An Investigation into European Learners' Needs with Regards to Turkish as a Foreign Language

Ümit Yildiz

Akdeniz University, Faculty of Education, Antalya, 07053, Turkey
E-mail: umit@tut.by

ABSTRACT The purpose of this research is to determine the content topics, language skills, learning environments, learning preferences, teaching-learning materials, in-class activities, out-of-class activities, and the teaching and assessment methods that are needed by the European learners of Turkish as a foreign language (TFL). The paper also aimed to discover the European language learners' level of interest in Turkish and reasons to learn it as a foreign language. The research was conducted with 137 European learners who were attending a Turkish language program called the Erasmus Intensive Language Course (EILC) at four state universities in Turkey in the 2013-2014 academic year. Data was collected using a needs analysis questionnaire. The results revealed that learners were highly interested and motivated in learning TFL. It was also seen that the learners preferred speaking activities, the correction of oral mistakes by the teacher and grammar exercises in the language learning process.

INTRODUCTION

In today's fast changing world the demand for learning foreign languages is increasing parallel to the world's dynamic nature; for this reason many language programs are designed to fulfill and adapt to the ever changing conditions and social expectations. The question is; what is the efficacy of a changing program if society's expectations are so nebulous?

Particularly in language teaching, the concept of a needs analysis is growing in parallel with its increasing growth in almost all the disciplines of education (Tahir 2011). The analysis of relevant literature showed that the concepts of a 'needs analysis' and a 'needs assessment' are quite often used interchangeably. Grant (2002) believes that the needs assessment has a vital role in the process of curriculum planning and improvement as it helps to design more effective curricula. In the field of language teaching, many specialists and researchers highlight the importance of needs analysis studies (Berwick 1989; Hutchinson and Waters 1991; Brindley 2000; Young 2000). Needs analysis studies help researchers to highlight the discrepancy between

Address for correspondence:
Ümit Yildiz
Akdeniz University,
Faculty of Education
Antalya, 07053, Turkey
Mobile: +37066516622, +905324404404
Fax: +902422261953
E-mail: umit@tut.by, umityildiz@akdeniz.edu.tr

'what is' and 'what should be'. The question of 'what is' refers to present, whereas the question of 'what should be' stands for future (Lewis and Bjorquist 1992; Priest 2001).

Albakrawi (2013) underlines the importance of collecting data through a needs analysis in order to identify the needs of learners. He also acknowledges that the needs analysis is one of the most practical channels in order to respond to the continually changing and developing needs of the learners. It is obvious that in order to create learner-centered teaching environments, the first step is/should be the identification of the needs of the learners'. Weddel and Van Duzer (1997) list a number of aims and benefits of a needs assessment studies: 'it aids administrators, teachers, and tutors with learner placement and in developing materials, curricula, skills assessments, teaching approaches, and teacher training. It assures a flexible, responsive curriculum rather than a fixed, linear curriculum determined ahead of time by instructors. It provides information to the instructor and learner about what the learner brings to the course (if done at the beginning), what has been accomplished (if done during the course), and what the learner wants and needs to know next.'

In recent years, as the demand for Turkish as a foreign language (TFL) has considerably increased in the world, more and more Turkish language teaching programs for foreigners are being opened and carried out in and out of Turkey. Yet, the shareholders of teaching TFL processes have not yet fully become aware of the need for

identification of the specific language needs of the Turkish learners, and to design effective curricula that best fit the specific needs of the attendants of these programs. The lack of literature addressing such studies also supports this fact. Nunan (1989) note that '…the effectiveness of a language program will be dedicated as much by the attitudes and expectations of the learners as by the specifications of the official curriculum'. The analysis of relevant literature shows that the background of the needs analysis studies, which determines the needs of TFL learners, is inadequate, and it seems to be of vital importance that such studies are still being neglected in the contexts of TFL.

However, recently the high enthusiasm, opening new TFL programs among the higher education institutions in Turkey is observed. It is vitally important to determine and understand what are the learners' language needs of TFL at the beginning of a course. It gives the Turkish instructors a chance to plan the educational processes that they will follow during their teaching in class, and to make necessary changes that best fit their learners' particular needs. In this sense, in the context of TFL, the needs analysis has a very crucial role as it will lead to better designed and higher-quality TFL programs. However, in the field of language teaching, needs analysis studies are, for many people, limited to the field of English language teaching, and it is considered synonymous with this specific field (Albakrawi 2013). As such, studies on Turkish language needs of the foreign learners are very limited. Among these limited number of needs analysis studies of learners of TFL are Balcikanli (2010), Karababa and Karagul (2013),Cangal (2013), and Yilmaz (2014). It is clear that the shareholders of teaching TFL should spend more effort in determining the language needs of TFL learners. One of the ways of identifying these needs is to carry out more needs analysis studies in various TFL contexts. Karababa and Karagul (2013) through a needs analysis study with 305 participants aimed to find out the needs of TFL learners. In this study, the researchers aimed to determine the needs of the learners related to the topics, language skills, the teaching environment, learning styles and the learning process. Findings in the research study showed that learners were most interested in topics related to Turkish culture, their own country and their job. Theresearch study also revealed that the learn-

