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## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AMONG SCHOOL GRADUATES IN DIVERSE CURRICULUM SETTING

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**Abstract:** This study aimed at investigating the English language acquisition among Indonesian school graduated from international, bilingual, and local curricula. To seek for the answer, this study employed a mixed-method approach, meaning that the researcher used questionnaire data from 28 participants with in depth interviews to gain information on how educational background, home environment and social interaction factors influence their English proficiency. The findings revealed that early and consistent exposure to English- particularly through English Medium Instruction (EMI) in international school setting- contributed to participants' higher fluency and confidence. However, other factors such as individual motivation and engagement with media and personal learning strategies played significant factors, even for those who were from local school settings. In conclusion, this study reflected that effective English acquisition is not determined merely by school type but also a combination of structured input, meaningful interaction, and learner agency. These findings provide implications for curriculum development and language policy in EFL context like Indonesia.

**Keywords:** SLA; Proficiency; Curriculum

## PEMEROLEHAN BAHASA INGGRIS DI ANTARA LULUSAN SEKOLAH DALAM LINGKUNGAN KURIKULUM YANG BERAGAM

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**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki pemerolehan bahasa Inggris di kalangan sekolah Indonesia yang lulus dari kurikulum internasional, dwibahasa, dan lokal. Untuk mencari jawabannya, penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan metode campuran, yang berarti bahwa peneliti menggunakan data kuesioner dari 28 peserta dengan wawancara mendalam untuk mendapatkan informasi tentang bagaimana latar belakang pendidikan, lingkungan rumah dan faktor interaksi sosial mempengaruhi kemahiran bahasa Inggris mereka. Temuan ini mengungkapkan bahwa paparan bahasa Inggris yang dini dan konsisten - terutama melalui English Medium Instruction (EMI) di lingkungan sekolah internasional - berkontribusi pada kefasihan dan kepercayaan diri peserta yang lebih tinggi. Namun, faktor lain seperti motivasi individu dan keterlibatan dengan media dan strategi pembelajaran pribadi memainkan faktor penting, bahkan bagi mereka yang berasal dari lingkungan sekolah setempat. Kesimpulannya, penelitian ini mencerminkan bahwa pemerolehan bahasa Inggris yang efektif tidak hanya ditentukan oleh jenis sekolah tetapi juga kombinasi dari input terstruktur, interaksi yang bermakna, dan agen peserta didik. Temuan ini memberikan implikasi bagi pengembangan kurikulum dan kebijakan bahasa dalam konteks EFL seperti Indonesia.

**Kata kunci:** SLA; Proficiency; Curriculum

## INTRODUCTION

English has become daily language for particular people and it is widely known as the first foreign language in Indonesia. It has influenced various aspects of our lives, starting from academic context, lifestyle to business. Due to that fact, people who are proficient in English have a better opportunity to communicate with international society and have a better prospect in career. However, being proficient in English in English as Foreign Language (EFL) countries such as in Indonesia is a bit challenging. It happens because language acquisition is a complex process influenced by cognitive, social, and environmental factor. To add, it takes time, consistent effort, and more importantly exposure. Exposure is a pivotal factor that helps language learners acquire the targeted language better than those who have a lack of exposure (S. M. Al Zoubi, 2018; Kosyakova et al., 2022; Lu & Dang, 2023). Exposure can come in many forms, such as social interaction, formal and informal education settings, and media such as television, the internet, and social media.

Extensive studies support that exposure greatly has effect on language acquisition. As Narayana (2023) in her research highlighted that consistent immersion in authentic listening and reading activities brought learners to language development through natural language patterns and cultural distinction. Also, Jahrani & Listia (2023) stresses student involvement and participation in language-rich settings play a pivotal role in developing language acquisition.

