexts (EPC) in facilitating pilgrimage experiences. Employing a qualitative case study with embedded quantitative validation, data were collected from 30 pilgrims affiliated with KBIHU Birrulwalidain Cileunyi Bandung, complemented by interviews with religious guides and Saudi-based mutawwif. Thematic analysis and regression-based mediation testing were conducted to examine the relationships among EPC, Communicative Self-Efficacy (CSE), and Facilitation of Pilgrimage Experience (FPE). Findings indicate that EPC significantly influences FPE both directly and indirectly through CSE as a partial mediator. English competence functions as situationally bound functional capital, particularly in medical, transportation, and emergency contexts. The study conceptualizes English for Pilgrimage Purposes (EPP) as a distinct ESP sub-domain and recommends systematic needs-based curriculum integration in pilgrimage preparation programs.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Hajj and Umrah, English Proficiency, Communicative Self-Efficacy, Pilgrimage Facilitation, English for Pilgrimage Purposes (EPP)

### **INTRODUCTION**

The annual organization of Hajj and Umrah constitutes one of the largest recurring religious mobilities in the contemporary world. According to the General Authority for Statistics, the total number of pilgrims performing Hajj reached approximately 1.8 million in 2023, with international pilgrims representing the majority. In parallel, the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah reported that Umrah pilgrims surpassed 13 million in 2023, reflecting a significant post-pandemic recovery and expansion under Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 framework. Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-majority country, consistently ranks among the top contributors of

Hajj and Umrah pilgrims, with more than 220,000 Hajj pilgrims annually and over one million Umrah pilgrims in peak years, as recorded by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

Despite the magnitude and global scale of this mobility, empirical reports from pilgrimage organizers and consular authorities indicate recurring communication breakdowns experienced by pilgrims in airports, hospitals, accommodation services, and during ritual guidance sessions. Language barriers—particularly limited English proficiency—have been repeatedly identified as contributing to misunderstandings related to health services, transportation logistics, emergency procedures, and digital application usage. English functions as a lingua franca among multinational pilgrims, service providers, and health personnel in Saudi Arabia, particularly in high-density areas such as airports, hotels, and healthcare facilities. Consequently, insufficient English competence has implications not only for individual worship experience but also for safety, service accessibility, and social inclusion.

From a social perspective, this issue intersects with broader concerns of global mobility, intercultural communication, and equitable access to religious services. From an educational perspective, it reveals structural gaps in pre-departure training curricula for pilgrims, which often emphasize ritual jurisprudence (*fiqh al-manasik*) while allocating minimal structured attention to communicative English skills tailored to pilgrimage contexts. The absence of context-specific language preparation may exacerbate vulnerability among elderly pilgrims, first-time travelers, and those with limited formal education. Therefore, the phenomenon warrants systematic academic inquiry grounded in measurable constructs and theoretically informed analysis.

Recent scholarly works (2020–2025) published in reputable international journals have begun to explore related variables. Studies in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts demonstrate that domain-specific language instruction significantly enhances communicative effectiveness in professional and situational settings. Research on English for medical purposes and English for tourism consistently reports positive correlations between contextualized language training and service interaction quality. Meanwhile, investigations into religious tourism and pilgrimage management emphasize intercultural competence and communication as determinants of service satisfaction and risk mitigation.

However, the majority of studies remain fragmented. First, many ESP studies focus on occupational sectors such as nursing, aviation, or hospitality, without addressing religious

pilgrimage as a distinctive communicative domain characterized by ritual terminology, multilingual interactions, and high-density crowd dynamics. Second, research on Hajj and Umrah management tends to prioritize logistics, public health preparedness, and crowd control, with limited attention to linguistic preparedness as an educational variable. Third, where language competence is discussed, it is often conceptualized broadly as “communication skills” without operationalizing English proficiency into measurable components such as listening comprehension in emergency contexts, transactional speaking ability, or functional vocabulary mastery related to pilgrimage rituals.

