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Teaching in English is Not Necessarily the Teaching of English

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Abstract

One of the most notable trends in educational internationalisation today is the widespread use of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in higher education institutions (HEIs) across the world. This phenomena, formerly referred to as a "galloping" tendency, is now more accurately described as a "pandemic" in scale. Just like any other country, Japan is seeing an increase in the number of institutions that offer some or all of their courses in English. This study begins by reviewing the literature to investigate the theoretical foundations and reasoning behind the current trend towards using EMI, which is seen by some as a magic bullet for revitalising the country's sluggish internationalisation profile and enhancing general English language abilities. Second, in order to throw light on attitudes, determine the concerns, and highlight certain limits and challenges linked with EMI courses, we analyse questionnaire data and comments from Japanese students attending such classes at two, second-tier institutions. It ends with some concrete suggestions for further language support activities and cautions against the pitfall of mistakenly thinking that English language instruction (EMI) can magically make Japanese students better English speakers.

Keywords: English medium instruction, higher education, internationalisation, Japan

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

"There is a fast-moving worldwide shift from English being taught as a foreign language (EFL) to English being the medium of instruction (EMI) for academic subjects" (Dearden, 2014, p. 2), according to a recent study collaboratively produced by the British Council and Oxford University. The current rate of adoption is causing some to call it a "revolution" (Dafouz & Guerrini, 2009) or a "pandemic" (Phillipson, 2009), and it has its roots in the bilingual education movement that began in the 1950s in Canada and Europe (Barnard, 2013). Europe was home to more than 800 EMI programs in 2002 (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2012). More than 6,400 are still in existence today (ICEF Monitor, 2013), and that number is rising in a number of additional nations where English is a second language (Björkman, 2011). One example is the recent legalisation of certain English-language courses at French institutions; another is the 2014 decision of Italy's Politecnico di Milano to offer all graduate courses in English. The most notable contemporary trend in internationalising higher education, in a nutshell, is the shift towards using English as the universal language of higher education (Parr, 2014). Universities in several Asian nations are embracing English as a medium of instruction. This is driven by a desire to stay abreast of global trends in education, improve students' ability to communicate effectively upon graduation, and boost national competitiveness in innovation and knowledge production (Hu, 2007). (Ali, 2013; Hamid, Nguyen & Baldauf, 2013; Wong, 2010). Even though they started out with somewhat diverse motivations, more and more Japanese schools are experimenting with EMI classrooms. The following statement, published in 1997, concerning international students, served as the original catalyst for expanding the amount of English programs given at HIEs: Educational programs using other languages (mainly English) should be established in Japan so that potential international students don't have to worry as much about learning Japanese and so that many high-achieving overseas students may study in Japan. Not only should international students take part in these activities, but so should students from Japan (Cited in Tsuneyoshi, 2005, p. 67).

