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Common sense and resistance: EMI policy and practice in Indonesian universities

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ABSTRACT

Research on English Medium Instruction (EMI) in Higher Education (HE) has tended to have a technicist orientation, examining for example how it is implemented and the challenges it has encountered. Much less critical attention has been given to the rationales that language policy makers and other stakeholders offer for introducing EMI – the drivers may be reported (e.g. Rose et al., 2020, in China; Galloway & Sahan, 2021, in Vietnam and Thailand) but they are rarely questioned. Here, we focus on these rationales, using data from a research project which monitored the spread of EMI through Indonesian HE. Managers at 24 institutions were surveyed along with 281 lecturers who taught their subject in the medium of English at 41 universities. In the stakeholders' responses, we identified four *common sense* assumptions (Gramsci, 1971) about English and its role in Indonesia that often underlay their justifications for introducing EMI. We also noted some signs of *resistance* to EMI which demand further empirical investigation. This case reminds us that public language policy should be based on careful analysis of needs at national and institutional levels.

Selama ini penelitian yang fokus pada penggunaan Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa pengantar (English Medium Instruction/ EMI) di Perguruan Tinggi (PT) cenderung terbatas pada hal-hal teknis saja, misalnya implementasi dan tantangan yang dihadapi. Masih amat sedikit penelitian yang menelusuri pemikiran para perancang kebijakan bahasa-dalam-pendidikan dan pemangku kepentingan lainnya terkait EMI. Studi ini berfokus pada pemikiran tersebut dengan menggunakan data dari suatu proyek penelitian yang memetakan penyebaran EMI pada perguruan tinggi di Indonesia. Survei melibatkan pimpinan 24 perguruan tinggi dan 281 dosen non-Bahasa Inggris di 41 universitas yang mengajarkan mata kuliah masing-masing dengan Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa pengantar. Berdasarkan respons para pemangku kepentingan, kami mengidentifikasi empat asumsi *akal sehat*

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(Gramsci, 1971) tentang bahasa Inggris dan perannya di Indonesia yang sering dikemukakan sebagai alasan untuk menerapkan EMI. Kami juga mencatat adanya indikasi *resistansi* terhadap EMI; gejala tersebut butuh penyelidikan lebih lanjut. Kasus ini mengingatkan kita bahwa kebijakan bahasa resmi perlu didasarkan pada analisis yang cermat pada aras nasional maupun institusional.

Introduction

Where does English medium instruction (EMI) policy come from and why is it apparently spreading so fast worldwide? Recent surveys of the phenomenon in Europe and Asia point to a complex interaction of top-down and bottom-up 'drivers.' In some countries, such as Japan, the government actively promotes the introduction of EMI programmes with the aim of internationalizing higher education (Rose & McKinley, 2018); in other countries, such as Tunisia, the lack of explicit language planning by the authorities allows higher education institutions (HEIs) to initiate EMI by themselves in the belief that this will improve their ranking, promote international collaboration in research or teaching, and boost income (Badwan, 2019). Demand from students and their families is also a factor in some contexts (e.g. China, see Iwaniec & Wang, 2022), as EMI is perceived to be a more effective way to learn English and later to enter the global jobs market.

In 2019–20, the authors carried out the first nationwide survey of EMI in Indonesian higher education (Lamb et al., 2021).[1] This was followed by a more focussed investigation which examined two issues: the arguments given for introducing EMI in HEIs and resistance to this innovation. It is this follow-up study which is reported here.

We propose that the Gramscian concepts of *common sense* and *resistance* provide a useful means for understanding the way in which the adoption of EMI in Indonesian higher education has taken place and how stakeholders have reacted to it.

The article begins by setting the scene and introducing the research. The core of the article then presents the research findings; it identifies four common sense justifications which are often proposed for the introduction of EMI and five manifestations of resistance to EMI. The discussion examines possible origins of these common sense rationales for and some unintended consequences of EMI programmes. The article concludes that the taken-for-granted nature of ideas about EMI must be countered by detailed analysis of the appropriateness or otherwise of introducing EMI. It also proposes an agenda for further research into the impacts of resistance to EMI.

Background

Before discussing the research, we introduce the phenomenon of English Medium Instruction, discuss the concepts 'common sense' and 'resistance,' and provide a brief overview of education and language-in-education policies in Indonesia.

English-medium instruction

The introduction of EMI has been one of the most significant developments in higher education systems worldwide over the past two decades. Recent authoritative surveys show this reform to be happening in all types of institution and in all continents (Dearden, 2015; Galloway et al., 2017; Hamid et al., 2013; Rose et al., 2020). These surveys, along with multiple individual research projects such as those reviewed by Macaro et al. (2018) and Galloway (2020), also show that EMI is being implemented in many different ways, for example in the language support given to learners and the tolerance for multilingual practices in the classroom. EMI programmes receive differing levels of political and popular support, and they meet mixed responses from HE staff and students. Where valid empirical evidence is available the programmes appear to produce mixed results in terms of subject learning and English language development (Macaro, 2018). Meanwhile, Dallinger et al. demonstrated that, for the content subject, CLIL classrooms needed 'to invest substantially more time to achieve comparable learning outcomes' (2016, p. 23).

