Realizing Internationalization at Home Through English-Medium Courses at a Japanese University: Strategies to Maximize Student Learning

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Abstract: In 2009, the Japanese government launched the Global 30 (G30) Project, a new initiative to internationalize universities. Selected universities had to create English-medium degree programs at undergraduate level in order to stimulate "internationalization at home." The G30 Project represented a major shift in the focus of internationalization efforts from quantitative to qualitative outcomes. Using a case study approach, this paper investigates one G30 program and the attempts made to open up English-medium course offerings to the wider student body. It explores two related issues: level setting and student attrition. A mixed methods approach was used with data gathered from students and course instructors. Sanford's (1966/2009) "support and challenge" conceptual framework, as adapted by J. M. Bennett (1993), and Vygotsky's (1978) "zone of proximal development and scaffolding" were employed. Results showed that to maximize learning it was important to have strategies to maintain a high level of course content while also providing targeted support to students at appropriate times. Effective strategies for reducing course attrition were identified.

Keywords: Higher education internationalization, Global 30, English-medium course, English-medium instruction, level setting, student course attrition, content language integrated learning, EMI, CLIL

Introduction

There have been increasing demands for higher education institutions (HEIs) in non-English speaking countries to establish English-medium programs and courses in order to attract international students, produce graduates who can contribute to the global workforce, and promote international profile of the institution (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra 2011; Lavankura, 2013; Kuroda, 2014). HEIs in continental Europe and throughout Asia have increased the number of range of English-medium programs and courses in recent years (Bradford, 2012). Japanese universities, previously not noted for providing English-medium programs, have recently started to follow this trend. To be more competitive in the globalized society and attract the world's "best" international students, Japanese leading universities have been striving to create quality English-medium degree programs at graduate level, and even at the more human resource intensive, undergraduate level.

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In 2009 the Japanese government began to provide incentives to universities to establish English-medium programs through a new university internationalization project referred to as the "Project for Establishing University Network for Internationalization," or the Global 30 (G30) Project. This project resulted in a significant increase in English-medium degree programs and individual course offering in Japanese universities. Over the five years of the G30 project, 2009 to 2014, 33 undergraduate and 123 graduate English-medium degree programs were newly established (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT], 2014).

One driver for creating English-medium programs and courses is that they allow universities to overcome the Japanese language barrier, making it possible to attract a larger and more diverse international student population. In the global race for securing the largest possible market share of highly talented international students, reducing the language barrier offer the promise of overcoming the hitherto phenomenon of "Japan passing", where talented students head to the English speaking countries rather than Japan, despite its mature HE sector (MEXT, 2008).

Another driver is that English-medium courses are of interest to local students and can help promote "internationalization at home." In addition to attracting international students in Japan, the Japanese government has sought to send Japanese students overseas to foster globally competitive human resources. Despite the trend, Japanese students are less mobile now and far fewer are going overseas for study now than in the bubble years of the 1980s and early 1990s. Given this situation, internationalization at home has been an alternative strategy and can provide non-mobile local students with international learning experiences.

Despite the expectations, offering English-medium programs and courses is not without its challenges for Japanese institutions. Ensuring a high quality teaching and learning environment is one such challenge (Bradford, 2012; Burgess, Gibson, Klaphake, & Selzer, 2010; Jon & Kim, 2011; Kuwamura, 2009; Lassegard, 2006; Mori, 2011; Tsuneyoshi, 2005). This paper explores student teaching and learning issues involved with English-medium instruction in Japanese universities, and the strategies that instructors are employing to enhance the quality of the at-home international learning environment. For the purpose of this paper, English-medium instruction (EMI) and EMI courses and programs refer specifically to the situation where a course or program is delivered in English in an educational setting where English is a second language.

This paper reports on a case study of one G30 program offered by a national university in Japan that, for the purposes of this study, will be called the Social Science International Undergraduate Program (SOC Program). The SOC program took in its first cohort of students in 2010. The students have a very high level of English proficiency and initially participation in classes was limited to student enrolled on the SOC program or the other English medium undergraduate program offered by the university. However, starting in the spring semester of the 2012 SOC Program began to offer its courses to the wider campus community. While various issues arose as a result, this paper specifically explores two important interconnected issues: course-level setting and student course attrition, taking into account both student and instructor perspectives. It seeks to better understand how to maximize student learning and course completion in English-medium classes attended both by students enrolled on English-medium programs and those enrolled on programs offered in Japanese.

Course-level setting and reducing student course attrition are challenges faced by instructors in any classes, but arise as particularly important with English-medium courses.

Universities in an increasing number of non-English speaking countries are offering English-medium courses and programs. Bradford (2012) notes that universities in quite different cultural settings, Asia and continental Europe, are experiencing similar issues when delivering English-medium programs related to language, culture and the structure of the programs and courses. This paper identifies strategies for maximizing student learning in the context of one Japanese program that will can be employed in other English-medium program settings as well.

English Medium Courses in Non-English–Speaking Countries

This section offers a brief review of research on English-medium programs and courses offered in Japan as well as other non-English speaking countries. It highlights the perceived challenges identified in the literature before introducing the conceptual framework that will play a crucial role in this paper.

