

The Growth of English Medium Instruction in Japan

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English-medium instruction (EMI) of content classes at Japanese universities is growing; approximately 1/4 of universities offer undergraduate EMI classes, often in the humanities and social sciences. However, with individual programs developing to suit local needs and contexts, there is no overall picture of EMI and no clear sense of the direction this trend is taking. In this paper we report initial results from a study attempted to develop just such a picture. A review of published documents and interviews with program stakeholders show that EMI programs take on a variety of forms. Some universities offer ad hoc collections of classes, with individual teachers deciding to teach in English. Others provide full degree-granting programs designed to attract high quality Japanese and international students. A tentative typology of undergraduate EMI in Japan can now be proposed, outlining the size and structure of programs as well as faculty and student body make up.

英語を使った専門科目教育 (EMI) を提供する日本の大学数は、増加してきている。現在、およそ200の大学(全大学数の約1/4に相当)が学部レベルで、ほとんどの場合は、人文学や社会科学分野のEMIプログラムを提供している。しかしながら、それぞれのEMIプログラムは、大学をとりまく状況やニーズに対応するため、独自の成長をしてきている。そのため、EMIの普及に関する全体像は把握されておらず、今後の方向性も明らかではない。この研究は、その全貌を明らかにするための初めての取り組みである。一般に公表されている文書の考察やEMIプログラム関係者へのインタビュー結果から、日本のEMIプログラムは多岐にわたっており、その場しのぎ的に設置されているEMIクラスもあれば、国内、海外を問わず優秀な学生を募集することを目的に、すべて英語で授業が行われる学位課程のEMIプログラムとして設置している場合もあることがわかった。この研究は、暫定的ではあるが、日本における学部レベルのEMI類型論を体系づけし、プログラムの規模や構造、また教員や学生の構成状況の概説を可能にした。

IN JAPAN, English-medium instruction (EMI) of content classes has been a growing trend over the past 15 years. Figures from the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology show that, as of 2006, approximately 1/3 of Japanese universities offered some kind of EMI courses, with 1/4 of all universities (194 universities) offering EMI to undergraduates (MEXT, 2006, 2009a). However, if we look at this more closely, it quickly becomes apparent that all 194 universities are not offering full degree programs in English. In fact, as of 2013, only approximately 25 universities in Japan offer full English-taught programs (ETP) for undergraduate students. The other universities offer EMI classes in a variety of formats, some with coordinated programs and others with much less coherence. With this investigation, we hope to set the stage for discussions of the growth of EMI by developing a picture of how these programs are implemented around Japan.



The Position of EMI in Japan

Of course, the growth of EMI is not happening in isolation. It is tied to surrounding events including a dramatic rise in the number of international students in Japan, which reached a peak of more than 140,000 in 2010 (JASSO, 2013). The number of international faculty, although still quite low, is also rising, growing by nearly a third from 2.1% of all full-time faculty in 1992 to 3.4% in 2007 (Huang, 2009). The Prime Minister of Japan, at the time of writing, has urged universities to double this number (Abe, 2013). This, however, is just a small part of the government's calls for internationalization, which have dominated the discourse on higher education reform in recent years (Yonezawa, 2010). One of the key elements of this internationalization strategy is EMI:

Amid ongoing globalization, in order to develop an educational environment where Japanese people can acquire the necessary English skills and also international students can feel at ease to study in Japan, it is very important for Japanese universities to conduct lessons in English for a certain extent, or to develop courses where students can obtain academic degrees by taking lessons conducted entirely in English. (MEXT, 2009b p. 17)

The government is also directly supporting internationalization of universities. The Global 30 program, a funding scheme designed to encourage internationalization of Japanese universities, promoted and funded the development of more than 35 full-degree EMI undergraduate programs for international students at 13 universities. In addition, the Global *Jinzai* (human resources) program focuses on domestic Japanese students, providing funds for 42 university programs which “foster human resources who can positively meet the challenges and succeed in the global field” (MEXT, n.d.).