ers of TFL preferred blended learning and audio-visual activities, watching videos or small group discussions in the language learning process. Another research study conducted by Balcikanli (2010) also aimed to determine the needs of TFL learners studying at the University of Florida in the USA. The researcher grouped the TFL learners' needs under four categories; linguistic needs, the learners' reasons to learn TFL, the resources, and psychological and sociological factors.The research study revealed that learners needed to gain competency in expressing themselves in daily conversations and develop their abilities to communicate in various situations. Furthermore, the researchstudy also portrayed that the learners' popular reasons to learn Turkish were to develop communication skills, carry out simple conversations in daily life situations and to get familiar with the Turkish culture. Cangal (2013), through a needs analysis study, aimed to discover the language needs of Bosnia Herzegovinian learners learning TFL. The main scope of this study was to describe the language needs of the Turkish language learners at different course levels through a questionnaire administered to 168 learners. According to the findings of the study, the males were interested in learning TFL more than the females. The study also revealed that one of the learners' most popular reasons to learn Turkish was to challenge educational and business opportunities. Yilmaz (2014), in a needs analysis study conducted with 32 participants, determined the Turkish needs of Polish learners. According to the results gathered by a questionnaire, the participants' most popular reason to learn TFL was to get familiar with the Turkish culture. The results of this descriptive study also revealed that although all of the skills were perceived important in developing Turkish language competency, the learners stated that speaking was the most important skill to be developed. Yildiz (2004) found similar results in a needs analysis study that he conducted in Belarus with 138 participants including the current learners, graduates, current and former instructors, faculty deans, employers and parents.This particular study aimed to find out the discrepancies between the current status and the desired outcomes of the TFL program carried out at Minsk State Linguistic University.In the research study, Yildiz (2004) determined that learners emphasized the great necessity for the speaking skills.

From the analysis of the limited studies conducted on the needs of TFL learners, it can be said that the most common needs of learners were to develop oral competency and to get familiar with the culture in which the language is spoken.

In recent years, as it is mentioned on the official web site of the EU, cooperative foreign language education programs at universities are rapidly increasing in the world as well as in Turkey. Besides, more and more students have been enrolling in language learning programs in Turkey as a result of the rapid development of the cross-border partnerships in educational fields. It is also declared by the European Commission (EC) 'The number of Erasmus Intensive Language Courses (EILC) supported by Erasmus has grown significantly since their launch. Some 465 courses (up from 435 in the previous year) were organised in 2012-13 in 26 countries for a total of 7,247 Erasmus students (+9%)' (European Union Press Release Database, Brussel 2014). As a candidate country for the European Union (EU)Turkey is welcoming thousands of foreign learners, including learners from EU countries. In the 2012-2013 academic year, Turkey was one of the most popular destinations to study languages,along with Italy, Portugal and Belgium (EU Press Release Database, Brussel 2014). EILC programs are funded by the EC as a part of the Lifelong Learning Programme. As it is explained on the official web site of EU, 'Erasmus offers specialized courses in the EU's less widely used and less frequently taught languages to help students prepare for their studies or work placements abroad. Courses are organized in the countries where these languages are officially used. They are not offered for the most widely taught languages such as English, German, French and Spanish (Castilian)'(EU Press Release Database, Brussel 2014).

As highlighted on the official home page of International Studies Center, the Czech Republic 2014, students do not pay any tuition fee as the EILC organizing universities receive the funding from the EC through the National Agencies in those countries. The courses offer students the opportunity of studying the home country's language and to get familiar with its culture before they attend their Erasmus study programs in that country. In this sense, EILC programs serve not only as a pre-semester language program, but also as an orientation period for Erasmus stu-

dents. The course length can vary from three to six weeks, including at least 60 hours of in-class teaching and 40 hours of out-of-class activities in terms of cultural programs, such as site-seeing tours and visits to museums. Turkey is one of these countries in which the EILC programs have been organized for many years. From a more specific point of view, in context of Turkey, the aim of EILC programs are to prepare foreign students for their mobility period in Turkish higher education institutions. It also aims to provide language preparation and an introduction to Turkish culture, to give basic survival information and skills that may help students to adapt themselves to the conditions of living in Turkey, and to present, briefly, the cultural, educational, social and economical context of Turkey.

