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The Implications of Emi Education for Graduates' Employment Conditions

Öğretim Dilinin İngilizce Olmasının Mezunların İstihdam Durumları Üzerine Yansımaları

Abstract

The exponential growth of EMI is attributed to various factors depending on social differences. In the context of Turkey, the promising nature of EMI over the job prospects plays a significant role for students' academic decisions. Turkish universities generally implement either full EMI or partial EMI. Previous studies have mainly addressed EMI at tertiary level and often failed to refer to the implications of it for graduates' business lives. The aim of this current paper is to report the influence of different EMI types over four aspects of employment as: employment status of graduates, being employed in a subject-related field, being employed in a division-related field, and finally the duration of seeking for a job after graduation. The findings revealed that there is a significant difference between the graduates of the two EMI types regarding the first two, whereas there seems to have no difference in the latter aspects.

Keywords: English medium instruction (EMI), higher education (HE), full EMI and partial EMI, job prospects

JEL Codes: E24, I21, I23, J21, J64, Z13

Özet

Öğretim dilinin İngilizce olmasına olan yoğun ilgi, sosyal farklılıklara bağlı olarak çeşitli faktörlere dayandırılmaktadır. Türkiye bağlamında bu ilgi, mesleki beklentilere hitap etmesi suretiyle öğrencilerin akademik kararlarında önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Türkiye'deki üniversitelere genel olarak ya tüm derslerde İngilizce, ya da kısmi olarak İngilizce eğitimi uygulamaktadırlar. Şu ana kadarki çalışmalar, öğretim dilinin İngilizce olmasının yüksek öğretimdeki etkilerine yönelik olup mezunların iş hayatlarındaki etkilere pek değinilmemiştir. Bu çalışmanın amacı ise öğretim dilinin İngilizce olmasının, dört farklı istihdam göstergesi üzerindeki etkisini raporlamaktır: mezunların istihdam durumları, bölüm bazlı bir iş kolunda çalışmak, fakülte bazlı bir iş kolunda çalışmak, ve son olarak da mezuniyet sonrası iş arayışında geçirilen süre. Elde edilen bulgular, ilk iki boyut söz konusu olduğunda farklı iki EMI türünün aralarında anlamlı farklılıklara işaret etmiştir, öte yandan son iki boyutta ise anlamlı sayılabilecek bir fark gözlemlenmemiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öğretim dilinin İngilizce olması (EMI), yüksek öğretim, tam EMI ve kısmi EMI, mesleki beklentiler

JEL Kodları: E24, I21, I23, J21, J64, Z13

Introduction

Research into the use of English as the language of teaching in higher education (HE) has witnessed an extraordinary growth over the past few decades across the world (Dearden, 2014, 2015; Kirkpatrick, 2014; Macaro, Curle, Pun, An, & Dearden, 2018) as well as in Turkey (Aslan, 2018; Karakaş, 2018, 2019, Kırkgöz, 2017, 2019; West, Guven, Parry & Ergenekon, 2015). This phenomenon, called English Medium Instruction (EMI), is defined by Macaro (2018) as “the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English” (p. 18). A significant proportion of these contexts are ex-colonised countries as a natural consequence.

However, the spread of EMI may not be attributed only to the historical grounds. Some other countries such as Turkey, where English has never been used as a first or second language of the society, also experienced the exponential growth of EMI programmes (Curle, Yuksel, Soruç, & Altay, 2020). Several reasons have been investigated so far to address to this expansion in different contexts. Considering job prospects of EMI students as one of these factors, this current study concentrates on certain outcomes of EMI in graduates’ professional lives by comparing two different EMI implementations (i.e., full vs. partial EMI).

1. Exponential Growth of EMI and Its Factors

The exponential growth of the EMI programmes globally has been the focus of many previous studies. When reasons and motivations behind this growth have been discussed; reasons such as the internationalisation and globalisation attempts of the universities (O’Dowd, 2015), an urge to recruit a higher number of domestic and international students (Dafouz, 2018; Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2013), enhancing the quality and reputations of the educational programs (Nguyen, Walkinshaw & Pham, 2017), university rankings (Rauhvargers, 2013) and student and staff mobility (Kirkpatrick, 2014) have been discussed.

