

# EFL LECTURERS' PRACTICE, PERCEPTION, AND EVALUATION OF ENGLISH AS THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

**Erikson SARAGIH**

Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

eriksonsaragih@usu.ac.id

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## ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions in non-English speaking countries, such as Indonesia, have practised English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in teaching-learning activities. Previous studies have explored EMI implementation policies and the difficulties of their implementation in Indonesian higher education contexts. However, this study examined the perception, comprehension, practices, and evaluation of EMI in Indonesia where English functions as a foreign language. The data of this study were taken from questionnaires distributed to 42 English lecturers. The results reveal that most lecturers' speaking skills are in the very good category, 95% of lecturers understand the EMI concept well and always apply EMI to learning activities. In EMI practice, the lecturers face obstacles, especially in arguing concepts, explaining and clarifying concepts, giving examples, and defining concepts. In addition, the lecturers reported barriers to expressing content materials in English, preparing long materials, and requiring a longer time to explain materials. The study also reported some students' problems in EMI practice, especially dealing with their low confidence in using English and low ability to comprehend materials. To apply EMI successfully, both lecturers and students need to improve their speaking skills in the context of higher education in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** EMI; tertiary education; practice; perception; evaluation; Indonesia context

## Introduction

The complex history of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) is connected to colonisation and globalisation (Kim et al., 2014). It can be associated with British colonial authority and the expansion of the British Empire in the 19th and 20th centuries in many parts of the world. The impact of the British Empire resulted in many of its colonies adopting English as their primary language of government, instruction, and communication. English eventually became the most widely spoken language in the world due to its economic and cultural domination, the growth of American popular culture, and the significance of English in international diplomacy and business (Sah, 2022).

In the EMI context, English is not only seen as a way to access global knowledge and opportunities, but it can also be a source of linguistic and cultural tension that causes a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, with both positive and negative consequences (Cheng, 2020). The positive sides include issues of global communication, access to education resources, and employability for higher education graduates (Zein et al., 2020). On the other hand, the negative sides cover issues of language barriers, inequality, cultural bias, and teacher competency (Goktepe & Kunt, 2021).

The application of EMI in the teaching and learning process in non-English-speaking countries is still an intriguing topic nowadays (Chang, 2019; Goodman, 2014; Salahshour et al., 2013; Yuan et al., 2020). Although using English as the target language continues to cause many challenges in various nations, the policy of applying EMI is still seen to be able to greatly motivate both educators and students to grasp English literacy (Chang, 2019; Floris, 2014). As a result, some educational institutions are continuing to establish policies in the area of foreign language instruction (Pearson, 2014; Samani & Narafshan, 2016)

Along with the paradigm shift in foreign language teaching from language description to functional language use for communication purposes, the use of EMI continues to be in demand by foreign language teachers and receives full support from educational institutions, particularly higher education in various countries (Eshghinejad & Moini, 2016; Fang, 2018). Furthermore, most educators share the enthusiasm for using EMI in foreign language acquisition. Even though there are no clear standards for implementing this policy in numerous countries, EFL teachers continue to use it in their classrooms. EMI is increasingly being used in higher education, although the variables behind EMI rise vary by nation. There are at least two reasons underlying the application of EMI. Firstly, most academic research—roughly 94%—is published in English in high-impact international journals. Therefore, considering that the subject is mainly written in English, it makes sense for students to practise English if they wish to keep current in their education. In addition, most of the language and information in many technical subjects, as well as the research and theses of students, are written in English.

In the last two decades, several researchers have conducted a lot of research on the use of EMI in the practice of English as a foreign language (Mancho-Barés & Aguilar-Pérez, 2020). Because of the significance of English, there is indeed a fast-expanding trend throughout many worldwide learning settings for English to be

accepted as the mode of instruction, even though the general populace communicates the language of the country. Of course, there are a lot of drawbacks to employing EMI, both for teachers and students.

Despite diverse attitudes regarding its usage, the use of English in Indonesian education programmes has been expanding for the last several years (Dewi, 2017). Indonesia's modernisation agenda has driven this expansion of English language education by Indonesian education institutions. The growth of English language instruction by applying EMI is driven by Indonesia's modernisation needs. English is used globally across borders in communication skills among persons in which the first languages are frequently not English, not just by native speakers or as a regional variant.

The creation of ELF has boosted language mastery for a variety of objectives and established EMI in a variety of settings. Although the use of EMI started the globalisation phase of academic institutions and improved educational quality can be assumed to a certain extent, the efficiency of EMI implementation in core subjects has yet to be thoroughly explored.

Some studies on EMI practices in the context of education in Indonesia have been carried out in the last two decades (Floris, 2014). The majority of them explored the relationship between EMI practices and government policies in the framework of EMI in the Indonesian school system, particularly concerning issues of sustaining the Indonesian language to demonstrate national identity (Dewi, 2017).

Some studies describe the disagreement and rejection of the use of EMI in many schools associated with nationalist issues to maintain the use of Indonesian language as the primary medium of communication in the area of education (Zacharias, 2013). On the one hand, some academic institutions in Indonesia aim to internationalise, but on the other hand, they still want Indonesian to be the primary language of instruction.