In response to the growing importance of English, there has been a rise in bilingual and international and bilingual schools in Indonesia, particularly in Surabaya as the second-largest city in Indonesia. Those schools offer international curricula such as Cambridge or Pearson and use English as a Medium of Interaction (EMI) as a means of daily language interaction. Attending in this type of school provides exposure to strengthen not only linguistic proficiency but also cultural understanding among students. Even though this kind of schools gives exposure and opportunity for students to immerse in a supportive language environment, there are other factors that could be influenced them in getting the language such as early education, parental background, exposure at home, and social settings (Cheng & Zhou, 2023; Kidd & Garcia, 2022; Ren, 2023; Su, 2024).

Two major theories in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) are relevant in this context. Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) highlights the importance of comprehensible input, while Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) emphasizes social interaction in language learning. For

students who enrolled in international schools, English acquisition happens through both formal education and informal exposure, such as peer interaction, media, and extracurricular activities. Through those exposures, students could gain meaningful interaction in the target language which benefit them in acquiring language (Krashen, 1981).

Studies have been conducted regarding second language acquisition (SLA). For example, a study by Samudro & Amin (2022) that attempted to explore the factors contributing to English language proficiency among Indonesians. The finding revealed that there were two factors influencing second language acquisition among Indonesian; the role of early contextual and meaningful exposure to English and engagement with the language through personal interests, such as video games and social media. Similarly, Apriana & Sutrisno (2022) in their study underscores the importance of both environmental and psychological factors, including parental strategies like the One-Parent-One-Language (1P1L).

It seems true that students who are from international or bilingual schools gain more exposure and have stronger English proficiency compared to local schools. However, it seems also true that students from different educational background face different challenges. Therefore, based on this context, this current study aims to discover the English acquisition process among Indonesian graduate students who have attended in international/bilingual school or local school. This study tried to examine their exposure to English at school, home, and social contexts. In addition, this study sought to key factors that contribute to their language development.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study used a mixed-method approach to examine the English acquisition process of Indonesian students who graduated from international curriculum. Through this approach the researcher tried to provide a comprehensive image of the factors influencing their English acquisition and issues encountered by the participants.

### **Participants**

The participants of this research were 28 Indonesian students who graduated from various curriculum settings in Surabaya; international, bilingual, and local schools. The respondents were selected through purposive sampling technique who had experienced significant English exposure during their school years. For the sake of diversity, participants from various schools and socioeconomic backgrounds are involved.

### **Data Collection**

Since this study employed a mixed method. The data were collected quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative data were taken from questionnaire and interviews were used to gain data qualitatively.

The questionnaire was divided into sections; information on the demographic profiles of the students, exposure to languages, learning settings, and self-reporting English ability. The questionnaire was in a form of Likert-scale statements and multiple-choice items to measure the English used in school, home, and social life. Alongside, the study also investigates students' challenges facing during their learning process of acquiring language, for example, with academic English, confidence in communicating, and with cultural barriers.

Meanwhile, semi-structured interviews with 10 participants were collected to gain qualitative data for better understanding about their experiences regarding the acquisition of English such as classroom experience, teachers' and peers' involvement, and the involvement of home and social worlds. In addition, participants were asked personal challenges, effective learning strategies, and perspectives on learning strengths and weaknesses in an international curriculum context.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is conducted on a triangulation basis, with survey data statistically examined for trends and patterns and interview responses coded thematically to reveal recurring patterns and distinct opinions. It maximizes the reliability and richness of findings and offers a balanced view of English acquisition in global curriculum environments.

Through this approach to research, the study aims to offer informative insights to informing learning how Indonesian students acquire English within an international curriculum setting, successful approaches and problems which may inform language teaching policy and practice in the future.

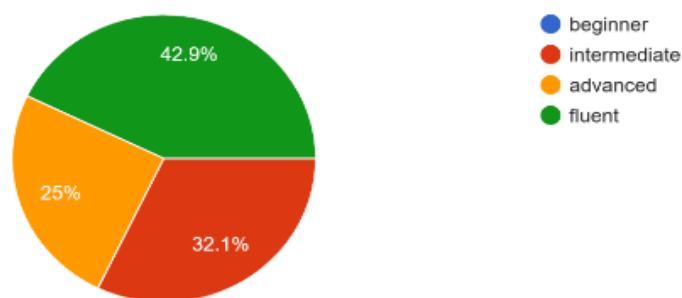
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Linguistic Immersion as a Catalyst for English Proficiency

The participants' achievement in developing their English cannot be separated from their educational histories. A consistent exposure to English Medium Instruction (EMI) was a pivotal factor in developing their English proficiency. The participants who mostly went to international or bilingual schools, particularly during their junior and senior high school achieved fluent in proficiency.

