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Perspectives of business stakeholders about EMI in Turkiye

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Abstract

EMI programmes have grown exponentially in various parts of the world. While the reasons for the growth in EMI programmes have been commonly discussed, the consequences or outcomes of EMI studies did not attract too much attention. Moreover, various stakeholders of EMI, such as students, lecturers, parents and administrators, have been examined, but the stakeholders in industry have received less consideration. Motivated by the necessity for a deeper investigation of the business stakeholders' opinions about EMI, this study examined the perspectives of business stakeholders about EMI programmes and their graduates in Turkiye. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 company managers and 12 Human Resources (HR) supervisors from a range of large, medium and small companies. Our findings revealed that recruiters perceived obtaining a degree from an English-taught programme as an important aspect of human capital taken together with other factors such as prior working experience, certificates and/or further training. Nevertheless, company managers and HR supervisors occasionally had different perspectives regarding EMI graduates' English proficiency levels, which might be a sign of these stakeholders' different perceptions towards EMI graduates and their language proficiency.

Keywords: stakeholders, EMI-industry relationship, Turkiye, human capital theory, perspectives about EMI, career prospects

Introduction

The Bologna Declaration (1999) marks an important milestone in Europe with two long-term goals, among others, in higher education. These goals are enhancing linguistic diversity and mobility in higher education institutions (Doiz et al., 2012) and producing a highly skilled linguistically competent workforce (Coyle, 2008). One of these goals, enhancing linguistic diversity, however, might have been hampered by the dominance of English-medium instruction (EMI) programmes in the European higher education setting, as many European countries have opted to change from a primarily monolingual curriculum in the first language (L1) to an EMI- or a bilingual curriculum (Wilkinson & Gabriëls, 2021). That is to say, in many settings, universities have not advanced the Council of Europe's goal of plurilingualism (Sheils, 2010; they have merely opted for providing EMI programmes alongside those in the L1. In this respect, Turkiye is no exception. EMI in this study is defined as “the use of the English language

to teach academic subjects other than English itself in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English" (Macaro, 2018, p. 19).

The second goal, i.e., producing a highly skilled workforce, is a topic of debate. Recent studies examined this issue by focusing on the job opportunities of the English-medium instruction programmes from the perspectives of current and graduated students (Altay & Yuksel, 2021; Huang & Curle, 2021; Sahan & Şahan, 2021). However, to our best knowledge, not many studies have examined business stakeholders' perspectives regarding the competencies EMI graduates have and their career prospects. Motivated by the need for further research to unpack the perspectives of various stakeholders towards EMI, this study explored what human resources (HR) supervisors and company managers thought about the graduates of English-taught programmes regarding job preparedness and quality of credentials. In our analysis, we utilised human capital theory (HCT) as a theoretical framework to examine how company managers and HR supervisors envisaged the significance of EMI in the recruitment and job maintenance process in the Turkish context. HCT can serve as a good theoretical framework because of its emphasis on human capital investment and development (Zhao, 2008), which are also discussed as merits of EMI education in some studies (e.g., Sahan & Şahan, 2021).

Review of Literature

In this section, we discuss how EMI has contributed to the Englishisation and internationalisation of higher education. We also explore the stakeholders of EMI at different levels. This section also includes a review of EMI in the Turkish context and how EMI is believed to contribute to the job prospects of Turkish students. Finally, we introduce HCT and how it might provide a lens through which EMI, and EMI graduates can be observed. c

Englishisation and internationalisation of higher education

EMI has contributed to the internationalisation of universities by making study programmes more accessible to international students and enhancing the international prestige of academic staff working in English-taught programmes (O'Dowd, 2018). The Englishisation of higher education is also a closely related phenomenon even though it might have hindered the pluralisation attempts in European higher education (Le Lièvre, 2021). Wilkinson and Gabriëls (2021) define Englishisation as "the process in which the English language is increasingly gaining ground in domains where another language was previously used" (p. 14). Englishisation of higher education is a very common practice globally. Recent research and reviews that examined the issues of internationalisation and Englishisation of higher education explored these concepts in the contexts of East Asia (Galloway et al., 2020), North Africa and the Middle East (Curle et al., 2022) and Europe (Wilkinson & Gabriëls, 2021). In the European context, country-specific investigations included Spain (Sabaté-Dalmau, 2016), Italy (Murphy & Zuaro, 2021), Estonia and Latvia (Soler & Rozenvalde, 2021) and Turkiye (Mert et al., 2023; Sahan, 2021; Toprak, 2019).

