

# English as a Medium of Instruction in Non-Native Countries (A study based on educational medium in government universities in Japan and Sri Lanka)

*C. D. H. M. Premarathna*

## **Abstract**

Today, English has emerged as the most widely used international language worldwide. Simultaneously, it holds prominence as the major language employed in scholarly pursuits across various research domains in both native and non-native English-speaking countries (NESC), particularly serving as a medium of instruction in higher education. The objective of this study was to examine the utilization of English as a medium of instruction in government universities located in non-native English-speaking countries. The research question is, "what were the reasons for selecting English as the medium of instruction for higher education purposes in these countries". For data collection, all government universities in Japan and Sri Lanka were chosen to represent developed and developing countries, respectively. The study's findings revealed that, except for art faculties, various departments in government universities in Sri Lanka use English as a medium of instruction (EMI). In government universities in Japan, there is a gradual increase in the adoption of EMI across disciplines, excluding art faculties. Additionally, art faculties in both countries have started incorporating EMI in accordance with the policies established by their respective departments. This research concludes that Japan, classified as a developed NESC, employs EMI as part of its higher education planning to facilitate knowledge transfer with other nations as quickly as possible. Equally, Sri Lanka, identified as an underdeveloped NESC, planned EMI to produce graduates aiming to meet the demands of the job market locally and internationally.

**Keywords:** International language, Knowledge transfer, Language planning, Education Medium of instruction,

## 1. Introduction

The language policymakers in various countries select an international common language (universal language) to communicate with other nations. Even from the viewpoint of the genetic-historical families of language, it is evident that there has historically been a need for a common language. Indeed, as mobility increased, bridging gaps between disparate language groups became a challenge, prompting the quest for a common means of communication. Communities either adopted an existing language as a regional lingua franca or created entirely new communication systems by blending two languages (Pidgin). The advent of Western exploration brought European nations to Asian and African territories for trade, leading to the establishment of colonies. Gradually, these nations asserted dominance, imposing their languages on the colonized regions. English emerged as a prominent language under this linguistic hegemony, continuing as an official language in many countries, even after independence. Moreover, within various international functions, trade agreements, sports, and other activities, countries where English is not the native language have opted for English. This choice extends to the medium of instruction of education as well, particularly in developed or under-developing non-native English-speaking countries based on different purposes.

Today in most of non-English speaking countries, English medium instruction was introduced into the education system, to gain prominence in scholarly endeavors across various disciplines. The influence of scholars using English prompted the translation of their works into native languages in some countries like Japan. Recognizing the necessity of English proficiency for international research dissemination, many countries have adapted their education policy accordingly. In the contemporary era, English has evolved into a global language, mirroring the 21st-century concept of a "Global Village." It currently boasts of the highest number of speakers worldwide, encompassing native and non-native speakers, totaling 1,121 million (Year 2022). In response to this global linguistic shift, numerous non-native English-speaking countries, both developed and developing, have restructured their educational frameworks to align with international norms. Consequently, numerous government and private universities in non-English-speaking nations have opted for English as a medium of instruction (EMI) for their degree programs, serving various purposes. Many countries adopt EMI to attract foreign students to their universities, thereby boosting their education policy with the influx of foreign currency. Others introduce EMI to retain their students within their borders, offering opportunities to access international knowledge of new technologies from their own homelands. Education policymakers in these countries often view EMI as the most effective and rapid means of acquiring knowledge from around the world in comparison with other mediums.

However, their aims and objectives vary, and there are both positive and negative effects associated with this new educational medium policy. Furthermore, it has implications for native language education within these countries.

Japan and Sri Lanka were chosen as the focus of this research due to their shared Asian heritage, steeped in rich literary traditions and educational foundations rooted in Buddhism. Presently, Japan is recognized as a developed nation, with notable advancements in both economic prowess and educational excellence. Conversely, Sri Lanka, though classified as a developing country, showcases a well-established education system that surpasses many of its counterparts in Asia. As a result, both nations boast of the highest literacy rates in the region.

This study aims to examine the role of English as a predominant international language, particularly as a medium of instruction in countries where it is not the native language. The objectives of this research are to examine the faculties that typically adopt English as a medium of instruction, to explore the motivations behind implementing English as a medium of instruction and its impact on the future of local medium of instruction, and to assess the potential implications of English medium instruction policies meeting the aspiration of non-native developed and underdeveloped countries.

The research questions of this research are to explore, why have countries like Japan and Sri Lanka where English as a non-native language, selected English as the medium of instruction in education. What drives the necessity for English as a medium in higher education, over the course of the 21st century in developed and developing non-native countries. How has the prevalence of English as an educational medium escalated in countries where it is not the native language and how does it impact the future of local medium of instruction.

## **2. Literature review**

The primary emphasis of the literature review revolves around research on dissemination of English as a medium of instruction in non-native English speaking countries; its role as an international language, its usage as both a second and foreign language, and its application as a medium of instruction in the global market. Furthermore, the research encompasses an examination of the history of English medium instruction in Japan and Sri Lanka.

