

**THE CHALLENGE OF TEACHERS IN  
USING ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF  
INTERACTION (EMI) AT  
SD 3 BAHASA PUTERA HARAPAN  
PURWOKERTO**

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**Abstract**

This research aims 1. To find out the challenges faced by teachers in using English as a medium of interaction at SD 3 Bahasa Putera Harapan Purwokerto, 2. To analyse the factors that influence teachers' ability to use English as a medium of interaction in the classroom. 3. To describe how do teachers overcome difficulties in using English as a medium of instruction. The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative to analyse the challenges and influencing factors. The data are taken from four non-English teachers at SD 3 Bahasa Putera Harapan Purwokerto. The writer applies two techniques to collect the data in this research, namely interview and documentation. Then, the data are analysed by using several

steps. The first step is conducting interviews with the teachers, the second step is transcribing the interviews, the third step is identifying and classifying the challenges faced by teachers, the fourth step is analysing the factors that cause the challenges, the fifth step is presenting the findings of the data analysis, the sixth step is interpreting the data analysis, and the last step is drawing conclusion. In this study the writer uses the theory of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), pedagogical content knowledge, sociolinguistic and cultural considerations, and teacher professional development as the theoretical framework. The findings of the research show that teachers face several challenges such as limited English proficiency, lack of confidence, difficulty in preparing materials, and problems in classroom communication. The study also reveals that institutional support and professional development programs play an important role in helping teachers overcome those challenges.

**Keywords:** *Teachers, English as a Medium of Interaction, English Language Use, Teaching Challenges, SD 3 Bahasa Putera Harapan Purwokerto*

## **1. Introduction**

In an increasingly globalized world, English plays a crucial role not only as a subject but also as a medium of instruction, especially in international and SPK (*Satuan Pendidikan Kerjasama*) schools in Indonesia. SD 3 Bahasa Putera Harapan Purwokerto adopts an international curriculum through operation with Pearson Edexcel, encouraging teachers to use English in classroom instruction. However, this poses a significant challenge for teachers who lack formal training in English language instruction. These educators face linguistic, pedagogical, and institutional

barriers that affect both teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes.

This article explores these challenges and the strategies employed by teachers to overcome them. Based on the explanation above, the writer is eager to conduct the research under the title "The Challenge of Teachers in Using English as a Medium of Instruction at SD 3 Bahasa Putera Harapan Purwokerto.

## **2. Literature Review**

The study applies five main theoretical concepts: Second Language Acquisition (SLA), pedagogical content knowledge, Sociolinguistic and cultural considerations, teacher professional development, and empirical evidence of challenges in SPK schools.

### **1. Second Language Acquisition (SLA)**

Ellis (2018:145) points out that acquiring a second language happens when learners receive input that is understandable yet slightly above their current level of ability. This is consistent with Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which underlines the importance of meaningful exposure and practice in the target language. For teachers, limited access to such exposure often becomes an obstacle in improving their competence to teach effectively in English.

### **2. Pedagogical Content Knowledge**

According to Loughran (2016:78), pedagogical content knowledge refers to the integration of subject matter expertise with suitable teaching methods. Teachers are required to combine these aspects so that students can grasp and engage with the lessons. The difficulty increases when

teachers must present content in English. Insufficient language skills make the delivery of complex ideas challenging, and this dual burden can reduce the quality of teaching.

### 3. Sociolinguistic and Cultural Considerations

Garton and Copland (2019: 96) emphasize that sociolinguistic and cultural dimensions are essential in bilingual classrooms. Teachers must adjust to the linguistic expectations of English-medium instruction while at the same time ensuring cultural relevance. In SPK schools, where student backgrounds are diverse, these demands often create difficulties in classroom interaction and maintaining student participation.

### 4. Teacher Professional Development

Proverbs are sentence fragments that have been frozen in terms of form, meaning, and function. They are short sentences that refer to something that most people have experienced and provide advice or warnings. It also describes and explains a repeated situation of particular social interest such as: Hammond et al. (2017: 14) argue that professional development programs should not only build teachers' pedagogical strategies but also strengthen their language proficiency. Such initiatives are necessary to enable teachers to apply English as the medium of instruction more successfully.

### 5. Empirical Evidence of Challenges in SPK Schools

Richards and Farrell (2018:90) highlight various studies that report real challenges faced by teachers in SPK schools. These difficulties can be grouped into four areas:

#### a) Language Proficiency and Confidence

Many teachers feel insecure about their English ability, which lowers their

confidence in teaching. This often results in reduced classroom interaction and avoidance of complex expressions.

b) Lesson Preparation Time

Preparing lessons in English takes much longer, as teachers need to translate resources or rehearse content delivery. This additional effort can lead to exhaustion and decreased teaching performance.

c) Communication with Students

Limited English proficiency can make it harder for teachers to explain complicated concepts or address student questions effectively, which may disrupt the learning process. Training and communication strategies are therefore necessary to overcome this issue.

d) Institutional Support

Support from schools plays a vital role in successful bilingual education. Access to training, peer support, and adequate resources helps teachers gain confidence in using English. Continuous development and encouragement from administrators further improve teachers' ability to handle language-related challenges.

