



Implementing English as a Medium of Instruction in International Economics and Business Education

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ABSTRACT

Internationalisation has become a strategic priority in higher education, particularly in faculties of economics and business that are closely connected to global markets and international collaboration. English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) is widely adopted as a key strategy to support academic integration and enhance students' global competitiveness. This study investigates the implementation of EMI in international classes at the Faculty of Economics and Business Education in Indonesia. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research explores the challenges and perceived benefits experienced by lecturers and students in EMI-based teaching and learning. The findings reveal several major challenges, including limited English proficiency among stakeholders, inadequate EMI-oriented teaching materials, and insufficient professional development for lecturers. Despite these constraints, EMI demonstrates potential to improve students' academic English competence, increase classroom participation, and advance institutional internationalisation goals. The study highlights the importance of comprehensive support systems, including targeted language training, curriculum alignment, and strong institutional policies, to ensure effective EMI implementation in non-English speaking contexts. These findings contribute to ongoing discussions on optimising EMI practices to strengthen internationalisation in higher education in developing countries.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Submitted/Received 24 Feb 2026

First Revised 12 March 2026

Accepted 2 April 2026

First Available online 31 July 2026

Publication Date 31 July 2026

Keyword:

English as a Medium of Instruction;
Teacher Professional Development;
Internationalisation; Higher
Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

The internationalisation of higher education institutions (HEIs) has become a global priority, as universities seek to enhance their reputation by improving competitiveness, innovation, and international collaboration (de Wit & Altbach, 2021). There is a range of initiatives organised by universities to achieve these goals, including student and faculty mobility, joint research projects, international curricula, and cross-border academic programs. Besides attracting international students, higher education institutions also aim to cultivate global citizenship, improve intercultural competence, and contribute to solving global challenges. With the growing use of digital technologies, internationalisation now also includes virtual exchanges and online collaboration, making global engagement more accessible than ever.

In Indonesia in particular, this agenda aligns with the government's *Asta Cita* vision, which focuses on improving the quality of education and positioning universities as globally recognised centres of excellence. In recent years, Indonesian universities have increasingly emphasised participation in global ranking systems such as the QS World University Rankings and the Times Higher Education (THE) rankings as a measure of international visibility and competitiveness. Although only a few Indonesian institutions consistently appear in these rankings, many universities are also actively developing international partnerships, expanding international programs, and strengthening research output to improve their global standing. Those efforts reflect a growing national commitment to transform Indonesian higher education into a more internationally engaged and competitive sector.

Despite these initiatives, Indonesia's position in global higher education remains relatively modest compared to regional peers. According to the QS World University Rankings in 2025, Universitas Indonesia ranks 206th, Universitas Gadjah Mada 239th, and Institut Teknologi Bandung comes 256th. These rankings, while respectable, still fall short of the achievements of neighbouring Indonesian countries. For example, Malaysia's University of Malaya is ranked 60th, while Singapore's National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University consistently place within the global top 20. Thai institutions such as Chulalongkorn and Mahidol also feature more prominently than most Indonesian universities. This discrepancy underscores the urgency of intensifying Indonesia's internationalisation strategies. Without transformative efforts, Indonesian universities risk being further left behind in the global higher education arena, reducing their capacity to attract international students and faculty and to pursue research collaborations.

To address this issue, the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology, has actively supported universities to pursue international collaborations as part of its higher education reform agenda. This includes regulatory support and funding schemes for joint-degree and dual degree programs, particularly in partnership with institutions from Europe, Australia, and East Asia. These programs are considered part of a strategic plan to improve academic quality, increase research output, and align Indonesian curricula with international standards. Moreover, they offer students valuable exposure to diverse learning environments, languages, and professional networks.

