

The Occupational Status of Translators and Interpreters in Turkey: Perceptions of Professionals and Translation Students

Türkiye'deki Mütercim ve Tercümanların Mesleki Statüleri: Öğrenci ve Çevirmenlerin Algıları

Araştırma/Research

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the perceptions of professional translators/interpreters and undergraduate translation students enrolled at a state university in Turkey about the occupational status of the translation profession, the curricula of translator-training programmes, and the challenges of translators/interpreters. The participants were 24 translation and interpreting department students enrolled in the Department of Translation and Interpreting at a state university located in southern Turkey and 12 professional translators and interpreters working in various cities in Turkey. Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews conducted face-to-face and online with the students and an online survey administered to the professional translators and interpreters. Through the lens of professional translators/interpreters and translation students, the study explored a tacit consensus over the status of translators, indicating that translation is perceived as a low-status occupation. By comparing the responses of the professionals and students, this study underscored the cardinal importance of translation students' specialisation during the course of the undergraduate degree. Based on these findings, this study portrays a more inclusive picture of the translation and interpreting curricula of undergraduate programmes in Turkey and the perceived status of translators/interpreters. The study also presents the participants' views about how to raise the

status of translators in society. In line with the results, the study also provided suggestions regarding the undergraduate translation and interpreting education as well as the potential solutions to improve the status of translators and interpreters.

Keywords: translator status, sociology of translation, translator education

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, profesyonel mütercim ve tercümanların ve Türkiye’de bir devlet üniversitesinde lisans programına kayıtlı öğrencilerin mütercim ve tercümanların mesleki statüleri, mütercim-tercümanlık lisans programı müfredatı ve mütercim tercümanların yaşadığı zorluklara ilişkin algılarını incelemektir. Araştırmamanın çalışma grubu, Türkiye’nin güneyinde yer alan bir devlet üniversitesinde Mütercim-Tercümanlık bölümüne kayıtlı 24 lisans öğrencisi ve Türkiye’de farklı illerde görev yapan 12 profesyonel mütercim tercümandan oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmanın verileri öğrencilerle ayrı ayrı gerçekleştirilen yüz yüze ve çevrimiçi yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ve mütercim-tercümanlara çevrimiçi uygulanan bir anket aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Çalışma, çevirmenlerin statüsü konusunda profesyonel mütercim ve tercümanların ve mütercim tercümanlık bölümü öğrencilerinin kuvvetli bir fikir birliğinde oldukları, bu bağlamda çevirmenlerin mesleki statüsünün düşük olarak algılandığı sonucuna ulaşmıştır. Çalışma aynı zamanda profesyonel mütercim ve tercümanların ve öğrencilerin görüşlerinin karşılaştırılması sonucunda, mütercim-tercümanlık öğrencilerinin lisans eğitimleri sırasında bir çeviri alanında uzmanlaşmalarının öneminin altının çizildiğini göstermiştir. Çalışmadan elde edilen veriler, Türkiye’de Mütercim-Tercümanlık bölümü lisans düzeyinde verilen eğitimin ve mütercim ve tercümanların algılanan statüsünün kapsamlı bir resmini ortaya koymuştur. Elde edilen sonuçlar ışığında, mütercim-tercümanlık lisans eğitiminin durumu ve mütercim tercümanların statülerinin geliştirilmesi konularında birtakım önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar Sözcükler: çevirmenlik statüsü, çeviri sosyolojisi, mütercim-tercümanlık eğitimi

1. Introduction

Although translation is one of the oldest professions in the world, it has only recently progressed into an academic discipline. There are many language specialists worldwide working as translators with or without a degree in translation (Djovčoš, 2014, p. 338; Drugan, 2017, p. 127; Ersoy & Odacıoğlu, 2014, p. 372; Sinković, 2017, p. 13), and it is not clear what sort of formal qualifications are required before language professionals call themselves a ‘translator.’ Today, many translator-training programmes operate around the world. These undergraduate programmes train students so that they can meet the future expectations of work providers in the market. In terms of the demands of the labour market, a graduate with a degree in translation or a language specialist with no university-level degree can be hired as a translator. The given priority, in most cases, is decided by translation experience rather than a degree in translation and interpretation (Horbačasuskienė et al., 2017, p. 155; Tyulenev et al., 2017, p. 346). The literature also reports that the translation and interpreting are not regulated in most countries (Drugan, 2017, 126), that is, a language professional can make a living as a translator without holding a degree in translation. For instance, Djovčoš (2014) found

no direct relationship between financial compensation and educational background of translators with or without a degree in translation studies (p. 351). It is known that translation and interpreting do not seem to be officially regulated professions in many countries (Drugan, 2017, p. 127; Kafi et al., 2018, p. 95; Uysal, 2020, p. 159), whereas translators sometimes practice their profession in sensitive sectors by collaborating with professionals such as politicians, healthcare providers, lawyers, and so on (Cortabarría, 2015, p. 408; Drugan, 2017 pp. 126-127; Jones, 2002, p. 22). Translators and interpreters, regardless of the sensitivity of the area they work in, are expected to obey certain professional codes as well as submitting a translation appropriate for their clients' demands. However, it is not an easy task for translators because the drastic transformation the global market has been undergoing gives a boost in translation projects' volume and complexity. This reality creates a compelling need for specialised translators. Therefore, attention should be paid to a variety of areas regarding translation specialization in translator-training undergraduate programmes.

