

RECRUITMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTORS AT THE SCHOOLS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN TURKEY: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES¹

Türkiye’de İngilizce Öğretim Görevlilerinin Yabancı Diller Yüksekokullarında İşe Alım Süreci: Sorunlar ve Zorluklar

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ABSTRACT: This study aimed to present a discussion on the selection and recruitment of English language instructors in Turkey and focusing on the issues and challenges arising as well as the views provided by the current English language instructors and the candidates. The study adopted a mixed-method approach benefiting from quantitative data through the online survey as well as qualitative data involving semi-structured interviews conducted with randomly selected participants. The study included a five-point Likert scale survey that was composed of 14 statements used to allow 200 participants to express how they disagreed or agreed with a particular statement. The statements were published as a survey on Google Forms and were shared on several social networking sites such as Facebook. The results of the study indicated that the requirements such as the minimum scores on ALES and language proficiency tests should be reconsidered while calculating the total scores for the selection and recruitment process. The results also revealed that the interviews appeared a real matter of considerable concern for the great majority of the participants as the questions asked during the interviews were not structured or standardized to allow comparisons among candidates and that issue of serious concern were voiced by the participants on the specific requirements in job announcements.

Keywords: English Language Instructors, Selection, Recruitment, Issues, Challenges.

ÖZ: Bu çalışma, İngilizce alanındaki öğretim görevlerinin seçilmesi ve işe alım süreçleri sırasında ortaya çıkan sorunları ve zorlukları mevcut öğretim görevlilerinin ve adaylarının görüşlerine odaklanarak tartışmayı amaçlamıştır. Çalışma, rastgele seçilen katılımcılarla

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yapılan yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmelere dayalı elde edilen nitel ve çevrimiçi anket uygulamasıyla elde edilen nicel verilerine dayalı tasarlanan karma yöntem araştırma deseninden faydalanmıştır. Çalışmada, 200 katılımcıya sunulan 14 cümleyle ilgili katılımcıların aynı fikirde olup olmadıklarını açıklamalarını isteyen ve beşli Likert ölçeği içeren çevrimiçi anket kullanılmıştır. İlgili ifadeler, Google Form alt yapısı kullanılarak çevrimiçi yayımlanmış ve Facebook gibi sosyal ağ sitelerinde paylaşılmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçları, başvuru seçim ve işe alım süreçlerinde toplam puanın hesaplanırken ALES ve dil yeterlik sınavlarında istenen taban puanların yeniden gözden geçirilmesini gerektiğini ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca sonuçlar, mülakatlara sorulan soruların yapılandırılmış ve standartlaştırılmamış olduğundan dolayı mülakat sınavlarının ve iş ilanlarına konan özel şartların katılımcıların büyük bir çoğunluğu için endişe kaynağını oluşturduğunu göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İngilizce Öğretim Görevlileri, Seçim, İşe Alım, Sorunlar, Zorluklar.

INTRODUCTION

A plethora of research has been conducted on various problems and issues in foreign language teaching and learning at higher education institutions (e.g. Ünal and İlhan, 2017) as well as in teacher education and recruitment (e.g. Mayer et al., 2017; Low and Tan, 2017). The research conducted in Turkey on English language teaching, language teachers, and instructors include the current educational reforms and initiatives at macro and micro policy levels (Kırkgöz, 2017), evaluation of national foreign language tests such as YDS-Foreign Language Exam (Akın, 2016) and ALES- Academic Personnel and Postgraduate Education Entrance Examination (Abdioğlu and Çevik, 2017), as well as the language needs of university students (Akyel and Özek, 2010) and early practices of language teachers at the tertiary level (Öztürk and Yıldırım, 2012). However, there is a paucity of research on issues and challenges that arise during the recruitment of English language instructors at the tertiary level, especially in Turkey.

Contrary to the findings of the studies conducted on student enrollment in teacher education programs (e.g. Assunção Flores and Niklasson, 2014), in Turkey, there is not any issue regarding the number of students applying for teacher education programs. There are many students applying to these programs, and the number of these students outnumbers available quota. Recruiting students to these programs is not a concern in Turkey; the concern is the problematic relationship between teacher supply and demand since there are more applicants than vacancies in almost any teaching subject including English. Therefore, graduates are seeking other possible employment opportunities.

In Turkey, the graduates with a Bachelor degree in English Language Teaching, English Language and Literature or a related field such as American Literature

can apply to Turkish Ministry of National Education to be a teacher of English at state schools. However, in the last few years, language teacher recruitment process has become a tough process for the candidates, as they have to go through several examinations such as KPSS (Kılıçkaya, 2009; Sakarya Maden and Göçerler, 2015; Kılıçkaya and Krajka 2010, 2013) as well as the interviews, the score of which is used to assign the candidates to the teaching positions. As such, recently there has been a great demand for the posts as an English language instructor at the schools of foreign languages in Turkey due to several reasons such as the low status of teachers at state schools, required service (4+2 years) on the first assignment and low salary in comparison with English language instructors.

