THE STATE OF ENGLISH IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN TURKEY – Part 1
A BASELINE STUDY
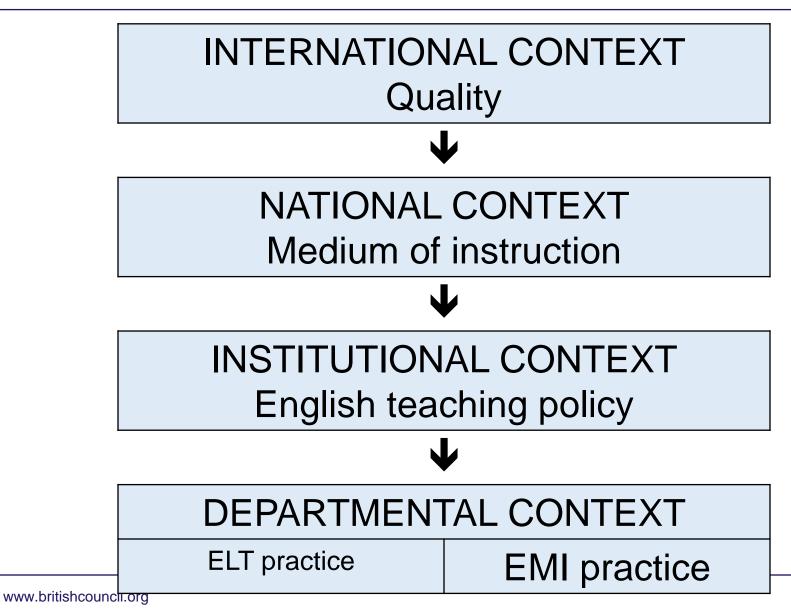
ANKARA

25 NOVEMBER 2015

BASELINE STUDY

◆ Identifies areas where reform or change may be needed

◆ Makes recommendations about how these reforms might be implemented

◆ Provides a base against which change can be compared after the reforms have been introduced.

EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT
Quality

↓

NATIONAL CONTEXT
Medium of instruction

↓

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT
English teaching policy

↓

DEPARTMENTAL CONTEXT

ELT practice	EMI practice

1. INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Focus: **Quality**

Conclusion: **quantity ➜ quality**

1. INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT – QUALITY: ISSUES ADDRESSED

1. **University rankings - quantity vs quality**

2. Quality of research

3. **Bologna process**

4. **Quality assurance**

5. Student mobility – inward

6. Student mobility – outward

7. Academic staff mobility – inward

8. Academic staff mobility - outward

INDICATORS – EPI RANKINGS (EUROPE)

1 Denmark	10 Austria	23 Spain
2 Netherlands	11 Germany	25 Slovakia
3 Sweden	13 Portugal	26 Lithuania
4 Norway	16 Romania	28 Italy
5 Finland	17 Belgium	34 Ukraine
6 Slovenia	18 Czech Republic	37 France
7 Estonia	19 Switzerland	39 Russia
8 Luxembourg	21 Hungary	50 Turkey
9 Poland	22 Latvia	

Source: EPI Index 2015 (N=70)

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY LEVELS (2015)

EPI levels	example countries	CEFR levels
Very high	Sweden	B2
High	Romania	⬆
Moderate	Ukraine	B1
Low	Russia	⬇
Very low	Turkey	A2

Source: EPI Index 2015 (N=70)

THE GENERATION GAP

- "Turkey's proficiency level has been drifting downward since 2012. In Turkey, instruction in English is highly grammar-driven, with a repetitive curriculum and few communicative teaching methods….

- "Turkey is well positioned to improve, however. The country's English teachers are already well qualified to teach conversational English, and the large youth population means that any improvements in schools will be felt quickly in average proficiency levels."

