

Skills Transformation in Higher Education: Perceptions of Foreign Language Lecturers[§]

Yükseköğretimde Beceri Dönüşümü: Yabancı Dil Öğretim Görevlilerinin Algıları

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Abstract: Utilizing in-depth interviews with 14 lecturers teaching English in foreign language departments at two state and two private universities in Ankara, capital of Turkey, this study aims to discover the direction of skills transformation of these lecturers. The results show that they assumed new roles and acquired new skills, but also lacked some critical skills. Work intensification, inadequate professional development opportunities, exclusion from decision-making processes, and increasing managerial control result in deskilling in both research and pedagogy. The research findings also show that work environment is unable to provide professional development and to increase the motivation of the lecturers teaching English, placing them at a disadvantage in universities. Lecturers who think that their ideas are considered unimportant or ignored tend to lose their motivation to improve some professional skills. This study revealed that the most noticeable issue facing foreign language lecturers in the higher education system is their marginalized and undervalued status.

Keywords: skills, proletarianisation, deskilling, control, higher education.

I. Transformation in Lecturers' Work and Skills

An increasing number of articles and studies reveal that students, academics, and administrative staff have been radically transformed in their way of working, experience, and skills, thus alienating academics from decision-making and work (Coaldrake, 2000; Deem and Lucas, 2007; McCarty, et al., 2017; Schapper and Mayson, 2005). Similarly, there are concerns that teachers and academics have lost control of their own work, because they have become domesticated or are far removed from determining the goals of education (Creasy, 2018; Gür, 2014; Macfarlane, 2011). Especially for the language teachers it is argued that motivation not only affects skills development but also affects teaching, professional development and all skills in general (Guo et al., 2020). Braverman (1974) describes 'deskilling' (deprivation of skills) as the separation of the design and implementation of jobs, as the majority of employees now do jobs designed by others. With deskilling, employees lose their right to design/plan routine jobs, tasks are transferred to a low skilled workforce, and labour control increases (Gallie, 1991). Increasing workload is one method by

which employers increase capital accumulation and profit margins (Braverman, 1974). When this way of working is adapted to lecturers in higher education, it is expected that the working hours will be extended during the day, and the work will be intensified during these hours, in other words, a lot of work will be done in a short time by expecting maximum workforce efficiency (Mather et al., 2007).

American sociologist George Ritzer (2018) illustrates four basic principles with his famous 'McDonaldisation' metaphor, which he introduced while examining the success of institutions that have become widespread in modern societies: efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control (20). Many organizations like McDonald's follow pre-designed processes to increase efficiency. Calculability emphasizes the quantifiable aspects of products and services. Ritzer raised several criticisms of the application of calculability to educational contexts, ranging from the scoring of lecturers by students, to performance assessments tied to the number of publications and citations, regardless of their quality. Predictability means that services and products are the same at different times and locations. The fourth principle, control,

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refers to the management of the actions of employees and customers by managers. Ritzer explains that, due to ready-to-use course content provided to lecturers and the increasing use of computer technologies, higher education institutions have been influenced by the principles listed above and transformed into 'McUniversities' (75). In this context, critics have raised concerns that higher education has transformed into a fast food chain that only sells ideas that managers think will sell, and that academics have turned into low-skilled links in this chain (Parker and Jary, 1995).

In higher education, key concepts related to such economic and cultural transformation include proletarianisation, precarisation, deprivation of skills (deskilling), and deprofessionalisation (Hartung, et al., 2017; Powelson, 2011; Randle and Brady, 1997). Key themes that appear in the literature regarding the work process in higher education largely reflect varying forms of control, fragmentation, and deskilling. Miller (1995) claims that faculty members have lost ideological control over their work. The emergence of human resources approaches like performance evaluation, standardization, and rationalization of works by applying accountability measures through surveillance and supervision have caused academia to function more like a business (Parker and Jary, 1995). Thus, academic studies cease to be an autonomous field and turn into a structure shaped by external demands (Dearlove, 1997). Joo and Choi (2021) focus on the importance of improving skills and professionalism in an educational ecosystem and increasing the autonomy. Critics argue that all of these factors cause professional erosion and decreasing skills for lecturers (Runte ve Runté, 2007). For foreign language lecturers, which is the focus of this study, the routine training and standardization of education through the use of ready-made teaching materials has created an academic environment that does not support the professional development of academics and reduces their motivation (Wilson, 1991). According to a study conducted with 2,500 lecturers in England, issues such as excessive workload, lack of support, isolation, job insecurity, and fear (rather than professional solidarity) are the main causes of psychological problems among academics (Shaw, 2014).