Moreover, inconsistencies appear in findings concerning the relationship between language training and perceived service satisfaction. Some studies report direct positive effects, while others suggest that cultural familiarity and group leadership (mutawwif guidance) mediate the relationship, thereby reducing the independent contribution of English proficiency. These divergences indicate the absence of a comprehensive model that simultaneously examines English proficiency, communicative confidence, and facilitation outcomes within the specific context of Hajj and Umrah.

To address this gap, the present study examines three primary variables: (1) English Proficiency for Pilgrimage Contexts (EPC), (2) Communicative Self-Efficacy (CSE), and (3) Facilitation of Pilgrimage Experience (FPE). Operationally, EPC refers to pilgrims’ functional ability to comprehend and produce English expressions relevant to transportation, accommodation, health services, digital platforms, and ritual instructions. CSE denotes the perceived confidence in engaging in English-mediated interactions during pilgrimage activities. FPE is defined as the extent to which pilgrims experience smooth access to services, reduced misunderstandings, and enhanced safety during Hajj or Umrah.

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in the ESP framework as articulated in foundational models of needs-based language instruction, complemented by Communicative Competence theory. Within the ESP paradigm, language instruction is designed based on specific communicative needs of learners in particular domains. In the context of Hajj and Umrah, the target situation analysis identifies predictable communicative events: airport procedures, hotel check-ins, medical consultations, crowd navigation instructions, and digital application usage. The model assumes that domain-specific proficiency enhances communicative performance, which in turn influences functional outcomes such as service accessibility and safety assurance.

Conceptually, the study posits that English Proficiency for Pilgrimage Contexts (EPC) exerts a direct effect on Facilitation of Pilgrimage Experience (FPE) and an indirect effect mediated by Communicative Self-Efficacy (CSE). The qualitative approach adopted in this research seeks to explore how pilgrims narratively construct their communicative experiences, how they perceive the role of English in critical incidents, and how contextual factors shape the relationship between language competence and pilgrimage facilitation.

Based on the foregoing theoretical and empirical considerations, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Hajj and Umrah pilgrims perceive the role of English proficiency in facilitating their pilgrimage experience?
2. In what communicative situations does English proficiency most significantly influence access to services and safety?
3. How does communicative self-efficacy mediate the relationship between English proficiency and perceived facilitation outcomes?
4. What contextual factors shape the effectiveness of ESP-oriented English preparation for pilgrims?

The objectives of the study are:

1. to systematically analyze pilgrims' lived experiences related to English-mediated interactions;
2. to identify domain-specific communicative needs within Hajj and Umrah contexts;
3. to examine the interplay between English proficiency, self-efficacy, and facilitation outcomes; and
4. to develop an empirically grounded ESP framework for pilgrimage-oriented English training.

Where applicable in complementary quantitative validation, the following hypotheses may be tested:

H1: English Proficiency for Pilgrimage Contexts positively influences Facilitation of Pilgrimage Experience.

H2: English Proficiency for Pilgrimage Contexts positively influences Communicative Self-Efficacy.

H3: Communicative Self-Efficacy positively influences Facilitation of Pilgrimage Experience.

H4: Communicative Self-Efficacy mediates the relationship between English Proficiency and Facilitation of Pilgrimage Experience.

By situating English proficiency within the socio-religious ecosystem of global pilgrimage mobility, this study contributes to the advancement of ESP scholarship and offers a contextually grounded framework for educational policy development in Hajj and Umrah preparation programs.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative case study design with an embedded explanatory component to investigate the role of English proficiency in facilitating Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage experiences. The qualitative approach was selected to capture the depth, complexity, and contextual nuance of pilgrims' lived communicative experiences, particularly in high-density, multilingual, and religiously structured environments. The case study design enabled an intensive examination of one institutional context, namely KBIHU Birrulwalidain Cileunyi Bandung, as a bounded system of pilgrimage preparation, guidance, and post-pilgrimage reflection.

The study also incorporated a complementary quantitative validation phase (embedded explanatory design) to examine the hypothesized relationships among English Proficiency for Pilgrimage Contexts (EPC), Communicative Self-Efficacy (CSE), and Facilitation of Pilgrimage Experience (FPE). This integration strengthened analytical rigor by triangulating narrative accounts with measurable indicators.

