

Experienced Second-Career English Teachers: Perceptions towards Professional Change

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Abstract: Many studies have focused on motivation and attitudes of career-change beginning teachers, however, only few have examined perceptions towards professional change of experienced second-career teachers after eight years of teaching. The current study assesses considerations that drove 26 experienced teachers to choose teaching, and teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) specifically, as a second career. The study is conducted in the context of a country of low teacher status, but of high demand for English studies. Content analysis conducted on the data of semi-constructed oral interviews reveals two opposed considerations. One - of people who seek stability, the other - of people of excellent financial stability who choose teaching out of convenience. The prestige factor belongs exclusively to those who change careers to EFL teaching, due to aura associated with the English language. A sense of satisfaction is expressed by all experienced second-career teachers. This brings hope to promoting the status of the profession, due to the enormous contribution of these mature teachers to the system. Nevertheless, complaints about low wages and a challenging job should be taken into account by decision makers to prevent dropping out of the teaching profession.

Keywords: second career teachers, career change to teaching, teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), career change to EFL teaching

1. BACKGROUND

Motivations for changing the actual job one has done so far are often those that pull individuals toward a new career or push them away from the old (Ibarra, 2006). These career changers (Crow, Levine, & Nager, 1990), or switchers (Mayotte, 2003), are driven by the necessity to avoid job insecurity and reduce dissatisfaction and work frustration and by the need for a work-life balance. They are also motivated by the desire to perform a meaningful work, achieve self-realization and contribute to the community (Carless & Arnup, 2011; Masdonati, Fournier & Lahrizi, 2017; Pas & Lapid, 2013).

Career transition to teaching which involves professionals with bachelor degrees to teach in schools is specifically intriguing, and has become popular in the last decade, due to a severe shortage of qualified teachers worldwide (McInerney, Ganotice, King, Marsh & Morin, 2015). Alternative fast-track paths in teaching programs are therefore offered to those who wish to engage in teaching after completing their studies in other fields (Laming & Horne, 2013; Tigchelaar, Brouwer, & Korthagen, 2008; Williams & Forgasz, 2009).

The particular decision to choose teaching as a second career is mainly driven by intrinsic (i.e., arising from internal factors) and extrinsic reasons (i.e., arising from external factors). Intrinsic motivations involve previous training and professional experiences (Freidus, 1994; Novak & Knowles, 1992; Richardson & Watt, 2005; Wagner & Imanel-Noy, 2014; Williams & Forgasz, 2009; Zuzovsky & Donitsa-Schmidt, 2014), empathy towards pupils, interest in education (Freidus & Krasnow, 1991), a desire to contribute to the society and to initiate a change in education (Powers, 2002), admiration for teachers, academic degrees in the field of knowledge, e.g., mathematics (Becker and Levenberg, 2003), and the concept of teaching as a valued occupation. Extrinsic reasons are motivated by stability and salary, scholarships, fine working conditions and time with family, (Katzin & Shkedi, 2011; Lovett, 2007; Varadharajan, Carter, Buchanan & Schuck, 2020).

The benefit of mature-age-second-career teachers to the educational system is enormous, as these teachers enter into the teaching field with prior occupational experiences and life skills from previous

careers (Anthony & Ord, 2008; Kaldi, 2009). They bring self-confidence and useful knowledge which might be useful in matters relating to challenges and multitasking required in school (Grier & Johnston, 2009; Hunter-Johnson, 2015; Williams, 2013). These qualities distinguish second-career teachers from young first-career teachers (Tigchelaar, Brouwer & Korthagen, 2008; Varadhrjan, Carter, Bucjanan & Schuck, 2016), and that they, themselves, believe that the most important attributes they bring to teaching are life experiences, generic workplace skills and personal abilities, rather than specific content knowledge (Williams & Forgasz, 2009).

However, if these life experiences are not seriously reflected and added into the classroom, then these qualities may not be transformed into better teaching skills (Freidus & Krasnow, 1991; Mayotte, 2003; Varadharajan, Carter, Buchanan & Schuck, 2020). Feelings of frustration are thus likely to appear, especially if mature-age teachers do not get enough support from the system (Freidus & Krasnow, 1991; Watters & Diezmann, 2015). This might be even more severe if the classes are too big, if parents are too much involved (Hursh, 2007), if the demands of the new profession were underestimated (Freidus, 1994), and if the teacher does not feel effective (Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb, O'Brien & Wyckoff, 2011).

