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## VISIBLE LANGUAGE-COVERT POLICY: AN INVESTIGATION OF LANGUAGE POLICY DOCUMENTS AT EMI UNIVERSITIES IN TURKEY

*Research Article*

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# VISIBLE LANGUAGE-COVERT POLICY: AN INVESTIGATION OF LANGUAGE POLICY DOCUMENTS AT EMI UNIVERSITIES IN TURKEY<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

As universities attempt to change their medium of instruction from the local languages to English and become more international by recruiting international students and teaching staff, their academic English language policies and practices appear to be more prominent. The use of English in higher education as the medium of instruction and the increasing cultural and linguistic mixture on campuses make English-medium instruction (EMI) universities a fruitful ground to explore issues of language policy and practice. This paper explores the academic English language policies and practices of three EMI universities in Turkey. Applying a combination of qualitative content analysis and negative analysis, I seek to find out institutions' overall orientation to English in their policy documents. The analysis shows that English is overtly pronounced as the official language of the institutions, yet the kind of English required remains considerably covert. However, the analysis of policy mechanisms further indicate that each university orients to a particular standard (native) English by implication as the appropriate kind of academic English. Additionally, such normative orientations seem to be guided by several dynamically intertwined ideologies. These results suggest that language-wise, universities' academic language policies are in need of immediate and drastic revision.

*Keywords:* Academic English, English-medium instruction (EMI), Higher education, language ideologies, language policy and practice

## 1. Introduction

Over the last two decades or so, higher education (henceforth HE) institutions across the world have been immersed in the act of turning to English in instruction (Dearden, 2014, 2015; Shohamy, 2013; Wächter & Maiworm, 2008, 2014) due largely to the pressure of the internationalization and globalization processes (Coleman, 2006; Turner & Robson, 2008; Woodfield, 2010). The interest in using English as a medium of instruction (henceforth EMI) has been so intense that the term, *internationalisation*, has often been associated with the notion of *Englishization*, i.e. an intensified use of English in various domains for certain purposes (Kirkpatrick, 2011; Phillipson, 2012). However, the driving factors behind EMI are not always the same across all the countries. In Europe, for example, the Bologna Declaration (1999) signed to create a harmonized European HE area allowed students and academic staff to freely move within the member states. Consequently, such an increased mobility has led to the embracement of EMI policies as the unifying approach to tackling students and teaching staff's linguistic diversity. Apart from these factors, universities, as articulated by many researchers (e.g., Altbach & Knight, 2007; Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2011; Wilkinson, 2013) have had

<sup>1</sup> This paper emerged from the empirical language policy data of my PhD project entitled 'Turkish lecturers' and students' perceptions of English in English-medium universities.'

some utilitarian motives (e.g. increasing their revenue, being competitive, and standing high in the ranking lists) for offering their courses in EMI.

### **1.1. The Story of EMI in Turkey**

As regards the EMI fashion in Turkey, a similar picture to the one observed around the world emerges in higher education (HE) in which English accomplished long ago to be “the most popular medium of education after Turkish” (Doğançay-Aktuna, 1998, p. 37). However, unlike many institutions across the world, Turkish HE institutions are not stranger to EMI since Turkey has been offering courses entirely in English at the tertiary level since the 1950s, albeit the number of such institutions being very few then. The main objective of delivering academic courses through English was, cites Kırkgöz (2005) from the Official Gazette of 1984, “[to] enable students who are registered at English medium department[s] to access scientific and technological information published in English in such universities” (p. 102). Considering the limited travel opportunities and lack of mobility before the 2000s, it becomes evident that the first Turkish EMI universities were not international with reference to their student and teaching staff population as they were predominantly composed of Turkish individuals.

Nonetheless, the number of EMI programs has risen steeply after the 2000s because of external pressures, such internationalization of HE and Turkey’s increased disposition towards cooperating with the western world in various sectors and domains, including education. To illustrate some of the attempts made, Turkey became a member of the Bologna Process in 2001, was involved in bilateral agreements with western countries on a number of issues, ranging from political, socio-economic to educational ones. What has been manifested in relation to the domain of education in practice is exchanging students and teaching staff with institutions abroad at different levels of education, predominantly HE, which has, in turn, called for the use of a shared language as a means of communication, i.e. English. Albeit Turkey is far behind its European counterparts in terms of the total number of EMI courses at universities (Wächter & Maiworm, 2008, 2014), a steady trend of rise in the number of EMI programs has occurred in recent years. According to a report on the role of English in Turkish HE, about one-fifth of all undergraduate programs are delivered via different modes of EMI (Arik & Arik, 2014). As voiced by scholars, such as Coleman (2006) and Dearden (20014, 2015), the private sector seems to spearhead the EMI trend at Turkish universities, offering relatively more courses in EMI than “under-funded and slow-reacting state institutions” (Coleman, 2006, p. 8). However, here some caution needs to be exercised regarding the given figure of EMI programs because that figure does not include the EMI courses offered at the postgraduate level. Furthermore, almost three years have passed since the report was written. It is rather likely, thus, that within a period of three years, the instruction of many courses has shifted into English. Therefore, knowing the exact number of EMI programs is not so straightforward presently. Additionally, the rising number of EMI programs in Turkey has come with a growth in the number of international students studying at Turkish universities in binary terms: as an incoming exchange student for a short period of time and as a full time student for a long term. According to a report available at Yükseköğretim Bilgi Yönetim Sistemi [Higher Education Information Management System] on the number of students by nationality, the total number of international students in the 2016-2017 school year was 108.076 (Council of Higher Education [CoHE henceforth], 2018). The present figure signifies that the incoming students do not only culminate in cultural diversity on campus but also create a linguistic diversity.

