

# Exploring the Goals of EMI Programs in Japanese Universities: An investigation on websites

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## 1. Introduction

The present paper aims to explore what the English-Medium Instruction (hereafter EMI) programs' goals are in the Japanese context. The internationalization of higher education has been common in many countries due to the advent of globalization. As part of their internationalization effort, universities around the world are introducing EMI programs. Japan is no exception to this trend, and the number of universities implementing such programs is increasing. (MEXT, 2020)

The motivation of implementing EMI programs is contextual (Macaro et al., 2018) and its purposes and goals are elusive and vary within each country and university. Within the Japanese context, there are two main purposes for implementing EMI programs/courses in today's globalized era. 1) To develop well-skilled human resources such as "global human resource" ("*gurōbaru jinza*") who have language (namely English) competence to drive the national economy, and 2) to attract people from overseas (Brown, 2016; Morizumi, 2015). Yet, there is no universally accepted interpretation of EMI programs in Japan as well (Brown, 2018; Chapple, 2014; Toh, 2016)

Then, what are EMI programs in Japan? What are its goals, and what role are they expected to play in the present Japanese society? Is it an elite education, an institute for training proficient English speakers, or developing global citizens/leaders? By investigating the goals stated in the websites of the EMI programs, this paper will explore what EMI programs are in Japan.

The following section introduces literature on the definitions of EMI programs and overviews the history of EMI education in Japan. The method and findings from the web pages are shown in the third and fourth sections. The next section discusses the role of EMI programs, and the implication will be demonstrated in the final section.

## 2. Definitions and history of EMI in Japan

### 2.1 Definitions

As mentioned earlier, the understanding of EMI is not universal, and the term EMI is not consistently defined. The use of English for teaching content subjects has been a

global trend and has been labeled in various ways; EMI, ICLHE, CLIL, CBI, EME (EMEMUS). The present paper will refer to the term EMI and see how it has been developed in the Japanese context.

The two prominent definitions of EMI have been described as follows.

The use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English.

(Dearden, 2014, p.4)

(T)he use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English

(Macaro, 2018, p.35)

The two definitions describe English being used for a purpose other than teaching the language itself and being implemented at places other than the Inner Circle. In addition, the two definitions deliberately do not mention the goal of EMI, whereas, for example, CLIL aims to improve both language and contents (Dearden, 2015; Macaro, 2018).

Based on these definitions, Bradford & Brown (2017) have added the last sentence to indicate the explicit or implicit aim of EMI in Japan, such as to equip students with skills needed in the international environment, including English proficiency.

EMI entails the use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English. It may or may not include the implicit aim of increasing students' English language abilities."

(Bradford & Brown , 2017, p.330)

On the other hand, the following definition states more in detail the actual condition of the EMI and motivations for being introduced in the Expanding Circle (including Japan).

English medium instruction (is) conducted in the context, where English is used as a lingua franca for content-learning/teaching among students and lecturers from different linguacultural back-grounds albeit not exclusively so. ... EMI is used

widely in so called 'EFL' countries in a traditional term, where it is primarily introduced to attract international students as well as home students who want to have more exposure to globally used English as a lingua franca while residing in their own home countries.

(Murata & Iino, 2018, p.404)

In fact, Brown's (2015) nationwide survey shows that attracting international students and domestic students is one of the key motivations for universities to introduce EMI programs and prepare domestic students for post-graduation workplace needs. Also, the Nikkei newspaper (Head office survey, 2019) reports that universities keen to internationalize their campus and conduct courses in English see improvement of local students' English proficiency as the most crucial task. The equipment of domestic students and the attraction of international students could be understood as part of an attempt to tackle the issues that Japanese society is currently facing. For instance, the development of a "global human resource" has been set up to respond to the request of developing students with global competitiveness from Japanese industries. On the other hand, attracting people from overseas is to compensate for the falling enrollment numbers of local students through demographic change and to enhance the university's competitiveness as a research institution for improving the university world rankings (Hino, 2017,2019; Iino, 2019; Ishikawa, 2009; Takagi, 2016).

In this way, the interpretations of EMI are diverse, and the motivation for implementing such programs is wide-ranging. Nevertheless, the definitions above indicate that the EMI program is a place where English is being used for educational purposes among people with different backgrounds. However, when we look back at the EMI programs in the past, the purpose and motivation of implementing EMI education were relatively determinate.

## **2.2 Overview of the history of EMI in Japan (from Meiji era to 21st century)**

According to Brown (2018), the boom of EMI education in Japan could be divided into four periods: Meiji, Post-war, 1980s~90s, and 21st century. By following his division, the present paper briefly overviews the history of EMI education.

