

ENGLISH AS A SOLELY INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIUM: ITS EFFECTIVENESS ON STUDENTS' RESPONSES AND ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

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Abstract

This research examined the effectiveness of English as the solely instructional medium in one informal educational institution. In the first English class, an English-only rule was strictly ruled whereas in the second English class, the use of Bahasa Jambi as the students' local language was permitted. The research is appropriately undertaken as a mix method research with quantitative and qualitative approach. The site of the research is an established informal English institution in Indonesia. The authors used three kinds of instruments in collecting the data; questionnaires, tests (pre-test and post-test), and interviews. Participants of the research are the students of intermediate classes of an informal education institution in Jambi. The results show that 1) the students of the first class have stronger preferences to learn English than the students of the second class 2) the students' English proficiency improvement of the first English class "under the strict rule of the use of English" is slightly higher than that of the second class "the local language permitted". Suggestions and recommendations are offered for the betterment of English teaching and learning in Indonesia.

Keywords: *English, Instructional Medium, Proficiency, and Responses.*

The instruction medium in EFL classrooms is an issue which has long history of debate among governments, institutions, academics, and practitioners, where there have been discussions for the development of a comprehensive policy in relation to the classroom language. The use of English as solely instruction medium is

always compared with the use of English combined with the use of mother tongue in English classrooms.

Many researchers have been conducted to investigate and examine the issue of medium of instruction, perhaps more than any other aspect of education. Broadly speaking, previous studies

focused on how the expansion of one system in one country influenced educational institutions (Ferguson, 2006; Mahwah, 2004; Vygotsky 1962; Wong, 2010) and attempted to assess student achievements and attitudes in order to test hypotheses regarding the relative merits of the systems. These studies emphasized that cognitive growth and the development of intellectual processes were more important than the accumulation of information (Vygotsky, 1962).

Some scholars introduced that foreign language learners were more successful academically when they were first encouraged to develop concepts and literacy in their native language (Krashen & Biber, 1988; Willig, 1985). Research also supported the theory that bilingual students transferred literacy skills to a second language (Barnitz, 1985; Cohen, 1987; Garcia & Padilla, 1985).

Some empirical studies have shown the benefits and weaknesses of the use of English as solely instructional medium in English class. Wong (2010) revealed that the class under the strict policy has a stronger preference for English as the sole medium of instruction, but their English proficiency had also become higher than

that of the more Cantonese-tolerant class. Further, the students with low proficiency registered in the beginning semester of one Pesantren (Islamic Boarding School) which obligate the Santri (students) to use English everyday one week a month in Jambi (one of Indonesian provinces) generally perceived that the help of native language help them understand English on the teaching and learning process for the daily basis. Nevertheless, they have anxiety and problems with confidence to speak English. The punishment given to those who do not speak English force them to keep silent and use their body language to convey something (Sofwan, 2012).

However, the research on this topic is limited on the area of informal educational institution. Therefore, this study was proposed and conducted to examine English as a solely instructional medium and its effectiveness on the students' English proficiency and responses at LIA as one informal educational institution by analyzing the responses to two research questions: 1) How do the students at LIA Jambi in the two classes respond to the implementation of the classroom language rule?, 2) How do those Students' at LIA language

preferencesrelatetotheirattainings of
 betterEnglishproficiency?

RESEARCH METHOD

The research is appropriately undertaken as a mix method research with quantitative and qualitative approach. Participants of the research are the students of two intermediate 3 (IN3) classes of a formal education institution in Jambi “LBPP LIA Jambi”. One class (class A) was taught from April to June, 2015 and the other one (class B) was from July to September. The students learning in this level (IN3) have homogenous levels of English proficiency as the institutions have set the standard bar for the students in every level they have. The table of the participants detail can be seen on the next page;

Table 1. The distribution of the research participants

No	Class	No of Students	Learning Schedule
1	Class A	15	April-June, 2015
2	Class B	17	July-September, 2015

The authors taught the two classes, who also enacted the English-only classroom language policy. Class A would be penalized if any student spoke anything other than English, whereas Class B would merely receive a verbal reminder that English was the sole language permitted, thus tacitly allowing some minimal mother tongue (Bahasa Jambi) use. This entire research took place over 7 months (April-October, 2015) from the preparation to final process of article editing.