Research into the larger questions of internationalization of higher education in Japan is widespread (see, e.g., Aspinall, 2013; Breaden, 2012; Goodman, 2007). However, research into EMI itself is somewhat less well developed. There are some arguments for greater adoption of EMI (Iyobe & Brown, 2011) as well as some arguments against such expansion (Oku, 2011). There have also been investigations into what kind of support is needed for EMI faculty (Oyabu, 2011; Utagawa, 2011) and how Japanese EMI programs may be informed by similar developments in Europe (Bradford, 2013). In addition, the size, organization, and key elements of several individual EMI programs have been described by writers such as Sekiya (2005), Harshbarger, Morrell, and Riney (2011), and Selzer and Gibson (2009). However, the overall picture of EMI in Japan has been somewhat unclear and thus discussions about the implications of this trend are on a shaky footing. Taking inspiration from Wächter and Maiworm's (2008) wide-reaching survey of EMI programs in Europe, we aimed with this exploratory study to develop just such an overall picture. Through examination of documentary evidence and interview data from selected EMI program stakeholders, we were able to tentatively explore how undergraduate EMI programs are structured, in what fields they are offered, and who the faculty and students are.

The Current Study

Starting with a list, provided by MEXT, of 194 universities known to offer undergraduate EMI, we conducted a cursory overview of information on EMI programs available on university websites. Following this overview, a manageable sample of 12 universities was chosen for further study. Choices were made based on three criteria: size, status, and position of the EMI program (see Table 1). Looking at these three aspects of the program design allowed us to choose programs thought to be representative of the range of EMI in Japan.

Table 1. Criteria for Categorizing Universities

Criteria	Details
Size	Small (< 2500 students)
	Medium (2500 - 10,000 students)
	Large (> 10,000 students)
Status	University / Junior college
	Public / Private
Position of EMI	Established / Newly forming
	Positioned as language / content program or multiple EMI programs

For each of the 12 universities in the sample, publicly available documents related to their EMI program(s) were collected (see Table 2). This collection formed an archive and gave us access to multiple voices from each institution. In some cases, the archive was not as helpful as was hoped, being limited in scope or consisting only of vague promotional documents and general policy statements. In other cases, however, the documents provided insights into the size and scale of EMI offerings as well as a sense of internal debates on program development. The archive served another function as well, enabling us to identify key stakeholders in EMI programs, who would later become the respondents in the interview component of this study.

Table 2. Archival Materials Collected From Selected Universities

Archival data type	Typical documents
Promotional materials	Pamphlets, brochures, webpages, welcome letters
In-house documents	Syllabi, class descriptions, faculty development reports, time tables, grant applications
Publications	Papers by relevant faculty, presentation materials from conferences and symposia

We were able to establish contact with 15 stakeholders at eight universities (see Table 3). Of the four other universities, stakeholders from two were not available during the period of this research, one did not respond to attempted communications, and one refused to be part of the research citing a “decision made at the top levels of the university.”

Table 3. Profile of Universities and Respondents

University and description	Respondents(s) Pseudonym (Gender) – Position
A Medium-sized, private (junior college) Single, established EMI program	Carl (M) – Faculty member
B Small, private Single, established EMI program	Janice (F) – Faculty member, program head

University and description	Respondents(s) Pseudonym (Gender) – Position
C Large, private Multiple EMI programs	Peter (M) – Administrator
	Takahiro (M) – Faculty member, program head
	Naomi (F) – Faculty member, administrator Keiko (F) – Faculty member, administrator
D Large, public Multiple EMI programs	Paul (M) – Faculty member, program head
E Large, private Single, established EMI program	Sarah (F) – Faculty member
	Jane (F) – Faculty member
	Eric (M) – Faculty member
	Alan (M) – Faculty member Tomoyuki (M) – Faculty mem- ber, program head
F Large, private Multiple EMI programs	Robert (M) – Faculty member
G Medium-sized, private Single, newly forming EMI program	Albert (M) – Faculty member
H Medium-sized, private Multiple EMI programs	David (M) – Faculty member

We met with respondents, visiting their campuses, to conduct semi-structured interviews. This form of data collection was chosen because it allowed us to investigate a set of key points thought to be common at all eight universities, but also allowed the respondents themselves to guide the discussion towards points of interest to them or of importance in their local context. Interviews ranged from 1 to 2.5 hours in length and were conducted in English. The interviews were summarized through multiple rounds of data reduction and information from them was added to what was known from the archive. This allowed the creation of an overall profile of each university's EMI program(s). Profiles were then compared to find both commonalities and noteworthy differences. The results are summarized below.