In the Turkish context, factors such as the internationalization of the HE system in Turkey after joining the Bologna Process in 2001 (Karakaş, 2018) and economic affordability in an increasingly globalized world (Kırkgöz, 2019) have been put forward as reasons for expanding EMI. Previous studies also report that programmes where English is used as the language of teaching have traditionally been more popular for students and parents when compared to programmes without EMI (Başibek et al., 2013). This popularity can be well explained by the likelihood of finding better jobs after graduation (Oz, 2005). In addition to this, EMI has been viewed as a tool to access a better education and a more respected job with good reimbursements (Kırkgöz, 2005). Further studies also highlighted the intellectual development of students through using the target language (Turhan, Kırkgöz, 2018; Atik, 2010); gaining social prestige (Atik, 2010), and

success at work (Arkın, 2013) as other reasons for the inclination towards EMI in Turkish HE.

1.1. EMI and Job Prospects

When EMI and job prospects have been examined together, many studies reported the perceptions of the students, teachers or administrators that EMI improves students' job prospects and chances for employment both globally (Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra 2013; Lei & Hu 2014) and locally in Turkey (Oz, 2005; Kırkgöz, 2005). However, we do not have the results of studies (except some notable examples from the Chinese context) where EMI graduates have been asked about their job opportunities after graduation, and the perceptions of the stakeholders have been tested.

Many higher education institutions globally adopt EMI programmes to enhance their students' social mobility and employment prospects (Björkman 2008; Chan & Dimmock 2008; Irvine et al. 2011). Previous studies have reported the beliefs and perceptions of the students that EMI helps students to attain better job prospects (Kırkgöz, 2005; Oz, 2005; Zhang 2017). This assumption may stem from two main reasons: On one hand, international companies in many countries would require their employees use English in the work setting and on the other hand EMI is believed to "kill two birds with one stone; in other words, students simultaneously acquire both English and content knowledge" (Rose, Curle, Aizawa & Thomson, 2019, p. 2).

Even though these benefits have been put forward by many stakeholders, in studies where students have been asked about the opportunities they receive after EMI instruction, some studies portray a pessimistic picture where the students state that job prospects attained via EMI studies are only benefitted by a group of few privileged students (Hu, Li, & Lei, 2014). From the Chinese context, some studies report that only a limited number of EMI graduates actually use English in their daily routines at work (Yang 2006; Gil 2010) and finding a job quickly after graduation can be a myth (Gu & Lee, 2018). Still, universities judge that switching to English will not only improve their graduates' job prospects but will make them more tempting to applicants drawn by well-paid future careers (Galloway, 2017). In turn, the number of EMI programmes, regardless of the EMI type, is globally in an expansion. To our best knowledge, no prior study has focused on the relationship between job prospects and EMI studies in the Turkish HE setting. Motivated from the gap in the literature, this study aims to address following research questions:

RQ1- Does the employment status significantly differ depending on the EMI type being graduated?

RQ2- Does being employed in a division-related field depend on the graduates' EMI type?

RQ3- Does being employed in a subject-related field depend on the graduates' EMI type?

RQ4- Does the duration of seeking for a job significantly differ depending on the EMI type being graduated?

2. Method

2.1. Context of the study

Two models of EMI are adopted in Turkish HE context as full and partial. Although the partial EMI institutions offer 30% of the programme courses in English, all EMI tertiary education is operationalized through the imposition of a preparatory year programme (PYP) for those students whose English is below a certain level (Macaro, 2018). The context of the study consists of a state university for each of the two models. In both, the data came from the engineering graduates of the two universities. The full EMI university is in the South-eastern Region of Turkey, whereas the partial EMI university is in the North-western Region. Both are located in metropolitan areas surrounded by industrial zones. Despite being in different parts of the country, the graduates of both universities are distributed all around the state regardless of their occupational status.

2.2. Participants

Although the engineering division of the two universities consist of various subjects, only three common subjects are determined to provide participants in this study. The total number of the participants is 248 graduates and their distribution within subjects and between universities are equally weighted for the consistency of the data. Therefore, stratified sampling is applied to compare the two EMI models.