One key strategy to achieve these goals has been the adoption of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). Although Indonesian HEIs may not rank highly on the global stage, they remain attractive to international students, especially from Global South countries, due to cultural compatibility, affordability, and regional accessibility (Muslim et al., 2025). EMI thus serves as both a symbol and a tool of internationalisation, enabling students to participate in academic and professional environments beyond national boundaries. In an era when English is the dominant language of science, business, and international collaboration, universities' ability to offer programs in English directly influences their appeal to international students and partners. Without adequate EMI implementation, Indonesian universities risk lagging behind regional competitors such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, which have long integrated EMI into their higher education systems. Strengthening the EMI program is therefore not only a pedagogical necessity but also a strategic imperative for enhancing research visibility, fostering cross-border collaboration, and preparing students with the linguistic and intercultural competencies needed in global academic and professional spheres.

EMI is defined as the use of English to deliver academic content in academic education (Macaro et al., 2018). It has been increasingly adopted in international programs across Indonesian universities, reflecting its wide-ranging benefits. For institutions, EMI enhances global visibility and facilitates international collaborations (Sahan & Şahan, 2024). For students, it expands access to academic resources, develops English proficiency, and cultivates intercultural awareness (Lin & Lei, 2021). Graduates of EMI programs, in turn, are widely regarded as more employable in both domestic and international markets and better prepared for postgraduate studies abroad (Sadiq et al., 2022). Generally, these benefits demonstrate that EMI plays a pivotal role in linking local educational practices with global standards and expectations.

Despite its recognised benefits, the implementation of EMI in HEIs, particularly in non-English-speaking countries, continues to face several critical challenges. A recurring issue reported in multiple studies is the limited English proficiency of both lecturers and students, which affects the clarity of instruction and students' ability to comprehend course content (Kirkpatrick, 2014; Puspitasari & Ishak, 2023). Lecturers often lack formal training in EMI pedagogy and therefore struggle to balance content delivery with language support (Dang et al., 2023). In many cases, lecturers switch to their local languages, such as Bahasa Indonesia, and/or use translanguaging alongside English to ensure understanding (Erliana et al., 2024a; Pramerta et al., 2023). Even though this strategy can support students' comprehension, it also indicates insufficient institutional preparation for the full delivery of EMI. On the student's side, common concerns about receiving EMI include difficulty processing academic content in English, limited exposure to discipline-specific vocabulary, and reduced classroom participation (Bolton et al., 2023).

These general challenges are particularly evident in Economics and Business faculties, where learning through EMI requires students to comprehend abstract theories, economic models, and quantitative concepts that are often conveyed in complex academic English. Recent studies in Indonesian EMI programs have demonstrated that students in these faculties struggle to interpret technical terminology, read academic journals, and articulate

analytical arguments in English (Sadiq et al., 2022; Subandowo et al., 2025). Meanwhile, lecturers face challenges in delivering internationally competitive content while also navigating their own linguistic limitations and a lack of English-based teaching materials. Additionally, EMI classes in these faculties are often framed as a flagship program to attract international students and elevate institutional branding, yet they are frequently launched without sufficient investment in teacher development, curriculum adaptation, or student language support mechanisms (Erliana et al., 2024b).

While existing research has addressed general challenges in implementing English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), there is still a notable lack of in-depth, context-specific studies that examine how EMI is operationalised within economics and business education. Critical aspects such as institutional preparedness, classroom practices, and the lived experiences of key stakeholders remain underexplored. As Guo et al (2022) suggest, the success of EMI initiatives is shaped by a complex interplay of factors, including cultural dynamics, institutional policies, and the availability of resources. This gap highlights the need for further investigation into how lecturers and students in economics and business faculties navigate EMI, what support mechanisms are available to them, and how well these programs align with broader internationalisation objectives.

This gap presents an opportunity to comprehensively find out how EMI is utilised as a strategic tool to strengthen the internationalisation of higher education in Indonesia. As a country with vast potential in the education sector, Indonesia requires studies that provide an in-depth understanding of EMI implementation dynamics from the perspectives of policy, teaching practices, and their impact on universities' international reputation. This study aims to investigate the implementation of EMI in a faculty that focuses on economics and business. The selection of this field aligns with a common trend among universities, which tend to highlight these faculties in their internationalisation efforts. This faculty often posits itself as the “face” of the university due to its ability to attract international students and maintain global collaborations in business and management. One of the researchers, who is also involved in the faculty's internationalisation program, aims to contribute to improving the quality of instruction by enhancing curriculum readiness, teaching staff, and students' engagement in EMI in international classes.

