STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH AND ITS EFFECT ON ATTENDANCE, ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND EFL MOTIVATION[*]

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of Strengths Based Approach (SBA) on attendance, academic achievement and student motivation in English class. For this purpose, an experimental study was carried out with freshman students at a state university in Turkey in the spring term of 2011-2012 academic year. The sampling of the study consisted of 66 students in total, 33 students in experimental group and 33 students in control group. Pretest posttest quasi-experimental design with a control group was used in the study. Clifton Strengthsfinder™ was used to determine the talent themes of students. The data on the motivation levels of students were obtained through the motivation scale, which was adapted from Attitude/Motivation Test Battery developed by Gardner (1985). The data regarding the attendance percentages of students in English class were obtained from attendance sheets taken by the researcher weekly. Students' exam scores in mid-term and final exams administered by the researcher in both terms were taken into consideration for the academic achievement of students. The study indicated that the most frequently encountered talent themes were restorative (f=16), responsibility (f=11), deliberative (f=9), ideation (f=9) and learner (f=9) respectively. Also, SBA affected the attendance rates of students positively in favour of experimental group; however, it didn't have a significant effect on students' academic achievement and motivation levels. It is considered important to study SBA, which is a fairly new area of study for both the world and Turkey.

Keywords: Strength, talent, attendance, academic achievement, motivation

GÜÇLÜ YÖN TEMELLİ YAKLAŞIM VE DEVAM AKADEMİK BAŞARI ve YABANCI DİL ÖĞRENME MOTİVASYONU ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ

ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Güçlü Yön Temelli Yaklaşımın (GYTY) İngilizce dersinde öğrencilerin devam, akademik başarı ve motivasyon düzeyleri üzerindeki etkisini incelemektir. Bu amaçla 2011-2012 akademik yılı Bahar yarıyılında bir devlet üniversitesinde birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin katıldığı deneysel bir çalışma yürütülmüştür. Çalışmanın örnekleminde deney grubunda 33, kontrol grubunda 33 olmak üzere toplam 66 öğrenci yer almıştır. Uygulama haftada iki saat olarak okutulan İngilizce dersinde yapılmıştır. Araştırmada öntest-sontest kontrol gruplu yarı deneysel desen kullanılmıştır. Çalışma kapsamında öğrencilerin yetenek temalarını belirlemek için internet tabanlı Clifton güç bulucu ölçeğinden yararlanılmıştır. Öğrencilerin motivasyon düzeylerine ilişkin veriler ise Gardner (1985) tarafından geliştirilen Tutum / Motivasyon Test Havuzundan alınan motivasyon ölçeği ile elde edilmiştir. Çalışmaya katılan öğrencilerin İngilizce dersine devam oranlarını gösteren veriler ise araştırmacı tarafından hem güz döneminde hem de bahar döneminde haftalık olarak alınan ders yoklama belgelerinden alınmıştır. Öğrencilerin akademik başarı düzeyleri hakkında bilgi edinmek için araştırmacı tarafından güz ve bahar yarıyılında uygulanan yıl içi ve yıl sonu sınavlarından alınan puanlar esas alınmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda, öğrencilerin yetenek temaları içinde en sık rastlanan yetenek temalarının 16 öğrencinin sahip olduğu *düzelten*, 11 öğrencinin sahip olduğu *sorumlu* ve 9'ar öğrencinin sahip olduğu *tedbirli*, *fikir* ve *öğrenci* olduğu anlaşılmıştır. GYTY'nin öğrencilerin derse devam oranını deney grubu lehine olmak üzere olumlu olarak etkilediği, ancak akademik başarıları ve motivasyon düzeyleri üzerinde anlamlı bir etkisi olmadığı araştırmada ulaşılan diğer sonuçlardır. GYTY'nin farklı çalışmalara konu edilerek ayrıntılı olarak araştırılması, eğitim sürecinin daha verimli olmasını isteyen karar vericiler için yeni bir alternatif bulunması açısından önemli görülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Güç, yetenek, devam, akademik başarı, motivasyon

