

Learning Motivation and Challenges of Vietnamese Students in  
English Medium of Instruction (EMI) at Japanese Universities

by

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### **Abstract**

Recently, English medium of instruction (EMI), in which English language is used to teach academic subjects in non- English-speaking countries, has become popular in many Asian countries, including Japan. Many Japanese universities are expanding their EMI programs not only to attract international students but also to strengthen their university ranking inside and outside the country. There is a large number of international students studying abroad in Japan both at Japanese medium instruction universities and at EMI universities. However, there is little research on international students in these programs such as what attracts students to EMI universities, particularly Vietnamese students. For the purpose of narrowing the gap, this study aimed to examine Vietnamese students' learning motivations towards the EMI program at Japanese universities, and it also focused on their challenges when learning at EMI universities. One hundred and three students enrolled in EMI universities were administered an online survey, and 18 students were also interviewed for this study. The study revealed that (1) the students in the present study have a mix of instrumental and integrative motivation. However, they were attracted primarily by instrumental motivation rather than integrative motivation, (2) students' sources of motivation in EMI programs varied owing to their plan to take EMI university before or after they came to Japan, (3) motivation can be changed if the learning environment is changed, and students clearly acknowledged their future orientation, and (4) problems identified by the students centered on the challenges in understanding lecturers' language and learning two languages.

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**List of Abbreviations**

EM	Extrinsic Motivation
EMI	English Medium of Instruction
ETPs	English Taught Programs
HEIs	Higher Education Institutes
IM	Intrinsic Motivation
JMI	Japanese Medium of Instruction
JASSO	Japan Student Services Organization
L2	Second language
MEXT	The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
TMI	Turkish Medium of Instruction



## Introduction

I have been studying abroad in Japan for more than three years. At first, I decided to study in Japan with the desire to find my future opportunity. However, after three years learning Japanese, I switched to study at a university where English is the medium of instruction (EMI). While I was in the Japanese medium of instruction (JMI), I learned both Japanese and English. From my observation in English classrooms, I found that Japanese students are not eager to learn English. In other words, they do not make efforts to communicate in English. For example, even though I tried to speak English with them, whenever having group discussion or group activities, Japanese students kept discussing in Japanese and summarizing in English before finishing the discussion. Therefore, that is one of the reasons that the English-speaking skill of Japanese students is not improved.

After entering EMI university, I realized that there are many Vietnamese students who are learning here instead of learning at normal Japanese medium of instruction (JMI) universities. According to Osaka Jogakuin University's statistics, over 72 international students, by the proportion of Vietnamese students occupies nearly 50 percent. Thus, more question is why many Vietnamese students make the decision for selecting an English-medium education.

According to Brown (2014), in Japan, offering EMI content classes at universities is a growing trend and at least 25% of universities make some EMI courses available to undergraduates. This program model is developing and growing, and it meets the demand to improve the international quality of English competence. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are succeeding in designing and implementing such programs. However, according to Lueg & Lueg (2015) it is necessary to find out if there is sufficient demand and motivation among the students of EMI courses before embracing and developing EMI programs.

Even though there is numerous research about teaching and learning motivation in acquisition of second languages or foreign languages (Dornyei, 2011; Gardner, 1985), there is not much research about the motivation of students toward EMI programs, especially, international students who are living and studying in Japan. Camacho-Miñano & Del Campo (2015, p.129) assert that:

This issue is important in HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) because a causal relationship is assumed between better learners, deep learning and subsequent professional work in real life. Students motivated to learn are interested in the issues included in lectures, reading and research and therefore try to complete more exercises and work harder.

Additionally, once university lecturers understand students' motivation, it will help them develop better teaching practices.

Thus, this research aimed to explore learning motivation and challenges of Vietnamese students in EMI programs at Japanese universities. Firstly, the reasons Vietnamese students decide to select EMI education are investigated. Secondly, this research also verifies their challenges to understand their perceptions of difficulties studying through the medium of English.

### **Literature Review**

The purpose of this study is to examine Vietnamese learning motivation and challenges students are encountering in EMI courses at Japanese universities. There are four sections in this part. The first section describes the English medium of instruction (EMI) in Japanese universities such as the definition of EMI, brief history of EMI in Japan and current EMI in Japan. The second section is about the position of international students served in the EMI programs in Japan. The third section reports the difficulties that domestic and international students are facing in EMI classes. The final section describes theories of motivation and some research results of learning motivation toward EMI education.

#### **English Medium of Instruction (EMI)**

English now is a dominant language in the world, spoken by approximately 400 million people in English-speaking countries such as the UK and the United States and by more than billions of people from non-English speaking countries particularly in Asia (Guo & Beckett, 2007). Furthermore, globalization entails an increasing demand for communication due to an increase in international relationships, trade and tourism.

Therefore, to follow the rapidly-growing global economy and increase the number of effective English-communication citizens, many Asian countries, with the recognition of English as an international communication tool, have reformed their English education within the past two decades (Littlewood, 2007). For example, in Singapore, to raise competence in English, new English syllabi aiming at 'teaching English for effective and appropriate communication' have regularly been released (Huang, 2016). The MOE in Hong Kong promulgated a policy of trilingual (English, Cantonese and Chinese) emphasizing the

development of oral proficiency (Huang, 2016). In Vietnam, the change from traditional teaching method into focusing to communicative skills.

The appearance of English medium of instruction (EMI) has become quite popular in almost all Asian countries such as Japan, Hong Kong, China, and Korea. Much research show that an increasing number of students from non-English speaking countries now are required to study in EMI universities and schools (Wallitsch, 2014).

According to Dearden (2014), English medium of instruction means the use of English language to teach academic subjects in countries where English is not the first language. English medium of instruction (EMI) originated in Europe during the 1950s and was only for graduate students from countries such as Sweden, Denmark, and Turkey. Until the 2000s, EMI expanded to undergraduate level due to the impact of globalization; especially in Asian countries, including Japan.

Globalization pushes an increasing demand for communication due to an increase in international relationships, trade and tourism. Therefore, all countries have been trying to equip students with two new skills, called “global literacy skills” for technological and English skills to meet the resulting demands in international and domestic labor markets and respond to the rapid changes brought about globalization (Tsui, A. B. M., & Tollefson, J. W., 2007)

### **EMI at Japanese Universities**

#### ***Brief History of EMI in Japan***

EMI in Japan is various in different stages and periods. EMI came to Japan quite early, from the Meiji era.

First of all, in the Meiji era, according to Brown (2018), EMI flourished by establishing foreign faculty teaching at new found universities due to the government's push to modernize and westernize. As a result, 3000 experts were brought to Japan for teaching various fields of subjects, and they became the mainstay of higher education in Japan in teaching many classes in English, French and German. However, the situation changed when the Japanese government replaced foreign instructors with domestic graduates or Japanese scholars who returned from study abroad. Then, it completely changed in to Japanese medium instruction and English was only considered as an object of study for more than half a century.

In the Post-World War II period, Brown (2018) argued that Japanese medium instruction was still a dominant language in Japan's higher education. English medium of instruction had a sign of returning; however, it mainly served for the needs of the new Western emigrant community. In the 1960s, there was the slightly expanding of EMI programs for incoming international students from partner universities overseas.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Japanese government started internationalizing higher education by encouraging universities to recruit more international students. However, it was not successful. The reasons are Japan universities just focused on increasing the number of international students rather than internationalizing the curriculum or teaching methods (Brown, 2018). At that time, EMI was considered as taking only a minor role because all programs for international students were taken in Japanese instead of English. Mulvey (2017, cited in Brown, 2017) criticized Japan because EMI was not introduced to domestic students.

However, EMI for international students was expanding. For example, 14 universities introduced graduate English taught programs where students can take an entire degree in English in the 1980s.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the images of internationalization of higher education changed. Universities started to recruit high-quality candidates for improving Japan's lost economic competitiveness (Brown, 2017b). As a result, G30, university Network for Internationalization, was introduced by The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) with the aim to internationalize universities in Japan and increasing their competitiveness

### *Current EMI at Japanese Universities*

In Japan, many universities started offering EMI classes, which is considered as a growing trend. Though EMI was just available for graduate students before the 2000s, now at least 25% of universities make some EMI courses available to undergraduates (Brown, 2014). Since 2017, MEXT has released the data and highlighted a rapid increase in the number of universities offering EMI in Japan (see Table 1)

**Table 1**

#### *Number of Universities Offering Undergraduate EMI Programs*

Universities(total)	2005	2013	2014	2015
National (86)	42	59	59	61
Public (83)	16	29	28	30
Private (601)	118	174	187	214
Total (770)	176	262	274	305

According to MEXT (2017), the proportion of the total universities in Japan offering EMI was nearly 50%. Especially, from the Table 1, the increasing number in the private universities offered EMI programs in 2015. However, there is little research about EMI programs in private universities.

According to Brown (2017a), currently EMI takes a twofold role in Japan. It not only serves for domestic students but also for international students. For international students,

there are three main kinds of programs. First, the short-term programs for students who study abroad in Japan only for a short time, three months to one year, still take an important role. Second, thanks to MEXT's Top Global University funding scheme, which supports EMI at 37 universities, the number of English taught programs (ETPs) for full-time students is growing. Third, a minority of international students in Japan, who are learning in Japanese-language or JMI programs, are also a part of EMI programs. For domestic or Japanese students, EMI programs are also growing, and it normally makes up only part of their degree program, a complement or supplement to their mainstream Japanese medium classes.

### *International Students in Japan*

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Japanese government started internationalizing higher education by accepting more international students outside of Japan. By the end of 2000, the government set a goal of accepting 100,000 international students. "The 100,000 International Students Plan was supported by the expansion of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) which gave scholarships to international students, and it was accompanied by an easing of regulations to allow international students to work part-time in Japan" (Bradford, 2018, p.67-68).

Initially, the development of EMI was not the main purpose in the 100,000 International Students Plan. However, it is stated that to succeed in attracting more international students Japanese language courses and Japanese language teacher training should be strengthened. In 2003, the 100,000 international students target was met (MEXT, 2004). In 2008, the government launched the new goal of receiving 300,000 International students by 2020. Establishing University Network for Internationalization (Global 30) funding project or G30 Project is the central support for this plan. In 2009, G30 set a goal of launching at least 33 new undergraduate and 124 new graduate English taught programs (EPTs) by 2014 (MEXT,

2009a, cited in Bradford, 2018). Consequently, G30 succeeded in offering 33 new undergraduate and 153 new graduate EPTs. However, the number of students intake in the new EPTs was limited (See Table 2).

**Table 2**

*G30 University New ETP Total Student Intake 2013*

University		Number of ETPs in 2013		
		Bachelor's	Master's	Doctoral
National	Kyoto	30	approx.60	approx.30
	Kyushu	few	approx.40	approx.30
	Nagoya	limited	limited	limited
	Osaka	limited	Approx.10	approx.12
	Tohoku	30	88	75
	Tokyo	Select number	149	10
	Tsukuba	few	approx.60	29
Private	Doshisha	50	45	28
	Keio	15	25	15
	Meiji	20	approx.35	5
	Ritsumeikan	80	few	few
	Sophia	30	15	10
	Waseda	100	55	3
Student(total)		approx.370	approx.600	approx.260

Table 2 shows the total student intake for all EPTs established under the G30 Project (Bradford, 2018). EPTs is only one of the models of implementation for EMI programs in Japan.

According to the latest figures of JASSO (2019) almost all international students are from Asia. China, Vietnam, Nepal are the countries with the biggest number of international students in Japan now.



**Table 3***The Number of International Students in Higher Education Institutions*

Country/ region	Number of students	
	2017	2018
China	79,502	86,439
Vietnam	35,489	42,083
Nepal	14,850	15,329
Korea	13,538	14,557

The government plan for receiving 300,000 international students by 2020 was met. However, there is no official data about how many international students are taking the EMI in Japan. Especially, as Table 3 (JASSO, 2019) shows, the number of Vietnamese students ranked number two, yet, the numbers of Vietnamese students learning at EMI universities in Japan is not revealed.

EMI started quite early in Japan from the Meiji era, yet it has recently become a growing trend since the 2000s. It seems that EMI in Japan is new and small and peripheral (Brown, 2017a). Therefore, international students may make the decision to learn English in Europe, Australia or American rather than in Japan.

Wallitsch (2014) revealed five reasons that Asia international graduate students chose EMI in Japanese institutions based on Push-Pull theory (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). First, people or students tend to flow from developing countries to developed countries. It is undeniable that Japan is a developed country. Second, Japan has a well-developed system in higher education. Third, the Japanese government gives many scholarships. For instance, Cambodians receive lots of scholarships from Japan. Cambodian students realized that it is the chance for them to experience study life overseas. Fourth, proximity to family was one of

the most important reasons for choosing to study in Japan. The students desire to stay in the region near their homeland and take less expense and time to return to visiting family. Finally, social links, for example, whether or not students have friends and family in the destination country, also is an important reason for choosing EMI in Japan.

Tran (2015) also found that foreign language competence and students fluency with the language used in the host country are main factors affecting Vietnamese students studying abroad and choosing a host country. Thus, it is reasonable that Vietnamese students make the decision to learn Japanese in Japan rather than in English. However, with Vietnamese students, almost all of them spend at least a year learning Japanese in Japan. Thus, they have a choice to learn at JMI university. There is no research found regarding the reasons why Vietnamese students, especially Vietnamese undergraduate students, decide to learn in EMI university in Japan. Therefore, it is necessary to research what motivates Vietnamese students to learn EMI in Japan.

### **The challenges of Domestic and International Students in EMI Courses at Japanese Universities**

EMI programs are now becoming popular in many countries, especially in the Asia area. However, this phenomenon is quite new and small. Many countries are facing a variety of challenges in implementing EMI programs, including in Japan. In order to get achievement in EMI education, it requires the effort from both instructors and students. There is much research about the subject of EMI within a decade about both the attitude of students and instructors. Among them, a range of the studies about the challenges of students in EMI programs were conducted. In the Japanese context, the challenges of students in EMI programs have been discovered; however, much research has focused on the government

policy strategies and challenges in implementing EMI programs from the perspective of policy makers rather than students' aspects. For instance, Bradford (2015,2016) developed four main challenges that EMI programs in Japan are facing, including linguistic, cultural, administrative and institutional challenges. Thus, previous studies showed that both international and domestic students are encountering many problems such as linguistic, cultural, and emotional challenges.

