



# Identifying, measuring and addressing language learners' needs

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## Abstract

Most university students are confronted with the feeling of loneliness and face with a number of other personal psychological and social needs during their first years at university. Depending on the students' age, gender, faculty, socioeconomic status or emotional intelligence, these needs may change considerably and affect their academic success. As a consequence, objective and frequent assessment of the needs of university students (especially in their first years) is essential to provide more sustainable, effective and meaningful educational programs. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to explore psychological and social needs of foreign language preparatory schools' students in Turkey and to determine whether those needs differ according to a number of independent variables. The sample of the study consists of 1526 undergraduate students studying at 5 different state-universities' language schools in Ankara, Eskişehir and İzmir during 2018-2019 academic years. SNAS (Students' Needs Analysis Survey), a Turkish adapted version of the original scale the Survey of Student Needs (SSN) was used for data collection. Finally, the results of this study revealed that freshmen language learners primarily have psychological, social, academic and financial needs and these needs differ significantly according to gender, language proficiency level and academic achievement.

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**Keywords:** Language learners' needs, psychological factors, social factors, academic needs, motivation

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## 1. Introduction

In parallel with the radical changes in human needs in terms of communication or education in the last few decades, university students' personal needs and the reasons why they should learn a foreign language have changed as well. This shift makes it necessary for educational researchers to closely and continuously monitor the differentiating academic, professional, social and personal needs of language learners, considering their developmental process within the very first years of their academic careers. As it is widely known, the new beginnings have always been hard for most of us to adapt, so there are important interactions between the education process at university

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and the developmental process during adulthood for young people. In other words, university life is described as an important period for intellectual growth, especially for undergraduate students, in which these young people experience many new academic, personal and social experiences including the time they spend for learning a foreign language (Papalia et al., 1998). Almost 80% of all university students study away from their families and hometowns in Turkey and this could cause many psychological, social and motivational problems for students especially in their first years (Ültanır, 1996). Nonetheless, in most Turkish universities, intermediate or upper-intermediate level foreign language proficiency (generally it stands for B2 level in CEFR) is required from the students to start taking their regular courses in their faculties. Thus, freshmen's quick adaptation to intensive language teaching programs at universities is critical to the efficiency and success of such programs, which are mostly compulsory in the first year for students who cannot pass the language proficiency exams in Turkey. In this process, students not only have to learn a foreign language in a specific time but also have to cope with many personal and academic issues such as adapting to the new academic and social environment of the university, meeting academic expectations and demands, achieving independence in terms of social freedom, questioning and re-defining relationships with friends and opposite sex and seeking for various career opportunities (Ültanır, 1998).

This study aims to provide some evidence about psychological and social needs of language learners and to determine whether those needs of language learners differ according to a number of independent variables such as gender, proficiency level and academic achievement. Thus, results of this study might show us what kind of social and psychological needs our students have which are necessary for language teachers to empathize with them better and to help them at optimum level in their language learning process. That is why the findings of this study could be useful for foreign language teaching program administrators, curriculum designers and language teachers since those results might reflect language learners' real worlds and their multi-faceted educational, psychological and social needs.

### *1.1. Theoretical background*

When the literature focusing on undergraduate language learners' needs is analyzed, it was observed that mainly a variety of economic, academic, professional, social and personal needs and problems of university students have been at the focus of researchers for so long (Aksu & Paykoç, 1986; Bertocci et al., 1992; Kacur & Atak 2011; Güneri et al., 2003; Ovando & Collier, 1998) and these needs were reported to have priority for university students. It was also stated that the students who had to learn a foreign language in the first years of their university education had to cope with serious economic and social difficulties at the same time and had problems in giving their full attention and care to their language education (Aluede et al., 2006; Arco et al., 2005; Kaur, 2007, Krashen, 1985). It should also be remembered that just because of the foreign language proficiency requirement of Turkish universities; most students have to spend at least one more year in their university education, which brings extra financial and psychological burden to both the students and their families. For instance, university

