Students' Perception of English Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Indonesia: A Case Study in a Business Communication Course in a Private Higher Education Institution (HEI)

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ABSTRACT

Recently, there has been wide interest in English medium of instruction (EMI) studies. The complexities of EMI at the tertiary level in Indonesia provide an opportunity for EMI exploration in higher education institutions since most studies on EMI in Indonesia are conducted in primary and secondary schools. Therefore, the present study attempts to address the issue of EMI in a private higher education institution in the Indonesian context from students' perspectives in terms of English for learning, English for career, English for internationalisation, preservation of tradition, local and global identities, university life satisfaction, and intention to migration. This study, based on an online survey, adopted a qualitative approach with a total of 40 undergraduate students of the department of business management in a private higher education institution in Indonesia participating in this study. Following the data collection, the collected data were quantitatively analysed through descriptive statistics using SPSS 23 for Windows. The results indicate that the participants under investigation positively respond to EMI program in their institution. They perceive the importance of English for their learning and career at a global scale. They do not view English as a 'threat' to the Indonesian language and culture's vitality. For more established living/employment, they are even thinking of going abroad to another country. Overall, they perceive the implementation of EMI policy in their institution as satisfying. The study's implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

Keywords: English medium of instruction (EMI), perception, international class, higher education, education.

1.   Introduction

A large body of data concerning EMI in primary and secondary schools has also been reported although the teachers and students face difficulties due to EMI implementation (Islam et al., 2015; Wijayatunga, 2018). In Indonesia, (Zacharias, 2013) states that teachers from international standard schools (ISS) made attempts to use as much English in EMI classes as possible although they disagreed

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with the EMI policy. Their use of English in the classroom should not be interpreted as support for the EMI policy, but this is their duty as a civil servant teacher. Therefore, the use of Indonesian is still allowed to compensate the teachers' and students' lack of English proficiency. Therefore, "the ISS policy was terminated following a Constitutional Court ruling on 8 January 2013" (Zacharias, 2013, p. 105) because "the policy provides unequal access to quality education", but EMI for teaching science and mathematics keep happening pervasively in Indonesia (Aritonang, 2013 as cited in (Zacharias, 2013, p. 105).

At university level in Indonesia, studies on EMI have also appeared previously in the literature and according to (Law of the Republic of Indonesia on Higher Education No. 12, 2012) it is regulated in Paragraph 3 Article 37 Section 3 that a foreign language can be used as a language of instruction in higher education. However, EMI in Indonesia is not without obstacles and challenges. (Dewi, 2017) investigating 36 lecturers using questionnaires and interviews states that lecturers' perceptions toward EMI in Indonesian higher institutions are complex. It is not only about linguistic issues and national identity, but also sentiment towards EMI because English is said to have originated from the West. From stakeholders' perspectives, (Simbolon, 2018), carrying out a qualitative research through focus group interviews among six lecturers and three university policy makers of a private university in Indonesia, found that English mastery is considered to have great value for university graduates. Therefore, stakeholders agree that EMI should be implemented at universities. The lecturers and university officials under her study also believe that English is necessary and important for their graduates to be more globally competitive.

2.   Background

(Simbolon et al., 2020), who conducted qualitative research through focus group discussion and interviews among 21 lecturers in a public university in Indonesia, found that the participants under their investigation tend to be lacking in EMI knowledge, resulting in their poor EMI practices with minimal appropriate pedagogical methods in the classrooms. (Ibrahim, 2001) states that through EMI teachers and students at Indonesian universities have more exposure to English language (comprehensible input) and more chances to use it (comprehensible output). Still, EMI will not be able to improve the four language skills in the same way. He further adds that a bridging program based on students' and teachers' academic and linguistic needs is highly needed due to a lack of English mastery.

(Liliani, 2015) interviewing students attending an EMI-based Business Management course in a private university states that university students face some difficulties and challenges during their studies through EMI. They are closely related to lack of vocabulary mastery and students' low proficiency in listening, reading, and speaking. They also find it hard to understand the content of the lectures due to their lecturers' insufficient English proficiency, which then leads to students' poor academic performance. (Floris, 2014) investigating perspectives of university students and teachers regarding EMI through classroom observations, interviews, and questionnaires states that university students and teachers agree that English plays an important role. However, in EMI classes, they encounter some obstacles in the process of teaching and learning. Teaching through EMI makes most of students feel a burden when responding in English because of students' insufficiency of English mastery to deal with the topics of the content subjects. In other words, English language seems to make a negative impact on their academic performances.