There are several theories on feeling of uselessness for people working in capitalist economies and it may also be applicable for lecturers working in universities. Richard Sennett (2007) emphasizes that it is not desirable for people working in capitalist economies to be indispensable to the institutions they work for. In other words, through increased control, workers can be easily alienated, and thus easily replace a situation that may be preferable for employers. According to Sennett, automation and increased technological pressures undermine employees'

skills and create a feeling of uselessness. As for university lecturers increased technological pressure may mean more control and ending up in alienation just like Sennett mentioned. Traditionally, autonomy, self-management, and professional solidarity were perceived as part of the organizational culture for lecturers working at universities. However, it is argued that the transition to mass higher education, combined with increasing financial pressures has transformed this situation in a number of aspects, making higher education is similar to for-profit sectors (Coaldrake, 2000). According to those who are critical of this change in higher education, academic pursuits are deprived of professionalism, professional cooperation is replaced by business administration, and academics are proletarianized (Halsey, 1992). Wilson (1991) claims that academics working at universities in England have become deskilled and proletarian, and as a result, academic pursuits have become worthless. Such a perspective laments, the loss of traditional authority and academic responsibilities, as well as the passing of control to administrators that has become prominent in 21st-century universities. Observable reflections of proletarianisation include low wages, declining working conditions, decreased autonomy, and increased control, and routine. Joo and Chooi (2021) claim that the increased bureaucratic control impede autonomy and free growth of teachers. They claim excessive workload is the biggest obstacle to advancement in multiple skills.

While academics in higher education are experiencing skill deprivation, there are also new skills that develop with the emergence of new roles (Macfarlane, 2011). According to the theories of upskilling, new technologies have reshaped the requirements for professional skills and brought about professional enrichment and increased expertise (Cappelli, 1993). With the advancing technology, the demand for certain professional skills has decreased, while in some fields, higher level skills have replaced skills previously required. The increasing use of technology has also brought about changes in pedagogical, contextual, and instructional design (Salmon, 2000).

Coaldrake (2000) explains that, to meet the needs of more diverse groups of students, academics are expected to teach in more flexible hours and places, use information technologies in their teaching, create curricula around learning outcomes, work in teams, and evaluate what they have taught. Many academics feel overloaded under the weight of the tasks expected of them, contrary to their ideals of determining the parameters of their own work-life. Deem and Lucas (2007) revealed that academics assign much more importance to scientific research and publication, as a result of the difficulty in meeting all these expectations. The fact that academics

direct their energies and time to research activities rather than teaching may result in insufficient educational activities, resulting in disadvantages for university students (Odabaşı et al., 2010).

Another aspect of control is that, in terms of gender, female employees work in lower positions and are exposed to more control and surveillance. In other words, they have less control over their jobs than their male counterparts (Apple, 1988; Karasek and Theorell, 1990). Some scholars have argued that some women prefer such control to achieve balance between work and family (Gutek, et al., 1991). According to Grönlund (2007), the family-work conflict of women is minimized in jobs where there is more control.

2. Work Transformation of Foreign Language Lecturers in Turkey

In Turkey, while state university professors and foreign language lecturers work in permanent status and thus possess long-term job security, assistant professors and research assistants are untenured and contracted for specific time periods. Studies have revealed that employment status in higher education institutions is closely linked to academics' work-life balance and quality of life. Accordingly, tenured academics reported a higher quality of life than their untenured and contingent counterparts (Taşdemir Afşar, 2015). In a study of academics working at not-for profit private universities, learned helplessness was common across faculty (Vatansever and Yalçın, 2015). Despite the scholars' rigorous training and advanced skills, many of them lack job security and face the risk of unemployment. Even worse, some academics were found to be alienated from their intellectual labour. Academics internalize the existence of this precarisation through such justifications as the spiritual satisfaction of their work, the pleasure of giving lessons, and 'being born as an academic' (Vatansever, 2013).