### *Linguistic Challenges*

Many studies have discovered that the challenges relating to level of language proficiency is important. For example, Chang's (2010) study has shown that only 36% of the students thought that their difficulties derived only from the subjects themselves however, 64% of them believed that English language is a problem they are facing in learning in EMI university.

Although these linguistic challenges are significant, studies revealed the relationship between language proficiency and academic outcomes is correlated. Many researchers revealed that students preferred to use their first language in the classroom due to the low English proficiency and the subject difficulties. For instance, Kırkgöz (2014, p.451-453) carried on a study comparing the perception of final year undergraduate engineering students in two modes of instruction, including Turkish medium instruction (TMI) versus EMI at Turkish institutions of higher education; and Kırkgöz found that TMI students gained academic knowledge more easily, learned in a more detailed way, and were more likely to sustain the learned information.

Similarly, according to the study of Coşkun, Köksal, and Tuğlu's (2014), the results indicated that when participants learned in Turkish, they got the comprehension scores higher than those who learned in foreign languages at both basic and deep understanding of a reading

text. Furthermore, according to Tarnopolsky and Goodman (2014), they also found that the participants considered the importance of continuing to use their mother tongue for the purposes of aiding comprehension”.

In addition, Kim (2011) found that almost all Korean students preferred some explanation in L1 in EMI classes due to the low English proficiency as well as the course content; the result indicated that the problem of classroom language became serious in EMI classes.

In the context of Japan, numerous research has found that Japanese students were dealing with English proficiency problems. For instance, Brown (2017b) found that Japanese undergraduate students had a limited vocabulary and poor reading and listening skills, which is hard for most of them to access EMI programs. Only an elite stream of domestic students could access the EMI programs.

Research on the correlation between English proficiency and academic achievement in EMI programs is still limited in Japan, but several studies have shown some problems. In the research of Selzer and Gibson (2009, cited in Brown, 2017b), they revealed many domestic students are encountering linguistics problems in EMI classroom. As a result, EMI programs have a high dropout rate. Another research of Taguchi and Naguma (2006 cited in Brown, 2017b) showed that domestic students feel unprepared for the linguistic demands of EMI; particularly, the students were facing the problems of long listening and the volume of reading required in EMI classes.

In terms of international students in EMI programs, these students are encountering L3 learning problems rather than English proficiency. For instance, Brown (2017b) argued that international students, even non-English speaking students have a higher level of English proficiency than Japanese students. This leads to the gap between domestic and international students in class activities. In addition, Rakhshandehroo (2017) conducted a study about the

experiences of Iranian international students in Japanese universities. The results reported that even though most have sufficient English capability, Japanese language proficiency is insufficient. This leads to problems in their academic lives.

### *Academic Cultural Challenges*

The second challenge both international and domestic students are facing is related to culture, which is considered as adapting to academic culture and interacting with international or local students. In addition, international students are also dealing with the problems of integrating into Japanese local culture and society.

First, both Japanese and international students may encounter adapting to the academic culture such as the norm and the practices of an EMI program. For instance, “Yamamoto and her colleagues (Brown, 2017b, p.12) argue that the culture of an EMI program can be especially difficult for students to adjust to when the program is taught by a mix of domestic Japanese and international faculty members, who have different priorities and different expectations for student performance”

For Japanese students, it may be difficult to adjust to the EMI classes due to the difference in terms of time and homework as well as international faculty compared to JMI. For international students, adapting to academic cultures is also the challenge for them. “It is hard for them to adapt to the breadth of coverage typical of a Japanese university and the sheer number of different courses they are required to take” (Brown, 2017b).

Second, interacting with peers is also one of the challenges of both international and domestic students. Several studies in Asian contexts have shown that local students lack confidence in English. This builds the barrier to communicate between local and international students. For instance, Kim, Tatar, & Choi’s (2014, p.11) study revealed that both Korean and international students were conscious of their English proficiency and the correlation to

achievement in the subject. However, Korean students show a lack of confidence in EMI activities, and they are less willing to work or interact with international students in the classroom. For example, student explained:

I don't think I want to work with international students for a team project. Somehow, we [Korean students] can't get our meaning across to them. It's uncomfortable, and the work doesn't progress well with them. Last semester, taking Evolution of Civilization class, we had a team project. We scheduled a meeting to talk about the project together, but only Koreans showed up at the meeting, and the international teammate came almost one hour later and kept talking about something irrelevant to the topic. I guess things that were clear to us were not clear to them.

In another study of Kim, Tatar, & Choi (2017) indicated the intercultural sensitivity occurring in the EMI classroom. Although the Korean students were aware of the benefits of EMI, their affective reactions toward interaction with international students were not high because of various reasons such as low level of English.

Similarly, in Japanese context, linguistic challenges mentioned above created a wider gap between domestic and international students. Tsuneyoshi (2005, p.79) reports that "Japanese students feel less able to keep up in EMI classes if there is a mixed domestic and international student body".

I couldn't understand the English. It was impossible to concentrate on listening to English for an hour and half, and I would give up in the middle of the course, then I would get totally lost. It also meant struggling with my inferiority complex.

In contrast, international students have difficulties in communicating and interacting with Japanese students due to low level of English language ability (Rakhshandehroo, 2017). For example, one student commented:

Language is a social and scientific barrier at Japanese universities. I had problems in communication with Japanese students due to their low-level English skills, and my low-level Japanese skills. I did all my seminar presentations in English, but I am sure that my Japanese lab mates did not understand at least 50 percent of my presentations.

However, for the international students, especially those who come to enroll in English taught programs (ETPs), integrating to culture outside the classroom may be a bigger challenge. This group of international students came to Japan with little or without Japanese proficiency. It seems that they can communicate with their advisors or professors in English; however, they have to handle in Japanese when communicating with administrative issues (Brown 2017b, p. 21).

### ***Emotional Challenges***

Emotional challenges or learning anxiety causes students to avoid taking EMI courses. Foreign language anxiety, which is defined as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128). Kudo, Harada, Eguchi, Moriya, & Suzuki, 2017; Suzuki, Harada, Eguchi, Kudo, & Moriya (2017, 2018) found that students tend to struggle with anxiety when speaking in an EMI classroom due to English ability; moreover, they are concerned about evaluation of speaking English from other students, and they felt anxiety about whether other students understand their English.

Similarly, Soruç and Griffiths (2018) conducted research about EMI students' difficulties and strategies at a Turkish university language. They found that students used a range of strategies to deal with their difficulties during lectures, their emotional reactions such as shyness and embarrassment, or speaking anxiety. However, these were still the problems that they had not many strategies to manage.

Thus, anxiety in learning progress or emotional challenges also is one of the problems that students are encountering in taking EMI courses. However, in terms of international students, that challenge has not been revealed yet. It is suggested that much more study be investigated about this problem. Therefore, this study also tries to find this gap in the context of Vietnamese international students in EMI programs in Japanese universities.

In sum, the challenges of domestic students have been given little attention by researchers and it has been discovered in various countries, including in Japan. In the context of EMI at Japanese universities, the challenges of international students have been mentioned in many studies (e.g., Bradford, 2018; Brown, 2017b), but it was only explored through the lens of instructors and policy makers; while only a small amount of research is from the voice of students.

Furthermore, there is no specific focus on the EMI international students' experiences, especially the majority Vietnamese international students. Although the number of Vietnamese students studying abroad in Japan is increasing, little research attention has been paid attention to the challenges of Vietnamese students in EMI programs. Thus, this study aims to investigate the challenges of Vietnamese students in EMI class at Japanese universities.



## **Motivation**

### ***What is Motivation?***

Motivation plays a significant role in second language learning, and it has been considered one of the most influential factors in determining L2 (second language) learning achievement. Lennartsson (2008) stated that motivation and the willingness to learn a second language are much more important factors rather than social ones. Definitely, students need to use motivation to overcome difficulties and complete the learning process, complying with academic and social expectations (Corno, 2001).

On the other hand, without sufficient motivation, students cannot accomplish long-term goals and achievement. Thus, it is no doubt that investigating the motivational aspect will be beneficial to all who are related; particularly teachers, learners, and leaders.

The definition of motivation is still a matter of controversy. However, at least, most researchers agree that motivation is fundamental for explaining why people do something, how long they persist to do the action and how hard they can engage in that activity (Dörnyei, and Ushioda 2011, p. 4). One definition suggested by Gardner (1985, p.10), is, “the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language”. Three main factors were mentioned in this definition, including effort, desire and attitude. These factors belong to the interior dimension of learners.

### *Motivation Theories*

**Integrative and Instrumental Motivation.** Motivation study started with Gardner and Lambert's research (1972), which emphasized the idea of integrativeness and stressed individuals' attitudes toward the L2 and the L2 community.

Gardner's (1985) motivation theory showed the relationship between motivation and orientation. Orientation functions as the tool to stimulate motivation to set goals. It is classified into two categories: integrative orientation and instrumental orientation.

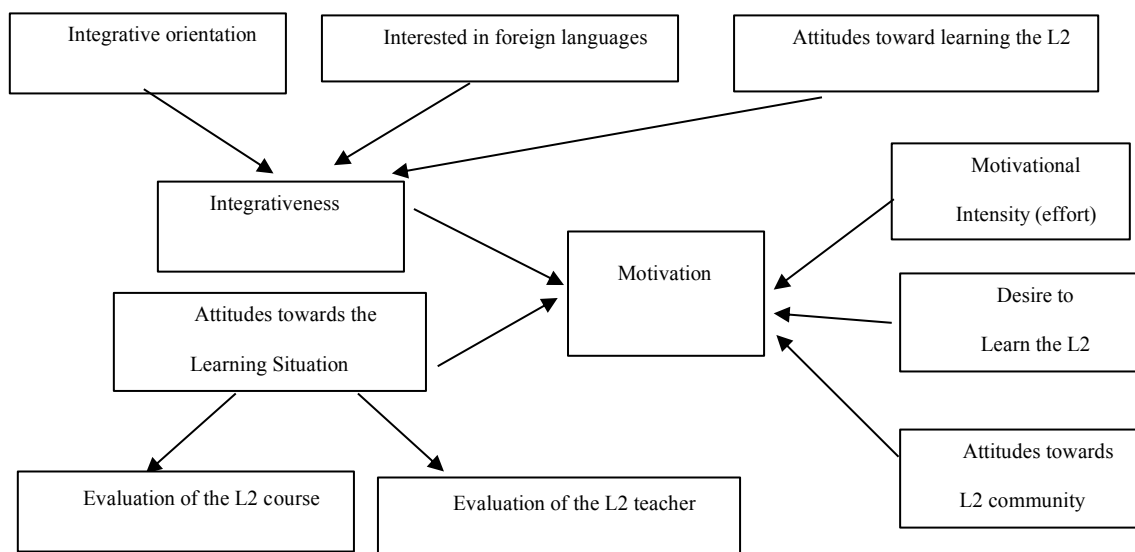
An integrative orientation was defined as "a positive disposition toward the L2 group and the desire to interact with and even become similar to valued members of that community" (Gardner & Lambert, 1959, p. 271).

By contrast, instrumental orientation refers to a desire to learn L2 for rewards such as having a good job with high salary or financial prospects or achieving higher social status. Macaro (2003) reported that depending on the goals of students, they tend to have different motivation, integrative or instrumental orientation. For example, people are instrumentally oriented if they aim to link learning language as the tool for future careers. They were integratively oriented if they desire to meet the culture or integrate into the L2 speaking community (Macaro, 2003).

According to Figure 1 below, integrativeness is determined by three factors, including attitudes towards the L2 community, interest in foreign languages, and integrative orientation. The desire to learn the second language, motivational intensity (the effort in learning the language), and the attitudes toward learning the L2 are three main factors determined to motivation. Additionally, attitudes toward the learning situation is determined by the evaluation of the L2 teachers and L2 course.

**Figure 1**

*Conceptualization of Integrative Motivation (Dörnyei, 2014, p. 42)*



However, this model had some criticisms. Firstly, it is not possible to apply the concept of integrative motivation without a specific target group or culture (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2009). Secondly, “the terms integrative and instrumental are certainly not adequate to embrace such reasons for studying as mere linguistic interest for its own sake, increase self-esteem and create a desired social image” (Luu, 2011, p.1259).

**Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination Theory (SDT).** The definition of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is the controversial debate with various definitions. For instance, Heider (1958) introduced perceived locus of causality, labeled either as personal causality or impersonal causality. Later on, deCharms (1968/1983, p.273) developed the notion of origin and pawn based on Heider’s concept, which orderly namely intrinsically motivated and extrinsically motivated.

Self-determination theory was created by Deci and Ryan (1985), which became one of the most influential approaches in motivational psychology. With this theory, human motivation was categorized into two types: intrinsic motivation (IM) and extrinsic motivation (EM).



needs because they are considered essential for personal growth and well-being” (Deci and Ryan, 1985).

**Attribution Theory.** Attribution theory was the dominant model in research on student motivation in the 1980s. The causal attributions one makes of past successes and failures have consequences on future achievement behavior (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2011, p. 15).

Future achievement can be attributed to ability, effort, task difficulty, luck, mood, family background, etc. Among these, ability and effort are considered as the most dominant perceived causes in Western culture.

**Self- efficacy Theory.** Self-efficacy refers to people’s judgement of their capabilities to do specific tasks and their sense of efficacy will determine choice of attempted, along with level of aspiration, amount of effort exerted, and persistence displayed (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2011, p. 18). For example, people with a strong sense of self-efficacy enhance people’s achievement behavior rather than a low sense of self-efficacy one.