(Qibthiyyah & Djamaluddin, 2015) found that university students in EMI classes performed slightly yet significantly better than in classes where Indonesian language was used as a medium of instruction (BMI). In terms of lecturers' performance based on students' evaluation, there was no significant difference between lecturers' performance in EMI classes and BMI classes. The study was then concluded that EMI does not cause any negative effects to students' academic performance and lecturers' teaching effectiveness. (Baa, 2018) qualitatively researching five (non-English) lecturers through interviews states that despite lecturers' and students' limited English proficiency for the implementation of international class program (ICP) through EMI, lack of sufficient bilinguals materials, and lack of English environment at campus, the lecturers believed that the program brings many benefits to their students such as improving their confidence and fluency in using English. However, another study conducted with the aims of measuring the English proficiency of 20 participants and their

mastery of mathematics as the content subject states that students' failure to make progress is mainly due to their inadequate mastery of English that they feel a lot of anxiety about the content subject (Manafe, 2018). (Muttaqin & Ida, 2015), who aimed to find out the use of English in the teaching of content subjects with a focus on students' attitude and classroom interaction at the tertiary level in Indonesia through interviews, survey, and observations, state that students' attitude towards EMI classes falls into moderate and high categories. English is mostly used in the classroom interaction between teachers and lecturers although at some point either code-mixing or code-switching can be easily and commonly found during the classroom interaction.

From internationalisation and globalisation points of view, they have some implications on higher education sectors. Therefore, it is a serious challenge for the government and higher education institutions to make an international curriculum and a policy that deals with international education that meets global needs and stakeholders' expectations. There is a serious need to prepare university graduates to be more competent and globally competitive that they can significantly contribute to the country development (Heriansyah, 2014). Moreover, to face ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), university students, lecturers, academic staff should be given much English exposure and an international class program should be standardised with some extracurricular activities and students mobility program (Fauzanna, 2017).

3.   What is English medium of instruction (EMI)?

English medium of instruction (EMI), which can be defined as "the use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English" (Dearden, 2014, p. 4), has been extensively studied in recent years. European universities offer programs in English to attract international students, to get local students ready and well-prepared for the global labour market, and to establish a good institution reputation (Aintzane Doiz et al., 2011). For example, in Denmark more than 25% of the master's degree are taught through EMI; however, not all of the lecturers feel they have adequate English proficiency (Werther et al., 2014).

English as both an international language and a lingua franca (Wysocka, 2013) is also used in universities in Asian countries such as China, Taiwan, Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia to gain complete access to the most modern stage of knowledge development and to improve competitiveness at home and abroad in terms of innovation and knowledge production (Hu, 2009 as cited in (Chapple, 2015). EMI in public universities in Malaysia is used by policy makers as a strategy to improve graduates' English proficiency to achieve its national development agenda (Ali, 2013) and in Bangladesh private higher institutions use EMI as "a marketing strategy for recruiting more (local) students" (Hamid et al., 2013, p. 7). In this setting, English, which is said to play an important role (Floris, 2014; Kim et al., 2017), serves to function as a means of intercultural communication – a lingua franca (Kim et al., 2017) and to improve learners' second language (L2) proficiency.

The spread of the implementation of EMI forms the basis for the internationalisation of higher education institutions (HEIs) (Zhang, 2017). Thus, HEIs in non-English speaking countries make every effort to improve their global competitiveness through internationalisation by offering EMI courses and programs for non-language subjects (Galloway et al., 2017). In the Indonesian context, in particular, this policy is always a topic of interest and public debate (Abduh & Rosmaladewi, 2019). The use of EMI, either in early education stage or university may put local languages at a disadvantage (Kirkpatrick, 2012). Therefore, there is a need to re-think and re-evaluate the EMI program at the university level in terms of language policy and objectives (Vidal & Jarvis, 2018).