EMI programmes have exponentially grown in various parts of the world (Galloway & Ruegg, 2020; Wächter & Maiworm, 2014; West et al., 2015). sEMI is often considered a factor in university rankings (Hultgren, 2014) and a contributor to the reputation of a university in the international market (Graddol, 2006) and to the prestige of institutions (Nguyen et al., 2017). Last but not least, it is an indicator of the quality of education in certain contexts, which is

mostly and more attentively handled by private institutions to compete with other schools (Dearden, 2016).

Stakeholders interests in EMI

Stakeholders in EMI have been a topic of interest for many scholars. Some authors have focused on students and their teachers (e.g., Aksit & Kahvecioğlu, 2022; Tatzl, 2011), some on teachers and administrators (e.g., Simbolon, 2018), and some others on parents (e.g., Başıbek et al., 2014; Wei, 2011). Materials writers and policymakers have also been regarded as stakeholders of EMI programmes (Galloway et al., 2017).

When the stakeholders' opinions and their interests regarding EMI are examined, students believe that diplomas from English-taught programmes can enhance the employability of graduates on the local and international levels (Tamtam et al., 2012). Similarly, some lecturers in a Chinese setting argued that EMI provided advantages at the institutional and national level for their students, including social mobility and career prospects (Hu et al., 2014). In this respect, the scope of previous research on EMI stakeholders has mostly concerned the academic setting, whereas very little attention has been paid to the business stakeholders, maybe because most EMI research was conducted from an applied linguistics perspective (Macaro & Aizawa, 2022) and focused on the learning and teaching practices.

EMI in the Turkish context and job prospects of Turkish EMI graduates

The use of a foreign language as medium of instruction (MoI) in the Turkish context has a longer history than the contemporary Turkish Republic. Dating back to the Ottoman state, using French as the MoI at the School of Medicine in 1827 is the earliest example in this vein (Marmara University, 2018). However, the earliest EMI school was established in 1863 when the first American school outside the US, Robert College, was founded in Istanbul (Minifie, 1998). Changes in their names notwithstanding, both higher education institutions continue education with English-only programmes today.

Although several other universities joined the "EMI train" (Macaro, 2018, p. 12) over time, it was not until the Bologna Process that the train gained momentum and may now be unstoppable. Turkish HE witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of EMI programmes at the tertiary level, especially in the early 2000s (West et al., 2015). Recent reviews of EMI in Turkish higher education reveal an exponential, four-fold increase in EMI programmes over the last two decades (Yuksel et al., 2022). Some EMI universities offer full EMI, where all the courses are taught in English, while others adopt a multilingual model, also known as partial EMI. Only 30% of the courses in the latter model are in English, and the rest are in Turkish (Curle et al., 2020).

As a natural outcome of this trend, EMI in the Turkish context has been heavily investigated over these two decades (e.g., Altay et al., 2022; Genc & Yuksel, 2021; Kirkgoz, 2014; Özdemir-Yılmaz, 2022; Soruç et al., 2022). Most of the previous research has concentrated on investigations of EMI at the classroom level. In the Turkish context, EMI universities have traditionally been “more favoured and popular for students and parents in comparison to universities without EMI” (Başıbek et al., 2014, p. 1819). This popularity might be due to “the increased chances of finding jobs after graduation” (Oz, 2005, p. 341) or a perception of increased social prestige (Atik, 2010). Similarly, studying through EMI has been regarded as a vehicle to access better education and a more respected and well-paid job (Altay

& Yuksel, 2021). A few studies, though not as many, have also investigated the implications of EMI on professional life (e.g., Altay, 2020; Altay & Erçin, 2020, Altay & Yuksel, 2021).

