



Secondary Education Students' and Teachers' Perspectives on EMI

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ABSTRACT

English-medium instruction (EMI) has become popular and developed as a growing global phenomenon nowadays in International secondary education in Indonesia. By comparison to this phenomenon's rapid growth, the EMI has not indicated immediate effectiveness in its application, in particular. The purpose of this research was to investigate the perspectives of students and teachers of the implementation of EMI at an Indonesian International school called Thursina IIBS Malang and to suggest ways to maximize the advantages of the policy while decreasing its disadvantages. To examine in-depth views and experience of the policy, structured interviews were conducted with 8th graders and academic teachers who were chosen purposively. Focus group discussion (FGD) was then employed to triangulate the data. The interview and FGD results showed that both students and teachers demonstrated strong acceptance of the policy because EMI could facilitate the teaching and learning process better and improve their English skills. However, in the EFL context, it was inevitably difficult to use English fully in the classroom where EMI naturally should be implemented fully in no other languages than English. Therefore, this study is expected to provide suggestions from the perspectives of EFL practitioners to maximize the benefit of the EMI policy in an EFL context.

Keywords: *English-medium instruction (EMI); Perspectives; Secondary Education; Teaching and Learning Process*

ABSTRAK

English-medium instruction (EMI) telah menjadi populer dan berkembang sebagai fenomena global yang berkembang saat ini dalam pendidikan menengah internasional di Indonesia. Dibandingkan dengan pertumbuhan pesat fenomena ini, EMI belum menunjukkan efektivitas langsung dalam penerapannya, khususnya. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui perspektif siswa dan guru tentang penerapan EMI di sekolah Internasional Indonesia bernama Thursina IIBS Malang dan menyarankan cara untuk memaksimalkan keuntungan dari kebijakan sambil mengurangi kerugiannya. Untuk mengkaji secara mendalam pandangan dan pengalaman kebijakan, wawancara terstruktur dilakukan dengan siswa kelas 8 dan guru akademik yang dipilih secara purposive. Focus group discussion (FGD) kemudian digunakan untuk melakukan triangulasi data. Hasil wawancara dan FGD menunjukkan bahwa baik siswa maupun guru menunjukkan penerimaan yang kuat terhadap kebijakan tersebut karena EMI dapat memfasilitasi proses belajar mengajar dengan lebih baik dan meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa Inggris mereka. Namun, dalam konteks EFL, pasti sulit untuk menggunakan bahasa Inggris sepenuhnya di kelas di mana EMI secara alami harus diterapkan sepenuhnya tidak dalam bahasa lain selain bahasa Inggris. Oleh karena itu,

penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan saran dari perspektif praktisi EFL untuk memaksimalkan manfaat dari kebijakan EMI dalam konteks EFL.

Kata kunci: Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Pengantar; Perspektif; Sekolah Menengah; Proses Belajar Mengajar

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INTRODUCTION

In Indonesian, English is considered as a foreign language and becomes a compulsory subject in secondary levels of education. Although English is not used as a daily communication, being able to communicate in English is highly needed in all aspects of life such as educational purposes, professional needs, and international lifestyle development (Dardjowidjojo, 2003).

The use of English as a medium of instruction in some Indonesians' classrooms is strongly encouraged since the desire to compete with the more global academic environment is demanding. Based on ISC (International Schools) research 2017, Indonesia has 195 English-Medium International Schools which accommodate approximately 59.600 students. These schools are, for instance, Thursina IIBS Malang, Al-Izzah IIBS Batu, Sekolah Ciputra Surabaya, Global Jaya School, and etc. English as an instructional medium (EMI) has rapidly spread and is considered to improve language learning as it provides a natural environment for sufficient communication in the target language. In such a natural environment, the learner does not need to make a deliberate effort to improve his or her language skills. By using EMI, learners are expected will be given the chance in more real-life to use the target language.

Thus, EMI begins to develop as a growing global phenomenon nowadays (Dearden, 2014). By comparison to this phenomenon's rapid growth and advantages, the EMI has not indicated immediate effectiveness in its application, in particular.