There have been a small but growing body of literature on English-medium instruction (EMI) in Japan. The previous studies identified two main interrelated issues instructors and students face in the English-medium programs and courses: linguistic and cultural challenges. Mori (2011) and Bradford (2012) observed shared issues in Japan and non-English speaking European countries. They mention that students' and instructors' limited English proficiency and diverse cultural norms and expectation may negatively affect quality of the courses (Bradford, 2012; Mori, 2011). Instructors may not be linguistically competent enough to deliver courses effectively, and students may not be able to fully understand a course due to lack of English proficiency (Mori, 2011, p. 68). Some studies have noted that linguistic challenges in English-medium courses can create boundaries between different groups of the campus community. For Japan, Burgess et al. (2010) indicated a negative outcome because of Japanese students facing linguistic challenges in taking English-medium courses. He argued that this results in *Dejima-isation*, a term used to describe the isolation of international students and Japanese returnees[1] from the rest of the campus community (p. 470). The community divide issue also happens in South Korea. Jon and Kim (2011) stated that English-medium courses could cause an "English divide" (p. 154). Students whose level of English proficiency is low tend to obtain lower grades on their assessments. These students, therefore, avoid English-medium courses because they value their grade point average.

As for cultural issues, Bradford (2012), Jon & Kim (2011), and Tsuneyoshi (2005) explored how a diverse student body can create different expectations and needs in class in Japan. Tsuneyoshi (2005) stated that diverse international student groups can bring diverse needs and expectations in terms of the format and style of lectures to courses (p. 79). She also added that having Japanese students in the English-medium courses only increases these needs (p. 79). Bradford (2012), on the other hand, noted that "English instruction leads to an 'Americanization' of classroom and accountability practices, partly due to the difficulty of separating English from its dominant culture and to the need for international transparency in the program" (p. 3). This issue was noted by Jon and Kim, who concluded that "[f]or Japanese students, the American type of class structure, using multiple evaluations and detailed descriptions of what to do in a syllabus, made them feel unprepared and did not acknowledge them as independent scholars" (2011, p.167).

English-medium courses in Japan and non-English-speaking countries have certainly raised various challenges in both teaching and learning. Non-English speaking countries face

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[1] Japanese returnees refer to those who return to Japan after residing and being educated abroad for a period of three years or more.

common issue with the introduction of English-medium programs and courses. These challenges lead to quality concerns regarding the programs and courses. Therefore, it is meaningful to explore what kinds of issues instructors and students face and their solutions. The past literature, however, tended to primarily identify challenges faced when adopting English-medium courses without suggesting strategies to resolve the issues and maximize student teaching and learning.

This research examines challenges to introduce English-medium courses in Japan and offers effective ways to provide students with a meaningful international learning experience. It can contribute a new perspective to the recent literature on English-medium programs and courses in non-English speaking countries by offering an investigation of EMI practice in a Japanese leading university.

Conceptual Framework

This paper draws on two conceptual frameworks: J. M. Bennett's (1993) "support and challenge framework," which is based on Sanford's (1966/2009) "principle of challenge and response", and Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) (1978).

Sanford noted that well-balanced challenges and support are required for student learning and development. "[P]eople do not change unless they encounter a situation to which they cannot adapt with the use of devices already present. They have to innovate, to generate some new response to meet the new situation offered them" (Sanford, 2009, p. 44). However, when students face too much of a challenge with an inadequate amount of support, they grow overwhelmed, which hinders their learning. Conversely, if students face less of a challenge with too much support, they become disinterested, which also hinders their learning.

J. M. Bennett (1993) utilized the framework and developed "a model for balancing content and process challenges for learners" (Figure 1). The model suggested that educators need to support learners by paying attention to the process, which is a teaching method, while challenging them with the content. In addition, if the content is less challenging, the process should be more challenging (Bennett, Bennett, & Allen, 2003, p. 254).
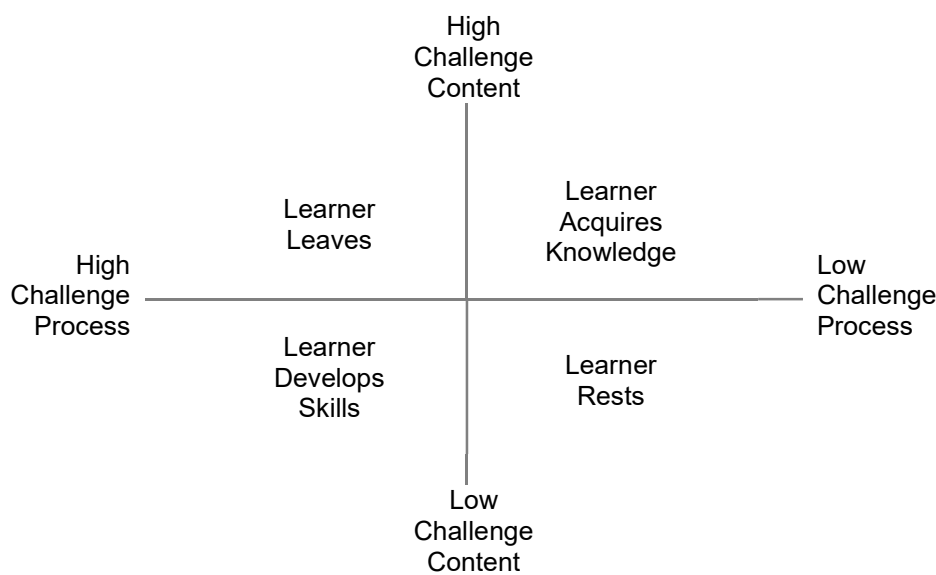

Figure 1. Content and process: Balancing challenge (J. M. Bennett, 1993).