Currently, developing translation competence is widely considered to be the ultimate goal of translator-training programmes (Flores, 2020, p. 1). Translation competence is contingent on in-class experiential learning situations (Massey & Ehrensberger-Dow, 2011, p. 27), but there are a number of other factors that form the basis for effective translation education. Translator-training programmes offer courses on translation theory (Gile, 2009, p. 20; Yılmaz-Gümüş, 2017, p. 9; Kelly, 2014, p. 63), native language training (Ersoy & Odacıoğlu, 2014, p. 371; Kelly, 2014, p. 73; Li, 2002, p. 514), literature (Kafi et al., 2018, p. 92; Kelly, 2014, p. 122; Xu, 2005, p. 243), specialised translation practice (Kafi et al., 2018, p. 92; Kelly, 2014, p. 152; Li, 2002, p. 520; Xu, 2005, p. 243), translation technology (Kelly, 2014, p. 62; Tyulenev et al., 2017, p. 349; Yılmaz-Gümüş, 2017, p. 5) and interpreting (Baker & Maier, 2011, p. 3; Li, 2002, p. 514). However, they should also help their students master receptive and productive linguistic skills in the source language (Gile, 2009, p. 21; Horbačasienė et al., 2017, p. 156; Yılmaz-Gümüş, 2017, p. 5). As Li (2002) and Kafi et al. (2018) demonstrated, there can be broad differences between the core components of translator-training programmes and the common needs of professional translators. Kelly (2014) further supported this argument by emphasizing the need for the implementation of local needs analysis to incorporate varying factors and considerations into planning translator training programmes (p. 3). The literature shows a body of empirical research suggesting that translator-training programmes somewhat fail to meet the demands of the work providers because of the rapidly changing demands in the labour market (Yılmaz-Gümüş, 2017; Horbačasienė et al., 2017, p. 151; Int, 2005, p. 135; Li, 2002, p. 521).

In Turkey, the importance of the translation profession has steadily increased. Translation as a profession has received special attention in the past few decades, and similarly, interpreter and translator training programmes at the tertiary level have also witnessed a remarkable level of growth (CoHE, 2019; Yılmaz-Gümüş, 2018, p. 58). Today there are over 100 undergraduate translator-training programmes in Turkey (CoHE, 2019). The main aim of these programmes is to equip students with translation skills and advanced foreign language proficiency so that the graduates can meet the market demands. Students enrolled in interpreter and translator training programmes have a

chance to gain profound insight into theoretical and practical aspects of translation training (Liu, 2013, p. 130; Yılmaz-Gümüş, 2017, p. 9). Even though these programmes are designed to enable students to develop their translation skills in their preferred subject fields at an academic level, expectations placed on translator students provoke a heated discussion centred on the assumption that there is a gap between the courses in translation curricula and the demands of the professional translation market (Di Mango, 2018, p. 74; Int, 2005, p. 135; Kafi et al., 2018, p. 92).

The occupational status of translators has been largely neglected in translation studies (Dam & Zethsen, 2008, p. 71), and the literature on translators' and interpreters' perceptions of their occupational status is limited (Dam & Zethsen, 2010, p. 195; Gentile, 2013, p. 64; Setton & Liangliang, 2009, p. 212). The translator's status, as well as the status of any other profession, is determined by its perceived place within society. As long as a member of a profession can be easily replaced due to the required skills or lack of demand in the market, their social status will be relatively low (Choi & Lim, 2002, p. 628). Status has sometimes been studied through the analysis of occupational prestige. A well-known set of parameters concerning occupational prestige is comprised of four components, namely salary, education, visibility, and influence (Dam & Zethsen, 2009, p. 3). On a global scale, it is abundantly reported that translators do not receive the recognition or prestige they desire (Chan & Liu, 2013, p. 448; Choi & Lim, 2002, p. 628; Dam & Zethsen, 2008, p. 71; Dam & Zethsen, 2009, p. 6; Dam & Zethsen, 2010, p. 207; Gentile, 2013, p. 76). However, the status of interpreters slightly differs from that of translators in that interpreters' mastery of a foreign language is considered an asset and therefore, their level of social recognition is not that low (Choi & Lim, 2002, p. 628; Dam & Zethsen, 2013, p. 245; Jones, 2002, p. 23).