Regarding the recruitment process, it is well expected that the universities struggle to recruit the best candidates available for the positions they have announced so that the candidates selected should serve their students and improve language teaching and learning based on the needs. Therefore, it is quite natural for candidates to expect the requirements as well as the recruitment process to be fair and open to competition. To the best knowledge of the author, there is no study conducted on the process of the English language instructor recruitment at the tertiary level in Turkey. This paper aims to fill this gap by presenting a discussion on the selection and recruitment of English language instructors in Turkey and focusing on the issues and challenges arising as well as the views provided by the current English language instructors and the candidates. Moreover, it is believed that the findings of the study will inform stakeholders of the issues prevalent in the current recruitment process and the suggestions to overcome any problems attached to this process to ensure the selection of the most suitable candidate based on only merit and organizational values and goals. The findings are also believed to be important to maintain a fair selection and recruitment process, which will be open to any suitable candidate and which will not disadvantage any applicant or discriminate against any group or candidates for any reason.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Recruitment Process in Turkey

The recruitment process of language instructors at the school of foreign languages in Turkey is completed in two stages: the announcement of the posts by the rector's office and the selection of the candidates based on several scores obtained on required exams as well as the interviews conducted for the final decision to be made.

Minimum Requirements

In order to apply for a position as an English language instructor at the school of foreign languages at a university in Turkey, the candidates first need to meet the minimum requirements as set by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) [in Turkish, Yükseköğretim Kurulu] since this council mainly provides the legal basis for the recruitment of English language instructors (Official Gazette, 2018). The current minimum requirements are stated as follows:

The candidate must

- hold a Bachelor degree (a four-year program) and an M.A. degree in English Language Teaching, English Language and Literature or a related field such as American Literature, and Translation and Interpreting. It is due to note that some universities may require the graduates of these programs except English language teaching to have a teaching certificate (Seferoğlu, 2004). It is due to note that an M.A. degree has been required after a recent change that was introduced and announced by CoHE through the Official Gazette on June 7, 2018.
- have, at least, 80 score (out of 100) on a language proficiency exam such as *KPDS* (State Employees Foreign Language Exam), *YDS* (Foreign Language Exam), *e-YDS* (electronic Foreign Language Exam), *ÜDS* (Inter-University Foreign Language Examination), *YÖKDİL* (Higher Education Institutions Language Exam), and any equivalent score on language examinations such as *TOEFL iBT®* and *PTE Academic* (CoHE, 2016; Avcı, 2016; Official Gazette, 2018: Article 3 Item 4),
- have, at least, 70 score (out of 100) on the linguistic/verbal section of *ALES* (Academic Personnel and Postgraduate Education Entrance Examination), which is held by *ÖSYM* (Measurement, Selection, and Placement Center). *ALES* has two sections: Linguistic/verbal and Mathematical /numerical. There are 50 multiple-choice questions for each section, 100 questions in total.

Taking into consideration the suggestions made by the school of foreign languages, the university senate may increase the minimum scores such as requiring a score of 90 on the foreign language exam or may ask for job experience of several years.

Candidate selection

Based on their needs, the heads of the School of Foreign Languages send their requests regarding the posts of language instructors to the Rector's Office and upon the approval of the Rector's office regarding the availability of the posts,

the requests are made to CoHE. However, the Rector's Office can also send their requests to CoHE directly without being sent the requests by the schools. When the posts are approved by CoHE, the Rector's Office announces a notice indicating the required qualifications, the deadline for application as well as the exam date at the web address of CoHE, <https://yoksis.yok.gov.tr/ilansayfa/> since this is a legislative requirement to make sure that the process is fair and open to any qualified instructor. Having met the requirements for the position, the candidates have either to send the documents to the university by mail or submit them in person within the deadline (15 days upon notice).

When the deadline is over, the applications are reviewed, and the unsuitable applications without the required documents are rejected. Then, the list of the candidates is determined by the jury members (three members, two of whom are the academics in the language field), considering the candidates' ALES score (40%) and language score (60%) (Official Gazette, 2018: Article 10). Based on the total score, the participants are ranked from the highest to the lowest and the list of the candidates eligible to take the exam is announced on the main page of the university, and the candidates are asked to sit the interviews on the specified date. The number of the candidates invited for the interviews depends on the number of the positions announced. The number of the candidates to be invited for interviews is ten times the number of the position available. If, for example, there is only one position, ten candidates (or more, if the other candidates have the same score with the tenth one) are invited for the interview.