This study, thus, explores the implementation of EMI in Indonesian higher education, particularly in faculties of economics and business, with a focus on its contribution to internationalisation. The study employs a qualitative case study to identify the successes, challenges, and strategies that institutions adopt in managing EMI policies. The research findings are expected to offer practical insights for the development of EMI policies, not only in the institution under study but also for other universities in Indonesia striving to improve

their global competitiveness. This present study is guided by two interrelated perspectives: the EMI Implementation Framework (Macaro et al., 2018) and the Internationalisation of Higher Education Framework (Knight, 2008; de Wit & Altbach, 2021). The EMI Implementation Framework highlights EMI as more than a language policy. It represents a pedagogical shift with implications for classroom practices, language proficiency, materials, and institutional support. Where both lecturers and students in Indonesia may lack

full proficiency, as English is not the Indonesian mother tongue, this framework highlights the tensions between content mastery and language demands.

The Internationalisation Framework sees EMI as part of a strategy to integrate international and intercultural elements into higher education. EMI is often posited as both a tool and a symbol of internationalisation, aiming to attract foreign students, improve reputation, and produce globally competent graduates. However, the framework warns against superficial adoption without sustainable institutional practices. Together, these perspectives allow analysis of EMI as both a classroom practice and a strategic instrument, situating local challenges within global trends.

Given the escalating need to compete in a global setting, this study is significant to comprehend how EMI can be effectively implemented as a tool to strengthen the international positioning of Indonesian universities. Aligned with the Asta Cita vision and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), this research seeks to understand EMI implementation and develop relevant strategies to overcome associated challenges.

Based on the aforementioned background, the research questions are as follows:

1. How is EMI implemented in international classes within the Faculty of Economics and Business in an Indonesian university?
2. What challenges do lecturers and students face in teaching and learning through EMI in economics and business education?

What institutional supports and strategies are in place to enhance the effectiveness of EMI in international programs, and how adequate are they perceived to be by stakeholders?

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to identify the implementation of EMI in the Faculty of Economics and Business at an Indonesian university. A case study was chosen because it allows for an in-depth, context-specific examination of complex educational practices, particularly in settings where policies and classroom realities may diverge (Yin, 2017). By focusing on a single institutional context, this study sought to capture the nuances of EMI adoption and generate insights closely tied to local conditions while still offering implications for broader higher education contexts. The design also enabled the inclusion of multiple data sources, such as interviews, classroom observations, and institutional documents, to strengthen the validity of findings through triangulation.

The research site was a prominent Indonesian public institution that had explicitly prioritised internationalisation through its strategic plan. While historically recognised as a leading teacher-education institution, it has in recent years expanded its orientation toward becoming a comprehensive university with growing international visibility. It actively participates in regional university rankings, such as the QS Asia University Rankings, and has seen steady increases in international student mobility and in collaborative programs. Within this institution, the faculty of economics and business was selected as the focus because it has the most international students. Furthermore, the faculty also represents a flagship

faculty often highlighted in university-level internationalisation initiatives. One of its long-term collaborations has been with a university in Uzbekistan, through a joint-degree program where Uzbekistani students complete three years of study in their home country and finalise the last year of their degree in Indonesia. This partnership has positioned the faculty as a central site for EMI-based instruction, with English as the primary medium to bridge linguistic and cultural differences between international and local participants.

Participants in this study were drawn from three stakeholder groups: lecturers, students, and administrators. Four lecturers who were directly involved in teaching EMI classes were recruited through purposive sampling. These lecturers represented different sub-disciplines within economics and business, such as accounting, management, and economics education. Six undergraduate students were included, all of whom were joint-degree students from Uzbekistan enrolled in EMI classes. Their unique status as international students provided valuable insights into the learning experience of non-native Indonesian students adapting to both EMI and a new academic culture. One international program coordinator responsible for program design and implementation was interviewed to provide the administrative and policy perspective. Participation was voluntary, and all participants were approached through formal faculty channels. The participant composition is summarised below.

