



Investigating Student's Perception of Learning at an English Immersion School in Indonesia

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: 2023-07-12 Revised: 2023-08-22 Published: 2023-09-02 Keywords: EFL; EIP; EMI.	English immersion programme (EIP) or English as the medium of instruction (EMI) believes in the importance of maximum exposure to the target language. The use of English as the main language at school are both exciting but also challenging for the students since English is not widely used outside of the schools. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how the students perceive EIP or EMI as they go through formal education in Indonesia. This study was conducted as a case study of fifty-nine secondary students in an EIP school in Bandung, Indonesia. The data was collected through questionnaire and semi structured interviews. The data from questionnaire was analysed using descriptive statistics whereas thematic analysis was employed to analyze data from interviews. The findings show that the students have very positive attitude towards the EIP at school. The participants believe that by going to an EIP school, they developed their English skills much more rapidly compared to those who study in non-EIP schools. This study contributes to the discussions surrounding the practice of EIP or EMI in Indonesia and other countries where English is learned as a foreign language (EFL).
Artikel Info	Abstrak
Sejarah Artikel Diterima: 2023-07-12 Direvisi: 2023-08-22 Dipublikasi: 2023-09-02 Kata kunci: EFL; EIP; EMI.	<i>English Immersion Program</i> (EIP) atau Bahasa Inggris sebagai Media Pengajaran (EMI) menekankan pada pentingnya paparan maksimum pada bahasa target. Penggunaan bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa utama di sekolah merupakan hal yang menarik tetapi juga menantang bagi siswa karena bahasa Inggris tidak banyak digunakan di luar sekolah. Oleh karena itu, studi ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki bagaimana siswa memaknai EIP atau EMI saat mereka melalui pendidikan formal di Indonesia. Studi ini dilakukan sebagai studi kasus dari lima puluh sembilan siswa SMA di sebuah sekolah EIP di Bandung, Indonesia. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dan wawancara semi terstruktur. Data dari kuesioner dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif sedangkan analisis tematik digunakan untuk menganalisis data dari wawancara. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa siswa memiliki sikap yang sangat positif terhadap EIP di sekolah. Para peserta percaya bahwa dengan belajar di sekolah yang menerapkan EIP, mereka dapat mengembangkan keterampilan bahasa Inggris mereka jauh lebih cepat dibandingkan dengan mereka yang belajar di sekolah non-EIP. Studi ini berkontribusi pada diskusi tentang praktek EIP atau EMI di Indonesia dan negara-negara lain di mana bahasa Inggris dipelajari sebagai bahasa asing atau <i>English as a foreign language</i> (EFL).

I. INTRODUCTION

English as the most widely used language in the world has become a subject of increasing importance in schools around the globe, including Indonesian schools. English has become a very valuable linguistic currency in the world (Niño Murcia, 2003). Consequently, English is taught as a mandatory subject at schools globally. In the major cities of Indonesia, such as Jakarta, Surabaya, Medan, and Bandung, English is taught beginning at a young age, whereas in more remote areas it is not taught until secondary education. In addition, English is taught as a subject to support the development of the students' intellectual, emotional, and social

skills, to aid in the mastery of other subjects, and to cultivate English communication skills (Suherdi, 2012). However, the quality of Indonesian student's English is still considered low (English First, 2022).

Numerous attempts have been made to enhance the quality of English instruction in Indonesia such as by changing the curriculum, the introduction of English language at primary education, and to make English as a mandatory subject at secondary school to name a few, but none appear to have produced the desired results. The implementation of an English immersion program (EIP) is an ambitious strategy selected by some elite institutions in

Indonesia in an effort to maximize exposure to the language in meaningful contexts. One of the founders of the institution where this study will be conducted asserts that through a full immersion program, Indonesian students will be able to speak and write English nearly as well as native speakers (Juliono, 2013). This is comparable to Lanneberg's critical period hypothesis (1967), cited by Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor (2005) which states that it is impossible to attain a native-like level of proficiency when learning a second language begins after a critical period, which is typically associated with puberty. This goal, however, should also take into consideration of how the students experience learning subjects in a foreign language, in this case, English. Student's perception is an important aspect of the learning process because learning a language require student's commitment. Learning is student's investment, therefore understanding how they perceive the learning process is utterly significant to the success of the learning process.

