

Teachers' Perspectives On The Implementation Of English As A Medium Of Instruction In Indonesian Schools

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Abstract:

Implementing English as a medium of instruction in Indonesian schools has required teachers to employ specific strategies. While using English to teach, teachers also experience challenges. To mitigate the challenges during the implementation of English in the learning process, teachers experience various moments when applying the policy from their workplaces. This study aims to discover teachers' perspectives when facing and dealing with challenges at school. Employing a narrative inquiry approach, this research involves three English teachers from three different teaching levels: an elementary school teacher, a junior high school teacher, and a senior high school teacher. The result of the interview showed that challenges to implement English as a medium of instruction come from teachers and students. Every teaching level of each teacher influences provides unique challenges and ways to mitigate them since teachers must deal with students with different learning preparation. However, most of teachers need to have English proficiency to support the delivery of lesson in the teaching process. Students must also have English background knowledge for understanding the material in English version. Students need to comprehend the various terms of English words in different lessons such as Math and Science. To tackle such challenges, professional development is an essential program for teachers. By getting professional development, teachers can increase their proficiency in English for facilitating the lesson. Students need to experience peer support to gain a better understanding of English communication. Acquiring English through daily communication with their friends at school can ease the process to learn the second language. **KEYWORDS:** English as a medium of instruction (EMI), Indonesian schools, teachers, students, challenges

1) INTRODUCTION:

The rise of English as a global language has influenced the educational system in many countries. The government has begun implementing English as the delivery language and requires teachers to use English in their classrooms. This also happens in most Asian countries [1]. Schools from pre-primary to primary, secondary, and high schools use English to deliver the lessons. The number of uses of English increases daily since the government sees the benefit of internationalizing their educational institutions and equipping students with English skills.

The shift in educational settings to start using English is called English as a medium of instruction (EMI). EMI allows schools to teach students in English and gives everyone the opportunity to speak in English [2]. This environment creates a habit for teachers and students to communicate fluently without being bothered by the grammatical structure or translation methods [3]. It supports the language acquisition process for students and teachers inside the school.

With the positive impacts of EMI, some experts claim that EMI also represents a bold gamble on the path to educational progress, promising global access and academic rigor but harboring potential pitfalls of linguistic disparity and cultural dilution [4]. There are two sides of EMI that education will face while implementing it. When using English, both students and teachers need to have proper proficiency, and they need to learn the cultural identity of the target language [5]. To understand the true impact of EMI, there is a need to dive beyond policy pronouncements and statistical summaries, venturing into the lived experiences of those navigating this linguistic crossroads: the teachers [6].

The research shows that some schools in Asian countries have implemented EMI [7]. Indonesia, as one of the countries in Asia, also faces this phenomenon. Indonesia is on this trajectory because Indonesia wants to increase its students' competence in English, but Indonesia also needs to preserve its culture [8]. Besides, many parents have chosen to enroll their kids to study in private primary schools with EMI settings since private schools have offered better opportunities for their children in the future [9].

Teachers who teach in EMI schools face some challenges and anxiety because they must be fluent in English [10]. They also need to be able to use media to teach so that students can better understand the authentic material [11]. This situation

forces teachers to upgrade their skills from time to time. They also need to adapt to students who come from different linguistic backgrounds [12].

Schools' policies to monitor the development of teachers in the EMI setting are also influential [13]. Some schools oblige their teachers to upgrade their English skills while teaching the students at the same time. This school-level policy creates certain pressure on the teachers as professional people [14]. To support the teachers, schools also provide professional development for teachers so that they can increase their proficiency easily [15].

Research conducted worldwide, spanning from Thailand to Malaysia and other countries, presents a multifaceted depiction of the influence of EMI [16]. While proponents tout its potential for enhanced internationalization and access to global knowledge, critics raise concerns about linguistic inequalities, cultural erosion, and teacher challenges [17]. This research adds to the conversation by focusing on the Indonesian context, offering valuable insights into the unique linguistic landscape and educational system shaping EMI's trajectory. Various studies have explored the experiences and concerns of teachers in the adoption of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), acknowledging their crucial role. Research in China and Nepal highlights teacher anxieties regarding language proficiency, pedagogical adaptations, and student comprehension [18], [19]. This study complements these works by offering rich personal narratives, capturing the emotional tapestry woven into teachers' professional journeys as they navigate EMI's uncertainties.