If EMI is, as is commonly believed, teaching content knowledge in English as opposed to English itself, then its goals and objectives consist of content and specialist knowledge gains for occupational purposes, making business managers one of the EMI business's stakeholders. This study focuses on stakeholders' perspectives in the sphere of business, i.e., company managers and HR supervisors, and examines them using a HCT framework. The study specifically focuses on determining the perspectives of business stakeholders towards EMI programmes and their graduates in Türkiye.

Human capital theory

Human capital theory argues that investment in human capital via education to obtain new skills can facilitate economic return in the workplace (Becker, 1994; Blundell et al., 1999). It is one of the key theories of the knowledge-based economy prevalent in public policy discourse in the last decades (Gillies, 2015). HCT specifically refers to the "knowledge, skills, abilities, and capabilities of individuals that have an economic value to nations and organisations" (Sebola, 2023, p. 219).

From an HCT perspective, education and training are regarded as the greatest significant practices that can enhance the quality of the workforce. Simply put, "the more and better education individuals possess, the better their returns in financial rewards and the better the national economy flourishes" (Gillies, 2015, p. 1053). Goldin (2016) argues that the definition and focus of human capital are based on the assumption that empowering people through education can enhance workers' efficiency and skillsets.

Based on the implications of HCT and treating English the language as a tool to enhance the chances and opportunities to be employed, prior studies examined whether English proficiency (e.g., Chandramohan et al., 2011; Luo & Daly, 2019) or studying in English-medium instruction programmes (Erling, 2017) would have any impact and increase individual capital in the job market and workplace. Their findings implied that both being proficient in English and a graduate of EMI programmes might increase opportunities and income in the workplace. In this study, we examined whether EMI would be regarded as an asset by business stakeholders in the Turkish setting.

Methodology

This qualitative exploratory study investigated explored the perspectives of business stakeholders towards EMI. Twelve company managers and 12 HR supervisors from various companies (e.g., large versus small, domestic versus international; see Table 1 for details) participated in semi-structured interviews during the data collection process. All interviews were conducted in the first language (i.e., Turkish) of the participants and later translated when needed. Managers are responsible for all facets of their companies' operations and are, therefore, expected to have at least a fundamental understanding of all processes. On the other hand, the extent of the responsibility/mandate of HR supervisors is determined by the information shared by the managers and is thus relatively limited. In this study, HR supervisors were responsible for recruiting new employees and enhancing the efficiency and productivity of the existing workforce. Even though they did not expressly have conflicting interests, they did have different responsibilities and duties, and we argue that this resulted in divergent perspectives regarding EMI graduates. The purpose of the interviews was to determine the needs of business

stakeholders in a variety of contexts in order to paint a more comprehensive picture of EMI graduate attributes. Initially, we hypothesised that varying responsibilities and obligations might result in divergent perspectives regarding the significance and position in relation to of EMI.

Context of the study

The data were gathered via purposeful sampling representing the diversity of the companies in one of the major cities of Turkiye, Kocaeli. In selecting the participants, first, a pool of companies was created based on the data supplied by a business organisation in the city. Later, the companies were grouped according to their size, focus and sector to reach diversity in terms of the characteristics of the companies. After identifying a list of companies, both of the researchers got in touch with the staff of the companies to arrange interviews. In Turkiye, Kocaeli is rated second to Istanbul in terms of productivity; 13% of the mass production companies of Turkish industry are located in Kocaeli. Manufacturing is the largest of the industries, with a total of 2,848 companies from 30 different sectors, corresponding to 28% of the all companies located in Kocaeli. whole. The top five sectors are metallurgical and materials manufacturing, rubber and plastic manufacturing, machine tools (and related equipment) manufacturing, food and beverages production, and base metal manufacturing.