- *Source: EPI Index 2015: 12*

FINDINGS – QUANTITY VS QUALITY

QUANTITY

Turkey	Public	Foundation	Total
2001	53	23	76
2015	104	71 +*8*	175 +*8*

QUALITY

China	211 & 985 projects
Korea	Brain Korea 21 programme
Japan	Global 30
Germany	Excellence Initiative
Russia	5-100 Project

TURKISH UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

	THES 2014-15	THES 2015-16	URAP
1-99	1	0	0
100-199	3	0	0
200-299	1	1	0
300-399	-	2	0
400-499	-	-	4
500-999	-	8	14
1000-1499	-	-	35
1500-2000	-	-	23
Below 2000	-	-	99
TOTALS	5	11	175

TURKISH UNIVERSITY RANKINGS 2014/2015

University	THE 2014-15 (300)	THE 2015-16 (800)
METU	89	501-600
Boğaziçi	135	501-600
Istanbul Technical	169=	501-600
Sabancı	182=	351-400
Bilkent	226-50	351-400
Koç	-	251-300
Hacettepe	-	601-800
Istanbul	-	601-800
Anadolu	-	601-800
Erciyes	-	601-800
Yıldız Technical	-	601-800

BOLOGNA PROCESS

- 3-tier degree structure (bachelor/master's/ doctorate)

- Recognition of degrees and study periods (ECTS)

- Joint degrees

- Social dimension – access to higher education, gender issues, etc..

- **Quality assurance**

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN TURKEY

" Only about 25% (of Turkish universities) are engaged in any external review." (Westerheijden et al 2010: 97)

FINDINGS – ELT QUALITY ASSURANCE

TYPE (N=23)	Pearson	EAQALS	CEA	BALEAP	none
State	4	0	1	0	8
Foundation	2	1	2	(1)	4
TOTAL	6	1	3	(1)	12

Conclusion: Many Foreign Language departments have taken quality assurance initiatives.

FINDINGS – INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT (QUALITY)

1. Focused on quantity (175 universities)

2. Improvement in quality, e.g. rankings

3. Quantity vs. quality: 100 Turkish universities outside the world's top 2000 (URAP).

4. Turkey's 'English deficit' is a major factor:

- restricting the quality of higher education

- restricting access to academic resources

- restricting international research publication

- restricting the mobility of staff and students.

NO. OF EMI MASTER'S PROGRAMMES (2015)

Rank	Country	No. of EMI master's
1	United Kingdom	11,665
2	Unites States	4541
3	Germany	1935
4	France	1275
5	Netherlands	1068
....		
18	Norway	238
19	Poland	196
20	**Turkey**	**173**

RECOMMENDATIONS - UNIVERSITY QUALITY

Create and fund a project to:

- Identify and support a tier of top quality research universities in the top 200

  This would enable top Turkish universities to maintain and improve their ranking.

- Enhance the quality of teaching, research and resources in universities outside the top 1000.

  The project would aim to enhance the academic quality and research capability of these universities.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH TEACHING

- More hours of English (+ 25%)

- Relevant curriculum (EAP)

- In-sessional English parallel to academic study

- Defined target levels each year

- Levels assessed by international exams

- EAP training for English teachers

- More EMI master's programmes

Source: MISiS Moscow

2. NATIONAL CONTEXT

Focus: **medium of instruction**

Conclusion: EMI ➔ TMI

2. NATIONAL CONTEXT – MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION: ISSUES ADDRESSED

1. **EMI undergraduate programmes**

2. TMI undergraduate programmes

3. Mixed-medium T-EMI undergraduate programmes

4. Graduate programmes

LONG HISTORY OF EMI IN TURKEY

1863   Robert College (now Boğaziçi University)

1956   Middle East technical University

1984   Bilkent University

Limited academic resources available in Turkish

`Elite' pool could speak English

THE FIRST PREP SCHOOLS

1958   Boğaziçi

1960s   METU

1996   All EMI universities

2002   All universities

Conclusion: English standards generally too low for EMI programmes

FINDINGS – NATIONAL CONTEXT (MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION)

1. EMI: English proficiency of both academic staff and students restricts effective teaching and learning

2. TMI: suffer from lower esteem

3. Mixed-medium (30-70) T-EMI teaching:

   • largely ineffective

   • staff and students have strategies for circumventing English in favour of Turkish

REASONS FOR LEARNING ENGLISH

Reason	students (N=4320)	teachers (N=350)
Meet employers' demands	1	3=
Study in other countries	2	1
Travel to other countries	3	2
Pass professional exams	4=	3=
Pass international English exams	4=	3=
Follow university lectures	6=	6=

Conclusion: English is needed for non-academic reasons

ENGLISH AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

RANKINGS	Students (N=4320)	Academics (N=64)
Lecturing in Turkish allows faster progress than lecturing in English.	1	3=
The government should raise the status of Turkish in society.	2	8=
Lecturing in Turkish produces a better classroom atmosphere.	3	11=
Lecturing in Turkish allows a teacher to go deeper into the content of the lesson.	4	11=

Conclusion: English is a barrier, not a gateway

RECOMMENDATIONS – MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

TMI: More focus, status and resources should be given to TMI programmes.

