Turkish-English bilingual content in the virtual linguistic landscape of a university in Turkey: exclusive de facto language policies

Ufuk Keles, Bedrettin Yazan & Amanda Giles

To cite this article: Ufuk Keles, Bedrettin Yazan & Amanda Giles (2019): Turkish-English bilingual content in the virtual linguistic landscape of a university in Turkey: exclusive de facto language policies, International Multilingual Research Journal, DOI: 10.1080/19313152.2019.1611341

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2019.1611341

Published online: 16 May 2019.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 11

View Crossmark data
ABSTRACT
With English as the lingua franca, numerous universities in non-English speaking countries offer programs with English medium of instruction (EMI) to receive international recognition in academia. These universities utilize their websites as primary sources for attracting prospective students and faculty from abroad. Drawing upon the distinction between de jure and de facto language policies and the notion of virtual linguistic landscapes, this study conducts a comparative content analysis of the Turkish and English homepages as subsections of the official website of Yildiz Technical University (YTU) in Turkey. It scrutinized the university’s language policies in its provision of content in both languages on its website which is conceived as virtual linguistic landscape (VLL) construction. Our comparative analysis revealed that YTU’s website content in English and Turkish is not aligned with its de jure policies, and found three main issues in YTU’s VLL: (a) unavailable and inaccessible content, (b) inconsistent content, and (c) incomprehensible and unclear English content on the EN-v homepages. Our findings lead us to contend that the de facto language practices observed on YTU’s official website appear to be inequitable because YTU’s international students and faculty in the 100% EMI programs cannot utilize substantial amount of online resources.

KEYWORDS
Bilingual university websites; English medium of instruction; de jure and de facto language policies

English has become the international language of academia (Conrad & Mauranen, 2003; Doğançay-Aktuna & Kızıltepe, 2005), and there is a worldwide surge for adapting English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in higher education institutions (Dearden, 2015; Kirkpatrick, 2011; Selvi, 2014). Universities frame their EMI offering as part of their internationalization goals to keep pace with the ever-globalizing world and attract international students and faculty (Foskett & Maringe, 2010). Universities’ official websites serve or function as international public relation tools, which play a significant outreach role in providing information about their faculty, students, admissions, scholarship opportunities, and campus life (Kang & Norton, 2006). Therefore, the language use on university websites has become important especially in contexts where English is not the (co)official language. A number of well-established universities in non-English speaking countries have websites in multiple languages, including English (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Against this backdrop, the present study analyzes the official website of Yildiz Technical University (YTU), Istanbul, Turkey by using the notions of de jure and de facto policies (Johnson, 2013) and the premises of virtual linguistic landscapes (VLLs) (Ivkovic & Lotherington, 2009).

As a VLL, the university’s website offers online content in Turkish and English and embodies the features of “monologic Web,” including primarily “a repository of texts” (Kelly-Holmes, 2015, p. 133) maintained and monitored by the University administration. Therefore, this study views YTU’s website as an important space to scrutinize YTU’s de jure and de facto language policies and addresses the following research question: To what extent does the de facto provision of website content in English and Turkish in
YTU’s VLL reflect its *de jure* language policies? Addressing this question is pertinent internationally because a burgeoning number of universities around the world offer EMI and provide an official English website along with the one in the local (co)official language (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2011; Pecorari & Malmström, 2018) as part of their internationalization efforts. Similar to YTU, such universities serve a sizeable international community who typically accesses the online content in English since they may not be as competent initially in the local language. Therefore, this study could inform language access issues in the VLLs of other universities with ever-growing EMI programs and international exchanges in Turkey and across the world.

**Focal case: Yıldız Technical University’s website**

This study focuses on YTU’s official website. Established in 1911, YTU hosts 10 schools with 39 departments, 2 vocational schools with 3 departments, 2 graduate schools, and 24 research and application centers. It employs over 1,800 faculty and over 1,000 staff serving over 35,000 students (Facts and Figures, 2017). Among its 39 four-year undergraduate programs, YTU offers eight 100% EMI undergraduate programs and accepts international students to these programs.

YTU’s internationalization goals are evident in its mission and vision statements. YTU’s official vision statement emphasizes “becom[ing] one of the most-preferred world universities” (“University vision statement”, n.d.). Similarly, its mission statement highlights the importance of “creat[ing] a university which pioneers education, scientific research, technological development, and artistic work aimed at the progress of society and the increase of the quality of life within an understanding of national and international solidarity” (“University mission statement”, n.d.). Both statements emphasize YTU’s goals to become an internationally known university which not only prepares students for interaction with international communities but also serves international students and recruits international staff.