**Previous Research on Motivation in EMI Context.** Employing EMI courses has gained the attention of many researchers recently and a significant number of studies have focused on the students’ learning motivation in EMI programs. For instance, in the Turkey context, Kırkgöz (2005) conducted a study to verify which motivation, instrumental or integrative, attracts students toward EMI education. The results showed that students prioritized a mix of integrative and instrumental motivation. Students, however, mainly chose to learn at EMI universities because of long term life goals such as better paid jobs and being broadly educated.

Another research of Menéndez, Grande, Sánchez, & Camacho-Miñano (2018, p.135) found the five factors that could influence students’ total motivation; including gender,

university access grade, methodology, perseverance and reflectiveness. For example, female students are more motivated and previous grades also affect students' motivation. A few studies also identified the motivation of students to opt for foreign language as the medium of instruction because of the reputation associated with the English language (Maccaro, and Akıncioğlu's, 2017; Kuchah, 2016; Tolon, 2014).

Similarly, in the Taiwan context, Huang's (2015) study revealed that interacting with international students in EMI courses and strengthening English ability as well as professional knowledge are the highest motivation of students in Southern Taiwan for choosing English language medium instruction.

In the Japanese context, Kojima & Yashima (2017) conducted a study to explore the relationships of EMI with motivation from the perspective of Self-Determination Theory. The results indicated that the Ideal L2 and attitude towards English have great impact on enjoyment in the EMI classroom, and future job opportunities made a strong decision to learn in EMI of Japanese students.

From the previous literature review, EMI started emerging in many non-English speaking countries recently. To successfully implement EMI programs, many studies in different countries paid attention to the many factors influencing EMI programs. Among them, learning motivation of students toward EMI has been already identified (Kırkgöz, 2005; Huang, 2015). Studies have highlighted that students are mainly attracted to learn EMI courses because of instrumental motivation such as getting a good future job. In the Japanese context, Kojima & Yashima (2017) found the same result. Therefore, this study also makes effort to identify whether Vietnamese students decide to learn in EMI courses at Japanese universities for integrative motivation or instrumental motivation.

### **Research Questions**

Given the fact that many Japanese universities are offering EMI courses, and the increasing number of both international and domestic students choose undergraduate degrees in English rather than their own native language for Japanese students, and rather than Japanese language for international students. It is necessary to investigate their sources of motivation toward this program. By identifying the main motivation affecting their opting for EMI programs, it may help teachers develop better teaching practices, design curricula as well as raise students' learning motivation centers in the universities

It is also important to explore challenges that Vietnamese students are encountering for studying through the medium of English. By investigating these problems, teachers and university leaders may better understand their current problems in order to support them and give some suggestions to overcome these challenges. This leads us to the specific research questions of this study are stated below:

1. What attracts Vietnamese students to learn EMI in Japan?
2. What are problems that Vietnamese students face when learning English as a medium of instruction?

## Methodology

### Participants

This study focused on private Japanese universities which followed an EMI program. A total of 103 Vietnamese students participated in this study. There were three main groups of participants: pre-academic, academic and graduate students in this study.

Pre-academic students were students who had planned to take entrance examinations to the EMI university, and students in Vietnam who were planning to study abroad at EMI University in Japan.

The academic students were from all levels of undergraduate study (i.e. freshman, sophomore, third year, final year) representing different academic departments.

Graduated students were students who are taking master and PhD courses at EMI universities.

Out of these, seven students were from pre-academic, 68 from academic, 28 from graduate students (See Table 4).

**Table 4**

*Background of Survey's Participants*

		Frequency (n=103)	Proportion
Gender	Male	24	23.3
	Female	79	76.7
Year of students	Pre-academic	7	5.83
	Academic	68	66.99
	Graduate	28	27.18



After online survey, the semi-structured interview was conducted to specifically examine how students decided to learn at EMI universities.

**Table 5**

*Background of Interviewee*

		N=18	%
Gender	Male	2	11.11
	Female	16	88.89
Pre-Academic	Japanese language school	2	11.11
Academic	First year	4	22.22
	Second year	2	16.67
	Third year	2	11.11
	Four year	2	11.11
Graduate	Graduate student	6	27.78

**Data collection**

To better understand students' motivation to learn at EMI University in Japan, mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative methods) were used to collect data for this study. Quantitative methods were used to conduct an online survey, which was distributed to 103 students to understand the ideas of a large number of people. The qualitative methods were used to conduct a semi-structured interview, which consisted of 18 students to deeply understand how individuals are attracted to EMI University and their challenges in that education.

***Questionnaire Design***

The design of the questionnaire was developed by adapting questions from the research of Kırkgöz (2005), which identify motivation of students in Turkey to study in the EMI course

and the difficulties students encountered. The present study was also an attempt to investigate the learning motivation and challenges of Vietnamese students in EMI Japanese university base on the integrative and instrumental sources of motivation. Thus, it is appropriate to use her questionnaire as the basis for this study.

The questionnaire was conducted online with Google Forms and was sent to participants by email and social media link. The questionnaire was divided into 5 sections, which consisted of a combination of a four-point Likert-scale statements, which ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree and open-ended questions.

Section one included the student's background information such as gender, major, English experiences. Section two was about students' level of general English, and section three had questions involving asking about their understanding of the lecture. Section four was questions about their motivation to learn EMI in Japan. The last section was composed of open-ended items asking about their challenges in the EMI classes.

The survey was written in English. Due to the limited English proficiency of some participants, especially freshman students and pre-academic groups, the answers for the open-ended question could be written in either English or Vietnamese.

### *Semi-structured Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews method is typically a dialogue between researcher and participant that allows the researcher to collect open-ended data, to deeply investigate participant thoughts, feelings and beliefs about a particular topic. According to Longhurst (2003, p. 143)

A semi-structured interview is a verbal interchange where one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions. Although the interviewer

prepares a list of predetermined questions, semi-structure interviews unfold in the conversational manner offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important.

Thus, it is the effective method to discover students' motivation toward EMI University

The interview was with 18 students who were selected from survey questionnaire participation and willingness to volunteer. The interview was either English or Vietnamese. Then, the conversation was recorded in MP3 format and then transcribed and coded for further analysis and interpretation.

The interview followed a semi structured format and lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes, and a range of questions about their learning motivation and challenges in EMI Japanese University were asked in the interview.

### ***Privacy***

Oral and written permission was collected from students at the beginning of the year, and principles of informed consent were followed. I promised that privacy would be protected, all names kept anonymous, and comments polished for grammar (to minimize embarrassment).

### **Data Analysis**

For the questionnaire, quantitative data analyses were conducted by using the SPSS program (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and qualitative data analysis was conducted by using coding system.

The 17- item questionnaire consists of 15 closed-end questions for students' attitude and self-evaluation toward English language and EMI lecture; students' motivation in EMI university; plus, two open-ended questions for free writing opinions and comments of students on their challenges at EMI universities in Japan.

SPSS program is mainly used to deal with analysis of responses to closed-ended questions, including question 1 to 14. Question number 14, which consists of 11 statements measuring learner motivation toward EMI program, were categorized into two sub-sources of motivation: instrumental motivation (items 1, 2, 4, 6, 10), integrative motivation (items 3, 5, 7, 9, 11). A Likert scale was developed to get student opinions on how strongly they agree or disagree to take EMI university in Japan.

Then, for open-ended questions (question 16,17), the data was classified into main themes by using coding system.

For the semi-structured interview, qualitative data analyses were conducted by using the coding system (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2018). Interview answers from students were used to analyze the survey results, to specifically understand why students choose EMI university and what was their strongest motivation.

## Results

Results are divided in two main sections. The first section reports the findings from survey data. This section reveals the profile of students and their attitudes towards English as well as toward the EMI program; and perceptions of their difficulties in EMI university. The second section verifies the finding from interview data. In this section, semi-structured interview data specifically examines students' learning motivation and their challenges in the EMI program.

### Survey Results and Discussion

#### *Background of Subjects*

**Students' Self-evaluation of Their English Proficiency.** As shown in Table 6, about half of students rated themselves as “good” when asked to self-evaluate their proficiency in each of the four skills of English.

**Table 6**

#### *Self-evaluation on the Four Skills*

	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Good	70.9	49.5	63.1	44.7
Fair	24.3	41.7	35	41.7
Poor	4.9	8.7	1.9	13.6
Total	100	100	100	100

Specifically, students are more confident in their listening and reading skills, with more than 70% of students rated listening as their best skill (only 4.9% of them rated themselves as poor). Similarly, with reading skills rated as very high proportion (more than 60% of them rated themselves as good, and only 1.9% of them rated themselves as poor).

For the speaking and writing skills, compared to listening and reading skills, the self-evaluation of students is lower, but it is also in high proportion (49.5% in speaking and 44.7%

in writing, only 8.7 and 13.6 of them rated themselves as poor in those skills). Generally, Vietnamese students in this survey are confident of their English proficiency in all four skills.

However, the students from different groups (pre-academic, academic and graduate) perceived differences in their abilities in the four skills. Among the three groups of students, the graduate group of students have the highest number of students who feel they are 'good' in the receptive four skills (Figures 3-5). Particularly, 88.46% of students rated themselves 'good' in both listening and reading, 65.38% in writing and 57.69% in speaking. Additionally, they are also the lowest number of students seen as being 'poor' in all four skills. This is illustrated by the fact that there is no student rating themselves in the 'poor' category in listening and reading skill, only 3.85% in speaking skill and 11.54% in writing skill. Thus, from the results, it can be assumed that graduate students are more confident in listening and reading skill rather than speaking and writing skill.

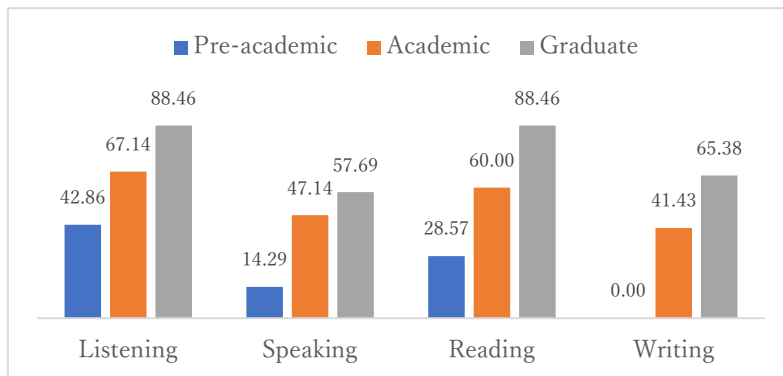
The results show that academic students also have the positive self-evaluation of their four skills with over 40% of them rate themselves as 'good' in all skills, and only a small number of them rate as 'poor' in four skills. Similar to graduate students, they are also stronger in listening (67.14%) and reading (60%).

For the pre-academic students, among the three groups, they are seen as the lowest group of students who feel that they are 'good' in receptive skills. Additionally, this group has the highest numbers of students who are poor in writing skills (42.86%).

In sum, both graduate and academic students are confident in all four skills. Not many pre-academic students rate themselves 'good' in English; however, they have a positive self-evaluation in listening and reading skills. All three groups are stronger in listening and reading skill than in writing skill.

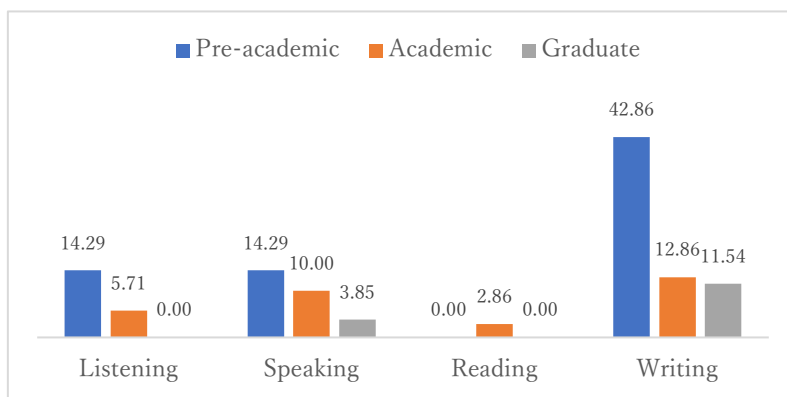
**Figure 3**

*Self-evaluation of Different Groups on the Four Skills as 'Good'*



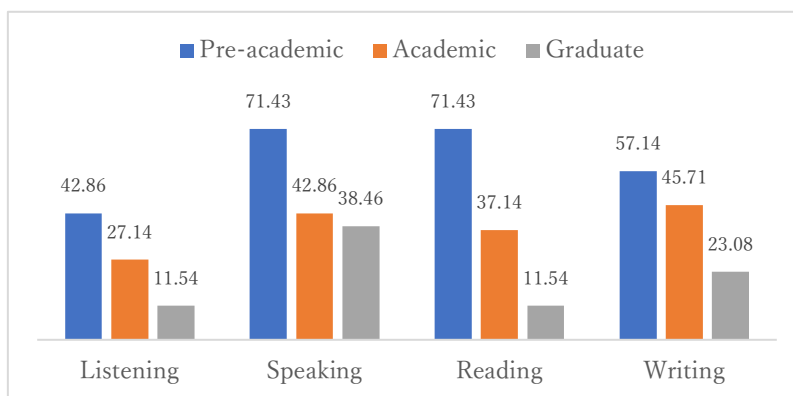
**Figure 4**

*Self-evaluation of Different Groups on the Four Skills as 'Poor'*



**Figure 5**

*Self-evaluation of Different Groups on the Four Skills as 'Fair'*

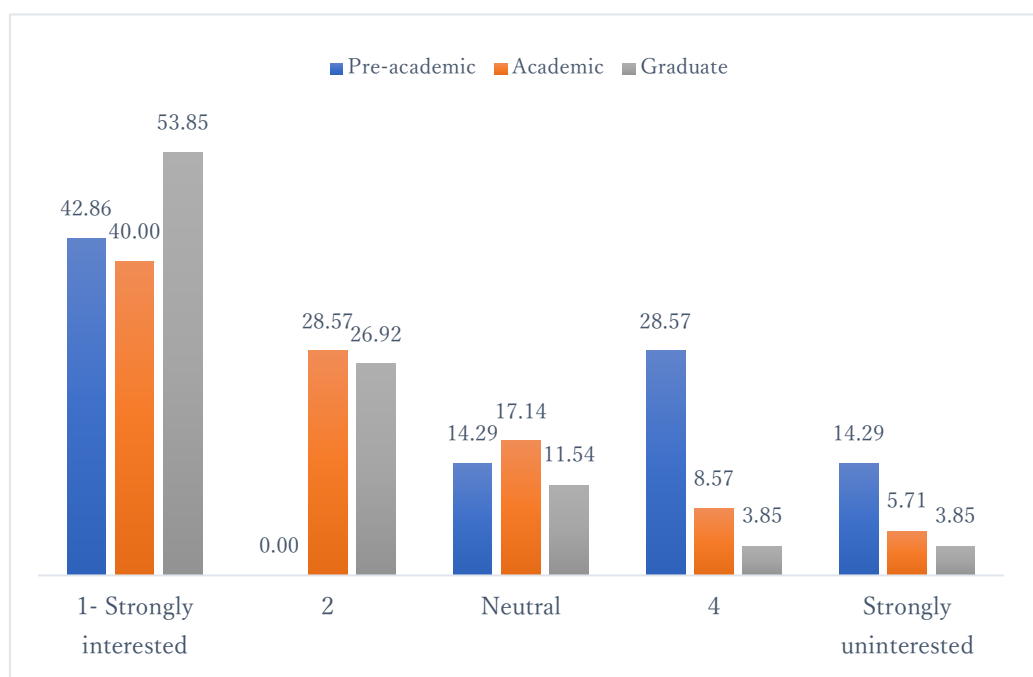


**Students' Attitude towards the English Language.** Most students felt strongly interested or at least had no especially negative feelings towards it (see Figure 6). Over 60% of students are interested in learning the English language, and only a small number of students are completely not interested in learning English. Comparing students from different groups, it appears that more graduate students and academic students reported that they are either strongly interested or interested in English language (80.77% and 68.57% respectively). By contrast, more than 50% of pre-academic students feel neutral or uninterested in English.