Although there is previous research on several areas of EMI implementation, there is a lack of special focus on the Indonesian environment. This study, therefore, fills a crucial gap by highlighting the specific challenges and opportunities presented by Indonesia's unique linguistic and cultural landscape. The work contributes to the existing body of knowledge by offering a unique and insightful perspective on EMI implementation through the lens of Indonesian teachers' experiences. Through an in-depth exploration of their stories, the research sheds light on the difficulties and successes of this educational transformation and poses important inquiries regarding language, identity, and the prospects of education in Indonesia. The research paves the way for further investigations that consider the nuanced realities of diverse classrooms and communities, ultimately encouraging a more holistic and humane approach to understanding and shaping the trajectory of EMI in Indonesia.

To fill the gap in the research, there are two research questions to be addressed.

- a. What obstacles do teachers face when implementing EMI in Indonesian schools?
- b. How do teachers face the obstacles in implementing EMI in Indonesian schools?

2) METHODS AND METHODOLOGY:

This study used the narrative inquiry as the research design. This research, by adopting a narrative inquiry approach, stood out for its nuanced portrayal of human experiences. As argued by [20], narrative research offers a window into individuals' subjective understandings and lived realities, allowing for a deeper appreciation of the complexities and contradictions inherent in educational transformations like EMI.

The researcher chose the subject research purposefully by involving three teachers from different teaching levels. They are one teacher from elementary school, one teacher from junior high school, and one teacher from senior high school. All of the teachers are graduates of English education. They are active in all English skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They all work in private schools in Yogyakarta province and Central Java province of Indonesia. The researcher chose English teachers from private institutions because English as a medium of instruction is currently used in private schools. At the beginning of the research, the researcher surveyed by contacting the teacher from senior high school. After doing the survey, the researcher came to the school to do a face-to-face interview and recorded the interview process. The researcher continued the interview by observing some educational documents, such as lesson plans and the textbooks used by the senior high school teacher. Due to the distance, the researcher interviewed the other two elementary and junior high teachers through Zoom meetings. Each interview lasted for about one hour up to two hours.

The interview questions were adapted from previous articles. All questions were given to interviewees to learn about their experience while implementing English as a medium of instruction in their institutions. There were some aspects that the researcher involved in the list of questions. They are related to the familiarity of teachers with EMI, the potential advantages of using EMI, potential difficulties of using EMI, pedagogical approaches and adaptations of teachers to facilitate learning in EMI settings, materials and tools for effective EMI implementation, teacher training for preparing EMI implementation, recommendation from experienced teachers to enhance EMI practices, teacher's overall evaluation of EMI, and teacher's aspiration for the development of EMI in Indonesian education, and parent's involvement in EMI implementation.

The interviews were examined inductively using the thematic analysis method outlined by [21]. This analysis comprises six sequential processes, which entail thoroughly perusing and reviewing the transcripts to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the material. Following that, the information was classified into some groups. The items were labeled and methodically contrasted with the recognized classifications. The concepts were evaluated and organized according to the study questions. Finally, concrete examples were identified to substantiate the topic. Subsequently, the teachers participating in the study were requested to evaluate the themes to determine the findings' reliability.

3] RESULTS

Narrative inquiry research through the interview process revealed some information about implementing EMI in Indonesian schools. In this session, the researcher deliberated the interview results and discussed them based on the questions.

Teachers' Experience in Implementing EMI

Every teacher that was interviewed has different experience in implementing EMI in the schools. Their statement is written in the following script.

