LEARNING CONTENT KNOWLEDGE THROUGH ENGLISH MEDIUM INSTRUCTION (EMI) AT THE FACULTY OF ECONOMICS, SRIWIJAYA UNIVERSITY

A THESIS

by

Ayu Vermila

Student Number: 06011281621020

English Education Study Program

Language and Arts Education Department

FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION

SRIWIJAYA UNIVERSITY

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2020

Approved by,

Advisor 1,	Advisor 2,
Soni Mirizon, M.A. Ed.D.	**Drs. Muslih Hambali, MLIS.**
NIP. 196711041993031002	**NIP. 195708261984031001**

Certified by,
Coordinator of English Education
StudyProgram,

Hariswan Putra Jaya, S.Pd., M. Pd.
NIP. 197408022002121003

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Student Number: 06011281621020

This thesis was defended by the writer in the final program examination and was approved by the examination committee on:

Day   : Thursday

Date : July 16th, 2020

ACADEMIC ADVISORS APPROVAL:

1. Academic Advisor: Soni Mirizon, M.A. Ed.D.   (   )

2. Academic Advisor: Drs. Muslih Hambali, MLIS.   (   )

Indralaya, July 16th, 2020
Certified by,
Coordinator of English Education
Study Program,

<u>Hariswan Putra Jaya, S.Pd., M. Pd.</u>
NIP. 197408022002121003

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned,

Name   : Ayu Vermila

Place, date of birth   : Muara Bungo, 11 Mei 1998

Student's Number   : 06011281621020

Study Program   : English Education

       Certify that the thesis entitled "Learning Content Knowledge through English Medium Instruction (EMI) at the Faculty of Economics, Sriwijaya University" is my own work and I did not do any plagiarism or in appropriate quotation against the ethic and rules commended by the Ministry of Education of Republic Indonesia Number 17, 2010 regarding plagiarism in higher education. Therefore, I deserved to face the court if I am found to have plagiarized this work.

Indralaya, July 16th, 2020

The Undersigned,

Ayu Vermila

06011281621020

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to:

- ➢ My beloved parents Afrizal and Syafnidar, who have given me invaluable educational opportunities and never stop to pray, support, and love me, Thank you for everything.

- ➢ Both of my sisters, Lola and Lia, Thanks for the endless love and support.

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Motto:

"It is okay to walk slowly as long as you are on the right track. You are progressing, and that's all that matters. You did well, self. " – Ayu Vermila

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Indralaya, July 16th, 2020
The Writer,

Ayu Vermila

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX   : Name of Appendices

APPENDIX A   : The Instrument of the Questionnaire

APPENDIX B   : The Results of the Questionnaire

APPENDIX C   : Students' Answer Sheets of the Questionnaire

APPENDIX D   : The Focus Group Discussion Questions list

APPENDIX E   : The Transcripts of Focus Group Discussion

APPENDIX F   : The Observation Checklist

APPENDIX G   : The Results of the Observation

APPENDIX H   : Documentation

APPENDIX I   : Surat Usul Judul Skripsi

APPENDIX J   : Surat Keputusan Pembimbing Skripsi

APPENDIX K   : Surat Izin Penelitian dari FKIP Universitas Sriwijaya

APPENDIX L   : Research Design Seminar Approval (pre)

APPENDIX M   : Research Design Seminar Approval (post)

APPENDIX N   : Preliminary Research Report (pre)

APPENDIX O   : Preliminary Research Report (post)

APPENDIX P   : The Final Examination (pre)

APPENDIX Q   : The Final Examination (post)

