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RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Turkish lecturers' views on the place of mother tongue in the teaching of content courses through English medium

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### ABSTRACT

One consequence of higher education institutions' efforts to internationalize themselves is the adoption of English medium instruction (EMI) in teaching. This is particularly the case in non-Anglophone countries. Although researchers have extensively canvassed the place of English in English as a foreign language (EFL) / English as a second language (ESL) in such countries, little has been researched on the place of mother tongue in EMI programmes. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the place of mother tongue in EMI courses. Data were garnered via interviews with EMI lecturers. The analyses indicate that lecturers are largely supportive of integration of Turkish into classes to varying degrees, and of letting students use it for certain purposes. Those against using Turkish in classes mainly underscore the presence of international students, and the institutional policy urging them to use English. The results offer practical implications for policy-makers and lecturers in terms of how they can adjust themselves to the current linguistic environment of their institutions.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, several transformations have occurred in the higher education sector of many countries across the world, particularly in Europe. Among the transformations that have been remarkably evident, we find a language aspect in the form of policy decisions by universities to switch to English medium in teaching. Recent research has indicated that many universities around the world, especially in Europe, have adopted different forms of English-medium instruction (EMI) in teaching, particularly in social sciences (e.g. business programmes) and the hard sciences (e.g. engineering) as a strategic response to the internationalization process (Dearden, 2014, 2015; Wächter & Maiworm, 2008, 2014). The case of EMI is no different in Turkey from the way it is in European and other countries. According to Arik and Arik (2014), about 20% of all undergraduate programmes in Turkey are executed through different modalities of EMI. Additionally, figures from the Higher Education Management System (2016) show that the total number of international students at Turkish universities exceeded 100,000 in the 2014/2015 academic term, yet Turkish students still constitute by far the majority of the student body in those universities.

The offer of fully or partly EMI programmes has conferred an advantage to institutions in the recruitment of international students and teaching staff. The linguistic mix on campus has mainly led to the emergence of two scenarios of English use. In the first scenario, English is chiefly used as an additional language among speakers of the same first language (L1). In the second scenario, English serves as a lingua franca to speakers who do not speak the same L1. Although these two scenarios can exist at one and the same time, it is usually the former scenario that prevails in the universities of non-English-speaking countries, such as China (e.g. Hu, 2015) and Turkey (e.g. Karakaş, 2016). Students at EMI universities, where the first scenario prevails, are therefore more likely to apply communication strategies, such as code-switching (alternation of L1 and second language [L2]) and language mixing in their linguistic acts.

Whether communication strategies, such as L1 use and code-mixing, should be applied in the language classroom has often been debated by researchers. Several studies with language learners and teachers in various contexts, ranging from China to Nepal, have documented the supportive role of students' L1, and code-switching practices in EFL/ESL classrooms, underscoring the point that these strategies pedagogically contribute to teaching and learning of foreign languages in several ways (e.g. Jan, Li, & Lin, 2014; Sharma, 2006; Timor, 2012). Most studies conducted in Turkey have revolved around similar issues, with more or less parallel findings (e.g. Paker & Karaağaç, 2015; Sarıçoban, 2010; Şevik, 2007). Apart from these studies, drawing on theoretical knowledge, some scholars, such as Atkinson (1987) and Cook (1999), argued, long before, for the facilitating role of L1 use in improved learning.

As already noted, the issue of L1 use has been hotly debated and meticulously studied in EFL/ESL research; however, it has so far received very scant attention in EMI research. Besides, previous EMI research reveals that languages other than English, such as the national language of the host country, or the languages brought by international students, are also used by lecturers and students in EMI classrooms, which have hence a certain scope for bi/multilingual practices (e.g. Channa, 2012; Costa, 2012; Flowerdew, Li, & Miller, 1998; Karakaş, 2016; Ljosland, 2010; Ljosland, 2008; Marie, 2013). This small-scale case study hence attempts to investigate Turkish lecturers' views on the use of L1, and to investigate these beliefs relating to their actual classroom practices. The research is structured around the following research questions:

- (1) What are Turkish lecturers' views regarding the use of mother tongue in EMI classes?
- (2) What factors influence the expressed views of Turkish lecturers?