In Indonesian international school, however, English is not only a compulsory course but also the medium of instruction in the classroom. This means that the teachers and students in this school are demanded to have highly proficient English since the learning sources and processes are adapting to international standards. In Indonesian's national curriculum itself, English begins to be taught in junior high school level where the students learn English from the most basic competence. Moreover, these International schools adapt International Curriculum in the teaching and learning process which learning coursebooks, content, and learning aims are different from what stated in National Curriculum. Using EMI in Indonesian secondary educations classrooms will be a big challenge for both students and teachers. Students with little or no prior English learning in their elementary school will likely have difficulty to read and make or copy notes from their teachers. This results in students with poor English skills to feel not

convenient in EMI classes and it is shown by their understanding of the modules, class participation, the result of examination and their overall performance (Sivaraman et al., 2014). The same goes for teachers; it is predicted that teachers' low English proficiency may lead to inefficient and ineffective teaching processes. As Ibrahim (2014) said, a teacher who cannot speak English fluently may face plenty of obstacles in teaching. Their instructions may be marked by delays, hesitations, circumlocutions, wordiness, and inaccuracies of the grammatical, lexical, and expression, and this will undoubtedly delay or even impede students' understanding of the teaching material.

In the concern with the research investigating EMI, Chang (2010) did research about EMI. The findings showed that, while they indicated their competence on average, EMI provided an opportunity to develop their English skills. The students also showed better receptive than productive skills. However, teachers have done very little to develop students' language skills. As for the acquiring of academic content, the students attributed the difficulties they suffered to their lack of knowledge of the target language.

Based on the research, it is clear that EMI can have many challenges for both learners and teachers. In the same classroom setting, students can demonstrate different attitudes to the language learning process. These vary attitudes require the teachers to be aware of their teachings' weaknesses and the students' need to enhance the students' learning development. When both teachers and students realize their insecurities in EMI classes, the teacher can reflect the factors that ultimately lead to students' success in L2 learning.

Previous studies on EMI (e.g., Simbolon, 2018; Kym & Kym, 2014) have mainly focused on university students and rarely explored Indonesian teenagers. In fact, studying students at the very beginning of learning English can be very helpful in providing meaningful insight into the implementation of EMI as well as in directing teachers' and students' needs in teaching and learning English. The study, therefore, aims to examine teachers' and students' perspectives on the implementation of EMI in the context of an Indonesian International secondary school.

METHOD

The research design used in this study was phenomenology. Phenomenology is a qualitative research design that focuses on the commonality of the living experience of a particular group in a specific community (Creswell, 2013). Using this method, the researcher focused on investigating the teachers' and students' perspectives regarding the implementation of EMI (English Medium of Instruction) within the Indonesian international school context. The participants expressed their point of view/perspective about teaching and learning by using EMI that they have experienced at their school so that the researcher got the whole 'picture' of the phenomenon discussed in this context.

This study was conducted at SMP Thursina IIBS Malang. This school combines two curricula: a national curriculum and an international curriculum. The international curriculum is adapted from the Cambridge International Curriculum (CIC). The school requires teachers and students to use English as a means of communication during the

teaching & learning process. Subsequently, students and teachers are demanded to have an international standards competence level in English which is higher than the standard stipulated in the national curriculum.

The participants were divided into two groups; Academic teachers and students. The participants from both groups were chosen by using purposive sampling. The researcher chose the participant purposively; the most authoritative participants who have been well understood and accustomed to the implementation of EMI were chosen to get the best research samples that represented the phenomena. In order to limit the participants, the snowball sampling technique was applied.

Interview and focus group discussion were employed to collect the data. Initially, the in-depth interviews were conducted to both students and teachers who had been chosen authoritatively based on the criteria of participant who really mastered and had deep understanding about the phenomena studied. The researcher then transcribed the data. At this stage, she discarded all irrelevant information. The following steps were line-by-line and color-coding. The analysis of the data became more profound as the codes were detailed. Next, she put similar codes into the same categories and moved them around in order to find out a way that reflected the best analysis. The categorization of codes in the previous step reflected themes. The researcher connected the themes in meaningful order to get the coverage of the data or emergent themes.