Various studies have been done in the field of EIP or English as the medium of instruction (EMI) and bilingualism in general such as in Baker and Wright (2021), Baldwin (2021), Genesee (2007), Lenker and Rhodes (2007) and Savage and Hughes (2014). Lenker and Rhodes (2007) further explain that foreign language immersion programs, also known as one-way immersion programs, are designed for students who speak English. According to Coyle, Hood, and Marsh (Coyle et al., 2010), implementing a bilingual education system has several consequences. The most apparent implication is that teachers must be able to deliver their lessons in English or participate in immersion programs in which all subjects are taught in English. They argued that implementing content and language integrated learning (CLIL) means that the emphasis of their lectures is not only on imparting knowledge of the subject matter, but also on assisting students in acquiring English.

In a study conducted in China, Wei (2007) reported the favorable comments made by students enrolled in classes taught in English. The students believed that studying English in an English-speaking environment significantly aided their English mastery. In another study Tong et al. (2008) investigated 534 Hispanic English learners from 28 elementary schools in the USA claimed that English immersion program helped students develop their oral proficiency effectively. At university level, Liu, Hu, and Peng

(2017) investigated how 208 Chinese students perceived a two-week English immersion programme. The results of the study show that in both weeks, the majority of students found the courses interesting and liked the majority of them for similar reasons (e.g., being interesting and having a lot of participation), that the program improved students' English abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing as well as overall English proficiency, and that the program improved students' interpersonal communication ability, confidence in using English, and knowledge of the culture of English.

Another researcher, Oommen (2012), argued that his research demonstrates that an integrated skill approach is the most natural method for language acquisition. In actual life, he continued, language skills are rarely used independently; it is uncommon for one of the four skills to occur by itself. He stated that to participate in a conversation, one must be able to speak and comprehend simultaneously, as he illustrated. To make language learning as realistic as feasible, instruction must simultaneously incorporate language skills, a requirement for communication. This perspective is held by educators who support bilingual and immersion education.

Genesee (2007) elaborated findings from extensive and thorough evaluations and studies of immersion programmes such as in Quebec (Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Genesee, 1987) and in other areas of Canada (e.g., Swain & Lapkin, 1982), as well as around the world in communities that have adopted what has become known as "the Canadian model" of bilingual education (Johnson & Swain, 1997; Christian & Genesee, 2001). More specifically, the research was carried out during the 1970s and 80s, after immersion was first instituted. The study found that:

1. Immersion students achieve the same (and in some cases superior) levels of competence in English, their native language, in domains related to reading, writing, speaking and listening comprehension in comparison to comparable anglophone students in all-English programmes;
2. Immersion students also attain the same (and in some cases superior) levels of academic achievement in mathematics and science in comparison to control students in all-English programmes;
3. At the same time, they achieve significantly higher levels of functional proficiency in

French in comparison to English-speaking students in conventional French-as-a-second language classes;

4. Immersion students generally achieve higher levels of proficiency in reading and listening comprehension skills (sometimes scoring as well as native French-speaking students) than on tests of speaking and writing; in all domains, their level of functional proficiency is at the advanced level;
5. Immersion students maintain a strong sense of identification with English-Canadian culture while obtaining an understanding and appreciation of French Canadians and French-Canadian culture not typically observed in non-immersion students.

