

## Students' Perceptions on the Use of Medium Instruction (EMI) at SMP Cahaya Bangsa Metro

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores students' perceptions and challenges in the implementation of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) at SMP Cahaya Bangsa Metro, Indonesia. EMI is increasingly adopted in non-English-speaking countries to prepare students for global academic and professional opportunities. The research utilized a descriptive method with purposive sampling, involving 11 eighth-grade students who had one year of EMI experience. Data were collected through classroom observation, semi-structure interviews, and documentation. Findings show that while students recognize the benefits of EMI, such as improved language proficiency and future opportunities abroad, they also face significant challenges. These challenges include difficulties with academic vocabulary, understanding technical terms, and adapting to teacher accents, particularly in subjects like science and math. Additionally, students prefer a mixed-language approach to enhance comprehension. The study highlights the need for tailored language support, clearer instructional strategies, and teacher training to address these challenges. By addressing these issues, educational institutions can create a more inclusive and effective learning environment for EMI students.

**Keywords:** *Students Challenges, Students Perceptions, Medium Instruction*

### ARTICLE INFO

*Article history:*

Received  
September 04,  
2024

Revised  
October 20,  
2024

Accepted  
November 08,  
2024

Journal Homepage

<https://www.attractivejournal.com/index.php/aj/>

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Published by

CV. Creative Tugu Pena

### PENDAHULUAN

The language of interaction significantly influences educational outcomes, when a certain language is designated as the medium of instruction; it serves as the principal instrument for communication in the educational process. English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) is gaining prominence in higher education globally, particularly in countries where English is not the first language (Macaro et al., 2018). This trend aligns with the broader goal of internationalizing education and preparing students for global academic and professional environments (Dearden & Macaro, 2016). In this context, teachers as facilitators of knowledge acquisition are tasked with explaining complex concepts, providing instructions and feedback, managing classroom interaction, and evaluating students' performance. The success of these tasks depends mainly on the language employed in instruction. According to Hammou & Kesbi (2023), the medium of interaction affects all classroom activities, from tasks to managing interaction among students.

In Indonesia, EMI has been adopted in several school, including SMP Cahaya Bangsa Metro, which integrates a bilingual program in subjects such as Math, Science, and English. While this provides opportunities for students to improve their English

skills, they face challenges such as a lack of confidence in speaking English and difficulties adapting to English-taught subjects. These challenges highlight the importance of understanding the role of language in educational outcomes.

Student perception of EMI is crucial to its effectiveness. According to Macaro et al., (2018), "student perception of EMI can be divided into aspects such as improvements in language proficiency, influenced by early exposure and family support, cognitive challenges in understanding complex subjects, and motivation driven by engaging environments and media." While students often prefer a mixed-language approach for better comprehension, they recognize EMI's benefit for academic and professional opportunities. Research by Aizawa et al., (2023) and Evans & Morrison (2011) highlights that students' struggles with vocabulary and writing affect their ability to adapt to EMI. These studies emphasize the need for tailored support, such as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for specific Purposes (ESP), based on students' backgrounds.

According to Bradford (2016), "The challenges of implementing English as a Medium of instruction (EMI) can be categorized into four main areas: Linguistic challenges, where students and instructors face difficulties working in a non-native language; cultural challenges, involving differences in educational and cultural backgrounds that affect classroom interaction; administrative and managerial challenges, which include recruitment, assessment, and program coherence; and institutional challenges, relating to the integration and identity of EMI programs within the broader educational framework."

Several previous studies have examined the perceptions, challenges, and strategies involved in the implementation of EMI. Researchers have suggested that these aspects, in conjunction with institutional roles, can significantly influence students' academic performance and perseverance during EMI implementation. The aims of this study are to explore students' perception of their teachers' use of EMI in the classroom and to identify the specific challenges students face in adapting to EMI environments.

Consequently, this study aims to provide further insights into how EMI is adopted as a pedagogical approach within the context of higher education in Indonesia. Specifically, the research focuses on students' perception of EMI implementation in education settings and identifies the challenges they encounter during this process. Accordingly, the research questions were formulated as follows:

1) What are the students' perceptions of the use of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) by their teacher in the classroom?

2) What are students' challenges of the use of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) by their teacher in the classroom?

## **METHOD**

This research utilized a descriptive method, using purposive sampling to select 11 eighth grade students who have had one year of experience in English Medium Instruction (EMI). In total, 11 students from Cahaya Bangsa Junior High School participated as respondents, identified by the initials Student 1 to Student 11. Data were collected through classroom observation, semi-structured interviews and documentation.