### **1.1. EMI policies in higher education**

EMI is defined in this article as 'the use of English in the offer of university degree programs in higher education instead of the domestic language of the country in question' (Karakaş, 2015a, para. 1). The primary purpose of EMI 'is to broaden students' general and specialized knowledge in academic subjects, and to promote professional expertise in English that enables students to take leadership in the international community' (Taguchi, 2014, p. 89). Therefore, EMI differs in focus from Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), because in CLIL the purpose is to teach content knowledge and language to learners in

tandem; however, in EMI there is no officially set language learning goals in course descriptions, and content teachers are not considered language specialists (Aguilar, 2015; Airey, 2012; Karakaş, 2015a).

Adopting EMI in teaching is a direct consequence of policy decisions. Thus, the notion of EMI will be positioned in the language policy framework in this article. According to McGroarty (1997, p. 67), language policy is 'the combination of official decisions and prevailing public practices related to language education and use'. Spolsky (2012) defined this notion 'as an officially mandated set of rules for language use and form within a nation-state' (p. 3) and considered language policy a superordinate concept consisting of three components: language practices, language beliefs (ideologies) and language management (Spolsky, 2004). Spolsky clarified these components as:

its language practices – the habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up the its linguistic repertoire; its language beliefs or ideology – the beliefs about language and language use; and any specific efforts to modify or influence that practice by any kind of language intervention, planning or management. (2004, p. 5)

Manipulation of language use, as understood from this quote, lies at the centre of language policy. The language beliefs component is seen as a key theme of language policy aimed at modifying people's linguistic acts. The final theme, policy as practice, is concerned with what people are prepared to do about language; for example, whether they will follow the agreed rules. Drawing on Spolsky's (2004) multi-componential policy framework, this research explores Turkish lecturers' views on the use of L1 and code-switching in classes. To this end, the main focus is on lecturers' meta-linguistic discussion rather than actual practices, because, as Kitazawa (2012) noted, 'people's language practices cannot only be fully understood only from observation and description of actual use' (p. 28).

## **1.2. EMI research in higher education**

The EMI literature shows that studies have, hitherto, been conducted from several perspectives, such as from a cognitive-pedagogical perspective led by researchers' interest in students' learning outcomes and experiences (e.g. Aguilar & Rodriguez, 2012; Airey & Linder, 2006), from a socio-political perspective with a focus on potential threats of EMI against national society and the language spoken by this society (e.g. domain loss) (e.g. Kuteeva & Airey, 2014; Ljosland, 2010), and from a linguistic perspective by questioning language policies of EMI universities (e.g. Hu, 2015; Jenkins, 2014; Karakaş, 2015b, 2016) and by examining students' linguistic improvement at EMI institutions (e.g. Rogier, 2012).

However, only few studies have, in any systematic way, investigated EMI stakeholders' views on the use of mother tongue, although these issues have been part of a considerable literature in EFL/ESL research. One of the first attempts to study lecturers' and students' practices and opinions about code-switching and mother-tongue use in EMI classes comes from Flowerdew et al. (1998), who investigated lecturers' attitudes, in Hong Kong, towards the use of Cantonese. Their findings showed that most lecturers were positive about mixed-mode teaching and, at least, minimum use of the L1 for various reasons; for example, naturalness of teaching in Cantonese, and clarification of important and difficult points. Additionally, the lecturers did not consider this way of teaching prejudicial to the learning process; quite the contrary, they perceived it as a facilitator in communicating knowledge to students, and in prompting more questions by students.

Other work on lecturers' views on mother-tongue use in EMI classes yielded conflicting results, however. For instance, a study by Channa (2012) with Pakistani science lecturers demonstrated that the majority were supportive of delivering lectures through English, but were considerably lenient with students using their native language(s). Another interesting finding was that although lecturers systematically used English in the main teaching activities, there were some instances of scarce mother-tongue use of a few lecturers mostly to effectively convey subject matters. Similar and remarkable in this line of research is the doctoral research by Ljosland (2008) on students at a Norwegian university. She observed that students switched to Norwegian on two particular occasions. The first was when they needed to deal with an unfamiliar English term of a given notion, and the second was when they sought to discuss a notion in English. Likewise, Ljosland (2010), in another study, observed that Norwegian lecturers and students were positive about using their L1 and engaging in code-switching, but on condition that English should be used in 'core' teaching and learning activities (e.g. lectures, examinations and dissertations). Nonetheless, 'fringe' activities (e.g. social interactions and informal conversation, such as chatting, joking) can be flexibly carried out using other languages.