This framework and model have been applied to intercultural learning in language classrooms in order to maximize students' language and culture learning. SOC and non-SOC mixed courses have different dynamics, but the frameworks and the model should be applicable, because both situations aim to enhance student learning. The framework and the model are used to determine the level setting of a course and to maximize student learning.

Another theory used in this study is Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD, which addressed the development and learning of children, but has recently been widely applied to teaching and learning in various areas. This theory is defined as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). More concretely, Woolfolk (2005) explained the ZPD as "the area where the child cannot solve a problem alone, but can be successful under adult guidance or in collaboration with a more advance peer" (p. 55). Vygotsky (1978) asserted that children learn better in the ZPD when provided with appropriate assistance from more skillful peers.

It is vital for educators to understand not only where the student is now, but where the student can potentially be in the near future. For students to transit from assisted and independent learning zone, "scaffolding" can play a significant role. Echevarria and Graves (2006), Gibbons (2002), and Mohan (2001) have noted that second language learners need "significant support in the form of scaffolding and sheltered content instruction" to take English-medium courses (as cited in Burgess, 2010, p. 470). The idea of scaffolding is the learning process originated from Vygotsky's concept of ZPD (1978). Building on this, Raymond defined scaffolding as the "role of teachers and others in supporting the learner's development and providing support structures to get to that next stage or level" (Raymond, 2000, p. 176). The concept of scaffolding helps educators understand how to best promote students' learning and development and help students' learning process to eventually function as an independent learner.

Methodology

This section first describes the G30 Program and the SOC Program at one G30 selected national university to have a better understanding of this paper research. The G30 Project allowed the national university to introduce English-medium undergraduate degree programs for the first time. Here, the author will explain the backgrounds of the G30 as well as the dynamics of SOC Program course design, delivery, and its students at the university. Then, the author will introduce how the data collection was conducted.

Global 30 Project

The recent university internationalization project, "Project for Establishing University Network for Internationalization," or Global 30 (G30), was launched in 2009 as a part of the *300,000 Foreign Students Plan*. The project endeavors to secure 300,000 international students by 2020, by enhancing academic, financial, language, and cultural adjustment support and educational environments with the 13 selected universities expected to lead Japanese internationalization initiatives at higher education level. One unique element of this project is that the selected universities are required to establish English-medium degree programs, with the objective of alleviating one of the major obstacles of studying in Japan, the Japanese language barrier. Another element of this project is that it aims to create a learning environment for both international and local students to learn from each other (MEXT, n.d.).

The national university investigated is one of the G30 selected universities. It established two English-medium undergraduate and two graduate programs for this project. This paper explores one of the undergraduate degree programs, the SOC Program.

SOC Program and Student Dynamics

This section introduces students' backgrounds in order to provide a greater understanding of student diversity in the SOC and non-SOC mixed student courses (Figure 2). The SOC program targets those who have been educated overseas or are from the international school system in Japan (SOC students). SOC students have high levels of English proficiency since they are required to study and obtain the degree completely in English. Some have grown up in multicultural or lingual environments. Some have completed all education at an international school in Japan but never been abroad. Others have attended local schools and studied in the local language.
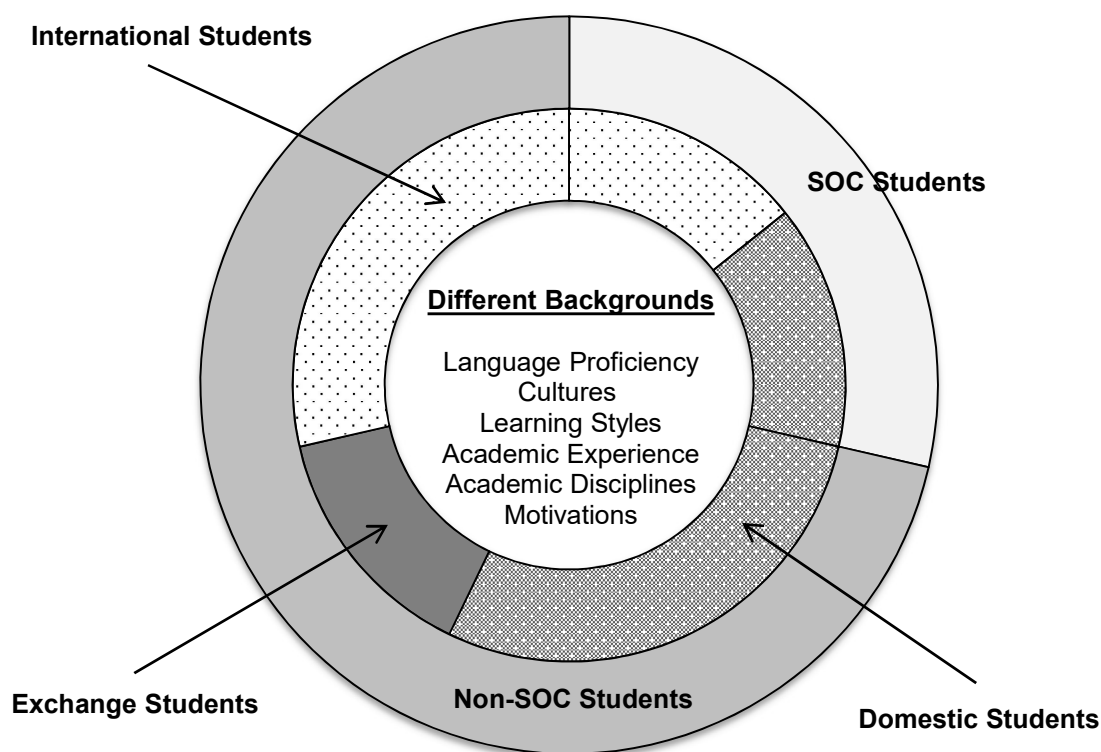