Furthermore, some studies highlighted the importance of selecting certain subjects that use EMI as the learning language (Aizawa & Rose, 2020; Borg, 2019; Graham et al., 2018). Respondents suggested that employing EMI in specific learning processes, particularly mathematics and natural science, would aid students in preparing to continue their education overseas while using English as the language of instruction (Floris, 2014).

Although prior studies have investigated the EMI phenomena (Fitriati & Rata, 2020), hardly any studies have looked at EMI practices by English teachers at the university level (Yuan et al., 2020), particularly in English study programmes. In Indonesia, the use of EMI in the context of education is rather blurred, both in terms of government policies and EMI practices in educational institutions (Duran & Sert, 2019). As a result, English teachers tend to make EMI a personal option based on their desire and ability to do so.

The study examined EFL lecturers' practice, perception, and evaluation of English as the medium of instruction in tertiary education. The research questions are:

1. How do EFL lecturers perceive their readiness to implement EMI in Indonesian higher education?
2. How is the lecturers' comprehension of EMI?

3. What language barriers are faced by both EFL lecturers and students in practising EMI?
4. What suggestions are proposed to improve the quality of EMI practice in the Indonesian context?

The study intends to provide a comprehensive picture and elaboration of EMI practice and evaluation, especially for English curriculum designers and teachers who practise EMI in higher education contexts in Indonesia. In addition, it is of pivotal importance to add to previous studies regarding the practice and application of EMI.

## **Review of Literature**

### **English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in a Global Context**

The dominance of English has elevated its role as an instructional language in the global setting, notably in higher education and worldwide commerce (Guo et al., 2022). It is the most widely used second language in the world as an international language. It acts as a platform for open dialogue among speakers of various languages. A lot of academic institutions across the world provide programmes taught in English on the topic of education, drawing students from different nations. This facilitates information sharing on a worldwide scale and promotes cross-cultural learning (Sjøen, 2023).

Since people of different countries speak English, each one has its unique accent and dialect (Shepard & Rose, 2023). Concerns about linguistic imperialism and the possible marginalisation of other languages and cultures are allayed by this diversity, which also adds to the language's adaptability and represents the language's worldwide reach. Although there are many different varieties of English, there are also standard versions like British English and American English that are used as benchmarks for communication consistency and as a medium of instruction (Gao et al., 2022).

### **EMI Contexts in Indonesia**

Indonesian is the official language and medium of teaching in Indonesia (Bolton et al., 2023). However, English is a language that is taught at several colleges and foreign schools. Since Indonesia is the world's fourth-most populated nation and third-largest democracy, its significance in global trade has grown. The use of EMI in Indonesia has been an intriguing topic, particularly concerning its application at institutions of higher education (Coleman et al., 2023).

The broader environment of English language instruction in a country cannot be separated from the growing popularity of EMI. The purposes of establishing an EMI programme might range from serving international students to encouraging internationalisation among national students.

Several universities in Indonesia are working hard to gain international recognition (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019). They partially achieve this by deliberately adopting EMI. At the high school level, it is typically used by schools that partner

with foreign universities. At college and university levels, EMI is typically used in English-based study programmes like English literature study or English language education as well as foreign classes at various institutions. Because EMI is highly preferred at many Indonesian institutions, language regulations in higher education regarding EMI implementation are still blurred. As a consequence, many universities have chosen different policies and strategies depending on the institution's needs (Simbolon, 2021).

### **Perspectives on the Implementation of EMI**

In Indonesia, the internationalisation of higher education aims to raise educational standards, make Indonesian institutions more competitive internationally, and foster a more varied and welcoming academic environment (Harun et al., 2020). The Indonesian government has made this endeavour a top priority in recent years. To encourage international participation and collaboration in higher education, it incorporates some strategies and efforts. Increasing the number of international students is one of the important components of this internationalisation endeavour. Universities in Indonesia have been attempting to draw in more foreign students by providing scholarships, raising the standard of instruction, streamlining the visa application procedure, and offering programmes in other countries by EMI.

There are still many questions about the use of EMI at different educational levels in Indonesia (Jahan & Hamid, 2019). This argument centres on difficulties relating to the country's official language and the low level of English proficiency among lecturers and students. Regarding English proficiency, several parties contend that EMI can only be used if lecturers and students have sufficient English language proficiency. In actuality, most lecturers and students struggle with comprehending and using English (Coleman, 2017; Saragih et al., 2023). They thus contended that careful planning was required to support this effort. Other groups contend that Indonesian ought to be the primary language taught there, particularly in educational institutions. Making English the language of instruction in higher education is considered to violate the 1928 Youth Pledge and the 1945 Constitution.

### **Method**

The case study was conducted at the beginning of the odd semester 2022/2023 academic year to examine the different views of individual lecturers about the perception, practice, and evaluation of EMI in the Indonesian context. Respondents in this research consisted of 42 lecturers of English Education departments at seven state-owned universities and 10 private universities in 10 cities from five main islands in Indonesia (Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Celebes, and Papua). They were from major cities, where EMI tends to be implemented. Respondents selected were those who practised EMI in the teaching-learning activities in their classroom.