One strategy YTU utilizes in internationalization is building collaboration with international partners through exchange programs such as Erasmus+ and Mevlana. Erasmus is an academic exchange initiative in 37 European countries funded by the European Union to support education, training, youth, and sports (Erasmus+, 2017). Committed to student and faculty exchange, YTU’s Erasmus policy statement is aligned with its internationalization goal: “YTU locates internationalization policy at the center of its strategy by supporting intercultural dialogue, gender equality and personal fulfillment, contributing to increased participation in lifelong learning by people of all ages” (“Erasmus policy statement,” n.d.). YTU partners with European universities through Erasmus program to gain national and international recognition and reputation.

Emulating Erasmus at the local level and expanding its scope to non-European countries, the Higher Education Council in Turkey launched the Mevlana Exchange Program in 2011 to send Turkish students and faculty abroad for academic purposes (Mevlana Değişim Programı [Mevlana Exchange Program], 2017). YTU’s Mevlana Program’s mission statement also fosters its internationalization goals: “Our mission is to […] increase […] the quality of life within an understanding of national and international solidarity” (“Mevlana mission statement,” n.d., para. 1). Different from Erasmus, Mevlana supports student and faculty exchange with universities in any country across the world, which is aligned with YTU’s aim to “become one of the most-preferred world universities” (“Mevlana vision statement,” n.d., para. 2).

Within the last decade, YTU’s efforts to attract international students and faculty members resulted in an ever-growing international community. YTU’s directorate of strategy development reports an increase in both the number of registered students seeking a bachelor’s degree and the number of exchange students who study at YTU for only one or two semesters (Faaliyet Raporları [Activity Reports], 2018) (Table 1).

The number of international students at YTU tripled from 586 (2.27%) to 1,918 (5.05%) between 2010 and 2017. However, the total number of international faculty remained minimal; 43 (2.96%) in

---

1 Participating in Erasmus and Mevlana, YTU signed bilateral agreements with universities around the world and the number of these agreements increased from 252 in 2010 to 744 in 2018.
2010 and 36 (2.20%) in 2017. The university administration still finds these numbers inadequate for the university’s internationalization endeavors, so YTU’s strategic plan involves recruiting more international students and faculty in the near future (Institutional Feedback Report, 2017).

YTU’s mission and vision statements as well as its participation in exchange programs indicate that the university policies aim to increase its international visibility and prestige. YTU’s official website has an important role in the implementation of these policies. Because YTU offers eight 100% EMI undergraduate programs that include national and international students and faculty, one may expect YTU to provide (Turkish and English) bilingual content on its official website. Therefore, the current study conducted a comparative content analysis of the Turkish (TR-v) and English versions (EN-v) on YTU’s official website to explore YTU’s de facto language policies (Johnson, 2013) in its VLL (Ivkovic & Lotherington, 2009).

EMI in higher education is on the rise in the contexts where English does not have an official status (Doiz et al., 2011). YTU has begun EMI programs and partnered with international exchange programs as a response to the global trend in internationalization. This global trend has influenced many other universities in Turkey and across the world. Therefore, although this study examines one university’s VLL, its findings will inform the language planning decisions of other universities with EMI programs, which wish to attract international students and faculty with the bilingual content on their official websites. More specifically, this exploratory study of one university’s VLL could provide insights about the issues of language accessibility of online content that will require reconsideration of meso-level policymaking at universities with similar programs.

### Conceptual framework

We analyzed YTU’s official website by using Johnson’s (2013) definition of de jure and de facto language policy and the concept of VLL as framed by Ivkovic and Lotherington (2009). Johnson defines de jure (by law) as openly stated language policies, while de facto (in practice) policies are those which are actually implemented. De facto policies “arise without or in spite of de jure policies and local language practices that differ from de jure policies” (p. 10). In this study, we conceive YTU’s vision and mission statements and its bilateral agreements with international partners through Erasmus and Mevlana exchange programs as its de jure policies. The content provided on its Turkish and English websites reflect the university’s de facto language policies. Although YTU does not explicitly aim to provide bilingual Turkish and English content on its website, it does strongly state the desire to serve students and faculty with EMI instruction. Given this objective, we assume that YTU will take responsibility for the English content on its website.