Despite the allocation of a considerable amount of resources and time, there is little research investigating the language needs of learners attending EILC programs, and whether these programs take into consideration the language needs of the learners. Particularly, this paper aims to explore this question in terms of determining the perceived language needs of incoming European learners. The EILC programs aim to gain learners beginner and/or intermediate level of Turkish proficiency. Yet, each EILC program, carried out at different universities, has its own curriculum. As such, it is unclear whether these programs are designed on the basis of the needs of the incoming learners.

Although the EILC Program is offered at different universities in Turkey, studies on collecting data from the shareholders of the program, in order to determine the needs of the learners with the aim of redesigning the program in the future, are scare. Motivated by this need, the researcher aims to investigate the needs of European learners attending the programs, and to draw attention to the necessity of making some probable modifications at the universities where these particular as well as similar TFL programs are carried out.

Objectives of the Study

This particular paper explores the perceived language needs of European learners enrolled in the EILC program at four state universities in Turkey with the aim of answering the following questions:

1. To what extent is the European learners are interested in learning TFL?

2. What are the learning preferences and reasons of European learners' learning TFL that are attending the EILC programs at Akdeniz University (AU), Istanbul University (IU), Ege University (EU) and Pamukkale University (PU)?

3. What are the needed content topics, language skills, learning environments, teaching-learning materials, in class activities, out of class activities and teaching and assessment methods by the European learners of TFL?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this particular quantitative research, a survey model was used, which according to Karasar (2010), aims to investigate a current or past phenomenon. Ndebele and Ndlovu (2013) note that surveys collect data at a specific point in time with the aim of describing the nature of current conditions. Buyukozturk et al. (2009) underlines that the survey model aims to determine participants' perceptions and interests. This survey study used a questionnaire to collect data and examine the perceived needs of European learners in learning TFL at four state universities in Turkey.

Participants

The participants of the current research were 137 European students, attending the EILC program at four state universities in Turkey. Sampling strategies and information about the sources were as follows: all the learners (N:137) enrolled in the EILC programs at AU, IU, EU and PU in the 2013-2014 academic year were selected. In selecting the sample, universities where the EILC programs are carried out with more than 20 learners were chosen. In this respect, a maximum variation sampling technique was used in order to identify and seek out "those who represent the widest possible range of characteristics of interest for the study" (Merriam 1998). Out of 137 participants, 54 were males and 83 were females. The participants' age varied from 19 to 29. Forty learners at AU, 40 learners at IU, 36 learners at EU and 21 learners at PU constituted the research sample of the study. The distribution of participants by nationality is given in the Table 1.

As it can be observed in Table 1, the participants of the study came from 23 different European countries. As they were studying in a European country, 1 student from Kazakhstan and 1 student from Syria also enrolled in the EILC program.

Table 1: Distribution of learners by nationality

Order No.	Nationality of learners	Number of learners	Percentages of learners
1.	Belgium	1	7
2.	Estonia	2	1.5
3.	Germany	31	22.6
4.	Sweden	3	2.2
5.	Slovakia	9	6.6
6.	Italy	10	7.3
7.	The Czech Republic	13	9.50
8.	Poland	13	9.5
9.	Greece	2	1.5
10.	Syria	1	0.7
11.	Finland	1	0.7
12.	Hungary	3	2.2
13.	Spain	3	2.2
14.	Denmark	1	0.7
15.	The Netherlands	3	2.2
16.	Austria	2	1.5
17.	Lithuania	5	3.6
18.	Latvia	1	0.7
19.	the United Kingdom	2	1.5
20.	France	5	3.6
21.	Ireland	1	0.7
22.	Portugal	2	1.5
23.	Kazakhstan	1	0.7

Instrument

The student profile and perceived needs of Turkish language were gathered using a survey. Data was gathered using some of the sections of the previously developed "Needs Analysis Questionnaire for Learners of Turkish as a Foreign Language" by Yildiz (2004). Some parts of the questionnaire were modified for this specific study in order to collect quantitive data. The first part of the questionnaire consists of demographic information; the second and third parts consist of a four point Likert-type scale (where 1 is not necessary at all=NN, 2 partially necessary=PN, 3 necessary=N and 4 is very necessary=VN). In the first part of the questionnaire, learners were also asked to indicate their level of interest in learning Turkish by putting a tick in the appropriate box. The second part of the questionnaire comprised of 10 items and aimed to gather infor-

mation on learners' reasons of learning Turkish. The third part consists of 50 items, aiming to determine the learners' perceived needs on the dimensions of learning preferences, the content topics, language skills, learning environments, teaching-learning materials, in-class activities, out-of-class activities, and teaching methods. In the last part of the questionnaire, learners were given 9 assessment types and were asked to indicate the choice of the most needed assessment technique as their first preference.

Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaires were administered to learners at four different state universities in Turkey at AU, IU, EU and PU where the EILC programs were carried out in the summer semester of 2013-2014 academic year. Moreover, as all of the participants had been learning English at least 9 years, the English version of the questionnaire was administered.

The questionnaire was given to 145 learners and 140 of them returned it. As three of the questionnaires were returned with unrecognizable responses, only 137 of them were effectively used. For the analysis of the quantitative data collected through the questionnaire, the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences, Version 20 (SPSS) program was used, calculating frequencies (f) and percentages (%).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the research were discussed, in parallel with the research questions, under three headings as follows; 1. The learners' interest in learning Turkish, 2.Reasons of European learners learning TFL, 3.The learners' perceived needs regarding the content topics, language skills, learning environments, learningpreferences, teaching-learning materials, in-class activities, out-of-class activities, teaching methods and their assessment preferences.

1. The Learners' Interest in Learning Turkish

As the findings in Table 2 portray, 70.1 percent of the learners stated their interest in studying Turkish as a foreign language. The learners didn't have to study TFL, as they did not have to attend the EILC program. This shows their interest and involvement in choosing to learn

Turkish. As it is seen in the Table 2, some of the learners (21.2 %) thought they really needed Turkish. On the other hand, only 1 percent of the learners mentioned that they do not really need it. Because of their field of study and future career, 2.2 percent of the learners felt they should learn Turkish. From Table 2, it can also be observed that most of the learners (70.1 %) are very highly motivated and eager to learn TFL. Gilakjani et al. (2012) highlight the importance of the interest and motivation of the learners in the environments of foreign language learning. He acknowledges that the learnerscontrol the flow of learning environments and without learners' motivation there would be 'no pulse' and 'no life' in the classes.

Table 2: Learners' interest in learning Turkish

Order No.	Items	Level of necessity	
		f	%
1.	I am very interested	96	70.1
2.	I am not interested	1	0.7
3.	I learn it because I have to	3	2.2
4.	I think I really need it	29	21.2
5.	I do not think I really need it	1	0.7
6.	I am not sure	7	5.1
	Total	137	100

It is well-known that with highly motivated learners, it is more probable to have more effective results in language learning environments. The findings of this research study revealed that learners were very interested and highly motivated to learn through TFL. According to Ni and Liu (2006), motivation has a strong effect on students' learning needs. The findings of a research study conducted by Metiuniene and Liuoliene (2006) also revealed that motivation is a very important 'driving force' and has a crucial role in students' achievements in the foreign language learning process.

2. Reasons of European Learners' Learning Turkish as a Foreign Language

Another dimension in the questionnaire asked the participants to indicate their ideas on the reasons to study Turkish. The given statements were asked to be rated on a 4-point scale from 1, (not necessary at all; NN) to 4, (very necessary; VN). The results are given in the Table 3.

Table 3: Learners' reasons to learn Turkish

Order No.	Items	Level of necessity								n
		NN		PN		N		VN		
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
1.	Communicate with people whose native language is Turkish	1	0.7	15	11.1	78	57.8	41	30.4	135
2.	Understand films, songs, TV and radio programs in Turkish	11	8.1	35	25.9	75	55.6	14	10.4	135
3.	Write reports, assignments, business letters, etc. in Turkish	26	19.7	33	25	58	43.9	15	11.4	132
4.	Read literary works related to my field of study in Turkish	17	12.8	52	39.1	43	32.3	21	15.8	133
5.	Read books, newspapers, magazines, etc. in Turkish	19	14.4	54	40.9	48	36.4	11	8.3	132
6.	Find a prestigious and well-paid job	NA	NA	6	4.5	61	45.9	66	49.6	133
7.	Be familiar with Turkish and different cultures	14	10.5	41	30.8	43	32.3	35	26.3	133
8.	Correspond with pen friends in Turkish	13	9.8	36	27	59	44.4	25	18.8	133
9.	Pass the exams in Turkish	16	12	44	33.1	56	42.1	17	12.8	133
10.	Work in international organizations	15	11.2	38	28.4	49	36.6	32	23.9	134

NN: not necessary at all; PN: partially necessary; N: necessary; VN: very necessary; NA: not applicable

The findings in Table 3 reveal that the participants' main reasons for studying Turkish were to communicate with native speakers of Turkish [(N;f:78),(VN;f:41)], understand films, songs, TV and radio programs in Turkish [(N;f:75),(VN;f:14)], and to find a prestigious and well-paid job [(N;f:61),(VN;f:66)]. Reading books, newspapers and magazines in Turkish was considered neither not necessary at all (f:19) nor partially necessary(f:54) by more than half of the participants. On the other hand, a big majority of the participants [(N;%:45.9), (VN;%:49.6)] stated that they need Turkish, as it may give them a chance to find a prestigious and well-paid job. From the analysis of Table 3, it can also be observed that more than half of the learners [(N;%:32.3) ,(VN; %:26.3)] were interested in learning Turkish to be familiar with Turkish culture. It shows that learners perceive the EILC program not only as a language but also a cultural orientation program. More than half of the participants think that they need Turkish to pass the exams they will take during their studies in Turkey [(N;%:42.1), (VN;%:12.8)], and in their probable work in an international organization [(N;%:36.6) ,(VN;%:23.9)].