EMI: New EMI programmes should focus on graduate programmes, in line with international practice.

T-EMI: Mixed-medium T-EMI programmes should be phased out.

T+EMI: Parallel Turkish & English programmes should be introduced, with students able to choose the language of instruction and assessment.

Conclusion: The academic quality of programmes would not be threatened by students' inadequate levels of English proficiency.

COFFEE BREAK

THE STATE OF ENGLISH IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN TURKEY – Part 2
A BASELINE STUDY

ANKARA

25 NOVEMBER 2015

3. INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Focus: **English language teaching policy**

Conclusion: **Preparatory school (pre-sessional) ➔ in- sessional**

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT – LANGUAGE TEACHING POLICY: ISSUES ADDRESSED

1   Provision, eligibility & compulsion

  ◆ Language proficiency levels

  ◆ **students' motivation**

2   **Distribution of ELT programmes**

3   Curriculum

4   Quality issues   ◆ Assessment & standards

                                          ◆ Quality assurance & review

                                          ◆ Professional development

                                          ◆ Teacher status

FINDINGS – INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT (LANGUAGE TEACHING POLICY)

1. Students enter preparatory school with low English proficiency levels and low motivation.

2. Preparatory school classes do not fully address these problems as:

- the curriculum is lacking in relevance

- classes are not delivered at the time in a student's academic career when they could be most effective.

STUDENTS' POOR MOTIVATION

Factors affecting progress (N=350)	rank
Poor motivation	1=
Lack of interest in English	1=
Inadequate practice in speaking/listening	3=
Large classes	3=
Late start in learning English	5=
Few chances to meet native speakers	5=

*Conclusion: Students say they **need** to learn English but they don't **want** to.*

REASONS FOR POOR MOTIVATION

- Low proficiency levels
- Prep year is "holiday" year
- Prep year is compulsory but non-credit-bearing
- No immediate need for English
- English needs are long-term (employment, travel)
- Repetitive curriculum
- Curriculum is often irrelevant - EGP
- Inadequate practice in speaking/listening

Conclusion: Preparatory year is not motivating

RECOMMENDATIONS – ELT POLICY

1. **Eligibility:** Preparatory classes should be voluntary and normally available only to EMI students.

2. **Standards:** Entry and exit standards should be established for all levels and assessed through valid examinations testing all four skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS – ELT POLICY

3   **Curriculum**:   The curriculum should be shifted away from English for General Purposes (EGP) towards English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP)

4   **Distribution:** English language classes should be maintained throughout all undergraduate and graduate programmes. These courses should be credit-bearing for EMI students but elective for TMI

Conclusion: Improve motivation through clear targets, relevant curriculum and English classes in all years.

4. DEPARTMENTAL CONTEXT - ELT

Focus: ELT practice – curriculum & methods

Conclusions: EGP ➔ EAP

teacher-fronted lessons➔
interactive lessons

4. DEPARTMENTAL CONTEXT – ELT PRACTICE: ISSUES ADDRESSED

1. English teachers' language proficiency

2. Use of mother tongue

3. Teachers' qualifications & training

4. **Curriculum**

5. Teaching materials

6. Textbook dependence

7. **Classroom interaction**

8. Classroom conditions & resources

9. Use of technology

FINDINGS – DEPARTMENTAL CONTEXT: ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PRACTICE

1. The English proficiency levels & qualifications of English teachers in universities are very good

2. Three widespread shortcomings were observed:

   a. Most teachers have little training in teaching EAP/ESP

   b. Curriculum is often irrelevant

   c. Lack of student-student interaction in the classroom.