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Israeli context is specifically unique in the study of transition to teaching, as of the low status of teaching in the country, including lower wages in comparison to other public sectors, as well as of poor teaching conditions and crowded classrooms (Dror, 2008; Goskov, 2016; Hurn 1985). Despite low status, even in a global perspective (OECD, 2011), teachers in Israel are expected to present high academic abilities, be experts in their field and obtain prominent teaching and communicative skills, linked with personal fitness (Avdor, 2008).

A study of novice second-career chemistry teachers in Israel, who have previously worked as chemists and participated in an alternative certification program at a science and engineering research university in the country, inquires resources that explain career transition. The teachers' desire to contribute to society appears as a central reason of the transition to teaching (Shwartz & Dori, 2020). Other factors elicited include: training and professional experiences (Zuzovsky & Donitsa-Schmidt, 2014), as well as admiration for teachers, relevant academic degrees, the desire to contribute to society and salary (Katzin & Shkedi, 2011).

Nevertheless, only few studies that deal with career change to teaching in the Israeli context have evaluated the switch to teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). This is surprising as of the many intensive academic programs in colleges of education and universities in the country to people with a good level of English who wish to change careers to EFL teaching, and since English is an extremely important language in Israel. This derives from its high status as a "world language" (Crystal, 1997) as well as from its wide usage in international trade, high tech and tourism in Israel, alongside Hebrew, the country's first and official language (Shohamy, 2017; Spolsky & Shohamy, 1999).

English is a compulsory core subject in all public schools in Israel, starting officially from the third or fourth grade. It is indispensable for academic advancement and is generally accepted as 'everyone's second language'. Universities in Israel practice bilingual Hebrew-English policies. Almost all academic texts are in English, whereas classes are merely taught in Hebrew. When a student in Israel is examined in the university entrance exams, there is a part of the English language. The student may also be required to complete English courses if he/she does not receive a high enough grade in the sorting exams and is required to read a large amount of academic material in English (Or, Shohamy & Donitza-Shmidt, 2017). English teaching profession is thus considered a valued discipline in Israel. Pupils and their parents perceive it as being a tremendously practical benefit in the world outside school (Shohamy, 2017), and thus there is huge demand for professional English teachers who control the language.

The few studies that deal with second-career English teachers in Israel focus on beginning teachers. A study on the professional challenges and concerns of student-English teachers who have participated in a fast-track induction program show complex feelings between what they have expected and what they actually encounter in school. The main challenges and concerns elicited involves classroom teaching, teacher-student relations, the extensive workload and their emotional involvement. However, these new teachers show the ability to apply strategies acquired in their previous professions to cope with professional challenges in school (Haim & Amdur, 2016).

Another study on career change to English teaching in Israel inquires hopes and concerns of candidates throughout an intensive one-year certification program to a special group of native and near-native speakers of English who possess an academic degree in various disciplines. The teachers express fears and a feeling of uncertainty regarding their choice and their suitability to becoming teachers. This is expressed along with concerns about losing self-confidence due to discipline problems and other external factors within school system. However, the fact that the participants are proficient speakers in the language, which they are supposed to instruct, provides some level of comfort and confidence (Leshem, 2019).

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- a. What characterizes people who change careers to teaching in Israel? Is there a difference between career changers to EFL teaching compared to other disciplines?
- b. Do experienced career changers to teaching in Israel express satisfaction after eight years of teaching?

4. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The current study focuses on career changers to teaching in Israel, a country typical of low teacher status (Dror, 2008; Goskov, 2016; Hurn 1985). Unlike previous studies that examine beginning student/novice teachers, this study focuses on experienced teachers who have been teaching in the public educational system for eight years. The study compares perceptions towards professional change of second-career teachers of EFL and second-career teachers of other disciplines. It is carried out according to qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis approaches, which are part of the qualitative descriptive research paradigms (Bowen, 2006). This approach refers to the study of personal experiences, elicited in the current study via a given qualitative data of an oral interview. The analysis requires interpretation of the meaning of content conveyed in specific phenomena and enables the researcher to make inferences about the message within the texts (Creswell, 2013).