Participants

Demographic data were collected from the participants after receiving their consent. The personal and organisational information of the participants was kept confidential. As shown in Table 1, most company managers were male (n=10), whereas the majority of HR supervisors were female (n=8). The company managers had worked in the field for seven to twenty-two years (M=13.1), and HR supervisors had a professional experience range of two to nineteen years (M=11.7). Companies were selected based on size, large, medium and small (n=4 in each size for both groups of participants). Regarding their focus, companies were distributed roughly in similar ratios based on their domestic, international and domestic/international focus, and their sectors.

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Research tools and analysis

Thematic analysis of interview transcripts was used as a method of content analysis for qualitative data (Riazi, 2016). In the analysis of interviews, thematic analysis can help “identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). A theme was conceptualised as a key idea about the data concerning the research questions. Our research questions focused on the perspectives of business stakeholders towards EMI programmes and how these stakeholders perceived the capabilities of EMI graduates. To this end, we have identified the themes of stakeholders' perceptions (e.g., technical English is one of the significant aspects of job recruitment and success). The themes also represented some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We used an inductive, bottom-up identification of the themes. All interviews were conducted in the interviewees' first language and later translated into English verbatim by the researchers. In

coding the interview data, the first author first coded the whole dataset to identify the major themes (as will be presented in the next section). Then the second author independently coded 20% of the interviews to ensure the inter-rater reliability of the themes. The discrepancies in the coding of the major themes were discussed by the authors and fixed in the process.

We benefited from the HCT framework's lenses when conducting our analysis. Specifically, we investigated how business stakeholders regarded English language and EMI diploma as assets, and parts of human capital both during the recruitment and workplace in the Turkish setting.

Findings

Four major themes emerged from the analysis of the data. Table 2 provides a summary of the interview themes and their frequency. We will discuss each of these themes in detail in this section.

[INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Theme 1: Technical English can be a more serious issue to deal with than content/specialist knowledge

The first theme that emerged in the analysis of the interviews was the significance of technical English proficiency, both in job recruitment and while carrying out job-related duties, which is also well-investigated as a student challenge in EMI education (e.g., Soruç et al., 2021; Altay & Yuksel, 2022). During the job recruitment process, both company managers and HR supervisors (n=8 and n=7, respectively) prioritised favoured technical English language proficiency over content knowledge, as stated in the interviews. In this regard, they believed proficiency in technical English to be an essential component of human capital. Both groups believed that content knowledge could be acquired and developed during the course of employment. However, they struggled to assist new employees in their language development concerning content-specific usage. Under this theme, we observed that both company managers and HR supervisors held similar views regarding the priority of technical English proficiency over content knowledge and highlighted this proficiency as a valuable asset in the workplace, as illustrated by the following quotes (particularly by Participant 13). theme.

Technical English knowledge is a priority for us. Both during recruitment and at work, especially when considering promotion. We can support our employees in training, and they can learn new things about the machines they work with. This takes some time, but we can afford it. But, it takes much longer time and effort if our employees have trouble with technical English. This is something that we can't keep doing for a long time.

Participant 5 (Company manager, 11 years of experience, mid-tier, domestic, machine tools industry)

Similarly, an HR supervisor emphasised the importance given in recruitment to technical English proficiency and communication skills over subject knowledge.

We usually have a checklist to follow during the recruitment interviews. We follow a routine and try to get as much information as possible from the candidates. During this process, we usually end up hiring the one with a higher English score. Candidates' subject knowledge and familiarity with what we are working on are important criteria. But, technical English proficiency and communication skills are usually more important than subject knowledge. This is mostly due to the feedback from other departments.

Participant 13 (HR supervisor, 14 years of experience, large, both food and beverages industry)

Theme 2: Companies consider EMI in recruitment

When company managers and HR supervisors were asked to discuss their priorities in the recruitment of new employees, six of the company managers and seven of the HR supervisors mentioned EMI degrees as a criterion. However, they also listed some other criteria, such as previous internships, academic success in the university, and extra courses and certificates taken, among others. We believe, from an HCT perspective, these credentials could be regarded as various aspects of human capital that might support employees in the workplace and strengthen their human capital. Our interviews also revealed that eight company managers and five HR supervisors held EMI degrees. Company managers and HR supervisors had different perspectives about initial specific criteria in the recruitment process. Company managers stated that each position and recruitment process brought together its own criteria, as exemplified by the manager of an international base metal company. We believe these conflicting attitudes might be closely related to the primary duties of each stakeholder. The following stakeholder comment provides depictions of the criteria for the recruitment of new candidates.

