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FROM WILLINGNESS TO COMPETENCE: INVESTIGATING PRIMARY TEACHERS' READINESS FOR EMI IMPLEMENTATION

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Abstract: *English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) is increasingly promoted in Indonesian primary schools to accelerate bilingual competence, yet evidence on teacher readiness remains limited. This explanatory sequential qualitative-methods study examined the EMI readiness of 108 teachers from elementary schools in East Java. An adapted 16-item EMI-Readiness Scale (α =.89) and three open-ended prompts captured quantitative and qualitative data across knowledge, skills, and attitude dimensions. Descriptive statistics revealed moderate overall readiness: conceptual knowledge (M = 2.75), pedagogical–linguistic skills (M = 2.64), and attitudes (M = 2.88). Only 40 % of teachers felt confident in spoken or written English, and the lowest means concerned oral fluency (2.39) and writing (2.41). Regression analysis showed perceived policy clarity was the strongest predictor of self-efficacy (β = .42, p < .01). Cluster analysis identified three attitudinal profiles—ready-supported (28 %), conditionally willing (46 %), and reluctant (26 %). Qualitative data uncovered reliance on ad-hoc self-learning, resource shortages, and ambivalent sociocultural positioning. The findings highlight a persistent gap between policy aspirations and classroom capability, driven by limited professional development, insufficient language proficiency, unclear guidelines, and infrastructural constraints. The study proposes a phased, resource-backed professional-development agenda that integrates content-language pedagogy, collaborative mentoring, translanguaging scaffolds, and systematic monitoring to foster sustainable EMI implementation.*

Keywords: *EMI; elementary teachers; teachers' readiness; language immersion program*

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INTRODUCTION

The rise of English as a global lingua franca has prompted an unprecedented push toward English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in the compulsory-school sector of many non-English-speaking countries. Policymakers across Africa, Asia, and Latin America frame EMI as a catalyst for internationalisation, economic integration, and workforce competitiveness (Galloway et al., 2020; Hu, 2019; Khramchenko, 2025; Rahman & Hu, 2025). These aspirations have translated into a diverse array of national and regional measures that seek to normalise English as a vehicular language from the earliest stages of schooling. Yet, despite the scale of these initiatives, scholarly consensus is emerging that EMI success hinges less on policy intent than on the on-the-ground readiness of teachers, learners, and institutions.

A survey of recent policy trajectories illustrates both the momentum and the heterogeneity of EMI adoption. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 embeds EMI as a cornerstone of its human-capital strategy, mandating English for core subjects throughout basic education (Quotah & Alghamdi, 2024). In Latin America, Colombia promotes EMI in teacher-training colleges and public universities to build an English-competent labour force (Michelon Ribeiro et al., 2024). By contrast, policy rollouts in Vietnam highlight the tension between an ambitious language roadmap and chronic shortfalls in teacher preparation, instructional resources, and respect for local linguistic ecologies (Anh, 2022; Tri, 2023). Rwanda's rapid shift to English-only schooling similarly exposes the gap between legislative decree and pedagogical reality, with reports of teachers reverting to translanguaging to mediate comprehension (Etienne et al., 2024; Sukmawati & Pujiani, 2024).

The Chinese experience foregrounds another critical dimension: policy clarity and rural – urban equity. Nationally, the Ministry of Education endorses EMI as a lever for raising China's academic profile, yet the absence of explicit implementation guidelines has led to inconsistent practices and widened achievement gaps for rural learners (Rahman & Hu, 2025; Zhu, 2024). Research further reveals that teachers in under-resourced districts struggle to reconcile bilingual content delivery with the mandated coverage of national curricula (Zheng & Choi, 2024). Similar concerns surface in South Asia. In Nepal, the proliferation of EMI in public primary schools has reignited debates about linguistic imperialism, cultural hegemony, and the reproduction of social stratification (Kadel, 2024; Parajuli, 2022; Saud, 2020). Indonesian reforms display yet another pattern: in the absence

of a unified national framework, EMI diffusion is piecemeal, varying markedly by province and school type (Erliana et al., 2024; Sukmawati & Pujiani, 2024).

Collectively, these cases underscore that EMI is not a monolithic policy but rather a constellation of locally negotiated practices. Achieving equitable outcomes requires sensitivity to sociolinguistic diversity, stakeholder engagement, and the safeguarding of indigenous languages (Kadel, 2024; Karki & Karki, 2024; Khadka, 2025). In the primary grades—where cognitive, affective, and linguistic foundations are laid—the stakes are particularly high: poorly supported EMI can undermine content mastery, marginalise non-dominant languages, and erode learner identity.