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Institutions both public and commercial, including the English Language Education Council, have lately pushed for colleges to increase the percentage of English-language courses they offer from 10% to 30% (Brady, 2008). The "Global 30" project, which is the flagship internationalisation initiative of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), has been accompanied by these moves. The primary goal of this project is to assist a small group of universities in improving their capacity to welcome and teach English to international students. The project's stated goal is as follows, according MEXT (2009): With the goal of enhancing our nation's international competitiveness in higher education, the G30 Project seeks to cultivate an atmosphere that is favourable to recruiting international students by providing an attractive level of education and nurturing advanced human resources that can collaborate effectively with international students. Since the people being discussed here are Japanese citizens, the plan for EMI in Japan is to boost housing for international students and, as a virtually inevitable byproduct, to help Japanese citizens become more globally engaged by helping them improve their English proficiency. The current number of courses offered ranges from 101 at 57 graduate schools and six departments at five institutions in 2006 (Burgess, Gibson, Klaphake, & Selzer, 2010). The goal is to increase this number to 300 by adding 33 more undergraduate courses and 124 more graduate courses. A total of thirteen universities—seven public and six private—were chosen from twenty-two applications in 2009; each will receive 200–500 million yen per annum for five years to boost their international student bodies, hire more foreign faculty, send more Japanese students abroad, and set up branch offices in other countries. It was not surprising that 13 large, prestigious colleges were selected since they were all quite cosmopolitan and innovative from the start. 1.2 Study Objectives Theoretical and pedagogical support for EMI is still in its early stages, despite its growing popularity (Keuk& Tith, 2013). Research regarding the manner of delivery and success or effect of EMI courses in Japan is particularly lacking, particularly in regards to second tier colleges, due to the fairly fledgling nature of EMI. The purpose of this research is to add to that existing literature. Burgess et al. (2010), Rivers (2011), and Yonezawa (2010) have all discussed the G30 and its EMI in considerable detail. Universal (or non-elite) universities, or what I like to call second tier schools (as opposed to the 'elite' G30 members and other'special case' universities, see Note 2), are what this paper will primarily concentrate on. Igami (2014) calls them such institutions. Although second-tier universities often lack the financial resources or the prestige to attract large numbers of international students, they see the value in offering English as a Second Language (ESL) courses and classes to Japanese students, which will allow them to accommodate more international students and, more importantly, help Japanese students improve their English language skills. Focussing on the issues surrounding this component of EMI at these Japanese institutions, this paper aims to first examine whether the increasing number of English lessons in Japan really improves students' English proficiency. What follows is an outline of the rest of the article. It begins with a quick introduction before delving into the history and reasoning behind the current trend of using EMI at Japanese universities to facilitate internationalisation and the supposedly subsequent English proficiency standards that come with it. The next step is to analyse and explore the limits and challenges found in the Japanese environment of second-tier institutions. This is done while simultaneously relying upon the findings of a small case study of foreign and Japanese students who had attended EMI courses, as well as some instructors who were engaged in the teaching. Topics included align with those mentioned in literature and other sources across many contexts, which are organised into major categories. Lastly, it cautions against the risk of mistakenly believing that English medium instruction sessions in Japan would automatically increase students' English language abilities and offers some practical suggestions for more language support activities.

2. The History and Demand for EMI in Japan

The benefits of bi/multilingual education at the tertiary level have been the subject of much empirical research. Institutionally, things like the opportunity for the promotion of student and lecturer mobility (Symon & Weinberg, 2013), raising research profiles and visibility in rankings (Kassteen, 2013), and increasing institutional income

from greater student numbers (Whitsea & Volet, 2011; Symon & Weinberg, 2013) have been outlined.

At the level of the individual student, Kassteen (2013) succinctly summarizes some of the main benefits including: improving cross-cultural understanding and global awareness; enhancing academic progress in other subjects; fostering creative thinking; enriching and enhancing cognitive skills and emotional development; helping students score higher on standardized tests, and enhancing career opportunities. In Europe, according to a report from the Economist Intelligence Unit (2012), “Even when recruiting for jobs in their home market, almost one-half of all companies say that prospective candidates need to be fluent in a foreign language, and a further 13% say that multilingual ability is a key selection criterion” (p. 12). Similarly, in Japan a recent trend in HE is the fostering of so-called ‘global jinzai’ (globally-competent human resources), one of the key components of which is said to be foreign language skills (Gurōbaru jinzaikusei shinkaigi, 2011; Keidanren, 2011) and hence again we see the link being made between EMI classes and language acquisition. In Brown’s (2013) study other institutional push factors noted behind the EMI trend in Japan were a desire to catch up with and/or distinguish themselves from other schools (including those in the G30), prepare students for study abroad or internships, and adding authenticity to language teaching. Yet, in spite of such a wide variety of benefits, “the aim of improving students’ English proficiency is not generally addressed” (Symon & Weinberg, 2013, p. 22), and certainly not in terms of how it may be improved.

With the proliferation of EMI courses in universities around the world, one concern that is increasingly being voiced is the danger of the English bias and the detrimental impact it can have on national languages (Brock-Utne, 2013; Cason & Rodriguez, 2013). In Israel, Senegal and Venezuela, for example, EMI has not been allowed in public education for this very reason (Dearden, 2014). Such an argument, however, is still rare in Japan and this is generally because the collective English proficiency level is considered to be comparatively low (Tsuneyoshi, 2005; “Japan ranks 26th”, 2014; Björkman, 2011), certainly sufficiently removed from any such threat to the dominance of the national language at present. Put differently, the perceived poor English proficiency level of Japanese university students has created an increased interest in the potential of EMI to alleviate this problem in Japan and the consequential growth in number of institutions already offering or preparing such opportunities. The latest available figures from MEXT show an almost 5% jump in the number of universities offering classes in English in the past 2 years (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of Japanese universities offering undergraduate classes in English

	2008	2009	2010
National	44	47	47
Public	24	24	21
Private	122	123	154
Total	190 (25%)	194 (25.6%)	222 (29.2%)
(% of all universities)			

Source: MEXT (2013).