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education aims at changing and developing students towards the desired direction. This is a formidable task as the individuals coming to schools have varying internal and external dynamics that drive them to behave in a certain way. All these dynamics and personal characteristics should be taken into consideration while developing and implementing the curriculum. Some of the personal qualities may hinder the process of learning although some others may contribute positively. In order to get information about individual characteristics and inclinations of people, education utilises psychology, which tries to explain human behaviour. Thus, educational psychology, "which aims at optimising the school setting and educational process within the framework of the findings of psychology" (Sürücü, 2009, 17) has come to the fore to help the stakeholders in education to identify the individuals.

Contemporary approaches in education require that individual differences should be considered in learning (Kılıç & Sağlam, 2013). If the individual differences are understood better, the educational practices can be tailored to increase the effectiveness of education. At first sight, it can be regarded negative to have a class consisting of students with many different qualities, personalities, expectations and so on. However, individual differences could be harnessed to have more fruitful learning experiences. Strengths, talents and abilities are the individual qualities that can contribute a lot in the process of learning and education. At this point, positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), which deals with the positive psychological traits of people, should be emphasized. Its theoretical bases were formed after the Second World War as a result of the reactions of some psychologists like Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers and William James against the perception that psychology solely studies mental illnesses of people (Froh, 2004; Gable & Haidt, 2005). They thought that positive constructs like love and happiness should also be included in the scope of psychology. Although Maslow (1970) mentioned the term positive psychology for the first time, it gained a considerable ground with the studies of Martin E.P. Seligman in 1990s. Personal strengths, on the other hand, were included in the field of positive psychology with serious contributions of psychologists like Donald O. Clifton and Edward "Chip" Anderson.

What is Strengths-based Approach?

The bases of Strengths-based Approach (SBA hereafter) have been laid as a result of the studies carried out in the fields of education, psychology, social studies, organisational theory and behaviour (Pritchard, 2009). As stated above, positive psychology has the greatest effect in the birth of SBA. SBA focuses on what students do well instead of their deficiencies (Gillum, 2005). Research conducted by the Gallup Organization (Clifton & Harter, 2003) discovered that the individuals whose talents are focused on and who develop their talents reach levels of excellence although the ones whose deficiencies are focused on achieve average performance (Schreiner and Anderson, 2005). SBA admits that learners are equipped with particular talents when they come to school and if their talents are determined and developed, they will be high achievers. The term "positive education" is used in the field of education as a reflection of positive psychology and SBA. Seligman et al. (2009, 293) defined positive education as "education for both traditional skills and for happiness." Another definition of positive education is given by Oades et al. (2011, 432) as "the development of educational environments that enable the learner to engage in established curricula in addition to knowledge and skills to develop their and others' wellbeing".

One of the most frequently repeated terms in SBA is the concept of *strength*. "A strength is the ability to provide consistent, near-perfect performance in a given activity" (Clifton, Anderson & Schreiner, 2006, 4). In other words, strengths are the personal qualities that enable someone to do something well recurrently. Strength starts with talent. Talent is "a naturally recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behaviour that can be productively applied" (Clifton et al., 2006, 2). Talents are the qualities such as processing information, interacting with people, perceiving the world, the drive to compete, being sensitive to others' needs and behaving comfortably in social contexts (Schreiner & Anderson, 2005; Anderson, 2004). A person may have lots of talents and they distinguish individuals from others. In order to perform to the levels of excellence, talents should be transformed into strengths, which is exactly what SBA focuses on. 34 different talent themes were defined in Clifton Strengthsfinder and Rath (2007) has explained them in detail in his book "*Strengthsfinder 2.0.*". The names of these talent themes were given in the method and findings parts.