4.   National identity and language

Within the identity theoretical framework, one's identity construct is at the individual level in which "meanings that persons attach to the multiple roles they typically play in highly differentiated contemporary societies" (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 248). Identities also refer to a social construct that exists within the shifting of cultures and social structures formed through language since identity is also a "dimension of linguistic enquiry" (Omoniyi & White, 2006, p. 1; Tsui & Ngo, 2016) and the language itself is a social practice taking place within power relationships (Tsui & Ngo, 2016). (Omoniyi & White,

2006) investigated how identities can be negotiated within multilingual settings. They state that when identity is constructed, validated, and performed through discourses at certain times and places, both identity and language are embedded to global and local power relationships that may and/or may not be negotiated.

From the perspective of students, identity and learning are socially defined. When learning, the objects and everything around them have an effect on their learning. Therefore, recognition and dialogical relationships are beneficial to identity construction (Taylor, 1994). Thus, students' identities are crucial and central to learning. Therefore, a culturally-relevant pedagogy should be taken into account to help "students make connections between their local, national, racial, cultural, and global identities" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 25).

Looking at the complexities of EMI at university level in Indonesia, therefore, it provides an opportunity for EMI exploration in higher education institution context since most studies on EMI in Indonesia are conducted in primary and secondary schools (Aritonang, 2014, 2017; Zacharias, 2013). Studies on EMI at the tertiary level which focused on lecturers' perceptions (Baa, 2018; Dewi, 2017), students' perspectives (Liliani, 2015; Manafe, 2018; Muttaqin & Ida, 2015), and lecturers' and students' perspectives (Floris, 2014) have also been conducted. Thus, a considerable amount of research has been conducted, but to my knowledge, more further studies that focus on students' perspectives towards EMI are still needed. Hence, it is desirable to survey as an additional study to address the issue of EMI from students' points of view in a higher education institution in the Indonesian context. Therefore, the present study seeks to address the following research questions:

(1) How do international class students in a private higher education institution perceive the importance of EMI?

5. Data and methodology

Forty undergraduate students majoring in business management in a private higher education institution in Indonesia participated in this study. The invitation to respond to questionnaires was sent to 70 students at the university, however only 40 responses were valid. Most of the study participants were female, the rest were male (60% and 40% respectively) in the age range of 18 – 21 years old, with an average of 19.3 years.

This study, which was based on one main data source, an online survey, adopted a qualitative approach. The online survey addressed to the students, consisted of two sections: students' background information and students' perceptions on EMI developed by (Tsui & Ngo, 2016) with a total of 24 Likert-scale items ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5).

The questionnaire employed in this study was translated into Indonesian that the participants found it easier to understand each statement in the questionnaire. At first, it was administered in the original English version. However, several participants reported encountering trouble comprehending a few statements in the questionnaire. Hence, a lecturer with a doctorate degree who was highly proficient in both Indonesian and English was invited by the authors to review the Indonesian version of the questionnaire to ensure the translation met the naturalness, readability, and clarity.

A pilot testing among 20 EFL students was carried out to ensure all information was clear, understandable, and plausible so that participants were enthusiastic about responding to each item (Schleef, 2014). This is also called pre-testing, testing the questionnaire before distribution to all participants under investigation to ascertain and assess its design, its suitability for participants, and whether it can achieve this study's objective (McQuirk & O'Neill, 2016). Following the data collection, we quantitatively analysed the collected data through descriptive statistics using SPSS 23 for Windows. It was to measure the participants' responses to the instrument on their perception of the importance of EMI related to aspects of career, learning, internationalisation, and preservation of the university's tradition. We finally examined the patterns through frequency within the study participants.

6. Results and discussion

To address the research question in this study, the participants' responses to the survey questionnaire were computed using descriptive statistics according to each aspect of perception including (1) English for learning; (2) English for career; (3) English for internationalisation; (4)

preservation of tradition; (5) local and global identities; (6) university life satisfaction; (7) and intention to migration as shown in Tables 1 – 7 below.

Table 1.

Results of descriptive analysis: English for learning.