In interviews of the type used in this study, the formulation of the central questions is done in advance, but the sequence of their presentation is not predetermined. There is scope during the interview to add questions according to the context, and sometimes the answers of the interviewee lead to spontaneous questions (Dushnik, Sabar Ben-Yehoshua, 2001).

4.1. Participants

The study involves 26 experienced career changes to teaching in Israel who have been teaching for eight years in regular Junior-high schools from mid-high socioeconomic backgrounds in the centre of the country. The teachers are divided into two groups. The first group consists of 14 career changers to English teaching (4 men, 10 women). The second group consists of 12 career changers to teaching other disciplines (5 men, 7 women); 4 teach mathematics (3 men, 1 woman), 2- literature (2 women), 2- computer science (1 man, 1 woman), 2- physical education (1 man, 1 woman) and 2 civic teachers (2 women). Age range of the participants is between 30 to 40. All participants speak Hebrew as a native tongue.

4.2. Tools

The study uses a semi-constructed oral interview (Gibton, 2001), designed specifically for the purpose of this study by the two authors. The interview includes structured questions, that give the respondent the opportunity to respond freely to the questions. It involves five domains. These are: (1) background (ten question); (2) motivations for a decision to change a profession to teaching EFL or to teaching another discipline (three question); (3) satisfaction with the decision after 8 years in the system (two questions); (4) perceptions towards teaching with relation to previous profession (four questions); (5) the concept of the profession and teacher status in Israel (seven questions).

4.3. Data Collection

Participants were interviewed individually in Hebrew by the second author in a quiet room; questions were adaptable to each population (i.e., career changers to EFL teaching, career changers to another disciplines). Each interview took 40-60 minutes. All interviews were being audio recorded (with participants' permission) and were then transcribed word-by-word, translated into English, and finally - analysed qualitatively by content and theme type (Bowen, 2006). To preserve anonymity, all

identifying information was removed during the transcribing process, and pseudonyms were used to keep all participants' information confidential.

4.4. Data Analysis

This study uses qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis (Bowen, 2006) to characterize perceptions and satisfaction of experienced second-career teachers in Israel after 8 years of teaching, as well as to pinpoint the reasons that led participants become EFL teachers and teachers of other disciplines. The interview is first coded into thematic categories, and major themes are then mapped out from the interviews. Data analysis is characterized as a qualitative process of analysis with intuitive elements or characteristics which aims to give meaning, interpretation and generalization to the phenomenon under study (Gibton, 2001). Analysis used in this study is of a process of ordering and structuring of the collected information for its interpretation and understanding of its meanings. The results of this study are limited to the specific career changers who took part in this study. Future studies may involve a bigger sample of participants of various backgrounds.

5. PRESENTATIONS OF FINDINGS

Findings are presented following the three questions of the study. First, characteristics of a career changer to teaching in Israel, next - motivations to change careers to English teaching, and finally - themes related with satisfaction regarding the decision to change careers to teaching in Israel after 8 years in the educational system. Findings are supported by relevant authentic examples from the interviews.

5.1. A profile of a career changer to teaching

Content analysis (Bowen, 2006) used to locate mutual themes to all experienced second-career teachers, has characterized a profile of a career changer to teaching in the Israeli context. The following analysis presents themes elicited from the interviews that are common to all career changers. Figure 1 displays a profile of individuals who decide to change careers to teaching in Israel.

