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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY ON THE PROFILE OF SOME POTENTIAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

Prof. Dr. İsmail Hakkı Mirici

Hacettepe University

hakimirici@gmail.com

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gonca Yangın Ekşi

Gazi University

goncayangin@gmail.com

Biodata

Prof. Dr. İsmail Hakkı MİRİCİ is a full time academic at Hacettepe University ELT Department in Ankara, Turkey. He was also the elected President of the World Council for Curriculum and Instruction (WCCI), and the Founder of the WCCI Turkish Chapter. He has been lecturing at Turkish universities for about 28 years. He has about 20 books and 50 articles published. He has participated in the steering committees of several national and international education projects. His main fields of studies are English Language Teaching, and Curriculum and Instruction.

Dr. Gonca Ekşi is an associate professor at Gazi University, department of ELT. Her research areas are teacher training, curriculum and materials development, language and culture, technology and language teaching and young learners.

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İsmail Hakkı Mirici

hakkimirici@gmail.com

Gonca Yangın Ekşi

goncayangin@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to investigate why high school students might wish to choose teaching as a career. Who chooses teaching and why is important for policy makers the teacher is an important variable in determining the quality of education. Countries, especially developing ones, are aware that they need to train better teachers who would educate citizens of the 21st century. Teacher recruitment policies also play a role in the selection and maintenance of practicing teachers. This study aims to (1) investigate the motives of high school students who wish to major in English, and most of whom may become English language teachers as a result of alternative recruitment policies; (2) to find out some information about the student's language learning beliefs and habits. The opinions of their parents and their language teachers have also been looked into to uncover any persuasion or dissuasion from people around the entrants. Three questionnaires were developed by the researchers to gather information from 86 students, 30 parents and 29 teachers. The data of the study were analyzed via frequency distributions and percentages to demonstrate the motives and profiles of students and the opinions and influence of parents and teachers. The findings suggest that students may choose teaching English as a career because they like it and they are interested in the language and its culture. Teaching is also regarded as an advantageous job by students and their parents. Language teachers persuade students who have some perceived ability to teach and who like languages. The findings show that because of the entrance exam used for selection, students may lack proficiency in skills that are not assessed.

Key words: Teacher candidates, teaching as a career, profile of potential teachers

1. Introduction

The 21st century has become the information age with the technological developments and “knowledge” plays the leading role. “The changing needs in economy, service and manufacturing industry, and society necessitate new forms of knowledge, skills and responsibilities” (Perkan Zeki & Güneşli, 2014:1). To become active players and to sustain economic growth countries need to make reforms. “Wealth creation through application of human knowledge and creativity is steadily outpacing wealth creation through extraction and processing of natural resources” (Kefela, 2010: 68). Therefore, it is important particularly for many developing countries like Brazil, Turkey, China and South Africa to be able to compete by investing in education to raise new generations who can reach, acquire, disseminate and use knowledge more effectively for greater economic and social benefits. The necessity to learn a foreign language, English in most cases, stems out of the growing status of English as a *lingua franca* and the increasing multicultural work practices. Finally, the fact that the content in the Internet and profession-related literature are predominantly in English makes

enhanced foreign language proficiency a must for developing countries. The key to effective English language instruction is the qualified teachers.

Language education programs in the higher education system in Turkey are introduced in different faculties depending on the program content and features. English Language Teacher Training programs are in the Faculty of Education. On the other hand, English Language and Literature programs, American Language and Culture programs, Translation and Interpretation programs, and English Linguistics programs are in the Faculty of Letters. Among those students who select one of these programs as their major, the most successful ones with higher scores in the university entrance examination are placed in the relevant program.

English Language Teacher Training Department graduates may start teaching in any educational institution after graduation without any additional requirement. The graduates from the other departments are in need of attending a pedagogic formation certificate program for two semesters to become a teacher of English. Therefore students may choose one of these fields of English as their major and after graduation they all have the chance to become an English teacher. Statistical records by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) indicate that of the 31,248 English language teachers in primary and secondary schools, 21,178 (67,7%) are ELT graduates, 6,486 (20,7%) are other English majors and 3,548 (11,4%) are graduates of other faculties (2013).