Against this background, researchers have sought to conceptualise "EMI readiness" as a multidimensional construct encompassing linguistic proficiency, pedagogical competence, institutional infrastructure, and socio-cultural alignment. Methodologically, studies deploy mixed approaches. Large-scale surveys often foreground English proficiency and self-reported teaching practices, while qualitative work probes classroom discourse and stakeholder perceptions (Hendges et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023). Galloway & Ruegg (2020) argue that robust readiness indices must integrate indicators of institutional support, including access to professional development and language-learning resources. Sukardi et al., (2023) extend this view, demonstrating that context-specific adaptations—such as mother-tongue scaffolding—are integral to readiness, particularly in linguistically heterogeneous classrooms.

Needs analysis has been proposed as a critical diagnostic tool. Harper and Sun (2022) contend that systematic audits of learner profiles, language challenges, and resource gaps enable schools to tailor EMI trajectories that respect both content objectives and language acquisition pathways. Such granular analyses are vital in settings where students negotiate dual cognitive loads: acquiring disciplinary knowledge and developing English proficiency simultaneously.

Beyond technical skills, EMI readiness also intersects with ideology and identity. Phyak (2023) highlights how EMI can serve as a proxy for broader socio-political projects, reproducing linguistic hierarchies if not implemented reflexively. Kim & Kim (2020) underscore the pedagogical imperative to craft learning environments that sustain engagement and affirm local identities. Complementing this perspective, Ojong & Addo (2024) call for culturally responsive curricula that empower marginalised groups and mitigate the alienating effects of monolingual, Western-centric content.

Despite these theoretical advances, three empirical blind spots persist. First, evidence on teacher preparedness remains largely attitudinal. While studies report favourable dispositions toward EMI, they reveal persistent deficits in functional English proficiency and methodological know-how (Joshi & Paneru, 2025; Mahara, 2023). Second, context-

specific challenges—ranging from sociolinguistic norms to infrastructural inequities—are under-examined, limiting the transferability of recommended practices (Etienne et al., 2024; Karki & Karki, 2024). Third, learner perspectives receive scant attention; yet student engagement, affect, and feedback are pivotal to sustainable EMI (Ernawati et al., 2021; N. B. Ghimire et al., 2025; M. R. Nur et al., 2025).

An additional lacuna concerns multilingual pedagogies. Although translanguaging is acknowledged as a potential bridge between linguistic repertoires, empirical accounts of its systematic integration into EMI remain rare (Kadel, 2024; Tanoli et al., 2021). Similarly, the dearth of longitudinal research obscures our understanding of EMI's enduring impact on academic achievement and language maintenance (Pun et al., 2022). These gaps have fuelled calls for more ecologically valid, duration-sensitive investigations that factor in policy shifts, teacher development trajectories, and evolving community attitudes.

Responding to these imperatives, the present study examines the readiness of Indonesian primary-school teachers engaged in a language-immersion programme in East Java. Drawing on a mixed-methods design that combines an adapted EMI-readiness questionnaire with semi-structured interviews, the research interrogates four domains: (a) teachers' conceptual knowledge of EMI principles, (b) their English language proficiency, (c) pedagogical competencies for bilingual content delivery, and (d) attitudinal orientations toward EMI implementation. Situated within Indonesia's fragmented policy landscape, the study sheds light on how local actors interpret, negotiate, and enact EMI in the absence of a centrally mandated blueprint.

The ensuing analysis seeks to contribute threefold: empirically, by furnishing granular data on Indonesian teachers' EMI competencies; theoretically, by refining the construct of EMI readiness; and practically, by proposing a phased implementation roadmap that accommodates local linguistic ecologies while meeting national ambitions for English proficiency. By foregrounding teacher agency and contextual realities, the study aspires to inform policy dialogues on equitable, sustainable EMI adoption in primary education—both in Indonesia and in comparable multilingual, resource-diverse settings.

In sum, the global diffusion of EMI underscores the need for nuanced understandings of readiness that transcend proficiency metrics and policy slogans. Sustainable EMI demands investment in teacher capacity, culturally responsive pedagogies, learner-centred feedback loops, and longitudinal monitoring of outcomes. The research reported herein endeavors to illuminate these dimensions, offering evidence-based insights to guide stakeholders committed to harnessing EMI's potential while mitigating its risks.