Figure 2. Chart showing student dynamics in SOC and non-SOC mixed courses.

The term, "non-SOC students," is used here to describe any students who are not on the SOC program (i.e., international students, domestic students, and exchange students from various departments). Non-SOC students bring further diversity to the English-medium SOC courses because they are from different countries from the SOC students, have different cultural and linguistic as well as learning backgrounds, and varying expectations from the courses (Tables 1-5). Each semester has had different dynamics of diversity in the SOC and non-SOC mixed student courses; however, the trend shows that the majority of the non-SOC students are undergraduate Japanese students taking SOC English-medium courses with the purpose of English improvement and an interest in the course content. The SOC courses are either social science-focused content or skill-based courses with English instruction. All courses employ

pedagogy of student-centered learning. Each course has specific learning outcomes or targets attitudes, knowledge, and skills that students should achieve by the end of the course. In this learning environment, where students from diverse backgrounds are learning together, instructors experience challenges in student teaching and learning. The following section details some challenges that were identified through interviews with students and instructors.

Table 1. *Student Percentages per Nationality*

Nationalities	%
Japanese	62%
Asian	21%
European	12%
Oceanian	2%
South American	1%
Dual nationality	2%

Table 2. *Registration Status*

Status	%
Bachelor 1st year	38%
Bachelor 2nd year	7%
Bachelor 3rd year	12%
Bachelor 4th year	5%
Master 1st year	23%
Master 2nd year	2%
Doctoral 1st year	1%
Exchange student	12%

Table 3. *Registered Major*

Major	%
Social sciences	47%
Foreign studies	17%
Law	14%
Economics	11%
School of Letters	6%
Sciences	1%
Engineering Science	1%
Other	3%

Table 4. *Percentage of Students Who Have Taken Courses in English*

Yes	56%
No	44%

Table 5. *Reasons for Taking SOC Courses*

Reason	JPN Student	Non-JPN Student
English improvement	42%	15%
Content of the course	32%	61%
Other reasons	26%	14%

Others: Study-abroad preparation, continuous learning after a study-abroad experience, English-medium instruction, different ways of delivering courses, friend/teacher recommendations

Data Collection

The aim of this study was to identify teaching challenges in SOC and non-SOC student mixed courses. The data collection comprised three phases: questionnaires were distributed at the beginning and at the end of the semester to all non-SOC students during the first phase, and in the second phase, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with SOC and non-SOC students as well as instructors. The third phase entailed weekly course observations by the author, acting as a teaching assistant (TA). The purpose of the data collection was to examine teaching challenges from multiple perspectives in order to determine how to create an effective teaching and learning environment.

The ethical protocol for this study was approved by the School of Human Sciences Ethics Review Committee, Osaka University (No. 12004), and was conducted on the basis of informed consent.

Non-SOC Questionnaires

SOC courses were offered to non-SOC students from the beginning of the Spring semester of 2012. The aim of the questionnaires was not only to understand students' backgrounds and experience, but also to generate data that could be used to enhance SOC and non-SOC student' teaching and learning experiences.

Data for this paper came from pre- and post-questionnaires that were distributed to all non-SOC students taking SOC courses in the Spring of 2013 in order to understand students' backgrounds and their experiences of the courses. The questions sought to find out which student populations were taking the SOC English-medium courses, why they were taking them, and their perceived challenges and benefits. The questionnaires were distributed twice, at the beginning and at the end of the semester. The questionnaires were in Japanese and in English, and students were allowed to use either language when answering the open-ended questions.