History of English medium instruction in Japan and Sri Lanka

The history of English medium instruction (EMI) education in Japanese universities dates to the Meiji era in the 19th century. Tokyo University, established in 1877 (Imperial University from 1886 to 1947), played a crucial role. During this time, both European and Japanese scholars taught subjects such as law, literature, science, and medicine in English, French, and German (Tokyo University Website, 2023; Kuwamura, 2018, p.265). Additionally, Japanese students were sent to Europe to receive education in English (Hashimoto, 2018, p.14). This marked a shift in the medium of instruction from Japanese to English in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

English-medium instruction in Sri Lankan universities also began in the 19th century. As a British colony at the time, under colonial policies, English medium schools and teacher training colleges were established in 1831 based on Colebrook-Cameron recommendations (Ruberu, 1967, p.46). In 1860, students sat for exams in Sri Lanka to enter universities in the UK, specifically Cambridge and Oxford. This allowed the children of elite in Sri Lanka to pursue higher education in English at British universities (Ruberu, 1967, p.92).

Furthermore, in 1870, Ceylon Medical College was founded, marking the beginning of English-medium instruction at the university level. Later, in 1921, Ceylon University College (now the University of Colombo) was established, and subjects in arts, and science began to be taught in English as a medium of instruction (Ceylon University College: Prospectus 1936-37, p.2-3). Before that, education in Sri Lanka, dating back to around 247 BC in Buddhist schools (then known as Pirivena schools or universities), was conducted in Sinhala. This changed when English replaced Sinhala as the medium of instruction in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Mendis: Colebrooke -Cameron papers, 1956, p.73-74).

#### Language Policies and linguists Imperialism

English is implemented as an official language or medium of education in various countries globally, either through constitutional or educational planning. Former colonies in Asia and Africa, which were under British and American rule, continued to recognize English in their constitutions even after gaining independence. Some African and Asian countries, such as South Africa and Malaysia, designate English as an official language in their constitutions (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). In countries such as India, language policies refer to English as a “National Language,” while Sri Lanka uses the term “link language” (Premaratna, 2004, p.140). Other nations, such as China and Japan, implement English through education policies. Brutt-Griffler (2002) emphasizes that even after colonial periods, English persists as a language in administrative, economic, and communication contexts rather than other international languages it has become, French, Spanish, Arabic, and Chinese. It becomes a language of literature and translation, particularly for works originally written in less-known non-international languages.

In the era of independence, some countries in the 20<sup>th</sup> century chose to make their native language the official language but retained English through education policies as a medium of instruction. This situation, influenced by the legacy of British imperialism, has led to challenges in language shifts and the dominance of English in education policies (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Thomas, 2007).

After gaining independence, some countries adopted policies in education where scientific subjects were taught in English, while other subjects were taught in their native language. Despite the formation of new language policies, former colonies couldn't eliminate the influence of British imperialism. In the context of the new language policies, there was a desire among policymakers from these countries, who had received English education, to use English once again.

“Language policies continued largely unchanged into the postcolonial age, as a result of which, it is speakers of the former colonial languages who are the dominant group in such states. Postcolonial education systems, particularly due to the influence of the World Bank in recent decades, have tended to give priority to the former colonial language and a marginal status to local languages” (Phillipson 2009, p.57).

By such policies, English became the language of the elite societies in those countries, and educational and administrative rights were restricted to their social circles. Furthermore, even if the native language was recognized as an official language in the constitution, the language of education was English, creating an environment where the general population did not have the freedom to receive education in their language. In some countries, although the native language was used in primary education after independence, English was mandated as the language of education in secondary and higher education. As a result, a situation arose where individuals who had received primary education could not attend university without switching to English as the medium of education.

The spread of English in various forms worldwide has been studied by many scholars (Crystal, 1997; Kachru, 1987; Phillipson, 1992; Lambrie & Quell, 1997; Phillipson & Skuttnabb-Kangas, 1996, 1997; Truchot, 1997; Widdowson, 1997). Phillipson, in particular, discusses the spread of English primarily through the concept of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992).

The terms imposition, dominance, subordination, and hegemony are specialized vocabulary used in political discussions related to the spread of the English language. The background behind these terms suggests that language plays a role in expanding political power.

However, in the context of a second language environment, language spreads in a different manner (Brutt-Griffler, 2002, p. 11).

Even after independence, the educational policies of these countries sought a language shift towards reviving English, thus perpetuating the situation of British imperial influence. Such educational policies put pressure on the general population to acquire an English education if they are to pursue a higher education. Furthermore, such an environment gives rise to a new elite culture, leading to a complete replacement of English as the medium of education.

### Global spread of English as a second language

The term "English as a Second Language" emerged after World War II, without a serious distinction between English as a Second Language and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Both were encompassed within English Language Teaching (ELT). The term ESL traditionally refers to students who speak a language other than English at home and come to school and study English. Some individuals or groups have chosen the term "Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages" (TESOL) to better reflect the linguistic reality at its core, which involves teaching English to speakers of languages other than English. English is also discussed as a second language in English-dominant countries. In countries like Canada, language policy focuses on teaching English as a second language to French-speaking students. Immigrants and linguistic minorities in English-speaking countries often learn English as a second language (Cummins J. 2022).