students mostly experience accommodation, adaptation and loneliness problems in the first year of their language education since most of them study in different cities in Turkey. In the following years, these students have to deal with various problems such as exam anxiety, future anxiety, relationships with faculty members and classmates, difficulty of the content of the courses, academic problems (repeating a year etc.) (Demir & Aydın, 1997). In the related literature, it is also emphasized that the academic needs of the freshmen and sophomores are higher while the needs of juniors and seniors in job search skills, decision making skills and self-understanding are more prominent (Weissberg et al., 1982).

In an attempt to increase the academic success and their dedication to their studies at university, undergraduate students' psychological and social needs have been studied extensively (Graves, 2000; Güneri et al., 2003; Koydemir et al., 2010). However, there are limited number of studies on psychological needs and private concerns of the freshman students who are studying in language preparatory schools at universities (Maşrabacı, 1989). In a number of studies carried out in Turkish universities, it was determined that university students have many economic, academic, professional, personal and relational needs or problems and student needs differ in terms of various variables (Bostancı et al., 2005; Pektaş & Bilge, 2007; Türküm, 2007.). What is more, it was also stated that university students are faced with various problems and needs that are becoming more and more complex and require extensive research (Hyun et al., 2006; Pang, 2005). Atik and Yalçın (2010) claimed that such problems may be related to the learners' developmental needs or character changes, as well as various relationship problems (with their peers, parents or teachers), academic concerns, stress, depression, fear of failure and personality disorders.

It was also reported that university students' problems might differ according to their class level, faculty or level of academic success (Doğan 2012; Şahin et al., 2009). Considering the fact that the level of stress, loneliness and psychological isolation could vary significantly according to students' number of friends, their being accustomed to the university programs and the amount of time they challenged with all these issues might be important in identifying students' needs. Also, research in Turkey reveals that students' faculties could also be an independent variable in discovering students' needs since those faculty differences could also signal some social and parental differences as well (Kacur & Atak, 2011; Şahin et al., 2009). For this reason, it is of great importance to determine changing academic, social, personal and professional needs of undergraduate language learners at regular intervals, and to plan the services provided by the student support units of language schools under the light of these needs (Barrow et al., 1989; Wong & Wong, 2001). In addition, faculty members, academic advisors, language school administrators and psychologists working in student support units, all the academic and administrative staff working at the university, should have sufficient knowledge and experience about the changing needs of students especially the ones in junior classes (Koplik & DeVito, 1986; Schweitzer, 1996).

The last but not the least, exploring undergraduate language learners' psychological and social needs is significant for student counseling units. On the basis of EU

accreditation criteria and university students' ever-changing interests, needs and expectations, it has become a necessity for universities' Psychological Counseling and Guidance (PCG) centers to diversify and develop their service network within the scope of their roles and functions (Benton et al., 2003). Therefore, the establishment of preventive and developmental support programs on the basis of research on students' needs and the continuous development of all programs (including especially the language teaching programs) prepared in terms of students' interests, expectations and needs will significantly increase the functions of universities' PCG services (Pektaş & Bilge 2007). Otherwise, any service or educational activity (including the ones related to foreign language teaching) designed without determining the actual needs and problems of the students will be insufficient to meet the basic needs of the students or to benefit from the services provided for them at the optimum level (Bishop, et al., 1998; Carney & Barak, 1976; Galagher et al., 1992). Therefore, Ramsey (2000) advised that the administrations of the PCG services need the results of such research to determine the changing needs and expectations of the target audience of these centers in order to utilize their existing resources in the most efficient way and produce activities that can respond students' needs and requests in the most effective way.