The Meiji period was the time for modernization and the westernization of Japanese society. Foreign language education and foreign language medium instruction were implemented to catch up with the educational practices of the West. Students were sent overseas, and foreigners as specialists were invited as *Oyatoi* (Imura, 2003; Umetani, 2007). It was during this time that the first EMI program in higher education was implemented in *Kaisei* School (the current Tokyo University) in

1873 (Brown, 2018; Erikawa, 2018; Fujimoto-Adamson, 2006; Imura, 2003). Since there were almost no resources (teachers and teaching materials) for teaching the subjects in Japanese, all subjects were taught in English by the invited foreigners. The goal of the EMI program focused on content learning that it aimed for domestic students to acquire knowledge and technologies from the West. However, the return of students from study abroad and the translation of textbooks had made EMI being replaced to Japanese-Medium Instruction (JMI) in 1883 (Erikawa, 2018; Fujimoto-Adamson, 2006; Imura, 2003; Okuno, 2007). Thus, because the content could only be learned in English, EMI had been implemented in the Meiji period.

The next prominent movement regarding EMI education could be witnessed in the post-war period (1945~1970s). EMI programs had been introduced as a receptacle for foreign residents and international students. For example, the international division (the current Faculty of Liberal Arts) of Sophia University (in 1949) and International Christian University (in 1953) were founded for the needs of the western expatriate community (Brown, 2018). Both EMI programs were again focused on content learning which aimed for children of expatriates to study at universities in English. Along with this, short-term EMI programs in private universities had begun to accept international students from partner universities (Horie, 2002). The short-term EMI programs were content-driven, and they aimed for international students to study Japan-related subjects (*ibid.*).

EMI education in the 1980s~90s was introduced for seeking internationalization of the universities. The reform of the *Kyōin* Law (in 1982) and the Standards for Establishment of Universities (*Daigaku Secchi Kijun*) (in 1990) had helped to expand EMI programs slightly (Amano, 2014; Mulvey, 2018). In particular, EMI graduate schools had been increased in this period. As an attempt to internationalize education, the graduate schools were mainly designed for international students and returnees who seek to earn a degree (Brown, 2018; Mulvey, 2018). There was also an attempt to introduce EMI programs targeting domestic students, though it failed due to the disapproval from the Japanese faculties concerning nationalistic and pragmatic issues (*ibid.*). In addition, although it only had a limited range of courses and in a small size, the 'International Student 100,000 Plan' in 1997 had fostered the establishment of EMI education (*ibid.*). Similar to the previous period, the EMI education was content-driven, and the targets were mainly international undergraduate exchange students or students who were familiar with taking courses in English.

From the 21st century, the EMI programs have expanded rapidly. Programs in both undergraduate and graduate schools targeting domestic students have increased. Various policies and projects regarding foreign language education and internationalization of the education have helped the expansion (e.g., Action Plan to

Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities in 2003, Global 30 Project in 2008, The Project for Promotion of Global Human Resource Development in 2012 [later became as Go Global Japan], and Top Global University Japan in 2014 (Brown, 2018; Burgess et al., 2010; Butler and Iino, 2005; Hashimoto, 2018; MEXT, 2003; 2017; Mulvey, 2018). Thanks to these policies and subsidy projects, the number of universities implementing EMI at the undergraduate level has reached 305, which indicates that almost half of the universities (41.0%) are conducting classes in EMI. Also, the number of universities granting a B.A. in EMI has increased from 38 in 2016 to 42 in 2018 (MEXT, 2020).

As the EMI programs have expanded in Japan and are being opened to students from various backgrounds, the objectives of the EMI program have now become elusive, as mentioned earlier.

Then, what could be achieved in EMI programs in current Japan? What are the goals of EMI programs being described by universities themselves? The present paper has tried to grasp the trends of program goals among EMI programs in Japanese universities by investigating the websites.

### **3. The website investigation of the EMI programs**

The website investigation explored what goals are described and how they are described on the websites. The websites were investigated because it is the face of the university, which is a place where ideologies and thoughts are symbolized and represented. The subjects of the website investigation were web pages of EMI programs, which allow students to earn a degree by providing almost all courses in English, which Shimauchi (2016) defines as “English-medium Degree Program (EMDP)”. Furthermore, the investigation focused on programs that are open to both domestic students and international students. According to the MEXT’s research, there are 65 EMDPs (38 universities) as of 2016 (MEXT, 2019). However, information about EMI programs could not be found from some of the listed universities' websites. As a result, 47 faculties (24 universities) have been investigated.

Pages that explain or indicate learning outcomes/goals and appealing points have been investigated. In particular, pages of mission statements, diploma/curriculum policies, and pages for prospective students have been browsed. Pages in Japanese have been mainly browsed, but when the information could not be found, pages in English have been browsed as well.

