



English as medium of instruction (MOI) in classroom activities: Teachers' perceptions from eastern Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

English as the Medium of instruction (MOI) in Indonesia has experienced up and down periods, thus affecting the teachers' use of code-switching and code-mixing strategies. This article reports on English teachers' perceived usefulness of English as the Medium of Instruction (MOI) in classrooms. Participants of the study are English teachers from various school levels in one province in Eastern Indonesia. This exploratory case study used a self-assessment survey as the single instrument. As a result, teachers have a positive perception toward English as the Medium of Instruction (MOI) as they believe it could improve students' proficiency. However, some are hesitant and would rather have classes taught in a blend of their native language and English. This study implies that teachers should consider elements of high-quality instructions. This study suggests developing an institutional ELT policy to infuse MOI into classroom pedagogy.



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The ideal condition in English classes no matter whether ESL or EFL should be in English. The situation could have English teaching materials, teachers preparing lesson plans in English and of course the teaching & learning interactions conducted in English. Using English as the Medium of interaction is assumed to create an English environment that leads to familiarity with using English. The circumstance could encourage student-teacher to interact in English even outside the classroom.

However, in many regular English classes in the context of the study, most teachers prefer to use the mother tongue as the language of interaction in the classroom (Basel, 2004). Some of the reasons are the assumption that mother tongue could lead to effective classes. Similar to this condition, teaching materials are also prepared using mixed languages. Teachers usually prepare teaching materials in English but explain them in Bahasa Indonesia. Moreover, teachers and students do not feel obliged to use English outside the classroom. The interactions and casual conversations that exist among them are merely for socialization and are more enjoyable, closer and more comfortable to conduct in their mother tongue.

There are numbers of studies that explored the use of English as the language of instruction in teaching English (Aguilar, 2015; Galloway & Ruegg, 2020; Islam, 2013) to name a few and several studies also conducted in Indonesia, some focus on higher education context (Dewi, 2017; Simbolon, 2016; Simbolon, Oliver, & Mercieca, 2020) and several others explore school contexts (Bukhari & Awan, 2018; Khasbani, 2019). However, research on teachers' perception of using MOI is still scarce, particularly in Eastern Indonesian context. For example, not all students can read and understand texts in English, thus affecting their learning comprehension and hindering them from effective English communication and interaction.

This study is conducted to investigate how teachers perceive the use of MOI and the kind of learning activities in the classroom. To find the answer to these questions, the researcher formulate research questions as follows: (1) how do teachers perceive students' ability to read & understand English? (2) How do teachers perceive students' ability to interact in English? (3) What is teachers' language preference in the classroom, and (4) how do teachers view the impact of using English in the classroom on students' English proficiency? This study is limited to junior and secondary school teachers in South Sulawesi Province.

In its existence as a medium of instruction, English as the language of instruction is known as English as a MOI of teaching English subject itself. While, using English for teaching academic subjects other than English, the term EMI is widely used. English as Medium of instruction (MOI) is constantly recommended after perceptions and experimentation. It is believed to be of extraordinary significance, especially in higher education (Siddiquah et al., 2021). Teachers and educators use English as Medium of instruction as a way toward learning and instructing that the usage could indicate the capabilities of instructors, their language and the primary language of the kids (Bukhari & Awan, 2018). Medium of instruction refers to a language used in teaching (McNeill, 2022) or for teaching (Harish, 2019). Even though it is not an official language of the country, bilingual or multilingual education may exist if more than one language of instruction is used in teaching and learning (Cheung & Wong, 2014).

The main benefit of MOI is to improve L2 proficiency. Researchers believe that familiarizing students with English could offer them more opportunities or obtaining employment after graduation (Aguilar, 2015; Arnó-Macià & Mancho-Barés, 2015). In addition, lecturers' could also get an advantage from EMI practices as their English proficiency could improve (Floris, 2014). To this end, English as the MOI appears to offer great benefits for both students and teachers.

The use of English as MOI in teaching academic subjects (other than teaching English itself) appears to be a rapid global transition, particularly in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL). Based on research conducted by Dearden (2014), English is increasingly employed as the language of instruction not just in universities, but also in secondary and elementary education. Aside of using English as a MOI in teaching English subject, the term EMI has been used interchangeably in several countries with other terms such as content and language integrated learning (CLIL) which is more to the methodology of language teaching. It is also occasionally mistaken with teaching English as a Second Language (EFL) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which are meant to help students succeed in English-speaking practices. Students often confuse EMI with EAP (English for Academic Purposes), a program that helps them learn academic subjects in English. As indicated by Dearden, this article defines EMI as the way of teaching educational subjects in English that is not the primary language of most of the students in a certain country.

