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Creating an International Academic Program in English. Benefits and Challenges.

—On the Examples of Lomonosov Moscow State University and Hokkaido University—

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Abstract — Modern development of higher education has had a similar affect on the leading universities in Russia and Japan, putting them under the challenge of internationalization. One of the most important aspects of internationalization is the growth in number of foreign students and the necessity to design academic programs in English for those students. In this area, Russian universities may find the techniques of the top Japanese universities to be extremely beneficial. This work examines the growing impact of English on higher education in general, how the leading Russian and Japanese universities should focus on particular pedagogic objectives of creating courses taught in English, and analyzes two academic programs in English designed at Hokkaido University.

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1. Introduction

The development of modern universities is greatly influenced by the processes of globalization and internationalization of higher education. One of the most important aspects of internationalism is the growing role of English in the modern educational world. The impact of the growing use of English on the development of higher education in the countries with different national languages was described in numerous publications by American (Altbach, 1998, 2006), Canadian (Knight, 2006), Australian (Doherty, Singh, 2005), Japanese (Werawan 2007; Yonezawa, 2006) and Russian (Ter-Minasova, 2008; Saginova, 2009) scholars, as well as representatives of many other scientific communities.

In this work the implementation of this trend at Hokkaido University in Japan and Lomonosov Moscow State University in Russia will be analyzed. Russian and Japanese systems of Higher Education have several similarities. Both countries originally borrowed the systems of university education from abroad. Through rapid development Russia and Japan managed to establish a well-developed system of higher education both in terms of number of students and quality of research. Both countries have rich academic traditions.

The best universities of Japan and Russia are competing to preserve the status of the leading global universities. They have to respond to the new challenges of internationalization in the area of university education. However, making reforms (including the change of the language of instruction for several programs, inviting students, researchers and teaching staff from abroad) universities must be careful not to lose the identity of the academic culture. That is why reforms aimed at internationalization often face opposition from the Japanese and Russian academic community.

It is necessary to define from the beginning, that academic programs in English are generally not aimed at the

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development of English language skills of the students. As opposed to the English language courses, international academic programs use English as a tool, language of teaching various subjects (from social science to engineering) to international students. The linguistic mistakes of the participants are usually not corrected and the evaluation is done without respect to the English language skills of students. However, English language skills are important criteria to be enrolled in those programs.

The objectives of this work is to analyze the issues connected with the change of the instruction language from the national language to English in Russia and Japan, to evaluate its pedagogical effects, as well as certain difficulties and limitations. To enable this analysis the examples of Lomonosov Moscow State University and Hokkaido University were chosen.

Finally, pedagogical objectives of international academic programs shall be described. This analysis is necessary, because the change of the language of instruction does not mean the creation of an international program. As example two academic programs in English at Hokkaido University shall be described.

2. "Latin of the 21st century"—the role of English in the internationalization of Higher Education.

The presence of a global language of higher education and research is not an entirely modern phenomenon. Originally, all European universities used Latin as a means of instruction and research. Then French became the language of aristocracy all over Europe and the language of international communication. With the outstanding progress of German science in the 19th century German became an international language of science. After the beginning of the cold war Russian became a widely spoken language of science and education in the Socialist bloc, as well as in certain regions of Africa and the Middle East, where many specialists got their education in Soviet universities.

Although Russian, German, Spanish, French, as well as Chinese are without any doubt languages of international communication, they can hardly be defined as global languages, entering all fields of international communication, dominating international education, business, science and technology, tourism etc. The dominating global language nowadays is English and its impact is wider then the impact of any other international language. One of the most famous scholars in the area of internationalization of Higher Education, professor Philip G. Altbach states that "English is the Latin of the 21st century."(1)

However, there are remarkable differences between Latin in Medieval Europe and English today. Probably, the most important difference is the fact that the use of Latin did not give advantage to any of the European nations, whereas the global use of English creates favorable conditions for the development of universities in the USA, England, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Though, being the language of the Roman Catholic Church Latin enabled certain political and religious influence on the development of universities. The secularization of university and the creation of national scientific schools promoted the use of national languages in education and research, but the scientific vocabulary is still dominated by the terms of Latin and Greek origin.