As Table 1 shows, most of the growth is in the private sector (where the majority of second tier universities are). Regardless of the overwhelming active support of the Japanese government, big business along with pressure from society and parents (Hamidet al., 2013), if not carefully prepared and supported, there is an inherent danger in the naïve and overly simplistic assumption that merely equates classes taught in English as leading automatically to increased overall language proficiency. While it should be noted that other surveys in different settings have found a correlation between increased exposure to EMI and increased English proficiency (Wong, 2010), such ‘success’ is often in elite institutions (where students already possess a high degree of linguistic ability) and/or in settings more amenable to linguistic opportunities immediately outside the classroom, neither of which are pertinent to the present study.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

This research employed a mixed-method approach in which questionnaires and interviews were conducted over a period of two and a half years with students enrolled in two different classes at two private, second-tier universities in Western Japan. Both classes were 15-week semester long content courses (i.e. not English

language classes) in which international exchange students as well as domestic students with a certain level of English proficiency (a minimum requirement of TOEFL 450 for one and an overall IELTS score of 4.0 or 600 TOEIC for the other) were eligible to enroll. Both courses formed part of a study programme for international students at the respective universities. Questionnaires in the form of brief, open-ended feedback forms in both English and Japanese were used to allow respondents to express their opinions without being influenced by the researcher (Foddy, 1993). Comments and feedback from teachers involved in teaching other classes in the programme have also been included in the results, which are interspersed in the following discussion so as to provide further insight into the issues encountered in the delivery of classes and impact on language learning for Japanese.

3.2 Participants

A total of 89 responses were collected overall from Japanese students and 26 from international students at various times during the semesters (the first class, a number of times during the semester and in the final class). The Japanese students (56 female and 33 male) were enrolled in a variety of faculties (classes are open to students from various faculties in both universities) as well as years (7 first year students, 39 second year, 29 third year and 14 fourth year). The international students (16 female and 10 male) were from a variety of ethnic backgrounds but with the majority being native English speakers (42%) from the United States, Australia, England and Canada. The remainders were from France, Germany, China, Norway, Spain, Portugal and Thailand. A number of other discussions were held with Japanese students enrolled in other EMI classes in the same programmes although they did not complete any feedback forms. All discussion interviews held were unstructured and informal, generally taking place before or after classes, although discussion times were also held during classes on several occasions. Discussions were conducted in both English and Japanese with randomly selected students who were assured their identities would remain anonymous.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 The Purpose of EMI in Japanese Second Tier Universities

4.1.1 Linguistic Issues

As mentioned, in Japan EMI classes are increasingly being utilized in order to raise the English proficiency of university students. Certainly that was the main reason reported by the Japanese students in this study as represented in Table 2. As can be seen, students (n=89) were asked to select up to three reasons for taking the classes. The total number of responses was 190 with the most frequent response given being to improve English language ability.

Table 2. Japanese students' reasons for enrolling in EMI classes (n=89)

Reason	Number	Percentage
Improve English ability	74	(38.9%)
Make foreign friends	49	(25.7%)
Experience 'real' English	35	(18.4%)
A course requirement	12	(6.3%)
Other	20	(10.5%)
Total Responses	190	

However, as this paper questions, the idea that merely taking a content class taught in English will lead to substantial linguistic gains is dubious. Some of the most important factors affecting the successful implementation of EMI in Japan are those of a linguistic nature, starting with the level of English language proficiency students possess. Insufficient ability has been identified as a major impediment to successful EMI courses in numerous previous studies (e.g., Beckett & Li, 2012; Doi et al., 2012; Webb, 2002). As a consequence, research has shown that students lacking ability to keep up tend to participate less in the classroom (Webb, 2002), have considerable difficulty comprehending lessons (Tsuneyoshi, 2005; Hellekjær & Räsänen, 2010), take longer to complete their courses (Tsuneyoshi, 2005), and are more likely to drop out (Selzer & Gibson, 2009).