During the interviews, the candidates are asked questions that will enable them to show their professional knowledge and skills as well as their ability of expression. The exam jury ensures that oral examinations are objective, measurable, and auditable; member designated as the rapporteur shall record the questions and answers of the exams (Official Gazette; 2016: Article 12). After the interviews, the jury calculates the total score of each candidate considering ALES score (30%), GPA (10%), language score (30%), and interview score (30%). The candidates whose interviews scores are below 60 are eliminated and their total scores are not calculated. Moreover, the candidates with the total scores below 65 are not eligible for the position. To the best knowledge of the author, no feedback is provided for unsuccessful candidates following the interview. After the results are finalized and the total scores are ordered from the highest to the lowest, the list of successful applicants for the position is announced at the website of the university. Moreover, reserve candidates are also listed based on the number of the position available. The successful candidates are assigned to the vacant positions and start work as soon as the

paperwork, such as submitting other official documents and getting required permission, and security investigation, which was required after the deadly coup attempt that shook Turkey in July 2016, is completed.

Previous Studies Conducted on Recruitment Process and the requirements

To the best knowledge of the author, there is no study conducted on the recruitment of English language instructors at the schools of foreign languages in Turkey. However, the related literature indicates that there are several studies conducted on the selection and recruitment of English language teachers at state or private schools. Therefore, it is believed that a concise and brief review of these studies will also contribute to the current study.

In the study conducted by Padermprach (2017), it was also noted that while the teachers in Thailand agreed that a test should be used in the recruitment of English language teachers, they also claimed that it was not sufficient to benefit only from a written test and added that the recruitment system must include teaching demonstrations and psychological aptitude test. The importance of affective skills of teachers has been echoed by Adıgüzel (2013), stating that in addition to assessing the teacher candidates' cognitive skills, some other features of the teaching profession such as the candidates' interest and attitudes towards the progression should also be investigated. In addition to these suggestions and the written exam on teachers' subject knowledge, teachers' GPA (Grade Point Average), and the evaluations on their practice teaching at schools during the last year in their undergraduate program should also be considered (Bahar, 2011; Polatcan, Öztürk, and Saylık, 2016). The participants in another study conducted by Atav and Sönmez (2013) underscored the importance of the interviews to be conducted with teacher candidates. 73% of the participants in this study agreed that interviews would also contribute to the selection and recruitment of the teachers.

English language education and examination in Turkey heavily focus on grammar, vocabulary, and reading skills (Kılıçkaya, 2016) and most language teachers and learners refrain from practicing speaking, listening, and writing skills since language exams in Turkey ignore these skills (Akın, 2016), making themselves an important challenge. These issues are not just limited to primary or secondary schools; preparatory schools at universities in Turkey also seem to ignore several productive skills. For example, the study conducted by Akyel and Özek (2010), which aimed to determine the appropriacy of ELT program to students' academic needs, revealed that students should be provided with ample practice in speaking and writing skills, especially for their academic studies. Another study conducted by Öztürk and Yıldırım (2012), investigated the induction process of EFL teachers at universities through interviews conducted with fifteen novice instructors working at different public

universities. One of the results of this study underscored the importance of the teachers' need for improving their speaking and listening skills. Considering the results of these studies, it can be stated that the language examination, including the language tests that language instructors must take to indicate their proficiency in English (YDS, for example), is limited to assessing recognition skills such as reading, rather than productive skills. Moreover, speaking and listening skills appear to be one of the determining factors.

Another requirement that candidates need to meet is to obtain at least a score of 70 on ALES in Turkish. Candidates must obtain this minimum score on the linguistic/verbal section. However, the correct answers provided to the questions on the Mathematical/numerical section also contribute to their score, though on a very small scale. There are several studies conducted on the views towards ALES, the most recent of which are the ones conducted by Kayahan Karakul and Karakütük (2014), and Abdioğlu and Çevik (2017). Kayahan Karakul and Karakütük's (2014) study aimed to present the views of 274 academics working at Ankara University towards the admission criteria to graduate education programs. One of the important outcomes of the study indicated that a great majority of the participants agreed that ALES could not assess the beliefs, behavior and the values that candidates were required to have. Similarly, Abdioğlu and Çevik (2017) aimed to determine 154 academics and administrative staff's views towards ALES at a state university. The majority of the participants expressed that ALES was not sufficient in terms of content and suggested that the content should also consider the test takers' fields, rather than asking the same questions to all test-takers.

In summary, the studies that investigate the views and suggestions of language teachers and academic staff on selection and recruitment processes and the requirements have indicated that several suggestions and changes are to be introduced to the recruitment processes. Most of the studies suggest the introduction of interviews to be conducted with the candidates so that their professional knowledge and skills can be observed. Based on the findings of the studies reviewed in this section, the minimum requirements seem to changed when, especially, such exams as ALES are considered.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The aim of this study is to present a discussion on the selection and recruitment of English language instructors in Turkey, focusing on the issues and challenges arising as well as the views provided by the current English language instructors and the candidates. The study adopted a mixed-method approach benefiting from quantitative data through the online survey as well

as qualitative data involving semi-structured interviews conducted with randomly selected participants.