From the beginning the "export of university education" was combined with the use of the "exporter's" language as the language of instruction. This may be seen in the development of the Russian and the Japanese university systems. For example, the first president of Hokkaido University (at that time the Sapporo Agricultural College) was William S. Clark, an American professor, President of the Massatusets Agricultural College. During the first years the language of instruction at the university remained English only and all of the professors were brought to Japan from the overseas. This trend may be also seen in the way Britain and France used their languages as a tool of instruction in the colonies.

The term "colonization" is sometimes used for modern globalization of Higher Education. Input of the western technologies, along with the dominating institutional model of an American college strengthened the role of English in Asia. This enabled the expansion of the "education market" of Australia and New Zealand. Finally, in some Asian countries, such as Malaysia or Singapore, the use of English in education is also a compromise between different ethnic groups and a guarantor of equality in education between the representatives of those groups, as well as a competitive advantage helping to attract more international students.

As English became the major language of international communication, many countries implemented English language courses and academic programs, in order to make

domestic students more competitive on the international arena. Academic programs in English are also used to attract students from other countries and English is the most widely used language of the double-degree programs.

The use of English affects not only educational methods, but also methodology, norms and standards of research and academic communication. English is now one if not the only language of any international scientific conference. Academicians from the USA, England, Australia, Canada or NewZealand are the admired guest lecturers in the universities of the developing nations. An example may be found in the recent development of Chinese universities, when ethnic Chinese, who studied at North American or Canadian universities are invited to return to China, receiving salaries and academic status much higher, then their colleagues, who went to Chinese universities.

The inequality is even more obvious in the area of scientific publications. The number of publications in international journals is an important criterion in university ranking (a new driving power behind the development of higher education, especially in developing countries). The vast majority of those journals are published in English, largely in the USA. The scientist with other native languages are not only disadvantaged from the linguistic point of view, but they also have to conform to unfamiliar academic norms and be evaluated from the perspective of a different research system.

Even considering all these inequalities, English remains the predominant language of science and its importance is growing, with more developing university systems willing to internationalize and regarding the partial or total (as in case Netherlands) switch to English as an essential part of the internationalization agenda. In order to stay in the mainstream of the global higher education development leading university systems promote introduction of academic programs in English, along with the increasing use of scientific and instructional literature published in the English language.

3. Creation of a course in English—pedagogical effects.

3.1 Diversification of Western pedagogy: changing norms and cultural variations.

The implementation of an English language course into curriculum usually does not only mean the change of the means of communication, but also an implementation of a foreign culture and teaching philosophy into the domestic curricula. In many cases this "implemented" learning and teaching culture lies upon the original cultural patterns and creates a "local variety of western pedagogy" with preservation of formal criteria, but important differences in the substance of teaching.

The use of English as the language of instruction in academic programs contributes to the growing market share of teaching materials, published in English and the spread of western pedagogy. However, the attempts to use Western tutorial at the class with Asian students sometimes result into "simulation and impurity of cultural processes." This was proved based on the experience of arranging a "western-style discussion" in a foreign student class at one Australian university. In order to force Asian students to behave, as their American peers do, "an authoritarian/coercive construction of power relations…at odds with the idealized democratic distribution of power in the imagined/fictionalized model of tutorial discussion" was created. (2)

Doherty and Singh, who observed those classes argue, that "it was a simulation of an imaginary or idealized pedagogy rather, than actually enacted pedagogic practices."(3) The crucial point by Australian researchers is that the real modern Western education system is changing, facing more cultural diversity, instability, fluidity and complexification, partly as the result of increasing international population of Western universities. This causes interplay between "re-centring and de-centring discourses"(4) and in this context the attempts to simulate pure Western pedagogy with Asian students at an Australian university may be regarded as an opposition towards the growing internationalization of the Western university. This work by Australian researchers illustrates an important trend: globalization and wide use of Western pedagogy with students from different cultural backgrounds changes and diversifies the understanding, of what Western pedagogy is.