In this paper, it was determined that learners' the most common reasons to study TFL were to communicate with native speakers of Turkish, to become familiar with the Turkish culture, to understand films, songs, TV and radio programs in Turkish and to find a prestigious and well-paid job. It can be said that learners perceive the EILC program not only as a language, but also a cultural-orientation program as they were very much interested in not only the language competency development but also in topics related to Turkish culture and people. As it was stated on the official web site of Afs (2014) 'The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages has concluded that through the study of other languages, learners gain a knowledge and understanding of the cultures that use that language. Moreover, learners cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs. Linguistic competence alone is not enough for learners of a language to be competent in that language.' Balcikanli (2010), Karababa and Karagul (2013) and Yilmaz (2014) in their needs analysis research studies also found out that learners of TFL were very interested in getting familiar with the culture. Likewise, Cangal (2013) also found in a research that to challenge job opportunities was one of the most popular reasons to learn Turkish among TFL learners. Karababa and Karagul (2013) in their research study, in a similar way, determined that one of the most motivating and interesting topics for the learners was related to their work/jobs.

3. Learners' Perceived Needs Regarding the Content Topics, Language Skills, Learning Environments, Learning Preferences, Teaching-Learning Materials, in Class Activities, Out of Class Activities and Teaching Methods

The frequencies and percentages of the learners' perceived needs of content topics and the classroom activities' dimension of the needs analysis are presented in Table 4.

As can be seen from Table 4, the most common classroom activities among TFL learners are speaking activities in class [(N; %:16.3), (VN; %:81.5)], correction of oral mistakes by the teacher in class [(N; %:22.3), (VN; %:73.4)], receiving written correction and feedback from the teacher for the assignments [(N; %:26.1), (VN; %:69.4)],

Table 4: Learners' perceived needs of content topics and classroom activities

Order No.	Items	Level of necessity								n
		NN		PN		N		VN		
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
1.	Speaking activities in class	NA	NA	3	2.2	22	16.3	110	81.5	135
2.	Listening to tape scripts	2	1.5	21	15.4	41	30.1	72	52.9	136
3.	Listening to radio, TV stations, movies, songs, etc.	9	6.7	32	23.9	40	29.9	53	39.6	134
4.	Grammar exercises in class	NA	NA	7	5.2	50	37.3	77	57.5	134
5.	Inviting native Turkish speakers to class	9	6.7	27	20.1	40	29.9	58	43.3	134
6.	Pair work activities in class	11	8.1	28	20.7	37	27.4	59	43.7	135
7.	Group work activities in class	13	9.8	39	29.5	48	36.4	32	24.2	132
8.	Debates	26	20	44	33.8	40	30.8	20	15.4	130
9.	Writing activities (formal and informal letters, essays, formal reports, etc.)	7	5.2	26	19.3	64	47.4	38	28.1	135
10.	Writing to foreign pen friends	30	22.4	53	39.6	39	29.1	12	9	134
11.	Journal writing (diary keeping)	44	33.3	59	44.7	25	18.9	4	3	132
12.	Vocabulary study in class	4	3	15	11.2	44	32.8	71	53	134
13.	Individual vocabulary study as home tasks	2	1.5	8	6	71	53	53	39.6	134
14.	Drama type activities playing, miming, etc.)	29	22	37	28	30	22.7	36	27.3	132
15.	Use of computers (CD-ROMS, internet, e-mail, Turkish language teaching Software programs)	26	19.3	55	40.7	39	28.9	15	11.1	135
16.	Language laboratory	23	18.1	35	27.6	49	38.6	20	15.7	127
17.	Watching video tapes in class	18	13.5	32	24.1	52	39.1	31	23.3	133
18.	Doing presentations, projects and written assignments individually	24	17.9	27	20.1	64	47.8	19	14.2	134
19.	Doing presentations, projects and written assignments in groups	28	21.1	35	26.3	40	30.1	30	22.6	133
20.	Learning Turkish songs in class	16	11.8	26	19.1	31	22.8	63	46.3	136
21.	Playing language games in class	6	4.4	33	24.4	47	38.4	49	36.3	135
22.	Translation of texts and passages	3	2.3	29	21.8	55	41.4	46	34.6	133
23.	Use of visual materials (pictures, posters, charts, maps, OHP, etc.)	7	5.2	18	13.4	64	47.8	45	33.6	134
24.	Use of real objects in class	18	13.4	28	20.9	59	44	29	21.6	134
25.	Supplementary materials (additional texts, worksheets, tests, etc.)	7	5.2	33	24.6	53	39.6	41	30.6	134
26.	Use of music in class (for relaxation, warm-up, etc.)	24	17.8	41	30.4	43	31.9	27	20	135
27.	Receiving correction and feedback of assignments from the teacher	NA	NA	6	4.5	35	26.1	93	69.4	134
28.	Correction of my oral mistakes by the teacher in class	NA	NA	4	4.3	21	22.3	69	73.4	94
29.	Receiving individual help from the teacher outside the class	2	1.7	21	17.6	48	40.3	48	40.3	119