Table 1. The Research Participants

Stakeholder Group	Number of Participants	Role/Background
Lecturers	4	EMI teaching in economics, management, and accounting
Students	6	Joint-degree students from Uzbekistan in EMI classes
Administrator	1	International program coordinator of the faculty

Data collection was conducted over four months and involved three primary methods: semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Interviews formed the central component of the data collection strategy. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with lecturers, students, and the program coordinator to explore their perceptions, experiences, and challenges with EMI. Lecturer interviews focused on teaching practices, linguistic challenges, and institutional support. Student interviews explored learning experiences, comprehension difficulties, and adaptation to EMI in a cross-cultural context. The interview with the coordinator provided insights into policy frameworks, rationales for EMI adoption, and the dynamics of the Uzbekistan joint-degree partnership. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, was audio-recorded with consent, and subsequently transcribed for analysis. *Bahasa Indonesia* was chosen as the language for lecturer interviews to foster openness between the researcher and the participants. While English was used during student interviews as a bridge to gain understanding.

Classroom observations were conducted in four EMI courses across the management and accounting programs. Observations provided direct evidence of how EMI was enacted in practice, with attention to pedagogical strategies, patterns of code-switching, and participation of international students from Uzbekistan. Notes were also taken on interactions between lecturers and students, and on whether EMI facilitated or constrained

classroom engagement. Document analysis included reviewing institutional policies, curriculum frameworks, EMI program syllabi, and partnership agreements with the university in Uzbekistan. These documents contextualised the data by showing how EMI was framed in official strategies and how the joint-degree program was structured at the faculty level.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the university's research ethics committee. Participants were informed about the objectives of the study and the voluntary nature of their involvement. Written consent was obtained, and all data were anonymised to ensure confidentiality. Data were analysed thematically using the six-phase framework proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006). The analysis began with repeated readings of interview transcripts, observation notes, and institutional documents to familiarise ourselves with the data. Initial coding was then conducted to identify meaningful units of information related to EMI implementation, such as "language proficiency challenges," "cross-cultural adjustment," and "institutional readiness." Codes were iteratively grouped into broader themes that captured recurrent patterns across the dataset. Triangulation was achieved by comparing findings across the three data sources, thereby enhancing credibility. For example, themes that emerged from student interviews regarding comprehension difficulties were cross-checked with classroom observation notes and with program documents outlining support mechanisms for international students.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study explored the implementation of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in international classes at a prominent Indonesian university, specifically within the economics and business faculty. Data were obtained from international students from Uzbekistan enrolled in the joint-degree program, lecturers teaching EMI-based courses, and the international program coordinator. The findings are elaborated across three main themes: (1) the implementation of EMI at the faculty of economics and business, (2) challenges of EMI implementation, and (3) potential benefits and opportunities. These findings are discussed alongside existing literature and theoretical frameworks to highlight both local and broader implications for EMI in higher education.

3.1 The Implementation of EMI at the Faculty of Economics and Business

EMI was implemented primarily through the international joint-degree program with a partner university in Uzbekistan. English served as the official medium of instruction across courses in management and accounting departments, used in lectures, textbooks, PowerPoint slides, and assessments. Students were required to complete assignments, presentations, and examinations in English, presenting a formal institutional commitment to EMI.

Classroom observations confirmed that lecturers consistently delivered content in English, even though students often spoke in Uzbek during peer discussions to clarify meaning. This practice of translanguaging allowed students to negotiate understanding complex terms, but simultaneously reduced opportunities to improve their academic English. Such practices are consistent with findings from other Southeast Asian contexts where

translanguaging is used to manage comprehension in EMI classes (Erliana et al., 2024b; Pramerta et al., 2023).

Moreover, while the faculty framed EMI as a flagship program for internationalisation, implementation lacked structured institutional scaffolding. No formal pre-departure training was provided for Uzbek students, nor were there intensive English bridging courses upon arrival. Lecturers, too, received no systematic EMI pedagogy training, depending instead on personal strategies such as simplifying language or providing weekly quizzes. As a result, while EMI was visible on the surface, its effectiveness in fostering deeper academic English proficiency remained limited. This illustrates how EMI adoption at the university functioned more as an indicator of internationalisation than as a fully integrated educational reform, echoing concerns raised by Guo et al. (2022) and Kirkpatrick (2014).