The percentage of female academics in Turkey (45%) is fairly close to the averages of OECD countries (43%) and European Union countries (44%) (OECD, 2019). However, historically female academics tended to specialize in disciplines that were less valued and occupy lower positions in institutional hierarchies that were deemed 'suitable' for women both of which contribute to their job insecurity (Acar, 1993; Şentürk, 2015). Indeed, the rate of female academics is higher in entry/lower level academic positions (e.g., instructor, specialist, lecturer, and research assistant) in Turkey (Ozbilgin and Healy, 2004). On the other hand, the representation of women noticeably decreases in administrative positions. As of January 2020, only six (4.7%) of the rectors leading Turkey's 127 state universities were women (The Council of Higher Education, 2020).

Though the official language of Turkey is Turkish, most of the universities in the country conduct lessons in English, which is considered as a lingua franca as well as a language of prestige. Foreign language lecturers in the Turkish higher education system typically teach preparatory English classes to undergraduate students, who study the language for a year before they are considered competent to carry on their academic studies in English. When compared with those who hold other teaching positions such as tenured or tenure-line professors or teaching assistants, lecturers of English are considered to be junior, low level, and undervalued members of the Turkish higher education system, teaching a minimum of 12 hours (though typically, 20-25 hours) a week under a heavy workload due to lack of staff. In the Turkish context, a bachelor's degree in teaching is credential to become a lecturer of English. However foreign lecturers often have graduate degrees (more than half of the participants have MA or PhD degrees in this study). Additionally, studies conducted with lecturers of English reveal that they have negative perceptions about their lower status in academy and feel alienated and that they have little control over their work (Demir et al., 2011).

Studies conducted in Turkey indicate that the majority of lecturers feel exhausted and overwhelmed due to their extreme course load and crowded classrooms (Özgüngör and Duru, 2014). This type of workload poses the danger of curtailing the personal and professional development of lecturers, which could result in deskilling. Excessive teaching assignments and crowded classes cause the lecturers to spend most of their time on teaching, to the detriment of their research activity. Although in Turkey language lecturers are not obliged to do research and it is not a part of their job description, foreign language lecturers need intrinsic motivation and must be encouraged for developing positive beliefs about the importance of research (Bai, 2018). Also, cultures of the institutions which puts more emphasis on teaching rather than research, language lecturers identify themselves more as teachers than as researchers.

3. The Purpose of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the skills of lecturers of English working in higher education institutions; specifically, what kind of transformation their skills have undergone, in which fields they develop skills, and whether they face deprivation. In this context, this research seeks to reveal the change in skills based on the self-reported opinions of the lecturers working in schools of foreign languages at two state and two not-for-profit private universities in Ankara, Turkey. This is the first study that investigates how and in what direction the skills of lecturers of English change in Turkish

higher education. This study contributes to the literature by amplifying the views of lecturers of English, who are part of the entry/lower-level academic staff and are considered to experience more control than tenured professors. What makes this study interesting is the argument that department of foreign languages teaching English to preparatory classes might be more prone to control and standardization than other departments in a university due to the standardization of language courses as well as the lower credentials of foreign language lecturers who do not have to have graduate degrees. Moreover, foreign language lecturers have more limited career opportunities than other academics in Turkish universities. There is also a need to discuss the situation of foreign language lecturers in Turkey in comparison with their peers around the world. For these reasons, the study will address the following research question: Is there a change in the skills of English lecturers? If so, what kind of a change is there in the skills of foreign language lecturers working in higher education institutions?

4. Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach, because qualitative methods are well-suited to discovering and understanding social problems for individuals and groups (Creswell et al., 2007). The work is exploratory in terms of purpose, because this area of inquiry is relatively new and there is little existing research on the subject (Stebbins, 2001). This research uses in-depth interviewing as its primary method to uncover lecturers' experiences and thoughts about their change in the skills. In-depth interviews allow participants to express their personal opinions, experiences, and point of view using their own expressions (Tekin, 2006). We develop the questions for the semi-structured interviews by considering the most important factors (e.g., workload, autonomy, participation in decisions, managerial attitudes, professional development) that affected lecturers explained in the literature. After the in-depth interviews, the data obtained from the participants were interpreted by the researchers (Flick, 2014).