### **1.2. Research Rationale and Purpose**

Naturally, this linguistic transformation in HE institutions has sparked off considerably heated debates and interest in issues surrounding the implementation of EMI. Research-wise, it is well documented that most issues around EMI has been studied intensively from a

cognitive-pedagogical aspect (e.g. disciplinary learning outcomes/experiences, Aguliar & Rodriguez, 2012; Airey & Linder, 2006; Byun et al., 2010), a cultural aspect (e.g. cultural identity loss, cultural erosion, Byun et al., 2010; Ljosland, 2010), a socio-political aspect (e.g. domain loss, parallel language use, Ljosland, 2010; Kuteeva & Airey, 2013), and an educational language planning aspect (Preisler, 2009). Little as it is, some research on language-related issues is also available (e.g. language/skills improvement, Rogier, 2012; Klaassen & Graaff, 2001; Ball & Lindsay, 2013; self-perceptions of English proficiency, Jensen et al., 2011; Jensen et al., 2013; Jensen-Thøgersen, 2011; Pilkinton-Pihko, 2010). What seems to be under-researched in EMI research so far is the linguistic aspect of HE, which is concerned with language policies and practices (Turner & Robson, 2008). The main reason for the dearth of research on the linguistic aspect is probably that the existing research on EMI in the Turkish context has largely had similar research foci as mentioned above, such as socio-political, cultural, and pedagogical foci (e.g., Arkın, 2013; Arkın & Osam, 2015; Collins, 2010; Kılıçkaya, 2006; Sert, 2008; Somer, 2001). Therefore, as far as the available research is concerned, little discussion and empirical research exist on linguistic aspects of EMI in Turkey (e.g., Collins, 2010; Gülle, Özata & Bayyurt, 2014).

Moreover, issues on EMI in the Turkish context have been investigated by researchers who are not originally from the Turkish context (e.g., Jenkins, 2014), and much of the existing research on language policies and practices has not taken into account the role of language ideologies in the formulation of policies and practices. Additionally, scholars argue that research studies on EMI should be done by researchers situated in the research context for an in-depth understanding (Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2013). With these gaps in mind, this paper aims to examine the leading Turkish EMI universities' policy documents and website data on academic English language policies and practices in order to specifically seek answers to the following research questions:

(1) How do the universities orient to English, that is, what kind of English is referred to or implied in their policy documents?

(2) What are the language ideologies that guide the existing policies and practices on academic English?

### **1.3. EMI: Definition, Different Approaches, and Policies**

At its simplest, EMI can be defined as “[t]he use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English” (Dearden, 2015, p. 2). EMI aims “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). This being the case, EMI has no explicitly stated language learning outcomes in course descriptions, and content lecturers are considered field specialists rather than language teachers (Aguilar, 2015; Airey, 2012). Additionally, both lecturers and students are considered to be users of English (Björkman, 2008; Mauranen, 2003; Pilkinton-Pihko, 2010).

Choosing English over the local languages in instruction is a matter of policy decisions. Therefore, the examination of language policy documents in this paper will be done against the backdrop of language policy framework. Language policy is “the combination of official decisions and prevailing public practices related to language education and use” (McGroarty (1997, p. 67). Much language policy research draws on Spolsky’ (2004, 2009) multi-componential model consisting of three dynamically interconnected components: language beliefs (ideologies), language practices, and language management. The first component –

language ideologies – is made up of profoundly entrenched beliefs and assumptions about appropriate language choice and (ideal) practices. As for the second component – language practices – they “are the observable behaviours and choices – what people actually do. They are the linguistic features chosen, the variety of language used” (Spolsky, 2009, p. 4). In other words, they are “the sum of the sound, word, grammatical choices that an individual makes, sometimes consciously and sometimes less consciously, that makes up the conventional, unmarked pattern of a variety of a language” (Spolsky, 2009, p. 9). The final component – language management – consists of the things people endeavour to do with language. As Shohamy (2006) maintains, language management includes explicit and purposeful efforts to modify and shape individuals’ language practices and/or ideologies as well as policy mechanisms, such as language educational policies and language tests. Shohamy (2006) argues that it is through the study of these policy devices and their after-effects that real language policies can be understood.

Concerning language ideologies, it should be noted that ideologies have four different aspects: cognitive, affective, programmatic, and solidary (Higgs, 1987). More exactly, from a cognitive aspect, ideologies can configure one’s perceptions and preconceive their understandings about language and its use. From an affective aspect, ideologies can instruct one about whether any particular way of language use is good or bad, or appropriate or inappropriate. When considered programmatically, ideologies are likely to impel people to act in accordance with their perceptions and evaluations. Finally, the solidary aspect indicates the potential of language ideologies to propel people to act and deliberate collectively under the influence of a dominant ideology, e.g. the belief in the superiority of native English speakers (NESs) to non-native English speakers (NNESs). All these aspects are of paramount importance in analysing the language policy documents in order to unpack policy makers’ ideological stances about academic English use on campus. Having said that, I turn now to the existing relevant research on language policy documents both around the world and in Turkey in order to demonstrate where the current study is situated in the field.

#### **1.4 Language Policy Research in EMI Universities**

As mentioned earlier, the EMI research on language policies and practices is relatively scant, yet the amount of research on the linguistic aspect of EMI is now on a constant rise around the world. For instance, a milestone study by Saarinen and Nikula (2013), found, as a result of website study of several EMI programs in Finland, that policies and practices were set against the benchmark of ‘native-speakerism’ in which the incoming students were expected to have certain varieties of native English (e.g. British English [BrE], American English [AmE], Irish English) in order to be exempt from language requirements. That is, the students are compelled to prove their English proficiency by obtaining required scores from the international tests (e.g. TOEFL, IELTS) “which take Inner Circle varieties of English as the norm for local situations” (Arik & Arik, 2014, p. 8) and thus “test their [students’] proficiency in native British or American English” (Jenkins, 2014, p. 12).