2.3. Data collection

The participants were provided with an online survey concerning the feasibility of the data collection. Supplying the necessary consent check beforehand, the survey included the following items: (a) the subject of the participants, (b) the university of the participants, (c) their occupation status, (d) whether they are employed in a position that is related to their division, (e) whether they are employed in a position that is related to their subject, and finally (f) how long they have sought job before being employed. The former two items were to be used in demographic distribution of the participants and the remaining items were respectively to compare the EMI models. The survey was directed in Turkish and the content validity of the items (Dörnyei, 2007) was assured before the procedure started.

2.4. Data analysis

The format of all survey items were designed in categorical variables. While the last item on the duration of being employed included options of intervals, all the remaining items had nominal options. As both the dependent and independent variables were categorical and thus cannot bear parametric qualities, the data were analysed through cross-tabulation and Chi-Square test for independence for (Dörnyei, 2007). The quantitative analyses were conducted through using the computing software R. They were also illustrated in the data visualization software Tableau Desktop.

3. Findings

3.1. Survey item # 1

The first survey item aimed to investigate the employment status of 248 graduate participants of both full and partial EMI. The options were three fold as “working”, “not working actively seeking new opportunities”, and “not working, not seeking opportunities”. The logic behind having the second and the last options together is to see whether or not their being unemployed depends on their individual choice. In order to see the distribution of the responses into the two EMI types, the following crosstabulation was prepared and Pearson’s Chi-squared test was run whether the distribution indicates and independence between the types.

Table 1: Pearson's Chi-squared Test of Independence Between EMI Types

EMI Type	Employment status		
	Not working, actively seeking new opportunities	Not working, not seeking opportunities	Working
Full EMI	10	6	108
Partial EMI	22	2	100

$$\chi^2 (2, N = 248) = 6.8077, p = 0.03325$$

As seen in Table 1, full and partial EMI depicts an independence in terms of the employment status of the participant graduates ($p < 0.05$). Based on the descriptive findings, it is evident that the number of full EMI graduates employed are relatively more than those of partial EMI. In line with this finding, full EMI graduates unemployed and seeking for new opportunities are almost as half of the partial EMI graduates. To our surprise, those who are not working and not seeking opportunities is higher in full EMI. That is to say, EMI graduates who are unemployed on their own will are more common in full EMI.

3.2. Survey item # 2

Since graduating from a certain subject may not always mean to find a relevant position with that subject, the second item investigated the distribution of the two EMI types with this respect. The participants were asked if they were employed in a related field to the subject that they graduated from. The findings are as in Table 2.

Table 2: Pearson's Chi-squared Test with Yates' Continuity Correction for Being Employed in a Subject-Related Field

EMI Type	Being Employed in a Subject-Related Field	
	Yes	No
Full EMI	98	26
Partial EMI	74	50

$$\chi^2 (1, N = 248) = 10.036, p = 0.001535$$

Based on graduates’ responses, a striking difference between the EMI types in the second item is clear as well ($p < 0.05$). Parallel to the findings in the first item, the number of full EMI graduates who are employed in a subject related field overwhelm the number of partial EMI graduates. This refers that full EMI graduates are occupied significantly more in subject-related fields in our case. Conversely, it also means that partial EMI graduates are employed more in other fields than their subject.

3.3. Survey item # 3

When the issue is engineering, there is a limited number of subject varieties to study at higher education. However, the subfields of this division are way further accordingly. Besides, some subjects of engineering can also cover the technical qualities and specifications of the other engineering subjects. For this reason, engineering graduates can often find a position in a different subject of engineering in the field. To illustrate this, the EMI types are cross tabulated again as in Table 3.

Table 3: Pearson's Chi-squared Test with Yates' Continuity Correction for Being Employed in a Division-Related Field

EMI Type	Being Employed in a Division-Related Field	
	Yes	No
Full EMI	106	18
Partial EMI	100	24

$$\chi^2 (1, N = 248) = 0.7166, p = 0.3973$$

The findings justify the previous findings as in the first and second survey items as well. However, the difference of the EMI types according to being employed in a division-related field is not much as significant ($p > 0.05$). As a result, there appears to be a parallelism between full and partial EMI types in terms of graduates’ being employed in engineering rather than another division. Still, full EMI graduates are slightly more populated to work in a division-related field.