The second, third, and following in-depth interviews could be done until the finding reaches the saturation point. Finally, following the students' and teachers' in-depth interviews, FGD was done to triangulate the findings. The researcher gathers 6-8 students who were purposively and authoritatively chosen and agreed to join this FGD. The FGD data was analysed to confirm and make the conclusion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Perspectives on the Use of English as Medium of instructions

Based on results of the interview and FGD with the students, it was found that the students' perspectives on the use of English as a medium of instruction in the classroom could be classified into four, namely: *Readiness for EMI*, *Challenges of EMI during teaching and learning process in the classroom*, *Improvement of language*, and *Language instruction preference*.

a. Readiness for EMI

As for the first interview topic related to students' English proficiency and background, in general, the participating students indicated that they had received English as one of their compulsory subjects in their elementary school. Therefore, English is not a brand-new thing they need to learn since they have basic knowledge about it. Some students even joined additional courses to increase their English level. An example was provided by Student 3 who stated in the following excerpt:

*I have studied English since kindergarten, I had English private tutor. From grade 1 to grade 6, I learnt English at school (SD Anak Shaleh Malang)
(Name:HZ, Students 3, interview, January 15th, 2020)*

Moreover, all junior high students who either participated in interview or focus group discussion session indicated that their English level are mostly in B1 (Intermediate / independent user) and some of them are in A2 (Elementary / basic user) based on CEFR level (Common European Framework of Reference for Language) the school uses; since this school adapted Cambridge International curriculum. The students' English class will be classified based on the CEFR level. Every year before the semester starts, the students have an English progression test to know their CEFR level. This level will determine their class or group for the learning process in academic subjects.

b. Challenges of EMI during Teaching and Learning Process in the Classroom

The students were asked about their perspectives regarding the implementation of EMI in their learning process in the classroom. They agreed that even though they enjoyed learning using EMI, they still claimed that they were more comfortable if their teacher did not fully deliver the lecture in English. They preferred the lessons were conducted partially using Bahasa Indonesia. The use of English fully could be applied in some learning activities such as students' group presentation. The interview excerpt below highlighted this point:

Most teachers use English entirely in the classroom. This sometimes makes me get difficulty in understanding the material explained by the teachers. I hope the teachers will mix teaching using English and Bahasa Indonesia; for example, the material written in PPT is fully in English, but when they explain the lesson, they should translate it a bit using Bahasa Indonesia. In some activities, such as group discussion and group presentation, I prefer using English entirely to improve my speaking skill. (Name:AAG, Students 1, interview, January 10th, 2021)

In addition, when the students were asked about the most persistent language issue faced in learning using EMI, almost all students in this study demonstrated their difficulty in learning the essential vocabulary and follow teachers' face-paced teaching. Student 3 elaborated on this issue and stated in the following excerpt:

When I try to follow the lesson, I often need to find the meaning of difficult vocabulary in the dictionary, which sometimes takes time. Fortunately, I can ask the teachers' help to explain to me what the words mean. Moreover, sometimes teachers speak too fast, and their language is so rigid and stiff like written in the books that sometimes more difficult to understand. I like it when teachers explain the lesson in their own words. (Name:HZ, Students 3, interview, January 15th, 2020)

c. Improvement of Language

Most interviewed participants reported an improvement in their language skills as a result of using EMI regularly during their teaching and learning practices. Most students agreed that EMI could help to enrich their vocabulary. This made them more

confident and productive in trying to compose sentences in English. The interview excerpt by Student 1 below noted the point:

It improves well. Especially my vocabulary. I find unfamiliar vocabulary in the class, and gradually I can understand the meaning well since I use those vocabulary often in the class. (Name:GMA, Student 1, FGD, February 2nd . 2021)

Moreover, some students noted that their speaking skill was also improving well both in the classroom or in their daily conversation context as the result of their built confidence in using English. This can be seen in the following excerpt:

It improves well. Since at Tazkia I am accustomed to have conversation with teachers formally and with friends informally, I think I have speaking practice a lot. Moreover, I am listening to people's talk in English a lot. This makes me enrich my vocabulary and imitate the pronunciation. I can be more active English user confidently. (Name: NAR, Student 3, FGD, February 2nd . 2021)

The findings above indicated that learning in English could increase students' English level at least in some skills and language components such as speaking, listening, and vocabulary. Overall, the findings reported that students' speaking skills had more improved than other skills. It was interesting since none of the participated students believed that EMI could facilitate them to improve their reading skills or content mastery in each subject.