We frame YTU’s official website as its VLL reflecting the characteristics of Web 1.0 “monologic” content (as opposed to interactive Web 2.0) (Kelly-Holmes, 2015) that is provided and maintained only by the university officials. VLL emerged as a concept following the research on linguistic landscapes (LL) (Landry & Bourhis, 1997) which is “an attempt to produce accurate and detailed inventories of urban multilingualism” (Blommaert & Maly, 2016, p. 197). Taking a socio-political and sociolinguistic

### Table 1. Number of international students and faculty at YTU between 2010 and 2017.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bachelor’s</th>
<th>Erasmus+</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Erasmus+</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
<td>586</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>151</td>
<td></td>
<td>717</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>142</td>
<td></td>
<td>874</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>169</td>
<td></td>
<td>1011</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>205</td>
<td></td>
<td>928</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1402</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1671</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1526</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1773</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>1791</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
perspective, LL studies explore the public signage (e.g., graffiti, visual images, signposts, notices, sounds, smells) on billboards, traffic signs, shop windows, walls along with many other forms of writings in the public spaces, produced by authorities or lay people (Shohamy & Gorter, 2009). Emerging from and expanding this strand of research, scholars studied the LLs that are constructed and experienced in digital public spaces and called these landscapes VLL (Berezkina, 2018; Ivkovic & Lotherington, 2009; Troyer, 2012).

VLL is an extension of the physical public spheres of language use. Similar to physical LL, VLL indexes boundaries, language hierarchies, and power relations “among the coexisting linguistic choices” in language communities (Ivkovic & Lotherington, 2009, p. 19). VLL conveys “symbolic messages as to the legitimacy, relevance, priority and standards of languages” as well as the communities represented (Shohamy, 2006, p. 110). However, VLL has its distinguishing characteristics because of the way the monologic web is organized and managed. First, VLL experiences more frequent content updates than LL, more so in dialogic Web 2.0 than monologic Web 1.0 (Ivkovic & Lotherington, 2009; Kelly-Holmes, 2015). Also, in the physical LL, individuals interact with the language content within delineated physical boundaries, but VLL is delocalized (Ivkovic & Lotherington, 2009), making it accessible to anyone with internet connection (Shohamy & Gorter, 2009). Lastly, the digital innovative possibilities allow VLL to include new ways of interactions and language uses within digital spaces although the content is controlled by those who hold the ownership to design VLL and make decisions about the language(s) of communication in Web 1.0 platforms (Ivkovic & Lotherington, 2009).

Data collection and analysis

In this study, we explored both the Turkish version (TR-v) and the English version (EN-v) of YTU’s official website through a comparative content analysis. Along with the university homepage, we focused on the homepages of three administrative offices and eight departments (see Table 2).

We selected these administrative homepages since they are directly relevant to the management of international exchanges with domestic and international students and faculty who could visit these webpages more likely than others. Likewise, we explored the homepages of eight departments offering 100% EMI programs that appeal to international students and faculty.

After the selection process, Author#1, who also worked at YTU as an English instructor for more than ten years, collected the data from YTU’s official website from November to December 2016. He first collected data from a TR-v homepage and then its EN-v equivalent and saved them in folders created for EN-v and TR-v of each homepage. After obtaining all the data from the EN-v and TR-v content of one focal webpage, he proceeded to the next one. To maintain the synchronic focus, he
took screenshots (N = 497) of all pages and snippets (N = 97) of important segments of these pages and downloaded online documents (N = 360).

During data collection, Author#1 used a 32” monitor and split the screen. He kept the TR-v of a webpage on the left and its EN-v counterpart on the right. Doing so helped him understand the magnitude of data through a comparative lens and assign initial codes to the data. Meanwhile, he also took field notes (96 pages) to facilitate the subsequent phases of analysis, particularly when meeting with the other authors.

Once he collected and stored the data on his computer, Author#1 started data analysis utilizing qualitative content analysis to “systematically describe the meaning” (Schreier, 2012, p. 3) of materials to address the research question. He first counted the number of 1) global navigational tabs and their submenus, 2) local navigational tabs on the side scan columns, 3) the number of news and announcements, 4) events and activities, 5) broken links, 6) blank pages, 7) language-switching occurrences consecutively. Then, he organized the findings in tables. Next, he examined the language choice in downloadable documents (e.g., syllabi, information sheets, forms) provided on both EN-v and TR-v webpages. After going through all the data, he assigned open codes to the entries in his dataset. During the data collection and analysis phases, Author#1 communicated with Author#2 and Author#3. Once the data collection procedure was completed, we collectively went through the list of open codes and clustered them into categories by checking the entries in the dataset one more time. Then, considering the research question, we consolidated the categories into three main themes that are presented in the following section.