The early exposure in rich-English environment becomes pivotal factor in participants' language development; it was reported during FGD that they were exposed with English since at the age of 4 and 5 when they started to enrol in kindergarten. These findings support Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1981), which highlights the importance of persistent input in boosting language acquisition. This input happens when students are exposed to language input which higher than their proficiency now and students can demonstrate understanding meaning or information rather than understanding form (Luo, 2024)

As a result, participants' self-assessed proficiency levels show a remarkably high rate of confidence in English ability. Out of 28 respondents, 42.9% identified as fluent, while 32.1% considered themselves advanced, and 25% reported an intermediate level (Fig. 1). None of participants identified themselves as beginners. This finding suggests that most learners—particularly those from international or bilingual backgrounds—developed high functional and communicative competence, reinforcing the role of early and meaningful exposure in achieving language mastery.



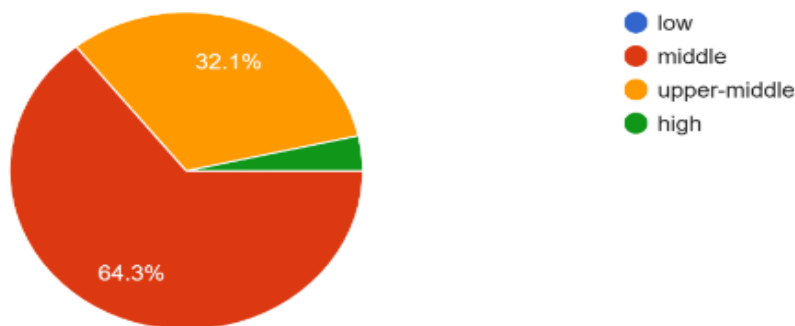
**Figure 1.**  
Participants' English proficiency level

Those who came from international school setting were steadily immersed in English not only during English classes but all across subjects, allowing for repeated exposure to meaningful and varied linguistic input in context. In that case, students acquired vocabulary, grammatical structures, and discourse conventions subconsciously (Gámez, 2015; KÜÇÜKLER & SULAC, 2021; Qureshi, 2021, 2022). The fact that students who emerged in language-rich settings learned to acquire the

target language better, this supports Krashen’s idea that acquisition happens naturally when students engage in meaningful context (Pauzan, 2024). In addition, using English in real-life situations helped students to pick up words and phrases naturally (S. Al Zoubi, 2018), underpinning the hypothesis that quality and quantity of input are fundamental to students’ foreign language development.

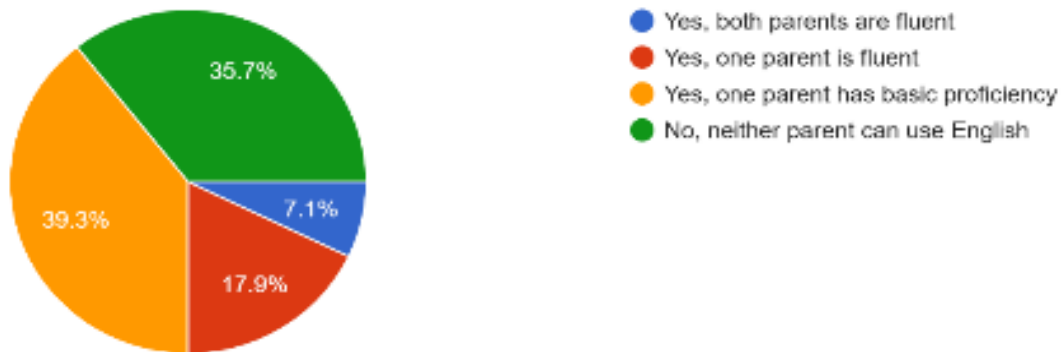
### **Home Support, Parents’ Influence and School Instruction**