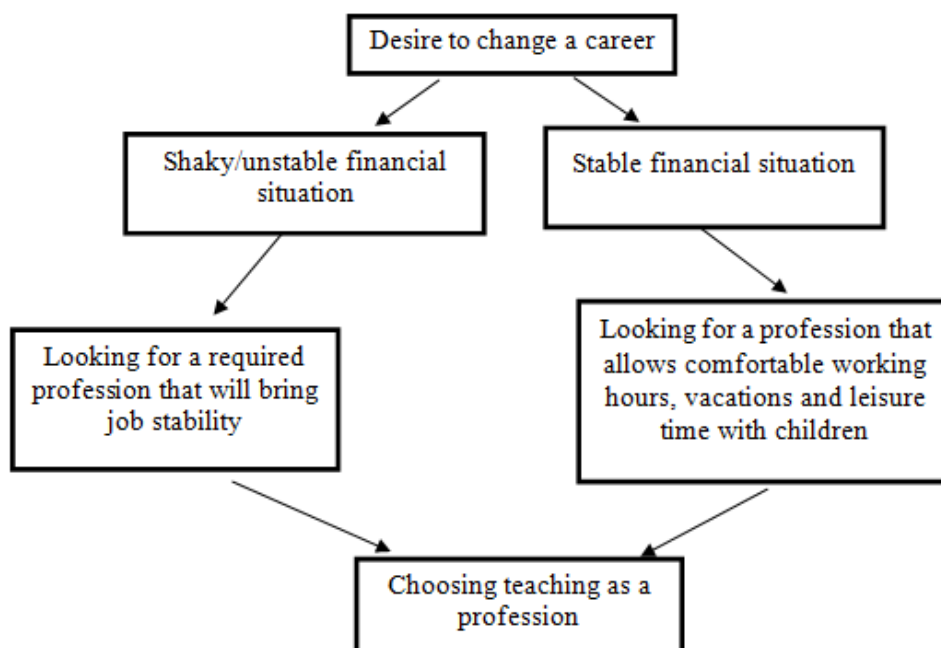


Fig1. Career changer profile

Two opposite theme types related with career changes to teaching are demonstrated in Figure 1. The first type involves people who have undergone a dramatic difficulty, exhaustion, complexity in being a parent of young children and having a full-time job which lasts until the evening. They are mature and consider the teaching profession a kind of “refuge”, due to the reasons mentioned above, and the demand for good teachers in the country. Career changers of this type are also motivated by the need to succeed in the new career; some see teaching as an escape from unstable work, unstable life and unstable income. The background to the difficulties of earning a living derives from reasons such as: bankruptcy, dismissal from work, and work as a freelance.

Dan: *"Wages, bureaucracy and inability to move forward in roles and stand out are the dark spots that made me change my career to teaching."* (English teacher, man);

Sharon: *"I had neither a permanent job nor a fixed salary, and most of it was work at home. I had to do marketing to fill my study groups, and this is an area that I do not know and excel at. I wanted to work in a secure workplace with a fixed salary every month"* (Literature teacher, woman).

Career changers to teaching of this theme type are looking for a required job which guarantees financial stability, as they are usually the main breadwinners and sometimes even single providers.

Ron: *"I had neither a permanent job nor a fixed salary, and most of it was work at home. I had to do marketing to fill my study groups, and this is an area that I do not know and excel at. I wanted to work in a secure workplace with a fixed salary every month"* (Math teacher, man).

Ben: *"Training management is an area that is not easy, and there are quite a few layoffs. I was looking for something stable and long-lasting, and I knew that teaching and teaching English in particular, is a profession that will provide me with a safe and secure job, I also knew I could supplement income with private lessons"* (English teacher, man).

Shelly: *"Look, my considerations consisted of interest, diversity, and of course, the possibility of a steady livelihood everywhere. Teaching English is a required profession"* (English teacher, woman).

Ruth: *"The English profession is required and wanted; I enjoy teaching English lessons, especially literature. I also know that I should always have no problem finding a job teaching English"* (English teacher, woman); *"I chose to study English teaching for three reasons; the first is that I love the language, I am quite good at it and experienced in teaching it. The second reason is the ability to teach private lessons and thus supplement income. The third is that I knew there were not a lot of English teachers in the workforce, and I could find work pretty quickly"* (English teacher, woman).

The second type of career changers to teaching mapped out is exactly the opposite of the first type. These career changers enjoy an excellent economic base and an economic anchor, usually from their spouse. Hence, they enable themselves to change careers into a profession that they love and may allow them to engage in a trade with more comfortable hours with their children, despite low salary. The temptation for vacations and flexible hours among this type of career changers is especially true for women.