Therefore, the findings suggest that students at least could improve one or two English skills, even though no one achieved all expected language skills to improve. This is common since EMI was only the instructional language which the understanding for each student may differ from others. In this context, most students started their studies with limited linguistic competence. This raises the question of whether the EMI policy is appropriate to achieve the purpose of raising students' English level.

To get deeper findings of students' language improvement, they were asked if they would obtain any language help to enhance their language skills from the school. The participating students delivered that they received a lot of English development programs that helped them to enrich their vocabulary as well as improving their speaking skill and confidence as the example shown in Student 1's interview excerpt below:

In Tazkia, we have a Vocabulary enrichment program once every two weeks. It helps us to get a new vocabulary. We also have a Public Speaking program every Saturday morning. We can practice delivering a speech in front of our friends confidently. Lastly, we have English Language Court. I know it sounds scary, but it's an outstanding program that obligates me to speak in English from 7 a.m; to 3 p.m. All programs are beneficial for all students to improve their English skills. (Name:KL, Student 2, interview, January 13th, 2021)

d. Language Instruction Preference

The majority of the participants agreed that English and Indonesian were the most commonly used languages in the classroom for instruction. Some students argued that English should be used as the language of instruction in learning because, in addition to being a foreign language, it would greatly assist students in studying or traveling abroad. This can be seen in the following excerpt:

Sure it does. We learn a new language. English is an international language so there is nothing wrong with learning English, we can work abroad. When I was in high school I would like to join an international club / community. From a young age, I want to study abroad and got a scholarship. And of course I have to speak English first. (Name:HZ, Students 3, interview, January 15th, 2020)

Meanwhile, some students argued that the language of instruction in learning should be determined by the subject being taught. Science and English classes, for example, were best taught in English because the books used were in English and the scientific principles in science subjects were widely explained in English. But, for them, Math was more suitable taught in Bahasa Indonesia since this subject needs not only a better understanding of concepts but also mastery in the way of a calculating formula. This has been expressed by Student 2 as stated in the following excerpt:

I prefer full English in subjects such as physics and biology. English lesson is really mandatory to use fully English. If math I don't think it's good in English fully. I am really bad at math, I am not good at math at all and English is a foreign language, so if I learn math, not in English fully or I mean partially in Bahasa Indonesia, I think I will understand more. (Name:KL, Student 2, interview, January 13th, 2021)

Student 3 added in the except below:

We can more easily do tasks or examination that must be in English like Cambridge. Our final project will be related to the Cambridge curriculum and this will make it easier for us to understand more. (Name:HZ, Students 3, interview, January 15th, 2020)

The data above revealed that the majority of the interviewees agreed to use English as a full medium of instruction in the classroom for many subjects, including English and science lessons, since the books used in both classes were in English, making it easier for students to answer questions in the test later. The majority of students, however, accepted that the Indonesian language was also appropriate for use as a language of instruction in learning since it is the mother tongue and is spoken every day. As a result, students had an easier time understanding the material used in the teaching-learning process, especially in Bahasa Indonesia and social lessons that used an Indonesian book.

As a result, all students at SMP Thursina IIBS Malang were required to use English as the language of instruction in the classroom for all classes, with the exception

of Bahasa Indonesia subject. Students, on the other hand, recommend combining Indonesian and English in the teaching-learning process to make it easier for them to understand the content and grasp the concepts.