Likewise, other research indicated the vagueness as for the type of academic English described in the policy documents. For example, Björkman’s (2014) language policy study on eight Swedish universities, all of which, except one, were found to covertly state what kind of standards are appropriate for lecturers and students. The university being explicit about its policies pronounces that good English use is the one that adheres to native English. While commenting on these results, Björkman (2014) attributes the overall lack of clarity in the policy documents to the assumption that the legitimate kind of English on campus is that of NESs and that since the authority of NESs is widely assumed, policy makers see no need to overtly express it in the documents. Parallel findings to those Björkman (2014) emerged in a three-



country (i.e. the UK, Austria, and Thailand) comparison study in which the researchers demonstrated that the institutions expected students to come to their programs with native-like English and, upon admission, it is their desire that students continue adjusting their English use to the standards of native English in their practices, mostly in written English (Baker & Hüttner, 2016).

Among the existing research, perhaps, the most comprehensive and the most pertinent one to the Turkish HE is that of Jenkins (2014) who not only examined policy and website data of 60 EMI universities from several countries, including two Turkish universities. Her findings show that universities mentioned English openly in their policy and website data, yet the kind of English required was somewhat obscure. However, as inferred from some policy devices, such as the recognised tests and their origins (e.g. TOEFL, IELTS), the use of textbooks grounded in native English, the kind of English desired came out to be native English varieties.

Turning now to the research on language policies and practices in Turkish universities, we see, apart from Jenkins' (2014) research on the two Turkish EMI universities, a dearth of research. Among the rare studies, those of Collins (2010) stand out. Collins' (2010) study with students in a private EMI university in Ankara reported that students were unhappy with the entry requirements and one-year English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program in which much focus is placed on grammatical competence. Additionally, she observed that some lecturers judged students' language performance against the norms of Standard English (StE), with a high expectation of correctness in assessment. Finally, she attributed students' unwillingness to take part in classes to the fact that they dreaded the possibility of not being able to express themselves correctly and the prospect of getting negative reactions from their friends and lecturers due to their non-conforming language use.

The above review on the linguistic aspect of EMI in Turkey demonstrates that the academic language policies and practices in Turkish HE have not been seriously problematized by researchers as yet. Thus, this study aims to delve into the top Turkish EMI universities' academic English language policies/practices in order to identify the kind of English the policy makers (i.e. the university administration) desire on campus and the underlying ideologies behind this.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 Research Design**

A qualitative case study approach was adopted in the present study. Since the study primarily tackles language policy issues in the Turkish context, the type of the approach was chosen to be a multi-sited case study (Luck, Jackson, & Usher, 2006) that treats the selected institutions as a case, with a "desire to understand complex social phenomena" (Yin, 2003, p. 2). The phenomenon in the current study is the institutions' academic English language policies and practices and the ways English are referred to within them.

### **2.2 Research Setting**

The research was conducted in three top-ranking Turkish EMI universities: Bogazici, University in Istanbul, Ortadoğu Teknik Üniversitesi (ODTU), in English Middle East Technical University (METU), and Bilkent University both in Ankara. Of them, Bilkent University is a private university. The commonality among the universities is that compared to other Turkish universities, they offer a wider range of BA and MA programs, have a greater number of students, including a significant ratio of international students, have wider networks with institutions abroad, and are considered to be among the Turkey's best research universities.

## 2.3 Materials, Data Collection and Analysis

The materials for policy and website data analysis consisted of various textual sources, such as a sample speaking test, numerous website pages, student handbooks, and strategic plans, which are all publicly accessible. Besides, most of these materials were downloadable as pdf or word files. These materials were primarily garnered from universities' main websites and relevant webpages. The analysis of the data was not a multimodal one as the main attention was paid to textual data from which implicit and explicit policy decisions could be drawn. In case of absent information on language policies and policy devices, additional information was sought and obtained by other measures, such as contacting administrative staff from the institutions and from online forums where stakeholders share their views on their universities' language policies and practices. The obtained data was analysed through a mixture of qualitative content analysis (Berg, 2001; Schreier, 2012) and negative analysis (Pauwels, 2012). Through qualitative content analysis, it was aimed to investigate the literal meaning of the policy data and above that, "the deep structural meaning conveyed by the message" embedded in the wordings of the policy documents (Berg, 2001, p. 242). As for the secondary tool, i.e. negative analysis, the purpose was to make sense of "meaningfully absent" elements (Pauwels, 2012, p. 253) in the data since qualitative content analysis primarily deals with the "[a]nalysis of what is and what is no there in the material" (Schreier, 2012, p. 47). Using negative analysis is rather significant considering the fact that not all language policies are overtly stated.

Additionally, in order to ensure trustworthiness and avoid the degree of subjectivity in the analysis of the data, annotated access links to the excerpts used while presenting the results are provided as footnotes whenever necessary. In doing so, the purpose is to show that the analysis is "*solid*," "*comprehensive*", and is done "in a *transparent* way, allowing the reader, as far as possible, to test the claims [and interpretations] made" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 173; italics in original). Therefore, any interested reader can reach and check the sources extracted in the presentation of results by clicking on the links given as footnotes.

## 3. Results

The analysis of the data is presented according to the three pre-determined themes related to each institution's academic English language policies. The main themes are the following: English language requirements for admission, language support in the pre-faculty EAP program (also known as preparatory schools), and language support in the faculty EAP programs (the language support students get while studying in their programs). Each of these themes is respectively addressed referring to each institution's policies.