The research team distributed questionnaires to 60 lecturers who met the criteria but only 48 lecturers returned online questionnaires. Of these, six questionnaires could not be used as research data due to technical problems (file problem). The participant demographic information is depicted in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Participant Demography based on Gender, Age, Education, Teaching Experiences and Types of College*

No	Demography	Categories	Total	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	17	41%
		Female	25	59%
2	Age	< 30 years	2	4.76%
		30-40 years	2	4.76%
		41-50 years	19	45.23%
		51-60 years	15	35.71%
		>60 years	4	9.52%
3	University status	Public University	16	38%
		Private University	26	62%
4	Education	Bachelor	1	2.38%
		Master	17	40.47%
		Doctorate	24	57.14%
5	Teaching Experience	1-5 years	2	4.76%
		5-10 years	6	14.28%
		11-15 years	14	33.33%
		16-20 years	16	38.09%
		>20 years	4	9.52%
6	Types of College	University	36	85.71%
		Institute	4	9.52%
		College	2	4.76%

The online questionnaire consisted of 10 questions to explore perceptions of readiness, description of EMI of language barriers, and EMI evaluation to improve the quality of EMI implementation in the learning process at the higher education level in Indonesia. The questions asked are a combination of closed questions in the form of a Likert scale and open-ended questions. The question items were validated by a team of experts to ensure that the question items were precise and accurate.

The data were collected in September and October 2022, by distributing Google links to selected respondents. To collect the data, the researcher followed several procedures to maintain the integrity of the research process and ensure the rights of respondents are respected. Firstly, the researcher informed the respondents about the purpose of the study and they voluntarily agreed to participate without coercion. Secondly, the researcher protected respondents' privacy by guaranteeing that their responses were kept confidential or anonymous.

The questionnaire data were analysed based on the following steps; data cleaning (removing any incomplete or inconsistent responses), data entry (entering survey responses into a dataset by ensuring accuracy), and data visualisation (generating charts or graphs) to visualise data distribution, data interpretation (interpreting the results, drawing a meaningful conclusion from data), peer review (colleagues reviewing the analysis to ensure its accuracy and validity).

## Results

The results of this study are described to show the lecturers' perception of EMI, comprehension of EMI, competence in EMI, their practice of applying EMI, and evaluation.

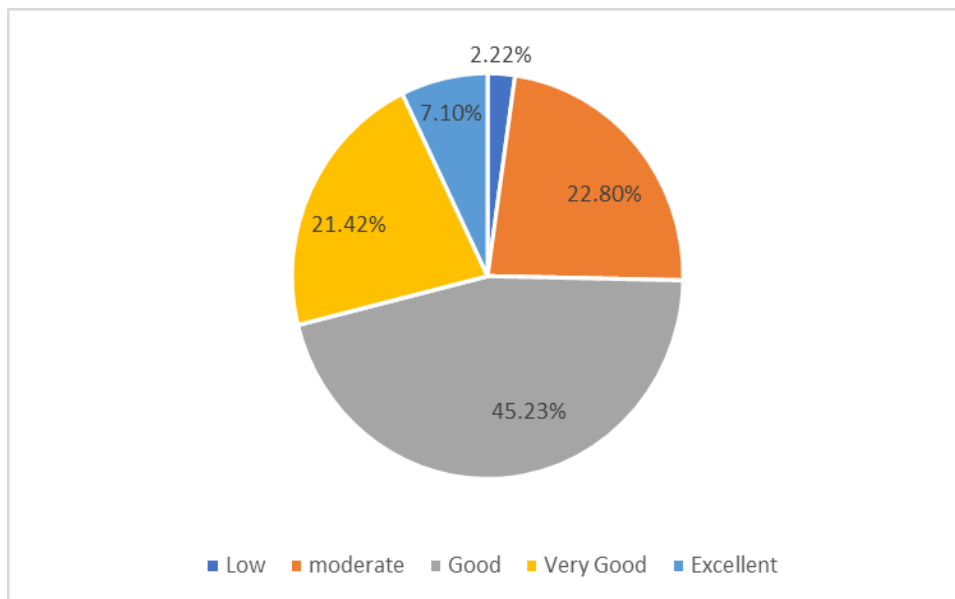
### Lecturers' Perception of EMI

#### *Perception of Speaking Skills*

Theoretically, the mastery of EMI is positively correlated with the speaking skills of the English teacher. This section describes the self-reflection of English teachers about their speaking skills in connection with teachers' performance in implementing EMI in the classroom. The teacher's self-reflection of their speaking ability is depicted in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Self-Reflection of Teachers' Speaking Skills*