This study aims to examine EMI readiness levels of primary school teachers in an immersion program, to identify the key challenges and opportunities in implementing EMI and to develop recommendations for improving teacher preparation in EMI domains. In

essence, this study not only evaluates teachers' current readiness but also maps the obstacles and enabling factors of EMI implementation, thereby generating practical recommendations for strengthening teacher preparation and ensuring that EMI contributes meaningfully to sustainable educational outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language-Immersion Program

Foreign-language immersion—first pioneered in Canada—positions the school as the primary agent of language transmission when families do not use the target language at home (MacIntyre et al., 2001). Immersion programmes differ from conventional foreign-language classes in two fundamental respects. First, the target language is employed as the vehicle, rather than merely the object, of instruction; second, all stakeholders—teachers, administrators, and peers—contribute to an extended language socialisation ecology (Feinberg, 2002). Empirical work consistently identifies three enabling conditions: (a) teachers with high functional proficiency and training in bilingual pedagogy, (b) a supportive institutional culture that normalises the use of the target language across curricular and extra-curricular domains, and (c) material resources that facilitate sustained exposure (MacIntyre et al., 2001).

Building on longitudinal evaluations of Canadian programmes, immersion is commonly classified by age of entry—Early (5-6 years), Middle (9-10 years) and Late (11-14 years)—and by intensity of exposure—Total (≈ 100 % target language) versus Partial (≈ 50 %) (MacIntyre et al., 2001). Meta-analyses indicate that Early-Total models yield the highest end-state proficiency without compromising content achievement; however, they also demand the greatest organisational investment and parental commitment. Partial or delayed models often emerge as pragmatic adaptations in contexts where teacher supply or sociopolitical conditions constrain full immersion, yet they still outperform traditional grammar-translation approaches in measures of communicative competence and metalinguistic awareness.

English as Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Primary Education

Recent international policy shifts have extended the immersion logic to English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in the primary grades, defined here as the systematic use of English to teach non-language subjects in officially non-Anglophone settings (Nikolov & Djigunović, 2023). The rationale is twofold: accelerating English proficiency during the neurologically sensitive early years and leveraging bilingual cognition for enhanced academic flexibility (Johnstone, 2018). Evidence shows that early EMI can foster superior metalinguistic awareness and cognitive control relative to monolingual instruction (Johnstone, 2018);

however, developmental benefits are contingent on pedagogical safeguards that mitigate cognitive overload (Wei & García, 2022).

A growing body of research now interrogates these safeguards. Additive bilingual frameworks—where L1 literacy development proceeds in parallel with English—consistently correlate with stronger subject-matter comprehension and affective outcomes (Cenoz, 2019). Conversely, subtractive models risk attenuating L1 skills and heightening academic anxiety (Lasagabaster, 2022). Teacher preparedness is pivotal: classroom ethnographies reveal that effective EMI practitioners combine high English proficiency with specialised strategies for linguistic scaffolding, multimodal explanation, and formative assessment (Merino & Lasagabaster, 2018). Where such expertise is absent, teachers frequently revert to code-switching that dilutes both language exposure and content clarity. Equally important are culturally responsive pedagogies that valorise local knowledge systems while situating English as an additional, not replacement, resource (Kirkpatrick, 2022). Without this balance, EMI can be perceived as a vehicle of cultural dominance, undermining community support and learner identity.

Policy landscapes are correspondingly diverse. In some jurisdictions, EMI is promoted as a nation-building strategy to enhance global competitiveness; in others, it is adopted cautiously amid concerns about equity and linguistic rights. Comparative analyses suggest that successful large-scale roll-outs share three features: (1) explicit, staged proficiency targets for both teachers and pupils; (2) continuous professional development linked to classroom-embedded coaching; and (3) monitoring systems that track bilingual and academic outcomes, not just English attainment.

Collectively, immersion and EMI research converges on the principle that early, sustained, and pedagogically supported exposure to the target language maximises both linguistic and cognitive dividends. Yet the field still lacks fine-grained studies of how these principles play out in low-resource contexts where teacher proficiency, infrastructural support, and sociolinguistic attitudes vary widely. The present investigation addresses this gap by examining primary-teacher readiness for EMI in Indonesian immersion programmes, thereby contributing context-specific evidence to the global discourse on equitable bilingual education.