No.	Statement	English for learning (%)				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Using EMI …						
1	Enhances my subject matter knowledge.				50	50
2	Improves my English language proficiency.				20	80
3	I can obtain better results in courses than those with bilingual (i.e., English and Indonesian).		10		70	20
4	Makes me more motivated to learn in non-language courses (e.g., Mathematics, Economics).		10		50	40
5	Enhances my discussion with other classmates.				50	50

Table 1 above illustrates that all participants agree and strongly agree with all statements in terms of English for learning. The third and four items have almost a similar pattern in which 10% of the participants under investigation show disagreement with the items. However, overall, it is apparent that they perceive English is important for a medium of learning.

Table 2.

Results of descriptive statistics: English for career.

No.	Statement	English for career				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Using EMI …						
6	Increases my chance for job search or upon graduation.				40	60
7	In all courses, employers would prefer me to it.				40	60
8	In all courses, my parents would prefer me to have it.			10	50	40
9	In all courses, it is important for my future success at work.				50	50

Table 2 above gives information about students' perception of EMI in terms of English for career. It is clear that all of them agree and strongly agree on all of the items, although 10% of them are undecided about one of the items above. In sum, they show agreement on all statements under this dimension.

Table 3.

Results of descriptive statistics: English for internationalization.

No.	Statement	English for internationalisation				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Using EMI …						
10	Better equips me to go for an academic exchange.				20	80
11	This university is to be more internationalised.				20	80
12	Can attract more students from				30	70

	foreign countries.					
13	Helps me to better communicate with classmates from various places.				40	60
14	Will raise the university image in the world.				60	40

Table 3 above shows students' perception of EMI in terms of English for internationalisation. It can be seen that they clearly show their agreement and strong agreement on the items under this dimension.

Table 4.

Results of descriptive statistics: Preservation of tradition.

No.	Statement	Preservation of tradition				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Using EMI …						
15	Will undermine the traditional Indonesian culture of this university	30	40		20	10
16	Will play down the importance of the Indonesian language in this university	20	60		10	10

Table 4 above illustrates students' perception of EMI in terms of preservation of tradition. There are two items under this dimension, and they almost have the same pattern. They disagree (30%) and strongly disagree (40%) that EMI will undermine the traditional Indonesian culture of their university. In addition, this pattern also applies to the second statement that they show disagreement (20%) and strong disagreement (60%) that EMI will play down the importance of the Indonesian language in their university.

Table 5.

Results of descriptive statistics: Local and global identities.

No.	Statement	Local and global identities				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I identify myself …						
17	As a local citizen.	10	20		60	10
18	As a global citizen.				70	30

Regarding students' perception of EMI in terms of local and global identities, based on Table 5 above it is apparent that majority of them agree and strongly agree on the statement that they still identify themselves as a local citizen, only a few of them (30%) show disagreement and strong disagreement on this item. However, all of them identify themselves as a global citizen as well.

Table 6.

Results of descriptive statistics: University life satisfaction.

No.	Statement	University life satisfaction				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I express my satisfaction …						
19	With my university.		10		50	40
20	With my university that I will recommend this university to everyone.				70	30
21	With my university academic life.				70	30
22	With this university overall.				70	30

Table 6 above shows students' perception of EMI regarding university life satisfaction. It is apparent that their responses have a similar pattern that they show agreement and strong agreement

on each item under this dimension, but 10% of them also show disagreement on the statement "I am satisfied with my university choice."

Table 7.

Results of descriptive statistics: Intention to migration.

No.	Statement	Intention to migration				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
23	I am thinking of moving to another country.		30		50	20
24	I plan to leave the place where I was born and raised.		50		40	10
25	I am searching for an opportunity for a study or employment in another country.				50	50

Looking at their perception of EMI regarding the intention to migration, most of them agree and strongly agree (50% and 20% respectively) that they are thinking of moving to another country, with only 30% showing disagreement on this idea. Looking at the next item under this dimension, 50% of them show agreement and strong agreement on the item that they are planning to leave their place where they grew up, and half of them state disagreement. Finally, all of them show agreement and strong agreement (50% and 50% respectively) that they are searching for an opportunity in a foreign country for a study or employment.