Consequently, findings of the related literature have mainly focused on university students' academic and pedagogical needs; however, there is little information on what freshman language learners in prep-schools need to feel themselves better while learning a foreign language and how these needs affect their language learning performances. Thus, in this study, it was aimed to explore psychological and social needs of language learners and to determine whether these needs differ according to a number of independent variables. To achieve this purpose, this study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What psychological and social needs do undergraduate language learners have?
2. Do language learners' needs differ according to gender, language proficiency level and academic success?

## **2. Method**

The general screening model was preferred for the research model and convenience sampling technique was utilized to collect the research data since the literature related to research techniques suggests the use of general screening model as it aims to describe a social or a pedagogical case or event that existed in the past or exists at present in the most objective way (Karasar, 2005).

### *2.1. Participants*

The sample of the study consists English language learners studying at 5 different state-universities' language schools in Ankara, Eskişehir and İzmir during 2018-2019 academic year. Before inviting the students to participate in the research via e-mail, official permissions were taken from each language school's administrations after

reporting them the scope and aim of the study. A total of 8500 undergraduate students were sent e-mails with an invitation to participate in the study. 1537 university students accepted to participate and sent their responses via an electronic online survey form. 11 students were excluded from the study because in their personal data forms or among the survey items there were missing parts which were crucial in data analysis. Finally, 1526 participants' (834 female students, 692 male students) responses from 13 different faculties of 5 state universities' language schools created the data set. The proficiency levels of each school was identified differently so they were all equalized by the researcher converting their original language levels in their language schools into four levels ranging sequentially from A to D (A for the highest D for the lowest language proficiency level). The distribution of the participants by gender, language level and faculty is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the participants according to gender, faculty and language proficiency levels

Faculty / Level	A		B		C		D		Total
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	
Education	47	30	48	33	50	42	53	51	354
Business Admin.	45	31	38	27	41	29	42	34	287
Science	41	33	22	17	36	27	45	42	263
Engineering	27	41	36	30	40	41	37	29	281
Others	54	32	41	31	62	49	29	43	341
Total	214	167	185	138	229	188	206	199	1526

834 participants (54.7%) in the study group were female students and 692 (45.3%) were male students. When the distribution was analyzed by the students' language levels, 381 (24.97%) of the students were in A level, 323 (21.17%) were in B level, 417 (27.30%) of the students were in C level and 405 (26.56%) were in D level. The language proficiency scores of the students (some of the language proficiency scores were reported out of a 100, whereas, the others were reported out of 4) were also re-coded in an index out of 4. Eventually, when the achievement score distribution was grouped according to participants' latest language achievement scores (LAS), 356 (23,3%) students were in the fourth group (Group 4) which includes students with a low achievement level (LAS <2.10), 387 (25.4%) students were in the third group (Group 3) with a moderate achievement level (2.09 <LAS <2.70), 382 (25%) students were in the second group (Group 2) with a high achievement level (2.69 <LAS <3.30) and 401 (26.3%) students were in the first group (Group 1) with the highest achievement level (LAS > 3.29).

## 2.2. Instruments

An electronic survey form developed by the researcher was used to collect data from language learners. In order to define and group the participants, in the first part of the survey under the name of "Personal Information", the participants' gender, faculty, present language level at school and the latest language achievement score were asked.

In the second part of the survey, The Survey of Student Needs (SSN) was used to collect data from language learners. The Survey of Student Needs (SSN) was first developed by Loeffler et al. (1984) with the initiation of Minnesota Psychological Counseling Center. The Turkish version of the scale SNAS (Students' Needs Analysis Survey), which was revised and adapted by Güneri et al., (2003), was used in this study. The Turkish version of the scale consists of 70 items as does the original scale to determine the psychological and social needs of the students in various fields and the participants answer the items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not a concern; 5 = Very much a concern). The scale has factors which categorize the students' needs under the following sub-dimensions: psychological, social, academic, interpersonal concerns, self-control, career, financial, discrimination, disability, university education, relations with academic staff and health. Finally, the reliability of SNAS was reported as .96, which could be identified as a highly reliable scale (Güneri et al., 2003).