On the other hand, some warnings regarding the immersion education has also been pointed out in many studies. Cummins (2000) for instance, warned that children's maternal tongues are fragile and easily lost during the elementary school years. If children are not exposed to their mother tongue outside the school context at home or in the community, they may lose the ability to communicate in their mother tongue within two to three years of beginning school. They may retain receptive (understanding) skills in the language, but they will use the predominant language when communicating with peers, siblings, and parents. He explains further that full immersion programmes can be seen as a repudiation of the culture and identity of the children. They are much less likely to participate actively and with confidence in classroom instruction when they feel rejected.

Furthermore, EIP posed huge challenges for the teachers because not only did they have to teach the subject matters but also English language ("The Great Wall of 'English Only': Teacher Perceptions of Classroom Ecology in Arizona's Post-Proposition 203 Era," 2013). Moreover, the low level of English language learners made it extra challenging for them to learn. From the students and parent's perspective, English immersion programme signaled negative connotation with the student's home language. They felt unvalued and appreciated because they were forbidden to use their native language in the learning process. Consequently, EIP schools, students tend to compare their native culture and language to the school culture and language. Students often focus on the flaws of other cultures, like English.

Students often focus on what a foreign culture lacks, which can cause discontent. Greeting, eating, and dating abroad might test students. Negative emotions and disappointments may lead parents to recognize cultural shock in their children. (University of Hampshire, 2012).

Dominguez and Pessoa (2005) conducted a study of students acquiring Spanish as a foreign language in an immersion setting reveals that students who began the program earlier outperformed new students in terms of oral proficiency. The finding also showed that gap between Spanish listening and speaking capabilities is greater for new students than for beginning language students. In addition to feeling more confident with their oral Spanish skills, the early learners reported being more inclined than the new students to use Spanish to express their emotions. This study provides evidence of the Spanish language development of early learners, as newer students required more prompting and more time to respond to some of the teacher-assigned tasks.

In Indonesian context, the implementation of an EIP promotes bilingualism (Indonesian and English) or, in certain regions of Indonesia, multilingualism (tribal languages, Indonesian, and English). One of the logical consequences of being bilingual is that teachers are expected to be able to communicate in Indonesian and English in both formal and informal settings. Teachers must be "ready" to engage in meaningful conversations in both languages outside of the classroom. Considering the pros and cons regarding English immersion programme (EIP) or EMI, this study seeks to understand the attitude or opinions of Indonesian English language learners learning at an EIP or EMI school.

II. METHOD

This research was conducted as a case study using a naturalistic qualitative research design (Silverman, 2020) in which the researcher did not manipulate or intervene with classroom activities, but rather worked with the case itself as the design point for qualitative research. The participants of the study are fifty-nine secondary school students (Grade 10 to 12). Moreover, this study's research design is a combined one, in large part due to the use of two distinct data collection methodologies. As detailed in the subsequent sections of this chapter, two data collection methods—questionnaire survey and interview—were employed for data collection.

These strategies are associated with quantitative and qualitative paradigms, respectively. In order to find answers to the present study's research queries, a combination of two strategies was employed. The research literature in the social sciences is replete with examples of combining data collection strategies across a vast array of studies. Denzin (2010) first introduced the concept of triangulation, which is defined as combining methodologies to examine the identical phenomena. Creswell (2018) states that the purpose of triangulation was to eliminate any inherent bias in specific data sources, researchers, and methods.

As depicted in Figure 1 below, the triangulation employed in this study is methodological triangulation, as it employs three data collection methods, namely questionnaire, interview, and observation, to enhance the validity of the results of the data analysis process. Regarding the data sources, both students and instructors were involved. Self-designed instruments were used to capture both types of data from each group. A survey questionnaire, interview protocols, and unstructured observations comprised the instruments. The former consisted of Likert scales, as well as categorical and numeric questions, which yielded quantitative data. In addition to qualitative and quantitative procedures, the pilot study included a check for validity and reliability. In terms of data analysis, descriptive statistics were used in conjunction with quantitative scales. As for the analysis of interviews and field records of observation, a qualitative method, content analysis, was used.