In general, almost all Vietnamese students in this survey felt interested or have a positive attitude toward learning English, especially graduate and academic students.

**Figure 6**

*Degree of Interest in Learning English Language*



**Students' Comprehension towards the EMI Lectures.** Figure 7 shows that both academics and graduates are able to understand more than 75% of the lectures (84.06%

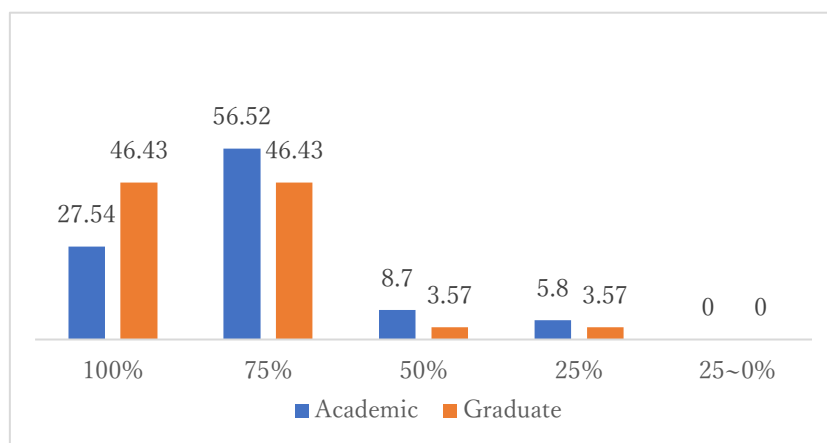


and 92.86% respectively). Only 14.5% and 7.14% respectively of the students in these two groups reported that they are able to understand the lectures less than 50%.

Particularly, it is surprising that none of them reported that they understand less than 25% of the lectures.

**Figure 7**

*Degree of Comprehension of the EMI Lectures*



In addition, Table 7 also shows that students assessed themselves as being stronger at reading and listening and weaker at writing and especially speaking. Specifically, with specific listening and reading rated as very high proportion, which is 68% and 67% respectively, whereas, only 1% of students rated themselves as poor in specific reading. In contrast, 10.7% of students rated as poor in specific speaking, which is the highest proportion within four skills.

From the results, it may be assumed that Vietnamese students follow the lectures well. Most of them can understand people speaking about their subject of study, and they can read texts on their subject of study well. However, their speaking about the subject of study is also limited.

**Table 7***Students' Perceptions of Their Specific Purpose Language Skills*

	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Good	68	55.3	67.0	51.5
Fair	29.1	34.0	32.0	39.8
Poor	2.9	10.7	1.0	8.7
Total	100	100	100	100

*Students' Learning Motivation toward EMI University*

**Sources of Motivation toward EMI University.** The results from the survey show that all the most frequent motivations given are instrumental sources of motivation (see Table 8). It is surprising to note that the three most popular sources of motivation for these students in this survey are related to study purposes (improve professional knowledge, read texts in subject area and become broadly educated). Thus, it can be presumed that these students are most strongly attracted to EMI university because of study purposes. To a large extent, these Vietnamese students are studying abroad, so study purpose may be the first priority with Vietnamese students in this survey.

Previous research (Kırkgöz, 2005), showed that long-term objectives such as better paid jobs and being broadly educated were the most popular motivation that Turkish students decided to choose to learn at EMI university. On the other hand, for Vietnamese students in this survey, long-term objectives (achieve a special goal, get a good job) were in the fourth position with regard to motivation.

**Table 8**

*Sources of Motivation for Choosing EMI at Japanese Universities (Five-point Likert Scale Results)*

Source of motivation	Type	Frequency (N=103)	Proportion (%)	Mode
Improve professional knowledge	Instrumental	66	64.08	4
Read texts in my subject area	Instrumental	55	53.40	4
Become broadly educated	Instrumental	55	53.40	4
Get a good job	Instrumental	53	51.46	4
Achieve a special goal	Instrumental	52	50.49	4
Would like to live abroad for working or studying	Integrative	48	46.60	4
Know international news and events	Integrative	46	44.66	4
Know English gives me personal satisfaction	Integrative	43	41.75	4
Make English speaking friends	Integrative	43	41.75	4
Learn about English speaking cultures	Integrative	29	28.16	4
Understand how English people think and behave	Integrative	27	26.21	4

*Note.* Responses on a Likert scale where 1= strongly disagree, 4= strongly agree.

Table 8 also shows that even though all integrative motivation is in the bottom, nearly 50% or over 40% of the students are attracted by integrative motivation. It can be found that this group is drawn more by integrative motivations concerned with expanding knowledge as well as preparing to live abroad for working or studying rather than concerned about the culture and people of English-speaking countries in general (Learn about English speaking

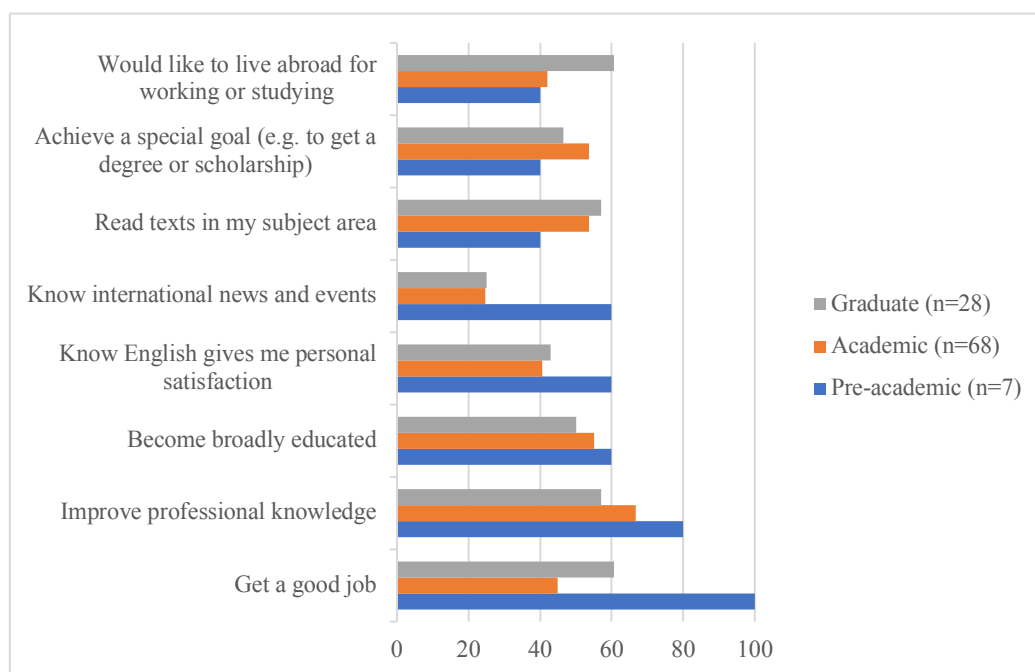
culture or Understand how English people think and behave) and know English speaking people as individuals (Make English speaking friends).

From the analysis of each question, the percent value between instrumental motivation and integrative motivation is not remarkably different, so most individual students ranked a mix of both instrumental and integrative sources of motivation as the main sources of motivation. It may be deduced that although attracted mainly by instrumental motivations, the typical student is also drawn by integrative motivation for some reasons.

**Sources of Motivation for EMI University in Difference Group of Students.** All three groups of students primarily selected instrumental sources of motivation (see Figure 8). This is illustrated by the fact that instrumental motivations are in the top two places. Even though all three groups strongly select instrumental motivation, it is interesting to note that their sources of motivation are slightly different.

**Figure 8**

*Differences in Motivation for Opting EMI University among Three Group of Students*



In general, long-term objectives (Get a good job) is in the third position regarding the instrumental source of motivation for academic students. However, it becomes the most popular sources of motivation for both pre-academic and graduate students. Besides, graduate students are also strongly attracted by the motivation of living abroad for working or studying. Furthermore, both two groups also have another instrumental source of motivation in the second position, which is ‘improving the professional knowledge’.

Even though pre-academic and graduate students mainly select EMI university in Japan because of instrumental sources of motivation, the results show that among the popular motivations are also two integrative sources of motivation. While graduate students are attracted by the desire to expand knowledge (know international news and events), pre-academic students are concerned more about the personal satisfaction and the culture of English-speaking people (English gives me personal satisfaction, understanding how English people think and behave).

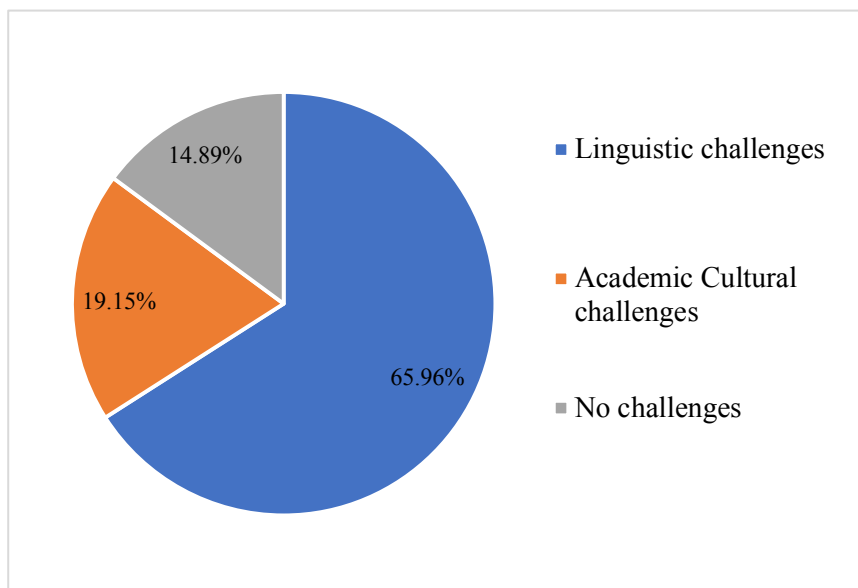
For the academic students, they are also strongly attracted to EMI because of instrumental motivation, which are all the top three places. However, their sources of motivation are slightly different from both pre-academic and graduate students. Unlike pre-academic and graduate students, all the sources of motivation on top three places are about learning purposes such as ‘Improving the professional knowledge’, ‘Become broadly educated’, ‘Read texts in my subject’, respectively the first place, second place and third place. In other words, they are more concerned about long-term objectives for learning purposes than job opportunities. However, similar to pre-academic and graduate students, among the popular motivations for selecting EMI university, they are also attracted to EMI university because of integrative motivation concerned with expanding knowledge (Know more international news and events)

### *The Challenges in EMI University*

The challenges of students in EMI universities were revealed based on the finding's data from online survey and semi-structured interview. This study looks at three different groups of students (pre-academic, academic, graduate students). However, for the pre-academic group of students, they have not entered EMI university yet, so they have not experienced any problems in EMI University. Thus, in this part, only academic and graduate students are discovered based on the survey and interview's data.

**Figure 9**

*Problems Experienced by Vietnamese Students through EMI*



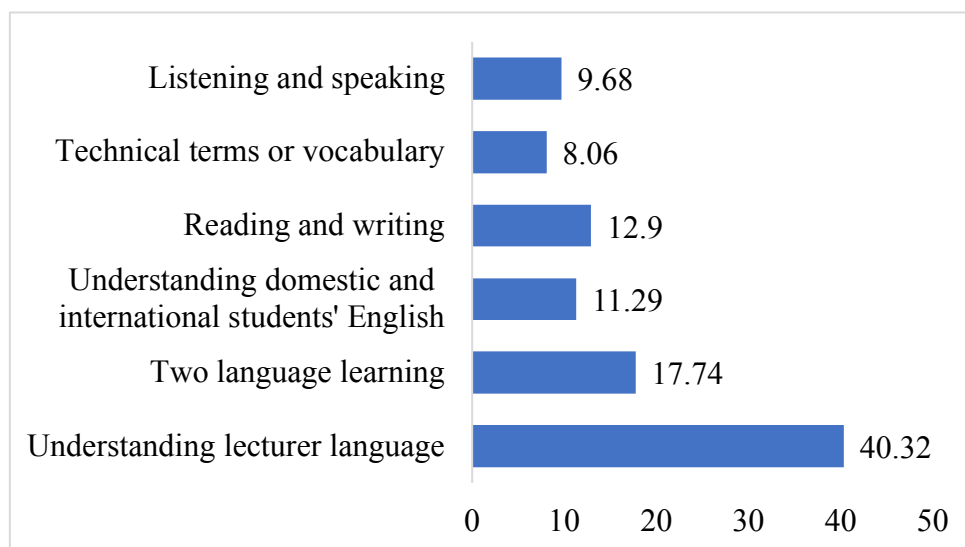
Students acknowledged that studying in an English medium university created a real challenge for them. According to the analysis of the survey's data, more than 85% of the students stated problems they are encountering with learning EMI program (See Figure 9) such as difficulty in understanding lecturer's language, and difficulty in communicating with domestic students. Only 14.89% of students did not state any problems or they had no problems in learning through English at Japanese University.