### *2.3. Data collection and analysis*

The data of the study were collected from 1526 freshmen English language learners studying at 5 different state-universities' language schools in Turkey 2018-2019 academic years. Before inviting the students to participate in the research via e-mail, official permissions were taken from each language school's administrations after reporting them the scope and aim of the study in the end of 2018. By January 2019, the online question forms, which include participants personal data questions and the Turkish version of the students' needs scale, were sent to contact people in 5 universities and all the participants received emails from these contact people working at their language schools. Finally, the students' responses were collected via e-mail between January 2019 and March 2019 (since that period of year was the end of the fall term, a two-month period was given to students to have time for responding the questionnaire), computed and analyzed by the researcher. Before selecting and utilizing the appropriate statistical methods to analyze the responses, the data set was tested in terms of normality. The items in the data set including the language learners' responses revealed a normal distribution according to the results of normality tests including Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk ( $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, parametric tests including the t-test, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and LSD (Least Significant Difference) were utilized to answer the research questions of this study.

## **3. Findings**

This study aimed to explore psychological and social needs of language learners studying at prep-schools of Turkish state universities and to determine whether adolescent language learners' needs differ according to a number of independent variables such as gender, language proficiency level and academic achievement; thus, the results obtained from the findings will be presented in this order. First, the analysis, which indicates the list of language learners' primary needs and whether participants'

responses vary significantly according to gender under each sub-dimension of the students' needs scale, is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of students' needs' according to gender (t-test results)

Students' Needs	Gender	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t	Sig.
Psychological	Female	834	21.02	8.79	1524	3.57	0.00
	Male	692	20.13	8.17			
Social	Female	834	19.89	8.62	1524	3.49	0.00
	Male	692	18.96	7.98			
Academic	Female	834	17.49	6.64	1524	0.73	0.50
	Male	692	17.32	6.51			
Interpersonal concerns	Female	834	10.79	4.60	1524	3.14	0.00
	Male	692	10.03	4.04			
Self-control	Female	834	7.59	4.25	1524	0.91	0.35
	Male	692	7.51	4.16			
Career	Female	834	10.47	3.75	1524	-1.03	0.29
	Male	692	10.71	4.05			
Financial	Female	834	12.98	4.11	1524	0.89	0.38
	Male	692	13.11	4.21			
Discrimination	Female	834	6.35	3.40	1524	-0.69	0.40
	Male	692	6.49	3.31			
Disability	Female	834	3.25	1.41	1524	0.63	0.36
	Male	692	3.17	1.29			
University education	Female	834	3.31	1.13	1524	-1.07	0.25
	Male	692	3.40	1.19			
Relations with academic staff	Female	834	4.19	1.91	1524	-0.53	0.61
	Male	692	4.12	1.88			
Health	Female	834	4.63	2.07	1524	1.09	0.20
	Male	692	4.50	2.01			

The results of the analysis revealed that the responses obtained from the sub-dimensions “psychological” [ $t_{(1524)}=3.57, p<.05$ ], “social” [ $t_{(1524)}=3.49, p<.05$ ] and “interpersonal concerns” [ $t_{(1524)}=3.14, p<.05$ ], prep-school students' needs significantly differ according to the gender of the language learners. However, the responses obtained from the sub-dimensions “academic” [ $t_{(1524)}=3.57, p>.05$ ], “self-control” [ $t_{(1524)}=3.49, p>.05$ ], “career” [ $t_{(1524)}=3.14, p>.05$ ], “financial” [ $t_{(1524)}=3.57, p>.05$ ], “discrimination” [ $t_{(1524)}=3.49, p>.05$ ], “disability” [ $t_{(1524)}=3.14, p>.05$ ], “university education” [ $t_{(1524)}=3.57, p>.05$ ], “relations with academic staff” [ $t_{(1524)}=3.49, p>.05$ ] and “health” [ $t_{(1524)}=3.14, p>.05$ ] prep-school students' needs show no significant difference according to the gender of the students.