Similar findings were recorded in the present study. On average, 34% of students who initially enrolled in the

classes failed to complete them and either gave up or officially withdrew. While exact data on the reasons was not obtained, anecdotal evidence suggests that insufficient language ability was the main factor. The following comments received from two male students who pulled out of the class (but remained in other classes taught by the instructor) are indicative.

At first I thought it would be a good way to listen to and practice English, but it was too hard for me. I couldn't understand.

It was above my level. It was too difficult to listen in English and take notes.

Regardless of the fact that both of the classes had entry requirements in place, clearly these are insufficient in terms of functioning as effective gate-keeping mechanisms. During the courses, the majority of the Japanese respondents admitted that their image of the class turned out to be vastly different to the reality (Table 3).

Table 3. Japanese students' attitudes towards, and impressions of, the difficulty of EMI classes (n=76)

Reason	Number	Percentage
More difficult than expected	55	(72.4%)
About what I expected	15	(19.8%)
Easier than I thought	3	(3.9%)
Undecided/No response	3	(3.9%)
Total Responses	76	(100%)

When asked about the strategies the students employed to keep up with the class, activities such as note comparison with foreign students, downloading lecture slides, recording and listening to the lectures again, keeping vocabulary logs and asking Japanese classmates, were mentioned. Further, one of the instructors specifically made an effort to support the Japanese students through activities such as providing translated documents, simpler explanations or links to readings in Japanese.

Thus, with regards to the linguistic benefit that was reported by students at the completion of their courses, just over half reported that they felt either "considerable" (18%) or "some" (33%) improvement, 24% no change, and the remainder were unsure. This was greater than Symon and Weinberg (2013)'s findings in which less than half of all students reported any real or perceived improvement in language abilities but less than that reported in Chang's (2010, p. 75) study (in which "most students" reported an improvement). From this brief discussion to date, one conclusion that can be drawn is that whether the provision of regular and organised structural language support was provided or not affected students' levels of satisfaction and comprehension. The students who utilized strategies or assistance offered by the instructor reported both higher levels of satisfaction and/or greater feelings of improvement and confidence. A clear correlation between students who claimed to have not utilized any of the support assistance and low or failing grades was also observed. In the class without regular linguistic support, comprehension and satisfaction scores were lower as were the Japanese students' grades in general. In short, without sufficient availability and utilization of specialized language support, EMI alone appears to lack the ability to confer linguistic benefits.

4.1.2 Making International Friends

After the expectation of being able to improve their English ability, the second most sort-after goal according to student responses was "to make friends with foreigners". In other international settings, increased importance is being placed on fostering such intercultural dimensions within the classroom (Whited & Volet, 2011) which is clearly an important function of such classes not only for furthering intercultural experiences but also for providing additional extra-curricular language learning opportunities. For students in this survey, making international friends was certainly seen as an extension of the linguistic goal as it was hoped that they would "become conversation partners" and thus lead to extra practice opportunities occurring outside of the classroom (*sotodemo hanaseru kikai*).

However, while for international students the opportunity to meet students from other countries, take classes and converse in English together makes their entire experience more accessible, doubt has been cast on this function when it comes to local students. In a European setting, Cason and Rodriguez (2013) refer to the danger of

what they call “Erasmus bubbles” forming whereby European students taking part in the Erasmus (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) programme gravitate to interacting solely with one another and not local students in the host country. A similar situation was witnessed in this study also. Of the 28 international students questioned, only 6 mentioned any regular, out of class interaction occurring (despite of their desire for it as well) and a further 3 saying sporadic relationships had formed but were short-lived.

It would appear that real engagement comes when courses have been carefully prepared to provide the correct tools and environment to allow it to happen. In other words, universities need to ensure that both international and local students have been equipped with the opportunities, skills, content and reason to allow for such exchange. Assuming it will naturally occur spontaneously is wishful thinking.

4.2 Double-Sided Dissatisfaction

While the Japanese students noted that the classes were generally either “very” or “extremely” difficult, the opposite was reported from the international students. Tsuneyoshi (2005) writes that one criticism received from Western students in Japan was that courses were not “Westernized enough”. In the present study too, similar feedback was received. In response to an open question about the course overall, the following comments were received from international students:

At times it felt like the class was held-up to clarify information for the Japanese

students. I would've liked more challenging material, more readings and homework, for example

e.