3.4. Survey item # 4

The two EMI groups were compared according to the duration of graduates’ seeking for a job after graduation with a final survey item. The options were provided in irregular intervals as in the following table. The descriptive findings were compared statistically to see if the two EMI types are independent of one another concerning the employment procedure.

Table 4: Pearson's Chi-squared Test for the Duration of Seeking for a Job After Graduation

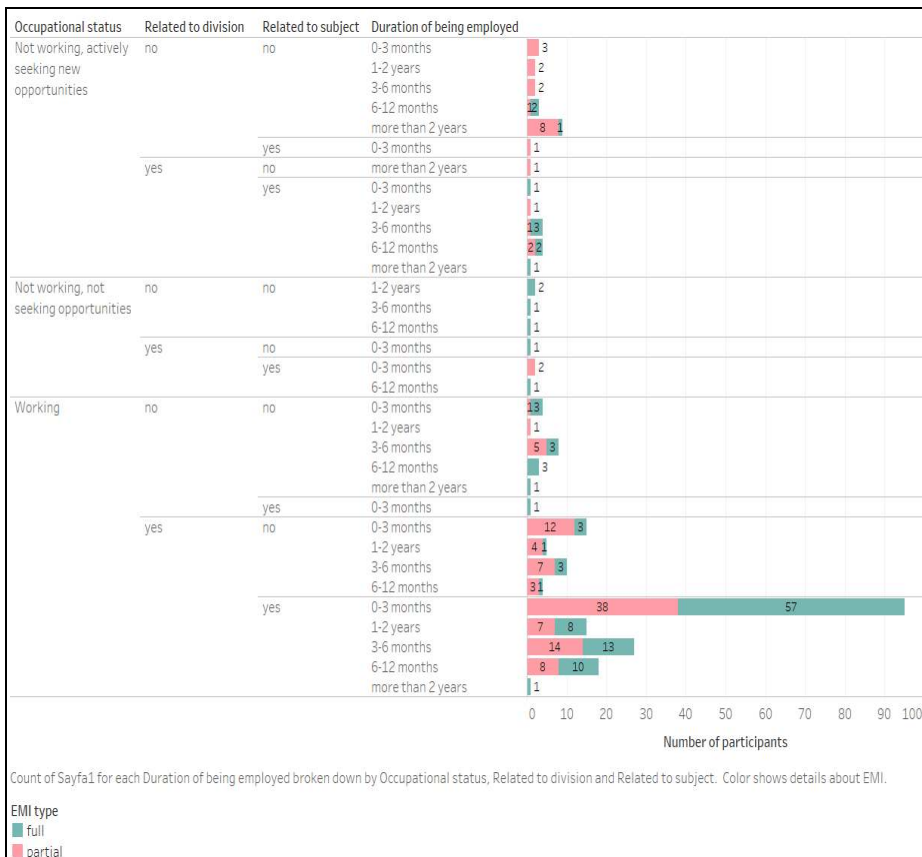
EMI Type	Duration of seeking for a job after graduation				
	0-3 months	3-6 moths	6-12 months	1-2 years	More than 2 years
Full EMI	66	23	20	11	4
Partial EMI	57	29	14	15	9

$$\chi^2 (4, N = 248) = 4.9481, p = 0.2927$$

As in the third item, the findings of the fourth item does not indicate a significant difference between full and partial EMI in terms of the duration spent while seeking for a job ($p > 0.05$). The descriptive findings refer to some noteworthy indications nevertheless. Full EMI graduates are occupied slightly more within the first year after graduation, mostly in the first three months. Partial EMI graduates find a job mostly in the first three months too, but but the cumulative number of partial EMI graduates who find a job only after the first year is 24 while it is only 15 in full EMI.

Regardless of the significance of their statistical independence, full and partial EMI types have distinctive facets of distribution in the aforementioned survey items. Full EMI seems to bear comparatively better statistics in not only being employed, but also in the duration of being employed. Figure 1 illustrates an overall chart of distribution of the comparison.