Findings and Discussion

Program Structures

Based on the archival and interview data from the eight universities studied here, as well as the overview of the full MEXT list of 194 universities offering EMI, it became apparent that programs which appeared very different on the surface were, in fact, quite similar. We were able to identify six broad patterns of EMI programs (see Table 4). With some overlap, these six patterns seem to encompass the bulk of undergraduate EMI programs offered in Japan and, thus, may form a tentative framework for classification. At some universities, there is a single program with clearly defined boundaries but most other universities offer EMI in multiple patterns. Often, different departments within a given university have developed EMI programs independently.

Table 4. Six Patterns of Undergraduate EMI in Japan

Category	Description	Example universities
1 Ad hoc	A few classes across the curriculum. Often taught by a foreign language teacher doing seminar-type or other classes. Generally isolated, not a significant part of the curriculum.	C, D, E, F, H
2 Semi-structured	Positioned within a given department. Several classes related to students' major. Often elective but may be required. Taught by content experts (Japanese or foreign) or by foreign language teachers. Not formalized as a program.	A, B, D, F
3 Integrated	Positioned within a given department. Formalized program (often elective) with entry / exit benchmarks and completion requirements. Often has a formal program name and a certificate of completion / diploma. EMI forms a significant part of studies related to students' major.	D, E, F, G, H

Category	Description	Example universities
4 + α program	Possibly formalized program serving students from several departments. EMI credits offered in addition to major. Often run parallel to program for incoming exchange students. Often has a formal program name and a certificate of completion / diploma.	C, D
5 English-taught program (ETP)	Entire undergraduate degree offered in EMI.	C, D, F
6 Campus-wide	All, or nearly all, undergraduate classes are taught in English. May be paired with a strong English for Academic Purposes program for incoming students.	Not found in this sample

Where a university offers more than one EMI program, the question of coordination and communication becomes important. Some universities, for example C and D, coordinate various programs and share resources, particularly human resources, between them. However, it seems to be more common that stakeholders from different programs do not communicate and, in some cases, are not really aware of EMI programs in other departments or faculties. As David from university H said:

The effort that goes into designing courses is very secretive. I can't remember a single time where one of the [faculty]

shared. They seem very secretive and hesitant to talk in detail. Basically nobody talks, or if they do, they don't develop [programs] together. There's no collaborative effort going on.

This was also seen at Universities E and F, where respondents were not aware of the full range of EMI offerings in other departments. However, this is possibly consistent with a wider lack of interdisciplinary communication that has been observed at Japanese universities (Adamson, 2010), and so should, perhaps, not be seen as a characteristic of EMI as such.

Program Size and the Growth of EMI

The number of undergraduate EMI programs in Japan has been growing over the past 15 years. Of the universities in this study, only three offered undergraduate EMI before 2000. Most others began offering EMI between 2000 and 2003. Currently six of the eight are expanding existing programs or establishing new ones (see Table 5). This rapid growth seen since 2010 implies that the MEXT (2009a) figure of 194 universities offering EMI, current as of 2006, may be underreporting the actual extent of EMI in Japan.

Table 5. Growth of EMI Programs

EMI program	Established before 2000	Established 2000-2003	Established / expanded since 2010
University	B, D, F	A, C, D, E	C, D, E, F, G, H

Despite the growth in the number of EMI programs and expansion of existing programs, EMI still appears to attract a relatively small student body (see Table 6). The full-degree Eng-

lish taught program (ETP) seen at university D, for example, has an incoming cohort of only 20 students per year. D's non-degree programs are also rather small, though they are the largest seen in this study. Their + α program admits 200 domestic and 75 international students per year, but considering the overall size of the university, Paul says, "That's not a huge number in the grand scheme of things." Most of the universities seen in this study are either expanding EMI programs now or planning to do so soon. University C for example, will nearly double the capacity of its + α program in the coming years; however, this will still only serve 2%-3% of the university's student body. Although most of the programs seen here offer EMI as individual elective classes, or as an opt-in program, a limited number of EMI classes are required at universities A, B, and E, though these are compulsory only for students in one single, relatively small department at each university. It seems clear that although EMI is becoming more common, it is not becoming the new mainstream of education for the bulk of university students in Japan.