When the factors which have significant differences according to participants' genders were analyzed, it was seen that the means of the responses given by female students for “psychological” ( $\bar{X}=21.02$ ), “social” ( $\bar{X}=19.89$ ) and “inter-personal concerns” ( $\bar{X}=10.79$ ) were higher than the male students' ( $\bar{X}=20.13$ ,  $\bar{X}=18.96$  and  $\bar{X}=10.03$  respectively). It should be remembered that participants answered the items on a 5-point Likert scale assigning “1” for “Not a concern” and “5” for “Very much a concern”; thus, it should be

understood from the female participants' answers that they have more psychological, social and inter-personal concerns than female participants in their freshman years. To illustrate, to items from psychological concerns in SNAS such as "Fear of failure", "Controlling anxiety and nervousness" and "Coping with loneliness", female participants responded as "very much a concern" more than male participants did; as a result, their arithmetical mean was significantly higher than males'.

Table 3. ANOVA results of students' needs according to language proficiency levels

Students' Needs	Source of variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Psychological	Between Groups	752.818	3	250.939	3.711	0.01
	Within Groups	102915.3	1522	67.619		
	Total	104412.8	1525			
Social	Between Groups	749.517	3	249.839	3.406	0.02
	Within Groups	111626.8	1522	73.342		
	Total	115336	1525			
Academic	Between Groups	449.621	3	149.873	3.526	0.02
	Within Groups	64685.206	1522	42.500		
	Total	65072.908	1525			
Interpersonal concerns	Between Groups	280.529	3	93.510	4.500	0.00
	Within Groups	31624.218	1522	20.778		
	Total	31965.844	1525			
Self-control	Between Groups	7.471	3	2.490	.137	0.95
	Within Groups	27648.289	1522	18.166		
	Total	27992.985	1525			
Career	Between Groups	204.752	3	68.250	4.434	0.01
	Within Groups	23425.154	1522	15.391		
	Total	23714.216	1525			
Financial	Between Groups	423.618	3	141.206	8.640	0.00
	Within Groups	24874.354	1522	16.343		
	Total	25452.027	1525			
Discrimination	Between Groups	85.954	3	28.651	2.442	0.08
	Within Groups	17855.624	1522	11.732		
	Total	18124.526	1525			
Disability	Between Groups	83.621	3	27.873	2.168	0.11
	Within Groups	19543.412	1522	12.841		
	Total	19924.584	1525			
University education	Between Groups	80.924	3	26.974	6.714	0.00
	Within Groups	6114.128	1522	4.017		
	Total	6398.525	1525			
Relations with academic staff	Between Groups	25.402	3	8.467	1.865	0.15
	Within Groups	6912.425	1522	4.541		
	Total	6998.868	1525			
Health	Between Groups	22.947	3	7.649	1.611	0.20
	Within Groups	7225.631	1522	4.747		
	Total	7287.873	1525			

Secondly, one-way ANOVA was performed to determine whether there were statistically significant differences among the mean scores of language learners on the

sub-dimensions of SNAS according to their language proficiency levels. The results of the analysis presented in Table 3 show that there are significant differences among students' responses to the items of SNAS according to the participants' language proficiency levels under the following sub-dimensions: psychological ( $F_{(3,1522)}=3.711, p<.05$ ), social ( $F_{(3,1522)}=3.406, p<.05$ ), academic ( $F_{(3,1522)}=3.526, p<.05$ ), inter-personal concerns ( $F_{(3,1522)}=4.500, p<.05$ ), career ( $F_{(3,1522)}=4.434, p<.05$ ), financial ( $F_{(3,1522)}=8.640, p<.05$ ), and university education ( $F_{(3,1522)}=6.714, p<.05$ ).