Participants

200 participants, who had applied for positions for English language instructors at least once, participated in the study. These participants were the individuals who responded to the survey that was published through Google Forms and was announced on several social networking sites such as Facebook. The demographic information about the participants is provided in the following table (Table 1).

Table 1: Participants' Demographic Information

Variable	Groups	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	69	34.50
	Female	131	65.50
Current status	Employed	112	56.00
	unemployed	88	44.00
Degree	B.A.	171	85.50
	M.A.	24	12.00
	Ph.D.	5	2.50
Program	B.A. in ELT	102	51.00
	B.A. in ELL	75	37.50
	B.A. in AL	23	11.50
	M.A. in ELT	14	56.00
	M.A. in ELL	9	36.00
	M.A. in AL	2	8.00
	Ph.D. in ELT	3	60.00
	Ph.D. in ELL	2	40.00
	Ph.D. in AL	0	0.00

Data collection instruments

The study included a five-point Likert scale survey that was composed of 14 statements used to allow the participants to express how they disagreed or agreed with a particular statement. The researcher developed the survey based on the previous studies conducted on related issues or statements. To ensure the reliability and validity of the survey, a pilot study was conducted with 50 seniors of English at a state university. Regarding the content validity, expert opinions were obtained and item factor analysis was done for construct validity. The Cronbach's Alpha co-efficient of the scale has been found .789. The survey published on Google Forms included a covering letter that indicated the information such as the name of the researcher along with the contact information, the basic aims of the study, and how the information

provided will be used. It was clearly indicated that no harm will result from the study, and all the information provided by the participants will be strictly kept confidential. The participants were also encouraged to participate in the study, as the study did not require them to provide any identifiable information. The survey was shared on several social networking sites such as *Facebook*.

Data Analysis

The data analysis included the quantitative data collected through the surveys (200 participants) and the qualitative data collected through the interviews conducted with twenty participants, 12 of whom were randomly selected. First, all the participants were listed as names on an Excel list and 12 participant names were randomly selected using the *Sort Range Randomly* utility of *Kutools for Excel*. The rest were willing and able to participate in the interviews. The data collected through the surveys were analyzed in terms of descriptive statistics using IBM SPSS as the survey was designed to enable the participants to express their views on the given statements, and there was no attempt to control or manipulate variables. The descriptive statistics included frequency and percentage response distributions as well as measures of central tendency such as the mean, and dispersion measures such as the standard deviation. Moreover, one sample t-test was also calculated to check whether the mean scores would differ from the neutral point (3).

The data collected throughout the interviews were subject to inductive content analysis. The interviews were carried out semi-structured interviews, and the researcher has a set of the following questions:

- What are your views regarding the exams required for the post as an English language instructor?
- In your view, which exam serves the best to be an English language instructor? Why?
- Do you think that interviews assess your professional knowledge and skills?
- What do you think about the minimum requirements and the requirements announced in the post announcements?

Depending on the flow and the topics of the interview with the participants, the order was sometimes varied. The analysis of the responses provided to the interview questions followed the steps proposed by Creswell (2007). The recorded interviews were first transcribed verbatim. The responses of the participants who did not agree to be recorded were analyzed considering the in-depth hand-written notes taken during these interviews. The transcripts were then checked for units of meaning to determine the emerging themes

and codes. When the themes and codes were finalized, another expert in the field was asked to code the transcripts to ensure consistency and credibility. As a final step, the similarities and differences were discussed by the researcher and the expert, which resulted in revisions to the codes. The themes and the codes, including the example responses, have been provided in Table 3. Three themes and seven codes emerged based on the content analysis: (1) Required MC exams; (2) Interviews; and (3) Requirements. The theme 'Written exams' included three codes: ALES, Language Proficiency Exams, and GPA (General Point Average), and the theme 'Interviews' was composed of two codes: 'Nonobjective-biased', and 'limited in scope'. The final theme 'Requirements' included two codes: 'Unfair', and 'specific to a person'.

RESULTS

Quantitative data results

The participants' responses to the survey were analyzed through descriptive statistics, which included frequency, percentage response distributions as well as the mean and the standard deviation and summarized in Table 2. Table 3 provides one-sample t-test results on the mean scores.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on the Participants' Responses to the Survey

#	Statement	\bar{x}	Std. Dev.
1.	ALES scores should be considered in the recruitment process.	2.58	.915
2.	Language proficiency exam scores should be considered in the recruitment process.	4.36	.531
3.	GPA should be considered in the recruitment process.	4.09	.745
4.	The impact of ALES scores should be increased in calculating the total score obtained.	1.51	.549
5.	The impact of language proficiency exam scores should be increased in calculating the total score obtained.	4.55	.556
6.	The impact of GPA (Grade Point Average) should be increased in calculating the total score obtained.	3.59	.816
7.	Interview questions enable me to show my professional knowledge and skills.	1.99	.653
8.	Interview questions enable me to show my ability of expression.	3.66	.761
9.	Interviews are objective.	2.33	.724
10.	Interviews should be abolished. Instead, recruitment process should only consider the exam scores.	4.19	.870
11.	Years of experience determined as a requirement is objective.	1.66	.975
12.	Limiting the B.A. /M.A. /Ph.D. degree to a specific program such as English Language Teaching or English Literature is objective.	1.67	.744
13.	M.A. / Ph.D. degree requirement is objective.	1.47	.750
14.	Specific requirements mean that the university has a candidate in mind.	4.31	.611

SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, UD= Undecided, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree

Table 3: One-sample t-test results on the mean scores

# Statement	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
s1	-6.489	199	.000	-.420
s2	36.231	199	.000	1.360
s3	20.698	199	.000	1.090
s4	-38.506	199	.000	-1.495
s5	39.431	199	.000	1.550
s6	10.137	199	.000	.585
s7	-21.969	199	.000	-1.015
s8	12.175	199	.000	.655
s9	-13.093	199	.000	-.670
s10	19.334	199	.000	1.190
s11	-19.508	199	.000	-1.345
s12	-25.273	199	.000	-1.330
s13	-28.865	199	.000	-1.530
s14	30.184	199	.000	1.305

Both Table 2 and 3 indicate that the participants tended to disagree with the statement ($\bar{x}=2.58$; $SD=.915$) regarding the use of ALES scores in the recruitment process. The data suggest that the participants do not want ALES scores to be considered in the recruitment process. As for the language proficiency exam, the table shows that the participants reported a much higher agreement with the statement that language exam scores should be considered ($\bar{x}=4.36$; $SD=.531$). Likewise, the participants also reported that GPA should also be considered in the initial recruitment process ($\bar{x}=4.09$; $SD=.745$). With regard to the statements on increasing the impact of the exams scores in the total calculation, the participants reported varying responses. The impacts of GPA ($\bar{x}=3.59$; $SD=.816$) and language proficiency scores ($\bar{x}=4.55$; $SD=.556$) were reported to be increased. However, the participants reported that they disagreed with the statement that the impact of ALES scores ($\bar{x}=1.51$; $SD=.549$) should be increased in calculating the total score. The participants' responses to the statements regarding the interviews led to interesting results. For example, while the participants agreed that the interview questions enabled them to show their ability of expression in English ($\bar{x}=3.66$; $SD=.761$), they tended to disagree that the interview questions aimed to assess their professional knowledge and skills ($\bar{x}=1.99$; $SD=.653$). Moreover, the participants reported that they disagreed that the interviews were objective ($\bar{x}=2.33$; $SD=.724$) and agreed that the interviews should be abolished and that only the exam scores should be considered ($\bar{x}=4.19$; $SD=.870$).

As to the participants' responses to the requirements in the post announcements, the participants disagreed with the statements that years of experience ($\bar{x}=1.66$; $SD=.975$), limiting the B.A /M.A. / Ph.D. degree to a specific program such as

English language Teaching or English Literature (\bar{x} =1.67; SD =.744) and M.A. / Ph.D. degree requirement are objective (\bar{x} =1.47; SD =.750). Moreover, the participants agreed that these specific requirements meant the university had a specific candidate in mind (\bar{x} =4.31; SD =.611).

Qualitative data results

Based on the inductive content analysis, three themes and under these three themes, seven codes emerged in total. Under the theme 'Required MC (Multiple Choice) exams', three codes were determined: ALES, Language Exam, and GPA (General Point Average). The themes and the codes, including the example responses, have been provided in Table 3.

Table 3: The Emerging Themes and Codes in the Interviews

Theme	Codes	Sample Responses
Required MC Exams	ALES	<i>I do not think that ALES is a good measure of English language teachers in terms of their professional ability and skills. It aims to test the candidates' mathematical and language skills in Turkish. We will be teachers of English, but we are required to take this exam. The impact of this test should at least be decreased</i>
	Language Exams	<i>Language proficiency exams are a better indicator of the candidates' ability. Of course, the language exams in Turkey are based on multiple-choice exams. They just assess recognition skills rather than productive skills. They do not assess speaking, writing, and listening. I believe that other exams that assess the four skills such as TOEFL iBT® are more reliable and valid.</i>
	GPA	<i>GPA should also be included in the initial screening process. I mean, ALES and Language exam scores are considered in determining the list of the candidates to be interviewed, but GPA is ignored, which means ignoring the candidates' success during their four years in their education. Moreover, the impact of GPA should also be increased.</i>
Interviews	Nonobjective-biased	<i>The interviews are not objective. I do not believe that the jury members can make decisions about whether the person is qualified of performing the job as an English instructor. The jury members asked me why I did not apply to the university where I lived.</i>
	Limited in scope	<i>The questions asked during the interviews may reveal my ability of expression in English as well as professional knowledge. Seldom did I have questions in other interviews on my teaching philosophy or experiences. I strongly believe that there should be no interviews.</i>
Requirements	Unfair	<i>I have no problems regarding the common requirements such as having a score of 80 in the language exam or 70 in ALES. But when I check the websites for notices for posts, I see many notices requiring that the candidates should be a graduate of only English language teaching. Some even require an M.A degree in a specific program.</i>
	Specific to a person	<i>When I see a post announced on the university websites or at the web address of CoHE, I sometimes get surprised. In addition to the common requirements, there are very specific requirements such as the program that the candidate must have graduated and the years of experience. These post notices are very narrow and specific. I believe that the university has a specific person in mind and by determining such requirements; they try to limit the number of applicants so that only that person or a few more could apply and they could easily select that person for the job.</i>