It touches upon the concept of language imperialism and how English, as a second language (ESL), is acquired through various methods in different language communities. The term ESL is discussed, highlighting its use for students speaking languages other than English at home. Primarily, countries that gained independence from British colonies and those under English dominance have ESL due to educational policies. Currently, methods for acquiring ESL or Second Language Acquisition are spreading worldwide, particularly in the field of Applied Linguistics.

Second languages develop within their respective language communities and are primarily implemented through language policies or educational policies. The spread of a second language in each nation occurs under the reformation of educational policies, aiming to address social and economic issues, and other challenges specific to each country.

## Independent Colonies and English as a Second Language Policy

Since the beginning of the 20th century, many countries have been contemplating their language policies after gaining independence. In South Asia and numerous African countries that achieved independence from the British rule, there was a widespread decision to choose a language, in addition to their national language, for communication with foreign countries, regions, and other ethnic groups within their borders. As a result, many countries opted for English as a Language of Wider Communication (Kaplan & Baldauf 1997 p14).

For instance, in Asian countries such as Brunei, Hong Kong, India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Mauritius, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, and others, English has become an official language due to language policies. Similarly, in African nations like Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Somalia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and more, English has been established as one of the official languages through language policies. In the Caribbean region, countries like Puerto Rico, Saint Lucia, Trinidad, and Tobago have also adopted English as an official language. South Pacific, countries including Fiji, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and others have English as one of their official languages. In the West Pacific, nations like the Marshall Islands, and American Samoa. West, as well as countries in Central America like Cameroon, countries in the Southwestern Pacific like Papua New Guinea, and in the Atlantic like Ireland and Sierra Leone, English is an official language (Kaplan & Baldauf 1997).

Therefore, in countries that gained independence from British and American colonization, English became an official language alongside their national language, serving as the language for administration and education. Conversely, English is used worldwide as a public language for administration and education. Furthermore, English is considered a second language for the citizens of these countries, who primarily speak their national language. In many of these countries, which are often multiethnic and multilingual, English also serves as a lingua franca among different ethnic groups within the nation.

## English as a Foreign Language

A foreign language refers to a language that is not an official language due to the language policy of a particular country. It is a language that is not spoken as the mother tongue of any ethnic group in that country and is taught in schools as part of the education policy. In East Asia, countries such as China, Japan, and South Korea, as well as countries in Central Asia and Europe, including France and Germany, English is used as a foreign language in their school education policies. For instance, in Southeast Asian countries like Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and Indonesia, English is

designated as a foreign language according to education policies (Lie, 2007; p.3).

### English as an International Language

In 1976, Smith (Smith 1976, p.38) presented a paper titled "English as an International Auxiliary Language" where he discussed the idea that English is an international language. In that paper, he defined an international language as "which is used by people of different nations to communicate with others." According to him, an international language refers to a language used by people with different native languages for communication. The role of an international language is not to replace existing mother tongues but to play a secondary or auxiliary role in facilitating international communication.

Currently, when we talk about an international language, English takes the forefront. English is increasingly being learned as a first language, second language, or foreign language worldwide. In the rapidly changing global landscape, the role of English has become crucial socially, politically, and economically (Murata, Jenkins, 2009, p.3). Furthermore, English is spreading globally as a language used not only domestically but also internationally in various academic fields.

Moreover, English is considered the primary language in international business (Neeley, 2012) and is also the language of international air traffic control (ICAO 2013). Since 2008, the International Civil Aviation Organization has been conducting annual tests to confirm the English proficiency of pilots to ensure their competency in communication (ICAO 2013).

### English as a Medium of Instruction in a global context

English serves as a language for spreading knowledge worldwide, primarily in the fields of science and technology. Historically, due to British colonial policies, students from colonized nations received higher education in English. Today, English is used as the medium of instruction in universities worldwide, including those in Asia and Africa. This is often a strategic policy to attract international students. The United Kingdom benefits economically by using English as the language of business and allocating funds from both international and domestic students (Tupas, 2022, p. 70; Crystal, 1998, p. 101, 103).

However, English is used as a medium of instruction worldwide, not only in fields of science, engineering, and medicine, but also in such field as literature. For instance, according to language policies in Southeast Asian countries, English plays a significant role as a medium of education. In countries like Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Brunei, where it was

once a colonial language, English continues to serve as the medium of instruction even after gaining independence.

On the other hand, countries like Cambodia (Khmer), Laos (Lao), Vietnam (Vietnamese), and Indonesia (Bahasa Indonesia) have their national languages as the initial medium of education. However, they have also chosen English as a medium of instruction, despite it being a foreign language in those countries. Notably, a similar education policy has been implemented in Indonesia, despite being a Dutch colony, English was chosen over Dutch as a foreign language, reflecting its status as an international language (Tupas, 2022, p. 69). The need for such policies arises from the globalization of various aspects such as the economy, politics, and culture, impacting non-native English-speaking countries. Particularly, in the context of a globalized economy, English is considered a tool (Spring, 2008; p. 352).