T1: *"This provided English speaking environment for students. Students and all teachers use English for daily communication. Some lessons such as Math, Science, Art, Computer, Catholicism, and PE are delivered in English."*

T2: *"In our schools, English has become the language to communicate on a daily basis. Since this school is a national school, all lessons are delivered in English and Bahasa. For example, students will learn Math and Matematika."*

T3: *"The teachers in this school use English to deliver the lesson. I am teaching other subject teachers to speak in English and give them examples of classroom instruction."*

All teachers explained that they used English for daily communication and utilized English as the language to deliver other lessons at schools. They implemented EMI by integrating English into their classroom instruction so that students are exposed to an English-speaking environment.

Perceived Benefits of Using EMI

When given this type of question, all teachers explained that using EMI in the classroom could facilitate students' daily communication in English. The details are written in the following script.

T1: *"I prefer explaining to my students by giving examples, like 'Instead of saying I do my homework last night, you could say I did my homework last night.'"*

T2: *"My students used the words or phrases that could be found in daily communication, but the words were not listed in their textbooks like thingy. They usually say this word when telling unknown objects."*

T3: *"Students become fluent and confident when talking in English."*

They found that students began understanding the use of language chunks that do not exist in the textbook but are actively used in spoken communication. Through this type of communication, there was a process of learning grammatical structure unintentionally while talking in the classroom. When students made mistakes while talking with others, the teacher chose to remind students directly without explaining the grammatical structure. For instance, the students used the auxiliary verb "do" to tell activities in the past. The teacher corrected that students need to use "did" instead. The students were exposed to a more native environment at school. For example, the students used "thingy" when explaining something they did not understand or remember.

Perceived Challenges of Using EMI

Based on the interview results, the teachers found that the challenges come from the students and teachers in the schools.

T1: *"Until today, I still believe there is no fixed method to teach English to students. I always observe my students' behavior in the learning process. Once they yawn, it is time for me to change my teaching method."*

T2: *"Junior high school students get bored easily. I need to adjust my way of teaching."*

The students experienced boredom during the lesson, so the teachers needed to stay alert. Once the teachers found students yawning, it was time for teachers to find interesting teaching methods and material to attract students' attention. Students' background knowledge of English is also essential to run the program of EMI in the school.

T1: *"Some of my students did not graduate from English-speaking schools or kindergarten. Some of them moved from state schools or Indonesian-based schools. They need to adapt from one semester to a whole year to understand English communication. Once I found a new student who did not get used to speaking English, I would help translate the classroom instruction. I would also ask my other students to make friends with this new student so that someone could accompany him/her."*

To help new students adapt to the EMI setting, students can gather support from their classmates and classroom teachers' supervision.

Another challenge was from the teachers.

T3: *"Most teachers in this school graduated from non- English majors. They have difficulty speaking in English all the time."*

In English-speaking schools, some teachers, such as subject teachers, come from non-English majors. Those teachers had different levels of English proficiency to support the lesson. The low level of English proficiency caused teachers to use improper terms while teaching in English.

Impact of EMI on Students' English Language Proficiency

The teachers explained that students' English language proficiency aligned with their scores in other subjects.

T1: *"Kids who could do good in English usually gain good scores in English-based subjects. However, they could not good scores in Indonesian-based subjects."*

T2: *"Based on my observation, pupils who are strong in English have a better chance to get good scores in either English or Indonesian-based subjects, such as Math or Matematika."*

Students who were good at Science with English language delivery also got good scores in science delivered in Bahasa Indonesia. In contrast, students with low English proficiency scores could not get good scores in other subjects. There was a correlation between students' English proficiency and their academic performances.

The researcher found an interesting fact in the elementary school.

T1: *"We give a score deduction for about 0.25 up to 0.5 if the students make wrong answers grammatically. I will put a circle on the wrong part and let them check the mistake themselves."*

The teacher used the scoring concept by involving the grammatical element. For example, the teacher deducted a score for students' mistakes in written or spoken works. This was to remind students that their academic performance in an EMI setting is essential since they will use their skills to communicate effectively outside the school.

Strategies to Support Students' Learning in EMI Classes

Every teacher from different teaching levels has different strategies to help their students to master English.