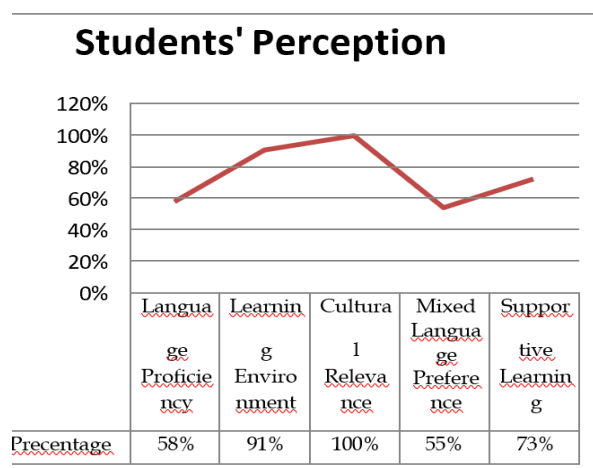
The analysis conducted used Miles & Huberman, (1994) interactive model, which includes main stages such as data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, thus ensuring systematic interpretation and validation of the findings. In addition, source triangulation was used to enhance data validity, aiming to provide a

comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions and challenges in implementing EMI.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As a result of the interviews and observations conducted, the researcher identified several significant findings regarding students' perceptions and challenges encountered in the implementation of English Medium Instruction (EMI). In line with Macaro et al., (2018), students perceive EMI as less efficient but beneficial learning approach. The challenges identified are in line with Bradford, (2016), who categorize them into linguistic, cultural, and structural challenges, especially those arising from the need to adapt to a second language. Although challenging, this adaptation ultimately enhances students' understanding of the subject matter. In addition, students' perception were group into three categories: Language proficiency, cognitive load, and motivation.

### Students' Perception on the use of English as a Medium of Instruction



The finding indicates that all students (100%) recognize the cultural relevance of English as a global language that provides future opportunities, such as studying abroad. Additionally, 91% of students emphasized the importance of an engaging learning environment, where the use of media like videos and games enhances their participation and comprehension. Family support and additional English classes were acknowledged by 73% of students as factors that boost their confidence in using English. Furthermore, 58% of students reported that early exposure to English contributed to their understanding, while 55% preferred a combination of English and their native language to better grasp complex subjects. These findings highlight that despite the challenges, students recognize the benefit of EMI and the significance of supportive environments for their academic success.

Table 1 Description Students' Perceptions on the use of EMI

Perception Indicator	Description
Language Proficiency	Students feel that their exposure to English from an early age contributes to their understanding.
Learning Environment	The use of diverse media (e.g., videos, games) enhances engagement and comprehension during lessons.
Cultural Relevance	English is viewed as an international language, facilitating, future opportunities, such as studying <u>abroad</u> .
Mix Language Preference	Students prefer a combination of English and their first language for better understanding, particularly in complex subjects.
Supportive Learning	Family support and additional English classes contribute to students' confidence in using English.

Based on the interview findings with twelve students, several important aspects were identified and categorized regarding students' perceptions of the use English as medium of instruction (EMI) in the classroom.

**a) English is easy to understand**

Most students found the teacher's explanations easy to understand during the teaching-learning process.

As Student 1 said:

*English is easy to understand, than like mandarin and some other language, I understand English more properly because I taking English class in BES (Bright English School), it's been almost one year and also my parent guide me.*

Student 2 Added:

*The teacher using simple word is mean I easy to undertand and the teacher sometimes give us some games, its make it more easy to undertand.*

Student 4 States:

*I love English, because in my family, especially my older sister, she is talking in English everytime.*

Based on the participants' responses indicate that they have been exposed to English from early age, having developed basic English skills since elementary school. This is further supported by their habit of speaking English with their families, and some students also attend English courses. As a result, they had no issues understanding the material.

**b) Learning media enhances students' ability to understand the material.**

Every participant provided identical responses, indicating that the teacher uses diverse media, including projection screens, PowerPoint presentation, audio material, various kind of videos, and online educational games such as Bamboozle, Quizzes, and Kahoot, to enhance the efficacy and engagement of the learning process.