Another important cultural consequence of the internationalization of a university and the switch to English is the appearance of "local variations on global scientific and teaching culture". Even though there are many textbooks and manuals on how to make a good presentation, deliver a speech, participate in a discussion or write an essay in English, the cultural interpretation of these rules and rec-

ommendations is totally different, as well as their usage by representatives of different cultures. This may be observed even on the linguistic level, when "I"-statements are usually avoided by Russian faculty in scientific discourse and direct contradictions (especially in form of "no"-answers, words of disagreement etc.) avoided by the Chinese and Japanese scientists.

Finally, it may be stated, that the learning experience of a student taking the same course (for example "Environmental science") in universities in Russia, Japan or the USA will be significantly different. The differences may be seen both in the form (size of the class, teaching style, norms of behavior inside the classroom), and in the methodological principles of teaching, evaluation and general expectations from the side of students and faculty.

3.2 Objectives of an international students' course.

The main aim of designing international academic programs and courses in English is to prepare students to study and work in rapidly globalizing world, to develop their intercultural awareness and to promote intercultural exchange. It is obvious, that to reach these goals it is not enough only to change the language of instruction. To make those courses really international they should be constructed in the way that would encourage students form different countries to cooperate, exchange opinions and to research and find together possible solutions for the issues discussed in the class.

Unfortunately, these important principles are often ignored. The students from different countries group in the class according to their origin and hardly communicate with each other. The professors limit their role only to delivering a lecture in English (often without much attention to how much of it is understood by the students), answering several questions and then evaluating an individual final paper or presentation, prepared by every single student (in the Japanese egalitarian culture there are several cases, when all of the students receive the same grade "A" or "B" based on attendance without regards to their performance). The interaction between representatives of domestic and foreign cultures remains low.

A more positive example may be seen in the courses arranged on both lecture and seminar basis, combining formal lectures, discussions, group work during the class, group research and group presentation. Often the original requirement for choosing a discussion partner is that he or she is a representative of a different culture. Moreover, the groups are built in the way to promote intercultural communication and cooperation by the students (for example a group of 4 has to consist of one student from Europe, North America, Asia and Japan). Initially, many students face certain difficulties having to deal with different patterns of behavior, working culture and thinking. However, if the teacher monitors the process and advices students on how to come over cultural gaps those cultural differences often turn to enrich the research with different perspectives and develop new approaches to research and study by all members of the group.

Important initial qualifications required from domestic and foreign students to enter an international students' course may be the English language skills. An important drawback of most of current language tests is that most of them test grammar, vocabulary, reading, listening and writing, whereas speaking ability, which is of crucial importance for students' intercultural communication in the classroom, can hardly be tested in advance.

The implementation of international courses taught in English into curriculum of universities all over the world also makes an injection of Western style studying culture in Japanese and Russian universities. Students attending those classes are more likely to express their opinions, ask questions, analyze critically. A Japanese professor expressed the following opinion concerning the behavior of international and Japanese students in his science class taught in English: "My class includes Japanese students so the syllabus is the same as for the Japanese course but the quality is much better, than the Japanese course I taught before, because …students ask many questions. It stimulates the class."(5)

3.3. Natural limitations of the courses offered in English in Russia and Japan.

Despite all of the advantages the construction of an international academic program may bring, courses in English have certain natural limitations. Those need to be considered especially in cases, when the university wants to implement extreme changes and to switch most or all of the academic (master's) programs into English.

The first limitation is generally understandable to anybody, who was ever involved into teaching or attending a class, where the professor or most of the students are not native speakers of English. The efficiency (amount of material taught and acquired during the lesson) of those lessons is usually relatively low, as opposed to the class

taught in Japanese or Russian. This is caused by the difficulties in word choice, speaking tempo, pronunciation defects etc. faced both by students and faculty. The situation in the classroom becomes entirely unnatural and inefficient, when both students and professor are Russian (Japanese), the course does not have any direct connection with the English language, but the language of instruction is English.