A considerable number of researches have been conducted to explore the teacher as an important variable in an educational system. Who the teacher was prior to and is during the teacher education programs and what the teacher's beliefs, characteristics, experiences, knowledge, and attitudes are matter a great deal in the pedagogical processes (Aksu et al, 2010; Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Richardson & Watt, 2006). Akyeamong and Stephens highlight the importance of what teacher candidates bring along upon entering a teacher education program: "the input characteristics and qualities of the typical beginning student teachers are important indicators of the quality of trained teachers at the point of exit and of their continuing long-term commitment to the profession" (2002, p.262). Identifying the profile of potential teachers and the range of motives for choosing teaching as a career are important points to develop more effective teacher recruitment policies and to improve teachers' professional skills and knowledge. It will be ideal if teaching is regarded a good career choice rather than a poor one. To improve the motives and quality of future teachers, it is safe to suggest that one should first define and determine the current profile of potential teachers, their opinions about the teaching profession as well as some other factors and people playing a significant role in the decision making.

Numerous studies focus on identifying background characteristics, socio-economic status, socio-cultural values and pedagogical beliefs of entering teacher candidates and how the attitudes and perceptions of teacher candidates change according to these variables (Aydın and Sağlam, 2012; Baykara Pehlivan, 2008; Çapa and Çil, 2000; Richardson & Watt, 2006). Several studies investigate the attitudes of pre-service teachers in relation to different variables such as faculty of graduation, program, gender, technology and so on (Çapa and Çil, 2000; Çapri and Çelikkaleli, 2008; Erkuş, 2000; Kışoğlu, 2000; Johnson and Howell, 2005). This line of research offers the benefit of understanding and predicting the behavior of teachers.

The reason why people prefer a particular professional identity is a matter of various aspects. A perceived teaching ability, providing an important service to society, making a difference in society, desire to shape future and work with children, desire and ability to work in a particular subject matter field, job security, work schedule and extended vacations,

previous experiences and personal fulfillment are cited as the as the most common reasons for choosing teaching profession as a future career (Aksu et. al, 2010; Barmby, 2006; Chin & Young, 2007; Crow et al, 1990; Eifler & Potthoff, 1998; Farkas et al, 2000; Jarvis & Woodrow, 2005; Krecic & Grmek, 2005; Pop & Turner, 2009; Richardson & Watt, 2006; Salyer, 2003; Smulyan, 2004). Besides, family influences, teacher influences, peer influences and teaching influences are also identified as some other major sources that influence individuals' goal of choosing teaching as a career (Schultz, Crowder & White, 2001, p.299).

Richardson and Watt (2006), in their study with 1,653 first year pre-service teacher education candidates in three Australian universities, developed and validated a scale named "FIT-Choice" (Factors Influencing Teaching Scale) to determine the strength of influence for a range of motivators. Their study suggested that a comprehensive understanding of why individuals choose teaching yield strategies for teacher recruitment campaigns that would improve the view about teaching as a poor career choice. The study also indicated perceived teaching abilities, the intrinsic value of teaching, and the desire to make a social contribution, shaping the future, and working with children/adolescents as the most commonly rated motivators. Choosing teaching as a "fallback" career was the lowest rated motivation, which was counter to the much earlier literature (Haubrich, 1960). As to the perceptions about profession, the participants generally perceived teaching as a career "high in demand, low in return" (Richardson and Watt, 2006, p.46). The participants also regarded teaching as a highly expert career but with relatively low social status with a low salary. One noteworthy finding of the study was the far greater number of females than males enrolling in teacher education programs. The teacher education entrants also reported "relatively strong experiences of social dissuasion from teaching as a career" (Richardson & Watt, 2006, p.49). Still, despite the negative social influence, career choice satisfaction ratings were high. In their study with pre-service teachers, Eret Orhan and Ok (2014) found that gender, department, desire to be a teacher, satisfaction from department, satisfaction from conditions of the country, and general life satisfaction were found to be significant factors affecting candidates' attitude towards teaching.

