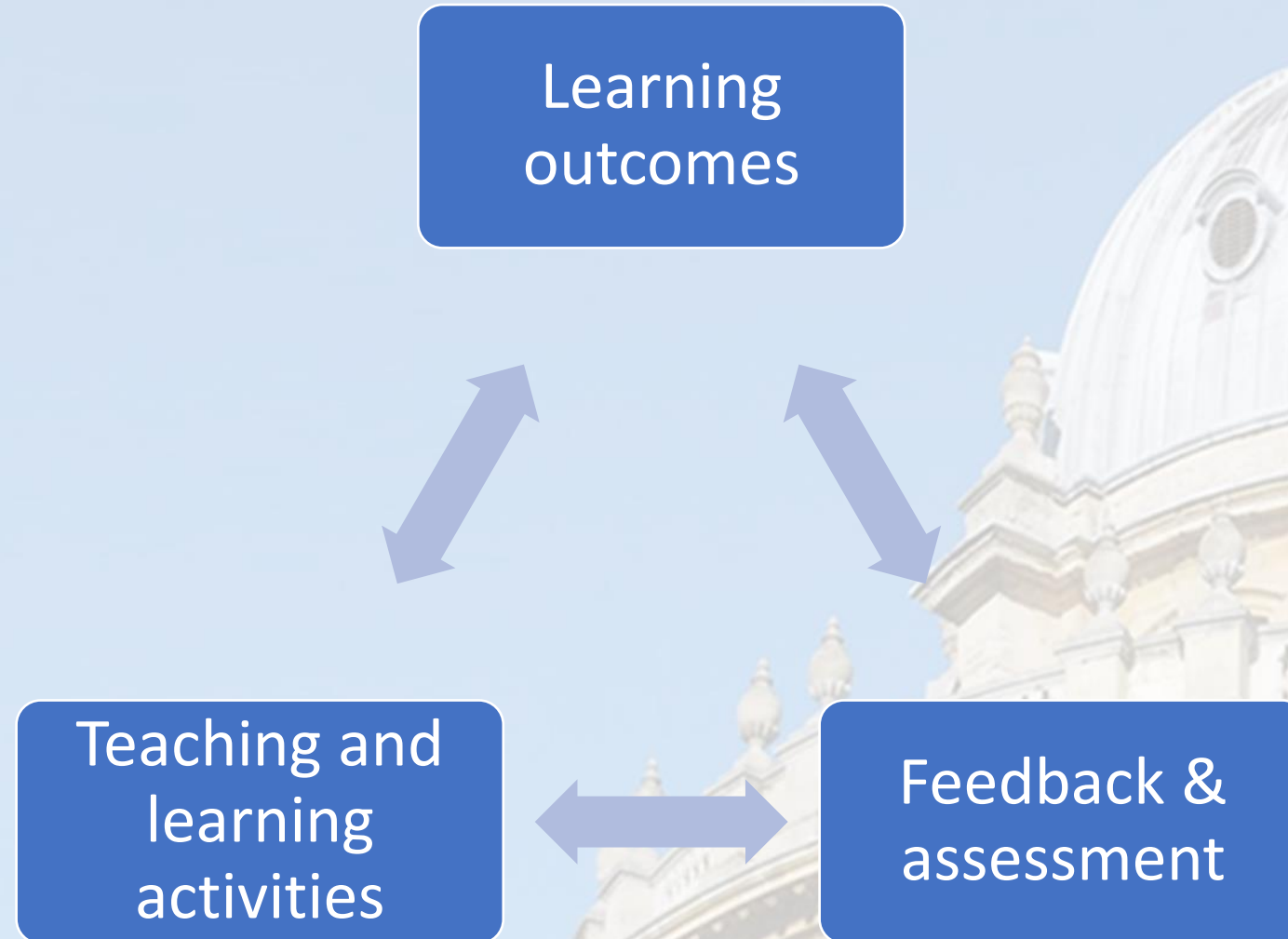# ALIGNMENT OF CONTENT AND LANGUAGE TEACHING