T1: *"Currently, the internet helps me provide interactive teaching. I can access YouTube to watch videos. I also use content from online magazines."*

T2: *"Now, I am in charge of reading and writing classes. Usually, I divide the reading process into three; pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading."*

T3: *"Games are always interesting to attract my students so that they can participate in the lesson actively."*

The elementary school teacher explained that using interactive media in the online world could increase students' interest in the EMI setting. For example, the teacher used YouTube and online magazines to give authentic materials to students. In junior high school, the teacher mentioned drilling to habituate students with sufficient vocabulary. Besides, the junior high school teacher divided the process of reading activities into three: pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading. This step could help students to easily understand reading in a more thorough condition. The teacher of a senior high school used the concept of games and rewards to motivate students to speak English. The students showed a positive perception of the involvement of the game in the learning process.

Useful Resources for Teaching English through EMI

All teachers use textbooks and online sources to support their teaching practice. However, they employ different ways of using them.

T1: *"The textbooks for English-based lessons in this school are written based on the Cambridge curriculum. They were sent from Singapore."*

T2: *"I usually use interesting content from YouTube. The content involves an infographic detail."*

The teacher from elementary school used the textbook and some authentic materials from the internet. The textbooks used by elementary and junior high school students were exported from some countries that use English as their second and main language. The teacher believed that the content on YouTube was varied and that the teacher could choose any preferred materials to introduce to students. The teachers from junior high school and senior high school also supported the idea by mentioning the textbook and some channels on YouTube because the content of YouTube was given as an infographic show.

Interestingly, the teacher from Junior High school frequently used the whiteboard with colorful markers to help students understand materials effectively.

T2: "Sometimes, my students asked me to give out the presentation file after the lesson. However, I did not give it to them. They will just save it in the folder but they did not read it at all."

The teacher argued that giving presentation files to students was not good enough because students tended to collect the files without being willing to review the materials for the next lesson and their assessment.

Professional Development Opportunities to Prepare for EMI Teaching

There are some programs to support teachers in implementing EMI in their schools.

T1: "The publisher of the textbooks usually gives training for teachers in this school about new teaching methods, especially with the content of their textbooks. Sometimes, the school principal and the vice principal work together to give in-house training for teachers about classroom language instruction since some of the teachers are not English graduates."

The elementary school teacher explained that there were some programs for teachers to prepare for using EMI. The first program was training outside the school, and a textbook publisher conducted it. The speakers who gave training were from Singapore and Filipina. The focus of the training was to give teachers the best practice on how to teach English and Science. The second program was in-house training for all teachers in the elementary school. This program was to share information on how to teach in an EMI setting from senior vice principals. In the end, the elementary school teacher explained the classification of teachers based on their proficiency.

T1: "Currently, the teachers will be grouped based on their English proficiency. There are four groups; A, B, C, and D. They will join a training program specifically based on their group. Once they can upgrade their skill, they will move to a higher group."

To support the EMI program for all teachers in the elementary school, the teacher said there were placement tests to group teachers based on their English proficiency. This was essential because some teachers in elementary school did not graduate with an English education major but with a basic education major. In the beginning, new teachers had to sit in the classroom and be grouped into groups A, B, C, and D. After the placement test, each teacher would follow a program to upgrade their English proficiency. Once their English proficiency was improved, these teachers would move to a higher level.

The professional development program in elementary school was quite different from junior high school.

T2: "As an English teacher, I joined a learning community called MGMP. This is to inform me of the current teaching method."

The program was conducted to familiarize teachers with English conversation. Besides, the junior high school teacher also joined the English teacher community at the local level. In this community, the junior high school teacher met many English teachers from non-English speaking schools or public schools. On certain occasions, the program of this community conducted a basecamp by coming to other schools to gain examples of how to apply EMI in other private schools.

The last teacher from the Senior high school explained that there was training for all teachers in the Senior high school.

T3: "I was instructed by the school principal to teach basic classroom instruction to other teachers, but you know they just use it to open and end the class."

This teacher was in charge of becoming the trainer since none of the teachers were graduates of English education. This training focused on familiarizing non-English teachers with classroom instruction in English, such as "open the book" and "move on to the next page". When the interview was conducted, the researcher found that non-English teachers used English expressions to open and close the lesson. However, the teacher kept using the Bahasa Indonesia for the rest of the lessons.