According to Kang and Shunmugam (2014), one important factor affecting the status of translators is unfair competition. Even experienced translators reportedly suffer from unprofessional practices in the market. Competition with unqualified translators, who charge less but produce low-quality translations, is a problem many translators lament. Several studies report unprofessional practices or a lack of professional standards in the translation and interpreting sector (Chan & Liu, 2013; Drugan, 2017; Hlavac, 2013; Kafi et al, 2018; Kang & Shunmugam, 2014, p. 201). The minimum requirements to perform as a translator vary greatly due to the absence of a well-recognised certification system. In most cases, when hiring a translator, the emphasis is on the experiences of candidates, rather than their educational background (Kafi, et al., 2018, p. 95; Tyulenev et al., 2017, p. 346).

Despite a substantial amount of translation being done in Turkey, little is known about how translators make their living and what is expected from translators in the market. This study aims to explore perceptions of professional translators/interpreters and undergraduate translation students about the occupational status of the translation profession and to dwell upon the curricula of translator-training programmes and the challenges of translators/interpreters. As the participants include both translators and undergraduate translation students, the study provides insights about the views of professional translators/interpreters in the field as well as students from different class

standings. Translation students have to take a compulsory summer internship at a translation agency as part of their degree programme in Turkey. This is an important opportunity for students when they form their opinion of the translation profession, translators and interpreters vis-à-vis their peers who are yet to have a compulsory internship. Students' views are considered to demonstrate differences based on their experience, or lack of experience, in the profession. Relatively speaking, few studies have dealt with the state of translator education programmes and the demands of the market (Horbačasienė et al., 2017, pp. 145-146). Moreover, the societal status of translators has not received adequate attention in translation studies (Dam & Zethsen, 2008, p. 71; Dam & Zethsen, 2009, p. 1; Gentile, 2018, p. 40). Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of professional translators/interpreters and undergraduate translation students enrolled at a state university in Turkey about the occupational status of the translation profession, the curricula of translator-training programmes, and the challenges of translators/interpreters. The current study attempts to shed light on the following research questions:

- (1) How do professional translators/interpreters and translation students perceive their occupational status within society?
- (2) What kinds of skill sets should undergraduate translation students develop to promote the status of the translation profession in Turkey?
- (3) What are the challenges of translators/interpreters in Turkey?

2. Methodology

This study adopts a phenomenological approach to gain insight into the perceptions of translators/interpreters and undergraduate translation students about the occupational status of the translation profession, the curricula of translator-training programmes, and the challenges faced by translators/interpreters. The phenomenological approach allows us, by trying to determine the commonality in the perceptions, to collect a comprehensive description of the current challenges faced by professional translators/interpreters and undergraduate translation students (Fraenkel et al., 2012). As stated by Welman and Kruger (1999), phenomenological studies aim to understand social and psychological phenomena "from the perspectives of people involved" (p. 189). Phenomenological method is based on the premise to collect in-depth data. Phenomenology is the method of accessing to the world through the ordinary experience that people live in their daily routine (Van Manen, 2014).

A purposive sampling stratification was used in order to ensure an adequate representation (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews conducted face-to-face and online with the students and an online survey administered to the professional translators and interpreters. The online survey was distributed through emails to 15 professional translators and five interpreters working in different cities in Turkey with the help of two professional associations. The respondents' consent to take part in the study was inferred by the return of the

questionnaire. In the end, a total of 12 professional translators/interpreters and 24 translation students volunteered to participate in the study.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained before the research began from the relevant university's ethics committee. Based on the research team's assumption that translation students' way of looking at the translation profession might demonstrate differences in their class standing, six undergraduate students from each group of the Preparatory Year English Language Programme (PYP), first-year, second-year and third-year students were recruited. PYP provides translation department students with an intensive tuition in the English language. All the courses offered at the PYP aim to equip students with advanced level of English, thereby preparing them to study their departmental courses through English. PYP students are not given any departmental courses. The students at CEFR C1 level of English are exempted from the programme.

The research team conducted semi-structured face-to-face and online interviews from February to May of 2020. The purpose of the interviews and online survey was to enable translators/interpreters and undergraduate translation students to elaborate on their viewpoints and to elicit more in-depth descriptions of their experiences. The researchers adopted interviews in preference to focus groups because they felt some concern for peer pressure or social desirability. That's why, interviews were considered to better serve the research purpose by engaging students in conversations rich in detail. In addition, an interview agenda with open-ended questions based on the ones used in the interviews was utilised. All the interviews, which lasted from 12 to 35 minutes, were carried out in Turkish to ensure natural communication. In addition, an online survey was designed, and twelve active translators participated in the survey. The reason why the translators were asked to respond to an online survey instead of participating in interviews is that the research team could not arrange any meetings with translators due to their full-time employment and busy scheduling in different cities.