Dr. Kari Sahan

Workshop 6: Curriculum Planning and Constructive Alignment

28 April 2022

Constructive alignment

Learning outcomes

Teaching and learning activities

Feedback & assessment

Teaching & learning in EMI

Constructive alignment

- Outcome-based approached in which learning outcomes are pre-defined

- *Teachers*: create a learning environment that supports activities appropriate for achieving the learning outcomes

(Biggs & Tang, 2011)

English medium instruction (EMI)

- Aspirational dual aims of content and language learning? → often unclear (Macaro, 2018)

- *Teachers:* often do not see themselves as responsible for students' language development (see Airey, 2013; Block & Moncada-Comas, 2022)

Teaching & learning

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Possible tension?

EVIDENCE FROM 2 STUDIES

What does empirical research say about the alignment of teaching and learning with ILOs in EMI classrooms?

(1) Findings from Thailand & Vietnam

Galloway, N. & Sahan, K. (2021). *The growing global phenomenon of English Medium of Instruction (EMI) in higher education in Southeast Asia: policy, perceptions and quality assurance.* The British Council.

- *Aims*: Driving forces, approaches, and attitudes toward EMI in higher education
- *Methodology*: Questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups
- *Participants*: Teachers & students at 17 universities in Thailand and Vietnam
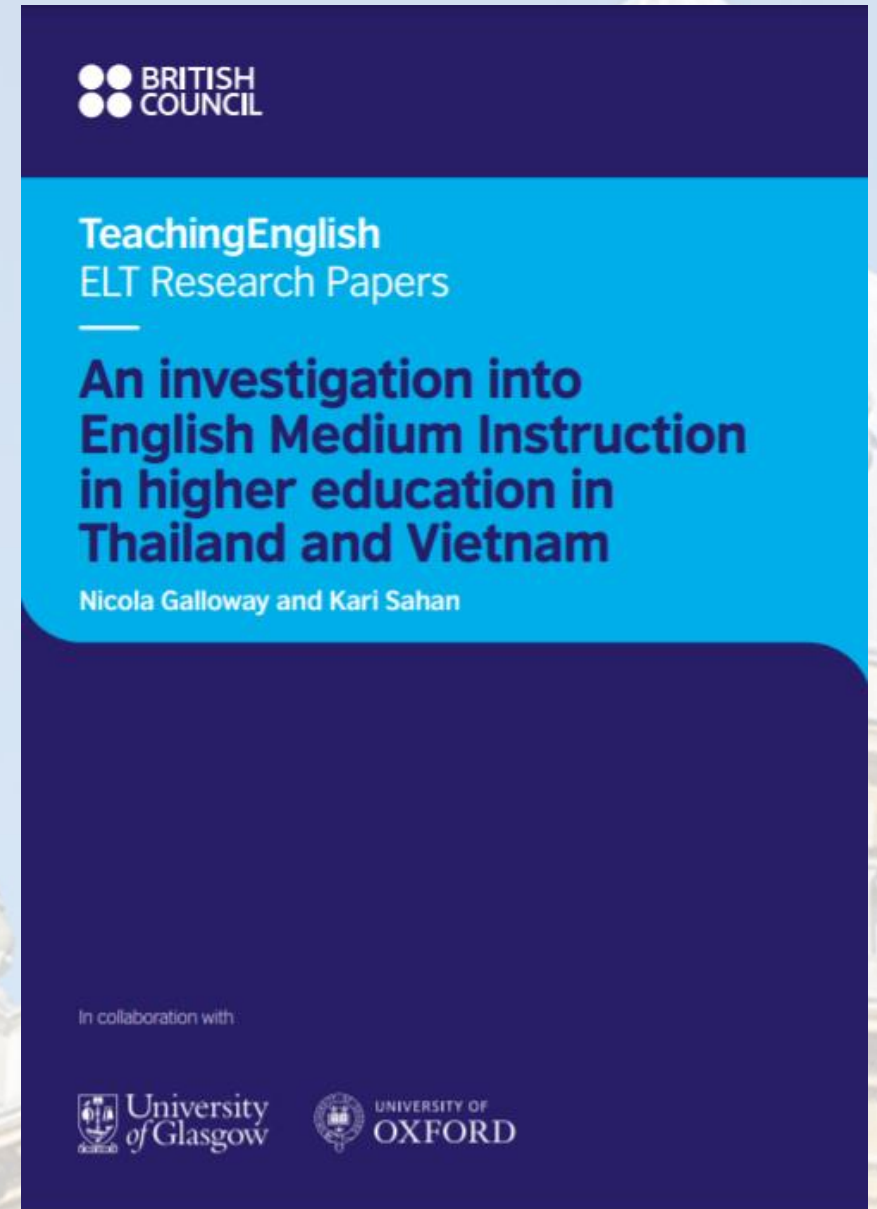
(2) Findings from Turkey