4.1. Study Group

This study was carried out with 14 lecturers working in the department of foreign languages at two state and two not-for-profit private universities in Ankara, Turkey. To recruit the lecturers for the study group, the four universities were first identified using the convenient sampling method. Characteristics of the study participants are given in Table 1.

4.2. Data Collection and Analysis

Before beginning the interview, the researchers informed participants about the research and their written ap-

Table 1. Descriptive statistics about participants

	Categories	Number of Participants
Gender	Female	9
	Male	5
Work Experience	6-10 years	7
	11-15 years	6
	16 years and above	1
Education Level	BA	6
	MA	6
	PhD	2
Institution Type	State University	8
	Not for profit- university	6

proval through an informed consent form were taken. All participants gave permission for their interviews to be audio recorded. In accordance with the principle of confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for participants. After obtaining the interview data, the audio was transcribed, and thematic analysis was performed. Thematic analysis aims to present the revealed findings in an edited and interpreted way so that the reader can understand it easily (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006). First, the researchers read the interview transcripts to analyze them by creating codes. By identifying the common aspects of the codes, the researchers obtained themes to form the outlines of the research findings. The code list and themes created were finalized after consulting an expert and making corrections based on their feedback. The codes and themes obtained as a result of this research are presented in the following section, using direct quotations to illustrate participants' experiences in their own words and to increase validity.

5. Findings and Discussion

This section analyses the findings obtained from the in-depth interviews under the themes revealed through thematic analysis.

5.1. Upskilling

Many participants highlighted that they have updated and improved their pedagogical and technological skills over time. They explained that since they teach approximately 25-30 hours of class per week, they use their pedagogical and professional skills more than any other skill sets. Pedagogical skills such as teaching skills, classroom management skills, preparing course content, and developing strategies based on the diversity of students come to the fore. Eight participants emphasized that they had to use online training material and technology intensively in their classrooms. In addition, the participants stated that they applied the knowledge gained in graduate or professional programs (i.e., CELTA, and DELTA) effec-

tively in their classrooms.

Participants who also worked as mid-level and junior administrative officers stated that their management skills had a positive effect on their professional skills. Participants mostly attributed positive developments in their skills to individual motivations. One participant explained as follows: 'I am obliged to improve my skills. I conducted a lot of research in the postgraduate and doctorate process. I have improved my management skills like a sub-manager' (P4). Another participant mentioned the importance of employing the technological tools that students currently use for in-class learning purposes, explaining: 'I have developed myself in using the tool[s] for many purposes.' (P9).

5.2. Deskillling and Workload

While participants defined their increasing workloads, they also emphasized that their work was being reduced to secretarial duties. Participants who thought that the imposed curriculum limited their skills also stated that the profession became monotonous with its repetitive structure. They emphasized that they had no time for research due to the excessive number of teaching hours. Given the fact that more than half of the participants engaged in postgraduate studies research is an important aspect. Also professional development of language lecturers require a good deal of research skills. Some participants also stated that their teaching skills were negatively affected by their heavy workload, and that they regressed in this area. Interestingly, the lecturers reported their pedagogical skills as among their most developed skills, but this was also the area where they felt they had regressed most. According to the lecturers' reflections, this is primarily because their classes were too crowded for them to employ their pedagogical skills in the most effective manner. Researchers generally agree that the number of students which provide the most qualified learning conditions for language-taught classes should not be higher than 18. Accordingly, a class of 25 people is crowded and a class of 35 people is very crowded. For instance In a program where two essays are expected to be written regularly every week in order to improve the writing skill, one of the most important skills of the language, reading 60 essays a week increases the workload for the instructors with weekly quizzes, evaluation of online assignments and extra responsibilities. Considering the importance of one-to-one interaction between the lecturer and the student for speaking and writing skills, which are productive skills in language classes, student-instructor interaction will decrease in classes over 18 and the time allocated for each student will also decline. In addition, the participants, who had assumed managerial positions also, stated that their pedagogical skills had deteriorated because they were away from the

classroom and teaching.