Intense debate and research about the impact of EMI will no doubt continue, and innovations in the way it is implemented will also continue, stimulated by a growing number of methodological guides such as the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) produced by the University of Southampton (2020) and the University of Tokyo (2020). Other innovations include new conceptualizations of the relationship between the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instructors and subject teachers (Green, 2020; Galloway & Rose, 2022; Hakim & Wingate, 2022).

As already noted, the research literature has identified multiple drivers for the growth of EMI, but, with only a few exceptions (Block, 2022; Block & Khan, forthcoming), authors rarely question the rationales that local stakeholders put forward for introducing EMI. To take one example, Galloway et al. (2017, p. 4) list eight 'driving forces' behind decisions to introduce English-medium instruction in universities in China and Japan: gaining access to cutting-edge knowledge, increasing global competitiveness to raise the international profile of their institution, increasing income and compensating for funding shortages at the domestic level, enhancing student and lecturer mobility, enhancing the international employability of graduates, improving English proficiency, reflecting developments in English language teaching and using English as a neutral language. Many of these would be easily recognized and endorsed by policymakers and teachers across the globe.

Research has shown that, in particular contexts, some drivers have more force than others. For example, in their survey of policy documents and teacher perspectives in higher education institutions in China, Rose et al. (2020, p. 21) identified five main drivers for EMI: cultivating talents/students; responding to globalization and promoting internationalization; improving the quality of teaching and curricula; implementing national and/or provincial policies; and assisting the development of the university and of HE. These drivers clearly overlap with some of Galloway et al.'s drivers. Notably, the perceived 'neutrality' of English is not mentioned by respondents in China.

Rationales offered by stakeholders in ex-colonial contexts where English is a second language are similar to those found in non-colonial settings. For instance, despite Malaysia's troubled relationship with English, Ali (2013, p. 81) shows how the Malaysian

government's National HE Action Plan emphasises the importance of the young generation being 'able to engage actively in the global world.' Meanwhile, HEI policy stresses that graduates should possess communicative skills in English. Together, these directives encourage the proliferation of EMI programmes. Malaysian students generally respond positively and are eager to participate in EMI tuition.

Meanwhile, in Tunisia, Badwan (2019) reports that university staff and students have strong positive beliefs that EMI will raise their standard of English, thereby helping them to integrate into the global research community and social networks, gain cutting-edge knowledge, and thrive in global job markets. There are subtle contextual differences in the drivers for EMI, as any close reading of the research will reveal, but on the whole it is the commonalities that are emphasised, and – perhaps because the same rationales are offered up repeatedly – they are rarely subject to critical scrutiny.

Common sense and resistance

When beliefs are expressed repeatedly, in multiple diverse contexts, especially by people of status, they start to acquire a sheen of normality, lulling observers into unthinking acceptance. They become the 'common sense view.' 'Common sense,' according to Gramsci (1971, p. 323), is 'a conception of the world … imposed by the external environment [in which] everyone is involved from the moment of [their] entry into the conscious world.' For Gramsci, common sense is not systematic. It is an array of widely shared beliefs and assumptions which may lack solid foundations but which, nevertheless, can have a powerful influence on decision-making (Crehan, 2011). Common sense has been adopted as an analytical tool in a number of fields, including reasoning and logic (Thomason, 2021), financial investment (Wilson & Wu, 2010) and foreign policy (Hopf, 2013).

It has often been observed that the creation of language policy – whether at the national level or in individual institutions – sometimes takes place without language planning (Aizawa & Rose, 2019; Fishman, 1983, p. 382; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003, p. 6, 15). Macaro (2018) suggests that there may be an iterative relationship between planning and policy: arguments for EMI are both encouraged by and help to perpetuate more general agendas of 'internationalisation' which have swept the globe in recent years. Hamid et al. also note that the selection of EMI policies in Asian nations may be based on a 'simplistic understanding of MOI [medium of instruction] as a cheap solution to complex language problems' (2013, p. 1).

In Finland, with regard to internationalisation initiatives in universities, Saarinen and Nikula have found that 'it is often taken for granted that lecturers and students will have few difficulties in operating in English. … [The use of English] is rarely problematised at the outset' (2013, p. 132). Malawi provides yet another example of an apparent contradiction between the selection of English as medium of instruction in higher education and the justification for this decision. Reilly (2019, p. 35) found that there is a widespread desire to 'instil a pride in being Malawian … to understand and appreciate symbols of Malawian nationhood, to be patriotic' and to achieve unity amongst all Malawians. Ironically, these nationalist sentiments are used to justify the use of English as medium of instruction. This contradiction represents a lack of research and planning underlying language policy in Malawian higher education.