Findings

Our comparative content analysis found that YTU’s Turkish-English bilingual website content does not reflect its de jure policies and pointed out three main issues in YTU’s virtual linguistic landscape that concern exclusionary de facto practices: unavailable and inaccessible information, inconsistent content, and incomprehensible English content on the EN-v homepages.

Unavailable and inaccessible information

To examine the website’s accessibility to all students, we first counted, and then compared the number of (a) global navigational tabs and their submenus, (b) local navigational tabs on the side scan column, (c) news and announcements, (d) events and activities, (e) online texts, functional hyperlinks, and downloadable documents, (f) broken links and blank pages, and (g) language switches on all the focal homepages.

Global navigational tabs and their submenus

Located on the top of webpages, navigational tabs and their submenus open in a temporary box when the navigational tab is clicked. They provide global navigation on the VLL as a common design feature to make access to information easier. They help organize the information into thematic categories similar to signposts found on campus. These tabs do not disappear so that users can easily
navigate the website. Therefore, the organization of the navigational tabs and their submenus play a crucial role in accessing online information provided in English and Turkish.

Due to their key role in webpage design, we examined the number of global navigational tabs with their submenus and local navigational tabs on the side scan columns in TR-v and EN-v homepages (Table 3).

While the numbers of global navigational tabs are the same in both versions, there are 19\% fewer submenus in EN-v than in TR-v homepages, which implies either a less organized or no content provision in the EN-v VLL.

To illustrate, TR-v university homepage presents links to TR-v webpages of the library and six offices (Communications, Logistics, Health, Culture and Sports, Social Facilities and Students Affairs Office). Since none of them has EN-v webpages, international students and faculty have no or limited access to information regarding many facilities and services on campus (e.g., accommodation, student transfer, transportation, dormitories, health centers, student clubs, recreation centers, sporting activities, enrollment, tuition and fees, online student portals, study halls, libraries). There is also no record of an academic calendar in English either on TR-v or EN-v homepage. Without access to this information, YTU’s international community cannot fully navigate YTU’s VLL. This suggests that they are required to be at least advanced Turkish speakers to stay informed about social and academic events on campus.

### Local navigational tabs on the side scan column

Another navigational design tool for a website is local navigational tabs designed as an upward pile of colored boxes on one side of a webpage. Unlike the global navigational tabs, these local tabs have a secondary role in helping users find temporary content. Table 3 also shows the number of these tabs on the TR-v and EN-v homepages. TR-v homepages have one-third more local navigational tabs than EN-v homepages. Among all, the Department of Chemistry’s homepage illustrates the most striking difference between the TR-v and EN-v (see Figures 1 and 2):

This juxtaposition of the two webpages demonstrates that non-Turkish speaking Chemistry students are not granted access to most of the student services and department-related announcements and events published on the TR-v. More specifically, there are only two tabs available on both pages, namely, Forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>TR-v Global Navigational Tabs</th>
<th>TR-v Submenus</th>
<th>TR-v Local Tabs on Side Scan Column</th>
<th>EN-v Global Navigational Tabs</th>
<th>EN-v Submenus</th>
<th>EN-v Local Tabs on Side Scan Column</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>UH</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IRO</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FSO</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EUEO</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C&amp;A</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engineering Chemistry</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civil</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engineering Bioengineering</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chemical Engineering</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engineering Industrial</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engineering Architecture</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| TOTAL         |                               | **70**        | **328**                            | **99**                        | **70**        | **266**                            | **75**
Figure 1. Department of chemistry’s TR-v homepage.

Figure 2. Department of chemistry’s EN-v homepage.
and Documents and Students Information Systems. Interestingly, the Accreditation tab is present on the EN-v page only. This could be because the accreditation agency requires the publication of this information in English so that it appeals to an international audience. There are six navigational tabs on the left-hand side on the TR-v page that are missing on the EN-v one: Academic Calendar, Chemistry Software, Periodic Table, Library, Internship, and Laboratories. All these tabs represent significant content that students and faculty at this department need for successful academic involvement, and their unavailability on the EN-v makes this content exclusive to Turkish-speaking students and faculty. For example, a non-Turkish speaking international student taking courses with a lab assignment would not be able to access the lab information.