Kamasak, R., Rose, H., & Sahan, K. (2021). Quality of Instruction and Student Outcomes in English-medium Programs in Turkey. In British Council Turkey (Eds.), *New Connections in EMI Turkey Research Partnership Fund 2020.* The British Council.

- *Aims*: Quality of EMI in higher education
- *Methodology*: Questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations
- *Participants*: Teachers & students at a private university in Turkey

BRITISH COUNCIL

New Connections in EMI Turkey Research Partnership Fund 2020

British Council Turkey

www.britishcouncil.org

BRITISH COUNCIL

Quality of Instruction and Student Outcomes in English-medium Programs in Turkey

March 2021

Themes from the findings

English learning in EMI classes

Teaching & **assessment** in EMI classes

Cultural considerations in EMI teaching

ENGLISH LEARNING IN EMI

Is English learning an aim?

Teachers did not rate English learning as highly as students did

Misalignment of teacher and student expectations

Driving forces and motivation

To understand the driving forces behind EMI, students and teachers were asked why students enrolled in EMI programmes (Table 4). Students' top reasons were:

- future job opportunities
- opportunities to practise or learn English
- study abroad opportunities.

Students rated learning English more highly than interest in course content. Teachers also believed that students enrolled in EMI programmes to improve their future job opportunities and benefit from study abroad opportunities, although teachers did not rate English learning as highly as students did. Mann-Whitney U tests revealed that students believed more strongly than teachers that EMI students wanted to **practise or learn English** (U = 71550, p = 0.022).

(Galloway & Sahan, 2021) – Thailand & Vietnam

BEST Programme Indicators:

Vision	Key cultivation	KPI 5Aa	KPI5Ab
• The people of Taiwan are expected to be well equipped with the ability to use English…	• To foster bilingual professionals in focus areas	• Students are provided with full training and support (such as pre-tests, EAP and ESAP courses, assistance in upgrading their English proficiency up to the B2 level…	• The percentage the sophomores who reach the B2 level take up of all domestic students… is set to rise year by year as a goal.

Is English support provided?

Misalignment of language needs & assessment

General proficiency exam v. subject-specific language skills

Institutional challenges

Issues of language proficiency were made worse by **language support challenges** at HEIs. One content teacher suggested that there was a mismatch between the English proficiency requirements – test scores from exams assessing general proficiency – and the subject-specific language skills that students needed in their EMI courses. Teachers (three EAP and one content) also stated that **collaboration-related challenges** resulted in a lack of EMI teaching staff with expertise in both content and language.

If so, by whom?

Institutional challenges were discussed with respect to **language support for students** and **teaching support for staff**. A major theme to emerge in the teacher focus groups was the **role of content and language teachers in EMI programmes**, which relates to collaboration-related challenges (Galloway et al., 2017; Galloway et al., 2020). Across focus groups (n=8), teachers disagreed over who should teach ESP courses and whether content teachers were responsible for teaching English in their EMI content classes. Both language and content teachers believed that language teachers needed more subject-specific training to deliver ESP courses. However, they disagreed on how easy it would be to equip language teachers with content knowledge.

Who should teach subject-specific language?

Differences between English & content teacher expectations

(Galloway & Sahan, 2021) – Thailand & Vietnam

Are teachers trained for EMI?