In addition to deciding on English as the language of instruction, educators around the world are scrambling to provide materials and instructional practices to support the newly adopted MOI of English. However, decisions on which language to choose is still debatable. In the context of TEFL in Indonesia, the debate centred on whether to use Bahasa Indonesia, the official language of the country or using English as the target language, or a combination of these.

The EMI program was originally implemented in Indonesian schools through the use of English as the primary language of instruction in subjects like mathematics and science, which is known for their International Standard School concept (Zacharias, 2013). It was expected that through these programs the students' English skills would improve because they were offered more opportunities to practice English. Unfortunately, the program only lasted for seven years, particularly in state schools. Some of the reasons are schools teachers' have low English proficiency (Kompas.com, 2010) which contributed to their unpreparedness in producing English materials, moreover, many teachers lack the background and skills to scaffold language learning, resulting in poor teaching and learning outcomes (Simbolon et al., 2020). Similarly, students are also reported to have limited English proficiency, furthermore,

challenges are exacerbated by the Indonesian Ministry of Education’s lack of EMI policy information (Sumitomo, Said, & N, 2012). This illustrates EMI practices are quite problematic, and while it is still growing it is better to explore which approaches fit best.

According to Peyton (2015), while searching on which language to use as the language of instruction, it is considered to start with having students learn in one language, then give them the chance to switch to teaching pupils in their native language, which is known as a language right (May, 2012). Many countries across the globe have seen a rise in interest in and approaches to mother tongue education during the past few decades. Ball (2014) found that children are more likely to drop out of school or perform poorly in early grades if they are taught in a language other than their native one. This is consistent with UNESCO’s finding that children’s first language is the ideal language for primary school literacy and learning (UNESCO, 2008).

Among the many studies investigating the right language instruction to use (Calderón, 2011; Cheung & Slavin, 2012), they stated that the quality of language education is more crucial than the language of instruction for boosting students’ academic achievement. Anchored in Peyton’s (2015) basic features for good quality instruction, the effectiveness of instruction features can be presented as follows.

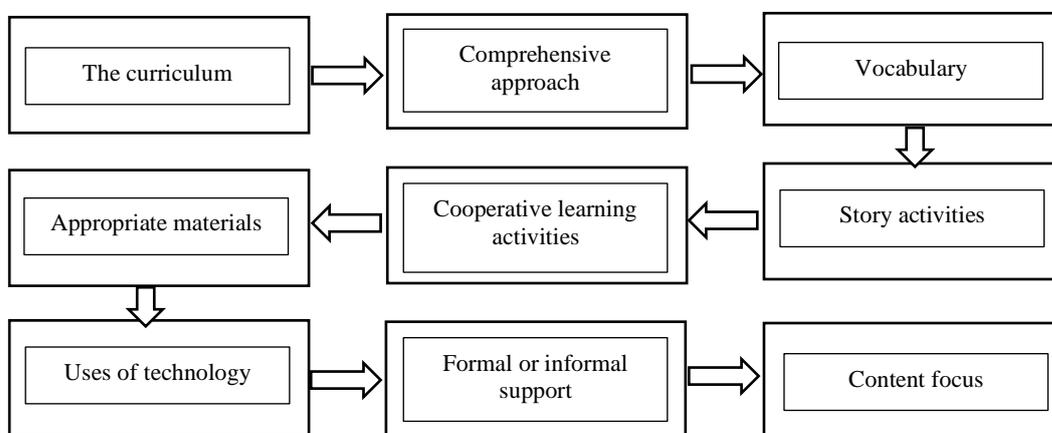


Figure 1. Nine basic features of high-quality instruction (Peyton, 2015)

These features of the high-quality instruction model are the element to consider when deciding the type of instruction to have in the classroom. The following is an illustration of the features.

