

English Medium Instruction (EMI) practice: Higher education internationalization in Indonesia

Nurmala Elmin Simbolon

Politeknik Negeri Pontianak, Pontianak, Indonesia
Simbolon73@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Indonesian universities are striving to obtain international recognition in this global competition of higher education. In doing so, many offer English Medium Instruction (EMI) courses. However, there is no documentation of the arrangement of EMI practice in Indonesian universities. This article presents a picture of the current implementation of EMI in some universities as one strategy to obtain international recognition. Survey research is selected to gather some key issues surrounding the implementation of EMI. A questionnaire is administered to 30 universities, and half of them returned the responses. Data analysis uses a descriptive approach. Findings show that the main reason for EMI practice in most Indonesian universities is to address current competition among global universities. Higher education internationalization is indicated in using the English language in two main types of EMI classes: 'Bilingual Class' and 'International Class'. This study also highlights the limited understanding of EMI practice implications in Indonesian universities, especially regarding relevant support given to both EMI students and lecturers. Some key suggestions from the research include incorporating English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in EMI programs and the importance of stimulating collaboration between both content and English lecturers.

Keywords: *English Medium Instruction (EMI); ESP; Internationalization; Higher education*

1. Introduction

Currently, higher education (HE) internationalization has become a priority in global contexts. Many universities strive to attract global citizens to enrol in their programs, and the English language is used as the medium of instruction for this purpose. This competition has resulted in a growing number of English medium instruction (EMI) programs in non-English speaking countries. In Europe, the number of EMI programs increased exponentially within less than a decade from 2007 to 2014 (Wachter & Maiworm, 2014). In Asia, Japan and China are leading in practicing EMI because they have many international students enrolled in their EMI programs (Galloway, Numajiri, & Rees, 2020).

In many contexts, EMI practice was initiated by the country leaders (Hu, 2019). In Europe, this trend was triggered through Bologna Process (Wachter & Maiworm, 2014) by expecting well preparation for their students and graduates. EMI practice is perceived to make their mobilization and employability smooth. In China, the Ministry of Education leader started to popularise it by requiring EMI programs to be one of the aspects of university quality control assessment (Hu, 2019). In Indonesia no specific arrangement of the government to practice EMI at a higher education level. The authority once said a clear mention, the Minister of Research and Technology and Higher Education (Menristekdikti and now Kemdikbud), using the term 'Bilingual Class' as a reference to EMI (Nasir, 2015). This class is perceived to be one way of addressing this global competition. This appeal seems to be the driver of the growing number of EMI programs in universities. The programs offered in either already-available or incidental courses are intended to accommodate student and faculty member exchange programs and international students enrolling in the universities. However, research on documenting EMI practice in Indonesia is in a stage of infancy because HE institutions' internationalization process commenced only about a decade ago (Simbolon, 2018). In global contexts, studies on EMI issues show a somewhat broad gap between the expectation of the benefits of EMI and its actual-ideal implementation (Dearden, 2015; Galloway & Ruegg, 2020; Simbolon, 2018; Simbolon, Oliver, & Mercieca, 2020). The study reported in this article was done to shed light on the current practice of EMI in Indonesian universities by examining their strategies in obtaining international recognition.

2. Literature review

2.1. *English Medium Instruction (EMI)*

English Medium Instruction (EMI) is commonly defined as using the English language to teach academic or content subjects in contexts where the language is not commonly spoken in society (Macaro, Curle, Pun, An, & Dearden, 2018). There are two main types of EMI practice in the context where this reported study was conducted. First is English language courses taught by English language teachers using content knowledge as language teaching guidelines. This particular course is known as English

for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). A broader approach for ESP was further proposed by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) by adopting English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). The other type, currently in-trend being practised in many universities globally, is content or discipline lecturers using the English language as the medium of teaching their subjects. This course, the focus of this study, is known as EMI (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2013; Macaro et al., 2018). In many contexts, EMI courses are commonly delivered by content lecturers, who are either with or without pedagogical training of EMI. The global practice of EMI is believed to have the potential to give economic growth. This belief is supported by the fact that EMI courses are commonly more expensive than regular courses.