Focus group excerpt with English teachers:

Teacher 2: I think the English teacher, when we want to teach ESP subjects ==we should coordinate, work with the EMI, I mean the specialized subject teachers, so that we can understand more about the content.==
Teacher 1: Yeah.
Teacher 2: And the terminologies, before we teach the ESP subject. ==Because some of the terminology we cannot understand and, yeah, this is very difficult for us to teach student[s] what the terminology that we don't understand.==
Teacher 4: Needs to take up a lot of time.
Teacher 2: So we, we need the cooperation of the subject teachers
Teacher 4: So many subjects.

(Galloway & Sahan, 2021) – Thailand & Vietnam

ASSESSMENT IN EMI

From T&V project

Language use

With respect to language use, students and teachers reported that EMI lessons were delivered various ways (Figure 7). According to students, English was 'always' or 'very often' used for lectures (58 per cent), course materials (70.2 per cent), classes (61.3 per cent) and exams (74.2 per cent). Comparatively, teachers reported higher levels of English use for lectures (77.6 per cent), course materials (86.7 per cent), classes (76.5 per cent) and exams (81.6 per cent). Mann-Whitney U tests revealed significant differences between students' and teachers' reported use of English, with teachers reporting **more English** use in their **lectures** (U = 60034.5, p = 0.000), **course materials** (U = 53703, p = 0.000), **classes** (U = 61307.5, p = 0.000) and **exams** (U = 63098, p = 0.000).
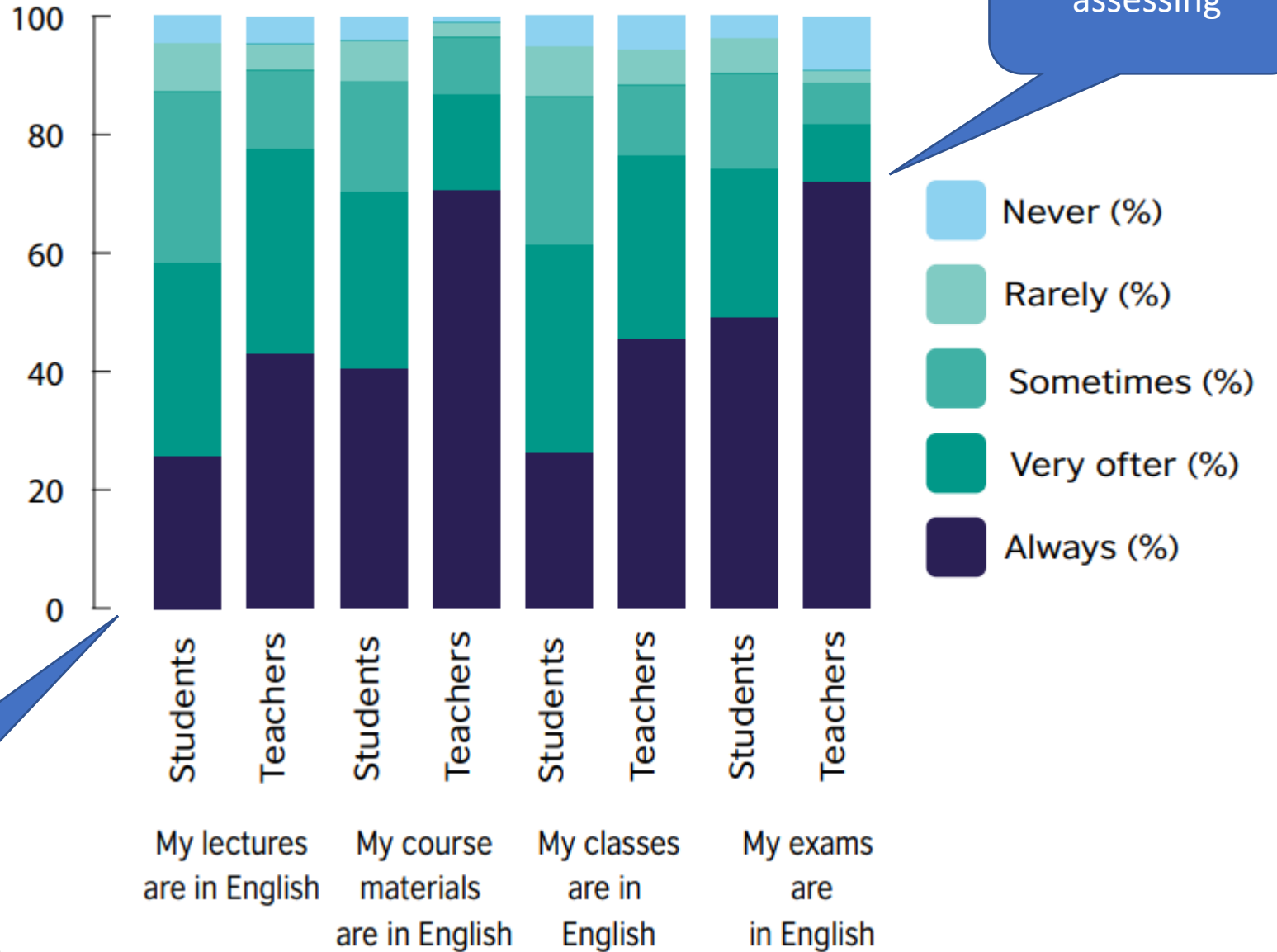
Differences in language use