The questions asked to the students included "How do you think translation as a profession is regarded in society?", "What do you think is a must in translation education?", "What are the most challenging parts of this profession?", "What part of your education do you think will help you most in your career?" and "How easily can someone make a living as a translator in Turkey?" What are the most challenging sides of working as a translator/interpreter?

The first part of the online survey administered to the translators/interpreters collected data about their age, years of experience in the profession, whether translation was the main or additional source of income, etc. The questions asked to the translators/interpreters were as follows: "What do you think is a must in translation education?", "Generally speaking, what do you think about how well the translation and interpreting education in Turkey meets the needs of translators and interpreters in their professional life?", "Which fields/types of translation have you been specialized so far?", "Please indicate if there are any types of translation you never want to perform and tell why", "Do you think you receive a recompense for your work materially and morally?", "What are the most common problems you encounter in your profession?", "What do

you think about the current status of translators and interpreters in our country?”, “How do you think the status of translators and interpreters should be in our country?”, “What should be done to improve the status of the profession?”. Those who received a formal translation and interpreting education were also asked to answer the following questions: “Which parts of translation education contributed to your career most?”, “What is the biggest contribution of your translation education to your career?”, “What predictions did you have about your career planning while you were receiving your translation education?”, “Today, which ones have become true and which ones have not?”, “What are the positive and negative effects of the education you received while performing your profession?”, “Which area had you planned to specialise during the course of your education? And which area are you specialised on now?”. Those who did not receive any formal translation education were asked the following questions: “What expectations did you have when you first decided to work as a translator/interpreter?”, “Today, which expectations have become true and which ones have not?”, “What are the positive and negative effects of the lack of translation education while performing your profession?”, “What factors had effects on your decision to start working as a translator/interpreter?”.

The data obtained through the interviews and open-ended questions were transcribed and analysed to find out what they had in common with a view to forming relevant themes, as suggested by Fraenkel et al. (2012). The authors subsequently conducted the content analysis separately. They reviewed and discussed the codes, and only the codes related to the purpose of the study were kept. The participants’ statements were collected under themes that reflected their common experiences and supported with their direct quotes providing more insights of the phenomenon. In the analysis of the data, qualitative data were also converted into quantitative data by counting the instances of the emerging codes. Inter-rater reliability was computed by using the number of codes of which the authors agreed and disagreed (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Hence, each author separately analysed the dataset, and then came together to compare and contrast the coded data. Substantial inter-rater reliability was found to be 0.88 [46/(46+6)]. No qualitative data analysis software package was used due to the relatively small amount of data. The data collection process lasted three months. Through the semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions, the study accessed in-depth data regarding the participants’ experiences of the phenomenon under investigation.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings obtained from the interviews and the online survey. The numbers indicate the times the expressions were uttered by the participants in response to various questions, and the responses are presented in line with the research questions.

The first research question aimed to find out how translation students and translators/interpreters perceive their occupational status within society.

Table 1

Perceptions of undergraduate translation students about the occupational status of the profession (n=24)

Themes	Codes	f
Status of the profession	Low prestige of translation as a profession	17
	Limited recognition of translation as an occupation	10
	Translation as an unreliable source of income	8
	Lack of visibility of translators/interpreters	8
	Clients underestimate the level of knowledge and preparation involved in doing translation	5
	Unrecognised efforts despite mentally and psychologically demanding nature of interpreting	5
	More satisfactory income from interpreting vis-à-vis translation	4

As seen in Table 1, the main theme obtained from the findings is the “status of the profession.” The most frequently mentioned items are “low prestige of translation as a profession” (f=17) and “limited recognition of translation as an occupation” (f=10). The participants also mentioned “lack of visibility of translators/interpreters” (f=8) and reportedly worried about not being able to rely on translation as a main source of income (f=8). They voiced a common concern over underpayment for work and getting paid late. They also expressed their concerns about the underestimated level of knowledge and preparation needed for translation and mentally demanding nature of interpreting. The following excerpts provide examples of the participants’ views regarding these issues.