Towards the end of the 20th century, many countries designated English as an official language or a foreign language. The purpose behind such policies was the necessity of using English, an international language, as the language of education. Consequently, some countries implemented bilingual education language policies, designating English as the medium of instruction for subjects like science, mathematics, and information technology. For example, in the Philippines and Brunei, English serves as the medium of instruction for science and mathematics (Tupas, 2022, p. 70).

#### EMI in global market of higher education

English Medium Instruction (EMI) has become popular worldwide, making English the lingua franca of higher education. English-medium universities have rapidly spread in Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America since the 21st century. In countries like Malaysia and Singapore, partnerships with English-speaking universities from the UK, Australia, and the USA allow local and international students to graduate with English as the medium of instruction (Dearden, 2014; Kirkpatrick, 2014). On the other hand, English-medium subjects are also gaining popularity in universities in Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and China (Hashimoto, 2018, p. 18). Against this backdrop, English continues to be not only an international language but also the lingua franca of higher education worldwide, with British universities continuing to expand globally.

### 3. Methodology

This study focused on Japan and Sri Lanka, employing diverse research samples. All government universities in Japan and Sri Lanka were selected to collect data. The data collection was conducted thorough investigations utilizing university websites and student handbooks of both countries, Ministry of Education reports, existing research, and interviews with some university professors in both countries to verify certain facts. Further, my personal experiences of studying abroad in Japan and teaching at a university in Sri Lanka were also used in this research. To analyse data, mixed methods were used; systematically blending qualitative and quantitative methods.

#### EMI as an Education Medium in Japan and Sri Lanka

Internationally, there has been an increasing trend of EMI from primary to higher education worldwide (Brown and Bradford, 2018). While Japan has traditionally used its native language, Japanese, as the medium of instruction in education, there has been a rapid shift towards English. On the other hand, in Sri Lanka, English served as the medium of instruction until 1961 due to its colonial history with Britain. However, the language policy of 1956 and 1958 (Official Language Act, No. 33 of 1956; and Tamil language special provisions Act, No28 of 1958), led to a transition from English to the country's native languages, Sinhala and Tamil.

Currently, both countries are experiencing changes in this situation, with a rapid transition to English Medium Instruction (EMI). In both nations, English is now considered a non-native language. In this context, it is essential to explore why, in the 21st century, there has been a shift to English as the medium of instruction. Additionally, understanding the educational policies in both countries that contribute to this shift, and examining what these policies envision for the future, is crucial.

#### English Medium Instruction policy in Japan and Sri Lanka today.

In Japan, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) implemented a policy to grasp English education to connect Japan with the rest of the world through the "Can-do" strategy in July 2001 (Honna & Takeshita, 2022, p.169-170). The goal of this policy was to create students who could receive education in English at the university level, starting from learning English in junior high school.

## Policies Regarding EMI in Japan

Japan has periodically implemented and adjusted its EMI policy to enhance opportunities for international students to study in government universities and to facilitate Japanese students in pursuing education abroad. Furthermore, this initiative seeks to facilitate an environment conducive to learning for both Japanese and international students within Japanese universities, by employing EMI to prepare these institutions for the global market of the future.

1995: Japan Education medium instruction policy change started: “Short-term Student Exchange Promotion Program”, Special curricula in English or other languages (MEXT, 1995). In 1998: Recommendations on the “Vision for the University of the 21st Century and Future Reform Measures”, Attractive development programs for international students, programs conducted in foreign languages, etc. (University Council, 1998).

2000: Recommendations on the Approach to “Higher Education required in the Global Era” – Conducting classes and exams in foreign languages for international and Japanese students (University Council, 2000).

2003: Recommendations on “Developing a New Policy for International Students”, Conducting classes and exams in foreign languages, offering comprehensive education programs that do not require Japanese (Central Council for Education, 2003 December 16).

2004, the policy of national universities in Japan led to several issues related to scholarships and accommodation when accepting international students. The use of Japanese as the medium of instruction was also a contributing factor. Most of the students studying in Japan were from Asia, with their number exceeding 90%. According to a 2004 survey, the number of international students was 117,302, surpassing the previous year by 7.1%. Among them, 97,342 were from China, Korea, and Taiwan (JASSO 2004). The Japanese government continues to switch the medium of instruction to EMI, aiming to provide opportunities for other foreign students to study in Japan.

2007: “Asia Gateway Initiative”, Systematic education system in English (Council for the Asian Gateway Initiative, 2007 May 16).

2008: Final Report on “Education Rebuilding by Society as a Whole”, Providing classes in English as a medium of instruction, with the goal of conducting 30% of classes in English (Education Rebuilding Council, 2008 January 31).

A new policy was established, based on this plan, and universities also planned to internationalize. By the year 2020, twelve years after the implementation of this policy, the number of international students had reached 279,597.