The curriculum is based on thematic modules or issues within those units, with teachers using approximately one week to implement vocabulary and background knowledge, build on students’ interests and knowledge, and provide multiple opportunities for students to use vocabulary related to the

themes and topics, as well as continuing to build vocabulary over successive lessons. A complete method to teaching reading comprises phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding and word identification, vocabulary comprehension and use, and reading skill, which are implemented at the proper times and intensities. As part of their reading ability development, learners have access to decipherable books and other readers. Special attention is made on vocabulary acquisition and usage. With adequate time for student engagement and detailed instruction, vocabulary is taught. Activities may involve a comprehensive bodily response (acting out words) and the use of multimedia (concrete objects to represent words). Teachers could simplify their terminology, introduce specific vocabulary that is likely new, and illustrate ways for independently acquiring word meaning.

For instruction, mentoring, and literacy exercises, resources are selected based on the student's competency, grade, and reading level. Cooperative learning activities give students the opportunity to work in pairs or small groups. Such activities could provide children with ample opportunities to employ their developing language skills in meaningful circumstances on a daily basis and boost their confidence in their language proficiency. Tale exercises cultivate an awareness of print, story structure, and language. These include oral and silent reading, as well as oral and written replies to read texts.

The present article examines the extent to which English teachers use instruction in their classroom and more specifically examines the quality of their instruction based on Peyton's study (2015). This empirical evidence accentuates the type of instructions used by teachers, how they used them and the quality of the instruction. The findings of the present study can serve as the basis for designing an effective instruction model to use in the classroom.

METHOD

This study employed an exploratory case study, using survey as a single instrument, to understand the teachers' perception of MoI (Mills et al., 2010). Drawing on Peyton (2015) study on language instruction, a survey was undertaken to examine teachers' attitudes towards the use of English in the classroom. These attitudes were investigated based on four evaluative elements: (1) students' intake/competence, (2) teachers' views on students' ability to communicate in English, (3) language instruction preference, and (4) teachers' views on the impact of EMI. Hence, the study's central research question is, "How do teachers assume and use English in the classroom?" To answer the question, a questionnaire was employed (see appendix).

This study involved 266 school teachers ranging from secondary, vocational schools, and boarding schools in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Teachers answered Google Forms sent via WhatsApp and other social platforms. The procedure of distributing the questionnaire is by contacting

teachers' professional development groups who then distributed them to their members. The distribution of the questionnaire was coordinated with the group leaders where they were asked to confirm their members' participation. Their participation can also be monitored in the Google form database where we can see how many participants have completed the questionnaire. The collected data is then analysed and interpreted. To examine respondents' responses, descriptive statistical analysis was utilized. Percentages and frequencies were used to determine the extent to which respondents rated their English proficiency, their opinion on the use of English resources, and the use of language instruction. This study uses a questionnaire as the single instrument of data collection. Before its official use, it was designed and developed through four stages: 1) the design and development of the questionnaire, 2) preliminary questionnaire testing, 3) validation of the questionnaire, and 4) subsequent validation.

The questionnaire consists of two sections, the first section asking about teachers' demographic information and the second part consists of 17 items asking about teachers' perceptions and use of English in teaching and learning. Based on the preliminary questionnaire testing, these items were generated from 24 items, three questions were irrelevant, two questions were redundant, and two questions were excluded due to ethical and psychological reasoning. Percentages and frequencies were utilized to determine how much respondents accepted English as MOI regarding the students' competence, teaching resources, and language instruction employed in teaching and learning.

Table 1 shows the characteristics of participants covering teaching assignment level, teaching location, qualification level, and certification status.

Table 1. Demographic information of Participants

Characteristics	Category	Number	% in Total N = 143
Teaching assignment level	MTS (JHS level- religious school)	6	37.1
	Junior High School (JHS)	53	4.2
	Senior High School (SHS)	54	37.8
	SMK (Vocational High school)	29	20.3
	MA (HS level-religious school)	1	0.7
Teaching location	City	92	64
	Suburban	23	16.1
	Country side	28	19.6
Qualification level	Bachelor in Education	102	71
	Bachelor other than Education	33	23.1
	Master in Education	1	0.7
	Doctor	7	4.9
Certification level	Uncertified	102	71
	Certified less than 5 years	33	23.1
	Certified between 5-10 years	1	0.7
	Certified more than 10 years	7	4.9

It was interesting to see that the majority of attendees were high school teachers. They mostly teach in the city and the majority of them had attained bachelor's degrees and 71% of the total respondents reported uncertified.