“No one cares about translators. They never check who translated the book they are reading.” (PYP student, participant 12)

“It is not easy to explain this profession, but some others say “wow”... Only educated people know about the importance of knowing a language and recognise translators” (first year student, participant 1)

“Their status is not high, they use students for receiving more effort and paying less. [...]. I do not have high goals about money, but I want to survive in my profession”. (third year student, participant 11)

“Actually, we [translators] are a part of it [business] but we don’t directly talk to [communicate with] end-users. Our visibility is limited I mean.” (third year student, participant 21)

“What we are doing is usually considered very simple; however, there are so many details we need to consider; people have no idea about all those details we need to deal with”. (second year student, participant 20)

“People see us like machines who can translate 24/7” (third year student, participant 10)

“[...] but I want it [to become an interpreter]. I watch people doing simultaneous translation; I find it cool. You can also earn more”. (third year student, participant 7)

Table 2

Perceptions of translators and interpreters about the occupational status of the profession (n=12)

Themes	Codes	f
Need for standardization	Translation unions and societies should establish standardization	8
	Only qualified language professionals should be allowed to work as translators	6
Status of the profession	Occupational prestige of translation is not at a desired level	8
	Translation is a main source of income	6
	Translation is an unreliable source of income	5
	Translators/interpreters should be more visible	4
	More satisfactory income from interpreting than translation	2

Similar to the views of the students in this study, the translator and interpreter participants also think that the occupational prestige of translation is “not at a desired level” (f=8), and standardization needs to be established through unions and societies (f=8). They also stated that translation should only be done by qualified people (f=6). According to some participants, translation is a main source of income (f=6), although some other participating translators stated that translation might not be a main source of income (f=5). Similar to the findings from the students, a lack of visibility was mentioned by a number of participants (f=4). Some excerpts are as follows:

“Translation is generally seen as a burden that can be done in a short time and in a fast way for the completion of formal documents in some certain places. [...]. This consumption culture of accessing “cheap and fast” translations should be changed. Maybe translation unions and societies might help by collecting people having the same problem to help find a solution.” (Full-time translator with three years of work experience)

"I am very well aware of the fact that my department and diploma provided advantages to me in the job recruitment process. However, many people see translation as a profession that can be done by anyone who knows a foreign language and has time." (Part-time translator with nine years of work experience)

"Unfortunately, I hold a negative opinion. Our occupational income is not at a desirable level. People do not know this, especially concerning conference interpreting. We are underappreciated and they consider interpreters and tourist guides equals." (Full-time interpreter with ten years of work experience).

"I rely on translation as an additional source of income". (Full-time translator with 20 years of work experience)

"I have a decent [standard of] living but of course I wish I earned more." (Full-time translator with 12 years of work experience)

"In order to make the profession more visible, activities of career exploration [and] raising awareness can be organised." (Full-time translator with five years of work experience)

"From the first day you begin your [undergraduate] education, you start to feel euphoric, you start hearing [from others] about how much interpreters earn, [but] not every graduate can become an interpreter." (Full-time translator with 11 years of work experience)

The participants of this study reportedly hold an opinion that status of the translation profession is not at a desired level and clients, by overlooking the mentally demanding nature of translation, may tend to underestimate the level of knowledge and preparation needed for translation. The literature documents the fact that translation as an activity or product is seen by many outsiders as a mechanical (Dam & Zethsen, 2010) or non-creative (Koskinen 2000; Bassnett, 2002, p. 12) process that is done "quickly and cheaply" (Koskinen, 2000). Dam and Zethsen (2008), in their study including high-end translators, conclude that translators hold a relatively low perception of occupational status, and Bassnett (2002) previously found a similar perception of status among translators. On the issue of how the profession is seen by those who are not in the field, Dam and Zethsen (2010) highlight the problem that many clients do not recognize translators as experts and do not treat them with appreciation. Translators' work details in the process of translating are not recognised by many. As reported by Pym (1998), the individuality of the style and decision-making processes of translators involved in the translation process deserves a special mention, which was indicated as having a lack of visibility by a number of participants in the present study as well. This lack of awareness and visibility seems to exist at varying degrees across different locales (Sela-Sheffy, 2008). In the Danish sample, similar to the findings of the present study, a lack of public awareness about the translation profession is indicated. In a similar vein,

Dam and Zethsen (2010) report a lack of awareness in society about what constitutes translation competence and its complexity as well as a lack of recognition of the importance of translation (p. 205). In the study that investigated '[in]visibility' of the translation job, Leech (2005) argues that translators' working from home with more flexible hours might be associated with low perceptions towards the profession. However, this is incongruent with the case of interpreters in a sense, as Jones (2002) underlines; interpreters are considered to have the privilege of working with senior public figures such as politicians. As a natural part of the interpreting profession, interpreters actually work at the edge of their cognitive abilities after some time on task to generate their income. Even though the students reportedly believed that oral translation is actually mentally and psychologically demanding, despite the common misconception within society, it can still be considered a profession of high visibility (Schouten et al., 2012). It is also reportedly more prestigious and an interpreter has a higher status compared to that of a translator. This is echoed by the findings of Ruokonen et al. (2018).