Attendance, Academic Achievement and Motivation

Attendance is one of the important issues in education. Students can reach the objectives of the classes as long as they attend them regularly. More and more schools complain about high dropout rates among students. Especially for student-centred education, students can hardly compensate what is taught in the class unless they are involved in the in-class activities. Attending classes is, at the same time, one of the keys of academic achievement, which is one of the most important objectives of education (Railsback, 2004; Kablan, 2009; Hancock et al., 2013).

Academic achievement is one of the most frequently used concepts in educational research, usually as a dependent variable. Academic achievement accounts for behaviour changes of individuals in all areas of curriculum except

for psychomotor and affective domain (Ahman & Glock, 1971 as cited in Erdoğdu, 2006). Another view on academic achievement by Çırak and Çokluk (2013, 72) is that "a student can be regarded academically successful when s/he exhibits the objectives in a given curriculum". Lack of academic achievement has lots of direct and indirect costs, which cannot be tolerated by the decision makers and stakeholders in education. As Keskin and Sezgin (2009, 5) emphasize "students exhibit affective reactions such as happiness, confidence and personal satisfaction in the presence of achievement but sorrow, disappointment and depression in the absence of it". That's why it's the most important objective for both students and teachers.

Another construct handled in this study is motivation, which is among the most frequently studied concepts in the field of educational psychology. Motivation is an abstract concept, which cannot be observed directly, is hard to define and explain and the presence of which can be inferred indirectly through observing some behaviour (Schunk, 2009; Dereli & Acat, 2010). One of the famous researchers in the field of educational psychology, Slavin (2000, 327) defines motivation as "the effect of needs and desires on the intensity and direction of behaviour". Another well-known educational psychologist, Woolfolk (1998, 372) emphasizes the abstract nature of motivation in his definition, "an internal state that launches, directs and sustains behaviour". Motivation is generally divided into two as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation based on the source of stimuli that launch behaviour. As for the field of foreign language learning, motivation is classified as instrumental and integrative motivation, based on the underlying purpose of learning a foreign language.

1.1. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to find out the dominant talent themes of higher education students and to transform those talents into strengths by involving them in the activities which have been developed in line with the requirements of SBA. In addition, this study tries to determine the effect of SBA on the variables such as attendance, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) motivation and academic achievement, which are frequently studied in the field of education.

1.2. Significance of the Study

This is the first study in Turkey which introduced the concept of Strengths-based Approach as it was defined by Clifton, Anderson and Schreiner (2006). The study is important as it indicates a paradigm shift from focusing on the weaknesses of individuals to their talents and strengths in the field of education. Also, the talent themes of Turkish higher education students were identified for the first time through this study. Identifying the talents and strengths peculiar to each student is valuable in that those talents and strengths can be made use of in the period of instruction. As it is stated by Schreiner and Anderson (2005, p22), "focusing on student deficits and needs is focusing on the student who is not there". However, when the strengths of students are focused on instead of their weaknesses, a more realistic instruction can be conducted. Finally, the study aimed at determining the effect of SBA on three dependent variables; attendance, EFL motivation and academic achievement. If the relations between these variables are figured out successfully with this study, the scholars, teachers, administrators and other stakeholders in the field of education could have an insight into the effects of SBA in education.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

Experimental design was used in the study. Quasi experimental design was used as the experimental and control groups weren't formed by the researcher. Thus, non-equivalent control group model was used. Taking into account the principle "the subjects in both groups should be as similar as possible" (Karasar, 2005, 102), the groups were determined in accordance with their university entrance exam scores and English class scores belonging to the previous (fall) term.

