

English-Medium Instruction and the Expanding Role of Language Educators

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This paper highlights the expanding role of university language educators in English-medium content instruction (EMI), a rapidly growing phenomenon in expanding circle countries and regions in recent years. With the growth of EMI, however, there is a reported shortage of qualified faculty who are willing and able to deliver academic content in English effectively. As such, language educators are increasingly taking on that responsibility in one way or another. With EMI still in its infancy in Japan, I find this complementary role professionally rewarding and educationally meaningful. After giving some background information, I examine the situation behind this development using data from recent surveys focusing on EMI faculty. Then I explore a range of roles language educators can play in line with content specialists in such emerging areas as L2 academic content teaching and teacher training. Finally, I propose component elements of EMI practice for collaborative implementation.

本稿は、英語による専門科目の授業 (EMI) 実践において拡大する、大学語学教員の役割について考察する。近年EMIは拡大円圏国・地域で急速に増える一方で、資格のある教員、すなわち、学術分野を英語で効果的に教える能力と意欲を備えた教員の不足が報告されている。そのため、語学教員がその責務を担うケースが増えているが、日本のEMIは未だ発展初期の段階にあり、そのような語学教員の補完的な役割は専門的にも教育的にも意義あることと筆者は捉える。本稿では、まず背景情報に触れた後、EMI教員に焦点を当てた筆者の最近の調査データを一部活用し、この役割拡大現象の背景事情を押さえた上で、第二言語による学術科目授業や教員研修面で、専門科目教員と歩調を合わせた語学教員の様々な役割について考察する。最後に、両者の連携によるEMI実践の鍵となる構成要素について提案する。

English-medium content instruction (EMI) continues growing in higher education institutions in expanding circle countries as part of internationalization efforts, especially at the undergraduate level. In fact, the number of English-taught bachelor's programs (ETBs) in Europe, in which classes are taught in English, skyrocketed from 55 in 2009 to 2,900 in 2017 (Sandström & Neghina, 2017). A similar upward trend, if not as fast, is seen in Japan. According to MEXT (2017), 305 universities or 40.9% offered some EMI at the bachelor's level in 2015, up 10% from 2011, though the number of full ETBs was limited to 73 programs at 40 institutions.

With the growth of EMI come increased student mobility and a diverse student body at home and abroad. EMI provides this increasingly diverse body of students with the opportunity to learn academic content in a language other than the local one. Moreover, the need for learning academic content in English while developing the target language skills seems to be on the rise. For example, English as a foreign language (EFL) learners in Japan seem to be shifting from learning the language per se to acquiring academic content in the language (Anthony, 2016; Koike, 2018; Shea, 2017).

Nevertheless, there has been a reported shortage of academics willing and able to deliver disciplinary content in English across languages and cultures effectively in a non-Anglophone context (Chapple, 2015; Dearden, 2014; Kuwamura, 2009). As such, content specialists who have no or little EMI experience and language educators who traditionally teach EFL for general or specific purposes are increasingly taking on that responsibility in one way or another (Carty & Susser, 2014). Meanwhile, because of potentially ad-hoc placement of EMI faculty at the institutional level, a range of issues have been raised among stakeholders revolving around staffing and student learning. With EMI still in its infancy in Japan, I find the mutually complementary role between language educators and content specialists professionally rewarding, educationally meaningful, and worthy of further study.

To explore the seemingly expanding role of language educators in Japan, I first examine the situation behind this current development, using data from recent surveys

focusing on EMI faculty in Japan and Europe. Then I discuss a range of specific roles language educators can play in line with content specialists in such emerging areas as L2 academic content teaching and teacher training. Finally, I propose the component elements of EMI practice for collaborative implementation by language educators and content specialists.

Status Quo

In this section I investigate the faculty situation and potential effects it may have had on student learning, drawing on a review of relevant literature and two recent surveys.

