



TECHNICAL ISLAMIC VOCABULARY IN  
MALAYSIAN TOURISTIC MASJID DA'WAH  
PAMPHLETS

BY

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for  
the degree of Master of Arts in  
Teaching English for Specific Purposes

Kulliyyah of Languages and Management  
International Islamic University Malaysia

AUGUST 2017

## **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to identify the technical terms present in Malaysian touristic masjid da'wah pamphlets and gauge whether their occurrence has any significant impact on the difficulty level of the content. A total of 25 English language Islamic da'wah pamphlets were analysed in order to reach the conclusions found by the study. Two instruments were employed to collect and analyse the data; the first instrument was a four level scale to classify lexical items and the second instrument was a readability formula developed by textbook publisher Robert Gunning. The findings of the study show that a considerable amount of technical vocabulary is employed in the pamphlets. Consequently, most pamphlets analyzed were found to possess a low readability level due to their scores being above the easy-reading line. As past studies have demonstrated, the vocabulary of a text plays a major part in the understanding of it, thus, this research would assert that the lexical items employed in these da'wah pamphlets may hinder readers from appropriately grasping the Islamic concepts elaborated within them.

## ملخص البحث

تَهْدِفُ هذه الدَّرَاسَةُ إلى تَعْرِيفِ المِصْطَلَحَاتِ الفَنِّيَّةِ المُسْتَعْمَلَةِ في المِطْوِيَّاتِ السِّيَاحِيَّةِ في مساجد ماليزيا ومعرفة مدى فعالية هذه المصطلحات في عملية الدعوة إلى الإسلام. حُلِّلَ مَضمون 25 مَطْوِيَّةِ دَعْوِيَّةِ باللُّغَةِ الإِنجِلِيزِيَّةِ بِحَدَفِ الوُصُولِ إلى نَتَائِجِ الدَّرَاسَةِ. اسْتُخْدِمَتِ أَدَاتَانِ لِجَمْعِ وَتَحْلِيلِ المَعْلُومَاتِ. الأَدَاةُ الأُولَى عِبَارَةٌ عَن مِقْيَاسٍ مِن أربعة مُسْتَوِيَاتٍ لِتَصْنِيفِ المِفْرَدَاتِ اللُّغَوِيَّةِ. أمَّا الأَدَاةُ الثَّانِيَّةُ - مِن اِخْتِرَاعِ النَّاشِرِ رُوبَرْتِ جَانِينِ - فَهِيَ عِبَارَةٌ عَن صِيغَةِ لِقْيَاسِ المُسْتَوَى اللُّغَوِيِّ المُسْتَحْدَمِ فِي المِطْوِيَّةِ وَ هَلْ يُنَاسِبُ السَّائِحِ ذُو الثَّقَافَةِ المُتَوَسِّطَةِ. تُشِيرُ نَتَائِجُ الدَّرَاسَةِ إلى وُجُودِ مَادَةٍ لُغَوِيَّةٍ مَحْسُوسَةٍ مِن المِصْطَلَحَاتِ الفَنِّيَّةِ فِي المِطْوِيَّاتِ وَتُبَيَّنَ أَنَّ هَذِهِ المَادَةَ فَوْقَ مُسْتَوَى القِرَاءَةِ السَّهْلِ وَذَلِكَ فِي مُعْظَمِ المِطْوِيَّاتِ. يَتَعَلَقُ الفِهْمُ الصَّحِيحُ لِلنَّصِ بِنُوعِيَّةِ المِفْرَدَاتِ المُسْتَحْدَمَةِ فِيهِ وَبِنَاءِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّدَ الدَّرَاسَةُ أَنَّ صَعُوبَةَ المِصْطَلَحَاتِ الفَنِّيَّةِ المُسْتَعْمَلَةِ فِي المِطْوِيَّاتِ الدَّعْوِيَّةِ تَحُولُ دُونَ الفِهْمِ السَّلِيمِ لِلْمَبَادِئِ الإِسْلَامِيَّةِ.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion; it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching English for Specific Purposes.

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Nuraihan Mat Daud  
Supervisor

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*This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved parents*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to dedicate this study to my dear parents, who granted me their support in accomplishing this feat: may Allah bless you for your love and patience.