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain further insight into non-SOC students' experiences in courses, as well as those of SOC students and instructors. Sixteen SOC students, 20 non-SOC students, and seven instructors were interviewed during the academic year 2012-13. The students were asked to detail their motivations for taking the SOC courses if non-SOC

students, and their course experience focusing on challenges, benefits, and support that were useful or they thought could be useful to enhance their learning experience. The instructors were asked to detail their teaching strategies and their perception of the challenges they faced when teaching students from diverse backgrounds. Interviews were conducted either in Japanese or in English, whichever language students and instructors felt comfortable using. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Japanese transcriptions were translated into English by the author.

Course Observations

Some of the courses were observed weekly by the author, acting as a TA and an observer. There were advantages and disadvantages to this dual role. On the one hand, the author was able to gather rich data that helped better understand the learning environment, the learners, and the instructors. On the other hand, becoming part of the program as a SOC TA and building good relationships with the research participants made it difficult for the author to always maintain a detached perspective on the research topic.

Ultimately, everyday class observations, as well as daily interactions and conversations with professors and students, interviews with professors and students, and questionnaires offered different perspectives on the program and enriched the research data.

Data: Identifying Challenges in SOC and Non-SOC Students Mixed Courses

Course-level setting and student course attrition[2] were the main issues that arose during the interviews with every instructor. These two issues are interrelated. One cause of student course attrition is that the course level is set too high. This section clarifies these two issues from multiple perspectives: students, instructors, and a TA.

Level Setting

The non-SOC students' backgrounds showed that they have diverse linguistic and learning backgrounds, as well as various reasons for taking the courses. When teaching these students, instructors face difficulties on setting the course level. Some instructor's comments are provided here. Different levels of students' English fluency are the first challenge they face, as noted by one of the core instructors[3] on the program:

> As an instructor, it is difficult to know where to set the level. I do not want to bore SOC students. That's for sure. At the same time, I do not want to ignore the students whose English is still basic. So I have to find a mutual ground. That is a big challenge. (Instructor A – A core course instructor on the SOC Program)

There was also a perception among instructors that the SOC students can manage a higher workload in preparation for the class. This idea is rooted partly in the students' familiarity with the English language medium of instruction, but also because the curriculum includes specifically the development of meta-cognitive skills (Kusuma-Powell & Powell, 2013). Thus,

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[2] Student course attrition in this paper refers mostly to those who take classes at the beginning and stay to the end of the semester, but drop before final evaluations. SOC and non-SOC student mixed courses have many non-SOC students who do not officially enroll but audit the courses.

[3] The term *core instructor* is used to describe a faculty member employed specifically for the SOC program or who has a special responsibility for delivery of the program.

another instructor member articulated his difficulties in attempts to identify how much individual students are capable of given the diversity of the student body:

> SOC students, Japanese students, international students, exchange students, all kinds together. I always need to think about how much they can read, how much they can prepare to engage in a discussion, how much work I can expect them to do outside the class. So I'm constantly struggling with this and trying to get feedback from the students. (Instructor B – A core course instructor)

An examination of the students' perspectives showed that they have different opinions on the SOC course workload. An exchange student from the Philippines said, "the courses at my home university are really demanding, and the amount of readings in SOC courses is pretty adequate for me" A non-SOC Japanese student stated, "the amount of work for assignments is more than for the Japanese regular courses. SOC courses are about eight credits worth!"

Instructors are trying to understand students' capacity and determine a level where all students can benefit from the course. While on the one hand they are concerned with those students who do not have a strong command of English or basic knowledge of topics in the social sciences, they are also concerned to challenge those students with a high level of English proficiency and with considerable knowledge on social sciences issues:

> SOC students have already taken four courses related to sociological issues and they are fluent in English, and here I have non-Sociology non-English native students. It [the class today] did not seem boring for SOC students, but I still have to think about how they will react to covering the same topic. (Instructor C – A core course instructor)

It is not surprising, then, that some SOC students perceive a gap in knowledge between SOC students and non-SOC students. As one third year student commented: "Some students are not on the same level as SOC students in terms of background knowledge."

Inappropriate level setting can lead to student course attrition. If a level is set too high, some students might become frustrated and drop the course, but if the level is set too low, some students grow bored and drop the course. As one core instructor noted, "Level setting is difficult. You do not want students to drop out. We want to support them. We do not want them to fail if they work hard."

Non-SOC Japanese students struggle not only with course preparation but also in class. One non-SOC Japanese student discussed his struggles in class, and he felt that he had become an incompetent learner:

> I felt so much frustration that I could not express what I wanted to say in class. Also, I sometimes did not have any idea what to say since I was not able to fully understand the reading materials…I became a person who cannot do anything in the English-medium SOC courses.

Entrance to the investigated national university is highly competitive, so for some of the non-SOC Japanese students they experience not only frustration, but also a challenge to their hitherto identity as high achievers.

Although Japanese students expressed their struggles in the interviews, Table 6 shows that overall only 3% of the students felt the level of the course was "too difficult", and most students

perceived it as "difficult" or "just right." Since the level of courses is set high, it is not surprising that students perceived it as "difficult." This indicates the possibility that students are able to deal with the level of the course if appropriate support is provided.

