

English-Medium Instruction in Japan: Experience and Its Implementation in Internationalization of Agricultural Higher Education in Uzbekistan

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Abstract

EMI has been described as the most significant trend in educational internationalization' (Chapple, 2015, p. 1) and as an 'unstoppable train', from which EMI educators must ensure students alight safely at their destination (Macaro, 2018).

Many studies have been conducted to explain and find out what is the best experience to implement in internationalization of Higher Education (HE). However, while literature covers a wide variety of theories, this review will focus on two non-English countries' experiences.

Most Asian countries are adopting English-medium instruction (EMI) programs in order to internationalize higher education and develop their economies. Japan is one of the countries where the internationalization of universities is growing rapidly due to the successful implementation of EMI programs. Every year, more universities offer new programs and expand existing ones. However, the majority of universities in Asia face numerous challenges in realizing globalization of higher education, especially those in the early stages of transitioning to English teaching programs. Tashkent State Agrarian University (TSAU) in Uzbekistan is one of them. Agriculture is a vital sector of Uzbekistan's economy, standing for about 25% of annual GDP and employing about 30% of the labor force in 2023 (Ministry of Agriculture, 2023). TSAU, established in 1930, prepares agriculture specialists not only for Uzbekistan but also for neighboring countries. In Uzbekistan, not many studies are done related to the internationalization of agricultural tertiary education.

To reduce the challenges faced by students and content teachers on their EMI journeys, we must first understand the language-related challenges that many students and teachers experience in the process. This article attempts to investigate the early challenges faced by Japanese universities in transitioning to EMI courses and what aspects of the Japanese EMI experience would be suitable to apply in higher education in Uzbekistan. Moreover, the study will focus on how consensus should be obtained in collaboration between English language and content teachers. The role of English language teachers in the successful implementation of the EMI program is immense and irreplaceable. The study is set out to investigate EAP teachers' views and readiness for collaboration with content teachers, in addition to the way they engage in collaborative practices in the EAP tertiary context in Uzbekistan and Japan.

Moreover, the research discusses the various existing language supports for EMI program students and redesigning the English language classes to reduce the linguistic challenges.

The findings are based on a literature review of Japanese universities' strategies in the implementation of the EMI program. To address the study questions, a questionnaire was used to gather quantitative data by asking content lecturers the identical 30 questions on 5-point Likert scales with choices ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". In the questionnaire, participated content lecturers from TSAU, Akita University and Tokyo University of Technology and Agriculture (TUAT), English language teachers from TSAU and some 1st-year and 2nd-year undergraduate students from all three universities who enrolled in the EMI program also showed interest in participation in research. Also, the research discusses the comparative study of delivering content courses through class observations at TSAU and Akita university.

Findings are expected to be introduced to the department of "Languages" and shared with content lecturers who are involved in the EMI program at TSAU and serve as a source for future research.

Keywords: English-medium, instruction (EMI), internationalization, globalization, implementation, higher education, content lecturers