METHOD

Consistent with contemporary best practice in educational-readiness studies, the present inquiry adopted an explanatory quantitative methods design (Gläser-Zikuda et al., 2024). Quantitative data were gathered first to map teachers' English as a medium of instruction (EMI) readiness. The sequential logic allowed the data from qualitative (open ended questions) strand to refine and contextualize statistical trends, in line with

recommendations for purposeful integration of methods (Corr et al., 2018).

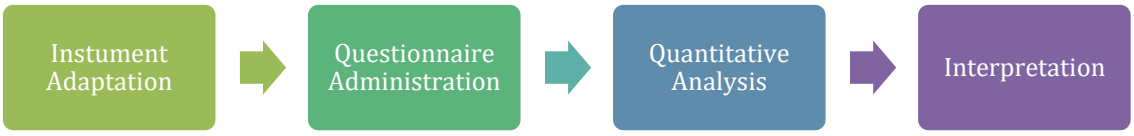

Figure 1. Procedural flow of the quantitative methods design

The study was situated at primary schools in East Java that operate a language-immersion preparation programme. Purposive sampling yielded 108 classroom teachers (94 female, 14 male; mean teaching experience = 7.3 years). Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection, reflecting stakeholder-engagement principles in educational action research (Bailey et al., 2019).

The quantitative strand used an adapted version of the 16-item EMI-Readiness scale developed by Lo & Othman (2023), extended with three open-ended prompts to capture self-directed professional-development activities. Items were arranged on a four-point Likert continuum (1 = Strongly disagree to 4 = Strongly agree). Quantitative data were collected via an online survey platform. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and percentages) mapped overall readiness. Overall EMI readiness was mapped by aggregating the 16 Likert items into three dimensions (Knowledge, Pedagogical–Linguistic Skills, Attitudes), computing dimension means, and classifying levels using equal-interval cutoffs on the 4-point scale (Low = 1.00–2.37; Moderate = 2.38–3.13; High = 3.13–4.00).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

To address the research questions regarding teachers' readiness in terms of knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities, and attitudes toward EMI implementation in elementary schools, an analysis of the average scores for each dimension was conducted. These average scores were classified into three categories: low, moderate, and high, based on equal interval ranges. In this study, the ranges used were 1.00-2.37 (low), 2.38-3.13 (moderate), and 3.13-4.00 (high).

The results are presented in an integrated narrative, in which quantitative findings from 16 closed-ended questions are explained descriptively and supported by respondents' responses to three open-ended questions. This qualitative data enriches the quantitative findings by providing deeper context related to teachers' English language skills and their readiness to implement EMI.

Table 1.
The level of teachers' knowledge and understanding of EMI (n=108)

Item Number	Item	Mean	SD	Category
1	I understand the definition and purpose of EMI in elementary schools.	2.90	0.784	Moderate
2	I understand the curriculums and policies on EMI in elementary schools.	2.72	0.759	Moderate
3	I have knowledge of how to teach and explain materials to students in an EMI class.	2.62	0.828	Moderate

Table 1 shows the level of teachers' knowledge and understanding of EMI based on mean scores and categories. The analysis findings indicate that teachers' knowledge and understanding of EMI fall into the moderate category for all three items, with mean scores ranging from 2.62 to 2.90. The statement "I understand the definition and purpose of EMI in elementary schools" has the highest mean score among the three items (M=2.90), followed by understanding of EMI policies (M=2.72). Meanwhile, teachers' ability to explain material to students in EMI classes received the lowest score (M=2.62). These findings indicate that although most teachers have a sufficient conceptual understanding of EMI, there are still gaps in its practical application in the classroom. Furthermore, moderate scores on understanding the curriculum and teaching methods indicate the need for more specific training to enhance teachers' readiness for EMI implementation. First, inadequate professional development remains the most immediate constraint. Despite more than a decade of policy discourse, only a small proportion of the sample had attended formal EMI workshops, mirroring Anaam's (2022) report from Morocco and Nur et al.,'s (2023) survey across Indonesian districts.