Almost all of the lecturers considered the increase in workload as the foremost cause of their declining skills. It is important to note that lecturers in English are typically given extra duties due to the lack of qualified staff in their subject area, and they view the excess paperwork as secretarial work. Lecturers stated that they lost a significant amount of time because they had to make copies of papers and deal with technical issues. One participant described their experience as follows:

Apart from the teaching role, for example, there are paper reading, secretarial duties like being an optical reader ... Having such tasks besides being the teacher, is a huge waste of time. Instead of spending my time copying I should be doing research. Due to the physical conditions, extra tasks in this manner do not give an opportunity for the people to improve themselves. (P5)

Another participant expressed that they had no time to prepare for their lessons, because of the excessive paperwork. They explained: 'There is a lot of paperwork sometimes, the forms sent by e-mails, filling in those forms, making photocopies bring extra workload and causes me to lag behind in teaching activities.' (P8) Another participant explained that their experience serving as 'tech support,' combined with the frequent clerical work caused a decline in skills. They explained their experience as follows: 'The most troubling situation we encounter is, for example, online homework. We are not technologists... Sometimes when they tell us a technical problem, we cannot solve it. When you go home, you can receive a lot of e-mails. Secretarial duties take a lot of my time.' (P1)

Some participants indicated that their professional skills atrophied because of the curriculum that was imposed on them. According to P6:

Management takes the decisions. Being autonomous is not something that is supported in our field because then you are out of the standard education. What if your colleagues get annoyed if you teach something different. [...] Everything has to be standard. Being standard is also idealized.

One participant described their experience as follows:

I think that limits this lecturer. Because there is a disadvantage that what you will teach for a year is done by a group of people above, by people who have developed themselves and are academically advanced. The academic identities of those people are revealed while preparing these programs,

but since it is not done by updating the dynamics of the incoming students and the expectations of these students every year, this curriculum creates a gap in the hands of the teacher in the classroom. Even if you put an excellent curriculum in front of you, if the teacher cannot make the changes by himself, if the management forces not to make any changes, a completely strict education is in question. (P3)

These lecturers explained that they were unable to use their pedagogical skills because they were assigned distance education courses, or because their job descriptions were not made clear by administrators. Additionally, they felt increased pressure on student achievement in their courses due to the emphasis placed on student-centered education. One participant explained that their research output had weakened: 'Due to the fact that we are completely focused on teaching we lack the research part. Because after a certain year of experience in the teaching profession, I think that if a person does not participate in research, he/she lacks the researcher personality.' (P3).

Extra tasks, secretarial work, excess paperwork, and increased technical issues are some of the workload barriers faced by the lecturers interviewed for this study. Despite increasing student enrolment, the number of lecturers remained the same; and this imbalance, combined with additional counselling and advising responsibilities, work becoming monotonous, and rigid curriculum imposed by administrators all contributed to the deskilling of lecturers of English language.

5.3. Autonomy in Decision Making

The majority of the participants stated that they did not possess autonomy in their institutions or departments, nor did they have a role in decision-making. They indicated that the administration determines what to teach, which books that will be taught, and what the program and course content will be. However, they do have autonomy over their classroom activities, as well as their methods of teachings. 13 of the 14 interview participants expressed that they were not completely autonomous in the decision-making process. Almost half of the participants stated that they did not have to be autonomous in the decision-making process, and that they were even satisfied that the limits were determined externally. These participants explained that minimum autonomy would be the best approach, because a standard would be provided for them, and they did not want to take much responsibility because they were afraid that this could further increase their existing workload. For example, one participant stated that the administrators were satisfied that everything was manageable, and that the lecturers found

it confusing to be more autonomous and did not support it because they thought it would bring an extra workload (P6).

Some participants voiced discomfort at the idea of autonomy over the curriculum, because they felt that they were not competent in program or content development (P11). Others labelled such autonomy as 'risky,' explaining how it might unpredictably impact student achievement (P13). On the other hand, other participants stated that this lack of a voice in decision making affects their skills and motivations. While one participant stated that sometimes it was difficult to implement the policies and curricula created by others (P1), another asserted that those who prepared and even implemented programs were unaware of the student profile and dynamics (P3). There were also participants who believed that not being included in the decision-making process was the result of standardization efforts, and consequently as lecturers their skills and work became mechanized and monotonous (P7, P8, P13). These lecturers believed that such lack of agency caused low motivation in educational activities, teaching, and research skills.