In all of these cases language policy decisions, including decisions about EMI, have been based on common sense assumptions, not on empirical data. Gramsci argues that in the social environment of an education system students may seek ways to resist the common sense of their subaltern position. In this way, they may be able to move to a 'critical position' that can overturn the conditions of their subjugation (Ives, 2009, p. 67).

Education and language-in-education policies in Indonesia

The ideology underlying Indonesia's education system ever since Independence was formulated by the writer and first Minister of Education, Ki Hadjar Dewantara. It can be summarised in the phrase *memanusiakan manusia* (to make humanity humane). Through education the individual flourishes and also contributes to the development of a harmonious pluralist society.

According to the 1945 Constitution, Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian) is the sole language of government, parliament, the legal system and the press. It is widely used as the national lingua franca and is the home language of about 20 per cent of the population (Ananta et al., 2015). Apart from the national language, Indonesia possesses 720 other languages (BPPB, 2021; Eberhard et al., 2021). Official policy is that these languages are to be 'preserved' while foreign languages are to be 'mastered' (Kemendikbud, 2017). In the context of education, the Constitution and several legislative instruments make it clear that Bahasa Indonesia is the medium of instruction. The reality, however, is complex; although official policy remains unchanged practice has fluctuated from time to time (Hamied & Lengkanawati, 2018; Nur'Aini et al., 2019; Walker et al., 2019; Zein, 2020).

Historically, English has played only limited roles in Indonesia, but over the last few decades it has become very prominent. Despite the legal obligation to use Bahasa Indonesia as the medium of instruction, the Government has made two attempts in the last 15 years to introduce English for this purpose. In 2007, the Government introduced an 'International Standard School' (ISS) scheme. One ISS was to be established at each level of education – primary, junior secondary, senior secondary – in each district throughout the country. These schools received generous funding from local and central governments; in addition, they were permitted to charge fees. They were also expected to adopt a foreign curriculum and they were to teach at least mathematics and science through the medium of English. In fact, some schools attempted to use EMI for all subjects. The scheme was very appealing for parents who could afford the fees and the ISS soon became the schools of choice for local elites (Coleman, 2011; Hadisantosa & Coleman, 2015). But the scheme also attracted widespread criticism (Coleman, 2009). In 2013, the Constitutional Court ruled that EMI in schools was unconstitutional because it was socially divisive and constituted a threat to the national language (Coleman, 2016a, 2016b). Consequently, the ISS scheme had to be halted.

Despite the illegality of EMI in schools, the then Minister of Research, Technology and Higher Education announced that a bilingual (English-Indonesian) curriculum was to be introduced in all universities by 2016 (Dewi, 2017, p. 242). This policy was not implemented, although several of our interviewees referred to it, apparently under the impression that EMI had indeed become obligatory at the higher education level.

Many universities have established their own so-called 'International Programmes' (IPs) in parallel to their normal degree programmes. IP fees are considerably higher than those charged for normal programmes and the facilities provided are usually more comfortable. It is expected that all subjects will be taught through the medium of English. Nominally, the IPs have been established to cater for international students, but in reality most of the students are Indonesian. Given the high fees charged by IPs, most participants come from wealthy families (Hamied & Lengkanawati, 2018). A lecturer told us:

> … actually, these are not very good students because they are not pass the four [entrance] exams … they are not good, because actually they are not intent to be international students, but because they are rich, their parents actually have money, so they can pay more.

Another lecturer admitted that his institution's EMI programme does not recruit students from remote and less prosperous parts of the country: 'I don't think there has ever been a student [on this programme] from Papua.' This is the context in which EMI is frequently implemented in Indonesia: students come from very prosperous backgrounds.

The research

The original research was commissioned by the Indonesian Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education (now the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology) and managed by the British Council. The Ministry was aware that EMI was expanding in the university sector in Indonesia, but it needed to know how extensive EMI is, what approaches are being used and the challenges which it faces.

In order to explore these issues, a mixed methodology, involving surveys and case studies, was employed. A questionnaire with both closed and open questions was designed for university managers (for example, faculty deans); 24 responses were received. A similar questionnaire, also using both closed and open questions, was prepared for lecturers; 281 responses were received. Case studies were carried out in three universities; seven EMI lectures were observed; seven managers and 12 lecturers were interviewed; and 20 students took part in six focus group discussions. In addition, at one institution, two whole class discussions were held, involving 50 students. The lecturers all had experience of using EMI in their classes and the students were all studying in EMI classes. Finally, the Director of the Agency for the Development of Language & Publishing (now the Agency for Language Development and Management) was interviewed; this is an official body under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology which is charged with 'developing' Indonesia's national language and 'preserving' its local languages.