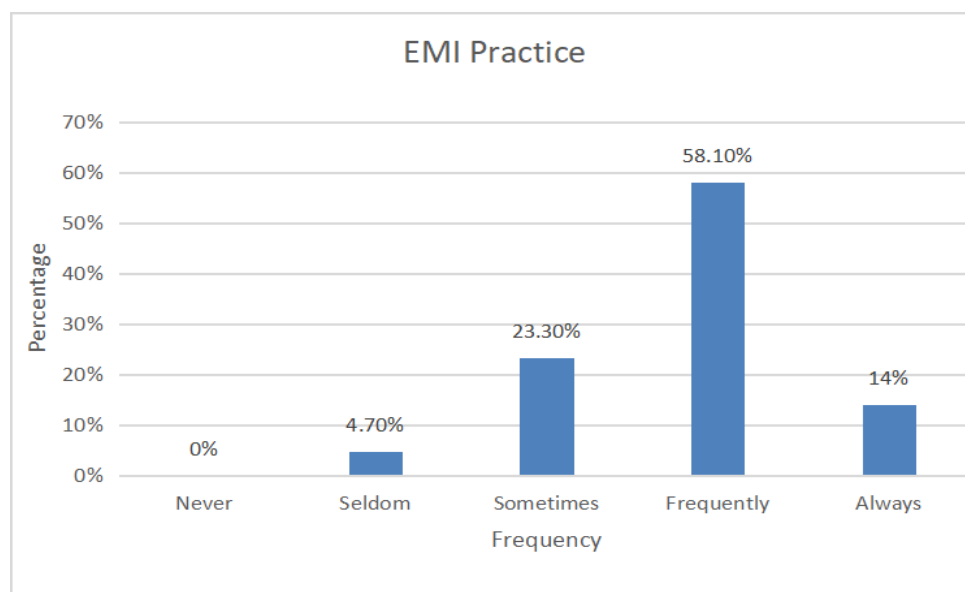
The self-grade speaking skills was performed by grouping assessments from a score range of 60-100. In this measurement, the score categories were grouped as excellent (100), very good (90), good (80), moderate (70), and low (60).

The results showed that 19 out of 42 teachers (45.23%) rated their speaking ability in the value of 80, 10 teachers (22.80%) rated their score 70, 9 teachers (21.42%) rated their ability score 90. Three teachers (7.14%) rated their ability in the "Excellent" category, and only one teacher (2.38%) rated their speaking ability in English in the "Low" category (60). Overall, most teachers do not have problems implementing EMI when it comes to their mastery of speaking skills in English.

### **Frequency of EMI Practice**

The frequency of applying EMI in the learning process was elicited using a Likert scale with the options "Always", "Frequently", "Sometimes", "Seldom" and "Never". The frequency of EMI application in the learning process are depicted in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**  
*Teachers' Frequency of Using EMI*



A total of 25 English teachers (59.52%) were in the "Frequently" category, 9 teachers (21.42 %) were in the "Sometimes" category, six teachers (14.28%) were in the "Always" category, and two teachers (4.76%) in the "Seldom" category.

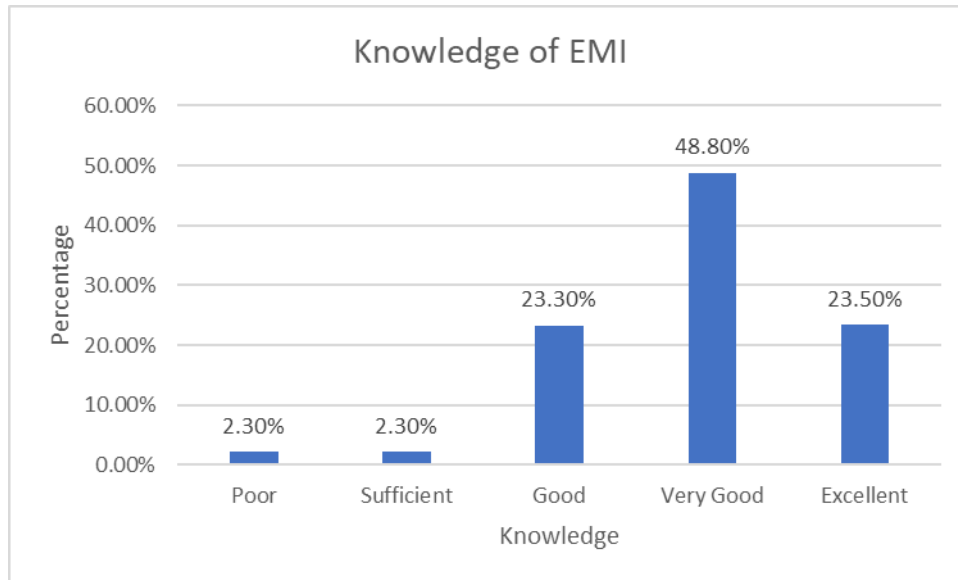
### **Lecturers' Comprehension of EMI**

Lecturers' comprehension of EMI includes their knowledge of EMI and their competence in using EMI. For this question, teachers were asked to rate their knowledge of EMI using as 1 for Poor, 2 for Sufficient, 3 for Good, 4 for Very good, and 5 for Excellent. The teachers' knowledge of EMI is depicted in Figure 3.