### 3.1 Bilkent University

#### 3.1.1 English language requirements

To identify the kind of English implied or stated in the policy documents, two key sources were consulted: the international language tests whose scores are accepted for fulfilling entry requirements and the in-house exam administered by Bilkent's School of English Language (BUESL), known as PAE<sup>2</sup> (Proficiency in Academic English Exam). The international tests (i.e. IELTS, TOEFL IBT, CAE) recognized for admission into the programs provide compelling evidence that Bilkent favours AmE and BrE over the others on its campus, yet by implication. Similarly, Bilkent's own language test, quite similar to the international tests in design, seems to prioritise a particular StE variety. Being conducted at two stages, it attempts to measure, in the first stage, "a student's knowledge of grammar and vocabulary" (PAE

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<sup>2</sup> The previous name of the institutional language exam was Certificate of Proficiency in English (COPE).

Guidelines<sup>3</sup>, 2018, p. 1). The second stage is administered in two parts, the first of which consists of reading, grammar, vocabulary, and listening, and the second part includes writing and speaking exams. However, there is no available, or meaningfully absent (Pauwels, 2012), information on the assessment criteria in the guideline. The only given information was about the speaking test, available as a downloadable file in the Announcements' page of the BUSEL's website. The guideline notes that a student is considered successful in the exam if s/he is able to

- expand their answers and produce relevant, coherent, and meaningful speech.
- use **correct intonation, rhythm, and pronunciation** so as to be understood easily.
- **speak fluently and coherently** on a range of topics without any **unnatural hesitation**.
- communicate clearly and support what they are saying by using relevant examples and detail.
- consistently use a wide range of language **naturally, accurately, and appropriately**.
- make themselves **clearly understandable** to the listener (my emphasis),

A closer inspection of the latent content of the above criteria indicates that they are relatively elusive in terms of the kind of English desired because there is no explicit description of whose pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm is considered correct, whose speaking is fluent and coherent, who uses language naturally, and such. However, such vagueness and the ideologically-loaded words used in the discourse of the assessment criteria lead us to conclude that Bilkent expects students to adjust their English to the norms of StE in their linguistic acts, as it gives much weight to correctness, appropriateness, and naturalness, i.e. the assumed authenticity of NESs.

### 3.1.2 Language support in the pre-faculty program

This unit aims to enhance students' English who fail to meet the language entry requirements. The BUSEL Student Handbook<sup>4</sup> writes that its teaching staff consists of around 120 language instructors, including some international instructors. It becomes obvious from a simple examination of academic staff catalogue<sup>5</sup> that what is meant by *international staff* corresponds to British and American teachers (see also Preparatory Staff Handbook<sup>6</sup> for the 2016-2017 academic year). What is more interesting is the assignment of these teachers in the testing unit and that most of the international teachers do not hold a degree in a language related field, but have certificates like CELTA<sup>7</sup> and DELTA<sup>8</sup> obtained from teacher training courses. This shows, thus, that *international* is used to mean NES teachers in a similar fashion as with in other non-Anglophone institutions (e.g., Kirkpatrick, 2011; Saarinen, 2012; Saarinen & Nikula, 2012). Moreover, students undergo a formative assessment until they complete the program, yet no accounts regarding the assessment criteria, the textbooks used, and the teaching approaches followed are given in the website and policy data. However, the Frequently Asked Questions<sup>9</sup> page writes that the unit "make[s] use of commercially prepared materials as well as a collection of software" (para. 30), but they do not spell out the names of these books, which publishing houses prepare them, who the textbook writers are, and where they are produced. It is thus left to the reader to infer that such commercial materials are

<sup>3</sup> Available at [http://engprepstudent.bilkent.edu.tr/data/pae\\_data/PAE.2018.kilavuz.en.pdf](http://engprepstudent.bilkent.edu.tr/data/pae_data/PAE.2018.kilavuz.en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <http://engprepstudent.bilkent.edu.tr/data/kilavuzlar/2017-2018-student-handbook.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://catalog.bilkent.edu.tr/current/faculty/ff85.html>

<sup>6</sup> [http://busel.bilkent.edu.tr/data/handbooks/2016-2017\\_staff\\_handbook.pdf](http://busel.bilkent.edu.tr/data/handbooks/2016-2017_staff_handbook.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

<sup>8</sup> Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

<sup>9</sup> [http://busel.bilkent.edu.tr/?page\\_id=792](http://busel.bilkent.edu.tr/?page_id=792)



probably the ones designed by publishing companies in ENL countries in conformity with StE norms.

In sum, it is clearly inferred from the above analysis that Bilkent refers to NES teachers under the guise of *international* and takes much pride in recruiting them. Seeing that they particularly assign NES teachers to the testing unit, it is probable that these teachers are tasked with measuring students' English against native or native-like English, which also matches Bilkent's overall orientation to native English.

### 3.1.3 Language support in the faculty program

The faculty program sets out to contribute to the development of students' academic English as students continue their studies in their own disciplines by offering mandatory and elective academic English courses. One striking aim of the unit is described as attempting to help students to "assess and continue to improve their linguistic accuracy and expression" (the Aims & Purposes<sup>10</sup> section, para. 2). In respect of staff profile, the program has about 60 instructors, "many of whom are native speakers of English" (BUSEL Student Handbook, p. 3). Unlike the pre-faculty program, the faculty program gives more information on the courses offered, course objectives and aims. It is seen from the relevant pages that overall, the courses centre around academic writing (e.g. English Composition I – II) and speaking (e.g. Advanced Communication Skills) as well as grammatical competence (e.g. Advanced English Grammar I-II). The primary goal of the program – *make students learn to use English in line with StE conventions* - becomes clear from the analysis of some course objectives that focus on helping "students to further develop competency in grammar" (Advanced English Grammar<sup>11</sup>, para. 1), and "linguistic accuracy and range in English" (English and Composition I<sup>12</sup>, para. 1). Further to this, the program provides writing support to students in its writing centre, BilWrite, which is tasked with giving feedback and help to students on their written coursework and problem areas in writing. To clarify the scope of its services, BilWrite teachers' obligations are described as follows:

- provide feedback on the overall organization of the paper, clarity, coherence, **language structure**, and word choice, and whether it meets the requirements of the task.
- provide feedback in order to help students **become better writers**.
- help with **grammar**, but do not correct or 'fix' papers (BilWrite<sup>13</sup>, para. 4-5; my emphasis)

The above descriptions reinforce the conclusion that students are tacitly encouraged to abide by the norms of StE in their writing. Also, a presupposition seems to be maintained between becoming 'better writers' and 'linguistic correctness'. Finally, given the offer of several courses on writing and grammar and a separate writing centre, one can speculate that utmost attention is attached to students' grammatical competence and writing skills, perhaps perceived as the most serious problem areas in need of urgent remediation.

## 3.2 Boğaziçi University

### 3.2.1 English language requirements

Boğaziçi requires students to certify their English level with scores obtained from the international tests (i.e. TOEFL and IELTS) and its own language test, Boğaziçi University English Proficiency Test (BUEPT). Additionally, students need to sit for a test of written

<sup>10</sup> <http://fae.bilkent.edu.tr/about-us/purpose-aims/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://catalog.bilkent.edu.tr/current/course/c82117.html>

<sup>12</sup> <https://catalog.bilkent.edu.tr/current/course/c82101.html>

<sup>13</sup> <http://bilwrite.bilkent.edu.tr/>

examination (TWE) if they fail to get the minimum score from the writing section of the tests. As with Bilkent's PAE, BUEPT is administered in two stages. The first stage measures students' listening and reading comprehension while the second stage attempts to assess students' writing skills. It is stated in the Online Student Handbook<sup>14</sup> related to writing that “[d]uring the evaluation process, what is predicated on is a grammatically and semantically competent academic English and expression of ideas in a coherent manner” (Sınav İçeriği – Exam Content, para. 3; my translation). An analysis of the entry requirements and the test objective for written expression shows that Boğaziçi has a tendency towards standard (native) English. Further evidence to this comes from the university's online writing centre, i.e. Boğaziçi University Online Writing Lab (BUOWL) that is at the disposal of both students and teaching staff. Its main mission is summarised as to help students and teachers of writing courses excel their academic English, “with tips on grammar, punctuation, spelling, and other problem areas in English such as pronoun agreement, subject-verb agreement, and sentence fragments” (General Information<sup>15</sup>, para. 2). Looking at the BUOWL's main goal<sup>16</sup> below, it becomes clear that it is primarily concerned with improving students' grammatical competence, writing skills, lexical knowledge, and structure.

By the end of the Prep year, students will be able to write academic essays (and research papers) at Freshman level *clearly and accurately at an acceptable speed*. They will also have a critical awareness of their writing in terms of content, coherence, and linguistic accuracy (my italics; para. 1).

Finally, Bogaziçi's orientation to native English can also be drawn from its exemption policies, as the university seems to problematize NNES students' English only as the Application<sup>17</sup> page states that “[n]on-native speakers of English must provide proof of proficiency in the English Language by means of” TOEFL, IELTS, and DAAD (Exchange programs, Application, para. 4). However, this suggests that the incoming NES students (if any) are exempt from the proficiency exam. One reason for their exemption might relate to the assumption that since these students already speak English as their native tongue, they are already good at the required kind of English. The accounts from the preceding analysis indicates the dominance of the ideology that associates the appropriate kind of academic English with standard (native) English.

### 3.2.2 Language support in the pre-faculty program

School of Foreign Languages (SFL) is responsible for the provision of intensive academic English courses to students who failed to meet the entry requirements. The staff body<sup>18</sup> comprises around 110 instructors, including 12 international instructors (eleven NESs and one Russian). The program seeks to improve students' four major language skills, yet with a more emphasis on writing. The student booklet<sup>19</sup> reads that “the need arises for students to be able to use English correctly in their writing as well given that the examinations at the university are written” (Section C, para. 1; my translation). There is evidence from the foregoing statement that correctness in using English is deemed important not only in written outcomes but also, most likely, in spoken output. Students are subject to continual assessment until they successfully pass the exit exam at the end of one-year intensive study via various means (e.g. quizzes, achievement exams, quarter exams, coursework). However, one cannot see any information regarding how assessment is carried out. It is mentioned in the special units under

<sup>14</sup> <http://yadyok.boun.edu.tr/birim/ogrenci-el-kitabi.htm>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.buowl.boun.edu.tr/buowlstudentsinfo.htm>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.buowl.boun.edu.tr/teachers/writing%20program.htm>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.intl.boun.edu.tr/?q=application-0>

<sup>18</sup> <http://yadyok.boun.edu.tr/contact/hazirlik-ogrt.asp>

<sup>19</sup> <http://yadyok.boun.edu.tr/birim/ogrenci-el-kitabi.htm>

SFL that most materials are designed by the course materials preparation unit, but does not talk of what type of textbooks are produced, their content, the curriculum followed, and which kind of English is taken to be the model in such materials.