The full report is available to read online (Lamb et al., 2021). Attention focusses on the extent to which EMI is being implemented, the ways in which EMI is being interpreted and implemented, the challenges which have been encountered, stakeholders' attitudes, and the effectiveness or otherwise of using English as the medium of instruction. To some extent, also, the report identified a number of reasons which universities gave for introducing EMI. Our impression was that the arguments in favour of EMI had not been carefully thought through, but time did not permit these arguments to be analysed critically. The report also noted some signs of resistance to the introduction of EMI. We suspected

that the rationales in favour of EMI failed to persuade some stakeholders, but it was not possible to explore this in detail.

Findings

After the report had been submitted to the research sponsor, we decided that we needed to look again, in greater detail, at rationales for introducing EMI and resistance to it. We therefore re-examined all the evidence – the responses to open questions in the two questionnaires and the case study data – to look in detail at these two issues. The findings from this re-examination are reported here.

Justifications for EMI

Many of the justifications provided by Indonesian respondents for introducing EMI corresponded closely with the 'drivers' identified by Galloway et al. (2017). However, we found that four justifications for EMI were mentioned frequently and that they had the character of 'common sense' views. Respondents rarely expanded upon them, as if their truth was self-evident:

(a) EMI is needed to ensure quality

(b) EMI is needed for international accreditation
(c) EMI is necessary for international communication, career development and competitiveness

(d) Students can effectively absorb English from their subject lecturers.

We now submit each of these justifications to critical scrutiny.

Common sense justification (a): EMI is needed to ensure quality

The assumption here is that the world's most prestigious universities teach in English (and only English) and that *therefore* (a *non sequitur*) teaching in English ensures quality. One lecturer commented:

> The methodology is more effective when English is used as the language of instruction.

Another said that using EMI is important '*to increase the quality of learning.*' [2] Another lecturer responded:

> Because [our university] is already classified as a world class university so of course the whole academic community, including lecturers, students and non-academic staff, must be familiar with English.

Other lecturers wrote:

> The time is right for us to deliver many of our courses with quality appropriate to a world class university and that includes providing many international classes taught in English.

> [EMI is necessary] to improve the quality of the teaching-learning process in certain subject areas.

In reality, in other parts of the world, many universities which are recognised as being of outstanding international quality do not use English as the medium of instruction. Some time ago Coleman (2015) noted that 20 of the 75 most highly-ranked universities in the world did not use English as their medium of instruction. More recently, the World University Rankings (THE, 2022) ranked 1600 universities in 99 countries. Institutions in Switzerland, Japan and France are selected for discussion here.

Example 1: ETH Zürich (Swiss Federal University of Technology)

In 2022, ETH Zürich was ranked 15th in the world. The university uses both German and English, as its website explains:

> Bachelor's degree programmes: … the main teaching language is German. … Master's degree programmes are mostly taught in English (ETH Zürich, 2022).

Example 2: University of Tokyo

The University of Tokyo was ranked 35th in the world in 2022. Its webpage states:

> For degree programs offered in Japanese, please note that a high level of Japanese proficiency is required. The University also offers a variety of graduate degree programs taught in English, some of which do not require Japanese proficiency (University of Tokyo, 2022).

Example 3: Université Paris Sciences et Lettres (Université PSL)

In 2022 Université PSL ranked 40th in the world. French is the medium of instruction in 49 of its programmes (Bachelors to Doctoral) and English is the medium in 28 programmes. In about a quarter of all programmes both English and French are used (Université PSL, 2022).

From these three examples, it is clear that some of the most prestigious universities in the world do not teach exclusively through the medium of English. Furthermore, many of the lowest-ranking institutions in the world do employ English as their sole medium of instruction. Therefore, simply adopting English as the medium cannot guarantee that university degree programmes will be of high quality.

Common sense justification (b): EMI is needed for international accreditation

The Government of Indonesia wishes universities to be accredited internationally and, for that purpose, it recognises 22 international accreditation bodies (Kemdikbud, 2020). If a university degree programme achieves international accreditation, it is automatically granted Indonesian national accreditation at Level A.

The belief that EMI is a requirement for university accreditation is almost ubiquitous. Questionnaire responses from two university managers illustrate this:

> Many accreditation procedures still use English as one of their criteria. The government wishes universities in Indonesia to have a world class reputation (World Class University).

Another respondent reported that EMI was already being practised in their institution:

> … in order to increase our rank and gain national accreditation … to improve the university's ranking by gaining international accreditation … the University is smartening itself up so as to reach the accreditation standard of AUN-QA [ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance]

How accurate are these constantly repeated assertions that EMI is a requirement for accreditation? Since 2021, one of the authors of this article has had the opportunity to observe at close quarters the accreditation process in one of Indonesia's state universities. One of the accrediting bodies, in this case, is the Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Study Programs (AQAS, 2022), a non-profit-making organisation based in Germany. Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral programmes in a range of disciplines in the university in question have been subjected to the process. The AQAS procedures are detailed, exhaustive and collaborative. All documentation relating to the programmes is examined; senior managers, academics, current students, alumni and end users (i.e. employers) are interviewed; and university facilities, from libraries to toilets, are inspected.