Table 6. Approximate Number of Students Studying in Non-Degree EMI Programs*

University	Number of students	% of student population
A	120	2%
C	120	1%
D	275	2.5%
E	250	3%
G	20	4%

Note. *Where data is available.

There seemed to be several reasons for the small size of EMI programs. At some schools, the small programs were serving

the perceived level of demand from students. When there was a greater demand, some universities did not have the human resources (i.e., qualified faculty) to meet the demand. Also, at some schools, the EMI programs were intentionally kept small so as to be more manageable or to give the program a position as an elite stream within the school.

There are also some indications that EMI programs are kept small to avoid conflict or political entanglements with the wider faculty. If an EMI program were to become too big or too successful, it could be perceived as a threat to the Japanese identity of the university. Robert described the situation at university F saying,

I think obviously that this is a Japanese university so a lot of the teaching that goes on is still in Japanese. I don't think they want to move everything onto the EMI scale of things. I think people would be upset if they thought it was turning into a foreign university.

Fields of Study

According to Hashimoto (2013), EMI programs in Japan tend to be focused on science and technology at the graduate level and the humanities and social sciences at the undergraduate level. Although this is not a strict division, it is consistent with the undergraduate programs offered by universities in this study (see Table 7).

Table 7. Overview of Fields of Study Offered in EMI

Humanities and social science courses	Science and technology courses
Japanese Studies	Agricultural Science
American Studies	Environmental Studies
Economics	Science & Technology
Political Science	Biology
International Communications	Psychology
Minority Studies	Engineering
Linguistics	
Sociology	
Anthropology	
Geography	
History	
Business Studies	

Interestingly, when Science and Technology courses were offered, they were intended to promote general understanding rather than being taught at a level intended for specialists. This is perhaps linked to an image of EMI as part of a broad, liberal arts or general education outlook. Takahiro from university C said that EMI programs have to control the volume and depth of content to allow for L2 (usually Japanese) students' lower capacity for uptake of new information and that they should be aiming for broad understanding and the development of "human skills" rather than detailed specialist-level understanding. However, he acknowledged that this is not always a popular choice with faculty: "It's really difficult to tell the academic staff that you can't teach something at a really high level because the students have to spend more time on the English."

At the eight universities studied here, EMI program content was chosen in one of several ways. In some programs, including at universities B and E, there was a clear attempt to offer

students a coherent program of EMI courses connected to their major. In other cases, including programs at universities A and F, EMI classes were added to the curriculum based on the interests and specialties of the available faculty, leading to a less coherent set of offerings.

In $+α$ programs, such as those seen at universities C and D, the needs of international students, especially short-term students, seemed to be driving the choice of content. In this model, programs for domestic and international students run parallel to each other and share courses designed for the international cohort. As such, topics such as intercultural communications or Japanese studies form the backbone of the program and are supplemented with a wide, but shallow, range of courses from other fields so that as many students as possible can feel that their interests are being addressed.

EMI Students

Given the dominance of notions of internationalization in government discourse on higher education, it may be somewhat surprising to learn that, for the universities studied here, domestic Japanese students seem to make up the bulk of the student body in EMI programs. Large numbers of international students are only seen in two of the six program types, $+α$ programs and full-degree ETPs. Firstly, $+α$ programs tend to be designed for short-term international students and thus it is natural that they are seen in such classes. However, even here, these classes are open to, and may be more popular with, domestic Japanese students.

Also, full-degree ETPs are designed for international students. University D, a public university, offers an ETP restricted to international students. According to their admissions policy, “Individuals who have Japanese citizenship or Japanese permanent resident status are not eligible to apply.” At private university

F, however, the degree program is open to both domestic and international students. This difference in admission policies between public and private universities is seen across many undergraduate ETPs in Japan. Among the Global 30 schools, for instance, the seven public universities explicitly limit ETP admissions to international students. At the six private universities, however, Japanese students are not explicitly restricted (Hashimoto, 2013).