The analysis of the academic programs in English offered by Hokkaido University reveals that most of them are introductory level courses (with an exception of the faculty of Engineering). Most of the courses in English at the Moscow State University are either in the area of "Russian studies" (introduction into Russian society, economics and culture), or British-American, Australian studies. Most of the courses offered to international students in English at the Moscow State University are introductory level courses. On the basis of this comparison it may be stated, that it is extremely difficult to develop a highly specialized course in English with a deep view into scientific substance of the subject. In the area of humanities it is next to impossible, to organize a deep study of national history, philosophy or literature in English, because most of the terminology of the research in that area is hard to translate.

It should be mentioned, that Russian and Japanese universities have certain attraction for foreign students as authentic and strong scientific communities. In order to make it possible for international students to get a deep view into research subject, to understand the understanding and development of the subject within an academic community, to communicate effectively with the members of this community certain command of the national language is needed.

Finally, the lacking foreign language skills of students and faculty are an important barrier for the creation of courses in English. Creating an international program a university often has to hire teaching staff from abroad, which can seriously worry the domestic faculty.

4. Courses taught in foreign languages at Hokkaido University and the Moscow State University.

4.1 Historical perspectives and actual state of affairs.

It should be mentioned, that originally national language was not the main tool of communication in Hokkaido University (HU) and the Moscow State University (MSU). Due to the relatively late development of the higher education system in Japan and Russia both countries had to invite numerous professors from abroad in order to establish the national university system.

Hokkaido University was founded as Sapporo Agricultural College 1876 by an American professor William S. Clark. Originally, all of the classes were conducted in English. The proportion of foreigner among professors of Moscow University (founded 1755) was relatively high, but from the beginning Russian scholars took more and more teaching positions. The language of lecturing was Latin (due to the European university tradition). There was originally one lecture course in Russian taught by Professor Nikolay Popovsky, but the next year the curator of the university, count Shuvalov was persuaded that all of the lectures should be conducted in Latin. It is remarkable, that from the beginning one of the hottest discussion points in the Conference of Moscow University was the right to conduct lectures in Russian. This right was finally achieved 1767, when the Empress Catherine II issued an order to the Russian professors of the Moscow State University to conduct their lectures in Russian. However, Latin, German, French and English were still used for academic communication, because of the international origins of the faculty.

Until the end of the 20th century the only teaching language of the HU and MSU were Japanese and Russian respectively. MSU webpage still states, that "all the courses are given in Russian."(6) Most of the students entering the university are supposed to have a one-year preparatory study at the Center for International Education. During this year they study Russian, as well as several courses from the area of "Russian Studies," where certain courses are conducted in English. Traditionally, several subjects at the Faculty of Philology and Faculty of Foreign Languages and the Institute of Asian and African studies were conducted in English or other foreign languages studied at those faculties. Recently, one international research program in English (International Summer School in Biology and Medicine) has been launched by the Faculty of Fundamental Medicine. There are currently 3342 foreign students enrolled at full day programs at MSU, which is 9% from the total number of full-day program students. The number of full time foreign academic research staff is

194 (2%), part-time academic and research staff – 1,165 (46%).[7] The total percentage of foreign teaching staff according to the official university statistics is 12%.

The internationalization of Hokkaido University started in 1980s, at the same time with the other prestigious National Universities. However the introduction of academic programs taught in English came much later. "The Special Postgraduate Program in Agricultural Chemistry" was introduced 1996, followed by "Hokkaido University Short Term Exchange Program" in 1997. The "English Graduate Program in Socio-Environmental Engineering" established 2000. "Special Training Program for Veterinary Researchers toward Building an International Network for Veterinary Researchers" and "International Graduate Program in Natural History Science" were established 2007. However, only one of these programs ("English Graduate Program in Socio-Environmental Engineering" – modern name of the Program is "English Engineering Education" or "e^3") uses English as the only medium of instruction. It is remarkable that most of international programs were launched by the most famous and numerous faculties of the university.