The assessment was not what we get back home, probably because of the different levels in the class.

This point is related to the question of at which level to pitch class content. If, as expected and desired by the majority of international students, the class adopts a curriculum and delivery method on par with that found in institutions in Western institutions, for example, Japanese and other non-English native or near-native speakers will often find themselves disadvantaged. In one of the Japanese participant's words:

I wasn't able to concentrate for long as it was too difficult for me. When there were words I didn't know or the speech was too fast, I often stopped listening and sometimes even fell asleep.

When they (international students) asked questions or made comments or jokes, I was completely lost. I wanted the teacher to translate it all for us.

4.3 Teaching Issues: Who?

Of all the issues impacting on the success of EMI in terms of the impartation of language skills, the question of who teaches and how are the most important. Globally, the selection and retention of suitable teachers is a pressing task. According to Tsuneyoshi (2005), one of the biggest challenges in continuing a programme with lectures in English “was finding faculty who were both willing *and* able to present lectures in English” (p. 80, emphasis added). Similarly, it was reported that in 83% of the countries where EMI courses are taught, the lack of qualified teachers was a large complaint (Dearden, 2014) with serious implications for teaching quality. While it appears that some instructors volunteer to teach EMI classes, others are often nominated to do so merely because they had spent time abroad or spoke English well (Dearden, 2014). In Japan's case, there also appears to be a clear shortage of both those willing and able to teach EMI classes effectively.

One possible reason for this may be related to teaching style. University teachers in Japan have been criticized for being closed-minded, indifferent to internationalisation or lacking international sense (Jinzaikyōsōkokkyō, 2012) and this general apathy towards internationalisation impacts on their attitude and desire towards teaching classes in English as well. In discussions with other instructors in this survey the following comments were received:

It [EMI] is a positive move, but I can't do it. My English isn't sufficient I feel.

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Weneedmoreclassestaughtinforeignlanguages,butwe[all]aretoobusy.

Even among native Japanese speakers, concerns over the quality of instruction have been voiced. "Unfortunately... the teaching methods at most universities,... remain mired in one-way, teacher-centered approaches that do not help students acquire confidence, communication skills or a broader understanding that they need for engaging in international situations" were recently lamented in an editorial in Japan's largest English daily newspaper ("Too many inward looking students", 2013). Such broad strokes are often indicative of popular opinion. Some people think that any lesson that is taught in English but translated from Japanese is really an EMI class. Unfortunately, education suffers when teachers don't put enough emphasis on using high-quality language in the classroom (de Wit, 2011). This is likely caused by the common misconception that education is only about passing on knowledge and that the method of delivery is unimportant. But it isn't even close to the complexity of the procedure. In order to successfully communicate important ideas to students in a manner that makes the lectures understandable, it is not enough to only have "the ability to read widely and write at length in a second language" (Barnard, 2013, p. 4). The lack of established norms and criteria is making it difficult for schools to recruit, hire, and retain the best educators for English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. To put it simply, coercing someone who isn't ready or able to do it is a waste of time. What Phillipson (1992) calls a "native-speaker fallacy" is another possible explanation. Since the lessons are held in English, many institutions and leaders feel that only native speakers should teach in order to maintain an image of being "international." As an example, Kyoto University intends to recruit one hundred more international instructors over the next five years to instruct half of its general liberal arts courses for undergraduates in English ("Kokusaikanifutatsu no kabe", 2013). As shown earlier, this method disregards the question of whether the initial Japanese material was enough and if the international instructors has the necessary skills and expertise to instruct in a Japanese setting. Teachers may be hesitant to teach English as a second or foreign language (EMI) for a third reason: many of them do not see themselves as language instructors (Doiz et al., 2012). Students have a hard time understanding EMI lessons when professors don't think teaching English is their job and don't take responsibility for their students' English, as Dearden (2014) questions in her survey. "Whose job is it to help students become better English speakers if not the subject teachers?" According to Deinden (2014), page 6. Nevertheless, in the conventional Japanese university setting, where there is often still a distinct division between what are known as expert topic teachers (*senmon*) and general liberal arts (*ippankyōyo*) instructors, a specific stigma persists, making the matter more difficult to resolve. Language instructors are still mostly seen as *kyōyo* teachers and are stereotyped as having inferior prestige compared to their subject colleagues, even in modern times. Therefore, subject instructors' sense of pride and position may influence their willingness to teach in English. On a more pedagogical note, Japanese subject instructors have voiced their opposition to teaching in English (Saito, 2013). On the other hand, they fail to capture the essence of EMI courses offered by Japanese colleges. To guarantee that EMI courses in Japanese universities achieve both language and content aims, it is crucial to resolve this unnecessary dichotomy of teacher types. Last but not least, a lack of faculty and institutional support as well as acknowledgement of the increased labour necessary to prepare EMI lessons is a contributing factor to instructors' lack of passion, which is connected to the preceding point. Institutions should adequately pay teachers for the extra work they put in by providing them with specialised training and assistance with preparations. "The majority of faculty members involved in internationalisation initiatives will be faculty members who have an interest in the international dimension of education who have been recruited haphazardly unless this dimension is explicitly acknowledged in the evaluation and promotion of the faculty" (Hawawini, 2011, p. 10). International learning contributions are undervalued in the current university system since most departments and faculties establish their own incentive systems and professional development chances or perks. Therefore, it is not unexpected that few faculty members engage in international education initiatives beyond attending conferences, as Stohl (2007) argues, given this environment. Participants in the current research included two non-English, non-Japanese native speakers with near-native or native-like English competence, as well as native Japanese speakers with strong English ability and two native English speakers from outside of Japan. The instructors for the classes had all volunteered to do so. Pay for EMI lessons was the same as pay for any other class, with no exceptions for things like more time to prepare. Multiple native Japanese instructors at one school flat-out declined to teach English lessons, citing the "enormous workload" and "lack of time to prepare" as their reasons. It is worth noting that this aligns with the results of Hawawini (2011) and others, including as Simon and Weinberg (2013), Dearden (2014), and Alidou (2004), who found that it is important to support the instructors who are most suited for EMI.