Before using the survey, it went through instrument validation process that involved two experts in MOI. The second part of the survey includes a number of subscales: students' competence comprises six items that evaluate students' ability in using English. Students' ability to interact in English comprises 4 items. Three items asking about language preference for instruction and the fourth subscale asking about perceptions of benefit of using English as a MOI comprises 4 items. Table 2 shows the factors and instances of items in the survey.

Table 2. Dimensions of the English as MOI questionnaire

Perceptions of using English instructions	Dimensions	Example of items
Students' competence	Students English Proficiency	The majority of students comprehend everything I say in English. The majority of learners comprehend English course materials and textbooks
The ability of students to communicate in English.	Using English for communication	The majority of students are at ease addressing inquiries in English The majority of students feel secure working in groups in English
Preference for Language of Instruction	Perceptions of using Language of instruction	Learners learn better when instructed in English The students learn effectively when instructed in English and Indonesian
Impact of English as MOI on students' English proficiency	Perceptions of English as (MOI) impact	The students will improve their speaking ability significantly when taught in English The students will improve their reading ability significantly when taught in English

FINDINGS

Students' Competence (Items 1-6)

As indicated in figure 2, most participants assumed that students do not get the essence of the lesson when teachers use English as the language of instruction. Almost 50% of participants responded undecided to the item asking about whether students understand English instruction (item 1). Interestingly, teachers mostly agree to item investigating students' reading ability on text

materials and exam instruction (items 2 & 4). Regarding students' understanding of reading materials and exam instruction, and their ability to answer the questions, participants tended to be neutral (items 3, 5, & 6). Therefore, it could be stated that teachers who participated in this study are quite unsure about their students' competence. At one pole they doubt students' capability to get the meaning of explanation and instruction in English but at another end they admit students reading ability as good.

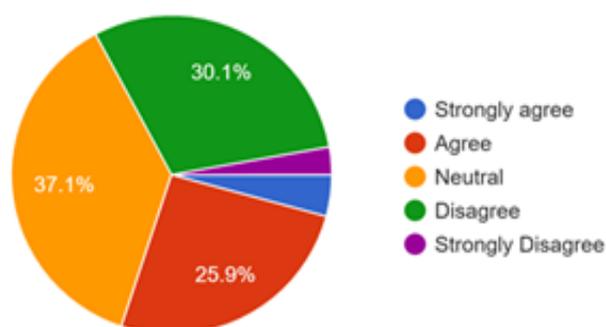


Figure 2. Participants' response to the item asking about students' competence

Another interesting finding from the study is that teachers tend to differentiate between reading ability and reading comprehension. For item asking about students' ability to read examination instruction they confidently agree with up to 50,3% agreement (Question 4). However, they responded mostly undecided (39,2 & 40,6) to items asking about whether students understand examination instruction in English (item 5) and whether they can answer the questions that are written in English (item 6). For this reason, teachers might consider using cooperative learning activities that enable learners to collaborate either in groups of two or three.

Teachers' perceptions of students' competence to interact in English (item 7-10)

In responding to students' competence to communicate in English, majority of the participants, as presented in figure 3 voiced that they have doubt whether students are comfortable asking questions in English (item 7); uncertain as to whether students are able to answer teachers' queries in English (item 8); and are neutral in highlighting whether students are at ease conversing in English with their peers (item 10). The only strong response that almost reaches 60% is teachers' assumption about students' positive response to doing group work in English (item 9).

These findings show that students might be able to respond to teachers' instructions for example asking questions or replying to teachers' questions, but

they perform those as an obligation or routine. This might also indicate that students are restricted to contract on the agreement they had/signed upon the commencement of the semester saying that their participation in the classroom contributes to their final marks. To some extent, this finding resounds characteristics of Indonesian students who are willing to do assignments and respond to questions when they are assessed (Azis, 2015). This indicates that teachers should offer students multiple opportunities and types of activities that could improve their interest in the lesson and make them more engaged. In this case reflection on the curriculum should be more intense.