Figure 3 illustrates that the majority of lecturers understand EMI theories and concepts in the "Very Good" category (48.8%), the "Excellent" category (23.5%), and the "Good" category (23.3%). The data also show that a small number of teachers have a minimum understanding of EMI, namely, in the "Sufficient" category (2.3%) and the "Poor" category (2.3%). This phenomenon indicates that most teachers have read various literature on the practice and application of EMI before they apply EMI as the language of instruction in the learning process.



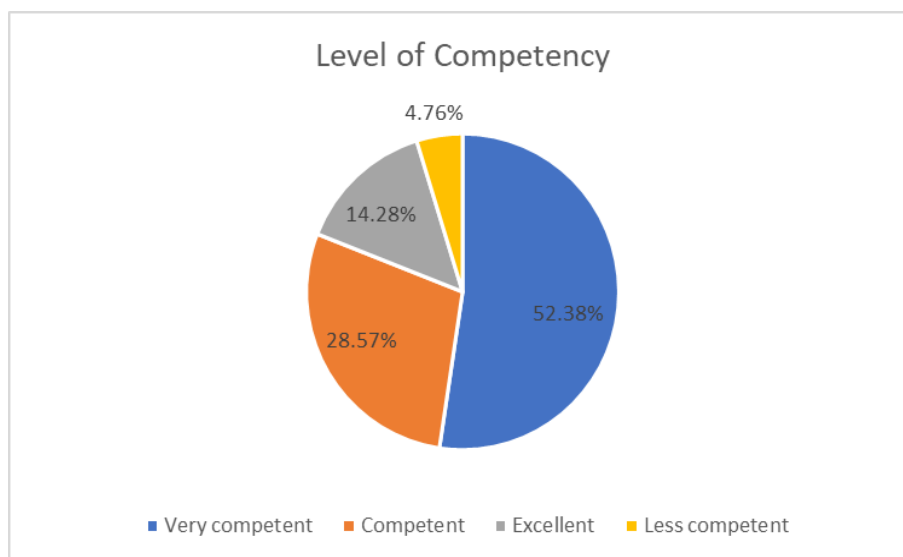
**Figure 3**  
Lecturers' Knowledge of EMI



**Lecturers' Competence in Using EMI**

These question items confirm the self-reflection results on competency in implementing EMI. Figure 4 shows the percentages of the respondents' self-reported competency in applying EMI in the "Excellent", "Very Competent", "Competent", "Less Competent", and "Poor" categories.

**Figure 4**  
Respondents' Competency in Applying EMI



A total of 22 respondents (52.38%) were “Very Competent”, 12 respondents (28.57%) were in the category of "Competent", six respondents (14.28%) had “Excellent” competence, while two respondents (4.76%) were in the category of “Less Competent”.

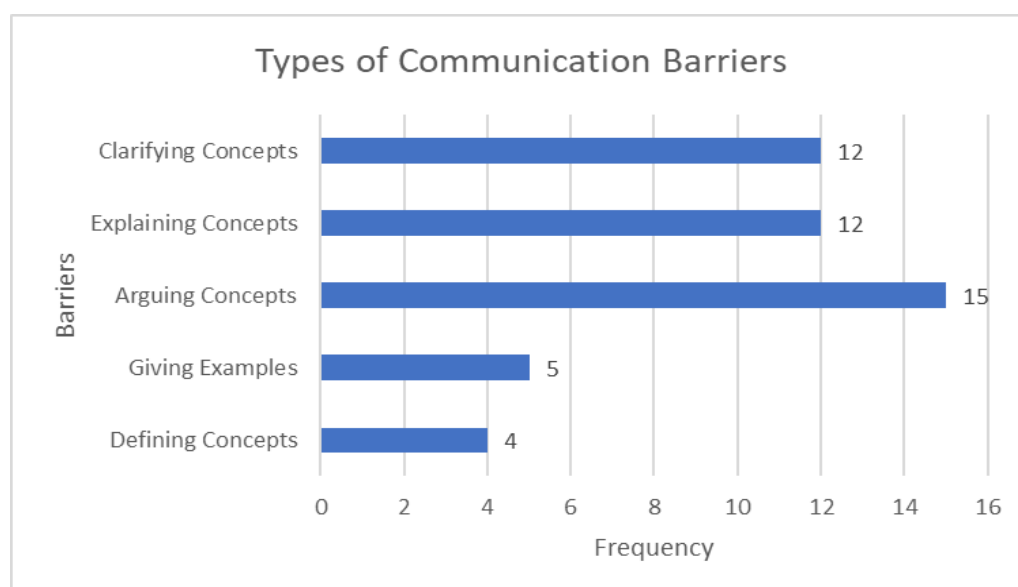
### The Practice of Applying EMI

The practice encompasses the communication barriers, lecturers' and students' language barriers experienced by the respondents in practising EMI, the teaching components they felt were the most difficult in implementing EMI, and the solutions they took to solve problems in implementing EMI.