#### **Research Setting and Participants**

The research was conducted at KBIHU Birrulwalidain Cileunyi Bandung, a registered Hajj and Umrah guidance group (Kelompok Bimbingan Ibadah Haji dan Umrah) operating under national pilgrimage regulations in Indonesia. The institution provides pre-departure religious training (manasik), logistical coordination, and on-site assistance for pilgrims traveling to Saudi Arabia.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling with maximum variation criteria to capture diverse communicative experiences. The sample consisted of:

1. 30 Indonesian pilgrims (Hajj and Umrah alumni within the last three years),
2. 2 Indonesian religious guides (pembimbing/manasik instructors), and

3. 2 Saudi-based mutawwif (Arabic-speaking pilgrimage guides assigned during on-site assistance).

The people who went on the Hajj or Umrah pilgrimage were chosen based on criteria. These criteria included:

- (1) they had to have completed the Hajj or Umrah in the three years
- (2) they had to have used English to communicate during the pilgrimage and
- (3) they had to be willing to take part in in-depth interviews.

The researchers wanted to make sure that the people they chose were different in terms of age, gender, education and experience traveling to countries. This was done to get a range of information.

## **Data Collection Procedures**

### **1. In- Semi-Structured Interviews**

The researchers collected information by doing interviews with the pilgrims that lasted around 60 to 90 minutes. They asked questions about the pilgrims experiences during the Hajj or Umrah such as:

- What was it like to use English in airports, hotels and hospitals?
- Were there any times when they did not understand something or when they were able to communicate
- How confident did they feel when using English during the pilgrimage?
- What did they do to prepare their English before the pilgrimage?
- How did the group leaders help with communication?

The researchers also interviewed the guides and the Saudi mutawwif. They asked them about the training they gave to the pilgrims the problems they saw with communication and how they helped the pilgrims.

All the interviews were. Written down word for word. If the interviews were done in Indonesian or Arabic they were translated into English to make sure the meaning was the same.

### **2. Document Analysis**

The researchers looked at documents from the institutions that helped the pilgrims prepare for the Hajj or Umrah. These documents included:

- The training modules they used before the pilgrimage
- The instructional handbooks they gave to the pilgrims
- Any English language training materials they used

- The procedures they had in place for emergency situations

This helped the researchers see how well the institutions prepared the pilgrims for using English during the pilgrimage.

### **3. Complementary Quantitative Instrument**

The researchers also gave a questionnaire to 30 pilgrims. The questionnaire asked them to rate how easy or hard it was for them to:

- Understand English when listening to it
- Speak English in situations
- Use words and phrases that were relevant to the pilgrimage

The questionnaire also asked them to rate how confident they felt when using English and how easy it was for them to get the services they needed.

The researchers made sure the questionnaire was valid and reliable by having two experts review it and by testing it with a group of people.

### **Operationalization of Variables**

The researchers defined three variables:

- English Proficiency for Pilgrimage Contexts (EPC): This was the ability to understand and use English in situations that were relevant to the pilgrimage.
- Communicative Self-Efficacy (CSE): This was how confident the pilgrims felt when using English to communicate during the pilgrimage.
- Facilitation of Pilgrimage Experience (FPE): This was how easy or hard it was for the pilgrims to get the services they needed and to have a pilgrimage experience.

### **Data Analysis**

The researchers used a combination of quantitative methods to analyze the data. They looked for patterns and themes in the interviews and questionnaire responses.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

The researchers used an analysis approach to identify the main themes in the interview data. They looked at the experiences of the pilgrims the challenges they faced and the ways in which they used English to communicate.

### **Quantitative Validation**

The researchers used methods to analyze the questionnaire data. They looked at the relationships between the variables. How they affected the pilgrimage experience.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

The researchers made sure that their study was rigorous and trustworthy by:

- Triangulating the data from sources
- Using an approach to coding and analyzing the data
- Keeping a record of all the decisions they made during the study
- Being reflexive and aware of their biases

#### Ethical Considerations

The researchers got permission from the institution before they started the study. They made sure that the participants knew what the study was about and that they could withdraw at any time. They also kept the participants identities confidential.