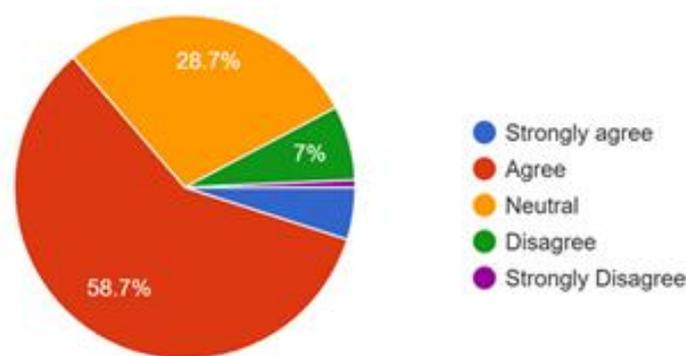


Figure 3. Participants' response to the item asking about group work/collaboration

Teachers' preference for using English or Indonesia Instruction (item 11-13)

When asked about students' preference for the language of instruction (see figure 4) teachers argue that students learn better when they are instructed using mixed language (item 13). An almost similar agreement was given to the item asking about preference for Bahasa Indonesia as the language of instruction (item 12) and most participants give neutral responses on students' preferences for English as the language of instruction (item 11). These findings signify that students in the context of the study still have limited English proficiency which could lead teachers to favour Bahasa Indonesia as the instructional language while teaching English.

Moreover, it is appealing to highlight that the majority of participants teach in the city. As this point differs from Wijayatungga's study, it signals two crucial phenomena: first, inequality of education in the context of the study, and second, researchers should consider further investigations on students' proficiency.

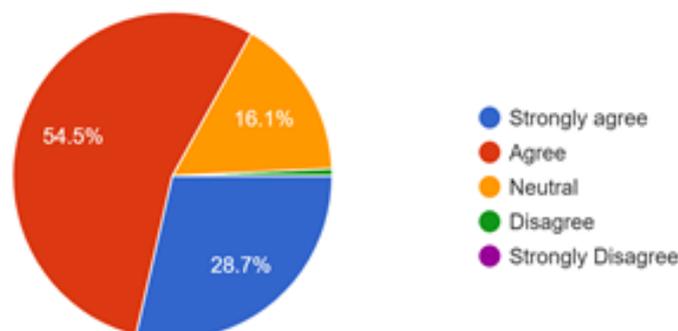


Figure 4. Participants' response to language instruction preference

Teachers' viewpoints on utilizing English in the classroom improves learners' English ability (item 14-17)

Although teachers who participated in this study assume that their students learn effectively using the mixing of English and Bahasa Indonesia or using Bahasa Indonesia totally, they are aware of the benefit of English as a MOI. They respond positively to all items highlighting the issue with a high agreement level. As shown in figure 5, the highest agreement (65%) is given to the improvement of reading ability as a result of using English as the instructional language (item 17). The second highest agreement of 59.4% addresses speaking ability (item 14); 58.7% for listening ability (item 15); and 55.9% agreement given to item 16 asking about the benefit of EMI to improve students' writing ability.

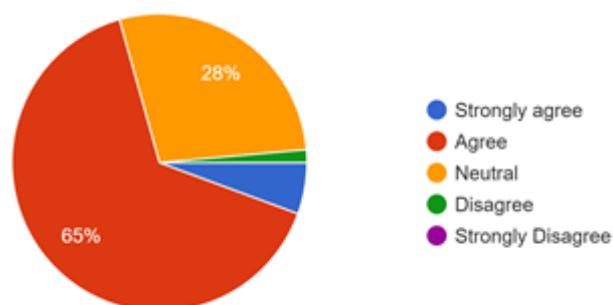


Figure 5. Participants' response to language instruction & reading proficiency

DISCUSSION

Referring to the mistake of the implementation of international standard schools (ISS) that ended in 2013, we need to avoid similar pressure. At that time, teachers were not well prepared, some of them were only good at everyday English and not with formal instruction in the classroom. Kashbani (2019) highlights the use of English as a MOI in primary and secondary schools in Indonesia as a waste of time and money because it was conducted without

mindful preparation. Similarly, the complicated interaction between teachers' English competency, students' perceived English competence, and the absence of socialization of the English as a MOI Policy also contributes to the problem (Zacharias, 2013).