Significantly, nowhere in the AQAS accreditation criteria is there an indication that English should be used as the medium of instruction. If necessary, documents are translated into English for the convenience of the assessors, but there is no requirement that English should be the medium of instruction. There is no assumption that EMI would contribute to the quality of the education which the university provides.

Another example is the accreditation scheme of the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC, 2019) which is based on standards developed by the UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). The *Benchmark Statement for Chemistry* (QAA, 2019) makes no statement about the medium of instruction nor indeed about any aspect of teaching-learning methodology.

A further international accreditation body recognised by the Government of Indonesia is the Association of MBAs (AMBA), also based in the UK. AMBA's detailed accreditation criteria say nothing about the language to be used in teaching, learning and assessment processes (AMBA, 2016). The accreditation criteria of the Korea Architectural Accrediting Board (KAAB, 2018) and the Engineering Council based in the UK (Engineering Council, 2020) also say nothing about the language of instruction. Thus, the widely and strongly held belief in Indonesian higher education institutions that accreditation makes the adoption of EMI obligatory is unfounded.

Common sense justification (c): EMI is necessary for international communication, career development and competitiveness

Many respondents take for granted that graduates will be functioning at an international level – and *only* at such a level. They also take for granted that graduates will need to be *competitive*. EMI is held to be essential for the achievement of these goals. The need for graduates to communicate with clients, employees and the public within Indonesia is hardly mentioned, Furthermore, little is said about *collaboration* with others, whether within Indonesia or in the wider world. These beliefs constitute another argument for using English as the medium of instruction in university degree programmes.

In interview, a faculty Dean said 'University graduates must be ready to join the global job market.' Another Dean in the same university added 'Students will not be able to

compete if they do not master English.' Lecturers made many similar claims in their questionnaire responses, a selection of which are quoted here. EMI is required:

> … to prepare students to compete at a global level

> … [so that] Indonesian students are equipped with competence in English (written and spoken) which will enable them to compete globally

> … so Indonesian graduates can gain employment abroad

> … so that students become more competitive – after they graduate, job opportunities are more numerous because they are more competitive.

One questionnaire respondent referred specifically to their own subject, Nursing:

> *It is more appropriate for teaching materials in Nursing to be in English, so that students can be prepared for the global [human resource] market.*

The assumption is that students should be prepared to practise their profession in contexts other than Indonesia, although in fact the majority will work in Indonesia after graduating. However, there is worrying evidence that nurses and midwives educated according to foreign curricula and taught through the medium of English are not able to communicate effectively with patients in their own country, even if they share the same first language (UNESCO, 2012). Midwives need to be able to communicate with mothers in the language with which the mothers are most comfortable. They need to understand the mothers' culture and beliefs about pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal care; and, therefore, they need to be trained to convert technical information into a format that mothers will understand (see Flood et al., 2019). The concern here is that if nurses and midwives are trained through the medium of English they will not acquire the skills required to communicate optimally with their Indonesian patients.

There are similar concerns that other future professionals – doctors, engineers, agriculturalists and many others – who have been educated through the medium of English will not be able to communicate effectively with their patients and clients in Indonesia.

Despite the narrative that, with the help of EMI, students are being prepared to function competitively and to work abroad, the reality is that the majority will probably spend their working lives in Indonesia, interacting orally and in writing with other Indonesian citizens. Proponents of EMI assume that graduates must be competitive in their professional lives, although in fact the ability to collaborate with others in their own society is essential.

Common sense justification (d): students can effectively absorb English from their subject lecturers

One of the most striking findings in our data is current lecturers' enthusiasm for EMI: 93 per cent of those sampled said that EMI contributed positively to students' subject learning and 98 per cent said that it was positive for students' learning of English. Indeed, 80 per cent of the lecturers sampled thought that their HEI should offer *more* EMI in future, and of these over 70 per cent said that this would improve students' English. At the same time, there was no suggestion that the lecturers themselves would do any explicit teaching of the language, apart from the occasional explanation of a technical term. As one

lecturer commented 'I'm really concerned with the content. If I also have to think about the English material, oh my God!' Nor had any of the HEIs sampled in our study put in place bespoke arrangements during their EMI programmes to support the development of students' English. Rather, it seems to have been taken for granted by both HEI managers and lecturers that L2 acquisition would just happen by itself, that students of Chemistry, for example, would absorb English during their English-medium Chemistry lectures through a process of osmosis.

Galloway (2020, p. 10) says that the primary objective of EMI is content learning and that language learning is often 'not an explicit educational aim.' However, she concedes that, in some contexts, EMI 'is very much aligned with goals to develop language proficiency.' This is certainly the view of many of our respondents. One Vice Rector said that the purpose of teaching in English was 'to improve the communication skills of graduates.' Another claimed:

> To be able to be actively involved in academic conversations internationally, English is still needed, so students must be equipped with [the necessary] skills.