Table 6. *Course Level*

Level	Non-Japanese Students	Japanese Students
Too difficult	2%	3%
Difficult	28%	48%
Just right	70%	44%
Easy	0%	0%
Too Easy	0%	0%
Not sure	0%	5%

This section covered the types of challenges both students and instructors face. The following section details an examination of student course attrition caused by these challenges.

Student Course Attrition

The data collected over three semesters gives us some insights into which students drop the courses, and when and why student course attrition occurs. Exploring and understanding these tendencies can help identify effective ways of supporting students in order to reduce student course attrition rates.

Instructors noted that non-SOC students often drop out from a course at the beginning or the end, and that the majority do so at the end of the course when they are required to complete the final assignment. One core SOC course instructor expressed this clearly by stating, "at the end of the courses, many of the non-SOC students choose not to submit the assignments, but they actually attend most of the courses. But they just do not complete the final assignment." Instructors insisted that they would like to identify the reasons for this occurrence; however, neither instructors nor TAs were able to clearly identify the reason for sudden course attrition at the end of the semester.

Interactions with students as a TA during the courses, however, provided insight as to why some choose to drop the courses. As a TA, the author observed that students often do not ask for help, even when they clearly need it. The results of the non-SOC student questionnaires also show that Japanese students are very much more likely to report the course they are attending is difficult, yet this does not translate into an equal number indicating that they need support (Tables 6 & 7). One would expect that students who find the course level difficult would feel the need for support. Nevertheless, for Japanese students there are more students reporting they find the course difficult or too difficult (51%) than those saying they need support (34%). If we contrast this with the non-Japanese (non-SOC) students, while 30 percent report finding the course they are taking difficult or too difficult, the majority (28%) recognize that they need support. We can surmise that the higher attrition rate for Japanese students is the result of too much challenge with insufficient take up of support. The following is a student's comment: "Although I feel that I need support, I am here attending SOC courses in order to challenge myself. I would like to see how much I can do by myself."

Toward the end of a course, the author received e-mails from students stating that they were dropping the course. The students usually explained that they had tried their best to keep up with the course material but had failed to do so. A non-SOC Japanese student mentioned that she was able to complete the course, even though she faced some obstacles in class. She stated that support was key in her having completed the course. "I think I was able to survive because it was a small-sized course with much inclusive learning atmosphere, and I had enough support from classmates and teachers. However, I have seen some students dropping out from the SOC courses." These interactions would seem to suggest that instructors need to increase their understanding toward student learning and intervene student learning with appropriate amount of support and times, which may be an important way of reducing attrition.

Table 7. *Need for Support*

Response	Non-Japanese Student	Japanese Students
Yes	28%	34%
No	70%	64%
Not sure	2%	1%

Analysis

The teaching challenges associated with SOC and non-SOC mixed classes were explored from the perspectives of students and instructors in the previous section. The following question should be first reconsidered in order to analyze the complexity of the issues: for what and for whom should the SOC learning opportunities be provided? This question is examined with considerations of the goals of SOC and the purposes of offering the courses to non-SOC students. Clearly answering this question can help identify where to set a level for the course.

SOC Learning Opportunities for What and for Whom?

According to MEXT (n.d.), one of the G30 aims is to "nurture internationally competent individuals by creating an academic environment where international and Japanese students can learn from one another" (p. 4). Previous government initiated internationalization projects have focused heavily on international students, but the G30 goals make clear that international learning opportunities should be offered to both local and international students. The director of the G30 SOC Program stated that the university began offering SOC courses to the wider campus community to broaden the scope of internationalization, as well as nurture demanding learners in order to be more competitive in the globalized world. SOC courses, therefore, should offer learning opportunities not solely to international students, but to the wider campus community and so expand the breadth of internationalization. They should help to create an inclusive learning environment for both local and international students, and enable better learners. SOC instructors, therefore, need to ensure that a learning environment is created that is beneficial to anyone with an interest in the courses.

A diverse range of students are taking SOC courses and for a variety of reasons. This leads to another important question: should these learning opportunities be provided to students who want to take SOC courses for reasons not specified in course learning outcomes? Some non-SOC students take courses simply for English improvement. SOC courses are not explicitly for the purpose of English improvement. They have specific course learning outcomes that are

stated clearly in the syllabus and form part of the criteria for course assessment. What are the implications of allowing students with very different motivations to take these courses? A gap may arise between student expectations regarding the course and what the instructor feels he or she is doing and which fit into an overall, internal, undergraduate curriculum. Regarding overall SOC program goals and the desirability of opening SOC courses to non-SOC students in order to expand the reach of internationalization initiatives, we can conclude that these courses should, in principle, be open to anyone with an interest in the course, irrespective of the students' motivations. Yet in considering the level of practice, both students and instructors need to have a mutual understanding of the course learning outcomes and the significance of taking SOC courses in terms of program goals. Instructors and TAs also need to provide effective support to those students who are able to achieve the learning outcomes each course sets.