Nationwide Survey

To find out about the faculty situation, I conducted a questionnaire targeting 260 colleges and universities in Japan offering EMI courses. The institutions chosen were based on an unpublished list of colleges and universities with EMI course(s) obtained from MEXT in January of 2016. I collected 78 responses (22 from national universities, 11 from public, 43 from private, and two unknown) and 21 additional ones from academic and administrative divisions within three of those universities (two national and one private).

The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions, including 18 multiple-choice items about the respondent's institution, EMI faculty, and their professional concerns and needs, with two open-ended items asking for a free comment and contact information (see Kuwamura, 2018, for a full review of the data). The respondents were mostly administrators and a few faculty members.

Makeup of EMI Faculty in Japan

Brown (2018) investigated the makeup of EMI faculty in Japan and found that they were primarily comprised of native speakers of Japanese and English who typically taught content, language, or both. My survey shows a similar trend (see Tables 1 & 2). Two-thirds of respondents reported that their EMI faculty were mainly first language (L1) Japanese speakers (32 respondents), mainly L1 English speakers (23), or a balanced mixture of both (11). In addition, 35 respondents reported that they had some EMI faculty whose L1 was neither Japanese nor English, but as varied as over 20 different languages. This may imply that faculty of various linguistic and cultural backgrounds manage to support the present implementation of EMI practice in Japan.

Table 1. Makeup of EMI Faculty by L1 ($N = 99$)

EMI faculty's L1	Number
Mainly L1 Japanese	32
Mainly L1 English	23
A mixture of L1 English, L1 Japanese and L1 other languages	17
A balanced mixture of L1 English and L1 Japanese	11
Other	6
No response	10

Teaching Load

EMI faculty typically taught an EMI course(s) in addition to local language-medium and/or language classes (see Table 2). Nearly 60% of respondents reported faculty delivering both Japanese-medium instruction (JMI) and EMI. More than 40% of respondents also reported faculty teaching language and EMI. These include educators such as those initially appointed to teach language being asked to teach content within a broad disciplinary area later on, as seen at some universities (e.g., Carty & Susser, 2014).

Table 2. EMI Faculty Teaching Load ($N = 99$)

Teaching load	Number
EMI and JMI	60
EMI only	44
EMI and language	42
EMI, language and JMI	25
Other courses	5

Note. Multiple answers allowed.

Employment Status

The employment status of EMI faculty varied: tenured, fixed-term, part-time, or a combination of these (see Table 3); fewer than 40% of programs were staffed mainly by tenured faculty. There are several issues connected to faculty employment status. First,

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because they are often on limited-term contracts such as a project grant on a renewable or nonrenewable basis, faculty may face the risk of late contract renewal decisions despite their demonstrated excellence in teaching during their appointment. There are also cases where tenured content faculty were unwilling to teach EMI at all (Heigham, 2018) or unwilling to continue after their first EMI class assignment (Kuwamura, 2009). There are also examples of EMI faculty continuing despite subpar teaching evaluations. These situations make it difficult for EMI faculty to fully commit, and a risk emerges of unstable implementation of EMI that affects student learning. Something fundamental may need to be done professionally for the sustainable implementation of EMI and positive learning outcomes along the way.

Table 3. Makeup of EMI Faculty by Employment Status (N = 99)

Employment status	Number
Mainly full-time (tenured) faculty	37
A mixture of tenured, fix-term full-time and part-time faculty	31
Mainly full-time (fixed-term) faculty	10
Mainly part time faculty	8
Others	3
No response	10