Three arguments can be found in the data which support this belief. The first is that massive exposure to English – listening to lectures, reading academic articles, watching videos and taking part in seminars in the language – is bound to have beneficial effects on learners' English. Not surprisingly, our respondents are unaware of Krashen's Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982) or any other Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory in support of this view. Rather, this belief reflects the common sense notion that going to live in a country is the best way of acquiring the language of that country.

Secondly, as noted earlier, there is a widespread perception that the six years of explicit instruction in English that all university entrants have experienced in school has largely failed to produce functional competence in English. One lecturer wrote:

> Their failure to understand English is due to their learning in school.

Several other lecturers commented on the fact that new students lack confidence in using English: 'the students are afraid of English' said one. A student who shared this opinion said:

> I think … like … the students in middle school or high school … they still need to have more English classes because if they're going to have like full English classes in university I am sure they will not understand most of it.

Our respondents therefore came to the conclusion that a new approach – such as EMI – would give students plenty of exposure and practice opportunities and so build their confidence in the language.

Thirdly, several lecturers pointed out that many resources are available in English to support study in specific subject areas. To achieve desirable learning outcomes, students need to be encouraged to access these resources and to be given the skills to do so. One EMI lecturer told us:

> The majority of the most up-to-date and newest teaching resources are in English. The important literature, on-line teaching resources, video cases, case studies, almost all are in English.

Unfortunately, evidence from both SLA and from recent EMI research suggests that language 'osmosis' is a myth. There is a consensus among SLA researchers that plenty of second language (L2) input is necessary for acquisition to take place but is not sufficient even when learners are motivated to attend to meaning. Successful acquisition normally requires carefully graded practice and regular feedback (VanPaten & Williams, 2015). Meanwhile, students in content-based and immersion classes may develop communication skills, vocabulary, and general communicative competence in the new language to which they are being exposed (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 296); however, these findings refer to school-age learners who are simultaneously receiving L2 instruction.

Regarding EMI in higher education, the picture is much cloudier. In their systematic review, Macaro et al. (2018) found that very few empirical studies had investigated this crucial issue with sufficient rigour (e.g. comparing students in EMI and L1-instructed classes) and nuance (e.g. what aspect of language competence would we expect EMI instruction to improve?). By contrast, there is alarming evidence for what can happen when students' pre-existing L2 proficiency is not adequate to study in English. As Hamid et al. (2013, p. 10) suggested – citing studies carried out in Bangladesh, the Maldives, Malaysia, India and Indonesia – instead of the highly desirable double gain one might expect from bilingual programmes, EMI may lead to a 'double loss' with students learning neither the language nor the subject successfully.

Besides these common sense justifications for EMI it was striking to observe that, while respondents extolled the qualities of English, many of them also revealed negative attitudes towards Bahasa Indonesia. For example, a PhD student said:

> To me, it's very important to use English as the language of instruction, so that we are not always considered as retarded.

An interviewed lecturer said:

> Ideas are sharper if presented in English. My friends also say that I write sharper ideas if I use English.

Another, who teaches on both Indonesian-medium and English-medium programmes, told us:

> To compare them, teaching in English of course is more prestigious. It's a higher caste.

Resistance to EMI

Besides common sense justifications for EMI, we also found indications of resistance to the use of EMI. These fall into five categories: national identity; questioning assumptions about the necessity for English; comprehensibility; questioning the assumption that English can be acquired through osmosis; and appealing to legislation.

Manifestation of resistance (a): national identity

One lecturer argued that internationalisation should not be allowed to threaten indigenous research and development and, ultimately, national identity:

> We mustn't let higher education institutions in Indonesia simply become places for foreign lecturers and for consuming only foreign literature. [These institutions] must also become contexts where Indonesian intellectuals can 'go international' and which provide equal opportunities for scientific developments which are based on the internalisation of indigenous knowledge, including mastery of Indonesian language and literature. Remember, language is a part of culture and of national identity.

Regarding the medium of instruction, two lecturers made the following observations:

> The use of Bahasa Indonesia as the official medium of instruction is a step in national politics [which is intended] to protect and develop national identity, as is done by other nations which have their own languages, such as Germany, Korea, Iran and China.

> I am 100% for keeping Bahasa Indonesia, because Bahasa Indonesia is equally important and it is also the language of national unity.

One respondent was willing to consider the use of both Indonesian and English in limited circumstances:

> Bahasa Indonesia must be used all the time. The use of foreign languages such as English should be used only in particular cases or on certain days. Not every day.

Manifestation of resistance (b): questioning assumptions about the necessity for English

A lecturer questioned whether students really needed English for their future: '*The majority of our students won't need English for their futures.*' Several students made related comments:

> What is English for? I mean what the need is and why I should use English? If you say English is for the international class, in other institutions many international classes still use the local language.