As of May 1, 2009 there were 990 foreign students studying at Hokkaido University, which makes 8% from the total number of students. From 3,847 staff members 451 are non-Japanese (12%), among teaching staff the number of foreign lecturers is 100 (5%). [8]

4.2 Development of undergraduate and graduate academic programs in English on the example of Hokkaido University Short Term Exchange Program and English Engineering Education Program.

Several Japanese private universities have launched their academic exchange programs in English already in the 1970-s. The national universities were mostly enrolling students with Japanese language knowledge until the 1990-s. That is why there were few students coming from Europe and the USA. The US Ambassador to Japan Walter Mondale addressed the problem of student imbalance between Japan and the USA in 1994, pointing out, that the number of Japanese students going to the USA is much higher, than the number of American students coming to Japan. In order to change that situation several national universities (e.g. Kyushu University, Osaka University) launched their first academic exchange programs in English.

Hokkaido University started The Special Postgraduate Program in Agricultural Chemistry in 1996 and a Hokkaido University Short term Exchange Program (HUSTEP) in 1997. It should be mentioned, that originally all of the participants of HUSTEP came from the USA and were supported with a scholarship, provided by the Japanese government. The choice of courses in English was limited to 5-7 courses, one from every field.

The program started to expand on other sister universities of Hokkaido University and in 2008 HUSTEP enrolled 38 students from 11 countries. As it is shown on the Graph "HUSTEP Participants Data (1997-2008)"[9] below, the number of students in the program was constantly rising, whether the number of students on governmental scholarship remained the same. 45 courses from the areas of social science, engineering, business, education etc. are offered in English. Students also have an opportunity to be enrolled in Japanese language courses and to conduct an independent study on the chosen topic under scientific supervision of one of the university professors. Several years after the start of the program Japanese students were also allowed to attend HUSTEP classes in English, which made a contribution to the development of cooperation between international and Japanese students. The important initial requirements for enrollment are English language skills, academic achievements at home university, as well as the description of the motivation to be enrolled at the program.

One of the most successful exchange programs for graduate students at Hokkaido University is the English Engineering Education. This program was started as a consequence of growing necessity to compete for the

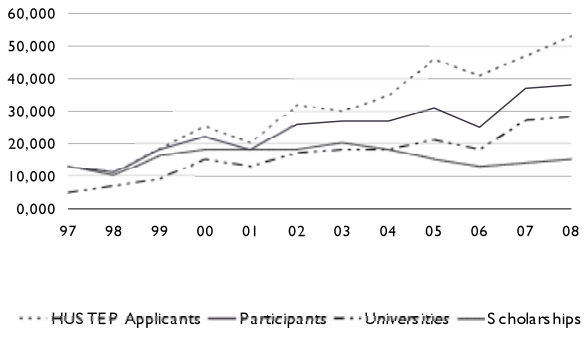

Figure 1. HUSTEP Participant Data (1997-2008)

brightest international students, in order to preserve the position of a world-class university. The program was launched in 2000 at the largest faculty of the university allocated 12 Japanese government scholarships annually, increased to 14 in 2007. Originally, the vast majority of the students at the Graduate School of Engineering came from China and South Korea. The introduction of a program in English in both cases (HUSTEP and English Engineering Education) helped to diversify the national representation with students from 39 countries studying at the faculty of Engineering in 2009. The Graduate School of Engineering now has with 190 students the biggest number of international students as compared to the other faculties. In 2006 41 courses was taught both in Japanese and English, 17 in English only. The current trend is that more courses that were originally offered in Japanese and English are offered in English only. HUSTEP is also a good example of how creation of courses in English stimulates diversity in origin of international students. The pie chart below(10) shows that only 37% of HUSTEP students in 2008 came from Asia.