ALES. The participants' responses to the questions on the required examinations show that ALES was not viewed as a reliable and valid indicator of the candidates' success in their future career. A great majority of the participants interviewed (n=17) indicated that the mathematical/numerical section of the exam does not assess their professional skills regarding English language teaching. One of the reasons pointed out by the participants why ALES was not regarded as a valid exam was that the candidates with high mathematical skills had an advantage over the others with low skills. This belief is evident in the response of one of the participants:

In order to be invited to the interview, the candidates are listed from the highest to the lowest scores. ALES accounts for 40 percent of the total score, which I believe is unfair. I have a very high score on the language exam, but when it comes to ALES, unfortunately, I have a low score, as I cannot do well in mathematics in that exam. Although I speak English very well and have a good GPA, most of the time I am not on the interview list due to the low score in ALES.

Almost all the participants (n=19) also indicated that the impact of ALES should be decreased so that the scores obtained in language proficiency exams can affect more the total score as it was expressed that the aim was to select an English language instructor. One participant expressed this as follows:

The impact of ALES should be decreased. The university, I think, needs a good language instructor who can speak and teach English well. ALES assesses Turkish language and mathematical skills through multiple-choice exams.

Language Proficiency Exams. The participants (n=19) believe that the impact of language proficiency exams in the recruitment process should be increased as they expressed that professional knowledge and skills could be better represented compared to ALES. However, it was also noted by some participants (n=11) that the current language proficiency exams such as YDS and YÖKDİL were not enough to assess the four skills of the participants as these exams were composed of multiple-choice questions that assessed recognition skills such as vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Therefore, these participants, while acknowledging the contribution of language exams to the recruitment process, expressed that these exams should be replaced by the exams that focus more on productive skills, rather than passive skills. One of the participants expressed this view as follows:

The scores on the language proficiency exams should contribute more to the total scores of the participants. The selection process would be fairer, I think. In this way, the candidates with higher ability in the language would

be interviewed for the posts. Moreover, the exams should be testing the productive skills such as the TOEFL iBT® test, which I think better represents the candidates' ability in speaking and listening skills.

GPA. A great majority of the participants (n=17) expressed that GPA should also be considered in the initial screening process. As mentioned before, during the initial recruitment process for the language instructor posts in Turkey, only ALES and language scores are calculated to determine which candidates are to be invited for the interview exams. However, the participants underscored the importance of adding GPA to the calculation as one of the participants explained:

GPA is totally ignored in the initial screening process. While the calculation of the total scores after the interview includes GPA, ten percent by the way, the first process does not include it. I consider this unfair because the candidates' educational background is ignored. I mean their success at the university.

Under the theme 'Interviews', two codes emerged: 'Nonobjective-biased' and 'limited in scope'.

Nonobjective-biased. Most of the participants (n=15) indicated that the interviews are non-objective and biased due to several reasons. One of the reasons indicated by the participants was that the questions asked during the interviews were more related to personal issues. Some of the questions asked during the interviews were: "Why did not you apply to the university where you lived?", "Would you like to work in the rural districts where the university has a vocational high school? and "Why would you like to be an English instructor?" One of the participants expressed this as follows:

The aim of the interviews should be to assess the candidates' professional knowledge and abilities such as current knowledge regarding language teaching at the university and pedagogical approaches. However, most of the questions in the interviews are related to other issues such as why we are applying to the university, and what makes you a good teacher. I was once asked if I was able to teach at a vocational high school where male students outnumbered the females.

Limited in scope. A great majority of the participants (n= 18) were of the opinion that the interviews were limited in scope as most of the interviews were conducted within five to 10 minutes. According to the participants, the questions did not aim to assess whether the candidates were qualified but rather, as they called, 'tricky' questions. 15 of the participants also indicated that the interviews should be abolished since they thought it was not possible to assess the candidates' ability in teaching English within a limited amount of

time through a few questions. One of the participants indicated this handicap as follows:

I have gone through a few interviews, but most of them were completed in less than ten minutes, or say fifteen minutes. I think it is not possible to assess the candidates' capacity to teach a language in that amount of time. I do not know what the jury members thought about that but asking a few specific questions, you cannot determine what that candidate is suitable for the job.

The final theme 'Requirements' included two codes: 'Unfair', and 'specific to a person'.