Course Level Setting

As discussed in the previous section, the course level should be set for all students to benefit, regardless of their background. The modified version of Sanford's challenge and response theory, challenge and support theory, was applied to consider how to provide effective learning to diverse groups of students. When the levels of the content and the process (teaching methods) are both set high, some students are overwhelmed and drop the course. If the levels of the content and the process are low, some students grow bored. When students are from different linguistic, cultural, and learning backgrounds, instructors and TAs need to provide support regarding the process to students while challenging students with the content. Caution should be exercised when providing additional support to those who can possibly be challenged more in the process.

Scaffolding Students

According to Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development, appropriate support needs to be provided by educators or "capable peers" to enable students to move from their current level of development to a desired or potential development level that is currently beyond their reach. Vygotsky called this space between actual and potential development the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (1978). When students are in the ZPD, in this case an English-medium and interactive learning environment, they need scaffolding to support their transition to being a capable learner in this context. In the G30 SOC learning environment, scaffolding was erected by the G30 instructors and/or TAs by creating a balance between challenge and support. To aid this process, instructors and TAs needed to be aware that students were in a transition process from an assisted to an independent learning zone. The balance of support and challenge was adjusted depending on where the student was located in his or her own zone of proximal development. Instructors sometimes need to provide or withdraw levels of support at appropriate times. Going through the learning process, students were then able to become independent learners in this new, previously overly challenging, environment. As a TA, the author observed students repeating the G30 SOC courses two or three times and, in so doing, transitioning from dependent to independent learners of English-medium, interactive courses. At first, these students could hardly participate in class discussions, but subsequently started taking leading roles. In turn, these students became capable peers able to support other students transitioning from an assisted to more independent learning zone.

Rapport between Student-Instructor

As discussed in the previous section, instructors and TAs need to provide student support for the process while challenging students with the content. In order to gain an in-depth

understanding of students' growth and challenges in learning over time, it is important to obtain direct and indirect feedback from students. In the Japanese context, feedback from student to instructors generally occurs only at the end of a course. During or after a class, Japanese students usually feel power-distanced from their instructors and rarely offer feedback (Hofstede, 1986; Phuong-Mai, Terlouw, & Pilot, A. (2006). Yet, dialogue is a powerful tool for instructors to understand and promote student learning and development.

Students' responses were obtained using both direct and indirect methods. Securing both direct and indirect methods allows students with different cultural backgrounds to pass their voice to their instructors. Regular in-class and after-class talks were useful, but it is important to secure indirect feedback through all approaches, such as weekly course reflections, pre- and post-questionnaires on students' learning experience, and course evaluations. Instructors have been incorporating their considerations of students' feedback into their practice. The SOC courses were offered to students during the first year as a trial period. The program experienced a high student course attrition rate. By receiving regular feedback from students, instructors and TAs were able to monitor students' progress, achievement, and behaviors of students and determine the best way to support students. It is always important to have a close student-instructor rapport in order to receive student feedback; however, it is also crucial to have a strong instructor-instructor network to share teaching experience.

Student Course Attrition Rates

The research data show that students, especially a large number of Japanese students, drop SOC courses at the end during the final assessments period. Bennett, Bennett, and Allen (2003) stated, "If the challenge is excessive, the learner will resist or engage in flight, psychologically or even physically" (p. 254). Instructors and TAs need to step into their learning more toward the end of the semester by paying more attention to Japanese students, because they also have a tendency to challenge themselves excessively and do not seek sufficient support.

The data from the last semester show a sudden decrease in student course attrition (Figure 3). Instructors and TAs are more aware of students' challenges and appropriate ways of supporting them. The university also provides more TAs for SOC courses. It is unusual for Japanese universities to provide TAs for small-sized courses, but it is important to increase support by having more TAs in order to maximize student learning. Surveys should be conducted regularly to further investigate the best way of supporting students.
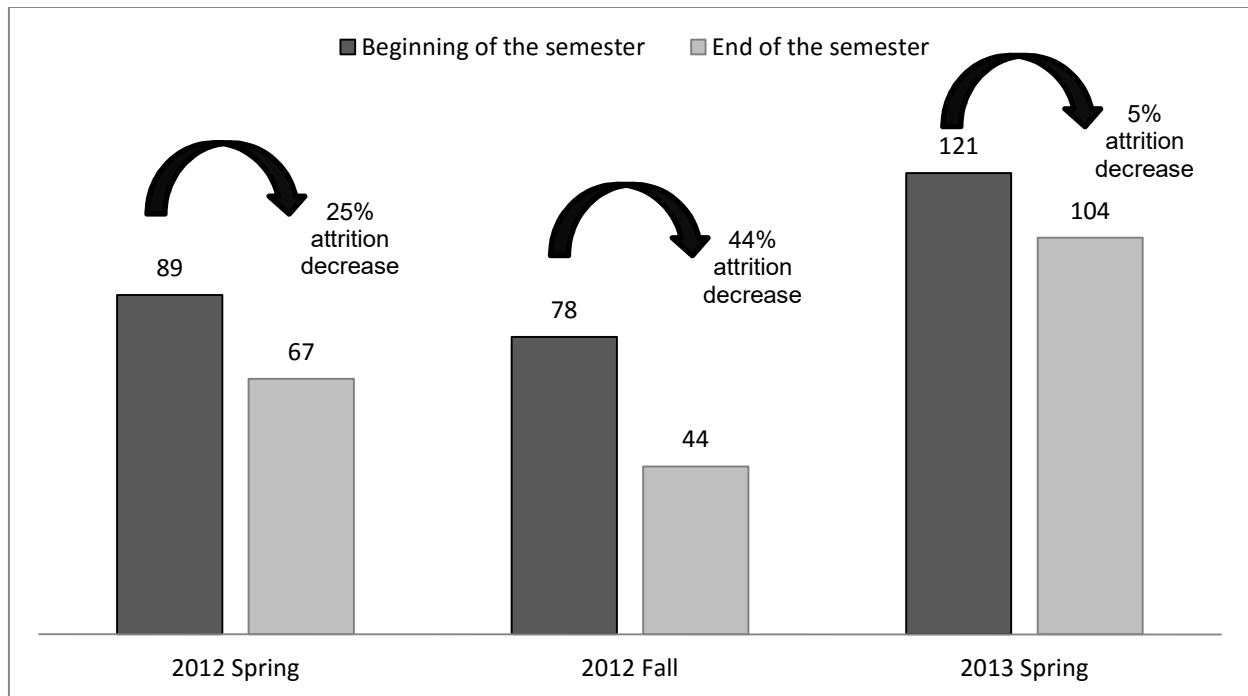
Figure 3. Graph showing student course attrition rates for non-SOC students.