2.2. Study Group

A sum of 86 first year students at a Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences at a university in Western Black Sea Region in Turkey made up the study group in the spring term of 2011-2012 academic year. Not all the students in both experimental and control groups filled in the data collection tools. So, a sum of 66 students, 33 for experimental and 33 for control group, formed the study group as they filled in the required data collection tools in time. Of the 33 students in the experimental group, 19 were female and 14 were male; in the control group, 17 were female and 16 of them were male students. While selecting the experimental and control groups among four groups, their university entrance exam scores and score categories belonging to the year 2011 and academic achievement scores in English class in the fall term of the same year were taken into consideration. As for the assignment of groups into experimental and control groups, the two groups were randomly assigned as control and

experimental groups. The mean scores of both groups were relatively closer to each other compared to remaining two groups.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

Four different data collection tools were used in the study. The first one was web-based Clifton Strengthsfinder[TM], which was used to determine the talent themes of the subjects in the experimental group. The Strengthsfinder[TM] consists of 177 item pairs and the original language of the scale is English. The researcher, who has an undergraduate degree in English language teaching, translated the scale into Turkish. The translation was controlled and corrected where necessary by a professional translator, who has an undergraduate degree in translation and MA degree in curriculum and instruction. The scale doesn't have sub-factors but the items are distributed to determine the five dominant talent themes of subjects among 34 different talent themes. The number of items allocated for a specific talent theme in the scale ranges between 4 to 14. Each item in the scale is made up of two sentences in two ends of a continuum and there are five grades to choose; two for the sentence on the left, two for the sentence on the right and one for "neutral". At the both ends of the continuum, the phrase "strongly describes me" is written. It is like a Likert type item but the main difference is that there are two sentences to grade at two ends of the continuum and the subject should decide which one to choose or simply sign "neutral" in case of an indecision. The figure below gives a clear idea about the structure of an item.
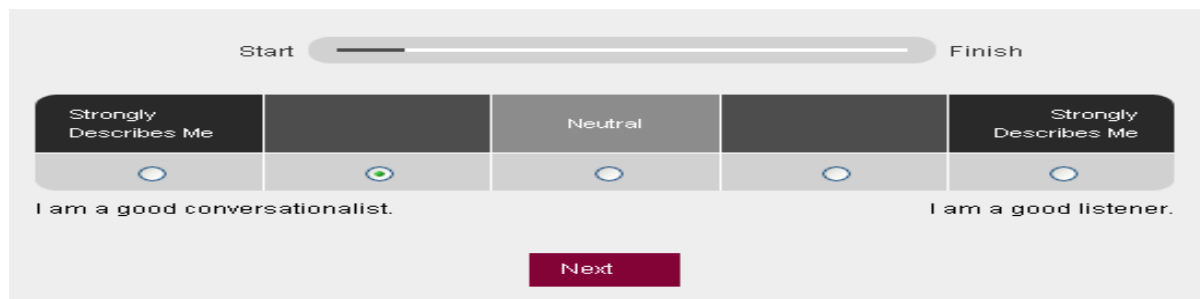

Figure 1. An original item pair taken from Clifton Strengthsfinder[TM]

Clifton Strengthsfinder[TM] is constantly subjected to psychometrical evaluations by the ones who have developed the scale (Asplund, Agrawal, Hodges, Harter & Lopez, 2014). The scale was applied on more than 3,9 million subjects in the world and valuable data were obtained regarding the internal consistency and test-retest reliability analyses. Gallup[TM] applied the scale on 46,902 subjects in 2008 and 2,219 subjects after 2008. The internal consistency coefficients of individual items obtained in these studies were given in Table 1 below.

Table 1.
Reliability Coefficients Belonging to Talent Themes Determined Through Clifton Strengthsfinder