> If we can use Bahasa Indonesia, why should we change it?

> We live in Indonesia. How can [we] be using 100% English?

> If English is used daily but the lecturers are Indonesian people, what is that for?

Manifestation of resistance (c): comprehensibility

Several lecturers were concerned that using English as the medium of instruction would have a negative impact on students' comprehension and motivation:

> Actually [EMI] is not good because I more fluent to speak in Indonesia[n], and the students more fluent to hear or accept the class in Indonesia[n]. … Which is better? Conveying or giving the class in English, which means that maybe some students can't accept all the material? Or the class conveyed in Indonesia[n] and the students can get more? I think it's better for students to get more, because actually this is not the English class. This is Chemistry class.

> Not all teaching materials can be delivered easily in English.

> Lecturers and their students master their mother tongue [rather than English]. [So] using English reduces … students' motivation.

Student interviewees made similar comments:

> Probably only a small number of us who graduated from international schools used English in learning the subjects and they are fluent in English. What about the rest of us who came from remote areas and other islands?

A silent form of resistance to EMI can be seen in student withdrawal from EMI programmes. Studying through the medium of English is simply too difficult for some, while others lack self-confidence in the language. Many experience anxiety. Consequently, we found high drop-out rates from some English medium 'international classes.' In one university 14 students were recruited on to an undergraduate EMI programme, but five of them had dropped out by the end of the first year. Another undergraduate programme in the same university started with three students, but only one was left at the end of Year One. In a later intake into the same programme, four of 14 students dropped out during the first semester. Although other factors played a role in these withdrawals, interviews with lecturers and students indicated that language was the primary cause.

Manifestation of resistance (d): questioning the assumption that English can be acquired by osmosis

One respondent questioned whether it was really possible for students to acquire English through their subject lectures and suggested that more structured English language teaching would be more effective:

> [English may be important, but] *language is a complex, high level skill. Using it requires structured practice.*

Manifestation of resistance (e): appeal to legislation

It is ironic that, while the Directorate General of Higher Education – part of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology – is apparently encouraging the adoption of English as a medium of education, another body under the same Ministry is opposed to it. The interview with the then Director of the Agency for the Develpment of Language & Publishing (as it then was) made it clear that EMI in universities contravenes legislation on the medium of instruction in the education system. The Director believed that concerned members of the public could petition the Constitutional Court to judge whether EMI in universities contravenes the country's Constitution, in the same way, that the Court had adjudicated on the constitutionality of EMI in schools in 2013. The Director concluded, 'There will be no Indonesia without Bahasa Indonesia.'

Although several respondents were aware of the legal requirement to use the national language in teaching they did not hesitate to use EMI. A Faculty Dean stated dismissively 'The law does not fit in with globalisation.'

Discussion

The research reveals that few Indonesian HEIs have a public policy on EMI. Central government policies are ambiguous: universities are under the impression that they are being encouraged to introduce EMI as a step towards internationalisation, while at the same

time, the national language planning agency points out that using any language other than Indonesian as a medium of instruction is illegal.

In practice, the arguments for EMI reflect widely shared and deeply held assumptions about internationalisation and the future of education and society. These beliefs are expressed forcefully and are literally indisputable: they are not open for questioning. With constant repetition, they have become 'common sense.' In reality, however, the assumptions turn out to be unfounded. They are myths (or 'fallacies,' Phillipson, 1992).

We heard no claims that EMI programmes contribute to the development of Indonesian society and we found no evidence of the humanism which Ki Hadjar Dewantara placed at the core of Indonesia's education system. Indeed, Sugiharto (2014, p. 230) suggests that Indonesian government efforts to 'internationalise' the education system indicate a 'diffidence' in drawing upon the work of the country's 'great pioneers in Indonesian national education' such as Dewantara.

Institutions offering degrees delivered through English do not have an egalitarian agenda. Instead, as in so many contexts, EMI in higher education in Indonesia is reproducing social distinctions.

We found that these programmes are powerfully oriented towards contexts outside Indonesia. In effect, they are designed to provide opportunities for young people from privileged backgrounds to prepare for further study and work abroad. The participants themselves tend to be wealthier than their peers in standard degree programmes. This common sense perception of the purpose of higher education is dominated by market-driven concerns (Walker et al., 2019). Graduates are expected to be self-interested and competitive individuals who will be active in a neo-liberal globalised economy outside Indonesia.

Indonesia is not alone in adopting EMI in response to what is perceived to be global competition. This belief is widely held and is found not only in higher education but also in schools. For instance, Channa (2017) records that in Punjab, Pakistan, in 2011 all Urdu medium state schools were converted to English medium with the aim of 'competing with the globalised world in the field of knowledge' (School Education Department, 2011). Meanwhile, Hayes (2022) suggests that the policy of teaching English in primary schools in several Asian education systems is based on 'a rationale that widespread proficiency in English is important for future national success in a globalised economy.' Hayes argues, not only is this economic rationale unfounded but it also 'exacerbates system inequalities.' Sonntag (2003, p. 30) goes so far as to identify a 'global marketplace,' with English as its 'linguistic feature,' where youth worldwide uncritically adopt the commercial values that it embodies.