Socioeconomic status can be one of determiners that boost the participants’ English proficiency, as it is seen that the majority of the participants came from high socioeconomic status that gave them beneficial access to get additional support such as private tutors, overseas experiences and extensive media exposure in English (Harmanto, 2018). Meanwhile, the participants who are from middle-income background, such as Jennifer and Willian, still attained advanced or fluent proficiency, it indicates that while financial resources can be beneficial, individual effort and learning strategies may also play an essential role (Seven, 2020; Zhang, 2024). Even though previous studies said that parental involvement in second language learning is crucial, this study shows its effects only on tangible supports such as providing books, school fees and tutors.



**Figure 2.**  
Participants’ Family Socioeconomic Status

As it is stated that exposure in a child’s circle is influential in someone’s language development. Parents as the nearest circle can be a main resource of English acquisition. However, this study shows that the influence of parental English proficiency on students’ language development found limited. The data shows only few participants whose parents were fluent in English and majority reported that their parents had only basic or no proficiency in English. Even so, the participants still had high levels of English fluency. That finding indicated that formal educational exposure and self-motivational learning were more influential than parental language background in this context.



**Figure 3.**  
Participants' Parental English Proficiency

Home support, according to some findings (Lehrl et al., 2020; Mustonen et al., 2024; Saadu, 2023), is greatly influence in boosting students' foreign language acquisition and motivation. Conversely, the survey result of question in this study, "*How important was your home environment in supporting your English learning?*" supports that the impact of home environment on English development is highly individual, meaning it may have provided essential exposure, encouragement, or resources for some.

In addition, even though, socioeconomic status could be a factor that helped students in academic achievement (Muttaqin et al., 2022), this study showed that parents' education background, English proficiency and economic status also had a little impact on participants' language development. It infers that parents influence students' language acquisition indirectly through financial support and motivation, but they do not fundamentally have direct effect on their children's language development.

The following data provides enlighten how participants used English in three different environments; school, home, social settings. Table 1 shows that school environment as the most consistent for English use reaching up to 21.4%. This means that school is a key environment where participants got much exposure and were involved in English practice, strengthening its fundamental role in participants' language development. Furthermore, social settings also received a constant result of participants used of English. Meanwhile, home environment was found generally low (3.6%). Thus, these findings suggest that the home environment laid a significant influence for some learners, but it was not universally influential. Therefore, this result emphasizes the importance of school-based exposure and peer interaction in enhancing English language development, especially when home support is limited.

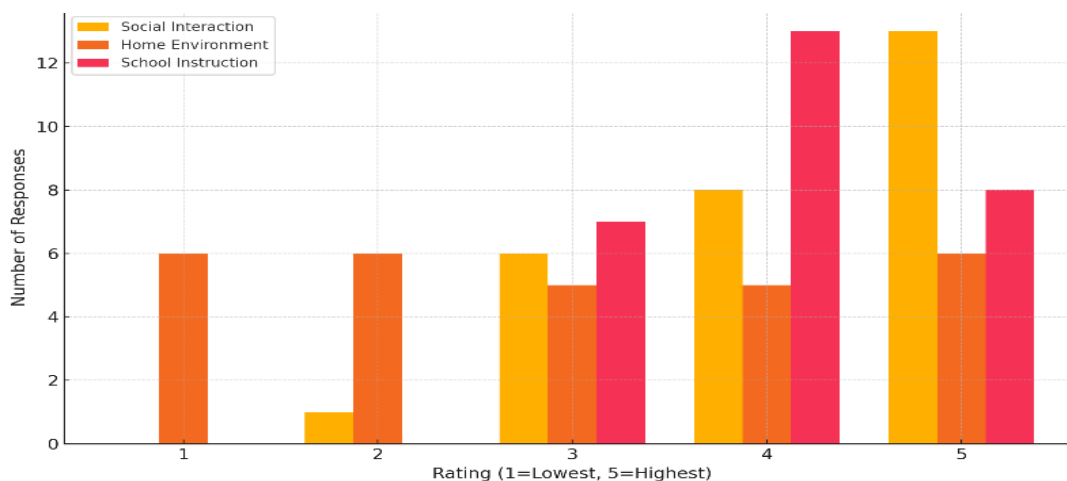
**Table 1**  
Participants' English Usage in Three Different Environments