We do not have really specific criteria for the selection of the candidates. Usually, the type of work expectations determines the list of the items we expect from our new employees. Prior experience in the field, it can be both during internships or after graduation, the main subject studied, and any certificates taken would be all considered in the selection of a candidate in general. We do also consider if a candidate studied their subject in English. This is mostly because of the technical terminology, and we also expect good communication skills in English.

Participant 8 (Company manager, 13 years of experience, small, international, base metal industry)

Recruitment appears to be taken as a more standardised process based on the interviews with the HR supervisors. More specifically, HR supervisors adhere to a structured routine that encompasses a set of procedures for the identification of suitable candidates. The example of an HR supervisor at a machine tool company serves to illustrate this routine.

We do follow a routine while assessing the candidates. This is more like a screening and shortlisting process. Afterwards, we highlight the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate. We usually regard studying a subject in English as a strength. But we also consider the university where this degree was taken, the major field of study, internships and/or prior experience.

Participant 17 (HR supervisor, 8 years of experience, mid-tier, domestic, machine tools industry)

Theme 3. Some EMI graduates have reportedly quite low English proficiency levels

Our analysis of the interviews revealed that both company managers and HR supervisors mentioned that not only was technical English a language-related challenge, but also some candidates with an EMI degree did not have strong general English language skills. This was a frequently mentioned theme in the interviews. However, twice the number of HR supervisors raised this issue as company managers (eight vs. four). This might be because of the nature of the job recruitment process. HR supervisors encounter more EMI graduates (and some of those are not recruited, possibly due to their general English proficiency levels), and company managers mostly deal with those who have already passed the job recruitment process and have somehow better general English proficiency. However, low English proficiency was still present even for those who successfully secured a position. In some cases, this was a surprising phenomenon, as noted by both a company manager (base metals) and an HR supervisor in metallurgical materials.

I graduated from a mechanical engineering programme at a major university more than ten years ago. In that programme, all of our courses were given in English. Before starting my programme [mechanical engineering], I had one year of intensive general English studies in the preparatory school. Then we studied everything in English. It was very tough in prep school and my first year. But I studied a lot and today I am quite comfortable in English and I owe this to my hard work in the first years of my programme. I recently encountered some engineers, who took all their courses in English like me, but overall they have very low English proficiency levels even during daily conversations. They can't communicate with the clients on the phone. They have a hard time understanding the tutorials and manuals. I am really surprised because they studied in English and everything looks good on their CVs. Good grades, and a degree from a reputable university but their English is poor.

Participant 4 (Company manager, 9 years of experience, small, domestic, base metal industry)

In the interviews with the candidates, after an initial warm-up in Turkish, we usually speak in English for a while to estimate the oral communication skills of the candidates and their background knowledge about the position. On some occasions, I observe that some students who studied their subjects in English do not have a good command of English. They not only lack communication skills but also technical terminology in English. This is quite surprising, considering they are all supposed to have taken English-medium instruction.

Participant 20 (HR supervisor, 5 years of experience, large, international, metallurgical and materials industry)

Theme 4: Some EMI graduates lack content/specialist knowledge

The analysis of the interviews also demonstrated that some EMI graduates appeared to lack the subject knowledge they were supposed to have. Both groups of our participants mentioned this issue with the same frequencies (n=5). However, when a further question was asked whether the same problem existed among the non-EMI graduates, almost all participants stated that this deficiency was present in both groups (i.e., EMI and non-EMI graduates). Quite interestingly, two of the company managers and one of the HR supervisors linked the lack of content/specialist knowledge with the prior EMI studies of the candidates, as exemplified by a company manager and an HR supervisor in the following excerpts.