2.2. Previous studies on EMI

Research on several aspects surroundings EMI practice has been conducted in various contexts of non-English speaking countries. Some perceived benefits of EMI evidenced in some studies include English proficiency improvement of students and teachers (Aguilar, 2015; Galloway et al., 2020; Islam, 2013). Galloway et al. (2020) conducted their study by including students and teachers in China and Japan. One of the study findings showed that most students perceived English proficiency improvement through EMI practice. However, their study also suggested a need for a review on full English application in the classrooms. Aguilar (2015) took on her research by investigating lecturers' perspectives on EM practice in a university in Spain. The lecturers in her study perceived that EMI would benefit students' English proficiency improvement. The lecturers also perceived that they do not need to support EMI student language learning (Aguilar, 2015). I think this perception is reasonable for some points. First, it is worth considering that there is a minimum requirement for English proficiency for English-taught courses. Also, the exposure of the English language to people in Europe is higher than those in Indonesia. So, both students and lecturers have more potential to access language support for learning and teaching in the EMI environment. Another study on EMI was conducted by Islam (2013) in Pakistan. Despite problematic English use in the country, the research findings showed that both students and teachers had a positive attitude towards EMI. They specifically perceived EMI practice as a responsive action to their future career (Islam, 2013).

Some other studies focused on investigating problems in EMI implementation (Briggs, Dearden & Macaro, 2018; Chen, Han, & Wright, 2020; Vu & Burns, 2014). Vu and Burns (2014) conducted a study in a public university in Vietnam. The research findings highlighted three main aspects that lecturers need in professional development. They are linguistics, content knowledge, and EMI pedagogy. A similar concern was also evidenced in the findings of a global online survey conducted by Briggs et al. (2018). One of the key issues found in their study was teachers' challenges in preparing EMI lessons. Another study was conducted in a university in China by Chen et al.

(2020). Data from 20 EMI teachers in the university was analyzed basing on the theories of multilingualism and instructional design. One of the main suggestions from the study's findings is the inclusion of problem-based teaching in EMI lecturers' professional development curriculum. The issues encountered by EMI lecturers were also evidenced in Simbolon's (2017) study. The challenges mentioned above are suggested to link with the fact that there is no consensus between the understandings of stakeholders and EMI implementation (Galloway & Ruegg, 2020; Aizawa & Rose, 2018; Simbolon, 2018). This inconsistency seems to cause institutions' limited support to both teachers and students and teachers to their students in EMI classrooms.

Despite problems in the EMI implementation in many contexts, EMI practice trends are ongoing (Macaro, 2015). Several studies on strategies of EMI practice to address the issues have also been documented. Overall relevant support appears to indicate a need for collaboration between language and content specialists. For example, Galloway and Ruegg (2020) focused their study on examining EMI students' support in universities in Japan and China. Questionnaires, completed by 702 students and 28 teachers in 15 universities. One of the findings shows that support in English for Academic Purposes (EAP), resulting from the collaboration between instructors with content professors, is helpful for students. Also, not in a significant number of students, the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course is useful. This particular finding suggests the potential of ESP be used as one type of support to both students and content lecturers of EMI programs. Next, a study was done by Weinberg and Symon (2017) in a university in the Middle East. Their study focused on developing an EMI course resulting from collaboration between content and English lecturers from four countries. The findings suggest a need to give both lecturers access to discuss and work together to cope with students' and lecturers' problems in the EMI classrooms. While this action requires a large amount of funding, the benefit can pay such costly effort. A similar study's focus was also done in a study by Macaro, Akincioglu, and Dearden (2016) in four universities in Turkey. Their study examined the experience of content and English lecturers while preparing the lessons collaboratively. The results from interviews showed a positive change in the content lecturers' perspectives on the role they can play in supporting students learning. In a different context and aspect, Huang (2015) conducted a study in a university in Taiwan. This study's findings highlighted some strategies that can be used to support students having lower English proficiency by improving student confidence and motivation. This finding indicates lecturers' need for professional development to support student learning in EMI classrooms.