Sinclair (2008), in her study with teacher candidates at different ages, conventionally categorizes these reasons as intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors involve social utility values, such as working with children and intellectual stimulation whereas extrinsic factors related to personal utility values are seeking a career change, a perceived fit between home and work life and the influence of others in the decision making process. Her findings suggest that all teacher candidates are motivated more by intrinsic factors than extrinsic factors regardless of their age. An interesting finding of her study is that an inability to enter another line of work was not found to be significant even for mature teacher candidates (cited in Evans 2011, p.611), which is in line with the findings of Richardson and Watt (2006).

As can be seen, the majority of the studies have been conducted on pre-service teachers in the faculties of education while very few studies shed light on high school students who wish to become teachers. Güleçen, Cüro and Semerci (2008), in their study with Anatolian teacher high school students, found that the attitudes of students towards teaching profession were average and in terms of groups, the attitudes of language students were higher than those of science students. Gömleksiz and Cüro (2012), however, found that Anatolian teacher high school students held a negative attitude towards teaching profession courses and demanded reducing content and teaching hours of these courses. The students in the study also stated that they did not think of becoming teachers in the future. It appears that studies conducted solely with participants from faculties of education or teacher training high schools may fall short. Therefore, the present study is thought to contribute to the literature by providing an insight into students from various high schools and their opinions and choices.

In terms of teacher selection, governments worldwide acknowledge the highly valued role of teachers in achieving the mission of each citizen having the knowledge, skills and values for the upcoming years. Teaching appears to be a socially valued profession. Yet, many countries are currently experiencing difficulties in attracting and maintaining effective teachers (Liu et. al, 2000). Unless teaching is made an attractive career choice for entrants, the shortage of well-qualified teachers may appear to get worse. The efficiency of any educational system mainly relies on how well teachers are educated and recruited (Johnstone, 2004; OECD, 2005). If policy-makers are to effectively attract suitably qualified people into the profession, they will need to understand who chooses teaching and why.

The procedure which determines the selection of those majoring in English also has a significant effect on entrants' skills and knowledge. In the Turkish context, university entrance exam is a multiple choice exam and it has the advantage of being able to test large number of candidates in a time and effort-saving way. However, being a high-stake exam, it determines life-altering decisions and placements for the enrollment in universities. That results in "studying for the exam". In other words, assessment drives learning- the so called "washback effect". Washback effect might be regarded as either negative or positive on learning and teaching. Negative washback occurs when a test aims to assess a narrow scope of language ability, and so constrains the teaching and learning context. Johnson (2009, p.87) highlights how assessment might affect how and what to teach and learn as: "High-stakes language testing, particularly when initiated at the state or national level, represents a powerful macro-structure that has a tremendous impact on what L2 teachers teach, how they teach, and what their L2 students ultimately learn". What a high-stake multiple choice exam assesses and what it does not assess can also affect how candidates study and what competences they have. Any government aiming to increase the quality of education in their country should improve the teacher selection and recruitment process before all else (Thaman, 2007). Hence, the study skills of candidates and their beliefs about language proficiencies also add a dimension to the profile of potential teachers.

1.1.Practising English Language Teachers in the Turkish Context

Peyton (1997) defines the knowledge and skills of a good language teachers as (a) a high level of language proficiency in all skills of the target language; (b) the ability to use the language in real-life contexts, for both social and professional purposes; (c) the ability to comprehend contemporary media in the foreign language, both oral and written, and interact successfully with native speakers (Philips, 1991); (d) a strong background in the liberal arts and the content areas; (e) understanding of the social, political, historical, and economic realities of the regions where target language is spoken; (f) pedagogical knowledge and skills, including knowledge about human growth and development, learning theory and second language acquisition theory, and a repertoire of strategies for developing proficiency and cultural understanding in all students (Guntermann, 1992); (g) knowledge of the various technologies and how to integrate them into their instruction.

In the review of pre-service ESL teacher education programs, Day (1993) identifies four components of knowledge that form the basis for these programs: content knowledge, pedagogic knowledge, pedagogic content knowledge, and support knowledge. This knowledge is delivered to the teacher candidates through different models that involve lectures, readings, discussions, microteachings and the practicum.

Yet, not all practicing English language teachers in Turkey go through the same training. This study's specific aim is to focus on who makes English language teachers in terms of their background features and their language teachers' and parents' opinions about their

choice. Therefore, a brief look at who the practicing teachers are in Turkey will be illuminating at this point.