Among this, 65.96% of the students are facing linguistic challenges, and 19.15% of students have academic cultural challenges. Thus, linguistic challenges seem the biggest problems for Vietnamese students in this research.

**Linguistic Challenges.** The result shows that linguistic challenges make up more than 60%. Linguistic issues are the biggest problems that Vietnamese students are encountering in EMI classrooms. Among Vietnamese students from different EMI universities in Japan in this survey, linguistic challenges are related to understanding lecturer's language as well as domestic and international students language, difficulty in listening and speaking, difficulty in reading and writing, difficulty with technical terms or vocabulary and difficulty in two language learning (see Figure 10).

**Figure 10**

*Linguistic Problems Experienced by Vietnamese Students through EMI*



**Difficulty in Understanding Lecturers' Language.** According to the survey, understanding lecturer's language has been found as the most challenging for Vietnamese students in the EMI classroom, which make up more than 40% (Figure 10). Lecturers' English skills such as the poor pronunciation or the accent, was discovered as the main root

causing the reduced ability to follow or understand lecture of participants. In the survey, students provided detailed examples of their problems.

The hardest thing would be teacher's strong accent that makes it hard to understand lectures (G15)

Since I'm living in Japan, some of my professors are Japanese. Although they have broad knowledge, their English pronunciation is not good enough, which made it hard for me to follow the lectures and sometimes I could not understand what they were talking or get the points they were trying to convey. (A66)

Not every professor has the same English level with the others. Some might not be native speakers, resulting in accents that might cause difficulty in delivering the speech. (A67)

Additionally, lecturers' English proficiency reduces not only their ability to understand or follow the lecture, but also their interest in the subject. For example, one student stated, "Some Japanese professors are not capable of fluent English pronunciation, so it somehow lowers my interest in the subject a bit".

As a result, it showed that English proficiency of teachers, such as their pronunciation and accent when giving the speech or lecture, plays a significant role with Vietnamese students. They may lower their interest in the subject as well as their understanding about the lecture.

***Difficulty in Two Language Learning.*** The result reported that nearly 17.74% of students are encountering problem of learning in two language. It is obvious that Vietnamese participants are learning both English and Japanese language and learning two



language is also one of the main motivations that attract them to EMI university. However, it also become a challenge for them.

According to the participants' ideas, learning two languages at the same time causes many problems such as consuming time, energy, etc. Moreover, this leads to many unexpected outcomes in learning English process such as lowering their English level, creating confusion in pronunciation between Japanese and English. Some examples are given below to indicate these problems:

When I start learning Japanese, my English ability will go down. (A98)

Not all professors/ teachers are native speakers which makes it hard to understand. Also, I feel like my English doesn't improve but become worse instead even though I use English most of the time. (A10)

Well both are difficult, so it took me a lot of energy and brainstorming to digest them all. (G21)

Not enough time to learn both languages and sometimes I mix Japanese and English together. (G4)

Thus, it is claimed that learning two languages at the same time may cause many challenges for Vietnamese students, and their English level may be reduced because of the big gap between the two languages. From the result in this survey, it is worthwhile to investigate whether learning through English in Japan is the effective pathway.

**Other Problems.** Beside the two main problems mentioned above, Vietnamese students faced other problems relating to linguistic challenges. First, they were encountering difficulties in understanding domestic and international students' language. Second, they faced difficulties in writing and reading, which make up 12.9%. Third, 6.38% of students have difficulty in listening and speaking. Finally, only a very small proportion of students

(8.06%) were facing difficulties in understanding technical terms or academic vocabulary in lecture.

Firstly, Vietnamese students faced difficulties understanding domestic and international students due to the gap in English proficiency between domestic and international students, especially domestic students or Japanese students. Some students commented:

People from many countries have different English accents, so it is quite hard to get used to it at first (A20)

English used by Japanese is only barely good enough for English learners. Probably due to the accent or the mindset of Japanese people, communicating with Japanese using English is not gratifying (G54)

English level of Japanese is not good, especially pronunciation (G24)

Japanese language proficiency is not good enough, which created the language barrier to understand each other.

Secondly, as discussed previously, the overall degree of the students' Perceptions of Their Specific Purpose Language Skills was moderately high. Therefore, difficulties in reading and writing were not found as the main problems that Vietnamese students are facing. However, a small number of students (8.51%) stated that they could not write the long assignment or read and research information in English.

Some students commented, "I have to get used to reading and searching for information in English. Besides, writing long assignments in English is a bit difficult, too", or "My writing skill in English is not very good so I have struggled to write essays and reports".

Thus, some Vietnamese students had limited ability in writing academic reports and reading in English.

Thirdly, the students faced difficulties understanding the EMI course content when they did not know the necessary technical terms or academic vocabulary. One student commented that, “I have quite limited vocabulary related to my major, so it is a little bit difficult to listen to the professor.” Another student said, “There are still lots of words in my major that I cannot fully understand”. “Some subjects contain lots of terminologies that I have to use dictionaries to get the idea”.

Finally, students stated that they are struggling in listening and speaking problems. The following statements are relevant examples in this context:

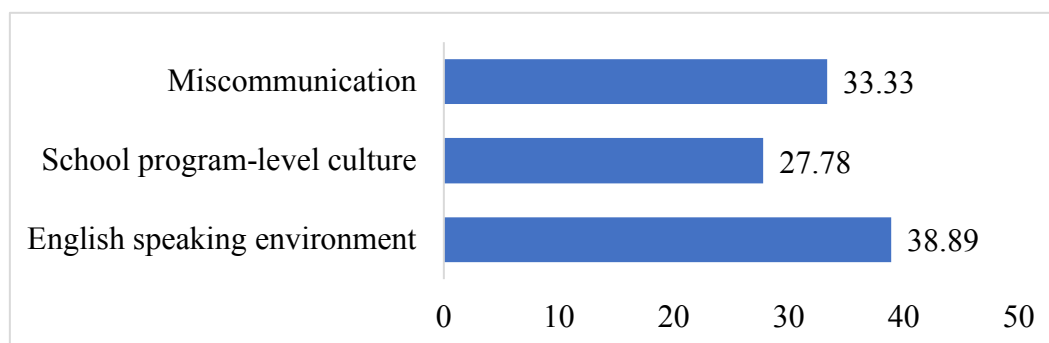
I am unable to express my ideas FULLY to friends or teammates  
because of my low English level (A90)

I am having problems of listening comprehension in class (G26)

**Academic Cultural Challenges.** It has been reported that culture challenges make up only 19.15% (see Figure 9). Only a small number of students mentioned their problems about cultural aspects in the survey. However, it does not mean they do not have academic cultural issues. The result in this survey showed that problems relating to academic cultural challenges including the problems of miscommunication, English speaking environment and program-level culture influenced by the curriculum (see Figure 11).

**Figure 11**

*Academic Cultural Problems Experienced by Vietnamese Students through EMI in Survey*



In this survey, for academic cultural challenges, difficulty in finding English learning environment is the main problems of Vietnamese students. One student commented, “This is my first semester, so I do not know what my problems will be when studying English in Japan. It may be the environment to be able to use English is limited”.

Some other students state that they are encountering to the problems of communication such as miscommunication with domestic students as well as other international students and teachers because of language barriers and culture differences. The following statements are relevant examples in this context:

English of some professors is not good enough, and Japanese students are not willing to communicate with international students (A69)

Not understanding subtle culture cues (A40)

Actually, my school has a ratio of 50-50 international students and Japanese students. Therefore, there is no serious problem in using English to study and communicate. However, sometimes jokes in English from my English friends to me seem not to be as funny as they should be. That stems from cultural differences as I have had no experiences with the culture/thinking patterns in my friends' countries (A9)

The school program-level issues such as Workload, Syllabus, subject difficult, teaching style are also the other problems that students are facing at EMI universities.

Some students reported:

I find some of my assigned reading materials difficult to fully comprehend and the workload was quite overwhelming, so the result ended up falling short of my expectations (A25)

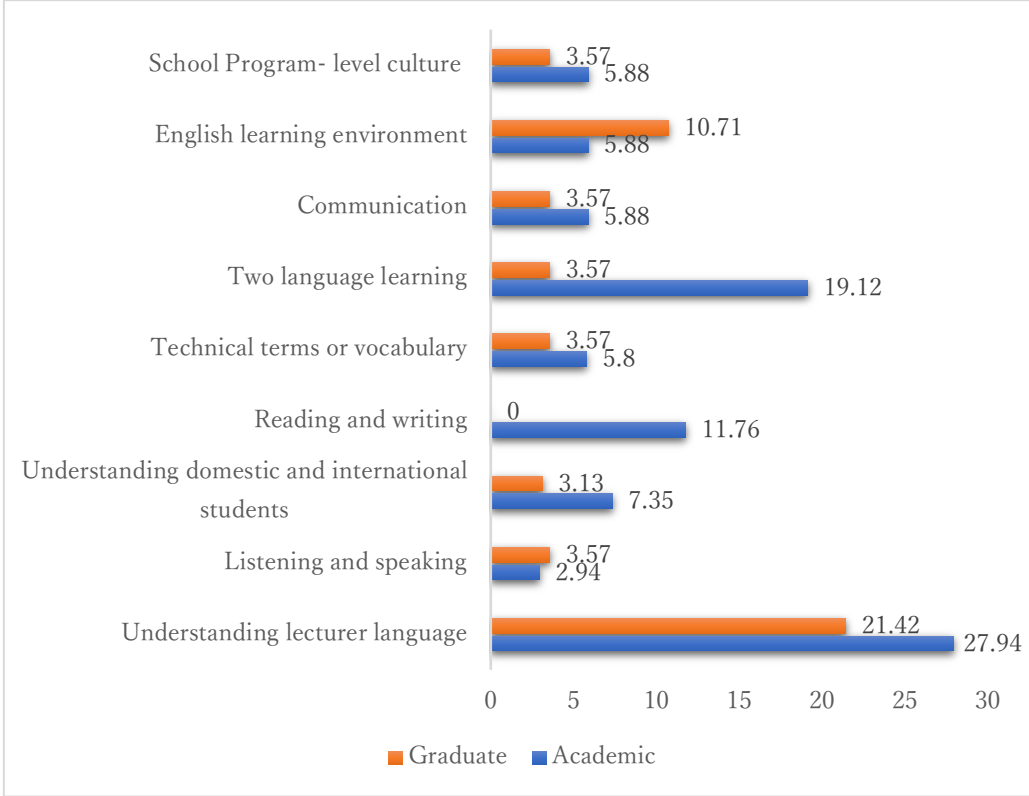
My English classes were all about TOEIC preparation or Practical Communication, etc. The subjects weren't attractive enough to learn about (A26)

#### **Problems Experienced by Academic and Graduate Students Through EMI.**

Figure 12 showed that graduate and academic students perceived the same types of problems. Both groups mentioned the problem of 'understanding lecture language'. Academic students stated problems in all categories rather than graduate students. In particular, academic students were more concerned about the problems of two language learning (19.12%) and reading and writing (10.71%), whereas only 3.57% of graduate students are encountering to two language learning problems, and none of them perceive the problems of reading and writing at EMI universities. However, beside the problem of understanding lecture language, English learning environment seems the second main challenges for them, which occupied 10.71%.

**Figure 12:**

*Problems Experienced by Academic and Graduate Students through EMI*



In sum, both groups of students have difficulty in linguistic challenges, particularly in understanding lecturers’ language. In addition, academic students are facing the other problems in linguistic challenges such as learning two language at the same time, reading and writing. On the other hand, graduate students are more concerned about the English learning environments in Japan.

### Interview Results and Discussion

This section is organized into three parts. The first part reports students' learning motivation in EMI university, which comprised of students' sources of motivation in EMI university and how their motivation varies between different group of students; and the motivation can change. The second part reports students' challenges and their biggest challenges in EMI universities. The second part is different from the survey's finding as only interviewees' data was examined. The results are only analyzed for all groups of students and do not separate pre-academic, academic and graduate students.

#### *Students' Learning Motivation toward EMI University*

**Sources of Motivation toward EMI University.** Semi-structured interviews were used to further examine the survey data. One important question asked was: "What are the most important reasons attracting you to take EMI university in Japan?"

**Table 9**

*The Most Important Reasons to Take EMI Courses in Japan*

Themes	Source of motivation	Sub-sources of motivation	N (times)	Students
Motivation	Instrumental	Future job	4	A8, G11, G16, P18
		Travel	1	P17
		Achieve a degree	1	G13
		Work in foreign countries	2	A3, G15
		Broadly educated	1	A1
		Improve professional knowledge	3	A4, G12, A6
	Integrative	Feel satisfaction	2	A2, A5
		Know international events and news	1	A9
		Like learning many languages	1	A7

Note: Total number of students is 18 and each student only has one response

The Table shows that 12 of 18 Vietnamese participants are attracted by instrumental motivation rather than integrative motivation. These 12 students decided to learn at EMI

university because of instrumental motivation such as future jobs, attainment of professional knowledge, degree of achievement, broad education and working in foreign countries. Among these long-term objectives, future jobs and improved professional knowledge are the top two, respectively 4 students and 3 students (Table 9). Some students stated that they would be able to find a good job in the future, if they could communicate in English well. One student explained:

A8: I am aware of the importance of English now, so I can easily get a job with high salary in the future

Several other students argued that they were able to improve their knowledge more easily given their proficiency in English language.