### 3.2.3 Language support in the faculty program

The unit responsible for the faculty language support is the Advanced English Division of the SFL. The key objective of the unit is “to offer students a wide variety of electives that will contribute to their cultural formation and confidence in written and oral expression in English” (About us<sup>20</sup>, para. 1). The courses are offered by 12 instructors<sup>21</sup>, one of whom is an American, also the coordinator of the unit. Course Details<sup>22</sup> page, enumerating the courses on offer, shows that major importance is attached to academic reading, writing, speaking, and disciplinary terminology. The impression one can get from the course aims is that the faculty English courses are designed to help students improve a standard version of English for day-to-day academic activities. To illustrate this point, a course called Advanced English<sup>23</sup> sets out “to enhance the spoken/written performance of the non-native student by emphasizing extensive discussion and essay production” (para. 1). As is obvious, there is a deficit view of NNES students’ English, and therefore their English is considered to need immediate remediation. Similarly, a speaking course seeks to enhance students’ skills “in voice production and breathing techniques, intonation, emphasis, and articulation required in public speaking” (English through Public speaking and drama, para. 6). What is left unstated is whose intonation, voice production, or articulation is considered the benchmark for students while enhancing their public speaking skills. It is probably taken for granted that the native speaker model is the ultimate target, which, thus, does not even need to be overtly mentioned.

There is a writing centre which aims, according to the student handbook, to discover the problem areas in students’ written assignments, and accordingly amend their writing. That is, a form-focused feedback is considered to be among instructors’ tasks. Closely scrutinizing the services offered by the writing centre, it seems that the services remain restricted to editing and giving feedback, yet without enough clarifications about what aspects of students’ writing are addressed in teachers’ feedback, other than grammatical corrections. The idea emerging from the preparatory program and its implementations is that there is an increased interest in leading students to use English in conformity with standard academic English norms.

## 3.3 Middle East Technical University (METU)

### 3.3.1 English language requirements

METU also asks students to prove that their level of English is adequate to follow departmental courses, with scores obtained from the international (TOEFL IBT & IELTS) or its in-house English Proficiency Exam (EPE). However, conflicting information exists regarding whether some students can be exempt from language entry requirements. The General Information<sup>24</sup> page reads that “[a]ll students who wish to carry out their undergraduate or graduate studies at METU have to certify their proficiency in the English language” (para. 1). However, additional policy information further shows that not all students need to prove their English for admission. For example, it is declared in a document regarding postgraduate students that “those who are the citizen of a country official language of which is English and graduated from universities providing their education in English do not have to certify their

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.advancedenglish.boun.edu.tr/index.htm>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.advancedenglish.boun.edu.tr/people-eng.html>

<sup>22</sup> <http://advancedenglish.boun.edu.tr/courses-eng.html>

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.boun.edu.tr/en\\_US/Content/Academic/Undergraduate\\_Catalogue/The\\_School\\_of\\_Foreign\\_Languages/Advanced\\_English\\_Unit](http://www.boun.edu.tr/en_US/Content/Academic/Undergraduate_Catalogue/The_School_of_Foreign_Languages/Advanced_English_Unit)

<sup>24</sup> <http://oidb.metu.edu.tr/en/general-information>

proficiency in the English language (para. 1). Similarly, for undergraduate students, the following explanation stands in the document:

the English proficiency of students who are nationals of English speaking countries and who have graduated from institutions of secondary education after receiving education with the nationals of those countries for at least the last three years, is evaluated by the SFL Administrative Board.

The above statements are a bit vague about which countries are recognised as English speaking countries or whether those countries include English-speaking colonial countries, too. Drawing on the meaningfully absent information in the statements, it can be aptly concluded that those countries mostly refer to ENL countries, such as the UK, the USA, and Canada. Therefore, it is largely NNEs that are forced to comply with AmE or BrE norms in order to be successful in the exams.

As for METU's own language exam, administered in two sessions, it aims to measure students' EAP skills. To find out what is said relating to the kind of English required, a booklet on EPE was examined. In the booklet<sup>25</sup>, there were several assessment objectives about different skills set. For instance, one objective regarding listening was set as “[t]o deduce the meaning of functional expressions, idiomatic expressions, vocabulary, and structure, to identify paraphrasing and to draw conclusions” (p. 2). Similar but more normative objectives also stand in the assessment criteria for writing and language use. One example of this is as follows:

[t]o assess the candidate's ability to **use correct, appropriate language structures**, vocabulary, and discourse features in writing, **to follow the conventions of standard written English**, to produce a cohesive and coherent piece of writing that accomplishes the given task (my emphasis; the paragraph writing section; p. 17).

Ample evidence comes from the above course objectives that EPE also requires students to be able to adjust their English to StE norms. Unlike Bilkent and Boğaziçi, METU does not imply it or leave it meaningfully absent, but explicitly announces it, as highlighted in the above extract.

### *3.3.2 Language support in the pre-faculty EAP program*

The Department of Basic English is the unit responsible for providing intensive English courses to students whose level of English does not satisfy the entry criteria. Courses are offered at five levels, with the purpose of improving students' basic language skills to a satisfactory level. More than 200 language instructors<sup>26</sup> are based in the unit, including nine international instructors (7 NNEs, one Italian, and one Russian). The skills prioritized varies depending on students' English level. For instance, for the advanced students, the courses aim “to perfect the skills and language necessary to practice academic skills at their faculties” (the Courses<sup>27</sup> section, para. 8). Given METU's disposition to StE as the appropriate kind of English for academic tasks as shown earlier, the department seems to wish students to perfect their language skills in conjunction with the established conventions of StE.

It is also noteworthy that unlike Bilkent's and Boğaziçi' pre-faculty EAP programs, METU's Department of Basic English unit does not offer adequate accounts for the assessment of students' linguistic progress, course contents, teaching aids, and approaches followed. What is mentioned explicitly is about what happens when students fail to pass the exit exam at the

<sup>25</sup> [www.dbe.metu.edu.tr/prf/EPE\\_booklet\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.dbe.metu.edu.tr/prf/EPE_booklet_ENG.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.dbe.metu.edu.tr/fac.htm>

<sup>27</sup> <http://dbe.metu.edu.tr/courses.htm>

end of the program, adding further that such students are placed at a Repeat program to get further language support prior to their transfer to their programs. It would be fair to maintain that the pre-faculty programs want students first to prove their English in StE-grounded tests, underpinning the institution's overall approach to standard (native) English as the favoured model.