I also wish to express my gratitude to those who dedicated their time and effort for this project. Without all of you, it would not have been possible.

Finally, a special thanks to Professor Nuraihan Mat Daud and Dr. Afiza Mohamad Ali for their immense patience, encouragement and guidance.



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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

While the proper usage of vocabulary is one of the main factors which contribute to the successful transfer of ideas from one speaker of the target language to another, outsiders to a specific field might have issues with certain advanced vocabulary related to ESP (English for Specific Purposes) since they might not be aware of the clear difference between ordinary terms and technical terms. One of the contexts in which this might occur is in or around the mosque (which in this study will be referred to by the Arabic term *masjid*), in this case in a Malaysian setting where the English language is utilized in printed reading material which is provided in order to explain matters concerning Islam to non-Muslim tourists and visitors.

It must be noted that religious observance usually calls for highly marked and self-conscious usage of specific linguistic resources, one of them being lexical items, i.e. vocabulary and different religious practices will differ in their choices along the entire spectrum of linguistic possibilities (Keane, 1997). Thus, religious speech situations can drastically vary from the familiar parameters of speech, since certain aspects of everyday ways of speaking are commonly altered (Keane, 1997). The study at hand, by way of a content analysis, attempts to shed some light on the vocabulary employed in the printed reading material provided to non-Muslim visitors at touristic masjids in order to highlight the technical terms present in these booklets and pamphlets, as well as determine the way in which they might affect the understanding of readers who are not familiar with the subject of Islam.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

In Malaysia one can find religiously related sites which easily serve the purpose of Islamic Tourism, the most obvious of them being the numerous masjids found within the Malaysian landscape (Laderlah et al., 2011). Thus, the study has taken into account two of the most commonly visited masjids in the country in order to collect data pertaining to this research, those being the National Mosque in Kuala Lumpur and the Putra Mosque in Putrajaya.

In recent years, the Malaysian Government has been increasing its efforts to promote the novel concept of Islamic Tourism in the country. The positioning of Malaysia as the 10<sup>th</sup> most visited country in the world for the year 2013 by the United Nations World Tourism Organization has given a necessary boost to the industry, in terms of both confidence and ambitions (Lai, 2013). Through the Tourism Ministry, the Malaysian Government managed to establish the Islamic Tourism Center in 2009, one of its main aims being the promotion of the Islamic history and legacy of Malaysia through the scope of tourism (“Religious Tourism Important Tourism Product”, 2009). The latest development of such policies has seen the International Islamic University of Malaysia, in conjunction with the Islamic Tourism Center, signing a memorandum of understanding with the Malaysian Government based on a mutual engagement on the task of directing the country towards becoming the premier hub for Islamic Tourism, in line with the strongly advertised running campaign of Visit Malaysia 2014 (“Malaysia Plans to Boost Islamic Tourism Sector, says Ministry” 2014).

In order to clarify their mission, the broad concept of Islamic Tourism has been defined by the Islamic Tourism Center as a wide range of tourism activities related to the exploration of Islamic history, arts, culture and heritage and/or to experiencing of

the Islamic way of life (Kamarudin & Ismail, 2012). As a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which supports Islamic Tourism in the campaign against Islamophobia, Malaysia has continuously vouched for the novel concept by making numerous claims to its enormous potential in helping non- Muslims become acquainted first-hand with the immense legacy of Islamic civilization and its contribution to all of mankind (Scott & Jafari, 2010). The Minister of Islamic Affairs in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom (2009-2016), agreed to the fact that Islamic Tourism is an effective way to bring forth a better understanding of Islam amongst humanity, as it can aid in doing away with the negative perceptions of Islam currently prevalent amongst some societies. Thus, a proper application of Islamic Tourism and a realization of its mission should in turn lead to the building of bridges of mutual respect amongst Muslim and non-Muslim nations throughout the whole world ("Religious Tourism Important Tourism Product", 2009).