Table 1: Number of International Students by Nationality - 2020

Country	Number of Students	Percentage	Country	Number of Students	Percentage
China	121,845	43.6%	France	1,231	0.4%
Vietnam	62,233	22.3%	Russia	754	0.3%
Nepal	24,002	8.6%	Cambodia	696	0.2%
South Korea	15,785	5.6%	Germany	631	0.2%
Taiwan	7,088	2.5%	United Kingdom	553	0.2%
Indonesia	6,199	2%	Brazil	550	0.2%
Sri Lanka	5,238	1.9%	Pakistan	540	0.2%
Myanmar	4,211	1.5%	Italy	476	0.2%
Bangladesh	3,098	1.1%	Egypt	381	0.1%
Mongolia	3,075	1.1%	Spain	380	0.1%
Thailand	3,032	1.1%	Mexico	362	0.1%
Malaysia	2,670	1.0%	Canada	333	0.1%
Philippines	2,221	0.8%	Singapore	332	0.1%
United States	1,752	0.6%	Sweden	288	0.1%
India	1,675	0.6%	Other Countries	6,454	2.3%
Uzbekistan	1,512	0.5%	Total	279,597	100.0%

(Sources: JASSO 2020)

Most of Japan's international students come from countries that use Chinese characters (kanji literacy), and the situation continued with few students from other countries study in Japan. Furthermore, based on my experience of studying in Japan since 1994, it is evident that it was not possible to enter a Japanese university without proficiency in the Japanese language at that time. Particularly, the medium of instruction for entrance exams for graduate programs in art and social science subjects was Japanese. Therefore, in some aspects, the use of JMI was an advantage for students who came from kanji based countries.

This report indicates that the proportion of international students familiar with Chinese-character-based languages decreasing, while the number of students from other Asian and Non-Asian countries is gradually increasing. Moreover, certain government universities admit postgraduate students who are allowed to compose their theses in English across various subject areas.

#### Overseas Study Support for Japanese students

The Overseas Study Support System planned by the Japanese government is aimed at Japanese students studying at universities located in various foreign countries. The system is provided by the Japan Student Services Organization to support the necessary expenses for academic activities with public funds, aiming to further expand the exchange of international students, enhance mutual understanding and friendship between Japan and various foreign countries, strive to cultivate outstanding individuals who can actively contribute international leadership positions, promote the overseas study of Japanese students, and contribute to the internationalization and enhancement of Japan's international competitiveness. These are the objectives of the system use to develop the English language skills as well as to gain knowledge from deferent fields that can be accessed through English medium instruction. At the same time EMI exchange programs continuous under the Short-term Student Exchange Program to study outside the Japan for one or two semesters and acquire credits while enrolled at a university in their home country, based on inter-university exchange programs. According to the MEXT (2010) report, 30 national universities offered an EMI short-term exchange program for undergraduate students in 2009. The JASSO (2023-2024) report highlights the trends observed among 10,999 Japanese students studying abroad in 2021.

## Policies of EMI in Sri Lanka

The EMI policy of Sri Lanka differs from that of Japan. It is rooted in the constitution and undergoes changes over time through amendments and revisions to the constitution. As mentioned before, due to its history as a former British colony, English served as the medium of instruction continuously in universities of Sri Lanka. After gaining independence from British colonial rule in 1948, a new constitution in 1956 established Sinhala as the language of administration, replacing English. According to this constitution, the languages previously in use could continue until the end of 1960 (Official Language Act No. 33.1956). Under the guidelines of "Official Language act of 1956" and the "Tamil Language (Special Provisions) act of 1958" the mediums of instruction at the Ceylon University shifted to Sinhala and Tamil.

"When the Sinhala language is made a medium of instruction in the University of Ceylon, the Tamil language shall..."

(Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act. No.28 of 1958)

Following this, new universities (University of Kelaniya (former Vidyalkara) and University of Sri Jayewardenepura (former Vidyodaya)) were established in 1959, with Sinhala as the medium of instruction in the Faculty of Arts. Additionally, a new university (University of Jaffna) was established in 1974, where Tamil could also be used as the medium of instruction. However, the medium of instruction in the medical faculty, which was in English, remained unchanged.

In Sri Lanka, a significant shift in the medium of instruction at universities towards English began with the new constitutional changes in 1978. The constitution designated Sinhala and Tamil as the medium of instruction in education, and a provision was made for higher education to be in languages other than these two (Constitution of Sri Lanka 1978, Chapter 4).

"A person shall be entitled to be educated through the medium of either of the National Languages: Provided that the provisions of this paragraph shall not apply to an institution of higher education where the medium of instruction is a language other than a National Language."

(Constitution of the democratic socialist republic of Sri Lanka, Revised Edition 2023) Under this policy, any government university or department of a faculty has the discretion to choose an alternative language as the medium of instruction.

Furthermore, the 13th Amendment to the Constitution in 1987 named English as a "link language" (Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution 1987), marking a significant change in Sri Lanka's language policy.

Unlike Japan, English became an official language by constitutional mandate in Sri Lanka, even though it is a non-native language.

To implement these policy changes are necessary in education policy. The constitutional amendment in Sri Lanka allows for the freedom to choose languages other than Sinhala and Tamil as the medium of instruction in both educational and administrative fields. With English being legally recognized as an administrative language and the medium of instruction continuing in English in the medical faculties of universities, it can be said that the right to use it in other faculties has been granted as well.

#### Implementation of EMI in National Universities in Japan and Sri Lanka

The policies regarding EMI within Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) have been instituted in national universities primarily since the early 21st century. Over time, these policies have extended from science and engineering faculties to encompass arts faculties.