English language teacher education programs are offered by 55 faculties of education (40 state universities and 15 private and/or foundation universities) in Turkey and five faculties of education in North Cyprus Turkish Republic. The language teacher education curricula offered by these departments is established by the Higher Education Council (HEC), and is revised to meet the demands of the national and international changes in education. The most recent revision was made in 2006 as a need to accord the program to train English language teachers with the demands of global world. In the Turkish education context, graduates of other degree programs (other than those of ELT departments in faculties of education) practice as language teachers. Graduates of faculty of letters have sometimes had the right to be appointed as teachers in the recent years depending on changes in policies of the state (Tercanlioğlu, 2004). Other majors of English have often sought a pedagogy certificate in case they wish to practice as English language teachers in schools. Teachers of other languages (such as French and German), provided they have attended an English language certification course with 40 credits, can also become English language teachers. Individuals who already hold a bachelor's degree from an English medium university can also be appointed as English language teachers provided they have a pedagogy certificate. Of the graduates of all departments mentioned above, those wishing to be appointed to teaching positions in state schools should take the KPSS (the Selection Exam for Professional Posts in Public Organizations) as the final step of the selection process. As can be seen, due to the urgent need to cover the need for English language teachers, alternative recruitment policies have resulted in career switchers in Turkey. The current figures of practicing English language teachers at schools indicate that the students of the above mentioned departments may end up being English language teachers at state schools in Turkey. Hence, a study attempting to shed light onto prospective English language teachers' backgrounds, study experiences and motives, and what roles and opinions their parents and their language teachers at their high schools have are important factors.

2.Problem

The main problem of this research is “What are the viewpoints of high school students who wish to major in English and those of their parents and language teachers about teaching English as a career and about their own English proficiencies prior to enrolment in a program at a university? The specific research questions are: (1) Do students in high schools who want to major in English at university think teaching as a career? (2) What are the roles and opinions of parents in their choice? (3) What are the roles and opinions of their language teachers in their choice? In terms of the language proficiency of these students the sub-research questions are: (1a) How do these students study? and (1b) What are their opinions about their own competences and language learning? As to their teachers, the study also seeks answers about the teacher's opinions about the students' competences and classroom practices.

3.Method

This descriptive study employs a survey method to gather information from potential teachers, their parents and their language teachers on learning English and teaching as a career. The participants consist of high school students who plan to major in English language programs at university, language teachers who work at high schools with those students and the parents of the students. The data was gathered during a large scale meeting held to inform the participants, who were actually coming from several different high schools in Turkey with their parents and language teachers. The participants were informed about

departments that they could enroll at university. Hence, convenience sampling was used. The participants answered and returned questionnaires on voluntary basis. Almost all of the participants, that is the high school students, their parents and teachers who were also present at the meeting, agreed to answer the questionnaires. A total of 86 students, 30 parents and 29 teachers participated in the study. Though the number is small, which might be a limitation of the study, the sampling involves much variety, on the other hand, as the participants were from several different types of high schools and grades. The findings of the study might be illuminating in that respect as it presents opinions and motives of students from different high schools and their parents and the language teachers who study with them.

4.Instrument

Three questionnaires were developed by the researchers. Validity is the extent to which a measurement instrument really measures what it is supposed to (Schnell et al. 1999, p. 148). The validation of the questionnaires were ensured as follows: Since a questionnaire is a survey technique in which each of the questions or items is independent from one another and thus the participants do not get an overall mark as a result, conventional validity and reliability measures are not implemented as in a scale. Instead, the content validity of the questionnaires, that is if the items represent the attribute that should be measured to a high degree (Diekmann 2000, p.224), was ensured by two reviewers who have knowledge of the subject matter in terms of how much they served the purpose of the study. “The assessment of content validity typically involves an organized review of the survey's contents to ensure that it includes everything it should and does not include anything it shouldn't” (Litwin, 1995, p.35). The experts also reviewed all of the items for readability, clarity, scope and comprehensiveness and came to some level of agreement about its final form. Thus validity was ensured in terms of fitness for the particular purposes of the study. As to the ethics, the high school students participating in the study answered the questionnaires with consent of their parents and language teachers, who were present during data collection.