The masjid, which has traditionally acted as the spiritual center of the Muslim community and as a symbol of the establishment and majesty of Islam, could certainly help in fulfilling the aims mentioned above, through its potential as an Islamic Tourism attraction and da'wah center open to both Muslim and non-Muslims alike. This vision is clearly in line with the "Mosque Trails in Malaysia" project recently launched by the Islamic Tourism Center, which states that "Muslims would usually be delighted to show others their place of worship" (Islamic Tourism Center of Malaysia Website, 2013). In promoting this newly conceived program, the Islamic Tourism Center website goes on to explain certain Islamic etiquette to be kept inside the masjid by non-Muslims, as well as briefly presenting some facts on the Muslim way of worship (Islamic Tourism Center Website, 2013). Thus, in order to further facilitate

the realization of the masjid as a Touristic attraction, varied printed reading material has been made available to non-Muslim visitors during these programmes and is presented to tourists with the aim of clarifying Islamic concepts and clearing the misunderstandings they might have regarding the faith. While these pamphlets, brochures and booklets are available in a wide range of languages, this paper will focus on and analyze the English language versions of them in order to contribute to the field of ESP, specifically in regards to technical vocabulary within an Islamic context.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

It must be noted that studies have pinpointed to the lack of research focusing on matters pertaining to religious tourism, to the point of declaring it one of the most understudied areas in tourism research (Timothy & Olsen, 2006). Within a Malaysian context, researchers have also attested to the fact that only rare attempts have been made at evaluating in any way the efforts undertaken towards the advancement of Islamic tourism in the country (Shafaei & Mohamed, 2015). Nonetheless, it can be said that such a gap stands contrary to the reality of religious tourism and cannot be due to a lack of interest or necessity to delve in the field. Indeed, studies have shown that due to the growth in cultural tourism, religious sites are being increasingly visited by curious tourists, bringing forth a surge in the interest in religious sites (Timothy & Olsen, 2006). This has been attributed by some to the growing number of people who are continuously asking themselves basic questions of human existence, such as “What is the meaning of my life?” while at the same being in a “search to be themselves” (Timothy & Olsen, 2006). Tourists might also visit religious sites because they have a genuine educational interest in finding out more about the history

of a site or understanding a particular religious faith and its tenets, rather than simply being motivated by the wish to travel (Timothy & Olsen, 2006). Indeed, it is a well-known fact that a rather large amount of those citizens of the world, whose mother tongue is English have in time, become Muslims, thus proving the growing interest in Islam and its teachings and values in the English-speaking world (Al Faruqi, 1988).

#### **1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study is expected to fill the gap existing in academic literature pertaining to English for Specific Purposes within an Islamic context, as well as in regards to Islamic tourism, by contributing in a way to the topic and further advancing the case of teaching of the English language for the purpose of da'wah (invitation to Islam). The study aims at helping us gain a better understanding as to the technical terms commonly used within an Islamic context which might require a more proper elucidation when presenting Islamic concepts in English to non-Muslims, as this constitutes a main contributing factor to the future success of these da'wah projects.

#### **1.5 OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this research are to:

1. identify the technical Islamic vocabulary present in the printed reading material available to non-Muslim visitors during Touristic Masjid programmes.
2. determine the difficulty level/complexity level of the printed reading material available to non-Muslim visitors during Touristic Masjid programmes



## **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study aims to reach its objectives by way of two research questions:

1. What are the technical Islamic terms present in the printed reading material available to non-Muslim visitors during Touristic Masjid programmes?
2. What is the percentage of technical Islamic terms in the printed reading material available to non-Muslim visitors during Touristic Masjid programmes?

## **1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The results brought forth by the study may contribute to the further development of Islamic Tourism in Malaysia, as its conclusions can be of use in the tackling of certain issues which are central to the implementation of policies related to such endeavors. The findings of this study should be of interest to those involved with the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism Center, as well as other stakeholders in the matter, such as offices of Islamic Affairs or educational institutions which offer courses on tourism or English for Specific Purposes training. Similarly, the findings might be of interest to other researchers in the field who may benefit from the results provided by this study.

## **1.8 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study covers the English language printed reading materials provided in order to explain matters concerning Islam to non-Muslim visitors at two of the most commonly visited masjids in the country, namely the National Mosque in Kuala Lumpur and the Putra Mosque in Putrajaya. The content analysis has been conducted on 25 pamphlets and booklets, of an average length of 4 to 6 pages, covering a broad range of subjects

related to Islam, its beliefs and its teachings. The study mainly focuses on the vocabulary employed in the fore mentioned printed reading material in order to highlight the technical terms present in these booklets and pamphlets, as well as determine the way in which they might affect the understanding of readers who are not totally familiar with the subject of Islam.