Conversely, Sri Lankan government universities have been autonomously implementing EMI in the fields of medicine, science, engineering, commerce and technology within their institutions, faculties, and departments. There has been a gradual expansion of EMI adoption in the field of arts, according to the policies of their respective departments.

#### EMI in Japanese National University Faculties

In 2022, there were 86 national universities in Japan, all under the control of the central government. Until end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, these universities used Japanese as the medium of instruction (JMI). This survey reveals that 35 national universities use English as the sole medium of instruction at least in one department, and 30 universities use both English and Japanese as the medium of instruction at least in one department. However, in liberal arts faculties, only 13 universities use EMI at least in one subject.

Table 2: Use of EMI in Faculties of National Universities in Japan

Faculties	EMI	EMI/JMI
Medicine	17	8
Nursing	2	2
Science	18	12
Engineering	22	10
Law	5	1
Commerce and Management	4	3
Dept of Economics	9	2
Total	77	38

(Sources: JASSO 2022)

According to the data in this table, it is evident that engineering, science, and medicine faculties mostly utilize EMI and EMI/JMI compared to the nursing, law, commerce, management, and economics departments.

Table 3: The situation of the art faculties government national universities mostly use JMI, but few departments use EMI.

Department	EMI	EMI/JMI
Political Science	4	1
Sociology	3	1
Tourism Studies	1	1
Linguistic and Cultural Studies	1	-
International Relations	6	3
Japanese and Asian Studies	2	-
Total	17	6

Use of EMI in Faculties of Arts of National Universities in Japan

(Sources: JASSO 2022)

This table indicates that despite the gradual implementation of EMI in Japanese government universities, following the policy of MEXT, only a limited number of departments within the faculties of arts have adopted it. In the case of art faculties in government national universities, the majority still predominantly utilize JMI.

#### EMI in Sri Lankan National Universities

In Sri Lanka, there are 16 national universities (Open university not included). Among the national universities, the faculties that use English as the sole medium of instruction are; Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Dental Sciences, Faculty of Nursing, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Animal Science, Faculty of Applied Science, Faculty of Science, Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Allied Health Science, Faculty of Geomatics, Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Management, Faculty of Technology, Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Sciences and Technology (University of Ruhuna). These faculties, utilized EMI in lectures, exams, reports, presentations, and all other academic aspects. The faculties such as Social Science and Humanities, initially used the native languages Sinhala and Tamil as the medium of instruction. From the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a bilingual medium of instruction, incorporating both English and the native languages, is implemented in these faculties. Although lectures in arts faculties are typically conducted in national languages, some departments provide the opportunity for students to answer questions in English.

#### Bilingual or Trilingual Medium of Instruction in Sri Lankan National Universities

Sri Lanka is a multilingual country, and the choice of the medium of instruction in arts faculties varies among universities. Some universities exclusively use English and Sinhala, while others use English and Tamil. Furthermore, certain universities utilize all three languages - Sinhala, Tamil, and English - as mediums of instruction (Peradeniya University and Colombo University), such as the Faculty of Education, and Faculty of Law (Colombo University), Faculty of Art (Peradeniya University). Faculty with English and Sinhala as Mediums of Instruction are the Faculty of Social Science and the Faculty of Humanities (University of Kelaniya), the Faculty of Social Sciences and Language (University of Sabaragamuwa), and the Faculty of Arts (University of Sri Jayewardenepura, University of Ruhuna). At University of Jaffna, there are two languages, English and Tamil, which serve as the medium of instruction in the Faculty of Arts.

The faculties and departments that exclusively use Tamil as the medium of instruction in the University of Jaffna are the Faculty of Hindu Studies,

the Unit of Siddha Medicine within the university's Ayurveda medical department, the Faculty of Performing and Visual Arts, and Eastern University's Faculty of Arts and Culture, which are exclusively conducted in the Tamil medium. In the Faculty of Arts, within departments such as the English Department, English Language Teaching Department, and the department focusing on Western classical culture, English serves as the medium of instruction. Additionally, in the Sinhala Language Department and

Tamil Language Department, their respective languages serve as the medium of instruction.

In other departments related to the Faculty of Art, the medium of instruction system involves both the national language and English. This practice is common and is determined by the policy of each respective department. Further, the trend of EMI is spreading to Sri Lanka, enabling individuals to pursue postgraduate degrees, including Ph.D.'s, with English-medium without having to travel to an English-speaking country.

#### Goals of the EMI In Sri Lankan National Universities

The University Grants Commission (UGC) of Sri Lanka has implemented a quality framework through the World Bank project, applicable to all higher education institutions. The objective is to cultivate graduates equipped for the demands of the 21st century. The framework emphasizes enabling learners to realize their full potential, fostering their ability to contribute significantly to the country's social and economic development (SLQF, 2015, p.6). Furthermore, government universities aim to produce responsible graduates who can meet both national and global expectations as well as the demands of the job market (website of government universities ex: Eastern University website).

### 5. Discussion

Both Japan and Sri Lanka are actively endorsing an English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) policy in higher education to cultivate graduates equipped with international language proficiency. Sri Lanka initially adopted EMI during the colonial era under British rule. Despite a shift to local national languages in the post-independence period, the country has revisited EMI as a strategic choice to empower graduates with English language skills, enabling them to compete in the global job market.