The analysis of the data shows that status is reportedly a common issue both translators/interpreters indicated. The participants of the study explain their opinions mainly in relation to income, visibility and power parameters which are some of the well-known dimensions in the occupational status literature (Weeks & Leavitt, 2017). Dam and Zethsen (2008) argue that status is a subjective construct and can vary from one context to another. Several participants were found to see translation as an additional source of income and they are reportedly not able to rely on translation as a main source of income. Despite being a significant indicator, income is not necessarily the decisive parameter in identifying the occupational status. The professionals who participated in this study are not satisfied with occupational prestige of translation and the majority of them believe it is not yet at a desired level. Similarly, Dam and Zethsen (2009) found that salary, education and visibility are three of the most important parameters of occupational prestige. In addition, Dam and Zethsen's (2013) study reports that income and educational background is considered to be the determinants of occupational prestige, which indicates that the perceived status of translation as a profession is low. Kang (2015) reported that some translators suffered from some clients' deliberately delaying or not paying the translators for the services rendered. Most of the participants of the current study consider translation to be an unreliable source of income, which indicates serious obstacles to the perceived status of translators/interpreters. Ruokonen and Mäkisalo (2018) found in a similar vein that translator status is affected by not only the level of income but also the translator's specialisation. A study conducted by Bahk-Halberg (2007) involved translators who quit the profession; low status and unappreciative clients were reported to be the major reasons for their decision. The participants of the present study also mentioned the unrecognised efforts required for translation tasks. Dam and Zethsen (2008) and Katan (2017) indicated that translators' specialised skills are not recognised by outsiders; they are recognised by translators themselves, and core employees underestimate the necessary length of time needed for translator training. These views are in line with the findings of the present study indicated in the first quote of a full-time translator. These factors are considered to

contribute to the lack of occupational prestige of translation that is not at a desired level as shown in Table 2.

Finally, the participants mentioned the strong need for standardization in the translation profession. Kang (2015) also reported that there is a need for associations to regulate the practice of translating. Such authority is believed to contribute to the prestigious status of the profession. Kang (2015) also states that translators' associations in most countries fail to provide authority over their members and regulate their practices, which seems to be in line with the findings of the present study. Recently, there have been targeted efforts in coordination with the Vocational Qualifications Authority to prescribe the required qualifications for translators in Turkey (Uysal, 2020). With the completion of this study, the minimum qualifications translators must possess to be able to practice their profession is considered to be better specified.

The second research question aimed to explore what translators/interpreters and undergraduate translation students think about the role of undergraduate translator-training programmes in Turkish universities in preparing prospective translators for meeting the future expectations of work providers in the market and to promote the status of the translation profession.

Table 3

Views of undergraduate translation students about undergraduate translator and interpreter education in Turkey (n=24)

Themes	Codes	f
Translation education in Turkey (general assessment)	should enable students to get acquainted with various types of texts/ include more practice-based courses	12
	is generally good at transforming students into linguistic experts	9
	fails to prepare translation students for real-life situations	4
	should inspire students with self-development throughout their education	4
	should provide feedback about the translation tasks	3
Proficiency in both languages	being equally proficient in source and target languages is essential	15

The findings regarding undergraduate translation education in Turkey fell under two themes that included a general assessment of the translation programmes and proficiency in both languages. The most frequently mentioned codes were the need for proficiency in the source and the target languages (f=15) and variety of practice in translation education (f=12). Although some students reportedly found translation programmes generally good at preparing students for the translation profession and for

developing from translation students to qualified translators (f=9), some others suggested that translation programmes failed to prepare translation students for real-life situations (f=4), and no matter how good or bad the programme is, professional self-development is the responsibility of the translation student rather than a programme's, therefore translation education should inspire students to continue their self-development (f=4). Receiving feedback about the translation task was reported as the most important part of translation education by a number of participants (f=3). Excerpts from the participating students are as follows:

"However, I can say that there should be more practical courses." (third year student, participant 10)

"...I really benefit from the courses. I believe that all the courses contribute to our knowledge of the language a lot." (first year student, participant 4)

"There are so many theories. Instead of learning these theories, we should practice a lot for real-life tasks. ... Education in Turkey is not sufficient. We should be provided with more detailed education. Producing translation starting from the second year is not sufficient." (first year student, participant 6)

"The education you receive is not enough per se, how you develop yourself makes you a good translator." (third year student, participant 10)

"The feedback I get from different types of translation is the most important thing." (third year student, participant 8)

"We have to be equally proficient in both languages we translate." (second year student, participant 22)

Table 4

Views of translators and interpreters about undergraduate translator and interpreter education in Turkey (n=12)