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
I used English at school.	0%	7.1%	25%	46.4%	21.4%
I used English at home.	10.7%	39.3%	25%	21.4%	3.6%
I used English in social settings outside of school.	0%	10.7%	46.4%	35.7%	7.1%

It was found that the average rating for school English instruction was relatively high, meaning that participants believed that school instruction provided a fine but not excellent

foundation; however, social interaction and external practices were pivotal for achieving fluency. It was supported from the following chart showing that social interaction was influential to their English acquisition.

The following chart (Figure 4) helps us to compare which environment (social, home, or school) participants found most helpful in improving their English. As it can be seen that social interaction had a greatest influence in participants' English proficiency, followed by school instruction and home environment got the least influence. This data infers that strong value of interactive and communicative experiences in learning English. Therefore, programs and teaching methods that boost authentic communication such as conversation practice, immersion, interaction with native speakers and fluent peers should be promoted.



**Figure 4.**  
Comparison of Factors Influencing English Learning

**Primary Methods of English Acquisition**

Participants mentioned that they learned English both formal and informal ways. Figure 5 reports that media exposure such as English-language TV shows, movies, social media, playing games and YouTube videos had slightly given more influence (92.9), followed by formal education, then online communication such as social media, gaming, and forums. The following is the excerpt how the participant learned English through movies:

*“Because I am not keen of reading, so I learned mostly from watching movies without subtitles and rewinding the phrases in my head. Also, by checking dictionaries and translating apps frequently to see the meaning, as well as examples on how these words are used in sentences.”*

Empirical research has found that media exposure influenced participants' English acquisition, specifically on developing listening comprehension, pronunciation, and vocabulary (De Wilde et al., 2020; Peters, 2018). Participants reported their engagement with children's programs such as Barney during their childhood and more complex TV series like Doctor Who and Merlin or English-subtitled content, which was for educational and entertainment purposes.

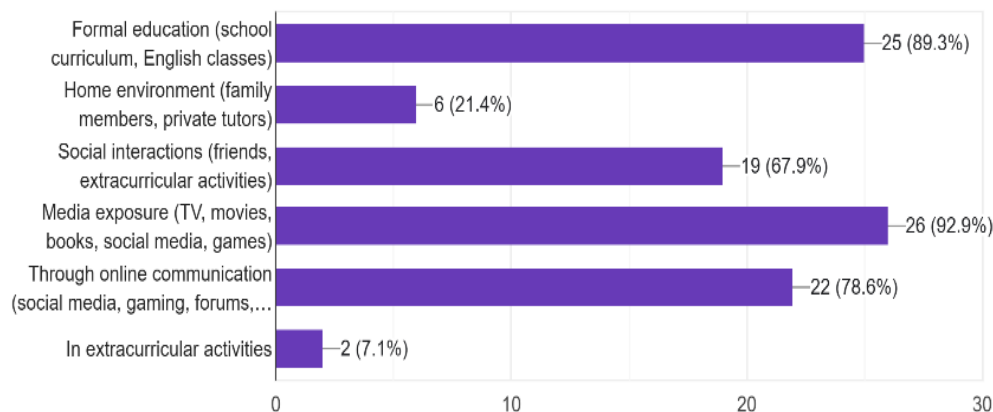
*“I started watching British shows in junior high-ish such as Doctor who, Merlin, maybe more but those two stuck the most. I used subtitle whenever available, but for most of merlin I never use one.”*