Teachers' Perspectives on the Use of English as Medium of instructions

Based on results of the interview with the academic teachers, it was found that the teachers' perspectives on the use of English as a medium of instruction in the classroom could be classified into four, namely: *Readiness for EMI, Challenges of EMI during teaching and learning process in the classroom, Improvement of language, and Language instruction preference.*

a. Readiness for EMI

In line with the students result, based on the finding during the interview sessions, it is found out that all the teachers have good English proficiency. No participating teachers have a TOEFL score below 550 or B2 CEFR level (Upper Intermediate / Independent user). This is because the school requires them to have a minimum of 550 ITP TOEFL paper-based test scores when they applied as teachers in this school. The teachers themselves mostly had experience in teaching international curricula for more than three years. The essential expected qualifications in teaching and learning using EMI have been met by considering both students' and teachers' English language proficiency and background. This can be seen in the Teacher 1's excerpt:

It's been 4.5 years. Starting from 2016 until now. For English lesson especially, we adapted the Cambridge curriculum from the start, so we used EMI from the start. I graduated from the State University of Malang, majoring in English Education. My TOEFL score is 550 and my TOEIC score is 870. (Name:DKV, Teacher 1, interview, January 20th, 2021)

b. Challenges of EMI during Teaching and Learning Process in the Classroom

Teachers were usually expected to teach or lecture and learned knowledge from textbooks to pass it on to their students. They were supposed to speak (giving/ presenting the lesson to the students) and read (understanding the textbooks for teaching) in English. The participating teachers, especially Science and Math Teacher, claimed that sometimes they get difficulty picking up the most appropriate and communicative language in teaching. Even though they might be able to speak in English fluently, delivering the lesson and making the students grab the concept correctly were other challenges when the material was taught in English. This was because Science and Math teachers usually used too formal or rigid language as it was stated in the textbook that was less communicative for teaching context.

In the teaching and learning process using EMI, all teachers agreed that when the material taught becomes more complex, it seems inevitable to shift English to students' mother tongues (L1). To compensate for English, Bahasa Indonesia was used. Therefore, while teaching in mixed modes or code-switching in the classroom could improve the

productivity of teaching and learning processes. This was pointed out by Teacher 3 in the following excerpt:

It's challenging for me as Math teacher. As we know that Math is considered as a 'ghost' or the most difficult subject for the students. Teacher often meets great difficulty in teaching even when we deliver the material using students mother tough. Teaching math using English is challenging so I do need to use Bahasa Indonesia partially in my class. (Name:IQ, Teacher 3, interview, January 22nd, 2021)

c. Improvement of Language

All interviewed teachers agreed that their ability to speak in English was improving well even though they were not English teachers. All teachers stated that not only speaking, but their content mastery for teaching was enhancing well due to the school policy that requires them to teach using English in the classroom. This was because this school was adapted an international curriculum that was Cambridge curriculum. As a result, teachers were forced to read teaching resources and textbook in English as explained by Teacher 2 in the following excerpt:

Personally, I think EMI is quite helpful because in fact, most of the literature in this biology subject is in English. And also there are certain terms which in my opinion cannot be translated into Bahasa Indonesia. These terms are easier to understand in English. So, for example, since the beginning we have used English, it will make it easier for students to understand terms in English and because basically the knowledge comes from abroad countries and is communicated in English, so if I understand more information in English than in Bahasa Indonesia. There are explanations of processes in Biology that cannot be explained in Bahasa Indonesia. (Name:RF, teacher 1, interview, January 18th, 2021)

Moreover, the teachers added that they also received language support from the school. The support is in the form of English Language Test preparation, Teaching Cambridge workshop, and teachers' reward. These language programs were also helpful to train the teachers to overcome their problem in delivering the lesson ineffectively and less communicatively as noted by Teacher 2 in the excerpt below:

All of us who haven't got any English certificate is obligatory to take the TOEIC test. Before the test, we received the test preparation first. All academic teacher also needs to join the workshop to teach the Cambridge curriculum. This is really helpful for me to learn how to teach biology effectively and communicatively. Also, we have a teacher of the Month (ToM) award. This award is to appreciate the teacher who always tries to speak in English inside and outside the classroom. I once received the ToM award, and I really feel proud to myself. (Name:RF, Teacher 1, interview, January 18th, 2021)