Dvora: *"I love English literature, studying, and teaching, I have an M.A. and a thesis in literature. I can afford myself low salary, an enjoyable job and time with my kids"* (literature teacher, woman).

Sara: *"I love the English language and love to engage, learn, and teach it. I don't care about low income"* (English teacher, woman).

Ranit: *"My family was delighted when I told them about the change; they knew I was looking for a place for social and meaningful doing. I have earned enough to make this change"* (Civic teacher, woman).

Ruth: *"One of the things that have influenced me most about teaching is the desire to be with my children in the afternoon and a significant figure in their lives. And not a weekend parent."* (English teacher, woman).

Affinity and connection to the field of knowledge are also apparent in teachers of this theme type who enjoy financial stability. Many of these career changes have an academic degree in the field of teaching (e.g., English literature, mathematics), and all that is left for them is to maintain the teaching certificate in the field.

Shelly: *"I felt the best connection to the computer world. It is a world I love. I also have a bachelor's degree in this field. I don't care about low pay. Teaching computer science will give me more time with my family"* (Computer science teacher, woman).

Sara: *"I have always loved English discipline and language. In addition to a degree in social work, I have a degree in comparative literature. Within the same degree, I also studied English"*

and American Literature courses. I was very connected to the topic of English language and literature. I can effort myself to being a teacher” (English teacher, woman).

5.2. Motivations to Choose English Teaching as a Second Career

Content analysis reveals mutual themes to all experienced-career changers that are likely to explain the decision to become teachers. However, several themes are specifically typical of both EFL and math teachers, whereas other themes are exclusive to career changers to English teaching. Figure 2 presents decisions to change careers to teaching English, mathematics and other disciplines in Israel.

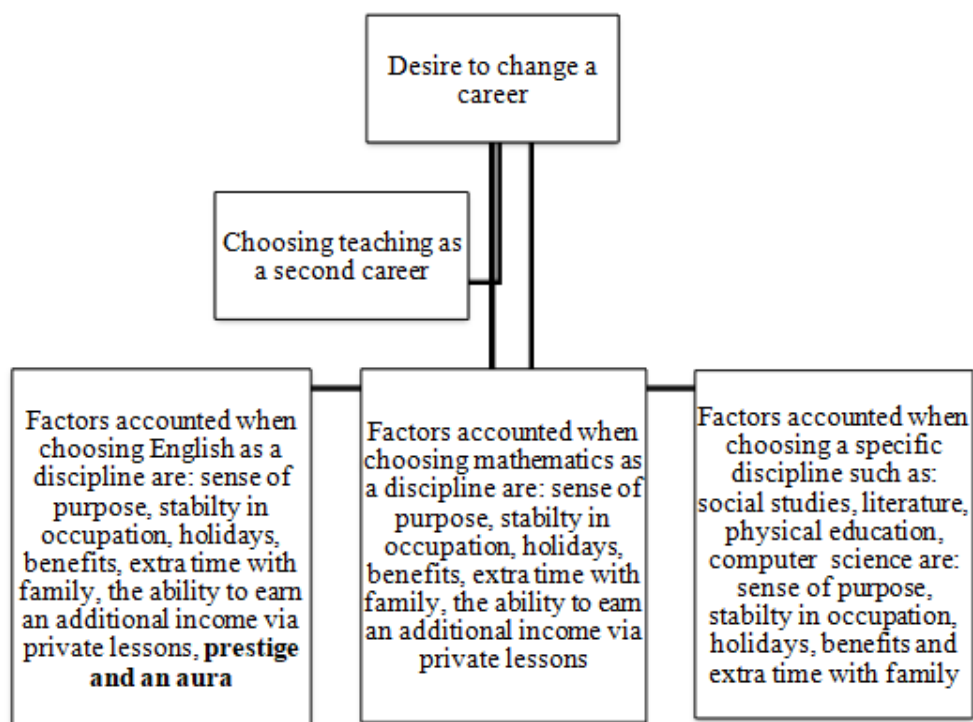


Fig2. Decision making for teaching English compared to other disciplines

Experienced career changers to teaching in Israel need a sense of purpose, as well as stability in occupation, benefits and extra time with family, as illustrated in Figure 2. However, the specific population of career changers to English teaching also discusses motivations of prestige and aura of English teaching which makes them choose the EFL discipline other than other disciplines. The issue of the prestige of the disciplinary field has not been risen among teachers in other disciplines.