As evidence, S11 claimed:

*Menurut aku pribadi si iyaa cukup membantu, kaya kalau kita belum ngerti bisa kita liat lewat media jadi mengerti.*

Student 1 mentioned:

*...sometimes play games by website using boomboosel, quiziz, and also using the song teacher turn on the speakier for play the music. The media help more easy to understand the material.*

Student 2 noted:

*Yes, like bamboozle, quiziz, kahoot, the teacher sometimes give us some games and its make it easy to understand.*

On the other hand, one students argued that the media did not always make her understand the learning material. This students is more accustomed to learning by herself.

Student 4 Expressed:

*Not really, if I not really understand the material, I just search on youtube and learn it by myself. I don't ask teacher I better studies on my own.*

The statement indicates that the media used by the used by the teacher is very useful for most students, helping them easily understand the material when they have difficulty in understanding the teacher's explanation and there is only one students who feels comfortable if learning with their own learning method to understand the lesson. It can be concluded that the students remained engaged and did not feel bored during learning process.

#### c) **Mix language is preferred by the students**

Several students believe that the language of interaction should depend on the subject being taught. For instance, science and English are better taught in English since the textbooks are in English. However, subjects like Math and Social Studies are considered more suitable to be taught in Indonesia.

The argument conforms with the information S1 stated:

*I prefer using English, sometime yes but sometimes no because there is subject like IPS is hard to understand usng English, fifthy-fifthy depent on the subject material.*

Student 3 added:

*Both of them, like science and math depend on the material itself.*

Student 6 claimed:

*I don't really understand about science and Math so I'm not suitable using English, in math I prefer using bahasa but in science its okay its using English.*

Student 10 also stated:

*Mix sih miss, cause sometimes still confused about the instruction, so for me better the teacher speak mix language so we all can understand.*

To conclude, the curriculum at Junior High School Cahaya Bangsa Metro requires English to be used as the medium of instruction for specific subjects such as science, English, and Math. However, students have proposed incorporating both Indonesian and English during lesson to improve their understanding of the material

- a) Several advantages have been recognized in using English as the medium of instruction.

Students have gained several advantages from using English as the medium of instruction, among other benefits.

Student 4 stated:

*A lot, English is international language, so if I go to another country I know how to speak in English. And also English is make easier to me for study aboard soon.*

Student 6 mentioned:

*I'm improve my English skill and able to talk to someone living in aboard. Cause one day I want living in aboard, I want to live in London with mya family.*

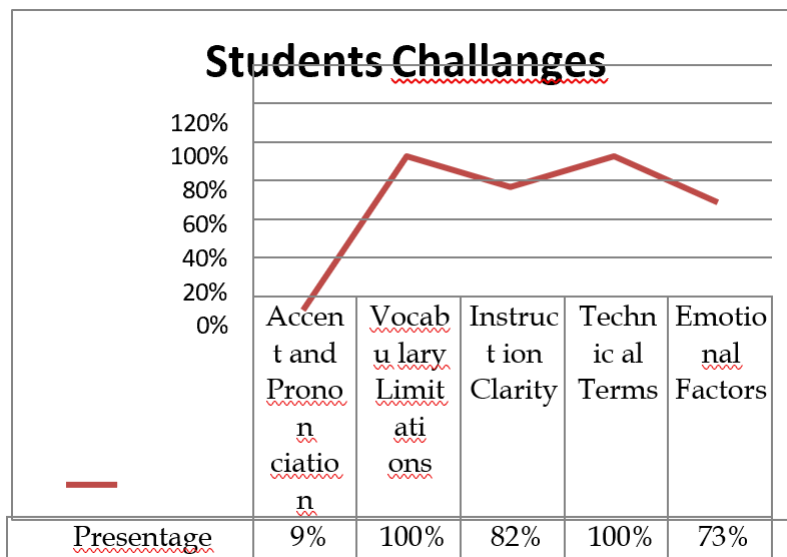
Student 7 added:

*I think, itu bisa bantu diri aku sendiri, tau lebih banyak kata-kata dalam bahasa inggris, terus cara penggunaannya. Dan semoga bisa bantu ngajarin adek sama mamah bahasa inggris dirumah.*

Based on the statements above, it can be concluded that students recognize the value of using English as the medium of instruction. They view it as beneficial not only for improving their language skills but also for future opportunities, such as studying abroad or living in an English-speaking country. Additionally, they believe it help them expand their vocabulary, apply English in everyday situations, and assist family members in learning the language at home.