Suggestions for Improving the Implementation of EMI in Indonesian Schools

All of the teachers explained that there was a strong necessity to enhance the teachers' English proficiency.

T1: "Teachers who teach in EMI schools must have a good level of English proficiency. They cannot explain the content if they do not know the terms."

T2: "They need to know how to speak in English properly because they will give good examples for students."

T3: "By being fluent in English, they will be more confident to talk in front of their students."

This proficiency was pivotal in conducting EMI in classroom and school settings. A teacher with a low level of proficiency could get stuck while explaining the material. Therefore, the teacher must have a good basic in English. In school settings, the teacher had to be accustomed to speaking in an English environment. The teachers had to get more exposure on how to speak English properly because teaching in English is about translating the words and bringing the context.

Overall Assessment of the Use of EMI in Indonesian Schools

They believe that all schools have different conditions to implement EMI.

T1: *"Every school has different human resources to support EMI implementation. Some of them have fluent teachers. Some of them don't."*

T2: *"Private schools have different curriculums and parameters. We could not judge whether the school is already correct or not."*

T3: *"If we want to build more schools with EMI settings, we must use a single school as the model. Other schools can take the model school as an example."*

The teachers knew that some schools in Indonesia did not use EMI. Only some schools had enough human resources to conduct EMI. However, each school's situation was different. Each had a different curriculum and purpose when implementing EMI. Therefore, there was no parameter to assess whether it was the best school. The teacher explained that there was a need to build a pilot school to implement EMI. Other schools could use the pilot school as an example.

Expectations for the Future of EMI in Indonesian Schools

All teachers expected that there would be more schools in Indonesia that could implement EMI.

T1: *"I hope there will be more schools with EMI settings in Indonesia. You know many job opportunities require applicants to be fluent in English. It shows English has become one of the essential requirements in this global world."*

T2: *"EMI schools can help students to be more communicative in written and spoken ways. Some kids can answer questions on the test paper. However, they couldn't explain it orally."*

T3: *"Nowadays, the teacher can access a lot of content to support their teaching in English like PMM. It is very useful."*

They believed that mastering English was an important necessity for each student in the current era. It could be seen from the job vacancy that required applicants to be fluent in English, either in written or spoken communication. The teacher realized that some students were able to answer questions on the text, but they were unable to explain it orally. This phenomenon showed that there was a need to help students so that they could speak English well. The teacher expected that there would be more exposure to English, so they encouraged their students to speak in English. The government already launched a platform named PMM (Platform Merdeka Mengajar). This platform gave easiness for all English teachers to access English materials.

Parental Involvement in Supporting Young Learners' Success in EMI Classes

Parents were active participants in supporting their students in acquiring English.

T1: *"As a teacher, I always communicate with parents regarding their child's progress in learning. I ask them to provide their children with story books so that there will be more English content at home."*

T2: *"Our school usually sends letters to parents to inform simple information in English, but essential letters in Bahasa to avoid misunderstanding."*

The teachers believed that education was not their full responsibility. Parents could help students at home by providing English books and letting their kids watch English programs. Although some parents could not speak English, the schools sent important letters in Bahasa Indonesia. Essential letters, such as consent letters to get vaccinated, would be sent in the local language so parents could understand them easily.

4] DISCUSSION

An initial objective of the project was to identify the obstacles faced by teachers when implementing EMI in Indonesian schools. This study found that two factors influenced the implementation of EMI: students and teachers. The detailed explanation is stated below.

1. Teachers

The results of this study showed that the implementation of EMI was actualized through daily communication at school and the use of English in other subjects. There is a requirement for all teachers to be able to communicate in English and have proper English proficiency. This proficiency level can help them teach students with proper classroom instructions and give students better examples of how to use English effectively for communicative purposes [10].