Effects on Student Learning

Together with such potentially unstable and ad-hoc staffing of EMI faculty, there is a concern among stakeholders regarding student learning, especially acquisition of content knowledge in English at the tertiary level (e.g. Saito, 2013; Shimizu, 2015). Stakeholders question how students could possibly comprehend and absorb academic content in an additional language when it is already challenging for them to do so in the L1. In fact, reduced content learning is seen in some EMI contexts (Byun, Chu, Kim, Park, Kim, & Jung, 2011; Heigham, 2018; Lassegard, 2006), such as when there is insufficient English language proficiency on the part of faculty, students, or both (e.g., Hamciuc, 2017; Huang, 2013). Students also express dissatisfaction with EMI practice in terms of lack of understanding of student questions and comments as well as insufficient explanations

and feedback on work among faculty (Heigham, 2018; Lassegard, 2006, 2014). The pace of lectures is another issue (Huang, 2013); if a lecture is too fast, students cannot follow it, whereas if it is too slow, they become bored. Nevertheless, these issues may have more to do with the communication skills of the faculty in the L2 than language proficiency itself (Lassegard, 2006), as content specialists assigned to EMI likely have sufficient disciplinary literacy in English. These issues may also occur because of anxiety (Carroll, 2015; Nakai, 2011) and identity (Bradford, 2016; Kling, 2013) on the part of EMI faculty.

Faculty Concerns and Needs

Similar faculty issues that may affect student learning can be found not only in Japan but also in Europe where EMI implementation began earlier. To highlight those issues as well as corresponding faculty needs in both regions, I conducted another survey on nonlocal language-medium instruction, not limited to EMI, in which I collected responses from 25 mostly Europe-based participants who were primarily language educators in higher education teaching academic content in a nonlocal language, mostly English. The survey used the same 18 multiple-choice items as the survey discussed above but was adapted slightly to reflect the wider variety of possible first languages in the European case. Table 4 compares faculty concerns and needs of the two regions.

What is noteworthy is that the respondents in Europe are more concerned about faculty language proficiency and express greater need for professional development, whereas staffing and workload remain primary concerns in Japan, as previously reported (Tsuneyoshi, 2005). Furthermore, because the majority of the Europe-based respondents were language educators teaching academic content, the role of language educators in content teaching and corresponding teacher training may be even greater in Europe. In fact, there is a growing need for professional development among EMI faculty there (O'Doud, 2018), where an increasing number of institutions are developing their own EMI training programs for faculty with the training being planned and conducted mainly by language-teaching specialists.

Table 4. Faculty Concerns and Needs in Japan and Europe

Area	Japan (n = 99)	Europe (n = 25)
Concerns	Workload (55)	Workload (13)
	Appointment (50)	Language proficiency (12)
Needs		Preparedness (12)
	Pedagogical knowledge (46)	Professional development (13)
	Resources (29)	Pedagogical knowledge (11)
	Professional development (28)	Language proficiency (10)
Professional development opportunities	Incentives (28)	
	No (65) > Yes (24)	Yes (13) > No (5)
	Other (10)	Other (7)

Note. Multiple answers allowed for concerns and needs.

In Japan, on the other hand, universities offering professional development opportunities to interested faculty do not seem to be in the majority (Brown, 2018). In fact, 65 out of 99 institutions did not provide such opportunities in my survey (see Table 4).

Expanding Roles of Language Educators

Placing academics equipped with both disciplinary literacy in English and L2 pedagogical skills at all Japanese colleges and universities offering EMI courses is ideal yet unrealistic. Given the status quo, the continued growth of EMI should in turn open up a range of professional development opportunities for language educators especially in the emerging areas of L2 academic content and language teaching and teacher training. Their engagement with EMI in line with content specialists is important as well.

L2 Academic Content Teaching

Guiding Students Through EMI

As I mentioned earlier, EFL students' interest seems to have shifted towards academic subjects in the target language in recent years. Language educators can guide these students through the different learning stages of EMI as seen in the ESL and academic bridge programs at Anglophone universities. In this regard, integrating academic language learning into EMI practice is key and language educators play an important role in this capacity.