3.2 Challenges of EMI Implementation

Language Barriers and Academic Literacy

Across data sources, language was the most immediate challenge. Classroom observations showed that although the lecturers delivered content primarily in English, student participation was limited. Of the 26 enrolled students, only 12 attended, and a few actively engaged in class. Most students relied on their peers for clarification, and often switched to the Uzbek language to ask for the meaning:

"Sometimes I cannot understand academic words, especially related to accounting terms. Usually, I ask my Uzbek friend first before answering the lecturer."
(Uzbek Student, Interview, 2025).

Lecturers confirmed that the specific terminology was a major obstacle. An accounting lecturer mentioned that only one or two students fully comprehended the technical vocabulary, which required weekly quizzes to reinforce learning. While students had some exposure to English prior to their arrival, they struggled to understand discipline-specific vocabulary in accounting and management. This echoes earlier studies reporting that discipline-specific vocabulary is a major obstacle in EMI contexts (Bolton et al., 2023). Students also expressed difficulty in achieving a deep comprehension of abstract theories, despite lecturers' attempts to simplify their English. As one lecturer explained:

"Out of 25 students, only one or two truly understand. The rest still struggle with accounting terms. I have to give weekly quizzes to push them to review at home."
(Accounting Lecturer, Interview, 2025).

This also aligns with Macaro et al.'s (2018) framework, which emphasises that EMI requires not only English proficiency but also academic literacy to interpret technical concepts. Without sufficient preparation, students risk surface-level understanding rather than deeper engagement with content. The classroom observation echoed this, as students occasionally needed concepts to be explained in Uzbek before comprehension was achieved.

Although some students highlighted that their lecturers used relatively simple English, the lack of academic vocabulary preparation was the most significant problem, particularly in gaining a deeper understanding:

“Sometimes challenging since we cannot understand the meaning of things deeply. You need to translate it first since it is not our mother tongue...but the lecturer uses easier English, that’s why we can understand.”

(Uzbek Student, Interview, 2025)

This confirms earlier studies suggesting that EMI students in non-English-speaking countries often struggle with academic literacy and resort to translanguaging as a coping mechanism (Erliana et al., 2024a; Pramerta et al., 2023).

Lecturer Preparedness and Pedagogical Gaps

The second major obstacle to implementing EMI concerns lecturer readiness. Most lecturers mentioned that they had never received any formal EMI training and relied on self-study to improve their English proficiency. One young accounting lecturer said:

“I never received EMI training once I was assigned to teach international classes. I learned on my own, even using Duolingo to improve my vocabulary. The faculty doesn’t prepare us. We must prepare ourselves.”

(Accounting Lecturer, Interview, 2025)

The lack of pedagogical preparation also restricted lecturers’ ability to foster higher-order thinking in English. A management lecturer reported difficulties in engaging students in evaluative and creative tasks, with classroom humour often failing to bridge cultural gaps. As a result, EMI classes tended toward lecture-based content delivery, a trend also identified in Dang et al.’s (2023) review of EMI pedagogy.

“Students can analyse, but when it comes to evaluation or creation in English, they struggle. Also, I tried to make some jokes or humour in English. But most of the time it doesn’t work with them.”

(Management Lecturer, Interview, 2025)

These challenges resulted in a tendency toward lecture-based content delivery. Observation notes described passive class dynamics, with the lecturer asking questions; however, the main responses came from a small group of ambitious students. However, lecturers experimented with strategies to increase engagement. For example, case-based discussions, role-plays on trade barriers, and digital tools like Kahoot and Quizizz were used by the lecturers to encourage students to learn.

While these methods encouraged participation, they were inconsistent and heavily dependent on individual lecturer effort. This lack of structured training meant that EMI classes

merely focused on content transmission rather than integrated approaches that simultaneously support language and content learning.