5.4. Professional Development

It is worth noting that a significant number of lecturers working at state universities expressed that they did not receive adequate support for professional development:

I do not think institution I am currently working for financially or otherwise supports my professional development. (P3)

For example, they do not send someone to a conference for professional development. There may be many reasons behind this and related to financial resources. The course load here may be too much. You can't get up and organize professional development activities every week while you are attending classes for 25-30 hours. (P4)

Participants associated this with the fact that the university did not allocate financial resources due to financial constraints and budgetary problems, and that lecturers of English language were often of secondary importance at their universities.

5.5. Future Expectations and Concerns

The concerns that participants voiced about their future were beyond what the researchers expected. While two participants stated that they could do their job for many years, there were also participants who stated that they considered being a lecturer as a career step, and that they anticipated turning to professions where they could use their skills more effectively in the future. Other fu-

ture goals that participants articulated including using technology more effectively, pursuing further academic studies, and making an effort to do their work more professionally. Regarding the concerns for the future, participants articulated general hopelessness and fears for their careers for several reasons. Firstly, the increase in the number of students as well as in the workload stood out as the most significant reason and concern for the lecturers not being able to use their skills. Again, the monotony of the work that was assigned, being bored or feeling exhausted were another repeated source of concern. The lecturers stated that their motivation was low because their work was not valued, their ideas were not considered, their professional development was not supported, and their professions were not viewed as prestigious; and as a result, their psychological pressure increased. Another concern of the participants was economic: they experienced or anticipated experiencing financial problems because of their low income. Economic uncertainties and lack of pay rise over the years both contributed to participants' anxieties about their profession.

6. Discussion

The research findings show that work environment is unable to provide professional development and increase the motivation of the lecturers teaching English. Research in other countries also indicate that English lecturers are marginalized and viewed as employees left out by their institutions (Carter and Bartlett-Trafford, 2008). Without research activities, lecturers' professional development is limited, and they are unable to fully perform their educator roles (Manalo, 2008). Moreover as this study shows, foreign language lecturers, who are part of the academic community, do not have enough time to allocate to research. Despite the fact that an increasing number of international students enroll in universities, the status and roles of lecturers of English have not been adequately recognized (Pourshafie and Brady, 2013).

According to the lecturers participating in this study, while research skills stand out as the most deprived skill in their working lives, technological skills are the most improved. While most of the lecturers thought that using the technology intensively contributed to their skills, some expressed that dealing with technical difficulties is a waste of time and teaching distance education classes curtails classroom interactions and thus pedagogical skills. At the same time, there is a clash between academics' choice and the institutions' goals regarding the adoption of educational technologies (Islam et al., 2015). For some educators, the use of technology in the classroom appears to be more about meeting institution or student expectations than their learning needs. Therefore, the intensive use of technology has a two-way effect that both

improves and causes deprivation in lecturers' skills.

Participants attributed the decline in both their research and pedagogical skills to reasons such as increased workload, extra tasks, and increasing numbers of students. Excessive teaching loads and crowded classes cause physical conditions worsen with each semester, because instructors lack sufficient time for research and service tasks (Özgüngör and Duru, 2014). The increase of working hours during the day and the intensity of the work during these hours mean that maximum efficiency is expected from a small number of lecturers (Mather et al., 2007). By increased work load the participants mentioned more crowded classes, less instructors, more secretarial work like copying and dealing with technical problems. Too much paper work, giving too many exams and marking too many papers, grading weekly essays following a very standardized rubric are considered to be increased work load. Becoming a psychological advisor to freshman students having adaptation problems to a new environment is another dimension of work load. Comparative studies with other OECD countries reveal that Turkey provides education in crowded classes and needs more instructors (Çetinsaya, 2014; Gür, 2016). Negative emotions, such as disappointment, stress, frustration, anxiety, hopelessness, and depression are found to be threatening language teachers (Huang and Guo, 2009). The lecturers interviewed for the present study also emphasized the words 'monotonisation,' 'mechanisation,' 'boring,' and 'becoming ordinary' when speaking about their skill deprivation. Other studies conducted with lecturers of English focused on similar keywords, such as alienation from their labour, routine, the monotonous side of labour, and lack of motivation (Davarcı et al, 2014).