The important consequences of the English Engineering Education program are increase in number of collaborative research projects, internationalization of the curricula and the growth in number of scientific publications in international journals. However, the fact that the Faculty of Engineering has the biggest number of students dropping out from the Japanese language courses may be considered as a negative consequence of the possibility to study using English.

5. Conclusions

From 1996 to 2009 the number of foreign students at Hokkaido University grew from 494 to 990. To some extent this growth was enabled by the creation of international courses in English (along with the economic development of East-Asia in general). The international programs in English diversified the representation of different countries, even though students from Asia still outnumber students who come from other regions.

The internationalization of the universities is a necessity in the era of global knowledge, information and mobility of human resources. The establishment of international programs helped to develop curricula, to promote publications in English, as well as to invite competent students with big potential, who may later join the faculty. The change of language of instruction does not mean "internationalization." Certain change of methods of teaching, encouraging more cooperation of students from different regions should be introduced. The university has to create an atmosphere, in which members of different cultures will be willing to cooperate, learn and research together. However, in both cases there is further necessity to increase the number of international academic programs (followed by the increase in number of international students and faculty) and improve the extent of internationalization of the curriculum, faculty and research.

The necessity to shift more programs and university environment towards the English language was acknowledged by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation and resulted into a "2020 program"

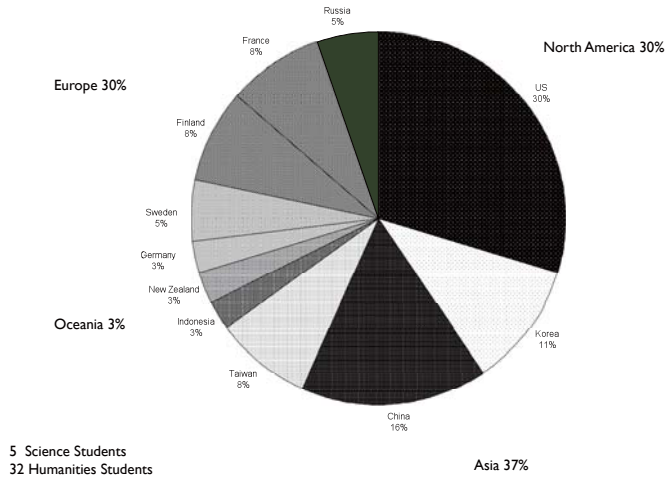

Figure 2. HUSTEP Student Diversity (2007-2008)

aimed at increasing the share of foreign students studying in Russia from current 2% to 7% by the year 2020. The main steps proposed in this program are further advertisement and promotion of education in Russia, financial and organizational support for the export of education programs, increasing the share of courses taught in foreign languages to 10%.

This program may be compared with the "300,000 International Students Plan" of the Japanese government, aimed at accepting 300,000 students in the year 2020. The plan includes measures towards invitation of foreign students to study in Japan, improving admission mechanisms, promoting globalization of universities, creating acceptable environment and promoting social acceptance of students after graduation.

Russian universities are nowadays at the beginning stage of the organization of academic programs in English language. That is why the experience of Japanese universities, such as Kyushu University, Waseda University, Keio University, Osaka University, as well as other members of the G30 program and Hokkaido University may be very useful for the internationalization of Lomonosov Moscow State University. On the other hand, the experiences of Russian universities in the establishment of studying programs and even whole universities (e.g. Peoples' Friendship University of Russia) for the development of highly qualified specialists for the developing nations may contribute to further diversification of students' origin at the Japanese universities and sustainable development of global higher education.

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Notes

1. Altbach, 2006, 126
2. Doherty, Singh, 2005, 61
3. Doherty, Singh, 2005, 66
4. Tyler, 1999
5. Werawan, 2007, 159
6. http://www.msu.ru/en/admissions/
7. http://www.msu.ru/en/science/stat/sci-staff.html
8. http://www.hokudai.ac.jp/en/brief/english/page12.html
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