Structural Limitations and Institutional Policies

At the institutional level, challenges included limited policy support and curriculum misalignment with the partner university in Uzbekistan. The coordinator of the international program acknowledged that the system remained reactive:

“Currently, the system is still reactive. We don’t require English proficiency upon admission. It’s only the TOEFL score of a minimum of 475 at graduation. This causes difficulties for both lecturers and students at the beginning”.

(Program Coordinator, Interview, 2025)

Additionally, differences in curricular standards between the two universities complicated the situation. Differences in curricular standards between the institution and the Uzbekistani partner university created further challenges. For instance, accounting courses involved discrepancies in tax regulations that confused international students. One lecturer provided an example:

“Accounting standards are not the same. For instance, taxation differs significantly between Indonesia and Uzbekistan. This makes it difficult for Uzbekistani students to follow.”

(Accounting Lecturer, Interview, 2025)

Lecturers also highlighted the absence of systematic institutional support, such as training, incentives, or structured EMI communities. While facilities such as digital boards and access to international journals were available, they were underutilised, and there were no bridging programs to help students adjust linguistically and academically.

These findings indicate that the implementation of EMI at the faculty level was not fully supported by institutional policy. While the faculty provided access to international journals and digital tools, there were no structured bridging programs, lecturer incentives, or EMI communities of practice. These gaps reflect Tsai's (2025) observation that EMI in Asian universities often lacks systemic alignment, leaving lecturers and students to manage challenges independently.

3.3 Potentials of EMI Implementation

Despite these obstacles, EMI demonstrated significant benefits for students, lecturers, and the institution. The following elaborates on the potential of implementing EMI within the economics and business faculty.

Languages Development and Academic Skills

Even though the language barrier is one of the challenges in implementing EMI, students reported noticeable improvements in their English proficiency and academic literacy. One Uzbekistani student reflected:

“Before coming to Indonesia, my English was basic. Now I can read international journals and write articles better. It is hard, but very useful.”

(Uzbekistani Student, Interview, 2025)

The lecturer also noticed progress when students were given structured tasks, such as weekly quizzes or case study presentations. This finding supports the previous research conclusion that EMI can enhance both content learning and language development when supported by active learning strategies (Lin & Lei, 2021).

Intercultural Growth and Social Adaptation

For Uzbekistani students, studying in Indonesia provided meaningful intercultural experiences. Factors such as cultural and religious compatibility and affordability made Indonesia an attractive study destination:

“Indonesia is a Muslim country; it’s easier for us to live here than in Western countries. And also, more affordable.”

(Uzbekistani Student, Interview, 2025)

This aligns with previous findings that Indonesia’s appeal for Global South students lies in cultural compatibility and affordability (Muslim et al., 2025). Beyond these practical considerations, students also highlighted the comfort of living in a society where cultural practices, food availability, and religious life were familiar. Participation in local events, interactions with Indonesian classmates, and the welcoming social atmosphere created opportunities to strengthen intercultural competence and social networks. For many, Indonesia became a “second home,” where they could adapt without the culture shock often faced in Western contexts. EMI in this setting thus functioned not only as an academic tool but also as a bridge for building meaningful cross-cultural relationships and global perspectives.

Lecturer Development and Institutional Reputation

Despite the challenges, lecturers expressed that EMI contributed to their professional development, pushing them to learn new technologies and adapt content for international audiences. One lecturer was praised by students for introducing innovative tools such as ChatGPT and big data analysis of Twitter data, making learning both practical and engaging. One young lecturer reported:

“Teaching with EMI forces me to grow not only in teaching, but also in building international image of our faculty.”

(Management Lecturer, Interview, 2025)

The international program coordinator also emphasised its broader institutional impact:

“Through EMI, we can expand international collaborations. We already have strong partnerships with Uzbekistan and several Malaysian universities. We are also exploring Korea, Thailand, and Japan.”