In Italy, the research by Costa (2012) on the actual language practices of science lecturers showed that they made certain use of Italian by performing code-switching through translation of technical terms in order to increase students' comprehension and learning outcomes. These findings partly matched those of Söderlundh (2012) who observed in Sweden that lecturers and students used the L1 of the majority, Swedish, in the courses as well as outside teaching situations (e.g. for compensating lack of English terminology). She concluded that using mother tongue of the majority in teaching seemed acceptable to students and lecturers, although these practices are, at the policy level, against the policy regulation which proclaims English as the official language of instruction.

Among the rare studies on the use of mother tongue in English-taught courses, notable is the finding that the use of languages at students' and lecturers' disposal other than English in teaching is an influential coping strategy adopted by students in the successful completion of academic tasks. For example, Marie's (2013) study on multilingual students' experiences with studying in EMI, in Rwanda, revealed that switching to the L1 in a context where students share the same mother tongue was a fruitful strategy to overcome cognitively demanding content courses. Based on her findings, Marie proposed that practices of code-switching should be permissible in lectures due to their mediating and facilitating role in assisting students' learning.

In Turkey, however, little research has investigated bilingual practices from lecturers' perspectives. Overall, studies investigating Turkish instructors' and students' attitudes towards EMI have indicated that the majority of lecturers were supportive of abandoning EMI, and of adopting Turkish-medium instruction due to the difficulties students experience when learning through English (e.g. Başıbek et al., 2014; Kılıçkaya, 2006). Among the rare studies which consider Turkish lecturers' and students' bilingual practices is that of Collins (2010), who found that students of a prestigious EMI university (i.e. Bilkent University) tended to pepper their English with some Turkish words, and often asked questions by switching to Turkish, yet their questions were reported to remain either unanswered or answered in English by lecturers, who avoided violating the rules of their institution. Another exception is Karakaş (2016), who reported on a qualitative case study of Turkish lecturers' and students' perceptions of English. In that study, Karakaş (2016, p. 216) found a prevalence of

negative views among lecturers and students towards those who resorted to Turkish at some situations. Some students were so pejorative that they described the code-mixed language use (i.e. English peppered with Turkish words, phrases, grammar constructions) by their Turkish friends as ‘Tarzanish’; that is, a language that can be spoken by one raised by apes.

The snapshot described suggests that language policy in EMI universities lags far behind linguistic practices because implementing EMI in courses is an issue of a monolingual language policy, whereas individuals’ observed and reported language behaviours exemplify a case of bi/multilingual practices. Therefore, in such linguistically dynamic and complex contexts, a discrepancy seems to frequently occur between language policy and day-to-day practices. It, too, has become apparent that lecturers hold a key role in the implementation of monolingual and plurilingual practices based on their positioning towards L1 use.

Moreover, much of the cited research on bi/multilingual practices in EMI contexts has taken the form of observations. The concentration was thus primarily on what happens in practice, but less on what practitioners indeed think about their practices. There is a strong likelihood of a mismatch between what practitioners actually do and what they might say and feel about their practices. It is with this motivation that the current study aims to add to the previous studies by investigating the lecturers’ views on the use of Turkish in teaching content courses.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Research design**

In this article, Turkish lecturers’ views on the place of mother tongue in English-only courses are examined by adopting a case-study approach and using Turkish EMI universities as a case. As argued by Yin (2003, p. 2), ‘the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena.’ In other words, a case study ‘is particularly useful when there is a need to obtain an in-depth appreciation of an issue, event or phenomenon of interest, in its natural real-life context’ (Crowe et al., 2011). The complex social phenomenon of interest in this research is the occurrence of bilingual practices at the level of practice, which are indeed disallowed at the level of policy in EMI universities.