NN:not necessary at all; PN:partially necessary; N:necessary; VN:very necessary; NA:not applicable

listening to tape scripts [(N; %:30.1),(VN; %:52.9)], grammar exercises in class [(N; %:37.3), (VN; %:57.5)], inviting native speakers to the class [(N; %:29.9), (VN; %:43.3)], and vocabulary study in class [(N; %:32.8), (VN; %:53)]. The out-of-class activities were also perceived as highly needed, such as receiving individual help from the teacher outside the class [(N; %:40.3), (VN; %:40.3)], and individual vocabulary study such as home tasks [(N; %:53), (VN; %:39.6)]. The least needed content items and classroom activities perceived by the learners are debates [(NN; %:9.8), (PN; %:29.5)], writing to foreign pen pals [(NN; %:22.4), (PN; %:39.6)], journal writing (diary keeping) [(NN; %:33.3), (PN; %:44.7)], drama type activities, playing, and miming, etc.) [(NN; %:22), (PN; %:28)], use of computers (CD-ROMS, internet, e-mail, Turkish language teaching Software programs) [(NN; %:19.3), (PN; %:40.7)], language laboratory [(NN; %:18.1),(PN; %:27.6)], doing presentations,

projects and written assignments in groups [(NN; %:21.1), (PN; %:26.3)]. The analysis of Table 4 reveals that learners are highly interested in learning language skills as well as the grammar of the Turkish language. In their classes, they are also eager to have activities that reinforce the learning process such as receiving feedback from the teacher and receiving individual help outside the class. One of the interesting findings of this dimension is the use of computers in class. The use of computers was scored 60 percent not necessary at all, and partially necessary. In parallel with the findings of other sections, the learners' most popular topic was speaking activities in-class, which demonstrates that they are very much interested in the oral competency in TFL.

The frequencies and percentages of the learners' perceived needs regarding the themes related to the teaching learning environment dimension of the needs analysis are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Learners' perceived needs regarding the themes related to the teaching learning environment

Order No.	Items	Level of necessity								
		NN		PN		N		VN		n
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
30.	I should receive knowledge and skills appropriate to my future studies	5	3.7	21	15.6	40	29.6	69	51.1	135
31.	Course contents should be relevant to my level of knowledge	1	0.7	16	11.9	56	41.5	62	45.9	135
32.	The course and the contents should provide the environment where I can practice the knowledge and the skills	3	2.2	11	8.2	52	38.8	68	50.7	134
33.	Courses should be adequately distributed (enough time should be devoted to each course)	1	0.8	13	9.9	62	47.3	55	42	131
34.	The way the courses are presented should be interesting	2	1.5	12	8.8	37	27.2	85	62.5	136
35.	The assignments should support the knowledge and the skills taught in the courses	1	0.8	10	7.6	59	44.7	62	47	132
36.	Course materials should be timely and sequentially distributed	7	5.8	28	23.1	48	39.7	38	31.4	121
37.	The level of skills activities should be too high for mylevel of Turkish	NA	NA	16	11.9	46	34.1	73	54.1	135
38.	Students should participate in class activities	35	27.6	36	28.3	40	31.5	16	12.6	127
39.	Pair and group work activities should be done in class	1	0.7	10	7.4	41	30.1	84	61.8	136
40.	Enough time should be spent on the language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) in class in order to improve my Turkish	8	5.9	27	20	42	31.1	58	43	135
41.	Extra supplementary skills activities (listening, speaking, reading, writing) should be used in class beyond the ones in the course and the work	1	0.7	7	5.2	36	26.7	91	67.4	135

NN: not necessary at all; PN: partially necessary; N: necessary; VN: very necessary; NA: not applicable

As can be seen from Table 5, most of the participants [(N; %:29.6), (VN; %:51.1)] stated that they need to receive the content knowledge and skills appropriate to their future studies. They also think that course contents should be relevant to their level of knowledge [(N; %:41.5), (VN; %:45.5)]. The majority of the participants stated that the courses should be adequately distributed [(N; %:45.3), (VN; %:40.1)], interestingly presented [(N; %:27.2), (VN; %:62.5)], and should provide students with an environment where they can practice their knowledge and language skills [(N; %:38.8), (VN; %:50.7)]. Similarly, the majority of the participants considered all of the items in Table 5 necessary and very necessary.