We also noted that respondents were enthused about the benefits of English and at the same time were disparaging about Bahasa Indonesia. They say that speakers of Indonesian are 'retarded' when compared to English speakers, that ideas are 'sharper' when written in English rather than Indonesian, and that English is 'more prestigious.' These are commonly held views. In a separate study in an Indonesian university, a student observed that English speakers are considered to be 'more educated' than others, while those who are not proficient in English are 'ashamed' (Zentz, 2012, p. 165).

The phenomenon of language shame is widespread (see Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins, 1988). In Pakistan, Rahman has written extensively on the 'cultural shame' of educated Punjabis about their language (for instance Rahman, 1999), while Coleman and Capstick (2012, p. 26) were told by one of their respondents:

> Pakistanis have learnt 'to look down on themselves' [while] 'mother tongues are used with a sense of shame.'

Manan et al. also describe the 'guilt, shame and stigma' which are associated with local languages in Pakistan. They conclude that 'in this way the current English-dominated linguistic hierarchy has been naturalised as absolute, normal and commonsensical' (2022, p. 8).

In India, Hafeesha and Vishnu Prasad (2021) found that, while speakers of local languages may acquire fluency in dominant languages (Hindi and English), they are ashamed of their own languages: 'Education promotes self-deprecation of one's culture, language and confidence.' However, in the Pacific island nation of Kiribati, Liyanage and Canagarajah (2019) have found various manifestations of shame associated with the use of English, the ex-colonial language. They argue that it is important to recognise the nature of these internal conflicts, for 'shame can have consistent potential against the homogenising and marketising pressures of the current economies and ideologies' (p. 451).

Even if language shame per se is not expressed, Indonesian universities seem to be ready – eager, even – to jettison the national language. Several respondents told us that if there is even one international student in a class then the medium of instruction in that class must be English:

> If there is a foreign student in a regular class, the lecturer uses English.

In other words, the host must adapt to the language of the guest. Galloway (2020) notes the same phenomenon in other contexts. In contrast, as shown above, universities in France, Japan, Switzerland, the UK and elsewhere require international students to learn and use the institution's language. In these situations, the guest adapts to the language of the host (usually, the host institution provides structured language support).

Despite the overwhelming force of common sense views of the importance of EMI, there is evidence of resistance among students, lecturers, some university managers and the director of the government's language planning agency. (Very similar evidence has been found in other contexts in Indonesia where EMI is being implemented, for example, the schoolteachers interviewed by Zacharias (2013).)

From this resistance, a number of questions arise: How does this reluctance impact on practice? Is it simply passive? Do resistant and enthusiastic lecturers teach in different ways? Do resistant lecturers – whether consciously or not – use English less frequently than their colleagues? Are students conscious of resistance on the part of their lecturers? Does lecturers' resistance impact on students' own perceptions of EMI? Is lecturers' resistance reflected in students' learning of subjects which are taught through the medium of English? These questions open up a new area of research.

Conclusions

The purpose of this article has not been to question the effectiveness of EMI as a means of improving the English language competence of university students or to identify its impact on Indonesia's language ecology. Rather, our conclusions are:

- In the context of Indonesian higher education several of the common sense arguments in favour of EMI are unfounded.
- As Gramscian theory predicts, these common sense arguments are random, not systematic.
- Some arguments reflect neoliberal capitalist and individualist objectives for education.
- These arguments privilege the English language but provide no role for Indonesian. Participants in EMI programmes – lecturers and students alike – have negative perceptions of their own national language.
- EMI as currently implemented in some Indonesian HE institutions is discriminatory and socially divisive.
- These arguments and views are in contradiction with the humanist and communitarian principles of Indonesia's educational ideology.

The discourse of common sense is loud, confident and influential. Nevertheless, there are some signs of the 'resistance and struggle' in what Gramsci calls the 'war of position' in preparation for social change (Ives, 2009, p. 664).

Unfortunately, Indonesia has not learnt from its earlier school-level experiment with EMI (Coleman, 2011, 2016b; Hadisantosa & Coleman, 2015). The research reported here underlines – yet again – the need for language policy to be based not on common sense assumptions but on careful language planning which makes use of verifiable data. Adopting language-in-education policies without contextually sensitive and critical analysis is likely to be counterproductive and, furthermore, socially divisive.

Notes

1. Ethical permission was granted by the University of Leeds Social Sciences, Environment and Leeds University Business School (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee on 17 April 2019, reference AREA 18-135.
2. Some respondents used English, others Bahasa Indonesia. Quotations in italics are our translations of Bahasa Indonesia originals.

Acknowledgements

Disclosure statement

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