The authors used three instruments in collecting the data; questionnaires, tests, and interviews. After three months into the course, students received a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) requesting their responses on the use of English as the medium of instruction. Answers using Likert range from 5 for “Strongly Agree”, 4 for “Agree”, 3 “Neutral”, 2 for “Disagree”, and 1 for “Strongly Disagree”. The writer used Bahasa Indonesia as the questionnaire language to obtain good understanding adapted from Wong (2009).

An English proficiency test (final test form of IN 3) was administered to all students. The test was administered before and after the research took place to see the difference between the students’ in the two

classes score achievement improvements. These final tests consisted of five varieties: (1) Listening, (2) Structure, (3) Reading, (4) Writing, and (5) Speaking. All kinds of tests carried an equivalent weighting, and a maximum mark of 5. All tests were randomly double-marked by a different teacher who ever taught the same class (LIA's procedure of test proctoring) to ensure the reliability of the assessment.

The authors stated the purpose of the interviews and how they would be conducted. Students were interviewed in their native language (Bahasa Jambi) to facilitate their broader perspectives, and assured that their identities would remain confidential by only using their initials. Adherence to this principle ensures that people will not be used simply as a means to achieve research objectives (Patton, 1990; Oppenheim, 1992). Open-ended questions were asked to elicit the best student responses to particular situations.

The analysis of the data was carried out in different ways. The questionnaire data were analyzed using graphpad. The table shown in this data analysis includes mean, standard deviation, and frequency. The test was analyzed by using *t*-test to compare two means using a web calculator

named *graphpad* (graphpad, 2015). Interview result was reported by transcribing, coding/dividing the data into some themes, and elaborating them in written forms (Patton, 1990). To assess the validity of the research, triangulation is used which is a method used by authors to check and establish validity in their studies by analyzing a research question from multiple perspectives and in this matter the data from the questionnaire, interview, and test were calculated, analyzed, and elaborated (Patton, 1990).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the research show the two important items or questions stated in the background of the study. They are; *Students' responses to the implementation of the classroom language rule*

The statement of this part is answered by elaborating data from questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire data were analyzed using SPSS 20. The table interpreting questionnaire data in relation to the students' response on the use of English as solely instructional medium is shown in table 2 (see appendix 2).

Table 2 shows that the mean (4.07) of responses from students of class A is

higher than responses from the students of class B (3.44). The responses of the students of class A are more positive than those in class B because the statements are all in positive ones in order to generalize the responses of the rule implemented.

Furthermore, the interview results show that some students in class A revealed that they like and accustomed to the situation when English is used as the only medium of instruction in their English class. They reported,

“I think I kind like the rule. At first I felt like I was forced to do it but then I used to it. So, I enjoyed it so much”, (MN)

“I have fun when my friends in the classroom did not even aware of one or two words of Bahasa Jambi were slipped through their tongues. My friends’ mistakes reminded me not to do the same mistakes”, (AR)

“At first, I felt a bit uncomfortable with the situation or the rule because I was afraid being criticized either by my friend or my teacher. At last, I am accustomed to having the situation and obtaining benefit from it and it is such a wonderful experience”. (ZA)

On the other hand, the students from class B whom English as the only instructional medium is not strictly ruled by the teacher have stated a slightly different opinion of the rules. Their opinions are varied,

“When the teacher asks us to speak English only in the classroom, I feel a bit threatened. I don’t feel good about it because my friends seem to mock or laugh at me”, (AF)

Group	Class A	Class B
Mean	2.367	2.494
SD	0.550	0.543
SEM	0.142	0.132
N	15	17

“I think I like the situation. When we are pushed to speak English all the time, we learned and gained something the environment of being in the situation of English and I have fun with it and I think my friends also had a very enthusiastic feeling”. (TB)

“When we want to ask some difficult words or do not understand them. I think we need our local language to ease and understand

Students’ language preferences in relation to their attaining a better English proficiency

The elaboration of this part were obtained by analyzing the data from the tests, pre-test and post-test. On the pre-test, the students from both classes have slightly difference on their English proficiency score of the test. The mean score of students from class A is slightly lower than the mean score of students from class. The table is shown below.