Figure 1. Research Design

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings and discussion will be presented according to the research questions guiding this study.

A. What are the general perceptions of the students regarding the implementation of EIP at their school?

1. The questionnaires

Seven questions are assigned to identify some key reasons for favouring a full English immersion programme in the under studied school. The first two questions are dealing with the students'

and teachers' perception of the importance of English at secondary and tertiary education. The following five questions are related to the benefits of learning within an EIP school in terms of developing students' English linguistic skills in the four areas, namely speaking, listening, reading, and writing (See Appendix 1 for the questionnaire).

The first reason for favouring EIP is that the students think that using English as the medium of instruction is very important for their study now and in the future as can be seen on Table 1 and Table 2. Most of the students, 86.4 and 83.1% perceive English as an important subject to learn at secondary and tertiary educational level and therefore they have positive attitude toward the implementation of an EIP at their school.

Table 1. Student's perceptions of the importance of using English at high school

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	1	1.7	1.7	1.7
so-so	7	11.9	11.9	13.6
Valid Agree	31	52.5	52.5	66.1
strongly agree	20	33.9	33.9	100.0
Total	59	100.0	100.0	

Table 2. Student's perceptions of the importance of using English at tertiary education

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	2	3.4	3.4	3.4
so-so	8	13.6	13.6	16.9
Valid Agree	25	42.4	42.4	59.3
strongly agree	24	40.7	40.7	100.0
Total	59	100.0	100.0	

Another significant reason behind the students' support of an EIP programme is that the students perceive the main advantage of learning various subjects in English is the progress they see in their English level of proficiency. From the questionnaire, item 5, 7, 8, 10 and 29 ask what the students and teachers' opinion is about the impact EIP has on the student's English language proficiency level. From Table 3 we can see that the students' perceptions of the influence of EIP on their English proficiency level are very positive. They really see the benefits of learning in an EIP context contribute positively to their English ability in the four areas of English skills, speaking, writing, reading and listening. These findings are in line with a study conducted by Tarhan (2003) where the majority of students and teachers think that English is important for

their future either to continue their education or for their jobs.

Table 3. Students' perceptions of the influence of EIP on students' English

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Able to write in English Mampu menulis	59	3.4137	1.08601
Able to understand explanation in English Mengerti penjelasan	59	4.0160	.77663
Able to give opinions in English Mampu memberikan pendapat	59	3.2373	1.02283
To improve student ability in English Meningkatkan kemampuan Bahasa Inggris	59	4.2203	.72082
Kemampuan English	59	4.1695	.74631
Valid N (listwise)	59		

2. The interviews

According to the results of the interviews, all of the participants appreciate the EIP at their school. They acknowledge that English is a globally used international language that they must acquire. One of them mentioned the significance of the English language in commerce and education. This is consistent with one of Krashen's principles, which states that the most effective method for language acquisition must provide comprehensible input in low-anxiety situations (Krashen, 1981). The reality that students enjoy studying in a context of total English immersion demonstrates the enormous potential for an effective language acquisition process. The following excerpts illustrate their responses to some of the interview questions concerning their perceptions of the EIP at their school. R represents the researcher's queries, while S represents the students' responses. The original interviews were conducted in Indonesian, and Appendix 2 contains the transcriptions.

R: Do you appreciate learning in a school where an EIP has been implemented?

S1: I appreciate learning in an EIP school tremendously.

It is excellent and enjoyable. International commercial relationships benefit from the use of English.

S3: It's enjoyable. I believe it is extremely positive.

Notes:

R: researcher

S: student

This portion of the transcript eloquently illustrates a point made by the students, namely that they genuinely appreciate learning in English and can foresee the benefits of speaking English fluently in the

future. The responses were given in a casual manner, and it is evident that they are enthusiastic and motivated to attend school every day, knowing that they will be instructed in English. One student commented that he interacts not only with the other students but also with the teachers, particularly the foreign teachers, in order to enhance his English proficiency. It can be inferred that the students and instructors have an equal and warm relationship because they spend time together outside of class. This relationship has made the students fearless and unashamed of making mistakes, as Rivas (2013) explains that when students lose their fear of making mistakes, they become more open to authentic conversation practice, where they learn as they go.