Sri Lanka has reformed its language policy to promote English as an official language identified as the "Link Language". This enabled the sector of higher education to select EMI as its medium of instruction. Accordingly, they gradually shifted their national language medium into EMI. The current data indicates that except for the art faculties in government universities in Sri Lanka, EMI is utilized in undergraduate and post-graduate programs across all other faculties.

On the flip side, until the close of the 20th century, Japan employed JMI as the medium of instruction in its government universities. Adhering to this language policy, they recognized that a majority of students came from nations using Chinese characters.

The objective was to make their universities accessible to students from diverse backgrounds and allow them to study in Japan.

Additionally, Japan aimed to exchange knowledge by welcoming foreign students to study in Japan while also sending Japanese students abroad for education in EMI (English Medium of Instruction). However, the constraints of their language policy, where English was not a national or official language, hindered the transition from JMI to EMI.

In the context of Japan's educational landscape, English was viewed as an international language according to the education policy. Consequently, the Ministry of Education had to repeatedly reform policies of medium of instruction, exploring various approaches to incorporate EMI in government universities. In the contemporary global scenario, English has evolved into a crucial medium for disseminating knowledge in a global context. Existing literature indicates that non-native English-speaking countries, particularly those highly developed, adopt EMI to share advancements in medicine, science, technology, commerce, and other fields on a global scale using the universal language.

When the initial stages of English-medium instruction in both countries are compared, it becomes evident that Japan's shift was driven by the need for scholars in various fields and the desire to learn European knowledge in various disciplines during the Meiji era. In contrast, Sri Lanka's background was shaped by its status as a British colony, where English-medium instruction was implemented as part of colonial education policies. Language is essential for education, but it can also be a tool for dominance. In Sri Lanka, the initiation of English-medium instruction in the 19th century was a result of the colonial administration using English as the language for administration and education. On the other hand, in Japan, the government aimed to cultivate intellectuals, utilizing English as the medium of instruction. Despite the different motivations, both Japan and Sri Lanka, through English-medium instruction, contributed to global connections and the dissemination of new knowledge of intellectuals in the world.

## 6. Conclusion

The study reveals that English is predominantly used in science, medicine, and engineering departments in both countries, with potential expansion into the arts subjects. Differences in the use of English as an administrative language are noted between Japan and Sri Lanka, reflecting their distinct motivations and backgrounds.

The findings of the research reveal the intention of developing Non- native English-Speaking Countries is to produce graduates for the job market and the developed Non- native English-Speaking Countries is to share their knowledge locally and internationally. However, EMI is currently still in a marginal stage in the faculties of social sciences and humanities in both countries.

The research concludes by recognizing the evolving role of English as a Global Medium of Higher Education Instruction (EGMHEI) and anticipates potential impacts on native language education, emphasizing the need for political solutions to address these complex issues regarding language policy.

JOURNAL OF THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

## References

- Alger, J., (2001). *The Cambridge History of the English Language*. Cambridge University
- Baugh, A. C. & Cable, T., (1993). *A History of the English Language (Fourth Edition)*. Routledge. London.
- Benton, R.A., (1996). *Language Policies in English-Dominant Countries*. edited by Herriman M. and Burnaby B. Multilingual Matters LTD. England.
- Brutt-Griffler, J., (2002). *World English. A Study of its Development*. Multilingual Matters LTD, Great Britain.
- Ceylon University Collage :Prospectus (1936-37), Colombo, Ceylon government press.
- Collins J. Slembrouck, S. and Baynham, M., (2009). *Globalization and Language in Contact. Scale. Migration, and Communicative Practices*, (Edited Book), Continuum International Publish Group.
- Constitution of the democratic socialist republic of Sri Lanka,( Revised Edition 2023), Parliament secretarial. file:///D:/Jounal%20article/constitution.pdf (access 12-12-2023)
- Cooray, L.J.M., ( 1985. *Changing the Language of the Law The Sri Lanka Experience*. Quebec, Les presses De l'Universite Laval.
- Corson, D.J., (1996). *Language Policies in English-Dominant Countries*. edited by Herriman M. and Burnaby B. Multilingual Matters LTD. England.
- Crystal D., (1998). *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cummins J., (2022). what extent are Canadian Second language policies evidence-based Reflections on the intersections of research and policy. [1] <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00358/full> (2022/12/4 Access )
- Dearden, J., (2014). *English as a Medium of Instruction -A growing Global Phenomenon*. London. British Council.
- Hashimoto, H., (2018). *Government Policy Driving English-Medium Instruction at Japanese Universities*. Responding to a Competitiveness Crisis in a Globalizing World. A. Bradford and H. Brown (eds), Multilingual Matters.
- Herriman M., (1996). *Language Policies in English-Dominant Countries*. Herriman M. and Burnaby B. (eds). Multilingual Matters LTD, England.
- English Medium Instruction in Japanese Higher Education. Brown and Bradford (eds),Multilingual Matters.
- Lie A., (2007). Educational Policy and EFL Curriculum in Indonesia : Between the commitment to competence and quest for higher test scores, TEFLIN Journal 18(1):1-14.