A4: I clearly acknowledge my future job orientation, which is about international business management. The job in that field requires a particular language to communicate and includes particular terminology which is hard to translate into other languages accurately. Therefore, I considered a university offering the subject in English.

One student mentioned that working in foreign countries is one of motivations to take EMI university.

G15: The department I am learning in, has not developed in Japan yet, so it is quite hard to find a job in that field in Japan. Therefore, I decide to work in foreign countries after graduating. As you know, working in other foreign countries, they require English proficiency, so that's the main reason I chose EMI university rather JMI university in Japan.

In addition, students also had integrative motivation to opt for EMI universities (4 responses in total) such as personal satisfaction, and they wanted to know international news and events as well as their interest in learning many languages. The following statements are relevant examples in this context:



A5: Compared to Japanese language, I feel more comfortable and relaxed when I speak English, and I express my idea more easily.

A7: My main interest is learning as many languages as possible, so in addition to Japanese language, I can learn English at school.

A9: English is the global language, so knowing English enables me to get involved in international affairs, information and events which help me to have more knowledge about the world.

**Motivation of EMI University's Students in Terms of Their Plans to Attend EMI Universities Before or After Coming to Japan.** From the survey's results, it clearly showed that all pre-academic, academic and graduate students were attracted by instrumental motivation even though their source of motivation was only slightly different. However, the semi-structured interview results revealed that their motivation to study at EMI university in Japan was not only affected by the instrumental and integrative motivation. They were also attracted by other reasons regarding their plans to take EMI university before or after coming to Japan.

According to the interview data, there were two different groups of students. First, half of the interviewees (9 students) already had plans to study through English at EMI university in Japan. They were aware of the EMI program at some universities in Japan before they came to Japan, and they aimed to take the university entrance examination directly from Vietnam into Japanese universities. Secondly, the other half of the interviewees (9 students) did not have any plans to take EMI university before they came to Japan. They aimed to learn and improve Japanese, so initially they entered Japanese language schools.

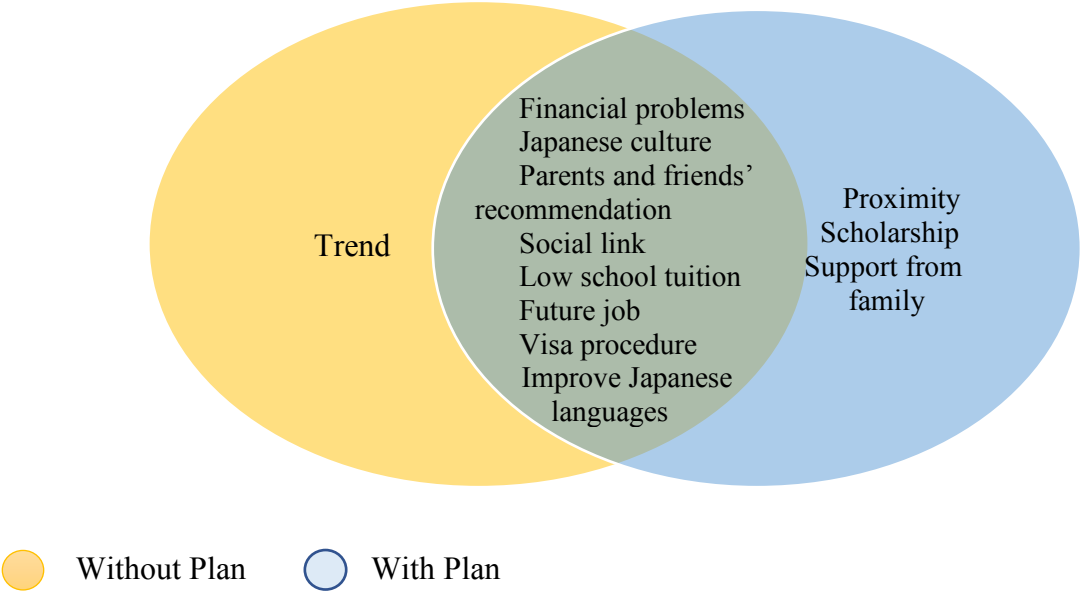
The groups had different goals from the beginning. Thus, their motivation to choose EMI university was also different. The difference and similarity in their motivation depends on

some factors, including why Japan, why EMI in Japan instead of other countries, Japanese language, and why they switched to EMI university instead of Japanese medium instruction University.

**Reasons to Study Abroad in Japan.** From the Venn diagram, both groups of students had many of the same reasons to study abroad in Japan (Figure 13). However, the main reasons for them to study abroad in Japan varies (see Figure 14).

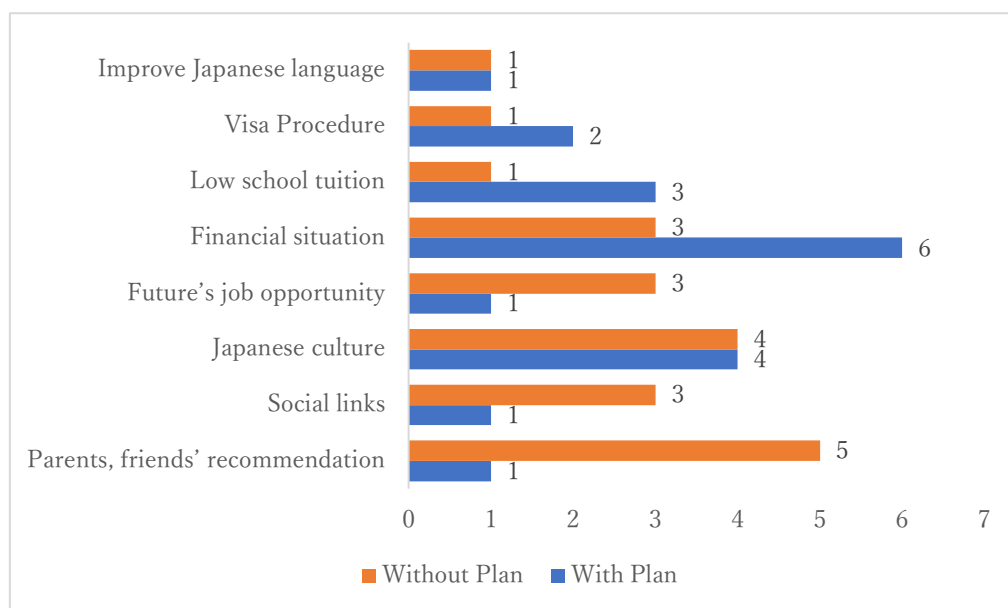
**Figure 13**

*The Differences and Similarities for Choosing Japan between With Plan and Without Plan Groups of Students*



**Figure 14**

*The Similarities for Choosing Japan between With Plan and Without Plan Groups of Students*



The highest number of without plan students decided to study abroad in Japan because they got recommendations from parents or friends. One student said, “I got a recommendation from my mom. There was an overseas education company near my house, especially, many students in my hometown can study abroad in Japan easily. Therefore, my mom recommended me to study abroad in Japan”.

Social links and future job opportunities are also main reasons for them to opt for Japan. One student reported, “My cousin is living and studying in Japan, so my parents feel more secure about me If I go there. On the contrary, my family will worry about me if I study abroad in a country that I have no relatives there”.

About the future job opportunity, another student shared, “Recently, the number of Japanese companies is increasing, so it will be an advantage if I can speak Japanese, especially, having a working and living experience in Japan”.

On the other hand, among the students with plans, the highest numbers of student chose Japan because of financial problems of their family as well as low tuition fees rather than getting recommendation from parents or friends, social links, and future job opportunities. They want to study in English-speaking countries, but the cost of living in these countries was extremely expensive, so that their family cannot support their living and studying expense there. Moreover, after searching about Japan, they found that the school tuition in Japan is much cheaper. Thus, they chose Japan.

One student said, “With the low tuition fee, I can afford the living expense and school fee by having a part time job, so I do not need to get much financial support from my family”.

Similarly, both groups of students also expressed the same main reason to study abroad in Japan. That is because of being interested in Japanese culture and tourism. One student claimed, “I find some things unique in Japan cultures and tourism. Japan’s character is good to study. Additionally, I want to travel through Japan”.

Another student added:

I became interested in Japanese culture through watching anime, reading comic books, even my relative’s story about Japan since I was a child.

I travelled to Japan when I was a high school student. I love the living style, the environment in Japan, especially, the Japanese people are very polite.

All of these good images remained after the trip and became one of the reasons to choose Japan for oversea study.

However, both groups of students also have different reasons why they studied abroad in Japan. For example, without plan groups of students came to Japan because of trends. For example, one student stated, “At that time, there are lots of students start studying abroad in Japan, which become a trend. So, I also decided to study in Japan.”

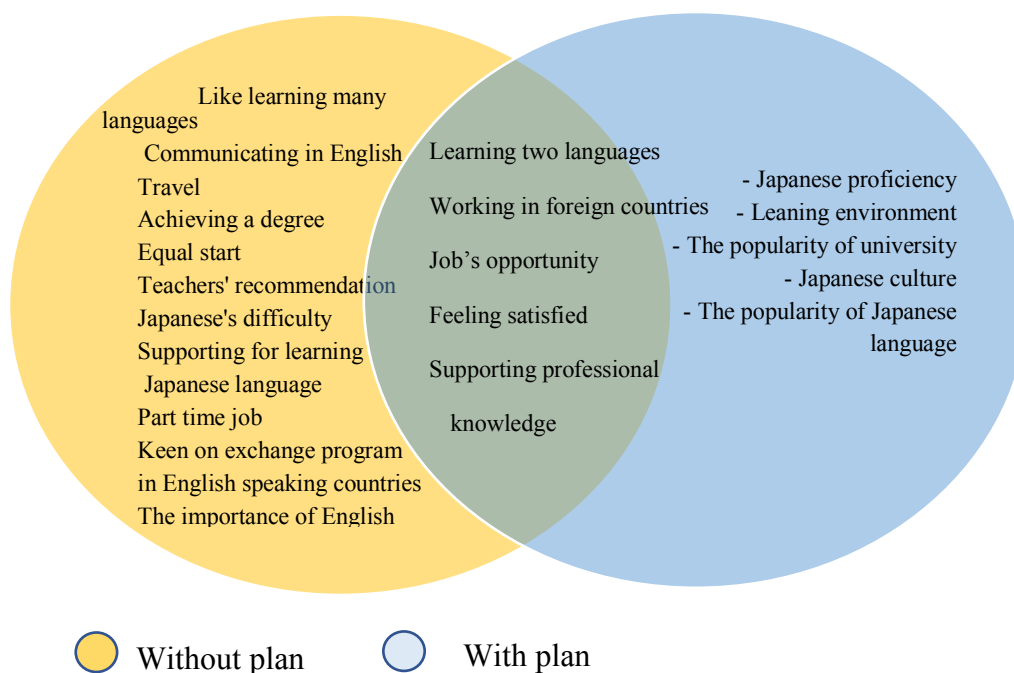
On the contrary, for students with plans, getting scholarship, the proximity between Vietnam and Japan, having support from family are the other reasons to choose Japan. Among these reasons, getting scholarship is one of their main reasons. One student commented, “Many Japanese universities offer lots of scholarships that I cannot find at universities from other countries. By receiving a scholarship, my study will be easier, and I will be more independent of my family’s financial support”.

In sum, both group of students highlighted many similar reasons to study abroad in Japan. However, the main reasons for choosing Japan is slightly different. For instance, the highest number of with plan groups of students came to Japan because of some main reasons such as financial problems, getting scholarships, and being interested in Japanese culture. On the other hand, for the without plan groups of students, they came to Japan mainly because of recommendations from parents or friends. Also, they were interested in Japanese culture and social links, future job opportunity, and financial problems.

**Why EMI?** From Figure 15, the interviewees reported their sources of motivation for opting for EMI universities. Both groups of students show the same motivation to select an EMI program at Japanese University such as learning two languages, working in foreign countries, expanding job opportunities, feeling satisfied when learning English and supporting professional knowledge.

**Figure 15**

*Differences and Similarities for Choosing EMI in Japan of Both Group Students*

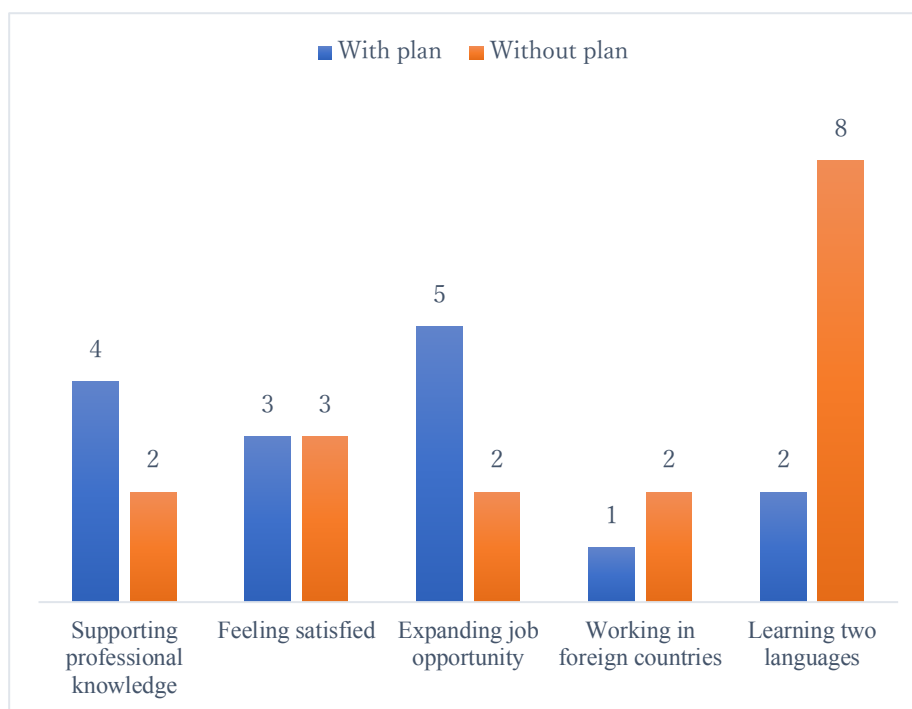


According to the With Plan group of students' responses (Figure 16), expanding job opportunities (five students out of nine students) and supporting professional knowledge (three students), which belong to the instrumental source motivation, are the most popular motivation to select the EMI program in Japanese universities. One of the participants said, "By knowing two languages, I can easily find a good job, and I cannot only work in Japan but also have a chance to work in other foreign countries".