#### Analytical Alignment with Research Questions

The study was designed to answer four research questions:

- How do pilgrims perceive the role of proficiency in the pilgrimage experience?
- What are the critical communicative situations that affect safety and access during the pilgrimage?
- How does communicative self-efficacy mediate the relationship between proficiency and the pilgrimage experience?
- What are the institutional and contextual determinants that shape the effectiveness of English language training for the pilgrimage?

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Theoretical Anchoring: ESP as the Grand Analytical Framework**

The study used the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) framework to understand the role of proficiency in the pilgrimage experience. The ESP framework emphasizes the importance of understanding the needs of a specific context.

### **2. Qualitative Findings**

#### **2.1 English Proficiency as Bound Functional Competence**

The pilgrims saw English proficiency as a practical tool that helped them access services stay safe and be independent during the pilgrimage. The researchers found that English proficiency was not about knowing grammar and vocabulary but about being able to use English in real-life situations.

#### **2.2 Communicative Self-Efficacy as a Mediating Construct**

The researchers found that communicative self-efficacy played a role in determining how well the pilgrims were able to use English during the pilgrimage. Even if the pilgrims had English proficiency they might not use it if they were not confident.

### **2.3 Contextual Moderators of ESP Effectiveness**

The researchers found that there were contextual factors that affected how well the pilgrims were able to use English during the pilgrimage. These factors included age, international experience, digital literacy and cultural reliance on group-based mediation.

The study showed that English language training, for the pilgrimage should be tailored to the needs of the pilgrims and should take into account the contextual factors that affect their ability to use English.

Document analysis of the manasik curriculum at KBIHU Birrulwalidain Cileunyi Bandung indicated that English instruction was informal and incidental rather than systematically derived from target situation analysis. No structured module explicitly addressed airport discourse, emergency communication, or transactional service exchanges. These contextual findings further validate ESP's assertion that effective instruction requires explicit alignment between communicative needs analysis and pedagogical design.

## **3. Quantitative Validation**

### **3.1 Descriptive Patterns**

Survey analysis of the 30 pilgrims revealed moderate mean scores for EPC, moderately high scores for CSE, and high scores for Facilitation of Pilgrimage Experience (FPE). Correlation analysis demonstrated a positive and statistically significant association between EPC and FPE, consistent with the theoretical assumption that domain-specific proficiency enhances contextual performance outcomes.

### **3.2 Hypothesis Testing**

Regression analysis confirmed the proposed structural relationships:

H1: EPC significantly predicted FPE, indicating that higher domain-specific proficiency corresponded with improved perceived facilitation.

H2: EPC significantly predicted CSE, demonstrating that linguistic competence strengthens communicative confidence.

H3: CSE significantly predicted FPE, suggesting that psychological readiness directly contributes to smoother service access and perceived safety.

H4: Mediation analysis using bootstrapping procedures revealed that CSE partially mediated the EPC–FPE relationship. While the direct effect of EPC on FPE remained significant, the indirect pathway through CSE accounted for a substantial proportion of variance.

This partial mediation pattern indicates that linguistic competence exerts both direct functional effects and indirect psychological effects on pilgrimage facilitation.

#### **4. Integrated Discussion**

##### **4.1 Empirical Extension of ESP Grand Theory**

The findings empirically extend Munby’s Communicative Needs Processor model into the domain of religious mobility. Pilgrimage activities generate identifiable communicative events characterized by institutional discourse, service negotiation, and emergency interaction. These events require specialized linguistic resources that cannot be adequately addressed through general English instruction.

Moreover, the integration of Communicative Self-Efficacy introduces a psychological dimension to ESP performance modeling. While Munby emphasizes communicative event specification, this study demonstrates that the activation of such competence is contingent upon learners’ perceived efficacy.

Thus, the structural relationship observed—EPC influencing FPE both directly and indirectly through CSE—constitutes an empirically validated extension of needs-based ESP theory within a socio-religious ecosystem

##### **4.2 Conceptualization of English for Pilgrimage Purposes**

Based on the convergence of qualitative and quantitative findings, Hajj and Umrah can be conceptualized as a distinct ESP sub-domain, here termed English for Pilgrimage Purposes (EPP). This sub-domain is characterized by :

High-density multilingual interaction

Institutional religious procedures

Safety-sensitive communicative events

Recurrent transactional and emergency discourse patterns

Such conceptualization broadens the epistemological scope of ESP beyond occupational sectors and situates religious mobility within legitimate academic inquiry.