The frequencies and percentages of the learner perceptions to the 'skills, grammar and vocabulary' dimension of the needs analysis are presented in Table 6.

As is displayed in Table 6, the most needed language skill was speaking [(N; %:23), (VN; %:75.6)]. Almost all of the participants [(N; f:31), (VN; f:102)] stated that they need speaking skills in Turkish, whereas only 2 of them considered it as partially necessary. The other perceived needed language skills were listening, reading and writing. As it can be observed in the Table 6, all of the language skills were scored over 83 percent in the questionnaire. It can be said that the desire to develop all the language skills among the participants are very high. On the other hand, the desire for studying grammar and vocabulary [(N; %:42.2), (VN; %:52.6)] is not less than the desire for skills' development. The findings demonstrate that the European learners of TFL think that they need a balance between skills' development and grammar competency. It may be said that they desire to cover the language skills and at the same time, to be competent enough in grammar of Turkish.

The learner opinions related to the items of 'teaching materials' dimensions of the questionnaire are presented in Table 7.

According to the findings in Table 7, almost all of the items related to the teaching materials' dimension of the questionnaire scored over 80percent, which demonstrates that the participants are highly desirous in having high quality teaching materials. It can also be concluded that the majority of the participants [(N; %:32.3),(VN; %:62.4] prefer course books and workbooks that provide sufficient and relevant activities [(N; f:43),(VN; f:83)], which are taken from daily life situation [(N; f:47),(VN; f:81]. The participants also prefer, with a score of over 80 percent, course books that are interesting, motivating, satisfactory in overall design and relevant in content to improve their language skills. They also think that the audio-visual aids and the quality of equipment used in classes should be up-to date. It is worth mentioning that most of the learners (%: 94.7) consider that the course material should provide sufficient and relevant content in order to improve their speaking skills. Among the European participants of this research paper, it can be observed that the speaking skill is very often stated as a very necessary language skill to be developed.

The frequencies and percentages of the learners' preferences regarding the assessment techniques dimension of the needs analysis are presented in Table 8.

Analysis of the Table 8 reveals that the most commonly needed assessment methods among TFL learners are oral exams (f:30) and the grammar and vocabulary parts of the exams (f:30). The findings have parallel results with the participants' mostly needed language skills. The other needed methods among participants are writing and reading exams, and the assessment of stu-

Table 6: Learners' perceived needs regarding the language skills, grammar and vocabulary

Order No.	Dimensions	Level of necessity								n
		NN		PN		N		VN		
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
✓	Listening	NA	NA	8	6	46	34.3	80	59.7	134
✓	Speaking	NA	NA	2	1.5	31	23	102	75.6	135
✓	Reading	1	0.7	16	11.9	62	46.3	55	41	134
✓	Writing	3	2.2	19	14.1	67	49.6	46	34.1	135
✓	Grammar and vocabulary	1	0.7	6	4.4	57	42.2	71	52.6	135

Table 7: Learners' perceived needs regarding the teaching materials

Order No.	Items	Level of necessity								n
		NN		PN		N		VN		
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
1.	The course book should be satisfactory to meet my needs in studying Turkish	NA	NA	5	3.8	38	28.6	90	67.7	133
2.	The course book should provide sufficient and relevant activities	NA	NA	7	5.3	43	32.3	83	62.4	133
3.	The course book should provide samples of activities taken from authentic daily life situations	1	0.8	4	3	47	35.3	81	60.9	133
4.	The work book should provide sufficient practice of activities covered in the course book	NA	NA	3	2.3	53	39.8	77	57.9	133
5.	The activities and topics in the course book should be interesting and motivating	1	0.8	6	4.5	50	37.6	76	57.1	133
6.	The overall design of activities (pictures, charts, tables, lay-out, exercises) in the course book should be satisfactory	3	2.3	12	9.1	44	33.3	73	55.3	132
7.	The course book should provide sufficient and relevant content to improve my following language skills in Turkish:									
	a) Listening Skill	NA	NA	9	7.3	43	34.7	72	58.1	124
	b) Speaking Skill	1	0.8	6	4.5	30	22.7	95	72	132
	c) Reading Skill	1	0.8	11	8.3	58	43.9	62	47	132
	d) Writing Skill	1	0.8	16	12.1	53	40.2	62	47	132
	e) Grammar and vocabulary	NA	NA	4	3.1	57	43.5	70	53.4	131
8.	Audio-Visual aids should be used in the courses (for example, OHT, pictures, posters, tape-recorders, video players, etc.)	8	6.1	16	12.2	50	38.2	57	43.5	131
9.	The quality of equipment (sound quality of tapes and tape recorders, video tapes) should be used in the courses is satisfactory	5	3.9	16	12.6	39	30.7	67	52.8	127