Additionally, only Turkish speakers have access to announcements and events because they are unavailable on the EN-v homepage of the Department of Chemistry. The announcements are critical course-related reminders or updates about, for example, mid-term exam schedules, seminar courses, practicum courses, and capstone projects. Also, regarding their frequency of updates, all 10 announcements on TR-v homepage were posted within a 17-day period. There is a six-month gap between the only announcement (May 17) on the EN-v page and the oldest announcement (November 21) post on the TR-v one. Similarly, the posts inviting students and faculty to events like lectures, talks, and conferences appear exclusively on the TR-v page, which denies access to international students and faculty.

**News/announcements and activities/events**

Since the news/announcements section usually provides particular information, it tends to be updated more regularly. The number of news/announcements along with activities/events reveals how frequently the administration provided up-to-date information for its visitors. Table 4 shows the total number of news/announcements and activities/events published on TR-v and EN-v homepages.

Table 4 displays that the number of news/announcements on the TR-v (n = 1996) is over 27 times more accessible than in the EN-v homepages (n = 72). Additionally, no piece of news on the EN-v homepage is more recent than on the TR-v. Only International Relations Office uploaded its latest announcement on the EN-v and TR-v homepages on the same date. Three departments had no news or announcement on their EN-v homepages. When we analyzed administrative and departmental homepages separately, we saw that the TR-v of administrative homepages provided approximately 10 times more online content than on their EN-v webpages. The difference is more distinct for the departmental homepages because their TR-v homepages present nearly 44 times more news and announcements than their EN-v homepages.

Similarly, the examination of activities/events offers important insights into YTU’s website maintenance. Table 4 also demonstrates the number of activities/events both in TR-v and EN-v homepages on YTU’s website. TR-v homepages also outnumber EN-v homepages for activities/events (n = 144 to n = 32). Among administrative ones, only the university homepage offers information about activities/events (6 in TR-v; 2 in EN-v). Of the eight departmental homepages, seven present activities/events on their TR-v homepages, while only five departmental homepages inform their visitors about these on their EN-v homepages. In total, the number of activities/events is at least four times higher on TR-v than on EN-v homepages. Only one in eight announcements of activities/events is before 2016 on TR-v homepages, but on EN-v homepages, only one in six announcements was posted in 2016.

**Online texts, functional hyperlinks, and downloadable documents**

Other important components of a university webpage are online texts, functional hyperlinks, and downloadable documents regarding academic and social life on campus. The comparative content analysis of YTU’s TR-v and EN-v departmental homepages offer significant insights into the discrepancies between English and Turkish content. The number of online texts, functional hyperlinks, and downloadable documents on TR-v homepages are approximately three times
more than those in EN-v ones (n = 605 and n = 201, respectively). Only 10.57% of the content on TR-v homepages is in English, while the Turkish content on EN-v homepages is more than half of the total content (58.20%). On EN-v, no department provides information on materials, software, forms, and alumni. Furthermore, they offer information only in Turkish for the academic calendar, internship, student information system, and student clubs and activities. All departmental EN-v homepages include Turkish content at varying degrees, and in several cases, their TR-v homepages provide English content, too.

To illustrate the provision of Turkish content on EN-v homepages, below is the Department of Civil Engineering’s “Commissions” page (see Figure 3) whose content is entirely Turkish except for the heading:

This page lists the department-wide commissions and the faculty members and graduate assistants serving on these commissions. Students and faculty may not need to visit this page so often, which could be the reason why the department did not translate the names of commissions to English. Moreover, below is an example for the provision of English content on a TR-v department homepage (see Figure 4):

The tab “Periyodik Tablo/Kimya Yazılımı” (Periodic Table/Chemistry Software) on the Department of Chemistry’s homepage opens up this page presenting software program descriptions and external hyperlinks to download them. However, the intended audience is vague because the use of the first personal pronoun in the introductory paragraph reads as if someone in the department put together this content or it was taken from someone’s personal webpage without editing it.

### Broken links and blank pages

The number of broken links and blank pages constitute an important factor indicating a lack of regular website maintenance and difficulties accessing information (see Table 5).

Table 5 shows that the number of hyperlinks is higher on the TR-v homepages (n = 3063) than on the EN-v homepages (n = 1718). This implies that TR-v homepages offer more online content than
their EN-v counterparts. When the percentages of broken links are compared, TR-v homepages have a slightly smaller percentage of broken links than the EN-v homepages (4.8% and 5.1%, respectively). However, the difference between blank pages is over seven times larger (1.8% and 8.7%, respectively).

**Language switch**

Some hyperlinks on EN-v webpages lead users to content in Turkish and vice versa, which we refer to as language switch. The instances of language switch also present important data since they indicate which language was primarily used to compensate for the lack of content in the other language. YTU’s VLL includes many instances where a link on the EN-v webpage directs users to a TR-v page due to lack of content in English. Table 6 displays the number of instances of language switch across TR-v and EN-v webpages in detail.