### **3. Method of Investigation**

The writer uses a descriptive qualitative research design in this study. The data are obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data come from four teachers at SD 3 Bahasa Putera Harapan Purwokerto who teach different subjects and share their experiences in using English as a medium of instruction. The secondary data are taken

from school profiles, classroom activities, and observations that support the findings.

To collect the data, the writer applies three techniques, namely interview, observation, and documentation. Interviews are conducted both face-to-face and online using a semi-structured format to gain in-depth information from the teachers. Observations are carried out in two classes, grade 5 Solidarity and grade 5 Mindfulness, to examine classroom interaction and teachers' use of English. Documentation is used to analyze supporting materials such as school profiles, photographs, and other related documents.

For data analysis, the writer employs the Miles and Huberman model in Yulianti (2022:22–24), which consists of three steps: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. Through these steps, the writer identifies the main challenges, organizes the findings, and formulates conclusions about the difficulties teachers face in teaching with English as the medium of instruction.

#### **4. Findings and Discussion**

The writer presents the findings of the research. The findings reveal the challenges faced by four non-English teachers at SD 3 Bahasa Putera Harapan Purwokerto in using English as a medium of instruction. The data are obtained through classroom observations and interviews with the teachers. The analysis also interprets the impact of those challenges on teaching and learning, as well as the strategies applied by the teachers to cope with the difficulties.

In the first finding, the writer presents the school profile. SD 3 Bahasa Putera Harapan Purwokerto is a multicultural SPK school that implements international curricula, particularly Pearson Edexcel, and emphasizes the use of English in

teaching core subjects such as Science and Mathematics. However, most teachers still rely primarily on Indonesian, while only a few are confident in using English consistently.

The second finding discusses the analysis of respondents' answers. The participants are Miss Dea, Miss Adel, Miss Putri, and Miss Delima, who teach various non-English subjects. Each of them experiences difficulties when incorporating English into their teaching. The challenges include limited language proficiency, lack of confidence, difficulties in explaining abstract or culture-based concepts, time-consuming preparation, and communication breakdowns with students.

From the analysis, the writer finds that the most dominant challenge is teachers' limited proficiency in English and their low confidence in using it fluently during classroom interaction. For example, Miss Dea struggles with vocabulary and pronunciation when teaching Science, while Miss Putri and Miss Delima face difficulties in translating cultural or religious terms into English. These limitations affect their ability to explain lessons clearly and sometimes cause miscommunication with students. Another frequent problem is the uneven level of student English proficiency, which makes it hard for teachers to maintain balanced engagement in class.

The next finding highlights the impacts of those challenges. The use of English often slows down the teaching process because teachers need extra time to re-explain or translate instructions. This reduces lesson coverage and continuity. Moreover, students' comprehension becomes uneven—those with higher English proficiency engage actively, while others

remain passive. Teachers also experience emotional pressure and self-doubt, which influence their confidence and authority in the classroom.

The writer also finds that institutional support for professional development is limited. Most teachers do not receive consistent training in bilingual teaching, so they rely on self-learning through online resources or informal collaboration with colleagues. This condition increases teachers' workload and restricts their opportunities for growth.

In the next part, the findings show the strategies that teachers adopt to cope with these challenges. Some strategies include simplifying language, repeating key vocabulary, using gestures and visual aids, switching between English and Indonesian, utilizing technology such as videos and online tools, and encouraging students to support one another in class. Teachers also show resilience by seeking external resources, self-study, and proposing more collaborative training programs.

From the results of this study, it can be seen that the main difficulties in using English as a medium of instruction are multidimensional. The challenges are not only linguistic but also pedagogical, cultural, and institutional. The findings indicate that English usage in teaching is often limited to basic commands or short expressions, while complex content tends to be explained in Indonesian. Teachers' professional development, especially in language proficiency and pedagogical adaptation, becomes a crucial factor in supporting effective bilingual instruction.

In conclusion, the writer finds that the implementation of English as a medium of instruction at SD 3 Bahasa Putera Harapan Purwokerto is hindered by teacher's limited English skills, lack of confidence, cultural translation issues, and insufficient institutional

support. Nevertheless, the teachers show initiative by adopting coping strategies such as code-switching, visual aids, and technology use. These efforts reflect their resilience, but without structured professional training, the challenges remain significant and continue to influence both teaching performance and student learning outcomes.

## **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the writer draws several points related to the research findings. The first finding shows that most teachers face challenges in applying English effectively, including limited vocabulary, pronunciation issues, grammatical hesitation, and lack of confidence. The second finding reveals that teachers struggle to explain abstract, moral, and culturally embedded concepts such as Pancasila and religious principles without changing their meaning. The third finding highlights student diversity, where varied English proficiency forces teachers to repeat, simplify, or switch to Bahasa Indonesia, which affects classroom communication and learning outcomes. The fourth finding emphasizes the lack of institutional support and regular training, causing teachers to rely on self-study tools that increase workload, stress, and reduce confidence. The last finding shows that teachers cope by using strategies such as visual aids, gestures, repetition, flexible responses, and adopting a growth mindset. These reflect their resilience and adaptability in the classroom.

Overall, the study concludes that using English to teach non-English subjects requires more than language proficiency; it also demands strong

pedagogy, cultural awareness, flexibility, and consistent institutional support.

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