## **1.9 METHODOLOGY**

The study is to be carried out through the analysis of the content present in the booklets and pamphlets which Touristic Masjids make available to non-Muslim visitors. The first question is based on recognizing effectively the technical terms found in the printed reading material provided to non-Muslim visitors during Touristic Masjid tours. The paper bases itself on certain studies which have identified the characteristics of technical terms, as well as on academic research which has classified Islamic lexical items and separated them into several categories (Elewa, 2014). The second question is linked to the objective of text complexity, as the percentage of technical items being employed is a factor that may be taken into account when assessing the difficulty of a text. The data will be analyzed by employing readability formulas in order to attain readability indexes which can gauge the difficulty or complexity of the texts and thus, give us an idea as to whether the vocabulary being employed in the content is appropriate for the targeted audience.

## **1.10 ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS**

While the first chapter of this paper has provided an overview of the study and generally explained its main components, the second chapter will go on to elucidate the main topics which are of concern and in direct relation to the subject of this

research. The third chapter will go deeper into the methodology employed in order to carry out the study, in regards to the theory behind it, the process of collecting the data, as well as the instruments utilized for the analysis. The fourth chapter will showcase the results of the study, by clarifying the analysis of the data and presenting the findings. The fifth and final chapter will conclude the paper by ultimately discussing the findings of the research and presenting a few suggestions in relation to further studies which might be linked to the topic of Islamic technical terms.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Several topics in relation to the study need to be clarified beforehand, in order to gain a clearer view as to the scope and breadth of the research. First and foremost, the importance of vocabulary in ESP must be addressed accordingly in order to grasp the role that lexical items truly play in second language learning. The topic of text difficulty in printed materials must also be discussed, in order to better understand one of the main points of concern of the study. Apart from that, the matter of Islamic technical vocabulary needs to be elucidated, as it represents another main component of the study and its understanding will facilitate the collection of data and its analysis. Finally, the concept of Islamic tourism in Malaysia and abroad is similarly approached, to aid us in clarifying the future of its endeavors, as well as bringing purpose to the research.

#### **2.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF VOCABULARY IN ESP**

Within a specific context there will always be a specific vocabulary that must be adhered to in order to properly follow the conventions of language of the field and be correctly understood. Thus, it is necessary to first delve into the role, as well as the importance, of vocabulary in ESP (English for Specific Purposes). First and foremost, it has been widely stated that ESP teaching considers vocabulary as not simply one of the main language components to focus on (Benhaoued, 2013) but a fundamental

component in ESP courses and that its concept and intricacies should be thoroughly absorbed by the learners (Wu & Wang, 2010).

In this manner, studies have looked into varying types and categorization of vocabulary and explored which types of vocabulary should be taught and how an ESP teacher can facilitate the learning process (Brooks, 2010). ESP teachers are advised to concentrate on and analyze four main parts: types of vocabulary, the type of vocabulary ESP teachers should teach, how ESP teachers select vocabulary to teach, and teaching and learning vocabulary (Wu & Wang, 2010). In the process, teachers should help students realize that acquiring a larger vocabulary is an important aspect of their learning, as well as provide students with strategies to learn and utilize vocabulary in the best way possible (Brooks, 2010). Researchers have argued that taught judgment about vocabulary and its use, which includes not only making distinctions between different types of vocabulary, but also the appropriateness of words depending on the situation, must be imparted to the learners (Wu & Wang, 2010). In addition to that, the importance of selecting the most suitable types of vocabulary has also been highlighted (Wu & Wang, 2010), as well as focusing on high frequency words during ESP courses (Brooks, 2010). Thus, it can be said that the key distinctive feature of ESP is vocabulary, whether it may be Legal English, Medical English, or any other variant. We may cite Business English as an example, as there exist some lexical words and phrases whose frequency of occurrence in Business English, as well as application, is not only higher, but also distinct when compared to General English (Benhaoued, 2013). One case, of many, would be the word 'supply', which in General English is rarely employed and usually carries the meaning of a verb, but in Business English it is commonly present and most of the time employed as a noun (Benhaoued, 2013).