In Indonesia, most research on EMI practice was done in a single university (Floris, 2014, Simbolon, 2017; Simbolon, 2018). A study was done by Floris (2014) in a private university and found a positive attitude toward the benefit of EMI in the lecturers' English proficiency. Nevertheless, her study findings also showed lecturer challenges in practising EMI due to insufficient training before the commencement of EMI programs. Simbolon (2017) examined EMI lecturers' practice in a public

university. Her study found a tension among the lecturers' understanding of practicing EMI in their classrooms. Some of them used a full-English medium, and others used code-switching between English and Indonesian languages without planning each language's use in their teaching sessions.

Further, Simbolon (2018) focused her research on examining stakeholders' perspectives on the implementation of EMI. Her study's findings show consensus between both teachers' and university leaders' perspectives on the positive benefits of EMI. Nevertheless, the study's findings found a mismatch between their understanding and their arrangement in implementing EMI at the university. One study that has been conducted by including several universities was done by Dewi (2017). She examined some public and private universities and sought to investigate lecturers' perceptions of EMI in Indonesian higher education. Her study found that most teachers perceived the use of EMI positively despite the complexities of their understanding of EMI. The teachers saw an important function of English language skills in accessing knowledge.

There has been no study documenting the arrangement of EMI practice by including several universities in Indonesia. The study reported in this article was intended to fill this gap by surveying both private and public universities and investigating strategies to implement EMI to obtain international recognition.

So, this study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. How are EMI programs implemented?
2. What specific supports are available for EMI students and lecturers?

3. Method

The research utilized a questionnaire to gather the information. 30 invitations were sent to both government and private universities via emails in early 2017, and 15 universities returned their responses and are reported in this article.

3.1. Instrument

Questionnaire design derived from the literature review on EMI practice. The issues include terms used to refer to EMI and ways to implement it. Most questions are closed-ended. One open-ended question asks the types of collaborations the universities have with higher education overseas. The responses to this question are in Appendices 1 and 2. The questions of the survey are in the Indonesian language.

3.2. Procedures

The first step was to obtain the letter of approval of research from the university. And then, the email addresses of the international officer of universities were collected. Purposive sampling was used for this study by choosing universities that have international affairs departments. Next, questionnaires and a consent form, and an information letter were sent to 30 universities via emails. After 30 days, a reminder email was sent to those that have not sent the responses. The return of completed

questionnaires and signed consent forms was considered to be their agreement to participate in this research. Half of the universities returned their responses and were reported in this article.

3.3. Data analysis

Seven private and eight government universities returned their responses. A descriptive analysis approach (Loeb et al., 2017) was used for this research. The findings are presented based on the key issues surrounding EMI practice.

4. Findings

4.1. RQ1: How are EMI programs implemented?

The findings showed somewhat a variety of terminology was used to refer to EMI. Two main terms that are 'Bilingual Class' and 'International Class', were the most commonly used terms by the universities. Figure 1 presents the responses to this question.