Pauwel’s framework was used in the present study. This framework is a multimodal framework that analyses websites as social and cultural data sources. Among the six phases that he stated for examining websites, phase 3, "In-depth Analysis of Content

and Formal Choices" (Pauwels, 2012, p. 253), has been used. This phase is used to analyze what is said on the websites by looking at forms and contents (ibid.). Thus, the present study focused on analyzing statements, opinions, and descriptions related to the goals of EMI programs.

Content analysis has been used to examine the descriptions. Common keywords and themes have been identified by thematic coding.

#### 4. Goals of the EMI programs in Japan

By browsing and analyzing the pages mentioned above, the descriptions of goals are briefly clustered into three types as follows.

- Skill
- Motivation
- Certificate

##### 4.1 Skill

Skill includes things that students are required or expected to acquire through studying at the EMI program. For example, critical thinking, foreign language competence, communication skills, interdisciplinary knowledge, deep knowledge particular to each major, and problem-solving skills were commonly demonstrated as major goals. All of the programs have shown some skills as one of the goals that students could acquire by studying at their EMI program. (words and phrases are underlined by the author.)

「英語および日本語に関する統合的な教育を通して、思考力、コミュニケーション能力、プレゼンテーション能力など、国際社会で活躍できるレベルの高度な言語能力を修得する。」(Uni\_16)

“Through integrated education in English and Japanese, students will acquire advanced language skills, such as the ability to think, communicate, and make presentations, that will enable them to play an active role in international society.” (Uni\_16) (translated by the author)

「世界の広範な事象に関する幅広い知識と深い理解、物事の本質を見抜く洞察力や思考力、これらの上に築かれたグローバルな視野とともに、英語をはじめとする外国語の卓越したコミュニケーション能力を涵養します。」(Uni\_12-1)

“(It) cultivates an extensive knowledge and deep understanding of a wide range of world events, and the ability to gain an insight into the essence. In addition, global

perspectives and excellent communication skills in English and other foreign languages are developed.” (Uni\_12-1) (translated by the author)

#### 4.2 Motivation

Motivation includes descriptions that indicate behavior, orientation, and awareness that the program requires students to obtain. Below are the extracts from the web pages. (words and phrases are underlined by the author.)

“Students are provided a world-class educational and research environment to study mechanics engineering and foster the international awareness.” (Uni\_1\_2)

「卒業生は、心身ともに健康であり、豊かな人間性を持つ。卒業生は、豊かな創造性と健全な倫理観を備えている。卒業生は、主体的・継続的に学習する能力を持つ。卒業生は、異なった価値観や伝統や制度を持った異文化に関して深い認識を持つ。」 (Uni\_6)

“Graduates are healthy in body and mind and possess rich humanity. Graduates possess a rich sense of creativity and sound ethics. Graduates have the ability to learn independently and continuously. Graduates have a deep awareness of different cultures with different values, traditions, and systems.” (Uni\_6) (translated by the author)

In many cases, these elements were mentioned in connection to the necessity of tackling global issues and challenges that people are currently facing (e.g., international relations issues and environmental issues). In addition, along with the skills, motivations were demonstrated with the lines explaining how the program aims to prepare an outstanding student (i.e., Global Human Recourse, Global Leader, Global Researcher/Engineer), which would also be mentioned later.

#### 4.3 Certificate

Certificate, as evident, includes English test scores such as TOEIC, TOEFL, and Eiken. For example, Uni\_24 explicated the target score of TOEIC 900 above, TOEFL iBT100 above, Eiken level 1 as the goal for students to achieve by the end of the final semester. On the other hand, Uni\_23-1 provides a certificate for the completion of its business course, which has been approved by the international business management organization.

Some common features could be found from the above three clusters, such as (1) Foreign language competence, (2) Diversity, (3) Global Citizen/Global human resource, (4) World Society, International organization, Multinational business.

#### 4.4 Foreign language competence

Among the four features, descriptions of foreign languages were most commonly found in the web pages (n=28 faculties, 59.5%). This also overlaps with the findings from Toh's (2016) study that "Language skills development" was emphasized among the seven universities he researched, where different components of English language teaching and support were provided for preparing students to take lectures taught in English. For the present website investigation, foreign languages were mentioned together with keywords such as work (*shigoto*), business, advanced (*kōdo na*), and the world (*seka*). The connections of foreign languages and these keywords bring back one of the goals stated in the Action Plan published in 2003, such as being able to use English at work by the time of graduating from university.

「英語で仕事ができる」人材を育成(する)。英語による「話す、聞く、書く、読む」コミュニケーション能力を磨き、英語で情報を正確に得て、自分の考えを表現できる能力の育成を目指します。」(Uni\_16)

"To develop human resources who can use English in their work. The program aims to develop communication skills (speaking, listening, writing, and reading) in English and to cultivate the ability to obtain information accurately and express one's thoughts in English." (Uni\_16) (translated by the author)

"Internationally Minded Students Acquire Global Skill and English Ability to Become Versatile Business Leaders" (Uni\_15)

#### 4.5 Diversity

Feature related to diversity (n=21, 44.6%) was describing the diversified environment that the universities offer. Most of the time, "diversification" was mentioned for appealing the programs for prospective students who are seeking to study in an international environment. It reflects the universities' attempt to differentiate their program from others.