Figure 1: Distribution of participants into categoric variables



4. Discussions

As mentioned earlier, EMI programmes at HE has a relatively higher popularity among students and parents (Başibek et al., 2013), and it could be attributed to a better likelihood of finding better jobs after graduation (Oz, 2005). In a similar vein, universities

utilize this deed and maintain establishing even more EMI programmes. HE institutions have the idea that these programmes do not only improve their graduates' job prospects, but also the graduates have better chances in being hired for well-paid jobs (Galloway, 2017). However, not all EMI programmes are of the same type and may not offer parallel opportunities. From this point of view, this study set out with the aim of investigating if the two EMI types in Turkish HE, namely full and partial, promise "better" occupational conditions in line with one another.

To shed light on this query, the first condition was set on being employed or not. It is seen that the graduates of full EMI programmes have statistically better employment situations. In addition, it is also observed that those who are unemployed on their own will are more common among EMI graduates, while the participants who are unemployed but seeking for a position is more frequent among partial EMI graduates. In fact, these findings somewhat reject the previous research in Turkish context in that students felt they would learn educational content easier for their professional career through their L1 (Kırkgöz 2014; British Council & TEPAV, 2015). However, partial EMI at which L1 is 70% of the medium instruction did not result in any better employability outcomes than full EMI.

A great many of the division-based studies on EMI is contextualized in engineering both globally (world (e.g. Vinke, 1995; Klaassen, 2001; Ball & Lindsay, 2013) and in Turkey (e.g. Kırkgöz, 2005; Başıbek , Dolmacı, Cengiz , Bür , Dilek , Kara, 2014; Soruç & Griffiths, 2018; Soruç, Dinler, & Griffiths, 2018; Turhan & Kırkgöz, 2018). Notwithstanding these, the second condition of this study focused on the implications of EMI types over being employed in a field which is related to the graduates' division. The findings referred to no significant difference between the two EMI types and their role in this regard, whereas full EMI graduates overwhelmingly occupy subject-related positions when compared to partial EMI graduates.

The final condition handled in this study was on the duration of seeking for a job after graduation. According to a 2019 report by the HR Office of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, nine subjects of engineering are amongst the top 25 in terms of duration of finding a job after graduation. The comparison of the EMI types did not reveal a significant variation in terms of the duration of being hired, but partial EMI graduates are more probable to wait over a year comparatively. All in all, full EMI graduates reflected to have obtained better conditions than their partial EMI counterparts in Turkey.

4.1. Limitations

There are also a range of limitations to this current research. The number of participants is, first of all, limited to generalizing the results in a wider context. This can be seen as an unavoidable result of graduate access difficulties. One other point that must be taken into account is that a few of the participants, but not many, have been overseas, usually as an exchange student. This factor and such can have a prompting role in their recruitment and thus influence the results. As such an example, a partial EMI graduate may have been abroad for a year to study and have taken all classes in English. Employers may also think that a graduate who has been abroad should be adequately competent; thus, exempted from any English proficiency test. Finally, geographic reasons

can be counted as another restriction. These two universities are distant to one another. Considering the participants might have had the opportunity to be employed at a nearby setting to their universities, the facilities they were supplied by their organizations can also vary.

Conclusion

Most EMI research so far has focused on the aspects at tertiary level. These studies include students' academic success, the challenges they experience and so on. Although EMI education at tertiary level is undoubtedly and most occasionally preferred so as to find better job opportunities after graduation, there is not enough research on the implications of EMI in actual business life. This study aimed to investigate four facets of employment and the implications of EMI types over them.

Addressing the job prospects of its graduates in Turkey, engineering is one of the most promising business fields. Based on the findings, it can be argued that engineers who graduate from an EMI faculty, regardless of the EMI type, are probable to have good employment conditions. When compared to partial EMI, full EMI offers even better opportunities not only in finding a job, but also finding a subject-related one. When the unemployment rates and the time spent for job hunt in other business fields in Turkey are taken into account, an EMI graduate of engineering apparently have a hot hand. Further studies are required to be conducted to perceive the insights of the EMI phenomenon after graduation.

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