3. Data from school observation

Data from observation show that both the teachers and students are really involve in the learning process. During the classroom observations, it can be seen that the students were actively engaged throughout the lesson as they asked questions and participated in class or group discussion. The atmosphere of the class taught by teacher A is more orderly than teacher B. Teacher A takes a stricter approach when dealing with student's behaviour in the classroom while teacher B deals with it in a more relaxed manner.

In both classes the teachers start the lesson with ice breaker, usually in the form of asking how the students are or asking about their weekend. The students in both classes seemed to be relaxed with their teachers as they often shared jokes with them even in the middle of the lesson which made everybody laugh. This approach is in line with one of the suggestions given by Gaffney (1999) where he proposes teachers to deliver their lessons interestingly so that the students will be motivated to learn the subject although it is taught in their second language (Gaffney, 1999).

When the lessons were over, there were a few students in both classes who went to clarify some issues which they had not understood. This conversation only took about two minutes as they needed to go the consecutive class. Both teachers gave brief

explanations to the students. Class A students asked about the movie project that was due within two weeks. They seemed to be excited to do the project as they planned to do it after school hours.

In light of the qualitative data from the interviews and the quantitative data from the questionnaire, it can be concluded that both students and teachers appreciate learning and teaching in English. They can all see the advantages of using English as the medium of instruction in terms of learning and developing their English proficiency in a context that is meaningful and pertinent. Students and teachers use English in their interactions inside and outside of the classroom, but converse in Indonesian during lunch and with classmates. Both teachers and pupils have no difficulty communicating in English as the medium, and they appear to use English more frequently and voluntarily than Indonesian.

B. What are the underlying reasons of the students and teachers for favouring an EIP at secondary level?

This is the second question on getting the students' and teachers' perceptions of the implementation of an EIP at a secondary school. From the questionnaire item the responses from students and teachers indicate that there are three main advantages of implementing an EIP at secondary level of education, namely the importance of English in general for their further education and career and the improvement in English language learning.

1. The questionnaire

Seven questions are assigned to identify some key reasons for favouring a full English immersion programme in the under studied school. The first two questions are dealing with the students' and teachers' perception of the importance of English at secondary and tertiary education. The following five questions are related to the benefits of learning within an EIP school in terms of developing students' English linguistic skills in the four areas, namely speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

The first reason for favouring EIP is that the students think that using English as the medium of instruction is very important for their study now and in the future as can be seen on Table 4 and Table 5. Most of the students, 86.4 and 83.1% perceive English as an important subject to learn at secondary and tertiary educational level and therefore they have positive attitude toward the implementation of an EIP at their school.

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Kemampuan English	59	4,1695	,74631
Valid N (listwise)	59		

2. The interviews

Data from the interviews show that the students see the main benefit of studying in an English immersion school is that it helps them to develop in their English skills. The other advantages mentioned are about the change of culture and knowing English literature more deeply. This can be seen in their response to the question given to them about the benefits or advantages they get from attending the school in the excerpt below:

R: What are the advantages of studying in a school which implement an EIP?

S1: I become more fluent in speaking English. The school culture is also different like the way we play, our mindset is so westernized. In my previous school I had to memorize a lot but here I am taught to think logically.

S2: It helps me to develop my English better which can be useful when I communicate with other people especially foreigners. I have an open mind when talking to people from different cultural background.

This segment of transcript describes how students appreciate the benefit of studying in an EIP school as a great way to improve their English skills and also to gain knowledge about English literature and culture. This finding is in agreement with the report by Hadley about the relationship between a language and culture (Hadley, 2001). One of the students claim to have also developed western culture and mindset which are not necessarily better than Indonesian's but are certainly appreciated by the student.