On the other hand, in the without plan group, the highest number of students reported that learning two languages (eight students out of nine students) and feeling satisfied when learning in English (three students) are their main reasons for switching to learn at EMI university. In other words, they are strongly attracted to EMI university because of integrative sources of motivation.

**Figure 16**

*Why Did You Choose the EMI Program at Japanese University?*



***Why EMI in Japan (With Plan Students)?*** For the With Plan group, as discussed above, their motivation to opt for an EMI university was decided by why they chose EMI in Japan instead of other English-speaking countries and Japanese language. Table 10 showed that they decided to choose EMI University in Japan instead of other countries for five reasons: the popularity of Japanese language, lack of Japanese language ability, learning environment, Japanese culture, and the popularity of the university. Among these motivations, the highest number of students opted for EMI in Japan because of the popularity of Japanese language, lack of Japanese language ability and international learning environment

**Table 10***Why EMI in Japan of With Plan Group of Students*

Group of students	Themes	Sources of motivation	N (times)	Students
With Plan	Japan Why EMI in	The university popularity	2	A5, G11
		Japanese language popularity	4	A5, A7, A8, G11
		Japanese proficiency	3	A6, G12, G15
		Learning environment	3	A5, A6, A7
		Japanese culture	2	A1, A5

Note: Total number of students is 9, and each student may have many responses

### 1. The popularity of Japanese language

The highest number of students (four out of nine students) chose EMI in Japan because of the popularity of Japanese language. According to the participants, even if they took EMI university at some non-English-speaking countries in Europe areas, it is necessary to learn their first language as well. Thus, they also pay attention to the language popularity of the host country. One student said:

I also considered about the language popularity of the host country.

After researching the popularity of each language in the world, I found that Japanese is one of the popular languages in the world. Therefore, I decided to take EMI university in Japan.

### 2. Japanese proficiency

Three students reported that their Japanese language proficiency is not good enough to complete the course in Japanese. Even if English is not their first language, their experience in learning in English is longer than in the Japanese language. Thus, learning in English is much easier than in Japanese.



One student commented, “I used to be an exchange student at a Japanese university for one year; however, I did not read and write Japanese well. Therefore, I think that it is hard for me to take Master’ degree completely in Japanese language”.

### 3. International learning environment

Before opting for an EMI university in Japan, they started finding lots of information about universities in Japan such as the university ranking, the learning environment, etc. Learning environment seems one of the main reasons for them to select EMI in Japan rather than in other countries. Almost all students in this group came to Japan before they decided to study abroad in Japan for many purposes such as travelling, exchange programs, visiting school etc. They realized the importance of the learning environment at a university. One student argued:

For me, the learning environment at University is very important to me. As you know, English is a global language, and I think universities offering English based courses may have lots of international students as well as Japanese students who want to learn English and make international friends. Thus, learning at a diverse university or multicultural university helps me more open-minded and develop many other skills.

Another student reported that the number of students in Asia is larger or not overpowered by the students from European countries.

#### 4. The university popularity

One student said, “I acknowledge the importance of university rankings in Japanese society. Thus, I paid more attention on choosing the university to study rather than learning through English or Japanese.”

#### 5. Japanese culture

Some students went traveling with their family, and others aimed to find out more about Japan university and lifestyle of Japanese people. After the trip, they found that Japan was appropriate for them to study and settle. One said, “I became more interested in life in Japan as well as the Japanese people after traveling to Japan when I was a high school student. Therefore, I desire to experience life there”.

***Why switch to EMI (Without Plan students)?*** For students without plans, their main motivation also connects to the reason why they want to switch to EMI university after learning Japanese at Japanese language schools.

Table 11 shows that four students (4 times) state their decision to enter EMI universities because of the chance to communicate in English, which is connected to integrative source of motivation. For instance, some of them stated:

A9: I like learning English; however, I have a little chance to speak English in Japan, so I decided to enter into EMI university, where I can communicate in English with friends and teachers.

In addition, three students (4 times) reported that instrumental and integrative motivation attracted them to switch to EMI university such as supporting for learning Japanese language, part-time job and travel. These are connected to instrumental source motivation. The following statements are relevant examples in this context:

P18: Japanese language borrowed a lots words from English, which is called katakana. Therefore, my Japanese vocabulary will expand.

P17: I love travel, I want to travel to many beautiful places in the world. English is an international language, so If I can communicate in English, I can easily go traveling around the world, to anywhere I want to go.

P18: I meet lots of foreigners from my part-time jobs, so I need to learn English to communicate with them for my job. After talking and communicating in English, I become more interested in English.

**Table 11**

*Why Did You Switch to EMI University of Without Plan Students?*

Group	Themes/ Types of motivation		Sources of motivation	N (times)	Students
Without plan	Why switch to EMI university	Instrumental	Support for learning Japanese language	1	P18
			Part-time job	1	P18
			Travel	2	P17, P16
		Integrative	Communicate in English	4	P18, P17, G16, A9
		Others	Equal start	1	G11
			Friends and Teachers' recommendation	2	A4, G13
			Japanese's difficulty	1	A6
			Keen on exchange program in English speaking countries	1	P17

Note: Each student may have many responses

P: Pre-academic student A: Academic student G: Graduate student

Furthermore, students also switched to EMI universities because they get some recommendations from their friend or teachers at Japanese language school. For example, one student stated the following:

G13: I was going to study abroad in Japan within two years, then return to Vietnam. After two years in Japan, I realized that I fit to work in the education field, so I aim to work as a teacher at a university or college in Vietnam. However, without a master's degree (MA), I can only teach at Japanese language center or work as teacher or trainer for Japanese company. Therefore, achieving a master's degree became my main goal when I was studying abroad in Japan. My friend is taking MA in Japanese now, he said that it is extremely hard to take MA in Japanese. He told me that he had to read all books in Japanese, but the problem is he cannot completely understand the content of the books. He recommended that I should take MA in English because reading books in English is much easier. Only when you deeply understand the content of books, you can summary and absorb the new knowledge. Thus, I started considering about taking MA in English and finding some university that I can learn through English.

Another student complained about the unequal starting point between Japanese students and international students in JMI in Japan:

G11: I think that learning through English in Japan is an equal opportunity in the position of international students. I have a friend, she is a good student at a public university in Nara. However, she was scolded every day. The teacher always complained about her Japanese writing. The teacher asked her to translate documents from English to Japanese very week. However, she is an international student, and she just started learning Japanese less than two years ago. Therefore, no matter how hard she learns, her Japanese is not as good as other

Japanese students. Thus, I found that it is very hard if you are from unequal start, so learning at EMI university is an equal starting point for me.

In short, for students who already decided to take EMI university in Japan, they chose EMI university in Japan because of expanding job opportunities, the popularity of Japanese language, insufficient Japanese language ability, and interest in learning environment in Japan.

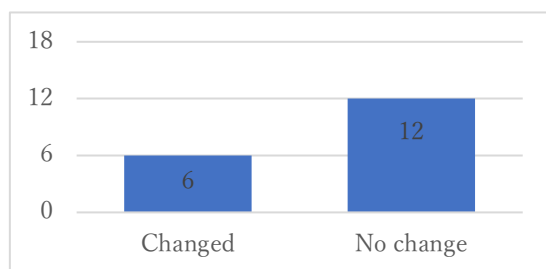
On the other hand, for students who switched to EMI university after graduating from a Japanese language school, learning two languages, communicating in English, being satisfied when learning English, and expanding job opportunities are regarded as the main reasons to make them switch to EMI universities instead of Japanese medium instruction universities.

**Motivation Can Be Changed.** Some participants stated about their changes in motivation after entering EMI universities. Therefore, this part reports how their motivation has changed and what affected their changes in motivation. In other words, the cause of changes in their motivation. This part only examines all participants and will not separate the different group of students (pre-academic, academic, graduate students) due to the limited number of participants.

*How their motivation has changed.* The Figure below shows the number of students who changed their motivation after entering into EMI universities in Japan.

**Figure 17**

*Did You Change Your Motivation?*



From Figure 17, six students indicated that their motivation to select EMI university has changed. These students have changed their motivation after entering EMI university. Four students changed from instrumental motivation to integrative motivation. Conversely, the other two students changed from integrative motivation to instrumental motivation.

*What affected their changes in motivation?* The change in learning environment seemed as the main cause to change the motivation of students. For example, support and improving professional knowledge was initially the strongest motivation to select EMI program instead of Japanese medium instruction (JMI) program in Japan. In other words, their motivation toward EMI program was mainly shaped by instrumental motivation rather than integrative motivation. However, that motivation has gradually changed over time. One student said:

I had a chance to join in an exchange program in Canada for seven months when I was in second year student. My English level improved a lot after this program. However, my Japanese proficiency went down. As a result, I could not exactly express my ideas to friends in Japanese. Conversely, I felt confident and extremely satisfied whenever I expressed my ideas to friends in English. Therefore, I realized that speaking in English and communicating in English gave me satisfaction and motivation to keep learning at EMI university rather than for supporting professional knowledge.

From her experience, it seems the change in her motivation has occurred after she came back from Canada. Her motivation changed from instrumental motivation (supporting professional knowledge) into integrative motivation (feel satisfied when learning in English).

Not only the learning environment but being unable to adapt to Japanese society environment also leads to the changes in motivation of student. In particular, one student argued in the following statement:

I decided to learn in EMI university for future job opportunity. After a few years learning in Japan, I realized that it is hard for me to adapt to Japanese society because of the big gap in both language and culture. I feel more comfortable and relaxed when I learn English, and I think their culture is more open, too. Therefore, I become to change my mind to live and work in foreign countries after graduating.

The example illustrated that the student's motivation is initially aimed at a future job opportunity. However, she realized the difficulty of adapting to current society, and her motivation changed. Now she would like to live and work in foreign countries. In other words, the motivation changed from instrumental motivation to integrative motivation

*The Challenges in EMI Universities***Table 12***Problems Experienced by Vietnamese Students through EMI*

Themes	Codes	Sub-codes	N (times)	Students
Linguistic	Teacher	English proficiency of teachers	14	A1, A2, A5, A6, A7, A8, A9, G10, G12, G13, G15, G16, G11, G12
	Student	Academic vocabulary	8	A2, A3, A4, A5, A7, G13, G16, G10
		The low English level themselves	1	A9, G16
		The low English level of domestic students	3	A1, A9, G13
		Two language learning	3	G11, G16, A9
Academic Cultural	Communication	Team work activities	7	A1, A5, A3, A7, A9, A4, G16
		Lack communication with domestic students	7	A2, A7, A9, A10, G13, G15, G16
		Lack communication with teachers	1	G12
		Integrating with local people	1	G14
	Learning environment	English speaking environment	1	G14
	School-program level	Subject difficulty	3	A7, A4, G16
		Workload	3	A4, A7, G14
		Learning and teaching style varies	3	A2, A6, A7
		Unstable curriculum	3	A4, G12, G16

Note: One student may have many responses

P: pre-academic student A: Academic student G: Graduate student

The challenges of students are examined in the semi-structured interview to clearly understand their main problems in EMI universities. The survey results revealed that students



mainly encountered two challenges: linguistic and academic cultural challenges. Therefore, this part also verifies students' problem based on two main categories: linguistic and academic cultural challenges. Additionally, this part also highlights the biggest challenges of students (See Table 12).

**Linguistic Challenges.** For the linguistic challenges, they are facing many problems such as English proficiency of teachers and students, academic vocabulary, and learning two languages. The survey results show that more than 60% of students are facing linguistic challenges, particularly the problems in understanding lecturers' language was the most challenging for them. Thus, it is not surprising that almost all the interviewees reported their difficulties in understanding the teachers' English at EMI university.

From the survey results, the low English level of teachers not only affects the understanding of the students but also their motivation to learn the subject. Similarly, one interviewee also said:

There are many subjects taught by Japanese teachers. I feel like their English is not good enough to completely explain or express the content to students. I became demotivated to take more optional subjects. Even if it is compulsory subject, I only study to pass the exam rather than feel excitement or motivation to learn the content (A5)

There are lots of professors from non- English-speaking countries such as African, Philippines even Japanese professors, so their pronunciation is quite hard to understand (A7)

Some participants also stated their challenges in following the lecture because of academic vocabulary:

M13: There are so many new academic words that I have never learned before, which reduced my understanding about concepts or details of lecture.

Being able to learn two language seems one of their motivations to opt for an EMI university. However, it also became their challenge when learning through English at EMI university in Japan. One participant commented:

M11: My pronunciation becomes more "Japanglish" over the years, and I have to dumb down my vocabulary when talking with people who are less proficient in their English abilities.

The participants in this study rated themselves good at English in all four skills, so not many students stated that they are facing problems in EMI university because of their own English level. Only one student stated, "I completely forgot English after two years learning Japanese language. Thus, after entering EMI university, I am having difficulties in understanding and following the lecture". On the other hand, more students are concerned about the low English level of domestic students.