We sometimes hire new graduates, and we see that they lack much essential knowledge needed to carry out their work routines. We do not see this very often, but we sometimes experience it. Also, in some cases, the new employees are graduates of prestigious universities who use English in their engineering courses. This is so interesting. I sometimes wonder if some of these engineers lack some specific engineering knowledge and training just because they studied in a different language. Maybe they had a dual barrier, both in terms of the new content and English. Of course, this does not always happen, but I can count four to five examples of these cases in the last five years.

Participant 1 (Company manager, 21 years of experience, mid-tier, both food and beverages industry)

I talked about the lack of English proficiency in some candidates, but lack of content/specialist knowledge is also a common problem we encounter. In some positions, we ask our candidates to translate a document, usually a work-related manual, about how a machine we use works, and we see that some candidates do not have English skills and basic engineering knowledge about how a machine operates. It gets more interesting if the candidate mentions his previous experience with a similar kind of machine in their CV.

Participant 15 (HR supervisor, 9 years of experience, small, domestic, base metal industry)

Discussion

In current EMI literature, to our best knowledge, when the issue of stakeholders has been discussed, business stakeholders are usually left out, while immediate beneficiaries of the English-taught programmes (i.e., students and their parents) and providers (i.e., lecturers) and organisers (administrators) of these EMI courses are taken into consideration (e.g., Simbolon, 2018; Tatzl, 2011; Wei, 2011). Moreover, few studies benefitted from an HCT framework in EMI settings (Erling, 2017). One of the main implications of the present study is the perception of the business stakeholders (i.e., company managers and HR supervisors) in terms of putting English in a special place when compared with content/specialist knowledge. This, indeed, can be an example of how EMI has been regarded as a part of human capital that can enhance university graduates' job prospects. Similar to some previous work in the field of EMI, obtaining a degree from an English-taught programme, together with some other factors such as internships, has been regarded as an important aspect of human capital to secure a rewarding job (Altay, 2020; Başıbek et al., 2014; Kirkgoz, 2014). Previous research has examined how students perceived their EMI diplomas as an important tool of human capital (Hamid et al.,

2014). Our study builds on this implication by providing data from another group of actors in the field of EMI: business stakeholders.

Despite the lack of previous research on business stakeholders' perspectives, there are other stakeholders, such as students who hold the belief that studying their subjects in English would benefit them most in their future careers (Rethinasamy et al., 2021) because "companies are moving towards English" (Al-Issa, 2017, p. 9). Similarly, many Turkish students chose English-taught programmes due to "the increased chances of finding jobs after graduation" (Oz, 2005, p. 341). These issues are also highlighted in studies by Kirkgoz (2005) and Sahan and Şahan (2021) in the Turkish EMI context.

Another implication that was evident in the analysis of the interviews was that both company managers and HR supervisors believed that previous EMI training was an important aspect of human capital. However, both groups also considered other factors such as prior working experience, certificates and/or further training as significant tools to get a better position in the workplace. As one might assume, the selection of a candidate in a job search process is multidimensional and complex (Zaharie & Osoian, 2013), and there might be both global and context-specific criteria (Farndale et al., 2018) to consider in this process. Our results demonstrate that EMI is regarded as a significant aspect of human capital among the business stakeholders we interviewed, which also reinforces the views of the EMI students and graduates who were quite optimistic about their career prospects (Sahan & Şahan, 2021). Furthermore, company managers follow a more eclectic pathway during job interviews depending on the necessities of the business. On the other hand, it is suggested that HR development professionals should demonstrate effective strategies for addressing multiple needs and negotiating various stakeholder interests (Nafukho et al., 2004). In line with this point, the interviews in this current research with HR supervisors indicated a more systematic approach in the recruitment process to address the multiple needs of their companies and the various interests of stakeholders.