Table 2.
The level of teachers' skills and abilities in EMI (n=108)

Item Number	Item	Mean	SD	Category
4	I can create a learning environment that is conducive to maintaining learning in an EMI class.	2.65	0.800	Moderate
5	I can assess students with different needs and experiences in an EMI class	2.72	0.795	Moderate
7	I am able to discuss with students the strategies needed to follow the learning delivered through EMI	2.61	0.759	Moderate
8	I am able to discuss with students regarding the English-language-related challenges through EMI	2.64	0.742	Moderate
13	I need help from an English teacher in using English in the EMI class.	3.09	0.881	Moderate
14	I am fluent in spoken English.	2.39	0.795	Moderate
15	I have good English writing skills.	2.41	0.854	Moderate

In the level skills and abilities dimension shown in Table 2, all items also fell into the moderate category, ranging from a mean of 2.39 to 3.09. The highest score for this

dimension was for the item "I need help from an English teacher in using English in the EMI class" (M=3.09), confirming that some teachers still rely on external support and are not yet fully independent in using English as the medium of instruction in the classroom.

Conversely, the two items with the lowest scores were related to English speaking fluency (M=2.39) and English writing skills (M=2.41), indicating that limited language proficiency remains a significant barrier to EMI implementation. These findings were reinforced by the open-ended responses, in which many teachers reported that they were still in the independent learning phase, for instance, "I watch YouTube every day to familiarize myself with English accents and vocabulary," or "I write a diary every night in English, although I still make many mistakes." Other efforts made by teachers to improve their fluency included taking online courses, using Duolingo, and practicing with their fellow teachers. However, several respondents also frankly admitted that "I don't have any specific activities to improve my writing skills," indicating variations in actual readiness in the field.

Beyond linguistic aspects, several pedagogical skill indicators also indicated a moderate level of readiness. For instance, teachers' ability to create a conducive learning environment (M=2.65) and assess students with diverse needs (M=2.72) indicated initial readiness, though these were not yet optimal. Similarly, the ability to discuss learning strategies and language-related challenges with students in EMI classes was also limited (M=2.61). The overall average for this dimension was 2.64, indicating that while teachers possess basic readiness, they still face notable challenges, specifically in strengthening both their academic English communication and pedagogical competencies relevant to the EMI context.

Table 3.
The level of teachers' attitudes towards EMI (n=108)

Item Number	Item	Mean	SD	Category
6	It is very difficult to control students in an EMI class	2.11	0.688	Low
9	I care about improving students' abilities in an EMI class.	3.24	0.681	High
10	I believe that students in EMI classes can achieve their best results with the right support.	3.26	0.777	High
11	I believe students with diverse needs and experiences in the EMI classroom can be equipped with both English and subject knowledge	3.25	0.698	High
12	I care for the achievement of students in the EMI classroom	3.23	0.756	High
16	I do not feel confident and comfortable teaching subjects through EMI.	2.21	0.809	Low

Table 3 shows the level of teachers' attitude towards EMI. The teacher attitude dimension appears to be more positive than the other two dimensions, as indicated by several items in the high category shown in Table 3. Four of the six items fall into the high category, reflecting teachers' positive attitudes toward EMI implementation. The highest mean score (3.26) was found for the statement, "I believe that students in EMI classes can achieve their best results with the right support," indicating teachers' commitment to and support for student success in EMI classrooms. In addition, the other three items related to teachers' concern for students' abilities, diverse needs, and achievement also recorded high mean scores, ranging from 3.23 to 3.25. Interestingly, two items with negative connotations scored low: "It is very difficult to control students in an EMI class" (M=2.11) and "I do not feel confident and comfortable teaching subjects through EMI (M=2.21)."

Table 4.
Open-ended questions

Item Number	Item
1	What activities have you undertaken to improve your English proficiency? Explain it briefly.
2	What activities have you undertaken to improve your written English proficiency? Explain it briefly.
3	Are you willing to teach in English? Please explain your reasons.

Table 4 presents the open-ended questions used to explore teachers' experiences and perceptions related to EMI implementation. The first two items focus on teachers' efforts to enhance their language abilities, asking them to describe the activities undertaken to improve their overall English proficiency (Item 1) and their written English proficiency (Item 2). These questions aim to capture self-directed or institutional initiatives such as attending training, practicing with peers, or engaging in writing tasks that reflect their readiness to teach in English. The third item addresses teachers' willingness to teach using English and the reasons behind their stance, thereby providing insights into their motivation, attitudes, and potential concerns regarding EMI. Collectively, these questions are designed to complement the quantitative data by eliciting qualitative responses that reveal not only teachers' skill development strategies but also their affective orientations toward EMI.