Second, formal education was classified as means of participants' way in learning English. This finding confirmed how EMI (English as Medium of Instruction) help students grow in English. This finding not only sheds a light on the impact of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in facilitating language development but also stresses how students benefit from the structured learning environment provided by formal education (Elkhayma, 2022; Saldo et al., 2025; Tien, 2023). The following is the excerpt of participant's thought about EMI:

*"Since I was in international school, all of my subjects were in English so that I gained my vocabularies not only from English class. My teachers who were foreigners also contributed to my English."*

Third, online communication- through social media and gaming platform- was recognized as an up-to-date avenue for authentic language use. This way, students required to use informal, real-time language production, which helped them to use colloquial expressions and digital literacy in English. Considering these, English was not limited to school contexts but could be extended into broader social and digital environments that students navigated daily.

*"You know in online games we can talk to any people around the world, there we have to speak a common tongue, English. There we are forced to communicate one another when playing games. We don't use formal language; we used slang and natural expressions."*



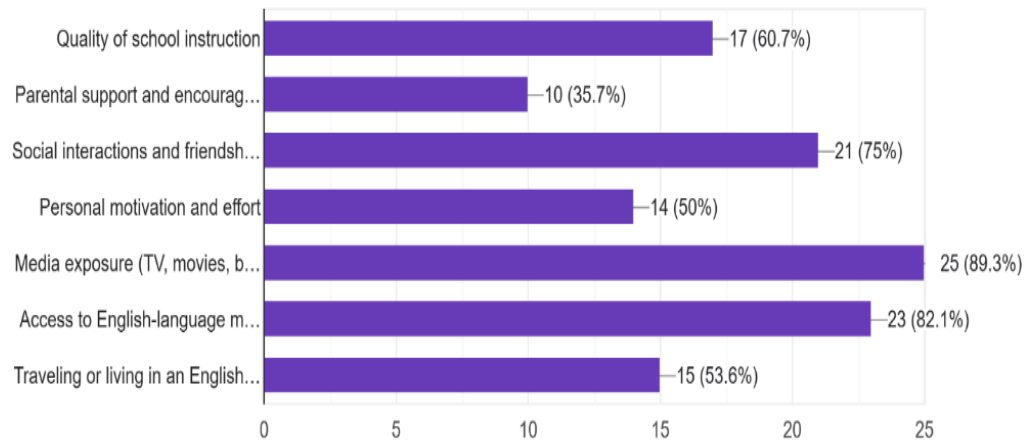
**Figure 5.**  
Primary Methods of English Acquisition

### Key Factors Supporting English Acquisition

Participants recognized several factors that contributed to their English language development, not only formal education but also interpersonal, psychological, and environmental factors.

Media exposure was identified as a key factor. This was closely linked to access to English-language media, these made students able to develop their English beyond the classroom in a fun and self-directed way. Secondly, the quality of teaching and learning at school become crucial. It was found that students who were from English-rich classroom environment, taught by competent teachers and engaged in a meaningful task had a strong foundation for their proficiency. Furthermore, many participants elaborated that social interaction and peer engagement had a strong influence as well. Participants who built friendships with classmates from different linguistic backgrounds got regular opportunities

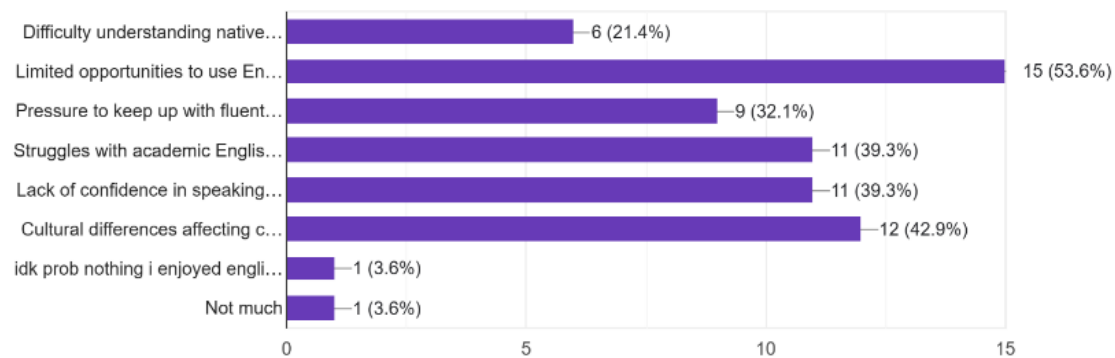
to practice English in real settings. Next, personal motivation and student sustained efforts mattered in language acquisition. Learners who actively tried to find opportunities through tutoring, speaking with native speakers, or using English beyond classroom tended to have higher confidence and competence. Lastly, some of the participants reported that traveling or living in an English speaking country benefited them. It deepened their fluency and navigated real-world interactions.