Hila: "Once I decided on teaching, I immediately decided that it must first be a known subject, that is, an important profession and also, of course, something I love. Now, English, I have always loved, and English is a profession that has five points, a profession with prestige, with a reputation"(English teacher, woman).

Yosi: "First of all, English is the most sought-after discipline, there is a shortage of teachers, and there is a much higher chance of finding work in this field. In the beginning, I thought about choosing math because it is a profession that interests me, but I felt it is less relevant to students' lives. English, on the other hand, is of enormous importance in life, and it also allows me as a teacher to connect with students" (English teacher, man).

Neta: "For me, the only option to become a teacher was to be an English one. Teaching is a profession with very low prestige and lower pay than other professions. I thought, if there were already a change in my economic situation, I would at least maintain relative prestige. To me, as well as to the environment within the teaching profession, there are two subjects in which teachers are given relative respect, and this is English and math. The rest of the disciplines are being disrespectful by students and parents, and I saw no reason to engage in either "(English teacher, woman).

Chaya: "I love the English language as well as other languages. I have experience in this field, it's fun because there is much room for imagination and creativity, I debated between three

disciplines, English, art and math, I decided to do a sort of market survey and realized that English is the most sought-after discipline. More than the others, so it was easy" (English teacher, woman).

Similarities between second-career teachers of English and mathematics are apparent, as both discuss the consideration of earning extra money by individual tutoring, as a crucial reason that makes them choose these specific disciplines.

Tom: *"I'm very glad I decided to do it. With my wife's encouragement of course. After completing my M.A studies in English, I started working in colleges as an English tutor in addition to working at school; it is great money, an important financial supplement that I would not be able to get have I not had done my change to English teaching" (English teacher, man).*

Yaara: *I preferred to make a career change to art, but when I realized that English teachers were more wanted than art teachers, and that I can make good money by teaching privately afternoon, I decided to change my career to teach English." (English teacher, woman).*

Roece: *"I have a degree in math, and of course I can give tutoring to all levels after school. It's a crucial consideration" (Computer science teacher, man).*

Erik: *"I felt best relation to mathematics. I also have a bachelor's degree in this science, I can teach it after school and earn extra money" (Math teacher, man).*

This theme type, related with supplement income with private tutoring, differentiates EFL and math teachers from other teaching disciplines. However, the theme of prestige and aura is unique only to the EFL teachers.

5.3. Findings on satisfaction with career change into teaching

All experienced second-career teachers express satisfaction with career change to teaching, due to flexible hours, time with family and love to the teaching profession, and all felt gratification with their role as teachers.

Shelly: *"I am very pleased with the decision, and I love teaching English. I believe it is an important profession. Even if I were to do the career change again today, I would choose English teaching" (English teacher, woman).*

Sue: *"The highlights in my decision to change my career to teaching are the many vacations, the flexible hours, and the satisfaction from teaching" (English teacher, woman).*

Stav: *"I am happy to work with teenagers and accompany them through their learning and growing up. I get a lot of love and appreciation from them." (Physical-education teacher, man).*

Rotem: *"In terms of benefits, now I have a lot more motivation to get up in the morning for work, there are comfortable hours, being able to be with my son in the afternoon and on vacations" (Math teacher, woman).*

Ruth: *"The change allows me to be more present in my daughters' life, which is something I missed in my previous job" (English teacher, woman).*

Shir: *"There are many advantages, these are mainly related to the hours and the fact that I gained back control in my life. Today I am responsible for the hours I spend, how much and why and when, and can navigate my strengths, invest more in my family during their waking hours, and work at night (Civic teacher, woman).*

However, two issues slightly clouded satisfaction from the teaching profession. The first is pay gap, that is the average between previous profession to current teaching profession, resulting in decrease in wages. The second refers to emotional burden as well as to multiplicity of tasks on a teacher and the high-level investment required from a teacher in Israel to fulfill his/her role.