In all other program types seen here, domestic Japanese students make up the vast majority of the student body. Universities A, B, and E report some international students in their EMI programs, but not in significant numbers, thus these programs are clearly intended to serve domestic students. In this sense, the rise of EMI can be tied to the ongoing government discourse on globalizing the domestic student body of Japanese universities and creating globalized human resources, rather than to the influx of international students.

EMI Faculty

The faculty of EMI programs in Japan seems to be made up of a mix of foreign, largely western, teachers and Japanese teachers. The exact mix seems to depend on how the program is positioned within the university (see Table 8).

Staffing EMI programs tends to be difficult, as they require a mix of specialist knowledge of content, language skills, and teaching experience as well as a willingness to take on a greater workload than either an L1 content class or a language class would normally require. Also, at many of the schools studied here, EMI classes are assigned above and beyond the regular faculty teaching load. Finding a teacher with the right balance of attributes who is willing to take on the extra work can be very challenging.

Structural issues can also make staffing difficult. Japanese

Table 8. EMI Program Faculty Make-up

Positioning	Faculty make-up	Example universities
Language program, English department or Communications department	Western, English native-speakers.	A, B, D, E, F, H
	Mainly language teachers with additional responsibility for one or more EMI classes.	
Content-oriented department	Mix of Japanese and international (not necessarily western).	C, D, E, F, G
	Content specialists, not language teachers.	

universities often offer limited-term contracts for new faculty members, which can make it difficult to attract quality candidates. Paul and Jane both reported that this was a staffing challenge for their universities. This issue also arises when the EMI program is funded through a short-term external grant. Naomi and Keiko at university C are both employed under such terms and are uncertain of their long-term job stability. At university D, the administrators attached to both the +α program and the ETP face the same uncertainty. This staffing challenge can also lead to long-term instability for the program as a whole. Institutional memory and the maintenance of a coherent curriculum can be compromised as faculty members come and go regularly. Jane describes this in terms of the death of the program:

Every time the faculty turns over, the program dies. Eve-

rything [they] bring to the program they take away with them. There is nothing left behind; it's completely undone. There is nothing to guide the incoming staff, so the program dies. It's very tenuous.

Possible Implications

Although the findings of this report are preliminary, some implications for language teaching do arise. First, it seems clear that some models of EMI are becoming part of language teachers' jobs. As EMI becomes more common, language teachers will be asked to take on more content classes in those programs. As such, a teacher's non-TESL qualifications and content specialties may become increasingly important.

In addition, it seems that the growth of EMI may inform practice for teachers of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Korenev (2012) argued that implementing EMI in Japan westernizes the medium of instruction but does not necessarily westernize the classroom culture. Instead, he said that it creates a blended academic culture where the "implemented learning and teaching culture lies upon the original cultural patterns and creates a local variety of western pedagogy with . . . important differences in the substance of teaching" (p. 3). So, in an EMI context, the medium of instruction will be English but the classroom culture may not match the western models often presented in commercial EAP texts. Brown and Adamson (2011, 2012) argued that EAP teachers in Japan need to explore how these differences influence the needs of students in their classes.

Conclusions and Future Directions

Findings from the current study have illuminated the broad outlines of undergraduate EMI in Japan. The number of programs has been developing rapidly since 2000, although the total number of students taking EMI classes remains relatively small.

Although current trends may be pushing EMI towards a more international student base, established programs seem to serve a largely domestic student body. Undergraduate EMI programs seem to be focused on humanities and social sciences and may be seen as fitting into a liberal arts tradition. The programs develop differently in response to local needs but can be categorized into six common patterns.

However, it must be acknowledged that the current study has not quantified the patterns seen so far. In the next step of the study, a large-scale survey project currently underway, the researchers hope to better pin down the size, scale, and scope of the trends established here. With that additional contextual information, the stage will be set for discussions of the development of EMI and its implications for the internationalization of higher education in Japan.

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