This present study examined how students perceive EMI in terms of the use of English for learning, the importance of English for career, English for internationalisation, preservation of tradition, local and global identities, university satisfaction, and intention to migration. According to the findings above, it is clear that the importance of EMI is widely accepted by participants under investigation, emphasising the aspects of career and internationalisation. This explicitly supports that globalisation is inextricably related to EMI which are consistent with European trends (Bolton & Kuteeva, 2012; Wilkinson, 2013) and Asian trends (Byun et al., 2011; Hu et al., 2014; Tsui & Ngo, 2016). In other words, they fully comprehend the importance of English and its possible implications for institutional recognition, international exchange, and employment opportunities on a local and global scale (Tsui & Ngo, 2016). Moreover, all of them identify themselves as a global citizen and they are even thinking of moving to another country for a more established living and/or employment. The results also clearly indicate that the participation of international students is viewed positively by the participants under investigation. This finding resonates with the findings of (A Doiz et al., 2013) and (Tsui & Ngo, 2016). The presence of international students in their institution is widely welcome. Looking at the preservation of tradition, they do not believe that English can undermine their culture and language. This implies that they do not see a drawback to the Indonesian culture and language's vitality; in other words, they seem to be oblivious to this issue. This finding is in line with (Tsui & Ngo, 2016) finding that most of their research participants ignore this perspective. In sum, they are satisfied with the implementation of EMI policy in their institution.

7.   Conclusion and policy implications

This study has provided an insight into EMI policy in a private higher education institution in the Indonesian context by investigating students' perception of EMI in terms of a variety of aspects, including English for learning, English for career, English for internationalisation, preservation of tradition, local and global identities, university life satisfaction, and intention to migration. The participants under investigation positively respond to the EMI program in their institution. They perceive the importance of English for their learning and career at a global scale. They do not view English as a 'threat' to the Indonesian language and culture's vitality. For more established living/employment, they are even thinking of going abroad to another country. Overall, they perceive the implementation of EMI policy in their institution as satisfying.

This study, therefore, has several implications. Regarding students' satisfaction, for example, lecturers and management staff should be aware of the importance of supporting career development

at a global scale. In so doing, it can retain, if not enhance, the students' university satisfaction. (Lueg, 2015) makes six recommendations for EMI practices in higher education institutions and management. First, further implementation of EMI should be pursued. Second, English language classes should be provided by universities. Third, potential employers requiring English skills should cooperate closely with universities. Fourth, lecturers should make adjustments to learner- and content-oriented instruction styles. Fifth, English as a lingua franca of non-native speakers should be successfully framed by the university administration. Finally, consistent and parallel use of English should be established by the university management.

Some lecturers might feel their English proficiency is inadequate, thus, their universities should provide them with ample opportunity to attend professional English preparation classes (Lee & Curry, 2018; Simbolon et al., 2020). Revision of the curriculum, and development of relevant policy guidelines regarding EMI should also be taken into account (Simbolon et al., 2020). In addition, more intercultural competencies, interpersonal skills, and communication skills should be well planned and developed. This program can increase the students' global identity without any disregards for their local identity (Tsui & Ngo, 2016). Moreover, it is generally accepted that today English is deemed as neither national nor foreign language, but its role has now changed to an international language (Ke, 2019). In other words, English does not refer to a specific form of variety, but it has many different varieties (Xu, 2013).

However, this study is not without its limitations. Although the current study is able to present a relatively comprehensive insight into EMI policy in the Indonesian context from students' point of view, this study was carried out in a small-sized sample (n=40). Thus, a larger number of samples should be involved by future researchers. Adopting a mixed-method approach with both quantitative and qualitative data analyses, e.g., factor analysis or structural equation modelling needs to be taken into account in the future. In so doing, we can provide more valid findings with a more reliable conclusion that we get a more in-depth understanding of this phenomenon in the Indonesian context. Therefore, in the current study, we cannot generalise our research findings as definitive evidence within the whole country since they are based on a restricted number of empirical facts.

The conflict-of-interest statement

In line with the statement of Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), I hereby declare that I had no conflicting interests regarding any parties of this study.

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