### 3.3.3 Language support in the faculty EAP programs

The Department of Modern Languages offers students obligatory and elective academic English courses, with its 72 language instructors, including an American. It takes much pride in mentioning in What's Unique About Us<sup>28</sup> page that

[m]any of our faculty members also hold international teaching certificates such as the **COTE, DELTA or ICELT**. We value our qualifications as we believe in the importance of professionalism in language education, interaction of research and reflective practice, and career-long professional development (my emphasis; para. 2).

As the SFL's mission<sup>29</sup> states, they excel for providing "English language education at international standards" (para. 1). It is evident that offering language education at international standards is achieved by the teaching staff most of whom have an international teaching certificate by Cambridge English Language Assessment. Since these tests are designed in a way to measure native-English-grounded English, achieving professionalism through such tests stipulates the use of standard (native) English. Only then can teachers of Turkish origin and teachers from a non-Anglophone context be considered professional.

In terms of courses offered and objectives, a similar scenario to those of Bilkent and Boğaziçi has emerged in that courses centre around language items, such as grammar and writing conventions. Take, for example, the case of an academic English course, *English for Academic Purposes I*, one of the learning outcomes of which goes like this: "use correct, appropriate language structures, vocabulary and discourse markers in written and oral production" (para. 3).

Correspondingly, most courses on speaking, e.g. Academic Speaking Skills<sup>30</sup>, set normative objectives and seem to canalize students towards "[u]sing correct pronunciation, intonation, and stress" without speaking of whose pronunciation, intonation, and stress is counted as correct and whose as incorrect. In line with such objectives, in most speaking tasks (e.g. presentations, debates/discussions, role plays), normative practices are set as criteria. For example, a student can score high in the exams only if s/he successfully

- uses **topically rich & diverse** vocabulary
- uses **grammar correctly**
- paraphrases the original text
- uses correct pronunciation
- speaks at an *appropriate pace*
- speaks fluently avoiding frequent repetitions, hesitations & gap fillers
- speaks loudly & clearly

<sup>28</sup> <http://mld.metu.edu.tr/node/20?mini=calendar%2F2012-08>

<sup>29</sup> <http://ydyom.metu.edu.tr/en/about-sfl>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.mld.metu.edu.tr/node/38>



- speaks using *correct intonation* (ENG 211 Current Events Presentation Rating Scale; bold in original; my italics; pp. 1-2)

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusions

Let us now return to the research questions. With reference to the first question, i.e. (1) How do the universities orient to English, that is, what kind of English is referred to or implied in their policy documents?, we can see that the policy devices (e.g. mechanisms) explicitly mention English as the language of instruction, but without making it clear which kind of English it is that students are supposed to use/have. However, the latent and negative analysis of the relevant policy and website documents (e.g. language requirements, exemptions from entry requirements, types of language support, teaching materials used, teachers' norm-oriented practices, course objectives and assessment objectives) revealed that the kind of English each institution seemed to enforce on students is standard (native) English. This hidden agenda is most visible in English language requirements, and finds further support from researchers' previous observations on EMI policies, as well. For instance, taking issue with the language entry requirements of EMI universities, Jenkins (2011) observes that "international university English language requirements continue to be determined in accordance with entrance examinations grounded in native English, in other words, a national variety" (p. 927). Besides, the wordings of the EAP policy materials analysed are further evidence for this case as some of them overtly refer to StE as the desired kind of academic English, especially when it comes to academic writing. That is, in their EAP policies and practices, EMI institutions, willingly or unwillingly, "tend to be concerned with standards, to assume and/or focus on idealized native English academic norms, and not to question whether these norms are the most appropriate globally, or why they should still be considered in some way better than other possibilities" (Jenkins, 2014, p. 49).

Arguments debunking such assumptions, however, have been raised by some scholars before (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1994; Mauranen, 2006, 2012). For instance, highlighting the demands, distinctive rhetoric and unique genres of the academic language on the part of individuals, be they NESs or NNEs, Bourdieu and Passeron (1994) considered them to be equal. Equally, Mauranen (2006, 2012) maintained that individuals start as novices in academic English, and thus attempt to acquire its distinctive characteristics, genres, and rhetoric at the onset. The main reason for their reasoning is that academic language is neither a property of a particular group nor their mother tongue. That is, no one can monopolise it given that "research discourses do not belong to any national community alone" (Mauranen, 2006, p. 149).

In addition to these arguments, some researchers were sharply critical of normative EAP policies and the deficit view of NNEs. For example, drawing on his experiences with multilingual students in remedial classes in an ENL context, Marshall (2009) noted that the students did not conceive of themselves as university students in the pre-EAP programs due to developing some sort of "a deficit 'remedial ESL' identity" that reminds students of "memories of being ESL at high school, something which many students think they have left behind on being accepted to university" (p. 11). He argued, hence, for the recognition of these students as rightful university students and for the appreciation of their multi-cultural and -lingual backgrounds as a richness for universities.

Comparison of these findings with those of studies reviewed earlier (e.g., Baker & Hüttner, 2016; Björkman, 2014; Jenkins, 2014; Saarinen & Nikula, 2013) shows that most EMI

universities have adopted a one-size-that-fits-all approach in their academic English language policies as it seems that their declared language policies and (desired) practices are grounded in native academic English. And this is done in a clandestine manner under the mask of various language mechanisms, most predominantly the tests. Albeit it is not something that emerged in this research as the policy implementers' perceptions (i.e. lecturers) were not involved in this paper, previous studies offer ample evidence for the parallel relationship between 'language management' and 'language practices' in that the policy implementers tend to act in accordance with the avowed principles of their institutions, obliging students to adopt particular ways of language use and perpetuating the ideologies behind those policies (e.g., Baker & Hüttner, 2016; Collins, 2010; Jenkins, 2014).