More specifically, in order to help effectively enhance students' acquisition of disciplinary content in an additional language, language educators could teach pre-EMI EFL courses, such as English for general or academic purposes. As a further step, they can also take on more content-based instruction that can act as a bridge between language courses and EMI in the form of CLIL (content and language integrated learning) or ILCHE (integrating content and language in higher education). CLIL is further divided into language-led, soft CLIL and content-led, hard CLIL (Ikeda, 2011), which should provide additional opportunities for language educators to fine-tune student learning. In fact, CLIL can be employed by language educators in general education as it already has been at a few progressive institutions (Ikeda & Pinner, 2013).

Teaching Disciplinary Content

Language educators with sufficient content knowledge could also take on EMI courses in general education directly, either by themselves or by teaming up with content specialists in a value-added way (Iyobe & Li, 2018). Their delivery of basic disciplinary content helps to prepare students for upper level studies.

The use of L1 is becoming an effective approach to EMI practice in terms of facilitating student acquisition of academic content (e.g., Fujimoto-Adamson & Adamson, 2018) as maintaining academic rigor in EMI classrooms at a level comparable to that through the local language-medium instruction is challenging. To this end, language educators with knowledge of the local language could help overcome students' cognitive challenges with bilingual support. Their expertise benefits both domestic and international students in a way that informs the local language equivalents of discipline-specific terminology in English for deeper tertiary learning in an intercultural environment.

Teacher Training

By utilizing their expertise in L2 pedagogy and/or training skills, language educators can also play a teacher-training role with nonnative English speaking (NNES) faculty and in EMI program development as well as in the aforementioned instructional areas.

Language Training

Naturally, language support is one major area for language educators to engage in as teacher trainers, as EMI faculty often deal with both language and content. This is especially challenging for content specialists who are not trained in language teaching nor experienced in conducting lectures in multilingual classrooms. It is especially so when there are students with mixed language abilities as there often are in EMI classrooms (Close, 2015).

To this end, language educators can play a key role in the emerging areas of L2 academic language teaching and corresponding methodology. They could assist content specialists in providing language support for EMI students with different levels of language proficiency. In fact, the need for LRI (linguistically responsive instruction) was recently addressed in response to the fact that content specialists are increasingly in need of assistance in supporting the academic language learning of students in the multilingual English-medium content classrooms that are growing in the United States and elsewhere (Gallagher & Haan, 2018). What is behind this is the rapidly rising number of international students in recent years.

Furthermore, language educators could also help NNES faculty gain an objective awareness of their own language proficiency in terms of comprehensibility, intelligibility, and pronunciation, all of which are needed to present materials clearly in English.

Program Development

To make EMI and ETBs stable and sustainable and to enhance their quality, language educators could play a key role in several areas of program development as well. These include hiring and managing faculty (and staff), curriculum and materials development (such as bilingual terminology for EMI courses), and the proofreading of materials produced by NNES content specialists. They could also perhaps produce and administer a qualifying test for interested faculty, an initiative taken in Europe (Kling, 2013).

Collaboration With Content Specialists

It is reported that there has been lack of collaboration among faculty across disciplines or departments (e.g., Adachi, 2017; Brown, 2018; Coleman, Hultgren, Li, Tsui, & Shaw, 2018) and that access to resources and materials for classroom use is limited. To help with linguistically responsive instruction, it would be more effective if language educators sought to collaborate with content specialists in one way or another and vice versa. They could complement roles mutually by offering their expertise to enhance content teaching and learning across languages and cultures.

In addition, language educators and content specialists could invite their content or language counterparts to observe their classes, ask to give feedback or advice, or team teach, as has already been done in a few universities in Japan and elsewhere (Iyobe & Li, 2018). These initiatives for collaboration would in turn develop into a “hybrid team” of professionals comprised of content specialists and language educators with enhanced tertiary learning as their mission.

Component Elements of EMI Practice for Collaborative Implementation

Figure 1 shows the component elements of EMI practice I have been developing as a research project. These are key professional areas in which content and language specialists would need to play complementary roles to an individually and institutionally appropriate degree (see Appendix for the composition of each element). I strongly believe that collaborative implementation will enhance the overall educational quality of EMI.