#### *Communication Barriers to Applying EMI*

Figure 5 provides an explicit description of the language barriers experienced by respondents in applying EMI in their teaching practices in response to open-ended questions. The "Arguing Concepts" function was the dominant obstacle experienced by 15 teachers (37%), followed by the “Explaining Concepts” and “Clarifying Concepts” functions experienced by each of the 12 teachers (30%). Furthermore, language barriers of “Giving Examples” were experienced by five teachers (13%), and “Defining Concepts” were experienced by four teachers (10%).

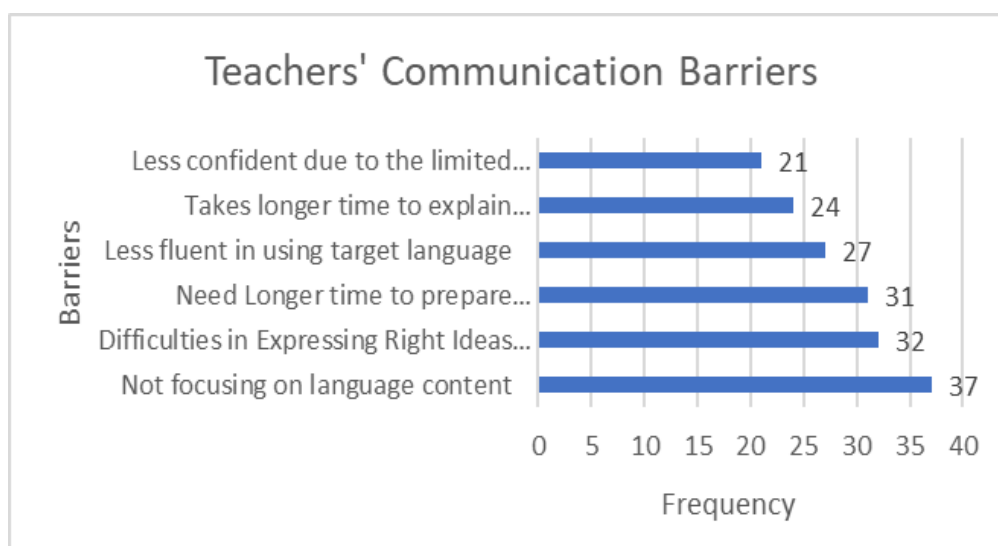
**Figure 5**  
*Types of Communication Barriers*



### ***The Teachers' Barriers***

Figure 6 describes the barriers faced by respondents in implementing EMI in their teaching practices. The barriers they experienced were generally related to 37 teachers (86%) not focusing on material content caused by language barriers, difficulties in expressing the right ideas in the target language (32 teachers or 74%), requiring a relatively long time to prepare the subject (31 teachers or 72%), not fluent in using the target language (27 teachers or 63%), takes longer to explain concepts (24 teachers or 59%), and less confident to teach the material because of limited technical vocabulary (21 teachers or 49%).

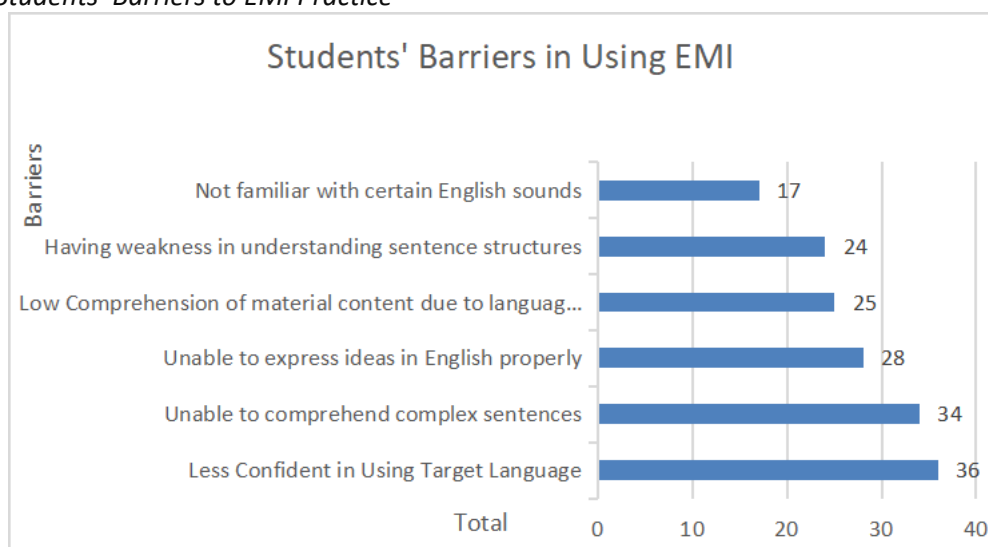
**Figure 6**  
*Description of Teachers' Communication Barriers*



### ***The Students' Barriers***

Figure 7 describes the barriers experienced by students when they attended lectures with EMI, as seen from the lecturers' perspective concerns. The barriers were lack of confidence in using the target language (36 students or 83.7%), inability to understand complex sentences (34 students or 79%), inability to express ideas in English properly (28 students or 65%), mastery of the material becomes slow due to barriers of language (25 students or 58.13%), weak in mastering sentence structure (24 students or 55.8%), not familiar with the sounds of English (17 students or 39.5%).