The first questionnaire with 13 questions was developed to gather information about students' demographic information, how they study English, what opinions they have about their English language competences and what motives they have for their future careers.

The second questionnaire with 10 questions was developed to gather information about teachers who teach and guide these students. This questionnaire focused on the data such as what language aspects the teachers focused on in classes, what competences their students had and how and why they guided and/or persuaded their students to choose teaching English as a career.

The third questionnaire, consisting of six questions, was designed to find out the demographics of parents and their influence on their children's choice of English language as a major in their higher education process.

5.Findings

5.1.Findings Based on Students' Questionnaire

Of the 86 students who answered the questionnaire, 33,7% (n:29) were between 15-16 years old, 62,8% (n:54) were 17-18 years old and 2,3% (n:2) were above 19 years old. Of these students, 77,9% (n:67) were female and 19,8% (n:17) were males. The distribution of students according to the schools they were attending was as follows: high schools 29,1% (n:25), Anatolian high schools 51,2% (n:44), private high schools 4,7% (n:4), Teacher high schools 1,2% (n:1), Anatolian high schools 11,6% (n:10), Anatolian Religious high schools 2,3% (n:1). Of the students, 5,8% (n:5) were 9th graders, 12,8% (n:11) were 10th graders, 52,3% (n:45) were 11th graders and 27,9% (n:24) were 12th graders. Of the students, 80,2%

(n:69) were attending to language groups whereas 15,1% (n:13) were not. Other important findings of the study are shown in the tables below:

Table 1. Reasons for students to wish to be enrolled in an English language teaching program

<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Statements</i>								
	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>i</i>
1	29	5	0	3	4	0	0	7	0
2	7	8	3	11	11	0	0	8	0
3	8	5	2	10	8	1	0	14	0
Total	44	18	5	24	23	1	0	29	0

As to the first three motives of students for majoring in English language teaching, the mostly cited reason is “I like learning a foreign language”[a]. The second most frequent answers are “I believe it to be advantageous as a profession”[d] and “I want to get to know the language and the people speaking it better”[e]. The third mostly cited reason is “I believe I am/will be successful in the field”[h]. Other statements by the students are as below: “I like teaching as a profession” [b], “I take my teacher as a model” [c], “my family wants this and persuades me” [f], my teachers want this and persuade me” [g], and other [i].

Table 2. Language aspects that participant students study in English classes

	<i>Never</i>		<i>Rarely</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Often</i>		<i>Always</i>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Grammar	5	5,8	2	2,3	7	8,1	29	33,7	42	48,8
Vocabulary	9	10,5	7	8,1	19	22,1	27	31,4	23	26,7
Reading skill	11	12,8	11	12,8	24	27,9	26	30,2	14	16,3
Listening skill	13	15,1	21	24,4	33	38,4	10	11,6	8	9,3
Speaking skill	16	18,6	15	17,4	34	39,5	12	14	9	10,5
Writing skill	18	20,9	15	17,4	21	24,4	20	23,3	12	14
Pronunciation	15	17,4	22	25,6	21	24,4	20	23,3	8	9,3
Multiple choice tests	9	10,5	4	4,7	9	10,5	20	23,3	44	51,2

The student’s answers about how much time they allocate to the aspects of language classes show that the majority of them spend the most of their time studying grammar (48,8%

always, 33,75% often) and doing multiple choice tests (51,2% always, 44% often). Vocabulary (26,7% always, 31,4% often) and the reading skill (16,3% always, 30,2% often) also receive considerable time. The language aspects that students spend least time are listening (9,3% always, 15,1% never), pronunciation (9,3% always, 17,4% never), speaking (10,5% always, 18,6% never) and writing (14% always, 20,9% never).

Table 3. *Language aspects that students feel competent about*

	Very poor		Poor		Moderate		Good		Excellent	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Grammar	3	3,5	4	4,7	23	26,7	41	47,7	14	16,3
Vocabulary	5	5,8	13	15,1	36	41,9	22	25,6	10	11,6
Reading skill	1	1,2	4	4,7	26	30,2	38	44,2	16	18,6
Listening skill	2	2,3	12	14	29	33,7	22	25,6	20	23,3
Speaking skill	4	4,7	14	16,3	38	44,2	23	26,7	5	5,8
Writing skill	0	0	13	15,1	25	29,1	37	43	11	12,8
Pronunciation	1	1,2	8	9,3	33	38,4	31	36	13	15,1
Multiple choice tests	3	3,5	6	7	19	22,1	32	37,2	26	30,2

The answers about how competent they think they are about skill areas and other aspects of language study show that most students regard themselves as “good” in grammar, reading, writing and doing multiple choice tests. They also think they can display a moderate performance in vocabulary, listening, speaking and pronunciation.