The third and fourth implications of our findings were somehow interrelated: issues about language proficiency and content/specialist knowledge. The participants of our study stated, with surprise on some occasions, that some EMI graduates had very low levels of English proficiency. The relationship between EMI and language development is still an issue of debate, although there are some recent studies that provide evidence in favour of language development in EMI contexts (e.g., Yuksel et al., 2023). Therefore, it is difficult to argue that EMI graduates would all have quite a high language proficiency. This issue might also be linked to the EMI model adopted in *Turkiye* (i.e., preparatory year model; Macaro, 2018), which values mostly non-standardised in-house testing in recruiting EMI students. These in-house tests may not reveal the actual proficiency levels of the students, and there might be some students who were admitted to the EMI programmes with low English proficiency levels. If the students do not have the opportunities to develop their language proficiency, they may have EMI diplomas with very low levels of English proficiency, as observed by the business stakeholders in our study. Moreover, some stakeholders also stated that EMI graduates lacked content knowledge. We believe that this might also be related to their low proficiency in English (Macaro, 2018) and language-related challenges EMI students experience in their EMI studies (Altay & Yuksel, 2022; Soruç et al., 2021), causing the students "struggle to understand what is being taught, and [these students] might engage less with the learning process as a result" (Macaro, 2018, p. 290). Our analyses also showed that company managers and HR supervisors sometimes had different perspectives because different interests and priorities were at stake. A notable example is regarding the low English proficiency levels of some EMI graduates. Eight HR supervisors (out of 12) mentioned this in the interviews, making it the highest occurring theme in the dataset for HR supervisors. However, only four company managers (again out of 12) highlighted this issue, and it had the lowest frequency among the major themes identified in this study. We argued that this difference could be related to the nature of the tasks each

stakeholder was responsible for. Due to the requirements of their job, HR supervisors might encounter more EMI graduates with lower English levels (who may not get the position). On the other hand, company managers are in contact with those who successfully complete the recruitment process with potentially higher levels of English. Moreover, the daily routines of these stakeholders might require different exposures with EMI graduates and lead to different, and sometimes conflicting, perceptions about them. Due to the requirements of their job, HR supervisors might encounter more EMI graduates with lower English levels (who may not get the position). In other words, they may perceive English as “a general human capital,” which is not only useful with the current employer but also with other potential employers as a fundamental requisite for any candidate (Fleischhauer, 2007). On the other hand, company managers are in contact with those who successfully complete the recruitment process with potentially higher levels of English. Moreover, the daily routines of these stakeholders might require different exposures to EMI graduates and lead to different, and sometimes conflicting, perceptions about them. Their perception of proficiency in English might rather be based on ESP and thus “a specific human capital,” which is regarded essential to increase productivity in their current job.

Conclusion

This study interviewed business stakeholders to examine their perspectives regarding EMI graduates. This exploratory research, which employed the HCT framework, yielded some interesting implications because, to our best knowledge, hardly any research has been done into business stakeholders’ perspectives on EMI. HCT framework views investment in education as an asset which yields profits in due course to the individuals (Gillies, 2015), and EMI can be viewed as a form of educational investment that can further the earnings of the individuals. Further research can expand this line of research by utilising other stakeholders such as employees of the companies (i.e., EMI graduates who secured positions in the workplaces) and/or their customers. Moreover, we could see that company managers and HR specialists sometimes had different (and to some extent conflicting) perspectives about the place of English and significance of EMI studies. We have already highlighted some of these differences but further research can shed more light about the variety and explore these issues in more detail.

Much of the research conducted to date has examined EMI from the perspective of students or teachers. Using an HCT framework, we examined the perspectives of business stakeholders on EMI graduates in this study. We focused specifically on the employability of EMI graduates and whether stakeholders held a favourable view of EMI graduates' language proficiency and subject matter expertise. Employment opportunities and graduate recruitment are among the primary goals of EMI; therefore, it is essential to listen to business stakeholders. In addition to other qualifications, such as work experience, certifications, and/or additional training, business stakeholders viewed an EMI degree as a valuable human capital asset. Our findings also revealed that our participants (i.e., company managers and HR supervisors) had different perspectives regarding EMI graduates and the significance of their language competence, which we believe might be due to the interests, work routines, and duties of these two distinct groups of stakeholders in Turkey.

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