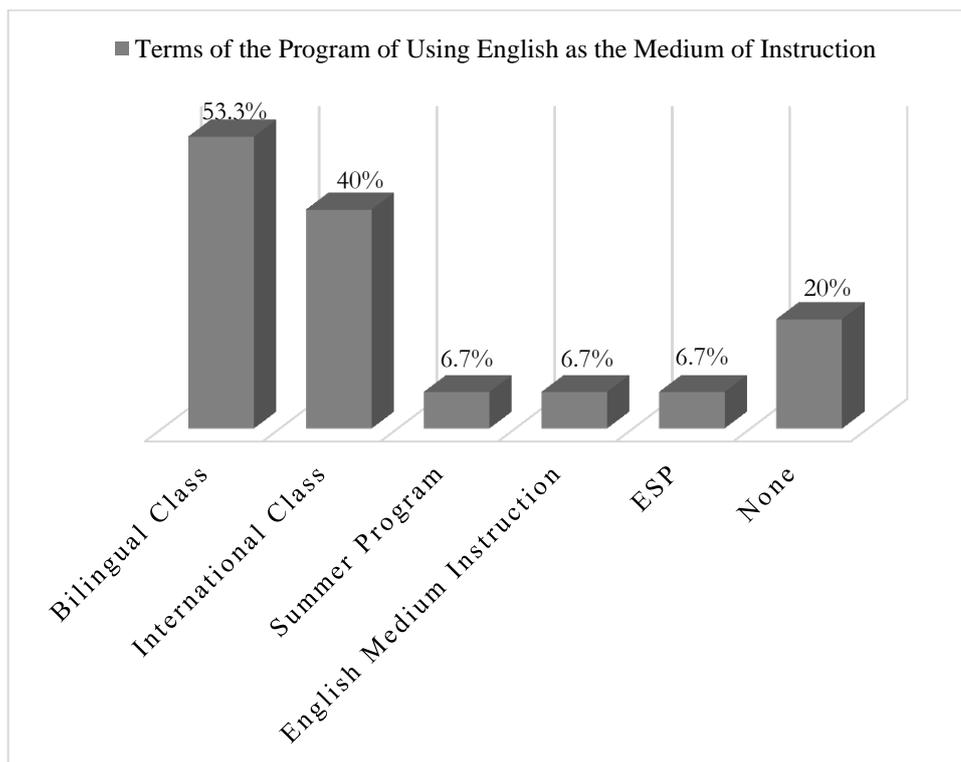


Figure 1. The terms used by universities as a reference to EMI

Figure 1 shows that some universities used more than one term to refer to EMI. This finding suggests that EMI practice was relatively new in this context and that universities need to offer an EMI course separately from their regular courses. In this way, they seem to give a specific label to indicate such a program. Figure 1 also suggests some points from the use of several labels to refer to EMI. First, few institutions have no EMI courses yet. By all means, EMI course here refers to courses

where some overseas students are enrolled in an EMI program or discipline courses that are presented using the English language. It is worth interpreting the response 'none' to the question. It should be understood that to facilitate students from overseas is unnecessary to have an English-taught program. Incidental EMI classes like Indonesian language classes occasionally are made to accommodate overseas students visiting a university in Indonesia. In this study context, such classes could exist in the universities stating have no EMI courses.

Another important point that can be grasped from the university's use of some labels as a reference to EMI is that this finding may suggest tension of university understandings of EMI among the stakeholders. Firstly, a university perceived EMI to be presented in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Next, their understanding of EMI can be co-constructed with university partners overseas. For example, to refer to EMI, a university utilized the term 'Summer Program,' which is uncommon in Indonesia. Additionally, one university used the term 'EMI' itself. When elaborated with the responses in the questionnaire's open-ended question (type of and institution partners they have), it appeared that their institution partner introduced this term through EMI pedagogy training provided to the lecturers before they started the program.

4.2. RQ 2: What specific supports are available for EMI students and lecturers?

The participants' responses to this question suggest limited understandings of the universities about the implementation of EMI and its relevant implications. The results are presented in Figure 2.