Discussion and Conclusion

Universities in non-English speaking countries have introduced EMI as a key internationalization strategy. Universities and individual instructors, however, are often struggling to find how best to provide students with effective learning opportunities. This research focused on two pertinent issues: level setting and student course attrition. It identified effective strategies to maximize student learning that may be of interest to educators who are teaching English-medium programs and courses in similar settings.

Previous studies on EMI have highlighted the perceived or actual negative outcomes of introducing EMI courses into Japanese universities and explained these in terms of linguistic and cultural dilemmas. However, in this in-depth case study of the Social Science International Undergraduate Program at one national university in Japan, it was shown that educators were able to turn some of the identified challenges into positive outcomes. They were able to successfully enhance student teaching and learning and decrease student course attrition rates. To create effective learning for everyone in the SOC course context, the level of the course content should be set high, but the teaching and learning process must be accompanied by considerable scaffolding for students, especially those who are new to the EMI learning environment.

In addition, this research revealed that Japanese students tend to overestimate their learning capacity and underestimate the value of support. Instructors need to be aware of that hidden message, that some students do need support in order to fully benefit from courses even though they do not seek it out. It can be argued that in the EMI learning environment Japanese students are learning how to learn and how to become demanding learners in a very new environment. Instructors and TAs need to be a part of their learning process to help them successfully to be independent demanding learners in the near future.

In the above process, educators and TAs require institutional support. Despite growing demands for the implementation of English-medium courses in Japan, there is perhaps insufficient understanding of the challenges that both students and instructors face. It is not only the language that is different, but often the pedagogy is also new. Add to this the diverse educational background of students and instructors, and the complexity of the EMI classroom can perhaps be better appreciated. To achieve the demands of this educational setting, not just students, but instructors also require a degree of scaffolding, particularly those new to EMI and/or interactive learning. Instructors may need professional development training to enhance their own skills and ability to support students effectively and appropriately in English-medium course settings.

This research also revealed the significant role that TAs can play in the delivery of English-medium courses. They can help scaffold students' learning as capable peers. At the same time, the TAs in this study contributed to lowering the course attrition rate. Japanese universities would do well to establish quality TA systems as a response to increasingly diverse teaching and learning needs. As with students and instructors, TAs need to be better trained and prepared for international learning environments. The current TA trainings lack the delivery of the knowledge and skills needed to assist students with diverse backgrounds in English-medium courses. TAs in English-medium courses need different knowledge and skills to support both students and instructors from the ones in Japanese courses.

Future research needs to further clarify and evaluate the skills and knowledge that students are acquiring in EMI learning environments. In a globalized society, it is necessary for students to gain skills and knowledge to be global citizens who can effectively work with diverse others. This is one of the motivations to introduce EMI as an internationalization strategy in non-English speaking countries. As this research indicated, creating learning opportunities does not automatically lead to student learning. The important process for producing effective student learning is that educators are better aware of how students learn as well as intentionally intervene their learning. Exploring if students truly are gaining skills and knowledge to be global citizens will provide universities and educators new insights toward student teaching and learning.

As Knight (2012) stated, "there is no 'one size fits all' model of internationalization" (p. 4). She also added that each country, each institution, and each program must determine the best approach to internationalization based on its clear set rationales, goals, and expected outcomes. Each university must determine the best approach to internationalize its curriculum and student teaching and learning, and whether the introduction of English-medium courses would be appropriate or not. The number of English-medium programs and courses has been increasing in Japanese higher education settings over the past five years. This paper offers insights not only for those institutions involved in EMI program and course delivery, but also HEIs in other cultural settings as well.

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