How are teaching and assessment delivered?

English for lectures
(58% / 78%)
v.
English for exams
(74% / 82%)

(Galloway & Sahan, 2021) – Thailand & Vietnam

Language used by teaching and learning task

English for assessing

English for lecturing

(Galloway & Sahan, 2021) – Thailand & Vietnam

Why might this be a problem?

Misalignment of teaching and assessment

Difficulties for student performance

[A] student noted that mixed language use could cause trouble for students with lower levels of English proficiency: *"The exams are in English, but we speak Turkish in the class. This might be the biggest problem sometimes. Maybe not for us but for the students who understand English less than we do. This might be the biggest problem for them"* (Student 1, FG6).

(Kamasak, Rose, & Sahan, 2021) – Turkey
*Note: FG = Focus group

Misalignment of learning aims & students' practices

Memorization = lack of learning depth

The students also stated that their motivation to study the subject (FG1, FG3, FG6) and their study habits, such as memorizing for exams (FG5, FG6), affected their content knowledge acquisition.

What other problems can arise from this?

(Kamasak, Rose, & Sahan, 2021) – Turkey
*Note: FG = Focus group

CULTURE & THE EMI CURRICULUM

Is the content applicable to the local context?

Who are the students?

What are the expected graduate outcomes?

Cultural challenges

Teachers and students identified **cultural challenges** in adapting EMI curricula to their local contexts. Some students noted that they could not discuss **content knowledge in the L1**, because they had not been taught technical terminology in the local language. Other teachers and students stated that EMI curricula were Western-centric and **did not apply to local contexts**. For example, one content teacher described challenges teaching the history of Thai architecture in English, because English terms did not exist to describe features of Thai architecture. Similarly, students in a Food Sciences Programme in Thailand worried that they lacked knowledge of local Thai food and ingredients because their curriculum was taught from English-language sources written for a Western audience:

> We are study[ing] about the bakery and the bread and the yogurt. But it's not like the traditional food for Thai people... We don't know anything about our country.

Food Sciences Student, Thailand, University Q

Cultural misalignments

(Galloway & Sahan, 2021) – Thailand & Vietnam

Does the curriculum design match the local context?

Advanced Programmes offered in Vietnam imported curricula from partner institutions abroad, which one EAP teacher stated were not always appropriate for the local context:

> We couldn't agree, because the formula of the programme in Vietnam and at this university is much different.

EAP Teacher, Vietnam, University M

No one-size-fits-all model

Curriculum misalignments

Final thoughts for aligning teaching & learning activities:

English learning

- Are learning objectives clearly communicated?
- Are support structures in place for teachers & students to achieve objectives?

Assessment

- Do teaching & assessment practices align?
- Are students demonstrating critical understanding?

Culture

- Do the course content, material, and design fit the local contexts?
- Does teaching align with culturally appropriate ILOs?

THANK YOU
FOR LISTENING

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