APPENDIX R   : Thesis Final Examination Suggestion Lists

APPENDIX S   : Thesis Consultation Card

LEARNING CONTENT KNOWLEDGE THROUGH ENGLISH MEDIUM INSTRUCTION (EMI) AT THE FACULTY OF ECONOMICS, SRIWIJAYA UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study are to find out the students' perception of the EMI program in learning content knowledge, the support given by the faculty, and the challenges faced by the students in learning content knowledge at the Faculty of Economics in Sriwijaya University. The participants of this study were the 1st (2019/2020 academic year) and 3rd (2018/2019 academic year) semester students of the Accounting Study Program, with the total sample was 14 students. This study was using a qualitative approach with questionnaire, focus group discussion, and observation as the technique of collecting the data. The findings of the study showed that, first, most of the students agreed and had a positive perception towards English as the medium of instruction in teaching content (economics) at the Faculty of Economics in Sriwijaya University. Second, the support given by the faculty was good enough and effective, such as: 1) Experienced lecturer, (2) The class facilities such as comfortable classrooms, softcopy of the material in pdf, projectors, and free wifi, (3) Reading room, and (4) a certificate from the faculty. Last, the challenges faced by students were mostly about their difficulty in understanding the content, expressed by the students such as: (1) encountering the unfamiliar/difficult word, (2) getting hard to understand the lecturer, and (3) having trouble to remember some the words.

Keywords: EMI, Students' Perception, Support, Challenges

A Thesis by an English Education Study Program Student, Faculty of Teacher Training Education, Sriwijaya University.

Name : Ayu Vermila
NIM : 06011281621020

Approved by,

Advisor 1,

Soni Mirizon, M.A. Ed.D.
NIP. 196711041993031002

Advisor 2,

Drs. Muslih Hambali, MLIS.
NIP. 195708261984031001

Coordinator of English Education
StudyProgram,

Hariswan Putra Jaya, S.Pd., M. Pd.
NIP. 197408022002121003

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces (1) background of the study, (2) the problem of the study, (3) the objectives of the study, (4) the significance of the study, and (5) the limitation of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

We all agree that English has become a bilingual language needed by our generation to support their needs to compete internationally. Jenkins (2003) states that globalization has driven the use of English as a communication tool in many international contexts. For example, most of the information that students can obtain for scientific, technological, and academic matters are in English. This point supported by Doiz, Lasabagaster, and Sierra (2013), which inform English, has become the most used language of instruction, driven by economic, educational, and social & political forces. Thus, people who are not using English as their first language need to understand English in order to access them.

In the educational field, because it has been influenced by globalization, there is a growing number in the implementation of teaching programs in the educational institution, for example, EMI, to improve the learners' English achievements (Wu, 2006). Tsou and Kao (2017) explain that EMI refers to the English-taught subject courses offered in non-English Speaking countries. It should be noted that EMI, the focus of the current study, is a model of the bilingual teaching program (Baker, 2011). The program will use English as an educational language.

Rolstad, Mahoney, and Glass (2005) explain that the bilingual program is effective in promoting students' academic achievement, and by that, the educational institution should give permit and even encourage this program

development & implementation of bilingual education programs. Ibrahim (2014) informs four factors that support the implementation of EMI; 1). Bilingualism could give cognitive advantages, 2) The critical role of English would motivate teachers and students to learn the language, 3) EMI would help students and teachers to get more exposure to English and chance to acquires it, 4) EMI could help students and teachers received literacy skills and strategies when they transfer their native language to English.

In response to the needs of using English, the Indonesian government developed a new act on its Educational system in 2003, under the law no. 20, which stated: *"the government and local government must organize at least one unit of education at all levels of education, which will be developed as a unit having the international standard of education."* Therefore, each district needs to establish at least one 'International Standard School' based on these instruments authorized above. Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Siera (2013) inform that the aim of introducing EMI in Indonesia is to facilitate English language learning, and the goal of the program itself is to improve students' English proficiency (Zacharias, 2013) along with learning the content. The program allowed the students to learn Mathematics and Science in English, although it was only lasted for some years and ended in early 2013.

Various reasons lead this program to failure. Whitehead (2010) explains that teachers' low English proficiency and lack of experience in teaching EMI could be contributing to the program's lack of success. Based on the early studies on the effects of EMI, they showed that one of the essential factors in determining the outcomes of EMI is the students and lecturers' English proficiency (Stryker & Leaver, 1997; Swain & Johnson, 1997). Hadisantosa (2010) explains that the process of conveying and receiving information in English or interacting with their teachers are the big challenges for students, even teachers. Hence, based on the finding, EMI is regularly used more in Universities than at primary and secondary schools with the expectation students who already in higher education

will have at least sufficient proficiency in following the class with English as the medium instruction.