### **2.2. Research participants and settings**

The research topic was addressed from the perspectives of 13 lecturers teaching in three long-established EMI universities: Boğaziçi University, Bilkent University and Middle East Technical University (METU). Of these, seven lecturers were from METU, three from Bilkent University and the rest from Boğaziçi University. Nine were male and four were female. They came from a range of disciplines, representing social sciences (e.g. international relations, economics), humanities (e.g. history, psychology) and hard sciences (e.g. mechanical engineering). Two forms of sampling were employed in selecting participants for the study, the first of which was purposive sampling, through which the aim was to reach ‘individuals who can provide rich and varied insights into’ the research phenomenon being investigated (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 126). Purposive sampling enables researchers to recruit participants who have been experiencing or ‘had [already] experienced the central phenomenon’ in a given context (Creswell, 2009, p. 217). In this study, the central phenomenon is the act of lecturing

in an EMI institution. The second sampling technique was snowball sampling, in which, first, I contacted my intermediaries in the afore-mentioned universities because they met the criterion for being a participant (i.e. lecturing in an EMI university and speaking Turkish as their L1). Second, I asked them whether they could identify further potential participants, whom I could contact via email or telephone and invite to take part in the study.

### **2.3. Data collection tool**

With the lecturers, semi-structured interviews were held on Skype. Using Skype as a platform for interviews was a practical decision, because the participants and the researcher dwelled in different provinces across Turkey. Conducting semi-structured interviews was also useful in terms of giving ‘an overall shape to the interview and help[ing] prevent aimless rambling’ on the part of participants, which, in effect, kept me, as the interviewer, in control of the direction of interviews (Opie, 2004, p. 18). The interviews lasted for 15–25 minutes and were digitally recorded with a sound recorder. Following Berg and Lune’s (2012) suggestion, the interviews were made in participants’ L1, but with frequent instances of code-switching to English for technical vocabulary and phrases. The interviewees’ profiles are shown in Appendix 1.

### **2.4. Data analysis**

Because of the descriptive nature of the data, I chose to analyse them via qualitative content analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Schreier 2012). Qualitative content analysis was employed to obtain ‘subjective interpretation of the content of the text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns’ (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). The main focus of the analysis was on the latent content (i.e. ‘a second-level, interpretative analysis of the underlying deeper meaning of the data’; Dörnyei, 2007, p. 246) rather than the manifest content (i.e. ‘descriptive account of the surface meaning of the data’; 2007, p. 245). While analysing the data, I followed the four-step analysis process suggested by Dörnyei (2007, pp. 246–257) for the investigation of qualitative content. The steps taken were as follows: transcribing the data; pre-coding and coding; growing ideas; and interpreting the data and drawing conclusions. Accordingly, I firstly transcribed the data and imported it into Nvivo 10 for coding. Next, I started reading through the data for pre-coding, in which I aimed to ‘obtain a general sense of the information and reflect on its overall meaning’ (Creswell, 2009, p. 185), often by taking notes on intriguing points within the data, and considering what is relevant and irrelevant to the research questions. I then moved on to main coding by coding the data through a bottom-up and a top-down approach. I combined the assigned codes into hierarchically organized categories of codes based on their relationship with each other in terms of addressing certain themes. Finally, the categories were grouped into two overarching themes: opposing voices and supporting voices, *vis-à-vis* the use of Turkish in EMI classes.

## **3. Results**

The categories that emerged from the interviews were hierarchically organized based on the extensiveness of the codes grouped in a given category. Table 1 outlines the lecturers’ views on the use of Turkish in classes.

**Table 1.** Categories and subcategories for lecturers' comments on the use of Turkish in EMI courses.

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Opposing voices: negative views on the use of Turkish
• Policy rule
• Disciplinary concerns
• Presence of international students in classes
Supporting voices: positive views about on the use of Turkish
• For the purpose of clarity and comprehensibility of the content
• For the issue of fairness
• For contextual disciplinary purposes

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### **3.1. Opposing voices: negative views on the use of Turkish**

Those lecturers who were critical of using Turkish during their classes cited different grounds for their position. The following are those voiced by the majority of participants.

#### **3.1.1. Policy rule**

Among the lecturers who opposed the use of Turkish and code-switching to Turkish, some expressed that using English in classes is the established criterion of their institutions and thus it is, for them, out of question to deliver their lectures through Turkish, as some expressed, Turkish can only be used if a course is directly related to the Turkish language or linguistics. A few lecturers reported that even if students asked them to switch to Turkish in some occasions, they refused such requests and carried on using English:

1. **L9:** At the end of each class, I always ask students, whether there's anything they have not understood or any questions they'd like to ask me before finishing the lecture. Quite often, they tend to ask their questions switching to Turkish, some students can easily ask in English and some others in Turkish. Again, I respond in English. I, occasionally, particularly at the beginning of the academic term, tell students I'd rather they asked their questions in English only.