As the ability of making clear distinctions as to the implementation of vocabulary is seen as vital, it must then be stressed that one of the main objectives of teachers and institutions involved in ESP should be to equip the learners with the best ways to acquire and implement vocabulary so that they may independently develop their aptitudes and skills (Brooks, 2010). Through a thorough understanding of all these points, it may be concluded that the teaching and learning of vocabulary plays a key role in the overall structure of the language teaching program (Wu & Wang, 2010).

### **2.3 TEXT DIFFICULTY IN PRINTED MATERIALS**

Once we have established the importance of vocabulary in ESP, we may then venture into understanding how vocabulary can be one of the main factors which affect the difficulty level of a text. It can be said that text difficulty in printed materials, in relation to vocabulary, has been discussed by many researchers in the past. Studies have noted the fact that comprehension becomes lower when texts contain difficult vocabulary and, that in at least half of the cases, the effect is significant, while at the same time noting that it takes a high proportion of difficult vocabulary to decrease comprehension measures (Freebody & Anderson, 1983). However, when understanding what is meant by difficult words, it is necessary to consider factors which make a word hard or difficult to process and go way beyond the length of the word or the number of syllables it contains, and may range from the different meanings a word might carry to the context in which the word is used. Furthermore, apart from single difficult words being considered during analysis, other studies have also shown how lexical "chunks" may similarly account for a large proportion of vocabulary (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Moon, 1997). An example being that of

French, from which research has proven that there are more complex units than simple ones. For instance, there are 6,000 adverbial expressions compared with 2,000 adverbs, 300,000 - 400,000 compound nouns versus 80,000 simple nouns (Arnaud & Savignon, 1997).

The inability to process larger stretches of text due to vocabulary issues has been proven to slow readers down, since focusing on unfamiliar words or concepts will take up some cognitive capacity that would otherwise be used for higher level processing of the text (Laufer, 1997). Thus, if a text surpasses a certain percentage of unknown words (or chunks), processing and comprehension turns into quite a laborious task, rendering strategies such as inferencing, which otherwise might help, useless (Coady & Huckin, 1997). As a matter of fact, certain studies have claimed that by far the greatest lexical factor contributing to comprehension is the number of words in the learner's lexicon. A vocabulary of 3,000 word families or 5,000 lexical items is needed to cover 90-95% of any text, as anything below this threshold will result in vagueness and reading strategies becoming ineffective (Coady & Huckin, 1997).

Thus, both in relation words as well as lexical phrases, vocabulary is recognized as a fundamental consideration in assessing difficulty. In order to identify which words or chunks are likely to cause difficulty, certain researchers have looked into vocabulary difficulties in content area textbooks and pointed out the following problems a) difficult words used in definitions (e.g. too many abstract words, definitions which are too broad), b) idiomatic expressions (difficult to infer the meaning), c) homonyms (especially in a high density) d) specialised vocabulary from 'imported text', which in this case may be translated as loan-words originating from other languages (Williams & Dallas, 1984). Such items are also expected to be found

in the case of religious discourse, as they are sometimes employed in order to more clearly expound certain concepts which are unique to the faith.

## **2.4 TECHNICAL VOCABULARY IN ESP**

Thus, while vocabulary plays a role in determining the difficulty level of a text, it is understandable that this effect will be even more considerable when a text employs technical vocabulary in its content. Technical vocabulary is seen as directly linked to a specific subject within a defined domain, and the meanings of these terms are closely associated with a particular object area (Menon & Mukundan, 2010). In fact, technical vocabulary forms part of the system of object knowledge and the mastery of such terms is of such great importance in the field of English for Specific Purposes to the point of considering it the most important category ESP learners are required to master (Benhaoued, 2013).

It has also been argued that the understanding of technical vocabulary and their extended meaning within specific contexts poses one of the biggest challenges for those who are not experts in a specific area (Menon & Mukundan, 2010). In this regard, certain studies have compared different approaches to identifying technical words. Attempts have been made to evaluate the effectiveness of each one of them, stating how being able to accurately identify technical vocabulary provides a necessary stepping stone for looking at how learners and teachers should deal with technical vocabulary within an ESP context (Chung & Nation, 2003).

## **2.5 ISLAMIC TECHNICAL VOCABULARY**

In regards to religious technical terms, studies have continuously shown how religious observance tends to call for highly marked and self-conscious uses of certain linguistic