Shaul: *"In teaching, I deal more with people and children while in my previous career as an engineer, I worked with computers most of the time. In the teaching profession, the working hours are fewer, and in my previous job, I would finish working at 7 pm. And of course, there is the help I provide my students; I am more satisfied with my work. However, there is also*

the salary issue; as an engineer, I earned twice as much as what I earn as a teacher. However, I get to be a significant parent in raising my children" (Math teacher, man).

Roni, *"Let's also address the economic perspective, I give my whole and work so hard, days and nights exactly how I used to do when I was a spokesperson in the city hall, but the difference is huge, as I am earning as half as I used to"* (physical-education, woman).

Sara: *"I love teaching, but in terms of drawbacks, there is no doubt that the teaching profession is challenging, I did not think it would be this way, neither the difficulty nor the job itself. If I have to summarize, then the advantages are personal - when it comes to work, controlling life, and distributing energy to the things that interest me, and the disadvantages are mainly the workload"* (Math teacher, woman).

Mia: *"I enjoy teaching. However, wages are insufficient in relation to the required investment"*. (English teacher, woman).

Neta: *"I love teaching very much, but my salary was undoubtedly badly affected by the change."* (English teacher, woman).

Despite difficulties expressed, neither drastic reactions nor emotional feelings of dissatisfaction is explicitly expressed by the experienced teachers with regard to career transition after 8 years in of teaching.

6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study focuses on 26 career changers to teaching in Israel, a country typical of teacher shortage on the one hand and of low status of the profession and low pay compared to other sectors, on the other hand (Dror, 2008; Goskov, 2016; Hurn 1985). Nevertheless, many people in the country choose teaching as a second career. This study inquires perceptions towards professional change after 8 years of teaching, and maps out the reasons that have made participants choose this profession. Specifically, it focuses on teachers of English, which is considered a powerful language in Israel in academia, industry, high tech, international trade and tourism, alongside Hebrew (Shohamy, 2017; Spolsky & Shohamy, 1999).

Only few studies have dealt to date with experienced second-career teachers, and specifically with career changers to teaching EFL in Israel. The few studies conducted inquire reasons to switch careers in addition to future expectations of beginning teachers. The current study is the first to examine experienced second-career teachers who have been teaching in the public educational system for almost a decade. It distinguishes individuals who have chosen EFL teaching from those who have preferred teaching of other disciplines (i.e., mathematics, literature, computer science, civic and physical education).

An original semi-open interview, designed specifically by the authors for the purpose of this study, has been given individually to each participant. The questionnaire tackles the major goals of the study which aim to map out: motivations to change careers to teaching, specific reasons to choose a particular teaching discipline, and EFL specifically, perceptions towards the change and the amount of satisfaction obtained from the decision after 8 years of teaching.

Content analysis (Bowen, 2006) conducted on the interviewees' response provides a profile of a career changer to teaching in Israel. It also supplies a concise thematic comparison between the reasons that have made experienced teachers choose EFL teaching as a second career compared to other disciplines, as well as specific themes regarding satisfaction with the teaching profession.

6.1. Novel findings

A major finding of this study shows that changing careers to teaching EFL is triggered by unique factors that characterize only those who choose to change careers to this discipline. Previous studies (e.g., Katzian & Shkedi, 2011) have discussed various factors in changing career to teaching, such as former occupation and salary. However, only in the English discipline, consideration, such as prestige, has come up. This appears as a solitary feature among teachers who have undergone switching to teaching English as a foreign language, so that the prestige factor, mapped out in this specific study, belongs exclusively to those who have undergone career change to English teaching in the unique Israeli context.

This finding thus suggests a process in which after deciding on changing a career to teaching, the decision of which discipline to choose (e.g., English), relies on several characteristics. These involve the relative prestige of the discipline compared to other disciplines, the amount of teacher shortage, relevant knowledge to the discipline and supplemental private employment options. Many who have an excellent self-perception of being proficient speakers of English feel they have a relative advantage of offering themselves as teachers in this field.