Moreover, one lecturer went so far as to say that when lecturers persistently use English in their classes without making any allowances for Turkish, students cannot have expectations about using Turkish and asking lecturers to switch to Turkish:

2. **L7:** In my classes, there come no requests by students for me to explain some concepts in Turkish. Anyways, I have never done it until now. Perhaps, had I done it before, they would be asking me to use Turkish now. As I had always avoided using Turkish during my lectures, none of the students have such expectations.

#### **3.1.2. Disciplinary concerns**

Some lecturers believed that resorting to Turkish during lectures can be disadvantageous to students enrolled in certain disciplines, such as international relations and engineering, where English has considerable weight for their career progression. They argued that using Turkish is, in one sense, doing such students an injustice, because students need to predominantly rely on English in their professional careers. In line with this argument, one lecturer noted:

3. **L1:** As I mentioned before, using Turkish during lectures in our discipline, namely international relations, complicate things for students. In a manner of speaking,



students will be wronged if Turkish is used. At the end of the day, there are no chances for these students to carry out their career prospects using Turkish. For example, the ministry of foreign affairs won't employ someone who merely speaks Turkish.

Other arguments in favour using English for disciplinary concerns centred on the availability of high-quality teaching materials in English, and the lack of textbooks written in Turkish. According to a few lecturers, when there is a tendency towards frequently using Turkish in lectures, students do not even consult the books written in English. Instead, they embark on a search for books either written in Turkish or books translated into Turkish. As was argued by some, such practices can lead to attrition of disciplinary content learning in the long run because students start to become unfamiliar with the key terminology of their disciplines in English:

4. **L12:** Let's say, we try to lecture our courses using a mixed-mode teaching. To tell the truth, we'll have difficulty in finding course books or have to heavily rely on Turkish course books written by some Turkish authors. I don't know, but there's the issue of quality with those Turkish books. It is, I think, more preferable to use course books which are well accepted across the world. Through such books, it is like we are presenting the state of the art to our students in their disciplinary domains.

### **3.1.3. Presence of international students in classes**

Although the lecturers who pointed to the presence of international students in their classes as an excuse for avoiding using Turkish generally supported an English-medium-only policy, they were, in principle, more positive about the idea of using Turkish in judicious amounts than the lecturers who focused their attention on the policy rule and disciplinary concerns. Overall, lecturers emphasized the fact that the existence of even a single non-Turkish student requires lectures to be run in English. Otherwise, switching to Turkish in lectures where foreign students exist will be an injustice to them because they are not capable of following courses in Turkish, or understanding Turkish phrases and terminology. That is, lecturers' approach to international students in terms of language preference was from a fairness point of view:

5. **L2:** Truth be told; I consider it to be very useful if some courses are run through Turkish-medium herein; however, Middle East Technical University teaches in this way [through English]. Or, it would be fairly good to recap some courses in Turkish at least a few times in an academic term. Of course, what I just said will not be possible in practice thanks to the presence of international students. It is because using Turkish to recap courses means passing unfairness to international students who cannot speak Turkish.

Some lecturers expressed great pleasure at their institutions hosting international students on their campuses due primarily to the fact that those students ensure lectures will be only in English. Turkish students, some lecturers argued, therefore cannot dare to ask the lecturers to switch to Turkish; for example, to answer some questions in Turkish or give some detailed information regarding a conceptual definition, argument and so forth:

6. **L5:** The presence of international students in lectures is a guarantee that courses will be carried out entirely in English. Even if there is merely one foreign student,

Turkish students have no right to say that they don't understand, and to ask me to recap the course in Turkish once again. Well, the reason is that whatever I say during the lecture should also be understood by foreign students. Thus, there's no room for any amount of Turkish use in such classes and my students are acutely aware of this situation.