##### **4.3 Theoretical and Practical Implications**

Theoretically, this study contributes to ESP scholarship by:

Extending needs-based theory into non-occupational religious contexts.

Integrating psychological mediation into ESP outcome modeling.

Demonstrating partial mediation mechanisms between competence and contextual facilitation. Proposing a structured, empirically grounded framework for pilgrimage-oriented language training.

Practically, institutions such as KBIHU Birrulwalidain Cileunyi Bandung are encouraged to incorporate systematic target situation analysis into curriculum design. Structured modules should simulate airport discourse, medical consultation exchanges, transportation coordination, and emergency communication scenarios, accompanied by confidence-building speaking practice.

### **5. Refined Conceptual Model**

The integrated findings support a refined structural model in which English Proficiency for Pilgrimage Contexts exerts both direct and indirect influence on Facilitation of Pilgrimage Experience, with Communicative Self-Efficacy functioning as a partial mediator and contextual variables acting as moderators.

This model substantiates the central proposition of ESP grand theory: language competence attains functional legitimacy only when systematically aligned with domain-specific communicative realities and learner readiness.

## **CONCLUSION**

Grounded in the grand theoretical framework of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly the Communicative Needs Processor model proposed by John Munby and the needs-based approach articulated by Tom Hutchinson and Alan Waters, this study has systematically examined the role of English proficiency in facilitating Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage experiences. By situating English competence within the socio-religious ecosystem of global pilgrimage mobility, the research moves beyond general language discourse and positions linguistic preparedness as a functional determinant of access, safety, and service interaction.

The findings confirm that English Proficiency for Pilgrimage Contexts (EPC) constitutes a domain-specific communicative competence rather than a generalized academic skill. Empirical evidence demonstrates that predictable communicative events—such as airport procedures, medical consultations, transportation coordination, and accommodation management—require specialized linguistic resources aligned with the principles of target

situation analysis. In these contexts, English functions as a lingua franca that mediates interaction between pilgrims and multinational service providers.

Qualitative analysis reveals that English proficiency operates as a situationally bound functional tool, directly influencing pilgrims' autonomy, anxiety levels, and responsiveness in critical incidents. However, the study also establishes that linguistic competence alone does not automatically guarantee effective facilitation. Communicative Self-Efficacy (CSE) emerges as a significant mediating construct, confirming that psychological readiness determines whether linguistic resources are activated in real-time interaction. The quantitative validation supports this structural relationship, demonstrating that EPC exerts both direct and indirect effects on Facilitation of Pilgrimage Experience (FPE), with CSE functioning as a partial mediator.

These findings extend ESP theory into the domain of religious mobility and provide empirical substantiation for conceptualizing Hajj and Umrah preparation as a distinct sub-field, namely English for Pilgrimage Purposes (EPP). By integrating target needs, learning needs, and contextual performance outcomes within a single analytical model, the study advances ESP scholarship beyond occupational sectors and contributes a theoretically coherent and empirically tested framework.

Institutionally, the research identifies a structural gap in pilgrimage preparation programs, particularly within KBIHU Birrulwalidain Cileunyi Bandung, where English training remains incidental rather than systematically derived from communicative needs analysis. The absence of structured ESP modules limits the alignment between identified communicative demands and pedagogical design.

In conclusion, this study affirms that English proficiency is not a peripheral competence in Hajj and Umrah contexts but a strategic enabler of safe, autonomous, and efficient pilgrimage experiences. Theoretically anchored in ESP grand theory and empirically validated through qualitative and quantitative integration, the findings underscore the necessity of institutionalizing needs-based English preparation within pilgrimage education frameworks. Future research is encouraged to replicate and expand this model across diverse pilgrimage institutions and demographic contexts to enhance generalizability and strengthen the evidence base for ESP-driven policy development in religious mobility education.

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