Another innovative finding to this study is the existence of contradicting considerations of two opposed populations of career changers who choose teaching as a second career. Our findings present a precise distinction between (a) the motivations of people who seek stability and want to make a change in their lives out of a need or desire to escape unstable work, unstable income and changing working condition, to (b) those of excellent financial stability, especially women in this study, who do not care about low pay, typical of the teaching profession in Israel. Participants who enjoy economic security have chosen teaching out of convenience, the desire to work at more comfortable and flexible hours as well as to enjoy the number of vacations in this field.

This finding elaborates on a previous distinction of two groups of career changers: those who are not satisfied with their career situation and those who wish to engage in a new career path of better vocation and values (Mandasoti, Fournier & Lahrizi, 2017). They are also in line with related concepts, such as “input” referring to the desire to make a change out of convenience or unstable financial situation, as well as with “processes”, referring to the actual decision to choose a certain profession as a second career (Ibarra, 2006). However, contrary to previous findings, the results of the current study focus exclusively on career change to teaching. They thus present an accurate distinction of opposed motivations that influence the decision to change careers to teaching, and to English teaching specifically.

The findings of this study are in line with reasons mapped out in previous studies of career change to teaching. Specifically, they support the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic reasons that drive individuals choose teaching as a second career (Katzin & Shkedi, 2011; Wagner & Imanel-Noy, 2014). The findings confirm Beck's assumption (2000) that in light of social and cultural changes, people begin to make a career change; Fouad and Bynner's (2008) claim of the need to create economic and employment stability; Arthur and Rousseau (1996) and Valcour and Tolbert (2003) who address the need for job stability and the desire to find a balance between personal life and career/work, and Schwartz & Dori (2020) who discuss teachers' desire to contribute to society. The findings of the current study partially confirm Lovett's (2007) distinction between altruistic motivations to improve society, intrinsic motivations, involving benefits and extrinsic motivations, related to comfortable working conditions and economic security. They also match the contradictory need for security versus self-realization discussed in Pas & Lipid (2013). However, the specific distinction made in the current study between opposed considerations of two major types of career changers to teaching is unique to this study. It gives particular knowledge, adds order and contributes to the understanding of choosing teaching as a second career, especially in a country of low teacher status.

7. CONCLUSION

The present study fills a gap in the literature by addressing experienced second-career teachers, as well as by differentiating between career changers to different disciplines in Israel. Content analysis conducted on the data of the interviews shows that the teachers who choose to change careers to teaching are those who have had an affinity to the field of instruction, such as English and math. They are competent in the chosen discipline, and so it seems logical and natural to change to this field. Another reason for the decision is that there is a shortage of teachers as well as a demand for teachers in this sector. It is important to note, that this motivation stands out only in interviews with English teachers. Another reason is the difficulty in earning a living, which may include those who went bankrupt, laid off from work or self-employed and those who wish to achieve stability and job security. This motivation is also noted only in English teachers. Among math and English teachers, it appears that these specific professions allow them additional income through private tutoring, as well as many vacations, comfortable working hours and the opportunity to spend more time with their children. These findings are consistent with previous studies that show the need for job security as a factor that leads people to choose a teaching profession (Watt & Richardson, 2007; 2008).

The findings also support Pink's (2009) assertion that a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction are crucial in choosing teaching, mainly because teachers' salaries are relatively low. This is particularly important in light of Dror's (2008) argument that in the Israeli labour market, teachers' wages are lower compared to other sectors. These arguments are also raised among English teachers and it is evident that the earning factor does not interfere with their choice of teaching EFL as a second career.

An important finding to this study reveals positive attitudes and satisfaction accompanied by feelings of self-fulfilment by all career changers, after eight years of teaching, and regardless of discipline. Satisfaction with the decision to change careers to teaching is expressed by study participants despite the drop in their pay and the sense of clutter and burden of the multitasking, typical of teaching in Israel (Morrison, 2016). No complaint has been made by the teachers regarding parental involvement (Hursh, 2007). These findings are highly encouraging in light of a growing trend of mature adults entering teaching as a second career in Israel. The major advantage of these new teachers is the richness, maturity, flexible thinking and diversity of life experience that they may bring with them. It is to be hoped that these qualified and qualitative teachers contribute to promoting the status of the teaching profession in the country. Efforts are required from the decision makers to make these teachers stay in the system.

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