**Figure 7**  
*Students' Barriers to EMI Practice*



### **Evaluation**

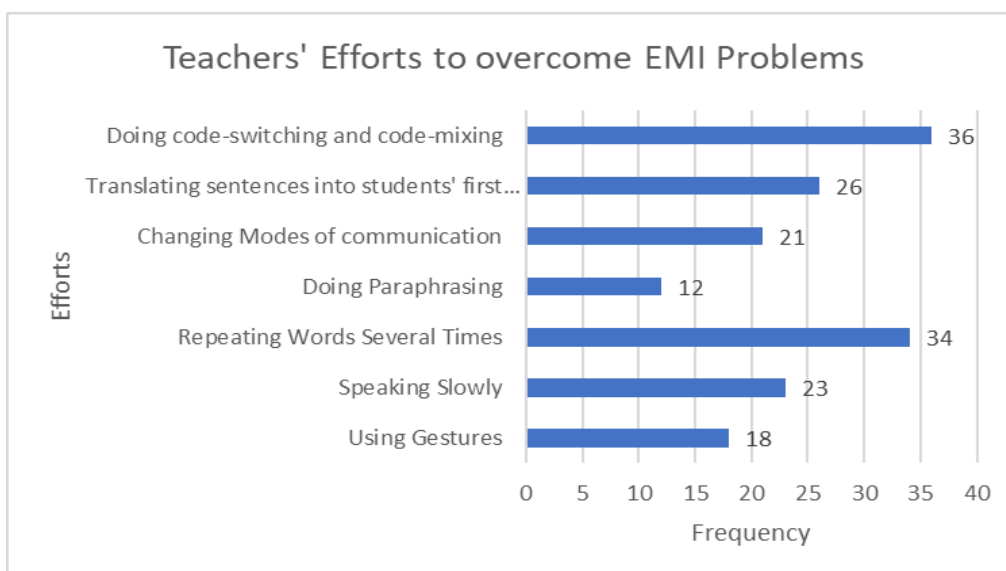
Respondents were prompted to provide details on the efforts they always make to overcome language obstacles in EMI, as well as suggestions for enhancing the effectiveness of EMI implementation in the assessment questions that took the form of open-ended questions.

### **Solutions to Language Barriers**

Figure 8 describes the teachers' strategies to correct and minimise errors, increasing students' understanding of the subject delivered by EMI. The teachers' strategies included code-mixing and code-switching (36 teachers or 84%), repeating certain words several times (34 teachers or 79%), translating material into the first language (26 teachers or 60%), speaking slowly (23 teachers or 53%), changing modes of communication (21 teachers or 48%), using gestures (18 teachers or 41%), and doing paraphrasing (12 teachers or 28%). The following excerpt is an example of a strategy that one respondent applied when he faced language barriers in EMI practice:

... when I experience problems in expressing an idea in the target language, in this case, English, what I usually do is mix languages ... hmm ... code-switching or code-mixing ... repeating the concepts several times into our local language, Indonesian, of course ...

**Figure 8**  
*Strategies to Minimise Problems Using EMI*



### ***Suggestions for Implementing EMI***

The teachers' recommendations for utilising EMI as linguistic communication in the learning process are shown in Figure 9. The teachers argued that both lecturers and students should improve their speaking skills (39 teachers or 92.85%), following EMI programme training (32 teachers or 76.19%).

The following summarises how the respondents felt about the idea of putting EMI into practice.

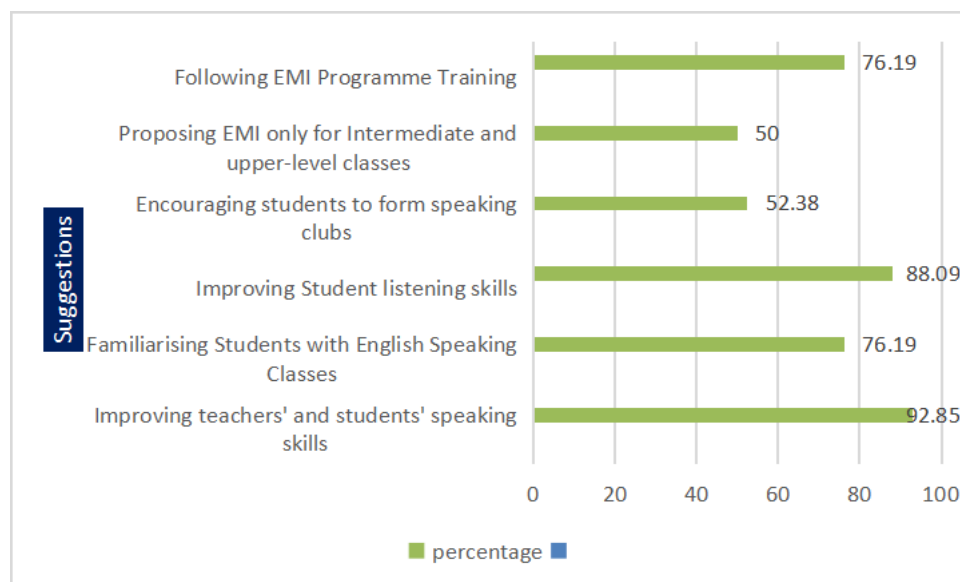
... to run EMI practices in university internationalisation efforts, both lecturers and students need to improve their English oral communication skills in English. Without good oral communication skills, especially in explaining the main material, EMI is difficult to implement.