### **3.2. Supporting voices: positive views on the use of Turkish**

Closely related to lecturers' positive views on the use of English in EMI classes is for what purposes and in which situations lecturers themselves and students can use Turkish. Most lecturers made positive comments on switching to Turkish, going against the official language policy of their institutions. The most notable among the reasons cited for using and switching to Turkish is that lecturers would like to contribute to students' learning outcomes by clarifying complex issues through the students' mother tongue.

#### **3.2.1. For the purpose of clarity and comprehensibility of the content**

According to some lecturers, there is no harm switching to Turkish in content-focused classes. They reported that because the acquisition of content knowledge lies at the core of EMI education, preference for English plays only second fiddle to content teaching through mother tongue. It also became clear from their arguments that the decision to use Turkish at some occasions, and to let students switch to Turkish for particular purposes (e.g. to ask questions) was a practical one, through which lecturers attempted to sympathize with students, seeing their struggle with learning content knowledge through English. They seemed to have adopted different modalities of Turkish use for various academic activities, as well. For example, lecturer L3 pointed out:

7. **L3:** Honestly, speaking for myself, I employ such a method: in classes, drawing mainly on lectures, I always deliver my courses using English. It does not matter whether it's a Master's class or Bachelorette's class. I always do as I said. All my lectures are in English. Our required readings are always in English. However, when there's a lack of understanding on the part of students, I frequently review the content in Turkish. I also allow students to use Turkish to ask and answer questions. The reason is I don't want to sacrifice content communication to using English only, which is indeed a linguistic barrier to students' learning. In such situations, I turn to Turkish and we have our discussions or questions and answers in Turkish. I developed such a formula to cope with the dilemma of language use.

At a later point in our discussion with lecturer L3, I brought up the issue of international students in order to delve into how lecturer L3 linguistically behaves when there are international students in her classes, and what choices she makes as to language preference. Intriguingly, she said she kept on employing the same method mentioned, but with an attempt to secure the justice to international students:

8. **L3:** I also follow the same technique when foreign students are present in the classroom. It is because I summarize everything to foreign students in English at the end of the class. I say to international students, after all, things get more complex for Turkish students when I constantly use English, and students thus experience trouble following the courses. I tell foreign students, we will just have

the discussion in Turkish and in the meantime, you'll get a bit bored. However, as I said to them, I'd make a summary of the discussion to them in English towards the end of the class, [international] students have accustomed to it. It does no longer cause a problem, therefore.

A few lecturers maintained that gains far outnumber losses once Turkish is used on certain occasions, such as for the purpose of recapitulating the course content. They made their case for using Turkish and letting students use, arguing that when courses are delivered through English, students cannot adapt to classes, which accordingly results in lack of participation in class and loss of interest in the course content:

9. **L6:** I am well cognizant of the learning loss emanating from switching to Turkish. Nevertheless, I consider that there are more gains than losses in terms of subject knowledge acquisition once Turkish is used as a resource at judicious amounts. There's, as I said, a little bit of concern regarding the use of Turkish, but it yields greater returns in respect of learning achievements. It is for this reason that I believe Turkish should also be preferred as an auxiliary language in EMI courses.

Remarkably, one lecturer, while arguing in favour of using Turkish for particular purposes, likened using only English in lectures to placing a frosted glass between students and lecturers who indeed speak the same mother tongue. Therefore, he held that banning the use of Turkish in classes would place students at a disadvantage:

10. **L11:** It would be easier for students to comprehend the course content if we lecture in Turkish. For example, we sometimes lose so much time while trying to discuss certain concepts since students have lots of trouble understanding these intellectually demanding concepts. However, the same concepts can be easily conveyed to students by using Turkish. English thus acts as a filter or, in other words, through English, transmission of content knowledge to students is attempted to be done behind frosted glass.

Similarly, another lecturer from the field of computer engineering was rather firm in his view that when the purpose of using English is to communicate subject knowledge to students, there is no need to be a 'language fanatic' who insists on using only English to the detriment of students' effective learning. He also developed a different conceptualization of language, which for him is not only a system of rules, but rather a multipurpose tool which links individuals' social experiences to their wider societal context, and helps them better understand their socio-cultural and political world. Motivated by this thought, the lecturer mentioned adopting the following method in terms of language use:

11. **L10:** If you attend my classes, you will see that there'll be cases for me to become an object of derision because of the way I use language, which is what we call METU English here. I deliver my lectures mainly in Turkish but frequent switches to English for the key terminology or by inserting English words and phrases into my sentences. I don't feel shame for this in the slightest degree. This way, I can use all the richness of Turkish. It is because, I believe, language doesn't only consist of structures or sentences we form; it also embodies connotations and references one can make to political, historical and socio-cultural elements in their environment. For example, if I refer to one of Cem Yılmaz's [a well-known Turkish comedian] humours in my lectures regarding a given topic, students can

better understand what I'm trying to explain to them. If this linguistic resource is not allowed in classes, I feel like a bird with a broken wing.