**Figure 6.**  
Key Factors Supporting English Acquisition

### Challenges Faced by Students

Even though participants in this study are confident with their level of proficiency, they faced various challenges during their journey in English language acquisition. The following chart shows what challenges they faced during the school years:



**Figure 7.**  
Challenges Faced by Students

The data revealed that most frequently challenge faced by participants was the limited opportunity to use English outside the classroom. Although students in international school had exposed to EMI, their community outside of the school predominantly used Indonesian or even local language. This led them to get consistent real-world language use, making it difficult to support what they did in school.

*“I used English more at schools since I had to or I would get punishment if I didn’t. So, when I was outside of the school, I used Bahasa Indonesia since many people used Bahasa Indonesia or even local language (Javanese), and I think it made my process in acquiring English was kind of not maximal.”*

Another challenge confirmed by participants especially in adapting to authentic and academic life. A participant expressed this following challenge during his school years:

*“When discussing English language context, it should be when all subjects are taught in English. However, this was only a challenge for about the first two years, and also when we were required to speak English with our fellow friends. Sometimes it's hard to express what we truly mean to say.”*

Several students also found themselves difficulties with academic English. They reported that when they were in secondary levels, they had to do a lot of essay writings, listening to complex lectures, and academic vocabulary. Also, in their school, school was usually more on test preparation. The following are the excerpts of participants interview:

*“Most part of the class were reading in turns, and writing essays. Somehow it made my life miserable back then, (laughing). We need to learn academic vocabulary which we hardly ever use it in daily lives.”*

*“They were focused on test preparation. There was less interaction and fewer activities that built communication skills. But the thing is, most of our teachers couldn't speak Indonesian and were also not allowed to use it. So yes, we were forced to interact fully in English.”*

Next, it was reported that participants had a lack of confidence in speaking English, specifically in spontaneous conversations. Some participants felt anxious about making mistakes or being judged, resulting to low engagement in discussions. Based on Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, anxiety can be a factor that slowing acquisition.

*“Eventhough I was in international school, I believe my grammatical written English skill is so much better than my oral skill (laughing). That's why I was not confident in speaking.”*

## CONCLUSIONS

This study explored language acquisition among Indonesian students who graduated from different curriculum- international, bilingual, and national schools. Findings depicted that early and sustained exposure to English, specifically through English Medium Instruction (EMI) in international schools, had a significant impact on participants' communicative competence and confidence. However, school was not only factor to their language acquisition. Other determinants such as media, social interaction, self-study, and personal motivation played a critical role, particularly for students from non-international school.

This study supports Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory from Krashen Input Hypothesis and Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory. These two theories highlight that language acquisition is most effective when learners are involved in meaningful interaction and receive comprehensible input in varied contexts.

This study also addressed several challenges such as real-world English use outside school, lack of confidence in spontaneous speaking, and difficulties with academic English and native speaker-accent. This implies that formal school should consider the need for ELT that balances academic with real communication setting and emotional support.

While this study provides valuable insights into English acquisition, there are some limitations addressed. First, the participants of this study was relatively small, only 28. This sample limits the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the study were mostly used self-reported data, which had more chance to be personal bias. Further research should include standardized English proficiency measures such as TOEFL or IELTS scores.

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