Table 3. Mean of pre-test result

Group	Class A	Class B
MEAN	3.720	3.588
SD	0.642	0.507
SEM	0.166	0.123
N	15	17

On the other hand, the result from the post-test show that the English proficiency score of class A significantly improves from the result of the pre-test with the improvement number of 1.353. Further, the improvement of class B score of English proficiency is 1.094 which is not significant compared to the improvement of English proficiency score of students in class A. The full interpretation of the data from the post-test is shown below:

Table 4. Mean of post-test result

CONCLUSION

This study is aimed at examining English as a solely instructional medium and its effectiveness on the students' English proficiency and responses at LIA as one informal educational institution by analyzing the responses to two research questions. The results suggest that the students should be addressed to the use of English a solely instructional medium because it effectively proves in improving students' English proficiency score. Furthermore, they will feel more comfortable, confidence, responsible, and brave if they are accustomed to speaking English due to the strictly-use of English a solely instructional medium in the classroom.

Exposure to English was also improved since they do not have other choices rather than using English. Nevertheless, should students be allowed to use either English or Bahasa Jambi during English lessons, they are going to naturally pick their mother tongue due to peer pressure. In addition, it has now been proven that enforcement of a strict English-only policy with English students has a great positive impact on learning which the two classes in this study developed their

English proficiency at differing rates. It is therefore suggested that teachers in English classroom always promote the use of English as solely instructional medium and all stakeholders support it to be a language classroom policy

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APPENDIX 1

Beri tanda X di kolom 1 (Sangat Tidak Setuju), 2 (Tidak Setuju), 3 (Netral), 4 (Setuju), dan 5 (Sangat Setuju)

Pernyataan	1	2	3	4	5
Menggunakan 100% Bahasa Inggris di kelas dapat meningkatkan standar Bahasa Inggris saya					
Kepercayaan diri dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris ditingkatkan melalui aturan tersebut					

Bahasa diberikan kesempatan, Saya lebih suka menggunakan hanya Bahasa Inggris daripada menggabungkan dengan bahasa jambi							
Guru bahasa Inggris adalah contoh baik jika mereka hanya bahasa Inggris di kelas bahasa Inggris							
Memaksa penggunaan “tidak boleh memakai bahasa Jambi di kelas Inggris” tidak mengancam saya							
Menyenangkan bias mendengarkan teman-teman saya berbicara bahasa Inggris di kelas							
Saya tidak akan merasa tidak nyaman jika teman teman saya juga berbicara bahasa Inggris di kelas							
Saya akan juga berbicara bahasa Inggris							
Jika guru bahasa Inggris saya berbicara							

bahasa Jambi, saya akan merasa tidak nyaman							
Jika dalam pelajaran bahasa Inggris, kita harus menggunakan bahasa Inggris sesering mungkin							

APPENDIX 2

Statements	Class	Frequency					Mean	Std. Deviation
		S (N.15)	A	N	D	S D		
When my English teacher only uses English as the medium of instruction, I like it	A	5	5	3	2	-	3.87	1.06
	B	4	6	4	2	1	3.71	1.21
Using 100% English in the classroom can improve my English standard	A	6	5	2	1	1	3.93	1.22
	B	4	3	7	2	1	3.41	1.18
My confidence in speaking English has been raised with the rule	A	7	5	2	1	-	4.20	0.94
	B	4	4	6	3	-	3.53	1.07
Given the choice, I prefer using English-only in English classes instead of mixing it with Bahasa	A	7	5	3	-	-	4.27	0.80
	B	2	3	7	4	1	3.06	1.09
English teachers are	A	6	5	2	2	-	4.00	1.07
	B	5	5	5	2	-	3.76	1.03

good examples if they only use English in English class								
Enforcing the "No BahasaJambi in English Class" policy does not alarm me.	A	6	7	2	-	-	4.20	0.86
	B	3	5	6	2	1	3.41	1.12
It is fun to listen to my friends speaking English in class.	A	6	5	3	1	-	4.07	0.96
	B	6	5	4	2	-	3.88	1.05
I will not be feeling uncomfortable if my friends also speak English in class.	A	5	8	2	-	-	4.20	0.68
	B	4	5	4	2	2	3.41	1.33
If my friends speak English, I will speak English too	A	4	8	2	1	-	4.07	0.88
	B	2	3	6	3	3	2.88	1.27
If my English teacher uses Bahasa Jambi to teach English, I will feel uncomfortable	A	5	5	3	2	-	3.87	1.06
	B	3	2	7	4	1	3.12	1.17
As these are English lessons, we should use English as much as possible.	A	7	4	3	1	-	4.13	0.99
	B	5	5	5	2	-	3.76	1.03
AVARAGE	A						4.07	
	B						3.44	