However, some other teachers are not English graduates. They need to adjust themselves in using English as classroom instruction [22]. This English proficiency influences other teachers in the school who implement EMI. The impact is addressed by requiring non-English teachers to upgrade their English proficiency. Demanding non-English teachers to have better English proficiency is the policy that school principals usually apply in their schools so that all teachers can successfully support the implementation of EMI [23].

Teacher professional development is the program that teachers in schools with EMI settings need to follow. They must

understand that teachers are lifelong learners who need to upgrade their teaching skills with the current progress in English language teaching [7]. The professional development program can be conducted by inviting experts from educational institutions, such as lecturers or educators from textbook publishers.

The current investigation found that professional development was conducted continuously. The school principals and vice-principals arranged continuous professional development every semester to give training for all teachers. The previous study done by [24] confirms that continuous professional development benefits teachers in familiarizing themselves with current issues and practices in English language teaching. However, joining the continuous professional development is also challenging for some teachers who must deal with administrative stuff. Teachers must leave their students and abandon their families because they must join obligatory continuous professional development.

2. Students

Another finding is that students' background knowledge about English. Some students who did not graduate from English-speaking kindergarten faced difficulty understanding the classroom instruction and English-based lessons. They struggled to achieve minimum passing grades since they could not understand the teacher's explanation and instruction on the worksheet or question paper.[25] also reported this finding. Someone explained that English background knowledge is essential in the classroom. It helps students comprehend what their teachers say and instruct. Besides, students' background knowledge can help them associate information with content knowledge. Students who study in English-speaking schools learn English-based lessons. Their background knowledge will enable them to relate the information to the lessons that they get in school.

Teachers usually do translanguaging during class time to solve the issue of limited background knowledge of English. Translanguaging helps students easily understand their teacher's meaning [26]. Besides, translanguaging facilitates the process of translating the context of the target language into the first language better.

Another interesting finding showed that there was peer support for new students who just moved from other schools and experienced difficulty speaking in English. Teachers asked students who were good in English to assist the new students. Pairing students to gain peer support is a form of creating a friendly environment for students at school [27]. Students who are still struggling in English will not feel alone and not abandoned. Students who get support from their friends will not feel disregarded because someone stands behind them. This atmosphere of the school creates a conducive learning process. Another finding that stands out from the results reported earlier was about parental involvement. Parents and teachers must communicate effectively to support children's achievement at school [28]. Teachers communicate with parents with certain strategies. They differ in the content of letters with the target language and the national language that parents speak. It is important to note that some parents do not speak English, and some letters indicate specific information related to the safety of kids, such as gaining consent for conducting vaccination at schools. To help parents, schools make an effort to differ their language while communicating with parents to maintain the delivery of messages.

5] CONCLUSION

This study set out to find obstacles experienced by teachers who are teaching in Indonesian schools with EMI settings and how those teachers deal with the obstacles. The finding has shown that running schools with EMI settings requires teachers with good proficiency levels. The school principals need to arrange continuous professional development with balanced proportions so that teachers can adjust their working time and private time. The second major finding was that students' background knowledge in English. Background knowledge is pivotal to help students understand the content knowledge and classroom instruction. Translanguaging and pairing students with enough background knowledge are two possible solutions offered for the school with EMI settings. Taken together, these results suggest that human resources are key components to running schools with EMI settings in Indonesia. The insights gained from this study may be of assistance to English teachers, school principals, or any policymakers in the educational field about EMI implementation for various purposes, such as private courses, boarding schools, or public schools.

The major limitation of this study is that the research only involved English teachers from private schools in Indonesia. Besides, the researcher had no chance to observe the teaching process to gain a wider understanding of EMI implementation in the field. In spite of its limitations, the study certainly adds to our understanding of the vivid description of what teachers experience while conducting lessons in English. Further work needs to be done to establish whether non-English teachers also EMI experience challenges and how they cope with such challenges. This would be a

fruitful area for further work.

6] Acknowledgement

I would like to thank LPDP (*Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan*) for financial support through the 3rd Asia Pasific Conference on Educational Research, Social Science and Humanities (APCERSSH-2024). Besides, I would express my gratitude to all of mentors for abundant knowledge and mentoring the manuscript.

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