Themes	Codes	f
Translation education in Turkey	should include more practice-based courses	12
	is generally good at preparing students for the profession	8
(General Assessment)	fails to prepare students for real-life situations	7
	meets the sector's needs only partially	5
	should be designed to improve students' proficiency both in English and Turkish	5

While some of the participants were satisfied with the education given to prospective translators (f=8), the need for more practice-based courses was the top-cited code (f=12). The responses related to the insufficiency of the programmes included

a number of factors mentioned by the participants; these included inefficiency of the programmes in preparing students for real-life situations (f=7), meeting the sector's needs only partially (f=5), and the required involvement of professional language training in both languages (f=5). Some excerpts are as follows:

"The courses should not depend solely on theoretical information. Students should be equipped with the translation tasks from various fields ranging from technical to legal and medical translation. They should be assigned to translate in various fields [...]. This way, the theoretical knowledge they have would be more meaningful." (Full-time translator with three years of work experience)

"The theories we learned at school brought depth into my translation. The diploma I have from the translation department was prestigious for job applications." (Full-time translator with 14 years of work experience)

"[Translator-training programmes] should incorporate more real-life situation and practice." (Full-time interpreter with ten years of work experience)

"[In relation to the undergraduate translator-training] it helped me expand my language skills, but I did not benefit greatly in terms of practical and professional aspects." (Full-time interpreter with five years of work experience)

"Courses should help translation students to become proficient in both languages equally." (Full-time translator with 11 years of work experience)

When the participants were asked to make a general assessment of the translation education, both translators/interpreters and undergraduate translation students mentioned the importance of practice-based courses and exposure to different translation tasks through various types of texts. Specialised knowledge and skills are required to translate well, which imposes institutions to offer a representative selection of specialised courses (Orlando, 2019). Considering the fact that translation market progressively grows in volume and so does increasing demand for specialised translation, now undergraduate translation education is of key importance to provide translation students with more opportunities in terms of specialisation (Rodríguez-Castro & Sullivan, 2015). Although some participants thought that the diploma they had from a translation programme brought them important opportunities, very few mentioned the contribution of theoretical courses. Translation students are sometimes resistant to theoretical courses and have difficulty in grasping the causal relations between theory and practice. This finding is in line with the previous research of Baker and Maier (2011) and Yılmaz-Gümüş (2017). Li (2002) also reported that theoretical courses were unmistakably the least popular courses among the students and indicated

that the participants highly recommended including more practical courses in the translation programme.

Finally, both translators and translation students stated the importance of being proficient in both languages for translation. Li (2002) also found that the student participants wanted to improve both native language and English rather than only one of them.

The third research question aimed to explore the challenges of the translation profession in Turkey.

Table 5

Challenges to the translation/interpreting profession according to undergraduate translation students (n=24)

Themes	Codes	f
Demanding nature of translation/interpreting	fear of making mistakes	14
	blurring boundaries between work and private life due to short deadlines	13
Status of the profession	too many competitors in the market	5
	insufficient respect for what it takes to translate	5
	lack of visibility	3
	difficulties and delays in receiving payments	2

In the demanding nature of the translation/interpreting theme, the participants mentioned challenges such as the risk of making minor mistakes that might change the meaning and the difficulty in making important decisions while translating/interpreting (f=14). The second most frequently mentioned code was related to the demands of the clients, bearing “Blurring boundaries between work and private life due to short deadlines” (f=13). Another important challenge was reported; an unreliable source of income, which included too many competitors in the market (f=5), insufficient respect for what it takes to translate (f=5), a lack of visibility (f=3), and difficulties and delays in receiving payments (f=2). Some excerpts are as follows:

“You need to give a perfectly completed task. Even a little mistake can change everything. This sometimes scares me.” (first year student, participant 1)

“People expect you to work 24/7.” (third year student, participant 10)

“Anyone who knows English can try to work as a translator.” (first year student, participant 4)

“Many people tend to see translators as a machine that can translate instantly.” (second year student, participant 20)

“Actually, we [translators] are a part of it [business] but we don’t directly talk to [communicate with] end-users. Our visibility is limited, I mean.” (third year student, participant 21)

“They [the clients] say [it is] urgent, [try to bargain] or they say we will translate, you edit.” (third year student, participant 10)

Table 6

Challenges to the translation/interpreting profession according to translators and interpreters (n=12)

Themes	Codes	f
Status of the profession	insufficient respect for what it takes to translate	9
	insufficient income due to too many competitors in the market	6
	lack of visibility	2
Demanding nature of translation	blurring boundaries between work and private life due to short deadlines and other client demands	12
	health problems caused by the working conditions	3
	getting bored of doing the same things	2