classes, there is little way of guaranteeing the quality of the education provided.

4.4 Teaching Issues: How?

Intrinsically related to the topic of who teaches, is the question of how to teach, which in turn impacts on whether linguistic gains are made or not. As mentioned, contrary to general perception, merely teaching a course previously taught in the national language in English alone is unlikely to achieve significant linguistic benefits. As Symon and Weinberg (2013) fear: inadequately prepared EMI instructors may believe they only need to translate their course from L1 to L2 in order to teach effectively in English and that no other modifications or adaptations are necessary. When reporting on their experience of EMI in Israel, Symon and Weinberg (2013) write that “if the only exposure to English is during lectures, and if assignments and examinations can be submitted in their first language, then improvement in English will be minimal” (p.23).

The question of how to teach EMI classes is complex and involves issues such as how much (if any) of the first language should be used and, if so, in what way and when (in class, in handouts or other supplementary material or text books, in presentation slides or assessments?), the content (how much to teach? using the same as in the first language or a more watered-down version?) and assessment criteria and methods. Because EMI in Japan is still in a relatively infant stage and literature is still sparse, the emphasis is primarily placed on content acquisition and any language development is seen more as a bonus (Symon & Weinberg, 2013). Yet, this is counter to the alleged goals of EMI created by the administering institutions.

In this study, all instructors estimated that English was used for approximately 90% of the time overall, and almost 100% of the time when teaching. However, content was reportedly adjusted so as to be more understandable to the Japanese students. One instructor mentioned such activities as preparing slides with Japanese translations of specialized words, providing brief reading handouts (in English and/or Japanese) which summarized the main points, regularly stopping and checking understanding, and including small group discussion opportunities, with international students in the class acting as facilitators. The other instructor provided minimal assistance unless specifically asked by individual students.

Assessment policies were varied and ranged from holding only end of term tests in English to more complex forms of assessment throughout the term (written reports and presentations). However, one instructor confided that grading had to be scaled “considerably” in the Japanese students’ favour and some questions were written either in both English and Japanese or with Japanese glosses on difficult words. Overcoming the language discrepancies between Japanese and international students was clearly a large concern.