Table 6 demonstrates that 1 out of almost every 17 links (182 out of 3063) on TR-v homepages takes users to English content. Most of these 182 links (90.10%) direct users to a website of an international entity, such as international organizations, international conferences, international corporations, online scientific databases, and computer software programs. While 7.18% of them lead users to a website of an
institution outside of Turkey, only 2.2% of these links are related to an organization located in Turkey, and none are to any of YTU’s EN-v webpages. On the other hand, EN-v homepages are linked to a TR-v homepage 153 out of 1718 times, which means that users are directed to a TR-v homepage in one out of at least 11 instances. Of these 153 links, 78.43% are to an intra-link to other pages within YTU’s website, 13.07% to a national organization, and 8.49% to a branch of an international organization in Turkey. These figures imply that the language switch between links on the webpages makes it harder for non-Turkish speakers to navigate within the borders of YTU’s VLL.

To exemplify, when users click on the Undergraduate sub-menu on the Department of Civil Engineering’s EN-v homepage (Figures 5 and 6), they find Turkish content on YTU’s Bologna Information System:

In this instance, a switch is ing program. Additionally, below is an example where the Resources (Bilgi Kaynakları) sub-menu under Research (Araştırmalar) on the Department of Bioengineering’s
Table 6. Language switch across hyperlinks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TR-v to EN content</th>
<th>EN-v to TR content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within YTU</td>
<td>Within Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UH</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRO</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSO</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUEO</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C&amp;A</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bioengineering</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERCENTAGE</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5. Department of civil engineering’s EN-v homepage.

Figure 6. TR-v of Bologna information system’s homepage.
TR-v homepage (Figures 7 and 8) takes users to a list of links to national and international databases and professional associations. All these links direct users to content outside YTU’s VLL, which indicates its interconnectedness with other VLLs. In addition, using most resources requires a certain level of English competence, which conveys the message that the international community’s language of Bioengineering is English. The links in YTU’s VLL provide a glimpse into this community.

Figure 7. TR-v of department of bioengineering’s homepage.

Figure 8. Links on department of bioengineering’s TR-v homepage.
Inconsistent content

Further data analysis showed inconsistent content across the TR-v and EN-v homepages. Such instances frequently occurred when we navigated through information about administrative and academic personnel (Table 7).

There are no inconsistencies between the TR-v and EN-v Departments of Chemical and Industrial Engineering webpage, and only two instances on the Department of Control and Automation Engineering’s webpage. However, there are many inconsistencies on other departmental webpages. On the TR-v webpages, 34 faculty members had a more recent academic title, which means that they received a promotion. Two faculty members appear to be retired on the TR-v webpages, while they are still listed as faculty on the EN-v webpages. Furthermore, four of the female faculty had a second last name on TR-v webpages, while having one last name on the EN-v webpages, which could be related to changing surnames after getting married. In short, TR-v homepages provided more updated information than their EN-v counterparts.

We found another perplexing mismatch between the two versions of Incoming Students submenu under Student Exchange on the International Relations Office’s homepage. There is a statement on its TR-v which says “Aynı zamanda 0 İngilizce olan programlar da mevcuttur” [There are also 0 EMI programs]. On its EN-v webpage, however, this piece of information is presented as: “There are also some programs that are conducted in English.” While the statement in Turkish suggests there are no EMI programs offered, the EN-v homepage states that the medium of instruction is English in some programs. The same issue arises when describing the Architecture Program on its EN-v homepage, where the statement is: “The language of education is 0 English and it has the same curriculum with Architecture program in Turkish.”

“Foreign Students Office” webpage also has some issues in terms of inconsistent content across Turkish and English versions (Figures 9 and 10). The heading for the homepage is the name of the office on both versions, but the English name has the Turkish acronym (i.e. YDOK) next to it. When compared, the Turkish and English names for this office do not correspond exactly from either direction of the translation. If translating from Turkish, the English name should be “Study Abroad (or International Students) Office Coordinatorship;” if translating from English, the Turkish name should be “Yabancı Öğrenci Ofisi.” This translation issue also concerns word choice of the descriptor for the international students at YTU because it conveys a message regarding how the university positions them. The current descriptor, “foreign,” promotes the discourse of othering as “foreignness” (Said, 1978), which contradicts the inclusive practices needed for the international students’ integration into YTU community.