These low scores from table 3 (item no. 6 and 16) suggest that the majority of teachers do not experience significant difficulties in classroom management and feel relatively comfortable and confident in teaching in English. This is supported by the open-ended responses, in which many teachers expressed their willingness to teach using EMI. As one respondent noted, "I'm willing because it will motivate me to continue learning and adapt to the needs of the times." However, some teachers admitted they were not fully prepared, primarily due to limited language proficiency. Another teacher remarked, "I'm not ready

because my language skills are still limited, especially in speaking." Some teachers would be willing to teach using EMI if training or mentoring were provided: “I'm willing to try EMI, but I need training and practical examples first." Inadequate professional development remains the most immediate constraint. Teachers consequently rely on ad-hoc learning—watching YouTube, using Duolingo, or informally shadowing English specialists—strategies that seldom provide the systematic pedagogical repertoire required for dual-focus teaching. These findings indicate that while teachers’ attitudes toward EMI are moderately positive, as reflected by the mean score of 2.88 for this dimension, successful implementation still relies heavily on technical readiness, particularly in English language skills, and on institutional support such as adequate training and mentoring.

To conclude, the table below outlines the overall picture of teachers’ readiness for EMI implementation in elementary schools.

Table 5.
Teachers’ readiness for EMI implementation — Overview Readiness scale (study thresholds)**:** Low = 1.00–2.37 | Moderate = 2.38–3.13 | High = 3.13–4.00

Dimension	**Overall mean**	**Category**	**Notable strengths**	**Key weaknesses**	**Priority supports**
Knowledge & Understanding	≈ 2.75	Moderate	Understand EMI purpose (M = 2.90)	Practical know-how to deliver EMI (M = 2.62)	Targeted training on EMI principles → lesson design, materials, assessment
Skills & Abilities (Pedagogical–Linguistic)	2.64	Moderate	Openness to collaborate/seek help (need support from English teacher, M = 3.09)	Oral fluency (M = 2.39), writing (M = 2.41); limited strategy talk with students (M ≈ 2.61–2.64)	Language upgrading (speaking/writing), CLIL/EMI strategies, classroom language routines, formative assessment for language & content
Attitudes (Affective)	2.88	Moderate → High	Care about student outcomes (M = 3.23–3.26); belief students can succeed with support (M = 3.26)	Lower confidence/comfort teaching via EMI (M = 2.21)	Coaching & mentoring to build self-efficacy; success exemplars; reflective practice

Table 5 provides an integrated overview of teachers’ readiness for EMI implementation in elementary schools across three key dimensions: knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities, and attitudes. The findings indicate that teachers’ readiness generally falls within the moderate range, with some variation across dimensions.

In terms of knowledge and understanding, teachers demonstrate a fair grasp of the purpose of EMI (M = 2.90), yet practical know-how in delivering lessons remains limited (M = 2.62), highlighting the need for targeted training in lesson design, materials development, and assessment practices. For skills and abilities, the overall mean of 2.64 reflects moderate readiness, with strengths in collaborative attitudes (e.g., seeking support from English teachers, M = 3.09), but weaknesses in oral fluency (M = 2.39) and writing proficiency (M = 2.41). This suggests the importance of upgrading teachers' language skills and equipping them with CLIL/EMI strategies, classroom language routines, and formative assessment approaches that integrate content and language learning. The attitudinal dimension shows slightly higher readiness (M = 2.88), leaning toward moderate to high, with teachers valuing student outcomes (M = 3.23–3.26) and expressing belief in students' capacity to succeed with adequate support (M = 3.26). However, their lower confidence and comfort in teaching through EMI (M = 2.21) point to the need for coaching, mentoring, and reflective practices that build self-efficacy. Taken together, the results highlight a balanced but cautious readiness profile: while teachers are conceptually aware and attitudinally supportive of EMI, their practical language and pedagogical capacities require substantial strengthening to achieve effective classroom implementation.

Discussion

This study set out to illuminate the complex reality that underlies Indonesia's recent surge of interest in English as a medium of instruction (EMI) at the primary level. The sequential mixed-methods design confirmed an overarching readiness gap: whereas most teachers recognised the strategic value of EMI, relatively few felt linguistically competent or institutionally supported to enact it. These findings reinforce the broader international literature that warns against assuming policy enthusiasm automatically translates into classroom practice (Etienne et al., 2024; Khatri & Regmi, 2022).