"Diversity in the [EMI program] student body, comprised of over fifty nationalities, including students educated at Japanese and international high schools in Japan, as well as both degree students and exchange students from abroad, provides an ideal environment for achieving the [program's] educational mission." (Uni\_12-1)

"Faculty diversity also contributes to the dynamic and exciting academic environment of [the EMI program]" (Uni\_19-1)

#### **4.6 Global Citizen/Global human resource and World Society, International organization, Multinational business**

The other two features, "Global citizen/Global human resource" (n=27, 57.4%) and "World Society, International organization, Multinational business" (n=23, 48.9%), are highly connected to the foreign language. As a preferable career, working at international organizations and multinational companies is mentioned, and students are expected to work as either a global leader, global citizen, or global human resource by making excellent use of acquired skills.

“Ultimately, [the EMI program] seeks to raise a generation of global citizens with a strong desire, profound ethical sensibility, and robust international competitiveness needed to take on today’s worldwide challenges” (Uni\_19-5)

“In providing students with the breadth and depth of knowledge they will need to help engage with the many and varied problems facing humanity at the local, regional and global levels, we strive to ensure that each can become a valuable member of the global community.” (Uni\_14-4)

「高い外国語能力、卓越した専門的知見、異文化への繊細な感受性を身につけ、国際機関や多国籍企業などで活躍できるグローバル社会の担い手の育成を行っています。」  
(Uni\_12-1)

“The program develops leaders of a global society who can play an active role in international organizations and multinational corporations by acquiring a high level of foreign language skills, outstanding expertise, and sensitivity to different cultures.” (Uni\_12-1) (translated by the author)

“[The program is] successful for preparing students to international organizations, multinational companies.” (Uni\_24)

### **5. Role of the EMI programs in Japan**

The four features above show that EMI programs expect graduates to buck up their market value by acquiring the required skill, motivation, and certificates to survive the competitive labor market and actively engage in building mutual relationships with people from diverse backgrounds.

There were various objectives and goals stated among universities by investigating the websites. Based on the findings, the programs were content-driven as well as language-driven, that the expectation in language improvement along with content acquisition could be observed. This fact represents what Macaro et al. (2018) pointed

out that interpretation of EMI and its motivations and goals are elusive. Furthermore, the elusiveness could be said as the continuum of content learning and language proficiency (Richards & Pun, 2021). Depending on each universities' motivations and goals, the assessments in EMI programs could be based on English acquisition, content learning, or both.

When we look back at the history and compare it with the current EMI education, although EMI education has always been a place where English has been used for educational purposes, its goals and motivations for implementing such education have become more intertwined, as mentioned in the previous paragraph. As an example, by looking back at the Meiji period, the goal was to make students learn content rather than improve language proficiency. On the other hand, the current EMI programs seem to cram too many objectives and goals into it.

As language education has been placed as one of the crucial national policies and planning (Morizumi, 2015), EMI programs are being considered as a solution for various issues (e.g., declining competitiveness of the Japanese economy in the global economy, declining of birthrate, lack of labor force). In other words, the role of EMI programs could be considered as cure-all medicine to solve the issues that Japan is facing. However, it is doubtful that EMI programs really have such an effect. As more universities are implementing EMI programs/courses, it is important to consider the meaning of conducting EMI education in Japan.

## **6. Implication**

The illustrious description on the web pages, to some extent, implicates how EMI programs have been seen by the government. As Le Ha (2013) points out, the implementation of EMI programs is widely believed to automatically internationalize the campus environment, attract international students, and give local students international experiences. In fact, these features have been commonly found on web pages. It seems that the importance of conducting an EMI program is in the fact that it is conducted in English and not so much in how practitioners (i.e., students) learn and overcome the difficulties at the program.

What Le Ha (2013) mentioned, to a certain extent, shows the implication of EMI programs are done without sufficient consideration of acquisition planning such as diploma policy, curriculum policy, and admission policy, which has brought EMI to be questioned for its educational quality and outcome (Hamid et al. 2013; Toh, 2016). As EMI programs are still in an incipient phase and the quality of its programs are still on the way of progress in Japan (Aizawa & Rose, 2018; Brown, 2015; Toh, 2016), how and what have students learned and achieved under the EMI programs are needed to be investigated. Thus, the details of students' trajectory in EMI programs and

contributing factors to completing the programs are deemed required. For further investigation, in order to contribute to further development of EMI programs, the empirical studies on what and how students learn and achieve in the EMI programs, particularly in the EMDPs, by conducting longitudinal research would be preferable for the next step.

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