Active participation in the decision-making process is one of the most critical factors determining job performance (Drummond and Reitsch, 1995). In this study, the participants agreed that they lack autonomy about what to teach. However, the participants did express that they had autonomy over their teaching methods and in-class activities. The lecturers advanced two views regarding their lack of autonomy in decision-making regarding course content. Participants who found it necessary and positive to implement pre-prepared programs explained that the pre-determined curricula did not limit their choice of class activities, and that the implementation of a standard program eases their work to some extent. The participants' resistance to autonomy is likely due to the method of curriculum design for the content of language courses, which are more prone to control and standardization than other departments in the university. Lecturers who thought autonomy to be risky also seemed to avoid taking too much responsibility, explaining that unrestricted curriculum would increase their existing

workloads by requiring more preparation of course content.

Another theme that stands out in the findings is professional development. The majority of the participants described a deficiency in this area. This finding supports other studies that have illustrated a gap in supporting the development of professional skills for lecturers teaching foreign languages (Kasworm et al., 2002). Similar to other nations (Mozzon-McPherson and Vismans, 2001; Mynard and Carson, 2014), foreign language lecturers in Turkey are specifically trained in foreign language teaching. If resources, activities, and strategies relevant to students' learning take into account individual differences, foreign language lecturers in Turkey can be seen as experts working together with students. They have an important role not only in teaching languages, but also in encouraging and guiding students to take responsibility for their own learning processes.

7. Conclusion

This study revealed that the most noticeable issue facing foreign language lecturers in the higher education system is their marginalized and undervalued status. These research findings echo the literature, which indicates that the jobs and skills of academic staff have been transformed by 21st century cultural and economic trends, and that these academics are also alienated from decision-making processes (Deem and Lucas, 2007; Macfarlane, 2011; McCarthy et al., 2017; Schapper and Mayson, 2005). The results show that lecturers are largely deprived of professional development opportunities that are vital for advancing their pedagogical, technological, managerial, and research skills.

This study revealed the necessity for developing policies to better define the roles of the lecturers, improve their working conditions, bolster their motivation, enhance their capacities, balance their workloads, and increase their professional development opportunities. The prevalence of concerns and uncertainty about the future seems to be related to the limited career opportunities and advancement opportunities as a language lecturer. In addition to these, monotony and boredom due to the repetition and tedium of the work are noteworthy concerns.

In higher education systems, lecturers of English indicate that their inappropriate workload, invisible compulsoriness, and employment type that lacks strict commitments to professional learning serve as constraints to their career development and advancement. Accordingly, these lecturers see themselves as higher education employees who teach the most classes but receive the lowest salary, leading to a negative perception about their pro-

fession. In order to reduce this workload, more language lecturers should be hired to better match the number of students enrolled by the institution. Courses should be capped at a reasonable number of students, lecturers to optimally use their pedagogical and academic skills. Policies should be established to enable lecturers to develop themselves in the fields of teaching, research and service and tasks that can be qualified as secretary work should be transferred to administrative personnel.

The concerns that participants voice about their careers, their future, fear of being bored with their profession, and lack of prestige cause them to experience decreased motivation, which in turn hinders their skill development. Lack of motivation could cause lecturers to be left out of university studies, unrecognized, unrewarded, marginalized, and undervalued (Webb, 2002). The present study has yielded significant findings to advance the understanding of how lecturers manage to work in an area where many restrictions exist. Working in unfavourable conditions hinders their capacity to work, their efforts, their loyalty, and their ability to provide quality support to students.

There is a need for additional studies that draw attention to the importance of the work done by language instructors in the field of higher education. Lecturers who think that their ideas are considered unimportant or ignored lose their motivation to improve their professional motivation in general and their skills in particular. There is a need to adopt a more holistic and coherent approach across the higher education sector around the world to ensure the importance of untenured faculty and staff, as well as increased recognition of their work and contribution to universities. Treating lecturers of English as peripheral to university operations or leaving their work unrecognized should be avoided; instead, their labour should be nurtured and encouraged. Some participants' reluctance to exercise autonomy in decision making should be the subject of further research, to enrich knowledge in this area.

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