NN: not necessary at all; PN: partially necessary; N: necessary; VN: very necessary; NA: not applicable

Table 8: The frequencies of the learners' preference regarding assessment technique dimension

Order No.	Dimensions	Level of necessity	
		f	%
1.	Grammar and vocabulary parts of the exams	30	21.8
2.	Writing exams	15	10.9
3.	Reading exams	15	10.9
4.	Listening exams	14	10.2
5.	Oral exams	30	21.8
6.	Quizzes	5	3.6
7.	Portfolio (a collection of learners' works and assignments) assessment	6	4.3
8.	Assessment of students' assignments	7	5.1
9.	Assessment of students' performance in class	15	10.9

dents' performance in class, while the least popular methods are quizzes (f:5), portfolio assessment (f:6) and the assessment of students' assignments (f:7).

The findings revealed that speaking activities, correction of oral mistakes by the teacher, receiving correction and feedback on assignments from the teacher, listening to tape scripts, grammar exercises, inviting native speakers to the class and vocabulary study in class were considered as very necessary themes for the learners of TFL.

The results of a research study conducted by Metiuniene and Liuoliene (2006) with foreign language students show that students' competency to study individually has a very positive and significant influence on their higher achieve-

ments in the language learning process. Similarly the results of this particular paper revealed that learners do not perceive language learning only as an in-class activity, but also an out-of-class individual and continuous study.

As the speaking skill occurred to be the most needed language skill among learners, it was obvious that learners were very eager to gain oral competency in TFL. Yildiz (2004), Balcikanli (2010) and Yilmaz (2014) found similar results in their research studies, that the oral competency was highly needed by the TFL learners. Besides, Yildiz (2004) and Yilmaz (2014) in their studies determined that although speaking was perceived by the learners as the most important skill to be developed, learners on the other hand stated that all of the other skills were also important in developing Turkish language competency. The findings of this particular paper, additionally to other studies conducted in the field, demonstrate that the European learners of TFL need a balance between skills and grammar competency.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of the findings of the limited research studies conducted in the field show that they have similar findings in nature; the most needed skill in learning Turkish is speaking, and the most popular reason to learn it is to get familiar with the Turkish culture. In this respect, the results of this particular paper are parallel to the findings of the other, previously conducted studies in the field. It can be interpreted that the TFL learners somehow perceive the other skills compatible; however, they are very much concerned with competency development in oral skills. It can be said that among learners, one of the most popular 'driving forces' in getting oral competency was the desire to get familiar with the culture of that language.

In conclusion, it can be claimed that following the rapid explosion of demand for learning TFL in recent years, higher education institutions should now rearrange, shift, reorganize and reconstruct their TFL programs, curricula, materials, teaching and assessment methods with a more learner-centered point of view, considering the necessity of determining the TFL learners' needs. In this respect, they should especially take into consideration the high expectations of learners in developing oral competency, and the inclusion of cultural issues in the TFL curricula.

Before concluding, more needs analysis studies in the field of TFL are highly needed in order to design more learner-centered TFL curricula; However, it should not be neglected any longer that 'analyzing the needs' of TFL learners is 'the first, but not the last step' in creating effective TFL environments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to gather further data in depth, this study or similar studies may be implemented at more universities in Turkey and in other countries where the EILC programs are being carried out. On the other hand, this research study was mainly based on only learners' needs. The other shareholders of Turkish instruction such as graduates, possible future Turkish learners, Erasmus coordinators of the department and teaching staff may be included in the data collection procedure as respondents for more in-depth information. In addition, the qualitative data may be gathered through interviews, in order to more deeply highlight the needs of European learners of TFL programs. It is recommended that the teachers of TFL, researchers and curriculum designers make use of the results of this particular paper determining the Turkish language needs of European learners, and to conduct similar studies for other contexts where Turkish is being taught as a foreign/second language in Turkey and in other countries.

LIMITATIONS

The research paper is limited to subjects at four state universities in Turkey. Results of this study may not be fully generalized to other contexts of the EILC and TFL programs. The questions were structured to gather respondents' personal perceptions.

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