Moreover, there are other inconsistent content issues in the navigational tabs and homepage content both on Foreign Students Office’s EN-v and TR-v homepages. There are some tabs presented only on the TR-v home page, namely, Türkiye Bursları (Turkey Scholarships), İKB (İslam Kalkınma Bankası/Islamic Development Bank), and MEB (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı/Ministry of National Education). Particularly, making the scholarships tab available on the TR-v page renders these scholarships exclusive to Turkish speaking international students.

Interestingly, the Student Satisfaction Survey tab is present only on the EN-v homepage. This might mean that the survey is originally in English, or following the Erasmus regulations, the creators of the survey assumed that students can express their opinions more comfortably in English than Turkish. Lastly, comparing the content on the homepage, we find an enormous disparity between EN-v and TR-v. FSO

![Table 7. Number of inconsistent information about personnel.](image-url)
seems to use its homepage as a space to post announcements and the links to other pages where the students can find further information. The EN-v is completely empty, while the TR-v seems to be regularly maintained, which is a problem because this webpage needs to cater specifically to international students. Due to this inconsistent content, non-Turkish speaking students are left uninformed about announcements about ID cards, registration, university-based or national tests, tuition fees, application for study abroad, exchange programs, and more, all of which are essential to keep their official student status.

As another example for inconsistent content, the Erasmus webpage includes a tab named Profile that takes visitors to the greeting letter addressed to international students and faculty (Figure 11).

This page presents Turkish content except for the letter, but it is accessible through the EN-v only. As we could not find this letter in Turkish to examine its content, we believe that it was originally written in English reflecting the Erasmus Program’s discourse of international and multicultural education. In that sense, this letter is not only to greet YTU’s incoming international members, but also to demonstrate that YTU’s internationalization endeavors are aligned with Erasmus Program’s goals and the
university’s agreements with partner universities. This intent could be the reason why this letter is published in English only on YTU’s Erasmus webpage. Ironically, the letter highlights the growing international community at YTU and frames its website as an “informative and helpful” source of information for international students and faculty. Lastly, following the Erasmus Program’s discourse, the letter chooses to use “international” instead of “foreign” to describe the mobility students and faculty at YTU, contrary to its use in the Foreign Students Office as we discussed earlier.

Incomprehensible or unclear English content on EN-v homepages

Our data analysis showed some issues that hinder comprehension of the English textual information on the webpages within YTU’s VLL. While the university homepage includes the least number of errors in English use with only very few typos, the Department of Chemistry’s webpages have a number of grammatical and lexical mistakes, which make the text incomprehensible at times. To illustrate, the general information about the Department of Chemistry on its EN-v homepage reads as though it was potentially translated from Turkish through machine translation (Figure 12).

Although the general idea might be understood, the sentences on this page are almost incomprehensible. Department administration either did not notice or did not pay attention to the problem of English language use on their departmental webpage. Almost all textual English content on this webpage requires substantial revision. Regarding the rest of English content in YTU’s VLL, we detected a number of errors in the following categories: grammatical, lexical, spelling, and punctuation. These errors impede the comprehension of the content at varying degrees. Amongst these errors, grammatical ones mostly make sentences incomprehensible when they are at the sentential level (e.g., use of relative clauses and voice), but more micro level grammatical errors (e.g., articles or demonstratives) do not impact the comprehension significantly. Lexical errors confuse the meaning when they are related to the wrong word-choice (e.g., “saloon” for “hall”), but the sentences with informal words (e.g., “mix” for “confuse”) are still comprehensible. Lastly, sentences
with spelling (e.g., “countrary” for “country”) and punctuation errors are still comprehensible especially thanks to contextual support, although they impact the reading fluency of the content. Potential reasons for such errors are the intervention of Turkish, the use of machine translation instead of professional translators, and/or the lack of necessary English language competence. Particularly, the sentential level grammar errors could mostly be because of the first language intervention, while such errors as tense could be due to inadequate language competence of the people who provided English content in YTU’s VLL. All these language use issues indicate that YTU tends not to use professional translation and redaction services to maintain online English texts. Without such services, the university runs the risk of providing incomprehensible information for the current and prospective members of its international community.

Discussion and conclusion

Our research goal was to explore to what extent the de facto provision of website content in English and Turkish on YTU’s VLL reflected its de jure language policies. Through our comparative analysis, we found issues regarding the availability and accessibility of information, the consistency of information, and the use of English on these webpages. These issues tremendously impact the non-Turkish speaking members of the YTU community, because online content on university websites is a primary source for current and prospective students and faculty. Therefore, we argue that, as in the case of LLs, the focal VLL in this study “serves an important informational and symbolic function as a marker of the relative power and status of the linguistic communities inhabiting the territory” (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 23).

