Chapter 10
Challenging the Monoglossic Ideology in English–Medium Higher Education in Türkiye

Talip Gülle

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7049-9885
Bartın University, Turkey

Yavuz Kurt

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3301-5316
Marmara University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

Türkiye has witnessed exponential growth in the number of English-medium instruction (EMI) programs and an influx of international students — changes that are accompanied by challenges and opportunities. This chapter examines the discrepancy between the prevailing English-only policy and the increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in EMI higher education institutions in Türkiye. While the chapter focuses more on EMI programs, similar challenges in Turkish-medium (TMI) programs are also examined. The chapter argues for a shift in perspective that recognizes and embraces language diversity, and proposes the development of inclusive language policies to facilitate student interaction and involvement. It also calls for further research on multilingualism in EMI and TMI programs to inform policymaking, curriculum development, and teacher training. Overall, it argues for a comprehensive understanding of actual language needs and practices in linguistically diverse classrooms to develop policies that better serve the increasingly multilingual student body in Türkiye's universities.

INTRODUCTION

The exponential increase in the number of tertiary-level English-medium instruction (EMI) programs in Türkiye seems not to be accompanied by informed policies and practices that take account of the new linguistic realities and needs created by learning in the second language (L2) for L1-Turkish students

and increasing numbers of (international) students from other lingua-cultural backgrounds. The so-called English-only policy persists, despite being frequently challenged and breached by both students and instructors. A similar picture is emerging in Turkish-medium instruction (TMI) programs as well, with a large number of inbound international students, particularly Syrian nationals, arriving in Türkiye following the war in Syria. While Arabic-medium programs are also being offered, their number is only limited, and therefore most Syrian students are enrolled in EMI or TMI programs.

In this chapter, we problematize the discrepancy between policy statements that are aligned with a monoglossic perspective, on the one hand, and the increasing linguistic and cultural diversity of university classrooms, on the other, and we discuss the potential implications of such diversity for language policies and teaching/learning. Acknowledging that the multilingualism and multiculturalism in higher education institutions (HEIs) necessitates a shift from the monoglossic perspective is an important step towards developing appropriate policy responses to the evolving linguistic landscapes of universities. Next should follow the enactment of educational policies that better represent the realities of linguistically diverse classrooms, which could include, for example, encouraging "translanguaging spaces" for students to increase their involvement and interaction (Wei, 2011), in principled and pedagogically sound ways. Such an approach would involve avoiding the imposition of a one-language-only policy, which we know is not actually practiced in many classrooms and whose implementation, or lack thereof, is up to individual instructors, who are rarely provided with training on good practices regarding when and how the multilingualism of students can be invited to facilitate the learning process and to achieve deeper learning. With this chapter, we also aim to invite researchers to conduct further research in EMI and TMI higher education (HE) programs in Türkiye with a multilingual lens to help better understand the micro-level practices of instructors and students, to observe how multi- or translingual acts are manifested in and out of the classroom, and to understand their roles in the course of teaching and learning, as well as managing multicultural campuses, so that policy-making, curriculum-development, and in-service and pre-service teacher training can be informed by more empirical data.

To this end, we first provide a brief overview of the monoglossic ideology and how it is reflected in policy while at the same time being challenged on many occasions by students and instructors. To put matters into perspective within HE in Türkiye, we then present the changes that have been taking place in recent years in terms of the linguistic landscape of EMI and TMI HEIs in the country. These developments also underline the importance of coming to grips with the increasing urgency of better understanding, and creating (language) policy responses to, the needs of students from diverse lingua-cultural backgrounds. The need for more attention to the role of language in education cannot be overstated given that it is "perhaps the most important tool in education because language is needed to communicate ideas and negotiate understandings" (García & Torres-Guevara, 2010, p. 182). Lastly, we argue that the translanguaging perspective rather than the dominant monoglossic ideology is a better fit not only for approaching the teaching and learning of these students but also for increasing social justice for them.

The Monoglossic Ideology

The monoglossic ideology refers to the perspective that aims to restrain language diversity with restrictive linguistic policies (Thomas, 2017). Its origins lie in the nation-state ideology in Europe (Flores & Schissel, 2014). The monoglossic ideology "assumes that legitimate linguistic practices are only those enacted by monolinguals" (García, 2009, p. 115) and "treat[s] monolingualism as the norm" (Flores & Schissel, 2014, p. 455).

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