### **3.2.2. For the issue of fairness**

A few lecturers who preferred to use mother tongue despite the academic regulations on the medium of instruction highlighted the issue of fairness while justifying why they themselves used Turkish, and allowed their students to switch to Turkish on certain occasions during lectures and examinations. Some even described the current situation as being at odds with the profile of the student population and teaching staff, almost all of whom are Turkish. They reported that strict insistence on the use of English, especially in written examinations, can reduce the efficiency of students, whose marks can be marked down as a result of switching to Turkish. Against such practices, overall, lecturers approached the use of mother tongue with a degree of lenience:

12. **L13:** Customarily, here students are expected to carry out each and every single academic task through English. However, at some occasions, students tend to write a few lines in Turkish in the exams although they are required to use English. However, since I'm not a language teacher and our course is not a language-specific one, I still assess what they have written in Turkish to maintain justice to these students, and don't reduce their marks. We even tell students the Turkish equivalents of phrases and words when they ask us for help with unfamiliar terms and phrases during exams.

One lecturer stated that he preferred to use Turkish from time to time, seeing that students experience difficulty in following and comprehending intellectually demanding academic subject courses even in Turkish. Thus, he submitted himself to the belief that now that the aim is to teach content courses to students through English, which is not the end itself but the means to the end, the policy regulations can be bent and challenged at the practical level:

13. **L8:** We observe that even when Turkish is used in lecturers, there stills seems to be a great deal of difficulty on the part of students since the course content requires high analytical skills and creative use of language with a degree of fluency. I also observed, when I went to the Netherlands for an exchange program, that teaching staff there preferred to use the mother tongue when there were no international students in the class, which has also led me to question and reflect on my own practices here.

### **3.2.3. For contextual disciplinary purposes**

Some lecturers, hinting at the importance of using Turkish in courses which have a high local connection, said that lecturers need to be flexible about using Turkish when delivering courses which are more linked to the Turkish context and culture than others that deal with more general issues:

14. **L4:** I particularly support the use of Turkish in courses which are highly relevant to the local context. I can understand there're advantages of using English in courses which are connected to wider issues more than local ones. However, some courses should, at least, be delivered through Turkish, particularly courses related

to the Turkish context, such as Turkish constitutional law. It's all about Turkey, and therefore it is better to be studied in Turkish, in my opinion.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusions

This research originated from an interest in exploring Turkish lecturers' views on the use of Turkish in EMI courses. Answering the first research question, analysis of interviews demonstrates that more than half of the lecturers were positive about using Turkish in lectures and letting students use it to some extent. Among the positively oriented lecturers towards the use of Turkish, the common belief was that lecturers should mainly focus on conveying content knowledge to their students, so language itself is not a primary focus, and the official policy can thus be bent at certain instances for the sake of students' better content knowledge acquisition. This finding generally agreed with those obtained in previous studies (e.g. Channa, 2012; Costa, 2012; Flowerdew et al., 1998; Marie, 2013; Söderlundh, 2012) in which content lecturers, overall, held positive attitudes towards using mother tongue with the purpose of maximizing students' learning. However, this finding did not closely match that of Ljosland (2010), who found that instances of mother-tongue use and code-switching to mother tongue mostly occurred outside teaching and learning situations; yet, in this research, most lecturers reported using Turkish and allowed students to benefit from it within teaching situations, such as in lectures, and examinations. A certain amount of caution is needed, however, when interpreting lecturers' positive views on the use of Turkish because the use of Turkish, according to lecturers, should remain subsidiary to that of English. Such an attitude suggests that lecturers regard Turkish as a resource to be employed in some situations but not always.