- MEXT., (2010). Outline of the student exchange system in Japan: Study in Japan and abroad 2010. [http://www.mext.go.jp/component/English/\\_icsFiles/afield-file/2011/12/14/1303740\\_1.pdf](http://www.mext.go.jp/component/English/_icsFiles/afield-file/2011/12/14/1303740_1.pdf)
- Mendis, G.C., (1956). *The Colebrooke-Cameron Papers: Documents on British Colonial Policy in Ceylon*. Geoffrey Cumberlege Oxford University Press.
- Murata K, & Jenkins J., (2009). *Global Englishes in Asia Contexts*. (Edited book). Palgrave Macmillan. UK.
- Official Language Act, No. 33 of 1956, The Sinhala Language As The One Official Language of Ceylon.
- Ota H , Horiuchi K., ( 2018 ). How Accessible are English - Taught Programs ? Exploring International Admissions Procedures, English Medium Instruction in Japanese Higher Education, Brown and Bradford (eds), Multilingual Matters.
- Phillipson, R., (1997). *Linguistics Imperialism*. Oxford University Press.
- Phillipson, R., (2009). *Linguistics Imperialism Continued*. Orient Blackswan PL, London.
- Premaratna, CDHM, (2004)
- 多言語国家スリランカにおける言語問題、博士論文、一橋大学大学院言語社会研究科、東京。
- Risento T., (1996). *Language Policies in English-Dominant Countries*. Edited by Herriman M. and Burnaby B. Multilingual Matters LTD, England.
- Ruberu R., (1967). *Missionary Education in Ceylon, Educational Policy and Missionary School*, Holmes B., (eds), E-Book. file:///C:/Users/cdhmp/Downloads/9781315887937webpdf.pdf
- Schiffman H.F., (1998). *Linguistics Culture and Language Policy*. Routledge.
- Sessional Paper X., (1956). *Final Report of the Commission on Higher Education in the National Language (Sinhala and Tamil)*. Colombo. Government Publications Bureau Colombo.
- Smith, L., (1976). *English as an International Auxiliary Language*. RELC Journal 7 (2)
- Spring J., (2008). *Research on Globalization and Education*. review of Educational Research 78(2):330-63.
- Sri Lanka Quality Framework., (2015). *The World Bank funded Higher Education for Twenty First Century (HETC) Project of the Ministry of Higher Education*. [https://www.ugc.ac.lk/attachments/1156\\_SLQF\\_2016\\_en.pdf](https://www.ugc.ac.lk/attachments/1156_SLQF_2016_en.pdf) (Access: 16-6-2023)
- Student hand book, Faculty of Law, University of Colombo. [https://law.cmb.ac.lk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/STUDENT-HANDBOOK-2021--New-Entrants\\_-FOL\\_UOC.pdf](https://law.cmb.ac.lk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/STUDENT-HANDBOOK-2021--New-Entrants_-FOL_UOC.pdf) (Access 01-01-2024)

- Student hand book, Faculty of Nursing (2021), University of Colombo.  
<https://nursing.cmb.ac.lk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Faculty-of-Nursing-Handbook-final-version-for-2020-2021-intake-1-1-3.pdf>  
 (Access 01-01-2024)
- Student Manual` (2016), Faculty of Arts and Culture, Eastern University.  
<https://www.fac.esn.ac.lk/images/downloads/fac.esn.ac.lk-students-manual-2016.pdf> (Access:13-12-2023)
- Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act, 28 of 1958.
- The Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka 1978, Revised edition - 2021,  
<https://www.parliament.lk/files/pdf/constitution.pdf>
- The International Civil Aviation Organization ( ICAO ) , July 2013. <https://www.icao.int/Newsroom/Pages/ICAO-announces-revamped-aviation-english-language-test-service-site.aspx>  
 ( Access 28/01/2023 )
- Thirteen amendment to the Constitution 1987, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. <https://www.lawnet.gov.lk/thirteenth-amendment-to-the-constitution-2/> ( Access on 14/02/2023 )
- Thompson L. Fleming M. and Byram M., (1996). *Language Policies in English-Dominant Countries*. edited by Herriman M. and Burnaby B. Multilingual Matters LTD, England.
- Tokyo University Homepage: ( Access on 2023/02/08 )  
[https://www.u-tokyo.ac.jp/adm/history/09\\_01\\_02\\_j.html](https://www.u-tokyo.ac.jp/adm/history/09_01_02_j.html)
- Turner J., (2011). *Language in the Academy*. Cultural Reflexivity and Intercultural Dynamics. Multilingual Matters.UK.
- University of Colombo Homepage. <https://cmb.ac.lk/history/>(Access 2023/02/08)
- University Grant Commission – Sri Lanka  
[https://www.ugc.ac.lk/index.php?option=com\\_university&view=list&Itemid=25&lang=en](https://www.ugc.ac.lk/index.php?option=com_university&view=list&Itemid=25&lang=en)
- Watzke, J.L., (2003). *Lasting Change in Foreign Language Education*. Greenwood Publishing group. USA.