CURRICULUM

OBSERVED LESSONS (N=49)

English for General Purposes	73%
English for General Academic Purposes	22%
English for Specific Academic Purposes	4%

TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE (N=350)

English for General Purposes	41.5%
English for General Academic Purposes	19.5%
English for Specific Academic Purposes	12.6%

Conclusion: Curriculum is irrelevant & demotivating

CURRICULUM – underlying problems

◆ Not based on needs analysis

◆ Textbook based

◆ Teachers' lack of ESP/EAP training

◆ Not customised to students' academic fields

◆ Not delivered when needed

Conclusion: Curriculum in most universities needs overhauling

CURRICULUM

"EAP writing activities should deal with the materials closer to university level classes. I did not find the content of the [prep] programme academically interesting. We were asked to write short essays on general topics. When I started my department I encountered many difficulties in producing writings as required by lecturers. I wish I had more challenging tasks, such as research oriented projects." [Kirkgöz 2009]

CLASSROOM INTERACTION

CLASSROOM INTERACTION (N=49)	%
A lot of student interaction	14%
Limited student interaction	53%
Teacher-dominated interaction	33%

Conclusion: Methodology is mostly teacher-centred and demotivating

CONSEQUENCES OF LIMITED CLASSROOM INTERACTION

1. Little practice ➜ poor speaking skills

2. Little confidence in discussion in EMI lectures

3. Passive approach to classes in ELT and EMI

4. Reducing interest and intrinsic motivation

RECOMMENDATIONS – ELT PRACTICE

1. Professional development:

English teachers should have greater opportunities for professional development:

    a. EAP/ESP curriculum

    b. Classroom interaction

Conclusion: English teachers would have the confidence and the skills to teach a more relevant curriculum, using materials which they could adapt and customise to students' academic disciplines.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. **Curriculum**:

The curriculum should be shifted away from English for General Purposes (EGP) towards English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP)

Conclusion: Motivation will be improved because students would not be repeating what they failed to learn several times in school, and because they will now see the relevance of the curriculum to their academic studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Work-related curriculum

An English for Occupation Purposes (EOP) course should be available to all students in their final year.

Conclusion: Students would learn the English skills they need for the world of work

5. DEPARTMENTAL CONTEXT – ENGLISH AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

Focus: methodology

Conclusion: content ➔ methodology

5. DEPARTMENTAL CONTEXT – ENGLISH AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION: ISSUES ADDRESSED

1. Approaches to English-mediated education

2. Introducing EMI programmes

3. English language proficiency of EMI academics

4. **EMI academics' responsibility for learning**

5. **EMI teaching strategies**

6. Training for EMI

FINDINGS – DEPARTMENTAL CONTEXT (ENGLISH AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION PRACTICE)

1. EMI academics' proficiency levels generally meet international standards.

2. There are problems in some universities in finding enough academics with adequate levels of English

3. EMI academics do not generally accommodate students' language difficulties and regard EMI learning as the students' responsibility.

4. Little EMI training is available.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEARNING

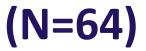| English language support	(N=64)
Translating specialist terms into Turkish	58.3%
Translating difficult sections into Turkish	51.7%
None/almost none	23.0%
Providing bilingual glossaries	8.3%
Other	1.7%

Conclusion: EMI academics provide little language support for students

EMI TEACHING STRATEGIES (N=16)

1. Mother-tongue strategies   4
2. English-language strategies   11
3. Repair strategies   31
4. Lesson structuring   24
5. Visual-aid support   9
6. Textual support   16

Conclusions:

- *Few EMI teaching strategies*
- *Strategies used ineffectively*

EMI TRAINING   (N=64)

Is training to help your teaching in English available in your university?	EMI	T-EMI	average
YES	35.9%	40.0%	37.5%
NO	59.0%	56.0%	57.8%

Conclusion: Little training is available for EMI academics

RECOMMENDATIONS - EMI PRACTICE

Training is needed for EMI academics:

- Take more responsibility for their students' learning

- Adopt language and technological strategies to facilitate learning.

- English for Academics training

Conclusion: Students' learning load would be reduced as lecturers 'accommodate' their language limitations and employ strategies to ensure that communication and motivation are improved in the academic classroom.

CONCLUSIONS

1. **Reform is needed**

2. **Reform is needed at all levels:**

   - **systemic**

   - **institutional**

   - **departmental**

   - **individual**

3. **Reform is feasible**

The state of English in
higher education in Turkey

THANK YOU!