To be able to join the class, the students need to understand English at a certain level. Therefore, some requirements are required to apply for the course. Hu, Li, and Lei (2014) express out of concern, the students who do not have strong English proficiency will have difficulties coping with the language demands of EMI class in the future. On the contrary, based on Dearden's study in 2013, she claims that in most countries, there is no standardization that the faculty sets as a requirement to get into the class that the subject taught using English. She also quoted one of the teachers saying they intentionally left out the standard as required because it is difficult enough to encourage faculty to teach in English.

If there is no requirement to get into the class, it is evident that there are students who get into the class with low English proficiency. This situation will create more challenges for students to follow the learning process, which usually in their linguistic part. Tsou and Kao (2017) express that many students have problems comprehending the text and the technical terms in the textbook. They explain further that the students' incompetence in English Proficiency made it difficult for them to express their thoughts, whether written or oral. Those who find it hard to listen quickly in English will find it hard to understand, and those who are incompetent in speaking will find it difficult to ask if they do not know about something. Ibrahim (2014) expresses that aside from speaking and listening, failing to understand the reading or being called incompetent in reading can also lead to another failure in the learning and teaching process. It prevented them from performing or getting any satisfactory result of their teaching and learning process.

The quality of the EMI class and the learning difficulties have become one of the significant issues that deserve more attention, and understanding students' perspectives of the EMI course, in particular, could help the faculty to improve the teaching practices and effectiveness of EMI. Hong, Ridzuan, and Kuek (2003) explain that perception is when someone thought about something that they

learned, and to measure how their attitude when using something, whether they agree or not about the method they are using. It shows that the students have their opinion toward something which they get from their learning process and how they react and reach toward that. Students' perceptions, expectations, and their way of coping with the academic requirements can be considered important factors for students' retention (Thomas, 2002). Students' point of view towards the class is essential to improve the EMI class. As explained by Sidhu (2003), the students' perspectives could be considered as students' points of view towards something in their learning and teaching process. He added, in the end, it produces some suggestions or arguments to the educators or for their classmates who can help to improve their learning process.

Based on the matters above, the faculties could provide some support for their students through the facilities and extra programs. In Focal University, for example, as reported by Hu, Li, and Lei (2014) – they state that they provided the students with extra sheltered intensive instruction in English. They give the students four weekly hours of English reading instruction for first-year undergraduates, two hours for English listening instruction, and another two hours for English speaking instruction. According to Tinto (2012), it is essential to provide the students with academic support at the beginning of their studies. Therefore, it is suggested that universities support students in developing academic competencies as early as possible through personalized programs and adaptive service (Mah & Ifenthaler, 2018). According to Wyatt (2011), personalized programs and adaptive services offer the opportunity to meet learners' needs. These days, we are evolved in revolution industry 4.0, which exposes more about technologies, and this could also be a significant potential to support the students learning process in the class like online tutorials, online class, and even online sources material. The supports could be in the form of facilities or even programs, as mentioned above.

As stated above, the Indonesian government had implemented the EMI class in some universities as a step to improve the students' language proficiency,

and Sriwijaya University is one of them. There are two faculties that are implementing this program at Sriwijaya University, and they are; the Faculty of Economics and Computer Science. This study focused on the Faculty of Economics.