The results of questionnaires and interviews with instructors and students indicate that the primary benefit of an English immersion programme is the

improvement of students' English proficiency. Teachers and students concur that the EIP has improved the English abilities of students in all four areas: speaking, reading, listening, and writing. The students have benefited from the teachers' cultural transfer in terms of expanding their cultural knowledge of the English language. The use of all English-language materials has bolstered the students' confidence in communicating in English and in continuing their education abroad. These reasons are consistent with Lambert's (1984) findings, as cited by Potowski, who asserted that the Canadian immersion education programme produced the highest level of L2 competence of all elementary foreign language programmes and that there is only a small cost to the students' L1 acquisition, as research on French immersion programmes has shown that immersion students develop similarly to their English-only peers. Moreover, pupils enrolled in immersion programmes appear to develop a more favorable attitude toward the L2's native speakers (Potowski, 2007). Gaffney cited Genesee (1992), who stated that in some instances, immersion pupils outperformed their English-only peers, as demonstrated by a study conducted in French medium schools in Montreal. The "...English language development [of French immersion students] was superior to that of students enrolled in non-immersion programmes..." (Gaffney, 1999).

This finding also resonates with Gaffney (2007) claim which stated that immersion students not only acquire second language skills and learn academic subject matter and concepts, but they also maintain a level of English language development comparable to their non-immersion peers. In addition, it should be noted that students' general language skills are improved, their general cognitive development and academic achievement are enriched, and their appreciation for the culture and people represented by the target language is broadened and strengthened.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

A. Conclusion

This previous section has elaborated the findings of this study which focuses on looking at the student's perceptions about the EIP or EMI at their school. The findings indicate that the students surveyed have positive attitudes toward the implementation of a comprehensive English immersion programme. The primary benefit that students perceive relates to their English proficiency. All participants claim to have observed positive results in the student's ability to communicate in English across the four English skills of writing, reading, listening, and speaking. The participants' increased knowledge and awareness of western culture has facilitated their interactions with English-native speaker instructors at their school. This improvement in English proficiency is the primary motivation for students and their guardians to attend an EIP or EMI school.

B. Suggestions

In relation to the preceding research findings and conclusions, the following suggestions are made:

1. For Teachers

Teachers must be aware of the requirements this system places on their subject-matter expertise and English proficiency. The school under review has made significant efforts to support its instructors by providing ongoing professional development. The teachers who wish to teach in a similar environment must be prepared to devote significant time and energy to adapting to the system, which includes familiarizing themselves with English teaching materials, creating effective lesson plans, and committing to continually improve their English proficiency.

2. For pupils

Learning in an English environment requires greater effort from pupils than learning in their native language environment. The students must be aware that in addition to mastering the subject matter, they must also excel in English.

3. For caretakers

Parental involvement is crucial to the success of the educational process. Parents must provide additional assistance to their children so they can acquire both the English language and the subjects. But

most importantly, parents must ensure that their children do not lose their Indonesian identity due to their extensive exposure to English language and culture.

4. For academic administrators

The results of the study demonstrate how positively students and teachers view the implementation of an EIP at their school; however, the concern regarding students' attrition in Indonesian and dearth of knowledge about their country must be addressed appropriately. A bilingual education system is recommended so that students can maintain contact with their culture and the rest of society. Native English speakers are expected to teach in English, while it is suggested that Indonesian instructors teach in Indonesian. The school must provide a sufficient quantity of exposure to Indonesian language and culture in order to increase the student's knowledge of Indonesia and, consequently, their sense of patriotism. It is suggested that the school include additional topics on nationalism and culture within the extant Indonesian culture courses.

5. For other scholars

They can view the findings of this study as background information and a challenge for managing other facets associated with the implementation of an English immersion programme.

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