I explained in detail what was expected, but it was clearly well beyond the Japanese students’ ability to write short essays in comprehensible English that actually answered the test questions. They often either didn’t have enough time or wrote an insufficient amount. It made grading an extremely challenging task.

Another commented:

It is unrealistic to try to test Japanese students and international students in the same way. In terms of linguistic ability, they just cannot be compared.

4.5 Structural Issues

A final issue deemed important – yet often overlooked in literature – is of a structural and administrative nature. For EMI courses to be able to contribute to the English linguistic development of students, systems and structures need to be put in place to support both staff and students alike. On most second tier Japanese campuses there is a lack of staff competent in dealing with international education either linguistically or conceptually, representing a dangerous void. Institutions must realize that for EMI courses to be successful, they need to be considered a fully-fledged, official part of the educational experience and not merely be regarded as ‘add on’ frills for appearance. It is, therefore, “necessary to sensitise all stakeholders to the importance of bilingual academic literacy and to the necessary shift in role perceptions” (Barnard, 2013, pp. 12-13). Fostering such perceptions can be done through faculty and administrative development programmes but also requires the appointment of permanent administrative staff to support and develop courses from a non-academic point of view. Administrative staff in Japanese universities are regularly rotated every 3-5 years irrespective at times of abilities and personal preferences (Lassegard, 2014) meaning appropriate staff are not always available. In both of the universities involved in the study reported here, neither employed dedicated staff for the EMI programmes

and those who were involved had neither experience nor expertise in any form of international education. Given the specialized needs and care required for EMI classes, such an approach represents a lack of understanding and dedication to the overall concept.

5. Implications, Considerations and Conclusion

As the preceding discussion has attempted to show, the implementation of EMI classes in Japan's second tier universities is a growing phenomenon with potential, but still very much a work in progress requiring more preparation and support to be of linguistic benefit to the majority of students. Based on the issues and problems highlighted in this small study, several practical recommendations are highlighted here for future consideration and research.

Firstly, universities and instructors need to abandon the assumption that simply teaching in English means students will automatically pick up the content and improve their language skills at the same time. In fact, there is a danger that in some cases neither could happen (Lei & Hu, 2014). Thus, a different approach to content instruction in English suitable to the goals of Japan's second-tier universities needs to be constructed, perhaps along the lines of the content and language integrated learning (CLIL) method. Regarded as the most developed form of EMI (Symon & Weinberg, 2013), CLIL, or dual-medium instruction (Barnard, 2013) encompasses both the teaching and learning of content and language (Marsh, Mehisto, Wolff, & Frigols, n.d.) into courses. In support of CLIL, Brüning & Purmann (2014) write it "certainly could be a good starting point and helpful as it has the potential to combine L1..., L2 and subject matters" (p. 319) by fusing the best of language education together with the best of general education (Georgiou, 2012). Adopting such a dual focus requires the careful conceptualization of class content and assessment and consideration of how to include international students into such an arrangement. This kind of groundwork appears to be lacking presently in Japan, yet is a fundamental essential.

Secondly, with regards to the actual method of instruction for students in Japan's non-elite universities, an English only environment can have serious academic repercussions especially when their English language ability is not advanced enough or they are not sufficiently supported linguistically. Thus, instructors should aim to incorporate intercultural discussion opportunities and activities as well as linguistic enhancement activities throughout a course. For example, adopting a dual-medium model in which the texts are written in English with summaries and abstracts written in L1 (Barnard, 2013). A similar approach was used by one instructor in the study and results were markedly more positive from Japanese students. In this way, international students are also able to participate as well as benefit from intercultural discussions and, if they are studying Japanese, use the same process in reverse (for example receiving summaries and study material in Japanese). Similarly, in order to firmly support and assist Japanese students to be able to comprehend and keep up with the classes, techniques such as scaffolding or sheltered content instruction should be employed regularly (Echevarria & Graves, 2006; Gibbons, 2002; Mohan, 2001). While the targeted usage of Japanese in classroom may contradict the direction even Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology is taking (such as insisting that English be taught *in* English at high schools and even junior high schools in the future, MEXT, 2014), it allows for the integration of international students, caters to the needs of less confident Japanese as well as enlarging the potential instructor base. Overall, as Tan and Ong (2011) write, there needs to be a reconsideration of in-class linguistic practices, in-school testing practices and the linguistic accommodation measures used to provide optimal support for those students who are less proficient in English.