Next, the LSD test was conducted to determine the groups which the statistical mean differences of participants' responses stemmed from according to the language proficiency levels (It should be reminded that A level was identified as the highest language proficiency level while D level was the lowest one). The results of the analyses proved that psychological needs of the A level students ( $\bar{X}=18.11, SD=4.72$ ) were significantly lower than the students at other language proficiency levels ( $\bar{X}=18.93, SD=5.32$ ;  $\bar{X}=19.26, SD=6.14$ ;  $\bar{X}=19.65, SD=7.03$  respectively). Upon examining students' social needs, an interesting finding came out. D ( $\bar{X}=18.23, SD=4.81$ ) and C level ( $\bar{X}=18.34, SD=4.90$ ) students' social needs' were significantly lower than A level students' needs ( $\bar{X}=19.16, SD=6.08$ ). In terms of academic needs, A level students' needs ( $\bar{X}=16.28, SD=4.80$ ) were significantly lower than the students at other proficiency levels ( $\bar{X}=17.02, SD=5.34$ ;  $\bar{X}=17.46, SD=5.45$ ;  $\bar{X}=17.85, SD=5.83$  respectively).

Another interesting finding was driven from the students' inter-personal concerns. D level students inter-personal needs ( $\bar{X}=10.03, SD=4.08$ ) were significantly lower than the students at other language proficiency levels ( $\bar{X}=10.93, SD=5.32$ ;  $\bar{X}=11.26, SD=6.14$ ;  $\bar{X}=11.65, SD=7.03$  respectively). As for the career needs of the participants, D level students' career needs ( $\bar{X}=9.88, SD=3.69$ ) were significantly lower than the students at other language proficiency levels ( $\bar{X}=10.43, SD=4.31$ ;  $\bar{X}=10.54, SD=4.47$ ;  $\bar{X}=10.70, SD=4.63$  respectively). Another striking finding came out with language learners' financial needs. The results revealed that D level students' financial needs ( $\bar{X}=14.27, SD=3.69$ ) were significantly higher than the students at other language proficiency levels ( $\bar{X}=13.51, SD=4.14$ ;  $\bar{X}=13.39, SD=4.28$ ;  $\bar{X}=13.52, SD=4.40$  respectively). Finally, in terms of the university education needs, D level students' needs ( $\bar{X}=2.91, SD=1.02$ ) were significantly lower than the students at other language proficiency levels ( $\bar{X}=3.27, SD=1.12$ ;  $\bar{X}=3.38, SD=1.17$ ;  $\bar{X}=3.44, SD=1.21$  respectively).

Table 4. ANOVA results of students' needs according to academic achievement

Students' Needs	Source of variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Psychological	Between Groups	757.644	3	252.548	3.620	0.01
	Within Groups	106175.6	1522	69.760		
	Total	108665.9	1525			
Social	Between Groups	52.125	3	17.375	.237	.869
	Within Groups	111124	1522	73.011		
	Total	111258	1525			
Academic	Between Groups	1101.671	3	367.223	9.185	.000
	Within Groups	60762.124	1522	39.922		

	Total	63114.865	1525			
Interpersonal concerns	Between Groups	58.842	3	19.614		
	Within Groups	31863.048	1522	20.934	.936	.418
	Total	31986.811	1525			
Self-control	Between Groups	43.941	3	14.647		
	Within Groups	27501.012	1522	18.068	.811	.496
	Total	27536.913	1525			
Career	Between Groups	138.156	3	46.052		
	Within Groups	23205.538	1522	15.246	3.020	.029
	Total	23348.603	1525			
Financial	Between Groups	82.012	3	27.337		
	Within Groups	25262.124	1522	16.597	1.647	.179
	Total	25321.018	1525			
Discrimination	Between Groups	14.803	3	4.934		
	Within Groups	17957.868	1522	11.798	.418	.739
	Total	18121.115	1525			
Disability	Between Groups	5.941	3	1.980		
	Within Groups	4151.094	1522	2.727	.726	.539
	Total	4155.043	1525			
University education	Between Groups	64.739	3	21.579		
	Within Groups	6128.948	1522	4.026	5.360	.000
	Total	6191.447	1525			
Relations with academic staff	Between Groups	24.840	3	8.280		
	Within Groups	6845.952	1522	4.497	1.841	.145
	Total	6905.811	1525			
Health	Between Groups	4.019	3	1.339		
	Within Groups	7239.498	1522	4.756	.281	.841
	Total	7244.565	1525			