**School Curriculum and Classroom Cultural Environment.** Similar to the survey data, students also stated their difficulties in communication, school-program level culture and English-speaking environment. However, more students stated their problems of communication and school-program level culture rather than English speaking environment. It is illustrated by only one student who mentioned her difficulty in finding the English-speaking environment. On the other hand, a total 14 students (16 times) reported their problems of communication, and seven students (12 times) mentioned their problems of school-program levels culture such as unstable curriculum, subject difficult, workload, learning and teaching style of both teacher and students. For instance, one student said, "There are many unrealistic or useless subjects such as some compulsory

subject relating to religion. It may be quite hard for some international students who don't belong to this religion to learn or accept that religion's belief".

It is surprising that no student stated their difficulties in team work activities in the survey. However, interview data revealed that seven students (7 times) out of 16 students are encountering the problems of teamwork activities at EMI university, which is one of the main problems in communication. The interviews highlighted that the low English level of Japanese students as well as the unwillingness to communicate between domestic students and international students leads to the difficulty in working in group together. For example, one student said:

I don't feel domestic students show their positive attitude toward group activities. For example, they rarely express their ideas or opinions. I guess that is because of the culture that Japanese people don't want to say something to hurt other people. Consequently, team working becomes meaningless. Students can not share the ideas together or find solutions for some problems.

**The Biggest Challenges of Both Academic and Graduate Students in EMI Programs.** Students stated many difficulties in EMI universities, and the table below shows the biggest challenges they are facing in EMI universities. Table 13 shows seven out of 16 students reported that they face linguistic challenges such as understanding lecturers' English and academic words. Particularly, it is clearly revealed that the highest number of students (six students) are encountering the problems of understanding lecturers' English.

However, eight out of 16 students show their main difficulties in school environment challenges which included English learning environment; school-program level culture such

as curriculum, workload, content difficult as well as learning and teaching style; communication, particularly in teamwork activities.

**Table 13**

*The Biggest Challenges of both Academic and Graduate Students in EMI Programs*

Themes	Codes	Sub-codes	N (times)	Students
Linguistic	Teacher	Understanding lecturers' English	6	A7, A8, A10, G12, G15, G16
	Student	Academic words	1	G13
Academic Cultural	School program level culture	Curriculum	2	A4, A2
		Workload	2	A9, G11
		Learning and teaching style	1	A6
		Content difficulty	1	A1
	Communication	Team work activities	2	A3, A5
	Learning environment	Speaking environment	1	G14

Note: Each student only has one response

A: Academic student G: Graduate student

### Discussion

While previous studies have addressed learning motivation and challenges of domestic students in EMI university (e.g., Kırkgöz, 2005; Kojima, N., & Yashima, T., 2017), this study mainly sought to investigate the significance of the following factors for Vietnamese students (N=103) enrolled in an EMI university in Japan: motivation and perception of difficulty.

Similar to domestic students, Vietnamese students as international students in Japan are also attracted to EMI university because of instrumental motivation such as improving professional knowledge, having a good future job, being broadly educated, etc. Surprisingly, their instrumental source of motivation regards long term objectives of studying purpose rather than future job opportunity. This factor is somewhat unique. As international students, they decided to study abroad not only to have a future job but also to gain more knowledge and to become more broadly educated. In addition, this study also found that they are motivated by integrative motivation concerned with expanding knowledge and preparing for living abroad, rather concerned about the culture or people of English-speaking countries.

Results also indicated the different source of motivation among pre-academics, academic and graduate students. I found that all three groups perceived the same types of motivation, which was instrumental motivation. However, their sources of motivation were slightly different. For instance, pre-academic and graduate students showed the same motivation to choose EMI university by future job opportunities, while academic students by studying purpose (improving professional knowledge). The students' motivations differences regarding their plan to take EMI university before and after coming to Japan was surprising. For students who already had plans to attend EMI university before coming to Japan, the reasons why they study abroad affect the participants' decision to choose EMI in Japan. For example, several participants love Japanese culture and tourism. In addition, in Figure 14, page 52, the

participants' views of why they study abroad in Japan is shown, and the highest number of students chose financial problems. For example, some participants explained they were more attracted to learn in English-speaking countries; however, because of financial problems, they cannot afford the life and school expense in these countries.

On the other hand, for students who did not have any plan to learn at EMI university in Japan after coming to Japan, I found that being able to learn two languages, expanding future job opportunity as well as getting recommendation from teachers or friends are the other reasons that made them switch to EMI university after graduating Japanese language school in Japan.

In addition, this study also revealed that motivation can change. Six out of 16 participants changed their motivation after entering EMI universities. The participants' motivation was influenced by the learning environment and future orientation.

Results also highlight the challenges of students at EMI universities. Similar to challenges of students in EMI (Bradford 2016), students encountered two main challenges: linguistic and culture challenges. However, it is surprising that while previous studies have addressed students' challenges in their low English proficiency (Da-Fu Huang, 2015; Chang, 2010; Kim, 2011), Vietnamese students in this study rated themselves 'very good' in English proficiency and show their biggest concern is about the English proficiency of teachers and learning environment in classrooms.

However, students were concerned more about linguistic challenges than cultural classroom challenges. Particularly, the problems in understanding lecturers' English.

Vietnamese students in this study also encountered communication problems such as team work activities, integrating with domestic students because of the low English level of domestic students as well as their unwillingness to communicate with international students.

In addition, both academic and graduate students are facing the same type of linguistic problem which is the difficulty in understanding teachers' English. Also, graduate students were more concerned about English learning environment, whereas, academic students were more concerned about the problems of two languages and reading and writing.

## **Suggestions and Limitations**

### **Suggestions**

This research has verified the motivation of these students as well as their challenges in EMI universities. Here are some suggestions to improve the EMI programs.

#### **School and curriculum**

- (1) Japanese language support: First, this study has revealed that there are groups of students entering EMI university in Japan directly from Vietnam, right after they graduated from high school or university. Their Japanese level is quite low, or they may have no Japanese proficiency. Thus, with that groups of students, schools need more Japanese language support for them not only inside class but they need to prepare their Japanese language to easily integrate into society. Second, this study also found that to be able to learn two language (Japanese and English) is one of their main reasons to opt or switch to EMI university in Japan. Therefore, beside taking all English classes, schools need to support their learning Japanese language such as Japanese classes, organizing Japanese language club in order to not only raise their learning motivation, but also build the connection between domestic students and international students.
- (2) Awareness of listening and speaking problems: The English-speaking environment is limited in Japan. Students have little chance to practice speaking skill outside of schools. Therefore, the speaking learning environment at school are quite important. Thus, it is important to create the good learning environment and opportunity for students to improve their speaking skills.
- (3) Connection between domestic students and international students: The results in this study show that there is a lack of communication between international and



domestic students because of the gap in English proficiency and cultural differences. Therefore, schools should be aware of these problems and design curriculum or class activities, which can help students interact with each other.

### **Students**

- (1) Preparing: Linguistic challenges resulted as the biggest challenge of Vietnamese students in this study, particularly in understanding lecturers' English such as the teacher's poor pronunciation and varied English accents. To overcome these problems, students need to be aware that there are many lecturers from non-English-Speaking countries such as Philippines, Indian, Korean, etc. Therefore, before studying EMI or switching to EMI university, students should listen to many English accents from different countries in advance.
- (2) Japanese students: Be willing to interact with international students, especially when working in group activities. Many studies found that Japanese students are ashamed and not confident in their English proficiency, which made them not willing to communicate with international students. However, domestic students need to change this kind of thinking because international students, particularly Vietnamese students do not criticize their English. Conversely, they will support them to improve English. The school needs to find a way to support and encourage Japanese to interact with international students.

### **Limitations**

This study has some limitations.

- (1) The numbers of participants: Even though there is no official data about how many students in total study in EMI university in Japan now, the number of students is

not small. Only 103 students participated in this research, so it does not represent all the Vietnamese students at EMI universities in Japan. Also, this research only examined some Vietnamese students, so it cannot generalize to all Vietnamese at EMI in Japan or other international students. More research is needed in the future.

(2) Pandemic: Because of the pandemic, I could not get more students to do my survey and interview.

### **Conclusion**

EMI programs have become popular in many countries, especially in the Asian area, including Japan. Japan is expanding its EMI program not only to attract international students but also strengthen their university rankings in the world. There is an increase of Vietnamese students studying abroad in Japan both in EMI programs and JMI instruction. By contrast, little attention has been paid to Vietnamese students in Japan.

For the purpose of narrowing the gap, this study examined Vietnamese students' learning motivations and challenges toward the EMI program at Japanese universities. This included an online survey with 103 Vietnamese students and semi-structured interviews with 18 students, selected from the online survey. This research was carried out to explore participants' learning motivation and challenges.

The students in the present study have a mix of instrumental and integrative motivation. However, they are motivated primarily by instrumental motivation rather than integrative motivation, particularly by the long-term benefits related to learning purpose and opportunities knowing English. Students believe this may lead to future jobs or working in foreign countries.

Furthermore, the semi-structured interviews' results also revealed that (1) students' sources of motivation in EMI programs varies owing to their plan to take EMI university before or after they came to Japan; (2) the motivation can be changed if the learning environment is changed.

This study also sought to discover the challenges of students at EMI universities. Not surprisingly, the Vietnamese students in this research experienced a number of difficulties because they are taking EMI in Japan, which is still new, small and peripheral (Brown, 2016).

From the survey, students encountered two main challenges, including linguistic and school cultural environment. Particularly, the problems in understanding lecturers' English.

Furthermore, the interviews also revealed that academic students were struggling in the problem of communication in team work activities because of the low English level of domestic students as well as their unwillingness to communicate with international students.

This research has shown that Vietnamese students not only started switching into EMI university after graduating from Japanese language school but there are also many Vietnamese students who decided to take EMI university in Japan instead of European countries or English-speaking countries.

While I was working on this research, I constantly questioned myself about whether they were satisfied in EMI programs, and how the quality of the output is. The questions arose because students seemed to have difficulty in finding appropriate English learning environments for learning two languages at the same. Therefore, further research about Vietnamese students in EMI programs in Japan must be conducted. For example, research needs to examine whether it is effective to learn at EMI universities in Japan or not, and whether it is better to only focus on learning Japanese language at Japanese medium instruction universities.

Additionally, this research only focuses on verifying students' learning motivation and their perceptions of difficulties. However, I did not analyze about how these difficulties affect their learning motivation in EMI programs. Moreover, this research compared among different level such as pre-academic, academic and graduate students to verify the similarity and difference in motivation and challenges toward EMI. However, their motivation and challenges also may vary according to their department and the university Thus, there is a

need for further research in this area. It is hoped that more research will be conducted to develop EMI education in Japan.

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## Appendix A: Questionnaire

### Section 1 Background Information

- ① Name: provide your name in case I need to contact you for an interview.
- ② Gender: Male \_\_\_ Female
- ③ Year of study: First year \_\_\_ Second year \_\_\_ Third year \_\_\_ Fourth year \_\_\_ Others \_\_\_
- ④ School
- ⑤ Major
- ⑥ Have you ever visited an English-speaking country? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
- ⑦ If the question 6 is yes, where was it and how long did you stay there?
- ⑧ Do you use English outside classes? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
- ⑨ If the answer 8 is yes, where and with whom?

### Section 2: General English

This section asks you to rate your own level of general English.

- ⑩ How well can you do the following?

	Good	Fair	Poor
Listening			
Speaking			
Reading			
Writing			

- ⑪ When you watch a movie how much can you follow?

100% \_\_\_ 75% \_\_\_ 50% \_\_\_ 25% \_\_\_

### Section 3 English for Studying your Subject

This section asks you to rate your own level of English in relation to studying in your subject area (mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, economics and business).

⑫ How well can you do the following?

	Good	Fair	Poor
Understand people speaking about my subject of study			
Speak about my subject of study			
Read texts on my subject of study in English			
Write about my subject of study in English			

⑬ How much can you follow the lecture in your subject area?

100% \_\_ 75%\_\_ 50% \_\_ 25% \_\_

**Section 4 Reason for choosing to study in English in Japan**

This section asks you about why you think English is important for you.

⑭ Are you interested in learning English?

(1= Strongly interested; 2= interested; 3=Neutral; 4= uninterested 5= Strongly uninterested)

⑮ The following statements are about your motivation for choosing a Japanese University where you can learn through English.

Please read the following statements carefully and decide how strongly you agree or disagree with them by putting the checkbox around the appropriate number from 1 to 4 that you prefer (1= Strongly agree; 2= Agree; 3=Disagree; 4= Strongly Disagree). "I AM MOTIVATED TO LEARN THROUGH ENGLISH BECAUSE....."

I can get a good job in future

I can improve my professional knowledge

- \_\_\_ I would like to live abroad for studying or working
- \_\_\_ I can achieve a special goal (e.g. to get a degree or scholarship)
- \_\_\_ I can know international events and news
- \_\_\_ I can read texts in my subject area
- \_\_\_ I can make English speaking friends
- \_\_\_ Knowing English gives me personal satisfaction
- \_\_\_ I can learn about English speaking cultures
- \_\_\_ It helps me to become broadly educated
- \_\_\_ I can understand how English people think and behave

**Section 5: Difficulties in learning through English in Japan**

This section asks you about your satisfaction and difficulties in learning through English at Japanese Universities.

- ⑩ What are the problems that you had studying through English in Japan last semester? (You can answer in either English or Vietnamese)
- ⑪ Do you have any further comments about learning English at a Japanese University? (You can answer in either English or Vietnamese)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION!

**Appendix B: Interview questions**

1. How long have you learned English?
2. Did you already graduated from university in Vietnam before coming to Japan?
3. Did you have a job after graduating? What did you do?
4. Why did you decide to study abroad in Japan?
5. Did you learned Japanese language before coming to Japan? How long?
6. Did you have any plan to study through English in Japan before coming to Japan?
7. Have you ever learned English in Japanese language or college before entering EMI university?
8. I'm interested in understanding what led you to study in English in Japan? or How did you choose learning through English instead of through Japanese in Japan?
9. What is the most important reason that attract you to take EMI courses in Japan?
10. What problems are you facing now when learning through English at your University?
11. What do you consider to be the biggest obstacle when learning through English in Japan university?
12. For the question in the online survey about how much you follow the lecture in your subject area, your answer is... so, can you tell me why?