Table 4. *What students do to improve their English*

<i>Values</i>	<i>Statements</i>								
	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>N</i>	65	22	1	44	62	53	37	6	5
<i>%</i>	22,0	7,4	0,3	14,9	21,0	17,9	12,5	2,0	1,6

The analysis of the answers related to ways of improving their English outside the class reveals that the mostly cited three techniques are “studying on my own” (22%), “watching foreign movies/series” (21%), and “reading books, newspapers and/or magazines” (17,9%). Other answers in descending order are “attending a private course” (14,9%),

“communicating with foreigners” (12,5%), “studying with friends” (7,4%), “going abroad” (2%), “other” (%1,6) and “being tutored” (0,3%).

Table 5. *Students’ beliefs about having a good command of English*

	Totally disagree		disagree		undecided		agree		Totally agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Learning lots of grammar rules	3	3,5	0	0	3	3,5	26	30,2	53	61,6
Learning lots of vocabulary	2	2,3	0	0	2	2,3	13	15,1	68	79,1
Being able to translate	2	2,3	0	0	6	7	18	20,9	59	68,6
Being able to read	2	2,3	0	0	1	1,2	10	11,6	71	82,6
Being able to understand what is listened to	2	2,3	0	0	2	2,3	12	14	69	80,2
Being able to speak and conduct spoken interaction	2	2,3	0	0	2	2,3	11	12,8	69	80,2
Being able to write	2	2,3	0	0	7	8,1	19	22,1	54	62,8
Perfect accent and pronunciation	2	2,3	1	1,2	4	4,7	33	38,4	45	52,3
Getting to know about different cultures	1	1,2		1,2	9	10,5	26	30,2	49	57

The students’ answers about having a good command of English show that they totally agree with all of the above statements and the highest ranking ones are competence in the reading skill (82,6%), listening (80,2%), speaking (80,2%) and vocabulary (79,1%). Although about half of the students (57%) agree that knowledge about different cultures is a part of competence in a foreign language it is the lowest ranking statement.

Table 6. Language aspects that students think are important to be successful at the university entrance exam and to be enrolled in an ELT program.

	Not important		Of little importance		Somewhat important		important		Very important	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Grammar	2	2,3	2	2,3	0	0	19	22,1	62	72,1
Vocabulary	2	2,3	0	0	0	0	12	14	72	83,7
Translation	2	2,3	0	0	9	10,5	23	26,7	51	59,3
Reading Skill	2	2,3	1	1,2	6	7	19	22,1	58	67,4
Listening skill	4	4,7	3	3,5	16	18,6	25	29,1	37	43
Speaking skill	3	3,5	3	3,5	14	16,3	22	25,6	42	48,8
Writing skill	6	7	8	9,3	9	10,5	17	19,8	43	50
Pronunciation	7	8,1	6	7	10	11,6	21	24,4	42	48,8
Different cultures in English speaking countries	4	4,7	5	5,8	23	26,7	23	26,7	31	36

The analysis of answers to questions regarding success at university entrance exam to be able to enroll in the English language teaching program show that the students think all of the options are very important. The highest ranking answers are vocabulary (83,7%), grammar (72,1%), reading (67,4%) and translation (59,4%).

5.2. Findings based on Teachers' Questionnaire

Of the 30 English language teachers participating in the study, 73,3% (n:22) are females and 26,7% (n:8) are males. As to their experience in the profession, except from one teacher who has less than five years of experience, the majority of teachers are experienced language teachers (6-12 years 26,7%, 13-20 years 43,3% and 21 and more 23,3%). Most teachers work in Anatolian high schools (73,3%) and most of them (82,32%) state that they try to persuade their students to study English at university.