A third point in need of consideration is the issue of entry requirements. One option is the creation of gradual step-up classes to allow for students to work their way up into higher-level content classes. The first level could be a mandatory general introduction 'tester' class providing students with an opportunity to appreciate what is required as well as instill some of the requisite study skills. Those who pass and agree with the goals and learning style would be able to continue on to more challenging EMI classes. Another possible method is the introduction of tutorial-style smaller classes to encourage discussion of content topics as well as provide an opportunity to gain practice in language-related techniques (such as how to ask and answer questions, write reports, make presentations, etc.). This could be done in tandem with writing centres, language teachers or other language assistants as well. However as these calls for much wider involvement in courses as is usually the norm in tertiary education, it also involves a commitment of resources and a new approach to understanding from the institutional point of view.

Fourthly, and related to the previous point is the issue of students' recognition and understanding of their own proficiency level and its limitations. Generally speaking Japanese students tend to undervalue their abilities in accordance with cultural and social norms. Even still, however, there is a lack of appreciation of the gap which

exists between conversational English ability and that required to comprehend, question, and internalize a university lecture in English. Thus, while researchers such as Wong (2010) claim that students in Hong Kong are in favour of English only instruction as a means of improving proficiency, this preference “is positively related to their own English proficiency” (p. 127). Similarly, Chang (2010) cautions that as students’ English language proficiency influences their level of comprehension we need to carefully assess whether teaching in English actually is leading to a general overall improvement and not just the *perception* of such. In Japan, there is still much work to be done in terms of both understanding the requisite skills for learning *in* English, objectively evaluating individual proficiency, and increasing motivation for usage within (and without) the classroom (as would be expected in Hong Kong, for example).

Finally, and related to the above point, universities that are serious about implementing EMI classes for their students, need to assess their requirements and invest in such courses appropriately. This involves investing in not only language support for students (Chang, 2010), but also such activities as pedagogical training in EMI techniques for teachers along with infrastructure and support staff and mechanisms. EMI instruction requires an additional skill set of both theoretical and practical training. As Kyeyune (2003) writes:

Teachers need to break away from teacher domination of classroom talk and the emphasis of subject content and adopt a language- or skills-based, communication-oriented bilingual approach to teaching. This approach recognizes student participation and teacher responsibility especially for bilingual language support for learning (p.183).

Similarly, Aguilar and Rodríguez (2012) argue that training which has been specially adapted to university teachers is necessary so lecturers can overcome their reluctance to methodological training and unlock the potential for EMI to be realized. Presently such professional development programmes appear to be ignoring the need for substantial EMI pedagogical components (Dearden, 2014). At the same time, institutional recognition opportunities (salary scale adjustments, promotions, development opportunities, etc.) need to be firmly in place as well to ensure those who are willing and able to teach the classes can and do teach them. While appreciation and understanding of the pedagogical requirements and complexities are gradually becoming clearer, institutional backing is essential in the success of such courses. Institutional support also means universities need to commit to the employment of dedicated administrative and language support staff to enable programmes to function properly and appropriate infrastructure, such as writing centres and self-access language facilities are essential requirements (Symon & Weinberg, 2013).

While small in scale, the results of this preliminary exploration paint a picture similar to that gradually emerging in institutions throughout Japan. With a predicted 67.3% (Dearden, 2014) of institutions worldwide expecting an increase in EMI in the future, universities need to seriously consider how best to create and organise such classes. Universities in Japan not involved in the G30 project or other Good Practice (GP) initiatives initiated by MEXT, are also equally likely to increase their number of EMI courses. While a large part of the aim of these courses is to contribute to the improvement of their students’ English language abilities while at the same time opening the door to potentially greater numbers of international students, as has been explained, substantial preparation and full, institution-wide commitment is essential to enable EMI to live up to the lofty expectations placed upon it.

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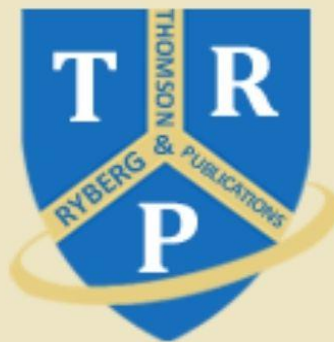
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