To sum up the findings, it is concluded that teachers' language improvement happened not only due to the use of EMI in the classroom but also because of the

comprehensive programs made by the school to achieve the purpose of raising students' and teachers' English level and optimizing the teaching and learning process in English.

d. Language Instruction Preference

Based on the result of the interview, EMI was largely supported by teachers based on the role that English had significant impacts on language skills and academic content learning. However, teachers also expressed doubts about the degree to which EMI should be implemented in the classroom, particularly in a particular part of the lesson where it would be more effective to use Bahasa Indonesia. They argued that they would need to use more straightforward instruction if any of the students are unable to cope with the knowledge presented delivered in English. The argument can be seen in the following excerpt:

Using EMI in teaching Biology is helpful both for the students and for me as a teacher. Some Biology terms are more comfortable and more effective to be conducted using English. It will help them to understand the concept of the lesson better. They will have a broader vocabulary and improve their speaking skill since all discussions are in English. However, I will use straightforward language to present the material/topic to make junior high students to understand the lesson easier. (Name:RF, Teacher 1, interview, January 18th, 2021)

Furthermore, unfamiliar or new words were often a frustrating learning barrier for students, teachers used L1 in temporarily to overcoming this when it was practical and efficient to do so. All teachers reported allowing students to translate to each other in Bahasa Indonesia when content was not fully understood by everyone in the class.

Overall, all teachers reported communicating in Bahasa Indonesia at length in the classroom only to aid students' learning. Teachers were conscious of the EMI policy governing language use in the classroom and did not want to be penalized for not abiding the rules. The teachers also reported allowing the use of mixed instructions of the L1 in the classroom to ensure students were learning.

The study found out an interesting finding that in EFL context it seemed inevitably difficult to use English fully in the classroom where EMI naturally should be implemented fully in no other languages than English. Madhavan, McDonald, and Paris (2014) stated that EMI essentially refers to the teaching of a subject using the medium of the English language, but where there were no explicit language learning aims and where English was not the national language. Subsequently, students and teachers suggest combining Indonesian and English language in the teaching-learning process to make it easier for them to understand the content. Supporting the students' claims, it was stated by Simbolon (2018) that teaching in mixed instructions or code-switching in the classroom can improve the productivity of teaching and learning processes when the material taught become more complex.

CONCLUSION

The interview and FGD results show that the EMI policy implemented in an EFL context proved to be effective and suitable in delivering course content due to the strong background of English level and language support given to the students and teachers. Both students and teachers also demonstrate strong acceptance to the policy because EMI can facilitate the teaching and learning process better and improve their English skills. Moreover, most interesting finding was found that in Indonesian EFL context, it was unavoidable to mix language instruction in the classrooms to facilitate teaching and learning process. EMI which should be naturally implemented fully in English could not be implemented as it was since EFL students needed more exploration of material learnt in more simple and familiar language instruction. Therefore, this study is expected to provide suggestions from EFL practitioners' perspectives to maximize the benefit of the EMI policy in an EFL context.

The results of the study may also contribute to the awareness-raising process of teachers & students and may cause stakeholders to pay attention to the study about the need to raise awareness of EMI and how to enhance their practice in the classroom. Finally, as it allows both teachers and students to reflect on their current EMI activities and experiences as a way to enhance teaching and learning, the present study is essential.

English-medium instruction (EMI) has become popular in secondary education in Indonesia. The use of EMI in some Indonesians' classrooms is strongly encouraged since the desire to compete with the more global academic environment is demanding. From a pedagogical viewpoint, the present study sheds light on the perspectives of teachers and students about EMI. Moreover, as the researchers expose instructors' and students' views in this report, it is a remarkable effort to provide advice to meet the needs of educating skilled and competent learners in a globalized world.

Future research could possibly explore the perspectives of both teachers and students towards the possible implementation of EMI at national levels through comprehensive study. Since this was a qualitative study, it is recommended to conduct future quantitative study in the same field to get holistic data. Moreover, further research in the context of Indonesia and similar contexts should employ more powerful research techniques such as survey, document analysis, observation of actual classes, and ethnography to explore the complexities involved in the use of EMI.

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