Regarding proposed activities to improve oral communication skills in English, another respondent highlighted the importance of informal activities:

... theoretically, EMI is used in formal education activities, but lecturers and students also need to communicate in English in informal activities, in terms of discussing academic activities. For this reason, speaking clubs for lecturers and students need to be formed ...

Other suggestions offered by respondents to improve the quality of EMI implementation are familiarising students with English-speaking classes (32 teachers or 76.19%), improving students' listening skills (37 teachers or 88.09%), encouraging students to form speaking clubs (22 teachers or 52.38%), and proposing the EMI programme just for the intermediate and upper-level classes (21 teachers or 50%).

**Figure 9**  
*Suggestions for Applying EMI*



### Discussion

The study showed how lecturers at tertiary education in Indonesia comprehend, practise, and perceive the use of English as a Medium of Instruction in their teaching activities. Firstly, regarding the ability of lecturers to run the EMI programme, almost all lecturers are capable and very confident in what they are doing as evidenced by the positive assessment of their self-reflection. This fact confirms the findings of previous studies (Duran & Sert, 2019; Hong & Basturkmen, 2020). Although most of the lecturers have good speaking skills, they have moderate knowledge in understanding EMI theory and concepts (Vu & Burns, 2014). Of course, this fact is in unambiguous contrast to the lecturers' ability to speak. This fact is not in line with previous findings (Al-Issa, 2017; Ennis, 2018; Jia & Hew, 2021) which stated that the speaking ability of lecturers is in line with the understanding of teaching practice using EMI.

This investigation provides several conclusions that are connected to EMI practices. First, only 14.6% of all research participants consistently used EMI in their instruction, with the majority falling into the "Often" and occasionally "Sometimes" categories. Even though the lecturers are capable of doing so, the institution needs to pay particular attention to the lecturers' commitment and drive to implement EMI in their lessons (Rowland & Murray, 2020). The educators also discussed other advantages they perceived from using EMI, one of which is to give lecturers and students more possibilities to communicate continually in English. To improve spoken literacy, increase practice intensity, and motivate lecturers and students alike, the benefits of EMI implementation must also be addressed. This discovery supports earlier studies (Sah, 2022; Tai & Wei, 2021).

When incorporating EMI in the educational process, both instructors and students face difficulties and limitations. The lecturers disclosed that their difficulty in applying EMI was lowering the delivery of course material because of issues with language and the challenges they faced in explaining their thoughts (Macaro et al., 2020). Students' inability to utilise English confidently and their limited understanding of complex words are among the difficulties they face when applying EMI (Saragih, 2019). Previous studies have also supported the two challenges faced by professors and students (Ali, 2020). Additionally, instructors, as well as learners, use code-switching and code-mixing in addition to repeating statements that they initially believed to be incorrect to get around language obstacles when applying EMI (Haidar & Fang, 2019).

Most teachers were in favour of implementing EMI in educational activities, particularly to promote the globalisation of university operations. However, the application of EMI in the teaching-learning process in higher education is still opposed by some lecturers, nevertheless. Those who have a different view contend that Indonesian language instruction should promote a love of Indonesian as a national identity (Efendi et al., 2021). In this case, they questioned the essence of using English in the teaching and learning process in the context of education in Indonesia. They believe that the role of Indonesian language in the academic world will be degraded if EMI is applied to all subjects at the university. The application of EMI can threaten the use of Indonesian not only in higher education but also at the elementary and secondary education levels. Furthermore, few teachers believe that EMI is very appropriate to be applied to the English teaching and learning process, and in international classes at the tertiary level, but not in the subjects contained in the national curriculum.

### **Conclusion**

The study on the perception, understanding, practice, and evaluation of English as a Medium of Instruction shows that although lecturers typically have a positive opinion and comprehension of EMI, they encounter difficulties putting it into practice, particularly when presenting instructional materials due to language constraints. The findings of this study additionally highlight the challenges faced by students who lack the confidence to express themselves in English, which affects the opportunities for learning encounters. The study shows efforts made to improve EMI's quality, especially those aimed at enhancing English communication between lecturers and students, and the requirement for specialised instruction for both parties to maximise the effectiveness of EMI implementation. Based on these findings, those involved in higher education internationalisation effort in Indonesia need to consider some policies to promote this EMI practice. Although the results of this study can directly describe EMI practices in the context of higher education in Indonesia, future studies on this issue should broaden its focus to research EMI practice to other subjects at the higher education level in Indonesia.

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