As regards the second research question, (2) what are the language ideologies that guide the existing policies and practices on academic English?, the analyses indicate that several language ideologies, such as ownership of English, native-speakerism, StE ideology and authenticity, that are intrinsically related have permeated the language policies of the EMI universities. Among them, the most influential one appeared to be the StE ideology which associates good English with correct English (see also, Karakaş, 2017). This result echoes the findings of previous studies exploring language ideologies at EMI institutions (e.g., Baker & Hüttner, 2016; Jenkins, 2014). This is followed by the ideology of native ownership and another related ideology, native-speakerism. The underpinnings of these ideologies were embedded particularly in the recognized international tests (e.g. TOEFL, IELTS) designed in ENL countries and by NES test specialists. One area where these ideologies were most perceptibly noticeable was language support units' academic profiles as almost all international instructors hired to teach academic English courses turned out to be NESs from different ENL countries. Further evidence for the impact of native ownership of English and native-speakerism on policy makers can be found by checking NES instructors' educational backgrounds since nearly none of them has a degree in a language-related field, but they hold some teaching certificates. It may be the assumption that since they are NESs and English is perceived to be their property, they are considered not to need a degree in linguistics, or applied linguistics, to be able to teach what they already use as their first language.

Taken altogether, considering the findings from each institution's language policy and website data, it is evident, as Jenkins (2014) put it, that "if these universities are reasonably typical, we have a situation where prospective and current NNEST university students are being influenced on an epic scale to change the way they speak and write English so as to make it more like the English of NES members of the academy" (p. 120). What is also problematic in university policy and website data is that despite priding themselves in hosting students from different nationality and language backgrounds, the linguistic diversity students bring along to campus seems to be brushed aside in the stated policies.

Finally, the findings offer important implications, both pedagogical and ideological, for EMI universities and their policy makers to adjust existing academic language policies and practices in congruent with the ground realities and the sociolinguistic profile of their institutions. The key theoretical implications of this study are about the need to reconceptualise some critical notions, such as good English, appropriate academic English, and good English user, that are mentioned in a normative manner in the policy documents. In the policy and website data, good English was equated with correct English or native-like English and similarly appropriate academic English with standard native English. Given the key mission of EMI, English is not

an end itself, but a means for acquiring academic content knowledge. As such, what matters most in EMI contexts is not using English correctly by conforming “to the norms of the standard language” but “good use of the resources available in the language” in the act of fulfilling academic tasks (Greenbaum, 1996, p. 17). This is a point that policy makers need to bear in mind when revising their institutions’ existing language policies.

As for the good user of English, we see that NESs are tacitly described as the target model in the policies. However, considering the status of lecturers and students who are neither language specialists nor learners, it is impractical to expect them to use English as NESs do. Therefore, there is a dire need to move towards a post-normative approach in EMI contexts in which the ideal language user is not conceived of as having the NES competence, but being a “skilled English user” (Jenkins, 2011, p. 931), an “effective communicator” (Björkman, 2011, p. 1) or an “intercultural speaker” (Baker, 2011, p. 4). Namely, a good language user is not someone who can use English like NESs, but one who can use English by wisely adapting and modifying their linguistic acts in compliant with their interlocutors’ communicative needs as well as application of various pragmatic strategies.

As for practical implications, policy makers are advised to reform their in-house language tests, predominantly grounded in teaching grammatical competence. Additionally, more appropriate teaching materials that prepare students for disciplinary academic English use need to be designed and developed by institutions’ materials preparation units. With regards to assessment, content and meaning should be the priority in students’ written and oral performance rather than correct language use. Alternatively, the major emphasis needs to be thrown on students’ *Englishing* (Hall, 2014), i.e. what students can fulfil and achieve by using English rather than how they cannot use English in conformity with NES norms.

It should also be noted that the study suffers from some limitations. First, the generalisability of the results is subject to certain limitations as the nature of the study is qualitatively characterized. However, this does not mean that the findings do not provide valuable insights for other EMI universities. The main objective of this research was not to reach a generalization but an adequate understanding of the phenomenon of academic English language policies and practices in Turkish EMI universities. Therefore, for a thorough understanding of the policies and practices, the inclusion of relevant institutional documents and website data would not be sufficient as key actors/stakeholders at these institutional settings were not included among sources of data.

Another source of weakness in this study relates to the materials used for the analysis. Since much of the data was obtained from websites and policy data publicly available online, and universities update their websites and policy data regularly, the content of the online website pages can tend to change quickly, and thus the access to the policy documents might be improbable at a future time. In addition, the analysis of the policy and website data in this study was not multi-modal, predominantly focusing on the textual data. Perhaps, running a multi-modal analysis of the policy documents would have produced richer data and results that could further supplement or complement the results already obtained.

It is hoped that this paper will provide some insights into EMI universities’ academic English language policies and practices and the ways they orient to English, which have not been sufficiently investigated in the Turkish context previously. Further research could also usefully explore academic English language policies and practices of EMI universities not included in

this study, especially the ones that offer partial EMI programs. For a thorough understanding of such settings, further research is an essential step with the inclusion of key stakeholders. Especially, a future cross-national study investigating academic English language policies through a multi-modal analysis of the policy data can produce striking results that may help us gain more insights into institutions' orientations to English and whether there is any change occurring in the policies and practices towards a more post-normative approach to English.

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