The top-mentioned themes included “status of the profession” and “demanding nature of translation.” The top-cited code for the first theme was “insufficient respect for what it takes to translate” (f=9) followed by “insufficient income due to too many competitors in the market” (f=6). As for the second theme, the top-cited codes were “blurring boundaries between work and private life” (f=12), and “health problems caused by the working conditions” (f=3). Some excerpts are as follows:

“Some clients say ‘I would do [it] myself if I had time’, which degrades your job.” (Part-time translator with 9 years of work experience)

“There is no standard for the fees paid for translation tasks [...]. There are too many others who are ready to do the same translation task for a lower price.” (Full-time translator with 20 years of work experience)

“Limited visibility is [a] common issue [problem]...” (Part-time translator with nine years of work experience)

“You always work under the pressure of time.” (Full-time translator with 14 years of work experience)

“[You have health problems due to sitting too much” (Full-time translator with 11 years of work experience)

“You start getting bored of doing the same things for years, and also converting [translating] all the time but not producing” (Full-time translator with 20 years of work experience)

A general lack of societal appreciation for what it takes to translate is a common theme in both groups of participants. Dam and Zethsen (2009) revealed that the work of translators can easily go unappreciated and translators can sometimes be referred to as anonymous actors of the translation process. In the eyes of some participants, despite the prevalent perception within society that translating is an easy and mechanical process, it is actually a mentally demanding task. The demanding nature of translation tasks was mentioned by both students and translators. In the translation literature, a number of studies have shown the tendency of clients to underestimate what it takes to translate (Dam & Zethsen, 2010; Ersoy & Odacıoğlu, 2014; Olohan & Davitti, 2015). While the student participants expressed their worries about making mistakes, this theme included health problems caused by the working conditions, blurring boundaries between work and private life, and getting bored of doing the same things. The most frequently mentioned code was short deadlines. Lacruz (2017) investigated cognitive efforts in translation and reported that there was “a trade-off between speed and quality” (p. 386). It is also reported that translators spend more effort and feel more tired when they have to work faster and pay more attention to quality, which leads to fatigue and lower productivity.

The number of competitors in the market was found to be a concern for several participants in the present study. Kang (2015) similarly noted that unfair competition from amateur translators and unprofessional practices in the profession were the problems mentioned by the translators in the market. Pym et al. (2013) also indicated that relatively high numbers of freelance and part-time translators and significant fragmentation of specializations are factors associated with this issue. The study conducted by Djovčoš (2014) also reported that translators tended to lower their rates when they faced competitive pressure. Client demands were noted by several participants; deadlines causing blurring boundaries between work and private life was therefore the theme that was formed. This finding was supported in the study conducted by Kang (2015), who reported that Korean translators were frequently rushed into finishing their translation task; client’s expectations for high quality and error-free work was also noted. Robinson (2003) also highlighted the clients’ demands placed on the translator such as short deadlines can sometimes be physically and mentally exhausting, thereby being disruptive to the translator’s private life. As pointed out by Robinson (2003) and Kang (2015), the boundaries between translators’ private and work lives can be blurry.

4. Conclusion

The findings of the current study indicate big challenges faced by translators/interpreters with regard to the level of their income and the status of their profession in society. The participants from both groups; namely professional translators/interpreters and translation students, hold a relatively strong opinion indicating a poor perception of the status of translators. However, both the groups of translators/interpreters and the translation students acknowledge interpreter status is relatively high for the reasons that interpreters have a more stable income and they consider what they do is appreciated more in regard to translators. The differentiation within the translation profession in the Turkish context in relation to the translator status and interpreter status calls for further investigation. Finally, regarding translation as a negligible source of income appears to be a common concern among the participants. Both groups of participants long for more respect and appreciation from their clients for their efforts needed for effective and high-quality translations.

The minimum qualifications for the translation profession in Turkey should be determined in order to improve the status of the translation profession. Within the last decade, considerable efforts have concentrated on the establishment of the national occupational standard for translators in coordination with the Vocational Qualification Authority, and this is of national importance. It is also worth mentioning that the apparent increase of undergraduate programmes for formal translation education cannot absolutely guarantee their graduates to become qualified translators or interpreters, yet formal training still occupies a constructive role in doing so. More practice-based courses from various fields are believed to prepare translation students for market conditions and real-life situations in a better way; therefore those kinds of courses in the curriculum is thus recommended. The classroom is a place where students learn, construct their professional identities, and shape their future career opportunities. Self-directed and well-guided translation students will indirectly help to promote the status of the translation profession. To ensure the quality and to promote the status of the profession, all the stakeholders should cooperate in making translation a fully regulated profession. Finally, it is worth noting that, like in many other professions, self-development is the responsibility of translators for a successful career. This suggests that translation students should constantly seek ways to improve their knowledge and skills, rather than merely relying on the translation education they receive.

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