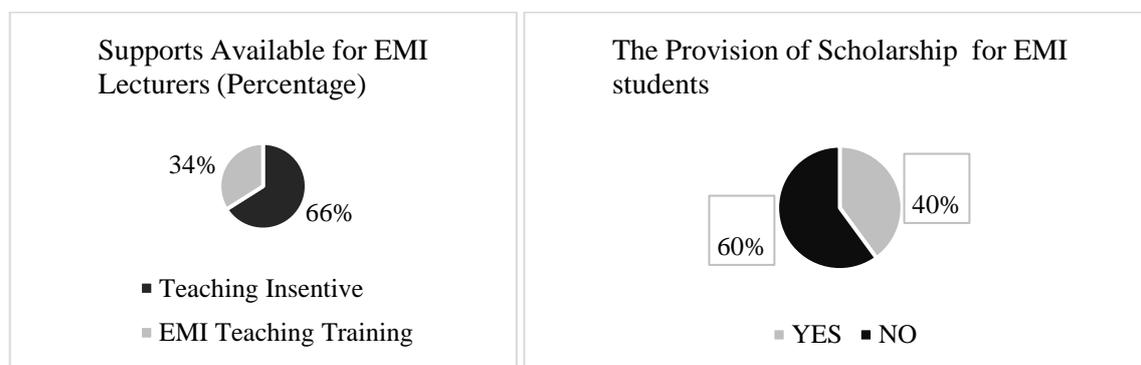


Figure 2. The number of universities providing support for lecturers and students (Percentage)

Figure 2 indicates that the types of support given to lecturers teaching EMI courses are in the forms of EMI pedagogy training and some incentives for teaching EMI courses. It is also worth noting that the provision of scholarship is the only support given to EMI students. The support seems to be in line with the feature of EMI programs, commonly incurring more expensive tuition fees than the regular classes are. The findings also showed that support of student content and language learning through the EMI environment seems absent. The application of a minimum requirement of

English proficiency for the enrolment in EMI courses is sufficient for students to study in English medium classes. Figure 3 indicates the types of English proficiency certificates used as one of the requirements for enrolling in the EMI programs.

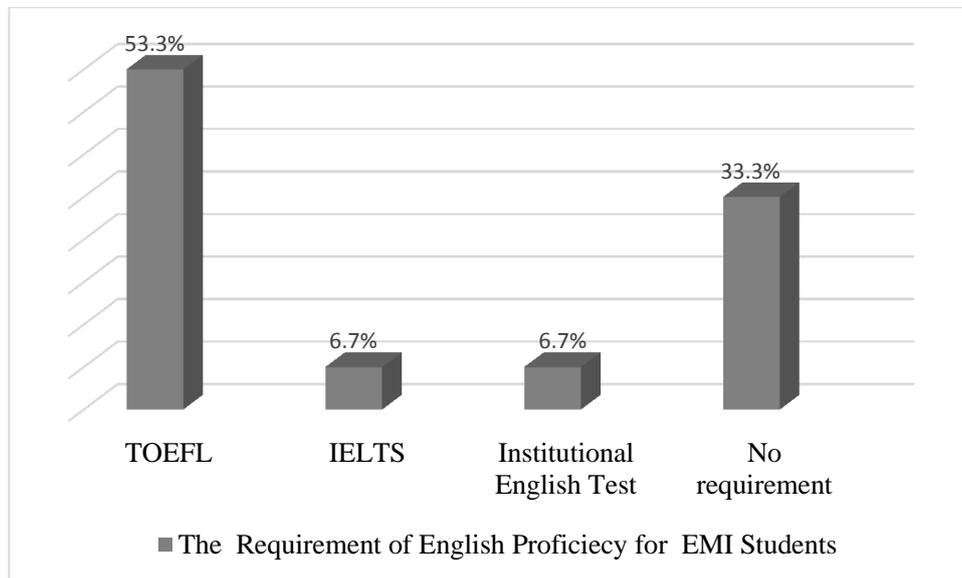


Figure 3. The number of universities using each type of English proficiency for EMI courses

As indicated in Figure 3, most universities used TOEFL as proof of students' English proficiency. Commonly TOEFL is used as English proficiency evidence in many educational institutions in Indonesia.

5. Discussion

5.1. Some implications of EMI practice

Implementing EMI courses in a context where English is not commonly used in society can differ from one context to another. University understanding about EMI and their perceived arrangement to implement EMI influence this variety. One of the implications of EMI practice is initiating collaboration with institutional partners. This perception allows for various types of EMI courses they would design or offer. For example, the term 'Summer Program' used in one university in this reported study appears to accommodate the model in its university partners because Indonesia has no term 'Summer' in terms of seasons, but has two types only, rainy and hot seasons. No further examination was done towards the use of the 'Summer Program' in the institution. However, the types of collaboration they currently have (Appendix 2) suggest that using the term indicates that the university may offer 'dual degree' or 'joint-degree' programs where some credits or units of the course are to be done in university collaborator.