Back to previous findings, English as a MOI was reported to be controversial in the sense means different perceptions of people. Some argue that English as a MOI could reduce nationality values, and the potential of English as a MOI to be divisive and lead to social inequalities (Dearden, 2014). Furthermore, teachers were not able or qualified to communicate through EMI because of the generational divide. In addition, as reflected in this finding, although it might be quite challenging, some students will not be able to cope with the workload and hence miss out on the educational material. Thus it is not surprising when there are no significant differences in students' achievement whether they are taught using English as a MOI or their mother tongue. In some cases particularly in rural areas, the result could even get worsen (Hu & Zhang). Furthermore, teachers might employ technology to extend the sources of language intake, knowledge creation, and the types of activities and interactions that they could participate in the classroom (Anas & Musdariah, 2018).

On the other hand, participants' confidence in their students' willingness to interact in a group, again signals the importance to respect cooperative learning activities. It appears that students enjoy working in pairs and small groups. As Peyton (2015) argues, students can practice their language abilities in a variety of real-world situations by participating in cooperative learning on a regular basis. Moreover, students in the study reflect to meet the characteristics of 21st-century skills: communication and collaboration. Students in this study belong to generation Z who welcome challenges and enjoy group discussions in a very interactive learning environment (Lase, 2019). Thus, teachers should alert that the era has come, it is time to collaborate and make collaboration a tradition in various learning activities.

To some extent, the phenomenon approves the position of the mother tongue as the language right (May, 2012) and could decrease the number of dropout students (Ball, 2014). In this sense, teachers appear to use appropriate materials and a comprehensive approach. Another insight to consider is teachers could initiate collaboration with other partners for example from different schools within the professional development group. Through this, a teacher could initiate a different program from a standard course that is built to facilitate subject and English teachers' collaboration in preparing students for EMI classes (Macaro, Akincioglu, & Dearden, 2016).

Interestingly, these findings are similar to Wijayatunga's (2018) study of the obstacles of utilizing English as instructional language in Sri Lanka. She contended that students are more responsive if they are taught in their mother

tongue. She further argues that the demand for English as a language of instruction is limited to urban communities. Therefore, emphasizing the characteristics of high-quality instruction suggested to frame this study, these findings ring the bell for teachers to reconsider content-based instruction through discussion and examples of text types.

The findings reveal that teachers believe in the use of English as a MOI to offer a great advantage to both teachers and students. Although it also reveals uncertainty, teachers' hesitation might occur due to limited resources to use or restricted support to get from school and parents. This finding resounds Simbolon's current study where she questions the quality of English as a MOI implementation in Indonesia (Simbolon, 2021). In responding to this circumstance, teachers should expand the use of technology as the source of language input, knowledge, types of activity, and interaction as suggested in the high-quality instruction (Anas, 2019; Anas & Musdariah, 2018). Moreover, the use of technology could create a comfortable and attractive classroom (Wijayatunga, 2018). Offering them an interactive learning environment means confirming that learning is unlimited, and they can study anywhere, anytime with unlimited access to new information (Lase, 2019). These conditions could lead to the efficacy of using EMI at schools could invite students' higher favor (Bukhari & Awan, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The study aims to explore four research questions (RQ1 to RQ4) focusing on teachers' perception of the use of MOI in their classrooms. It was sought to investigate the teachers' perception of students' ability to read and understand texts in English, interact with other in English, language preference in the classroom, and the impact of MOI on their students' proficiency. Drawing on the findings, the participants have positive attitudes toward English as a MOI and its role to improve students' proficiency. However, beyond its perceived effectiveness, teachers realize some obstacles that hindered them from the actual use of MOI in their classrooms, including students' proficiency. Moreover, the study also highlights an important insight into students' willingness to work in pairs and groups. This is a crucial signal to respond to. Teachers are considered to prepare a more comfortable and attractive classroom through collaborative work to characterize the 4.0 era, as well as utilize more technologies in the classroom, select the right methodology, and support from the Management of the school, which will give better results for the schools to implement English medium instruction. In other words, awareness of the context, comprehension of students' proficiency, and teachers' quality are worth considered along with Peyton's (2015) features of high-quality instruction.

Despite the usefulness findings presented in this article, the researcher recognizes that the present study does not embrace students' voices. Moreover, the limitation of this study is the use of a single instrument to collect data. Future studies should focus on classroom observations and interviews with instructors and students to learn more about how English is used as a medium of instruction in the classroom. Studying current trends of English as a MOI in Indonesian schools can also be highlighted.

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