In the final step, another one-way ANOVA was utilized to find out whether there were statistically significant differences among the mean scores of language learners for the sub-dimensions of SNAS according to their academic achievements (it should be noted that students who had the lowest academic achievement levels were placed in Group 4 while the students with the highest academic achievement levels were placed in Group 1). The results of the analysis presented in Table 4 reveal that there were significant differences among students' responses to the items of SNAS according to the participants' academic achievement levels under the following sub-dimensions: "psychological" ( $F_{(3,1522)}=3.620, p<.05$ ), "academic" ( $F_{(3,1522)}=3.526, p<.05$ ) and "university education" ( $F_{(3,1522)}=6.714, p<.05$ ).

In addition, LSD test results revealed that psychological needs of students in Group 1 ( $\bar{X}=18.03, SD=5.43$ ) were significantly lower than the students at other achievement levels ( $\bar{X}=18.77, SD=5.71$ ;  $\bar{X}=18.91, SD=5.90$ ;  $\bar{X}=19.38, SD=6.23$  respectively). In terms of academic needs, students' at the 4th and 3rd group's needs ( $\bar{X}=17.93, SD=7.01$ ,  $\bar{X}=17.84$ ,

SD=6.93 respectively) were significantly higher than the students' at Group 2 and Group 1 ( $\bar{X}$ =17.10, SD=6.33;  $\bar{X}$ =16.92, SD=6.22 respectively). Finally, in terms of the university education needs, students' needs in Group 1 and Group 2 ( $\bar{X}$ =2.78, SD=1.04;  $\bar{X}$ =2.87, SD=1.11 respectively) were significantly lower than the students' at Group 3 and 4 ( $\bar{X}$ =3.37, SD=1.58;  $\bar{X}$ =3.42, SD=1.60 respectively).

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

This main purpose of this study was to identify the psychological and social needs of language learners and to determine whether those needs of language learners differ according to a number of independent variables such as gender, proficiency level and academic achievement. To begin with, the findings driven from this study revealed that freshmen language learners primarily have psychological, social, academic and financial needs among the others. Such a finding was also reported by Schweitzer (1996) underlining the fact that especially in the first year of the university education, most students might suffer from a number of psychological and social problems including the feeling of loneliness and alienation. Moreover, the results of this study were in line with the findings of other studies which indicate that language learners' needs differ by gender (Benton et al., 2003; Galagher et al., 1992; Graves, 2000, Güneri et al., 2003). In particular, it was found that that the average score of female students obtained from SNAS in terms of psychological, social and interpersonal concerns were significantly higher than that of male students'. When the relevant literature was analyzed, it was seen that especially psychological and social problems were of great importance for girls studying at university and female students had higher psychological and inter-personal concerns than boys (Koç et al., 2004; Koplík & DeVito, 1986; Tahhan and Eitah 2002). Related to these findings, it must also be stated that since most women cannot gain their economic freedom and personal independence not until they have a university degree, they cannot feel a full autonomy and self-confidence in their adolescence and such findings reveal this fact once again.

When the findings of the research are examined in terms of male students, the financial and career needs of male participants were higher than the female participants'. Kacur & Atak (2011) reported the same finding and stated that in Turkey generally male students spend more money than females in their university years since they have a relatively more active and diverse social life than girls do, which can lead to spending more money and the need of more financial support. Besides, boys in Turkey, from the traditional perspective, are envisaged to be more independent, competitive, aggressive, responsible and dominant characters and supposed to take over the priority in meeting the economic needs of the house and family (Aksu & Paykoç, 1986). Because of this fact, career needs of male participants might be more in number than that of females' since they feel more responsibility in this concern.