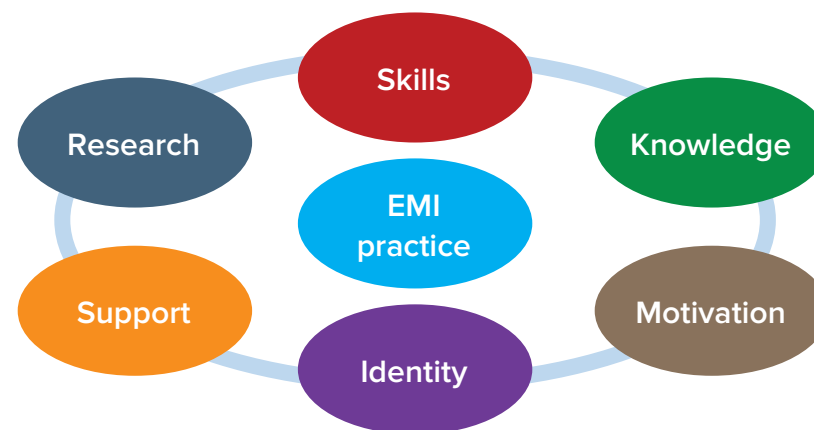


Figure 1. Component elements of EMI practice.

Challenges and Future Directions

Arguably, the biggest challenge university educators are currently facing in terms of implementing EMI is to ensure that students acquire academic content in a language other than the local one. Without quality assurance in line with current practices for JMI, educators may not be able to make progress in terms of educating and producing students equipped with skills and knowledge needed both locally and globally.

To ensure educational value and quality in Japanese higher education, EMI needs not only to be incorporated into mainstream education, in which domestic and international students interact and learn from each other across languages and cultures, but also to include language educators to their fullest capacity for better content teaching in English. It is essential to form and maintain a hybrid team of language educators and content specialists, raising the status of university language educators as well as of potentially underutilized foreign-trained academics (Yamamoto & Ishikawa, 2018). This can be attained if professional working conditions are ensured in a way that motivates faculty to engage in EMI practice sustainably.

EMI creates a meaningful and authentic learning environment in which students can use and further develop their language skills while acquiring academic content in their disciplinary fields. Language educators can play a professionally rewarding yet challenging role in guiding learners through their levels of engagement with EMI by bridging language and content as they offer their expertise. The need for “qualified” language educators is greater than ever as the real world continues looking for globally and professionally competent individuals.

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Appendix

Component Elements of EMI Practice

Elements	Makeup
Skills	<p>Pedagogical skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L2 teaching techniques • Discipline-specific approaches to teaching in English • Teaching across languages and cultures • Interactive presentation <p>Communication skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal communication • Intercultural communication <p>Linguistic skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English language proficiency • Comprehensibility and intelligibility of utterances <p>Self-efficacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to produce a desired or intended result • Objective grasp of own language ability, teaching style, etc.
Knowledge	<p>Academic content and language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General academic literacy • Discipline-specific academic literacy <p>Pedagogical approaches (e.g., TESOL, CLIL, ICLHE, LRI)</p> <p>Knowledge of the local language</p>
Motivation	<p>Willingness to teach in an additional language</p> <p>Genuine interest in teaching across languages and cultures</p> <p>Professional and personal meaningfulness</p>
Identity	<p>Professional identity, expertise and authority</p> <p>Own teaching style in an additional language</p> <p>Teacher's beliefs</p>

Support	<p>Professional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training opportunities • Collaboration between faculty across disciplines and/or departments • Access to resources <p>Linguistic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language support for students and faculty/staff <p>Administrative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • Supporting staff <p>Structural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper and balanced enrollment
Research	<p>EMI studies</p> <p>Interdisciplinary studies</p>