Unfair. A great majority of the participants (n= 18) expressed that while admitting that the minimum requirements as set by CoHE were reasonable, it was not fair to add extra requirements such as the limitation of the program and years of experience. One participant indicated that such requirements of this kind are not fair:

Some of the post announcements by the universities require 90 on the language exam. While this score might be reasonable, they also add a statement like this "The candidates must be a graduate of English language and literature". This means that the candidates that graduated in another program such as English language teaching or American literature cannot apply for this post. I think this is unfair. Some even say that the candidates must be currently an M.A. student in the program, which means that if you have an M.A. degree in your hand, you cannot apply.

Specific to a person. Regarding the responses on the minimum requirements as well as the requirements announced in the post announcements, most participants (n= 16) thought that the specific requirements in the announcements meant the university had a specific candidate in mind. As one of the participants explained in the quotation above, some requirements are so specific that certain candidates can apply for the post. One of the candidates expresses this issue as follows:

I believe that universities have certain candidates in their minds. I mean they determine the candidate to be accepted for the post first and then announce the requirements that that specific person can meet. Otherwise, how would you account for the requirements such as "The candidates must be an M.A. student in this or that specific program" and "four or five years of experience". Why not one year or two years?

DISCUSSION

During the course of the interviews, many participants mentioned that the interviews provided them with the means to express their views on the recruitment process as well as what was happening in the interviews for the posts. Therefore, the responses obtained through the interviews have really contributed to the discussion of the findings. The findings of both quantitative and qualitative data indicate the participants report the impact of ALES score should be decreased in the total calculation in both the initial and final calculation of total scores, while language proficiency scores and GPA were stated to be increased. This is most probably because ALES mainly assesses linguistic/verbal ability in Turkish and mathematical/numerical ability and that ALES is not seen as a valid exam because of its content, which corroborates the findings of the studies conducted by Abdioğlu and Çevik (2017) and Kayahan Karakul and Karakütük (2014). Considering the impact of ALES (40% in the initial process; 30% in the total calculation), the participants underscore that its impact should be decreased so that the language proficiency and GPA could play a more determining role in the recruitment process, which corroborates the findings of several other studies such as the ones conducted by Bahar (2011) and Polatcan, Öztürk, and Saylık (2016), whose findings indicated the importance of considering teachers' GPA and the evaluations on candidates' practice teaching at schools during the last year.

Moreover, as indicated by some participants, the language examination is also limited due to its content with a focus on recognition skills, rather than productive skills. As noted down by Akın (2016), Akyel and Özek (2010), and Öztürk and Yıldırım (2012), the most determining factor in language teaching and learning is the skills of speaking and listening. Thus, the language proficiency exam should meet the demands of the twenty-first-century learning and teaching environment by assessing productive skills in addition to receptive skills.

In the final recruitment stage, interviews play the most important role since the candidates with interview scores lower than 60 are automatically eliminated, no matter how high their other exam scores are. The responses provided by the participants to the survey items and to the interview questions clearly show that although their ability of expression in English is assessed during the interviews, their professional knowledge and skills cannot be determined considering the duration of the interviews. This result can be attributed to the fact that the short interviews through a few questions that were probably not structured or standardized to allow comparisons among candidates cannot allow deciding which participants are eligible for the positions. Moreover,

the interviews are not considered objective, as there are no criteria and/or rubrics on which the candidates are evaluated. Interviews are really a matter of considerable concern for the participants. Therefore, a great majority of the participants suggest removing the interviews and considering only the exam scores obtained, which was contrary to the findings of the study conducted by Padermprach (2017), which indicated that while a written test was considered necessary, the recruitment process must include teaching demonstrations and psychological aptitude test and the findings of Adıgüzel's (2013) study, which required that the candidates' interest and attitudes towards the profession should also be investigated, and the findings of Atav and Sönmez (2013), which revealed that the great majority of the participants interviews suggested including interviews in the selection and recruitment of the teachers. The difference between the current and other studies might be attributed to the fact that the participants in the current study do not rely on interviews or similar exam formats as these were believed to be non-objective and biased.

Another central concern as suggested by the findings is related to the requirements. Although minimum requirements are well received by the participants, when it comes to the specific requirements in the job announcements, issues of serious concern are voiced. It is quite natural for the universities to set standards or requirements for candidates to have achieved since it is critical for them to be able to select the most qualified ones to educate the students. Moreover, it is a well-known fact that qualified instructors make the largest difference in and contribution to learner achievement and motivation. One of the concerns raised is related to years of experience determined as a requirement. The participants' main question regarding this requirement is the reason why the universities determine such a requirement. It might be acceptable for universities to determine such requirements since, for example, the school of foreign languages may need English language instructors to teach preparatory classes or advanced classes in which there are students preparing for their departments where the medium of instruction is English and may require some experience. However, the job announcements do not include any information regarding this. Some job announcements, for example, require three years of experience. Some might question this number as one might ask 'Why not two years or why not five years? CoHE has a piece of legislation regarding the years of experience, which reads that the candidates with an M.A. in their field are considered to have had two years of experience. It is possible for some universities to 'get around' this legislation by requiring three or even five years of experience, which leads several candidates to have an advantage over the rest of the other applicants. Limiting the required degrees to a specific program or asking for a specific M.A. or Ph.D. degree are