When the language proficiency level was considered as the independent variable that might affect participants' needs, the findings revealed that psychological needs of A level students (the highest level) were significantly lower than the students at other language proficiency levels, whereas, social needs of D and C level students were significantly

lower than A level students' needs. These results might denote a number of inferences: self-confidence brought by the sense of success, experience gained throughout the language learning process, indifference caused by failure or the comfort caused by negligence. To start with, generally it is believed that success brings self-confidence and happiness especially at adolescence; thus, A level participants' fewer psychological needs might be explained in this way since they most probably feel themselves happier than the others at lower levels, which might cause less psychological needs. Moreover, in most language schools in Turkey learning a foreign language takes at least two semesters or more for students who do not have a foreign language background. Thus, A level students who could have spent more time than the other levels at the language school might be more experienced than lower level students', and this experience could at the same time bring some self-confidence and sense of feeling safe with itself. Lin (2010) states that university learning consists of a 4-step process which might be listed as discovery, enlargement and deepening, aiming and integration. Thus, A level students might have already practiced all these steps while lower level students still have a lot of uncertainties which could cause more psychological needs. Moreover, low level students' fewer social needs compared to A level students' can be interpreted as lower level students have more active social lives and they study less because of the feeling of indifference caused by failure or the comfort caused by negligence. Vaughn and Schumm (2003) define these students as "students at risk" since the lack of motivation and feeling redundant might drive these language learners away from education and change their personalities negatively. Furthermore, the career needs of the participants, D level students' career needs were significantly lower than the students at other language proficiency levels; whereas, their financial needs were significantly higher than the all other students' higher language proficiency levels. This finding supports the previous discussion about D level students' needs since the lack of success might have driven them away from career-planning and spending more time in activities out of the school which require more money than the other students at higher levels might need.

Finally, according to the results of the analysis made to test whether the needs of language learners differ according to their academic achievement levels, psychological needs of students in Group 1 (the highest academic achievement group) were significantly lower than the students at lower achievement levels whereas the academic and university education needs of students' at the 4th (the lowest academic achievement group) and 3rd Groups were significantly higher than the students' at higher achievement levels. These two findings of the study are in line with the finding reported in another study conducted by Güneri et al. (2003) which states that university students with low academic achievement levels have more academic and university education needs compared to the successful ones. It is obvious that success brings self-confidence, peace and hope to individuals while failure causes insecurity, anxiety and the need for help. Particularly in young ages, the well-being the academic success causes is very crucial since it helps the freshmen to have fewer psychological problems related to the university and feel more down to earth unlike the others who fail. On the other hand, academic failure brings anxiety and the need for help to the students who have low achievement levels (Bertocci et al., (1992). Thus, this finding leads us to an important interpretation that less successful students need the help of their teachers more than

successful ones. The same finding was also mentioned by Short & Echevarria (2004) and it was advised that especially in language classes where students at different academic achievement levels study together, language teachers' exploring and identifying the academic needs of less successful students and counseling them accordingly is very important for those learners. In most cases, with proper counseling, close attention and encouragement, less successful students could catch up with the successful ones provided that they are noticed and cared about by their language teachers.

As a last word, a number of research suggestions on students' needs could be made for the researchers. First, this study aimed to explore language students' needs using a quantitative method. A mixed approach combining quantitative and qualitative data could be a good idea to gain more insights on language learners' personal needs. Next, the focus group in this study was prep-school students at universities, a similar study could be designed for language learners at different age groups at universities. Moreover, not only language learners but also their teachers and parents can also be involved in the research to identify their awareness on students' needs. Consequently, a student needs' research for 12th grade students at high-schools in Turkey could be made to explore the psychological and social needs of these students who prepare for university entrance exams.

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