A first point of concern is the persistent divergence between teachers' conceptual grasp of EMI and their operational familiarity with curricula and assessment procedures. Although 72 % of respondents could articulate the purpose of EMI, only 58.6 % reported knowing the relevant policies in detail. Similar knowledge–practice mismatches have been observed in Morocco (Anaam, 2022) and Rwanda (Etienne et al., 2024), where limited exposure to policy-specific professional development left teachers uncertain about daily implementation routines. Such uncertainty, often culminates in cautious partial adoption: teachers sprinkle English phrases into lessons to comply symbolically, yet revert to Bahasa Indonesia when cognitive or managerial demands escalate—an enactment pattern that echoes Anaam's (2022) analysis of defaulting to L1.

Language proficiency emerged as the most formidable individual-level barrier. Barely 40 % of participants felt confident in spoken or written English; many noted that they "could explain science in Indonesian faster." The highest skills-item mean (3.09) was teachers' admission that they need assistance from English specialists, signalling dependence on external expertise. Reports of incomplete textbook sets, erratic internet, and obsolete audiovisual tools echo Mazorodze & Mkhize (2024) diagnosis that physical infrastructure across the Global South seldom matches policy ambition. This mirrors evidence from Nepal (K. Ghimire, 2024; Shrestha, 2025) and Vietnam (Anh, 2022) demonstrating that insufficient teacher fluency systematically undermines EMI objectives. The confidence gap corroborates Nguyen et al.,'s (2024) argument that self-efficacy mediates teaching quality: teachers who doubt their own language command struggle to enact communicative, student-centred EMI classrooms. The shortage of qualified teachers, highlighted by Anh (2022) and manifested in our sample's uneven fluency distribution, further compounds the challenge. Without purposeful investment, EMI risks becoming a symbolic policy rather than a pedagogical reality (M. M. Rahman & Singh, 2022).

Teachers' affective orientations clustered into three profiles—ready–supported, conditionally willing, and reluctant—closely resembling the typology developed by Santos & Li (2024). The ready–supported cohort, comprising 28 % of the sample, described themselves as "excited but in need of materials," a stance consistent with Rifiyanti & Dewi's (2023) findings that targeted content-and-language workshops can convert willingness into expertise. The conditionally willing majority (46 %) expressed openness yet insisted on "continuous mentoring," reaffirming Nur et al.,'s (2023) call for sustained professional development. The reluctant group (26 %) foregrounded anxiety about their own English, echoing Farrell's (2019) work on the role of self-efficacy in language teaching. Collectively, these clusters underscore the necessity of multifaceted professional-development packages that blend language upgrading, collaborative inquiry, and coaching (Alhassan, 2021; Morell et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2023).

Teacher beliefs and identities mediate how structural constraints translate into classroom behaviour. Cluster analysis identified a "conditionally willing" majority (46 %) whose commitment hinges on credible support—a pattern consonant with Tao et al.,'s (2024) concept of contingent self-efficacy and the readiness profiles mapped by Santos & Li (2024). Harnessing this latent enthusiasm requires professional-development designs that are dialogic, collaborative, and sustained (Macaro et al., 2018). Reflective practice, shown by Farrell's (2019) to deepen pedagogical insight, must therefore be embedded in mentoring cycles rather than treated as an individual hobby.

Institutional and infrastructural constraints sharpen the individual challenges. Teachers repeatedly pointed to scarce English-language textbooks, intermittent internet

connectivity, and the absence of a school budget line for EMI materials—constraints previously documented in other Indonesian contexts (Sukmawati & Pujiani, 2024) and sub-Saharan African settings (Mazorodze & Mkhize, 2024). Qualitative narratives frequently referenced "unclear standards" and "no follow-up after training," paralleling Etienne et al.,'s (2024) findings in Rwanda and Khatri & Regmi's (2022) critique of ambiguous mandates in Nepal. When roles, resources, and accountability mechanisms are opaque, teachers default to improvised —and often inconsistent—practices, thereby perpetuating variability in instructional quality. Without earmarked funding and clear procurement procedures, even the most enthusiastic teachers find themselves improvising on the margins.

Cultural negotiations further complicate implementation. Although attitude scores were comparatively positive—four of six items reached the high category—roughly one quarter of teachers still expressed reluctance. Several reluctant teachers voiced apprehension that EMI "dilutes local identity," a sentiment resonant with Phyak's (2023) critique of linguistic imperialism. Yet even teachers in the ready–supported profile proposed a phased, translanguaging-enabled rollout that would gradually increase English exposure while safeguarding Bahasa Indonesia scaffolds. Comparable hybrid models in Nepal have been shown to lower cognitive load and community resistance (Kadel, 2024), validating Ojong & Addo's (2024) call for culturally responsive curricula. Such evidence positions translanguaging not as a failure of EMI but as a pragmatic bridge between global aspirations and local realities.