Moreover, using the term 'Bilingual Class' suggests using both students' first language and English. The rationale for adopting a bilingual approach in EMI courses can be minimizing linguistic problems (Galloway et al., 2020; Simbolon, 2017)

encountered by both teachers and students when teaching and learning in the EMI environment. Another reason is to accommodate citizens' sense of national identity (Dewi, 2017; Islam, 2013).

Apart from terms used as a reference to EMI, the research's finding suggests a potential to design a new course to facilitate collaboration between the university's content and English lecturers and between the university and its university partners. For example, a separate program from a regular course can be set to accommodate content and English lecturers' collaboration to prepare students for EMI classes (Macaro et al., 2016). Nevertheless, designing a new EMI course as the outcome of the collaboration with partners overseas has the potential to elaborate, as evidenced in Weinberg and Symon's (2017) study. Hence implementing EMI may give more contextualized models of EMI in the global scope.

5.2. Must-have support for EMI students and lecturers

The perception of EMI and its implications also have an association with relevant support provided to both students and lecturers. In terms of relevant support for EMI implementation, limited support of professional development that needs to be provided to the lecturers can lead to problems encountered by most lecturers in previous studies on EMI implementation in higher education (Briggs et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2020; Vu & Burns, 2014). Thus, EMI teaching training is must-have support to provide before implementing EMI. Meanwhile, funding support for EMI students can be understood because EMI programs are generally more expensive than regular courses. Implementing EMI programs needs higher operational costs like giving incentives to the lecturers. Nevertheless, it needs further consideration to support students in the EMI classroom learning. Some strategic ways in other aspects like curriculum are necessary.

One of the strategies is the adoption of the ESP approach. This action has some implications. First, English lecturers can be one of the sources of support to EMI students. Incorporating discipline knowledge into the English courses (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) would support students' language learning. In this way, students would be prepared for learning in EMI courses presented by the content lecturers. English lecturers may contribute to this role because they commonly have English language teaching pedagogy training before their job appointment. Hence, they have some understandings of foreign language learning. Additional language teaching skills would enable English lecturers to increase student learning motivation, as proposed in Huang's (2015) study. English teachers can also collaborate in presenting EMI in a way suitable to their situation. For example, English specialists' role could be used as the key support to both students and content lecturers through collaboration in a preparation year of EMI programs (Macaro et al., 2016). Even though it is uncommon in most universities in Indonesia, this preparation program is worth adopting the ESP approach. This finding is worth investigating in future studies in this context. Another implication that can be grasped from adopting the ESP approach is that collaboration between lecturers in the

institution and other partners becomes compulsory to allow for successful EMI implementation. While the challenges are evidenced (Galloway & Ruegg, 2020; Weinberg & Symon, 2017), ways to enable this collaboration are worth examining.

6. Conclusion

The research aims to provide some insights from the current implementation of EMI in Indonesian higher education. In doing so, a survey is administered to university international officers to gather information, and their responses are analyzed descriptively. The findings show that there is tension in the understandings of universities of EMI and its implications. This research's findings especially highlight limited support given to both key stakeholders of EMI that are students and content lecturers. This situation leaves many questions in terms of the quality of the implementation. Based on the study results, systematic arrangement in providing relevant support is essential to make so that the goal of international recognition can be obtained.

It is admitted that using a single instrument for gathering information is one of this study's limitations. Classroom observations and studies on EMI teachers' and students' voices of their EMI classrooms' experience are recommended for future research, so more-in-depth insights of current trends of EMI in Indonesian higher education can be highlighted. In this way, guidelines for the provision of relevant support to the stakeholders can also be provided.

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