(Program Coordinator, Interview, 2025)

This demonstrates that EMI is valued not only as a pedagogical tool but also as a strategic driver of institutional branding and international partnerships, consistent with Knight's (2008) framework on internationalisation. The results of the study reveal a paradox in implementing EMI: while it provides opportunities for linguistic, intercultural, and institutional growth, it also exposes gaps in students' preparedness, lecturers' training, and institutional policies.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings echo Macaro's (2018) three-dimensional EMI framework, namely linguistic, pedagogical, and institutional. From this study, it was found that linguistic and institutional dimensions were the weakest. Students' limited English proficiency and reliance on L1 reflect broader challenges in academic literacy development, as documented in studies across Southeast Asia (Bolton et al., 2023; Tran, 2021). On the pedagogical side, lecturers' self-reliant strategies such as weekly quizzes, humour, and digital tools highlight resilience but also underscore the urgent need for systemic EMI training (Cinkara & Yüksel, 2024; Dang et al., 2023).

In the context of an institution, the absence of robust policies, such as mandatory requirements at entry, structured bridging courses, or curriculum harmonisation, suggests a reactive approach. These findings resonate with previous research highlighting that EMI often emerges in Asia as a symbolic marker of internationalisation without sufficient structural support (Guo et al., 2022; Kirkpatrick, 2014; Tsai, 2025). The institutional policy of requiring minimal English entry standards is not considered a proactive strategy, consistent with Guo et al. (2022). Without bridging courses, incentives, or policy alignment with international partners, EMI risks remaining symbolic rather than transformative.

At the same time, the observed benefits, such as fostering students' growth in English literacy, providing intercultural exposure, pushing lecturers to expand their skills, and strengthening institutional reputation, demonstrate that EMI can serve as a valuable driver of internationalisation when adequately supported. For the Indonesian context, within a teacher-education-based university in particular, the implications are twofold:

1. Strategic Expansion, which means EMI should not be merely concentrated in economics and business faculties, but also should expand into education faculties, as it would leverage the university's teacher-education identity to internationalise teacher training programs.

2. Policy Reform: universities should develop formal EMI regulations that connect language support programs, continuous lecturer training, and curriculum alignment with partner universities.

In so doing, EMI can transform from being a symbolic strategy to a substantive instrument for raising academic quality, supporting the university's vision, and strengthening Indonesia's competitiveness in global higher education.

4. CONCLUSION

This study explored the implementation of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in international classes under the economics and business faculty in one of the Indonesian higher institutions, focusing on a joint-degree program with students from Uzbekistan. The results revealed three main challenges: limited English proficiency and academic literacy among students, insufficient lecturer preparation due to the absence of formal EMI training, and structural gaps at the institutional level, including reactive policies and curricular misalignments with partner universities. These issues emphasise the challenge of maintaining EMI when linguistic, pedagogical, and institutional dimensions are not adequately addressed. At the same time, the study highlighted important opportunities for implementing EMI in higher education institutions, particularly in economics and business education. Students reported improvements in English proficiency, academic literacy, and intercultural awareness, while lecturers obtained professional development and international exposure. Institutionally, EMI has enhanced the institution's visibility and partnerships, highlighting its value as both a pedagogical tool and a strategy for internationalisation.

The findings suggest several implications. Universities should facilitate bridging programs for incoming students, formal EMI training for lecturers, and stronger curricular alignment with partner institutions. Lecturers need to adopt active learning and scaffolding techniques, while policymakers should issue national EMI guidelines to standardise practices and ensure quality. For the institution, its identity as a teacher-education-based institution demonstrated a strategic opportunity to broaden EMI into education programs, contributing to global debates on internationalising teacher preparation.

This research is limited by its focus on a single faculty, a small number of participants, and a short observation period. Future studies need to expand the scope across faculties and institutions, conduct longitudinal designs, and integrate quantitative measures of language and academic outcomes. In conclusion, EMI at the research site institution describes both the challenges and potentials of internationalisation in Indonesian higher education institutions. Supported by systemic effort, EMI can serve not only as a symbol of global engagement but also as a pathway to improving academic quality, intercultural learning, and international competitiveness.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This activity was supported by a research/community service grant from Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia under Contract No. 134/UN40.D/PT.01.01/2025, awarded in 2025.

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