Guided by its mission to become an internationalized university, YTU offers eight programs with 100% EMI and participates in student exchange programs (i.e., Erasmus+, Mevlana), which means that these programs can recruit international students and faculty who speak languages other than Turkish, but at least have adequate proficiency in English for academic purposes. However, scrutinizing the language in website content, we argue that non-Turkish speakers are denied access to a considerable amount of information in YTU’s VLL because of the discordance between policy and practice. This problem of accessibility is apparently a language problem in relation to the YTU’s language planning, because a large portion of online content is provided in Turkish but not English, and a good amount of the English content is either inconsistent, incomprehensible or unclear. Turkish language dominant in the physical LL appears to keep its privileged status in the virtual extension of YTU’s linguistic landscape as well.

Our findings lead us to contend that the de facto language practices observed on YTU’s official website appear to be inequitable because YTU’s international students and faculty in the 100% EMI programs cannot utilize its online resources fully as most information is provided only in Turkish. To explain, for their academic and social life on campus, international students and faculty must have access to all the information available for their Turkish-speaking counterparts. For that reason, aligned with its de jure policies of internationalization through EMI, YTU website includes English versions of the relevant administrative and departmental homepages. However, what is specifically necessary in the provision of
online content is parallelism between Turkish and English rather than a one-time creation of webpages hyperlinked on the broader website. In the case of university websites, management of such VLLs relies upon university officials who control the provision and maintenance of Web 1.0 content. For example, the higher number of broken links and blank pages on the English webpages point out that EN-v webpages lack adequate attention from the university officials. Therefore, non-Turkish speaking YTU students and faculty could be lost searching for information in this VLL about physical public spheres at YTU, which obstructs their participation in these spheres.

Our findings also direct attention to one of the overlooked problems in the de facto practices of EMI language policies and planning in higher education, namely, the provision of well-maintained English webpages. As EMI is becoming “a growing global phenomenon” (Dearden, 2015) in non-English speaking countries, universities in Turkey have recently started offering programs with 30% or 100% EMI because of the importance of English in the global economy and scientific knowledge generation (Doğançay-Aktuna & Kızıltepe, 2005). Earlier scholarly conversations on EMI policies and practices largely focused on the educational, cultural, and educational advantages and disadvantages of EMI along with in-class instruction, student and faculty attitudes, and public opinion (Kirkpatrick, 2011; Selvi, 2014). Adding to these conversations, our study drew upon empirical data to problematize the language use on the university official website which is an important tool in the Internet era. It seems paradoxical that, on one hand, YTU has ambitious internationalization goals as reflected in the increasing number of exchange program agreements with universities around the world. Yet, on the other hand, it does not properly take care of its Turkish-English website. YTU’s international community has exponentially expanded over the last eight years, but EN-v webpages are still not maintained by professional web designers and translators. Potentially because of the requirements of the exchange program agreements, the university’s main homepage, International Relations Office, and Erasmus+ Office webpages are relatively better maintained, while the departmental EN-v homepages cause issues of accessibility in terms of language and design. YTU may be under-resourced for web design and translation services to maintain its entire VLL properly, which is why the university administration could be prioritizing the maintenance of the administrative webpages as YTU’s “display window,” while delegating the responsibility of department homepages to department administrations.

The reason why language issues on the university websites have not so far been brought up as a problem could relate to the linguistic minority status of international students and faculty (compared to domestic ones) at the universities in Turkey, where the communication is predominantly in Turkish. There might not be space or a venue for non-Turkish speakers to voice concerns to the university administration. Instead of reaching out to the YTU administration for this issue, they could either be seeking their Turkish speaking academic advisors’ or classmates’ assistance or considering the navigation on the Turkish webpages as educative for their Turkish language development which they could conceive as one of their academic goals. However, more empirical research is needed to explore the students’ and faculty’s experiences with the online content on university websites.

To conclude, we argue that this exclusionary practice in YTU’s VLL is an important language problem that needs to be addressed with more equitable meso level language planning at YTU. As higher education institutions are becoming part of various international student and faculty exchange programs and offering more EMI programs, they should address this problem to construct a more linguistically inclusive VLL to enhance the outcomes of international exchange programs.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

ORCID

Ufuk Keles http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9716-640X
Bedrettin Yazan http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1888-1120