Table 7 *Teachers who persuade students to choose teaching as a career*

<i>Values</i>	<i>Statements</i>			
	a	b	c	d
<i>N</i>	24	19	15	1
<i>%</i>	40,6	32,2	25,4	1,6

Three mostly cited statements of teachers who persuade students to choose ELT as a career are: "I guide those students who have an ability for languages" (40,6%); "I guide

students who like English” (32,2%); and “I guide students who are suitable for teaching” (25,4%).

Table 8. *Teachers spending time for study with students in language groups*

	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Always	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Grammar	0	0	0	0	1	3,3	9	30	6	20
Vocabulary	0	0	0	0	2	6,7	7	23,3	7	23,3
Reading skill	0	0	1	3,3	1	3,3	12	40	2	6,7
Listening skill	2	6,7	2	6,7	6	20	5	16,7	1	3,3
Speaking skill	1	3,3	1	3,3	9	30	1	3,3	4	13,3
Writing skill	1	3,3	1	3,3	7	23,3	5	16,7	2	6,7
Pronunciation	0	0	3	10	4	13,3	5	16,7	4	13,3
Multiple choice tests	0	0	1	3,3	1	3,3	5	16,7	9	53,3

When asked how often they study aspects of language with students in language groups, the majority of the teachers state that they spend most of their time studying grammar, vocabulary and doing multiple choice tests. They spend little or no time in skills work.

Table 9. *Teachers' evaluation of their students' competency*

	Very poor		Poor		Moderate		Good		Excellent	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Grammar	0	0	1	3,3	5	16,7	13	43,3	3	10
Vocabulary	0	0	3	10	7	23,3	12	40	0	0
Reading skill	1	3,3	1	3,3	7	23,3	11	36,7	2	6,7
Listening Skill	1	3,3	3	10	12	40	5	16,7	1	3,3
Speaking skill	0	0	8	26,7	8	26,7	5	16,7	1	3,3
Writing skill	0	0	6	20	8	26,7	6	20	1	3,3
Pronunciation	0	0	3	10	11	36,7	6	20	1	3,3
Multiple choice tests	0	0	0	0	4	13,3	9	30	9	30

Most teachers believe that their students are good at grammar, vocabulary, reading skill and doing multiple choice tests.

Table 10. *Teachers' beliefs about having a good command of English.*

	Totally disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Totally agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Learning lost of grammar rules	2	6,7	5	16,7	1	3,3	12	40	7	23,3
Learning lots of vocabulary	0	0	2	6,7	1	3,3	12	40	13	43,3
Being able to translate	0	0	5	16,7	3	10	13	43,4	5	16,7
Being able to understand texts read	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	23,3	21	70
Being able to understand what is listened to	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	26,7	20	66,7
Being able to speak and conduct spoken interaction	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	20	22	73,3
Being able to write	0	0	0	0	1	3,3	13	43,3	13	43,3
Perfect accent and pronunciation	0	0	4	13,3	3	10	14	46,7	6	20
Getting to know different cultures	0	0	0	0	4	13,3	9	30	14	46,7

The teachers' answers about having a good command of English show that they totally agree with all of the above statements and the highest ranking ones are competence in the speaking (73,3%), reading (70%) and listening (66,7%) skills. The teachers' choice indicate that a perfect accent and pronunciation, grammar and being able to translate are the least favored indicators of a good command of English.

5.3. Findings based on Parents' Questionnaire

The demographic information of the 29 parents participating in the study show that nearly an even number of mothers and fathers have answered the questionnaire (15 females and 14

males). The age range is as follows: 35-40 year olds 20,7%, 41-50 year olds 69%, 51 or older ones 10,3%. As to their latest degree, 10,3% graduated from a lower secondary school, 41,4% from a high school, 6,9% from a two-year graduate program, 37,9% from a four-year graduate program and 3,4% from a post graduate program. When asked about foreign languages they can speak, half of the parents (55,2%) state that they can speak English at a beginner level and 27,6% at an intermediate level. Parents who can speak other foreign languages are a lot fewer and only with a low proficiency (German 2, French 2 and Arabic 1). None of the parents are proficient speakers of any languages. Other information about parents is as follows:

Of the parents, 58,6% (n:17) state that they have been effective in persuading their children to think English language teaching as a career and cited the following reasons as effective in their guidance:

Table 11. *Reasons for parents to persuade their children to choose teaching as a career*

Reasons	N	%
There is an English language teacher in the family.	2	2,7
He/she likes learning English.	15	20,8
He/she likes teaching as a profession.	9	12,5
He/ she takes his/her English teacher as a model.	7	9,7
I believe it is advantageous as a profession for my son/daughter (job security, salary etc.)	12	16,6
I would like my son/daughter to get to know the people speaking the language and their culture more.	7	9,7
His/ her teachers wants them to/ and guide them to choose teaching as a career.	3	4,1
I believe he/she can be successful in the field	16	22,2
Other	1	1,3

The mostly cited reasons for parents encouraging their children to choose English language teaching as a career are the belief that they can be successful (22,2%), the child's pleasure in learning English (20,8%), and considering it as an advantageous job for them (16,6%).

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The teacher is a component of utmost importance in the educational system and it is self-evident that we need to attract and retain highly capable students to teaching as a career to achieve educational excellence. Quality teachers are central to the training and education of citizens who have the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for the competitive and global world. The present study seeks to add to the literature on motives for choosing teaching as a career. Given the wide diversity in backgrounds of practicing teachers,

the study specifically aims to explore the motives of students in high schools who wish to major in English language programs at university; namely language teaching departments, language and literature departments, linguistic departments or translation departments.

The motives, knowledge and skills of those people who may choose teaching as a career provide valuable background information for policy-makers, recruitment bodies and teacher educators. The findings of this study will be of particular use to these groups. Current and recent research has tended to focus on teacher candidates at faculties of education. Given the large number of career switchers, this study provides an expanded focus which includes individuals who may end up teaching or consider teaching as an alternative. Results from our study indicate that high school students are attracted to teaching as a career mainly because of their liking and interest in the language, its culture and people. Considering teaching as an advantageous profession is another reason. The potential teachers also believe they could be successful in the profession. Persuasion from the family or others appears to be another factor.

As to teachers, they persuade their students to choose teaching if they are good at languages and like English and if they are suitable for a teaching job. More than half of the parents of potential teachers state that they have been effective in persuading their children to choose teaching as a career. Two of the reasons are the same as the teachers': namely pleasure in learning English and perceived success in the job. The parents also consider teaching as an advantageous job. This finding is different from that of Richardson and Watt (2006). Although teaching is considered to be a job that is highly demanding but low in return, parents think it to be an advantageous profession, probably due to often cited advantages such as flexible working hours and job security.

A closer look at what the students study and what aspects of language they feel competent at shows that they spend much of the classroom time doing multiple choice tests and studying grammar. They spend much less time in language skills. As a result of the allocated time, they feel comparatively more competent about grammar, reading and doing multiple choice tests. The potential teachers appear to be spending much more time studying for the university entrance exam; that is, for the language aspects that are assessed in the exam. Skill development and studying the language as a whole seems to be neglected. The students answers about having a good command of English show that they believe skills, such as listening and being able to engage in spoken interaction, are much more important. However, when asked what would bring them success at the university entrance exam, grammar, vocabulary, reading and translation are the highest ranking answers.

The teachers' answers share the same conflict. They believe a good English proficiency is primarily being able to understand what is listened to and communicate orally and secondarily knowledge about vocabulary, culture, writing and translation. Yet, they spend most of their time studying grammar, vocabulary and doing multiple choice tests and very little time in other areas and skills work. As a result, they believe their students are good at grammar, vocabulary, reading and multiple choice tests. High stake public examinations might often lead to top-down educational reforms (Noble & Smith, 1994). As the present study shows, what participating students and their teachers think about being competent in English and what they do to study for the university entrance exam are totally different. The effects of the exam on teacher training and student learning are of vital importance and to bring about a positive washback effect on classroom teaching and learning, the university entrance exam in its present form should be changed.

Mitchell and Barth (1999) point that the most harm will be done to the students by teachers who are poorly trained and tested. Therefore, it is essential to identify multiple

factors that influence individuals from different backgrounds who become English language teachers during decision making and policy designing. Further and longitudinal studies are needed to uncover more nuanced understandings of the motivations to enter teaching.

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