not the rare requirements in the job announcements. Such requirements lead the candidates to think that the university has a specific candidate in mind or has already determined the candidate to be selected. This is not unusual in academia. When the current and previous job announcements are checked and requirements are analyzed, it can be said that the candidates might be right about this. There are so specific requirements that only a few candidates can apply for the position and many other 'prospective' candidates cannot stand a chance, which is against the fairness and equal opportunity employment. While the data obtained through quantitative and qualitative data analysis may not be generalizable to larger populations of English language graduates willing to be English instructors, the key results might have the following implications.

The impact of ALES should be decreased, while that of the foreign language exam should be increased in the initial and the final recruitment process. Moreover, GPA should also be included in the initial recruitment process, and its impact should be increased so that the candidates' success and professional knowledge during their study in the program. The current nation-wide language examinations such as YDS and YÖKDİL fail to assess the candidates' productive skills such as writing and speaking and the receptive skills such as listening. Therefore, these exams should be changed so that they also assess the skills mentioned. Alternatively, other language exams as *TOEFL iBT®* and *PTE Academic* can be used. However, it was also noted by some participants (n=11) that the current language proficiency exams such as YDS and YÖKDİL were not enough to assess the four skills of the participants as these exams were composed of multiple-choice questions that assessed recognition skills such as vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Therefore, these participants, while acknowledging the contribution of language exams to the recruitment process, expressed that these exams should be replaced by the exams that focus more on productive skills, rather than passive skills. Since interviews are to be conducted as required by the legislation and the score obtained in the interviews are used to assign the candidates to the teaching positions, the universities and the jury members should ensure that the interviews are objective, measurable, and auditable. This can be done by recording the interviews, preparing detailed rubrics to assess the candidates, and allocating enough time to allow the candidates to show their professional ability and skills through a variety of alternative assessment such as portfolio assessment and micro teaching performance. Specific requirements determined for the positions announced appear to be a serious concern, and such requirements lead the candidates to think that the university has a candidate in mind or has already determined the candidate to be selected, which can be easily observed in the current and previous positions announced. Therefore, the universities

should pay special care to this concern and ensure that the application process is fair, and open to competition.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study aimed at presenting a discussion on the selection and recruitment of English language instructors in Turkey and providing data collected through surveys and interviews regarding the issues and challenges arising as well as the views provided by the current English language instructors and the candidates. The results indicated that the requirements such as the minimum scores on ALES and language proficiency tests should be reconsidered while calculating the total scores for the selection and recruitment process. The results also revealed that the interviews appeared a real matter of considerable concern for the great majority of the participants as the questions asked during the interviews were not structured or standardized to allow comparisons among candidates and that issue of serious concern were voiced by the participants on the specific requirements in job announcements. As elucidated in the present paper, the participants raised serious concerns regarding the use of exam scores in the recruitment process as well as the specific requirements for the positions, which dictates that there is an obvious need to take actions intended to promote fair and open competition as well as evaluation. In light of these concerns, of vital importance is the determination of the qualifications that are employed with the purpose of selecting the most qualified instructors so that they can better serve the needs of the students as well as the university itself.

Interviews conducted during the recruitment process seem to be the main concern for the participants. Interview performance might be much too variable to base an important judgment on candidates' current and future performance in a very limited time since an unstructured, ten to fifteen minute interviews is virtually worthless as a predictor of the candidates' long-term performance. Moreover, limiting the required degrees to a specific program or asking for specific requirements without reasonable explanations lead candidates to think that these positions are for specific candidates and the requirements are set so that only these candidates can apply. The recommendation, then, is to base the decisions on a variety of factors such as GPA, exam performance, and extracurricular activities during the university education, and when specific requirements are to be requested, they should be justified.

The current study did not take into consideration the effects of several demographic information variables such as gender, the program that the participants graduated from and the scores obtained on the required exams. Therefore, further research can investigate the effects of these variables on

the participants' responses to the survey statements and interview questions. Moreover, the other stakeholders' views (heads of the school of foreign languages) might also be obtained in further research to add much more rich data. When the study was conducted, it was not necessary to hold an M.A. degree in the related fields. However, due to a recent change, an M.A. degree was also required to apply for the positions. Therefore, the questionnaire did not include any statement regarding this change, which might be investigated in further studies. Since the study could not deal in detail with the reasons why the participants preferred to work as English language instructors at universities (Demirkasımođlu, 2018), further research can also focus on these reasons since it is believed that the findings might also shed light on the effects of current practices and decisions of policymakers on the future of English language teaching and learning.

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