The lecturers who were strictly negative about using Turkish and letting students switch to it emphasized that their language preference is considerably shaped by the institutional policy regulation and changing demographics of their classes, in which there are now at least a few non-Turkish students. Their reasoning presents some evidence that policy mediators can exert a certain degree of influence on some lecturers, because lecturers' linguistic acts can be shaped by policy mediators' decisions on language preference (Spolsky, 2004). Additionally, such pejorative attitudes to mother-tongue use in EMI environments are not new, as already noted (e.g. Collins, 2010; Karakaş, 2016). Judging from lecturers' negative accounts on the use of Turkish, it can be argued that they are essentially influenced by the belief which prioritizes language over communication of content and meaning.

Scrutinizing the factors that shaped lecturers' views on the use of Turkish was the second research question. The lecturers who opposed the use of Turkish in their classes were mainly bound by the English-only norm and the presence of international students in classes. Actually, one can assert based on these lecturers' reported linguistic acts that they were rather conservative in maintaining the monolingual English policy in all course-related activities, thereby, as policy actors, reproducing the ideology that there is no room for other languages to be used alongside English in EMI (Brown, 2010). Nonetheless, the lecturers who took a pragmatic approach to the use of Turkish in classes provided evidence that the existing monolingual policy can be challenged at the ground level for the objective of making content learning more effective, ensuring justice to students, and making students familiar with locally relevant disciplinary knowledge.

Additionally, the reported practices of lecturers who were favourable towards the idea of using Turkish in EMI classes signal the fact that language usage is not uniform in EMI classes, as described in the policy papers, and that the contexts where English is the preferred medium of instruction is far from being a monolingual environment (Ljosland, 2010). Indeed, this discrepancy between official policy and the real ground work has some implications for policy-makers and content lecturers. First, drawing on the results, it is suggested that policy-makers and university leaders reflect upon actual language practices of their stakeholders, and accordingly reframe their institutions' monolingual English policy, with straightforward policy rules about language use within and outside teaching situations. Such an effort will be a step in the right direction in order to align Turkish institutions' language policies with actual practices. Second, at a more practical level, content lecturers can be more tolerant towards bilingual practices in their classes, seeing as language itself is subordinate in importance to content because English is just a means of mastering subject-matter courses instead of a subject to be mastered by students, as in the case of CLIL. Content teachers' attention should be, therefore, on students' languaging; that is, what they can achieve by using English and other languages. Adopting such an approach to language use requires lecturers to avoid marking students down due to their bilingual practices. Third, because policy decisions are often taken in a top-down manner, lecturers' voices are not part of those decisions. To find a middle way between policy rules and actual practices, it is essential to include content lecturers in the decision-making process regarding issues of language use/preference.

I should also note that the study has some shortcomings. Firstly, due to its purely qualitative nature, the results cannot be directly extrapolated to other research contexts; however, this does not mean that they have no relevance or benefit for other research contexts and content lecturers located in those contexts. Because transferability is more important than generalizability in qualitative research, the rich description offered throughout the article and the results can resonate in other similar settings where parallel issues can be approached in like manner. Secondly, my data sources are limited to lecturers only, which barred students' views from being represented here. Thirdly, the results draw on lecturers' reported behaviours because the data were garnered through interviews. It is very likely that different results could have been generated had other methods, such as observation and field notes, been employed. Considering these shortcomings, it is obvious that there remains much scope for further research. Further research should particularly investigate the use of mother tongue in EMI classes through observations and field notes, if possible, in a longitudinal manner and with the inclusion of students. Furthermore, the use/place of other languages apart from the host language spoken by the vast majority of students and lecturers in EMI institutions is a fruitful area for further work.

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## Appendix 1. Interviewee profiles

Lecturer ID	Gender	University	Discipline
L1	Male	Bilkent	International relations
L2	Female	METU	Mechanical engineering
L3	Female	METU	History
L4	Male	METU	Economics
L5	Female	Bilkent	Psychology
L6	Male	METU	Electrical and electronics engineering
L7	Male	Bilkent	Electrical and electronics engineering
L8	Male	METU	Electrical and electronics engineering
L9	Male	METU	Computer engineering
L10	Male	METU	Electrical and electronics engineering
L11	Male	Boğaziçi	Philosophy
L12	Male	Boğaziçi	Mechanical engineering
L13	Female	Boğaziçi	Psychology