Against this backdrop, several policy and practice implications arise. Ministries should issue staged implementation guidelines that specify proficiency benchmarks, resource entitlements, and realistic milestones, thereby addressing the policy ambiguity highlighted by Khatri & Regmi (2022). Funding models need to allocate recurrent budgets for teacher training, resource curation, and infrastructural upgrades, mitigating the economic constraints underscored by Kaur & Singh (2020). Professional-development designs should integrate content-language pedagogy, collaborative reflection, and digital flexibility, echoing best-practice syntheses by Macaro et al., (2018) and Han et al., (2023). Finally, legitimising translanguaging as an interim scaffold could reconcile EMI goals with sociolinguistic diversity, reducing cultural backlash (Parajuli, 2022).

The study's contributions must be read in light of three limitations. First, the sample is confined to four private schools in East Java; public-school contexts and other provinces may yield different readiness patterns. Second, self-reported proficiency may inflate actual language abilities despite our triangulation with interviews. Incorporating classroom observations or standardised assessments would strengthen future work. Third, the cross-sectional snapshot cannot establish causal links between professional development and readiness trajectories. Longitudinal designs—tracing teachers from pre-service to in-

service stages—are needed to gauge sustainability, addressing the gap pinpointed by Pun et al., (2022).

In conclusion, the Indonesian case exemplifies a broader global tension: ambitious EMI policies outpace classroom-level readiness. Bridging this gap demands simultaneous investment in teacher capacity, institutional infrastructure, policy clarity, and culturally sensitive pedagogy. Only through such integrated efforts can EMI move beyond rhetoric to deliver equitable learning opportunities for young learners in multilingual, resource-diverse settings (M. Rahman et al., 2023; Sukmawati & Pujiani, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study furnishes empirical evidence that the readiness of Indonesian primary teachers to implement English as a medium of instruction (EMI) remains moderate and uneven, characterised by adequate conceptual awareness, constrained linguistic proficiency, and cautiously positive attitudes. Quantitative data revealed mean readiness scores clustering between 2.39 and 3.09, while qualitative testimony illuminated reliance on ad-hoc self-learning, limited institutional guidance, and culturally mediated ambivalence toward EMI. Regression analysis identified policy clarity as the strongest predictor of teacher self-efficacy, underscoring the pivotal role of explicit guidelines and sustained institutional support. Cluster analysis further revealed three attitudinal profiles—ready-supported, conditionally willing, and reluctant—signalling differentiated professional-development needs. These findings echo international research that attributes EMI implementation gaps to deficits in targeted training, uneven English proficiency, ambiguous policy frameworks, insufficient resources, and unresolved sociolinguistic tensions.

Based on the evidence, we recommend a phased, resource-backed reform agenda. First, the Ministry of Education should codify incremental proficiency benchmarks and link them to tiered professional-development milestones, ensuring that language upgrading and content-integration pedagogy progress in tandem. Second, districts must allocate recurrent funding for EMI-specific materials, digital infrastructure, and mentoring schemes, thereby converting aspirational policy into actionable support. Third, schools should institutionalise collaborative inquiry communities and reflective practice cycles that nurture contingent self-efficacy among the "conditionally willing" majority, while targeted mentoring addresses the anxieties of the "reluctant" cohort. Fourth, translanguaging should be legitimised as an interim scaffold to reconcile EMI objectives with Indonesia's multilingual realities, mitigating cultural resistance and cognitive overload. Finally, robust monitoring and evaluation systems—incorporating classroom observation, learner-achievement data,

and teacher–student feedback loops—are essential to track progress and recalibrate interventions.

Further, findings of this study rely on self-report, without classroom discourse, policy audits, or student outcomes, so claims about equitable EMI remain inferential. Future research should build a construct-to-indicator map, triangulate with observations, artifacts, CEFR assessments, policy/document analyses, and learner achievement/affect; then test theorized pathways (e.g., policy clarity → self-efficacy → practice → outcomes) using multilevel SEM, longitudinal designs, and trials comparing translanguaging vs. English-only pedagogy. It's crucial because this research would turn inference into evidence—linking readiness indicators to real classroom practice and student outcomes, not just self-reports.

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