As the site of the research, the researcher conducted a preliminary interview with one of the lecturers in Economic faculty, named Fera Widyanata, SE. M.Si. She teaches some classes in EMI class, which; Introduction to Micro Economics, Introduction to Macro Economics, and Introduction to Development Economics. Fera explained that she has been teaching in the EMI class for two years and still counting. Although she did not know when exactly the program established, she guessed it around three or four years ago. In the faculty, EMI is called as IC (international Class). The class is implemented for the whole semester and separated from the regular one. It is also open only for some main subjects, not every course. Fera admitted that to get into the IC class, the students' English proficiency needs to be considered, although she also admitted that it was harder to teach economic formally in English than in a regular class. She also expressed that although the students were good with speaking and writing skills, their listening skills still not sufficient. She frankly said:

> …..No no. they might be good with speaking and writing but they lack of listening skill. So, sometimes they ask me to repeat it in bahasa. When I said do you understand the material so far or when iam explaining, they will ask me to repeat it in bahasacause they don't understand that….

Then Fera explained that the teachers also need to fulfill some requirements to teach the IC class; for example, they need to at least score 500 in TOEFL or 6.6/6.7 in IELS. So, she concluded that both teachers and students are capable of IC class, although we cannot ignore the apparent challenges in the actual teaching and learning process.

Based on the description above, it can be seen that the challenges in implementing the EMI class could not be avoided, especially in the non-English-speaking country. Therefore, this research aimed to investigate the process of implementing EMI in the class, specifically in Economics Faculty at Sriwijaya University, and more focused on the students' perception towards the class, support given by the faculty to push the program, and the challenges that students faced in the classroom in the learning process. The researcher wanted to find out whether the same thing happened to EMI class in the Faculty of Economics at Sriwijaya University or not.

1.2 The Problems of the Study

Based on the background above, the problems of this study formulated into the following questions:

a) What is the students' *perception* of learning content through EMI at the Faculty of Economics, Sriwijaya University?

b) How is the *support* given to the students in learning content through EMI at the Faculty of Economics, Sriwijaya University?

c) What *challenges* do the students face in learning content through EMI at the Faculty of Economics, Sriwijaya University?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

In the relation to the problem, the objectives of the study are:

a) To find out what is the students' *perception* of learning content through EMI at the Faculty of Economics, Sriwijaya University?

b) To find out how is the *support* given to the students in learning content through EMI at the Faculty of Economics, Sriwijaya University?

c) To find out what *challenges* do the students face in learning content through EMI at the Faculty of Economics, Sriwijaya University?

1.4 The Significance of the Study

It is expected that this study would provide some benefits for:

a) The Students

This study enabled the students to be aware of the main purpose of the implementation of EMI class in the Economics Faculty of Sriwijaya University. Some of the students were not even really aware of the actual aim of the EMI class itself in the university. The only thing they know was the class using English. The minimum knowledge of the subject could lead some of them to think the class is tough to follow and make them anxious before they even started. Students need to understand the purpose, what to expect, and even what kind of learning strategies they need to use. These things were essential to make the class more enjoyable, and the students and teachers could reach the same goal.

b) The Lecturers

This study gave more knowledge on how the implementation of the EMI class in the Economics Faculty of Sriwijaya University. It was also relevant to the lecturers to understand the application of EMI in their class. Thus, they could choose the suitable teaching and learning strategies. Not just the students, but the lecturers themselves need to improve themselves before they teach in EMI class because some experts explained most of the teachers that teach EMI in Asia is not done by the qualified teacher.

c) The Faculty

This study gave some suggestions to the faculty on what to improve about the EMI class, which is going to lead to a more successful learning process. The faculty needs to hear what the students' view of the EMI class. It helped them understand the students' and teachers' needs in order to provide the best support

that will help improve the EMI class, which could lead to successful teaching and learning processes of content knowledge through EMI.

1.5 The Limitation of the Study

In line with the identification of the problem, there was three main focus of this study, and it was limited to: First, on students' perception towards the class which was wrapped in their perception towards teaching Economics in English policy, students' and lecturers' linguistic competence in English, and students linguistic competence in Bahasa Indonesia. Second, the supports that the faculty gives to support the implementation of the EMI class, which in the form of facility, programs, even token. Last, about the challenges that the students faced during the teaching and learning process. This challenge is the difficulties that students encounter during the class, which interferes with the learning process. This study is only up to identifying the challenges students faced during the teaching and learning process. However, this study does not provide any solutions.

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