The findings show that students perceive EMI as a less efficient yet beneficial approach, in line with Macaro et al., (2018), offering advantages like improved language skills and future opportunities abroad. Their perceptions are grouped into three aspects; language proficiency, influenced by early exposure and family support; cognitive load, reflecting challenges in understanding complex subjects; and motivation, driven by engaging environments and diverse media. While students prefer a mixed-language approach for better comprehension, they recognize EMI contribution to acadmic achievement and practical language development.

**Students' challenges on the use of English as a medium of instruction**





The findings highlight several challenges students encounter in the use of EMI. The most prominent issues include vocabulary limitations and technical terms, with 100% of students reporting difficulties in understanding academic and subject-specific terms, particularly in science and math. Instruction clarity was another significant challenge, as 82% of students found the inconsistent use of English and their first language confusing, disrupting the learning process. Emotional factors such as anxiety and embarrassment affected 73% of students, limiting their participation. Although accents and pronunciation were less frequently cited (9%), they still posed challenges when teachers' accents reflected elements of students' native languages. These challenges emphasize the need for consistent language use, vocabulary support, and emotional encouragement to enhance students' learning experiences.

**Table 2 Description Students' Challenges in the use of EMI**

Challenge Indicator	Description
<b>Accents and Pronunciation</b>	Variation in teachers' accents can hinder comprehension, especially when students detect elements of their first language.
<b>Vocabulary Limitations</b>	Unfamiliar academic vocabulary creates barriers to understanding content.
<b>Instruction Clarity</b>	Inconsistent use of English and the first language during lessons can confuse students and disrupt their learning process.
<b>Technical Terms</b>	Difficulty with technical or subject-specific terms can impede comprehension in science and math course.
<b>Emotional Factors</b>	Students experience anxiety or embarrassment when struggling to express themselves in English, affecting participation.

Several challenges are encountered by students in the implementation of EMI. Some students find it challenging to fully comprehend the lessons, leading them to believe that these challenges obstruct their understanding of the subject matter. **As expressed by Student 1:**

*Yes, how teacher are pronounce the word actually, you know that some teacher have different accent, the accent like I cant still still hear Bahasa Indonesia accent, when they are speak English like Javaness accents.*

**Student 5 mentioned:**

*Limit of vocabulary, because the teacher were said things that like organ or something that I didn't understand.*

**Student 10 Added:**

*Sometimes, just confused about new vocabulary. Pas pelajaran science sometime is hard to understand kaya kalau ada kata-kata baru, jadi lebih baik mix aja di bahasanya. Kalau math subject lebih prefer Indonesia aja kalau pakai English ada perbedaan dan agak susah, soal nya menghitung jadi kalau pakai bahasa Indonesia lebih mudah dipahami.*

Based on the responses above, the implementation of English as a medium of Instruction (EMI) present several challenges for students, significantly impacting their ability to comprehend lessons. Many students struggle with

variations in teachers' accents, which can hinder understanding, particularly when they still perceive elements of their first language (L1). Vocabulary limitations are another significant barrier, as unfamiliar terms can lead to confusion and misunderstanding of subject matter. Students also express a preference for mixing language in subjects where they encounter difficulties, such as science and math, often finding that using their first language (L1) enhances comprehension.

In contrast, based on classroom observation in Math and Science subject, teachers often repeat instruction or explanations in Indonesian. This practice indicates the teachers' awareness of the difficulties students face, such as vocabulary limitations and challenges in understanding accents. As a result, teachers tend to code-switch, using a combination of English and Indonesian to clarify the material particularly in more complex subjects. Therefore despite the EMI policy, the strategic use of students' L1 remains crucial in ensuring better comprehension and effective learning.

These findings highlight the need for improved language support and teacher training to address accent variations and vocabulary challenges in EMI contexts. By acknowledging these challenges, educational institutions can work toward creating a more inclusive and effective learning environment for all students Bradford, (2016).

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings from this research provide valuable insights into students' perception and challenges in the implementation of English Medium Instruction (EMI). While students recognize the benefits of using English in their learning, such as improved language skills and future opportunities for studying or living abroad, they also face significant challenges. These challenges include difficulty with vocabulary, teacher accents, and technical terms, particularly in science and math subjects. The study suggests that while EMI can enhance students' language proficiency and cognitive engagement, it also requires targeted support to overcome the barriers students face. To create a more effective learning environment, educational institutions should consider implementing additional language support, clearer instructional strategies, and teacher training to address issues related to accent variations and complex terminology.

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