No	Talent Themes	Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient (n=46,902)	Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient (n = 2,219)	No	Talent Themes	Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient (n = 46,902)	Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient (n = 2,219)
1	Achiever	0.66	0.67	18	Futuristic	0.73	0.70
2	Activator	0.62	0.59	19	Harmony	0.68	0.65
3	Adaptability	0.71	0.71	20	Ideation	0.71	0.69
4	Analytical	0.72	0.75	21	Includer	0.61	0.63
5	Arranger	0.64	0.65	22	Individualization	0.56	0.55
6	Belief	0.60	0.62	23	Input	0.52	0.57
7	Command	0.69	0.68	24	Intellection	0.70	0.72
8	Communication	0.73	0.72	25	Learner	0.75	0.78
9	Competition	0.73	0.71	26	Maximizer	0.72	0.64
10	Connectedness	0.65	0.66	27	Positivity	0.78	0.76
11	Consistency	0.65	0.62	28	Relator	0.54	0.60
12	Context	0.61	0.62	29	Responsibility	0.66	0.68
13	Deliberative	0.73	0.74	30	Restorative	0.70	0.67
14	Developer	0.65	0.70	31	Self Assurance	0.68	0.67
15	Discipline	0.78	0.78	32	Significance	0.70	0.70
16	Empathy	0.61	0.63	33	Strategic	0.69	0.66
17	Focus	0.71	0.68	34	Woo	0.79	0.76

Cited in Asplund et al., (2014, p.9).

As is seen in the above table, the internal consistency coefficients of items range between 0,52 to 0,79 in these two studies and the coefficients of individual items in both studies are usually very close to each other. The fact that the mean reliability coefficient of Clifton Strengthsfinder™ was 0,79 and test-retest reliability coefficients of 34 talent themes ranged between 0,60 to 0,80 in the study carried out by Gallup (2004) also supports the data above.

The second data collection tool was written midterm and final exams employed to determine the academic achievement scores of students in English class. The exams consisted of fill in the blanks and matching type questions to measure the levels of students in an unbiased manner. The content of the midterm exam consisted of the topics taught in the first half of the spring term and the final exam included all the topics taught in spring term as it was a more comprehensive exam.

The third data collection tool was the attendance lists of students in English class. Students were asked to sign the attendance list for once for every week in a two-hour English class. The attendance was taken for 10 weeks.

The last data collection tool was the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) motivation scale developed by Robert C. Gardner (1985). The aim of developing the scale was to determine the motivation levels of students in foreign language learning. The scale was composed of three sub-dimensions; attitude toward learning a language, motivational intensity and desire to learn a language. These three sub-dimensions were taken from Attitude Motivation Test Battery developed again by Gardner (1985) to determine the attitudes and motivation of students on different fields as prescribed by Gardner. The original language of the scale was English and it was translated into Turkish by the researcher and it was confirmed and corrected where necessary by a professional translator as was the case with Clifton Strengthsfinder™. Ten items under the title of attitude towards learning a language were structured as five-point likert items and remaining twenty items under other two sub-dimensions were structured as multiple choice items with three options having different scores. As for the validity and reliability of the scale, Gardner (1985) stated that the reliability coefficients obtained from the applications of the scale on more than 5000 students in Canada ranged between 0.89-0.91 and test-retest reliability coefficient of a six-week period was 0.79. The reliability coefficients belonging to the scale used in this study and its sub-dimensions were given in the table below. Pretest was conducted in February 2012 and posttest was implemented in May 2012.

Table 2.
Pretest-Posttest Reliability Coefficients of the Motivation Scale

Motivation and its Subdimensions		Pretest Reliability Coefficient	Pretest Mean	Posttest Reliability Coefficient	Posttest Mean
Motivation	**Attitude towards Learning English**	0.817		0.866	
	Motivational Intensity	0.657	0.882	0.713	0.917
	Desire to Learn English	0.746		0.826	

As can be seen in the table above, the motivation scale used in this study has a reliability coefficient of 0.88 in the pretest and 0.91 in the posttest. Thus, it can be claimed that the scale has internal consistency.

2.4. Implementation Process

Following the implementation of pretests on the experimental group, the students learned their talent themes and they were expected to transform their talents into strengths by processing their knowledge and abilities and using their strengths in different areas of life, including academic life. The implementation process took ten weeks except for the week in which midterm exam was applied. During the two-hour English classes, half an hour was allocated for the implementation of SBA and the rest for the subject of the week. The implementations for the experimental group were prepared and implemented according to *StrengthsQuest: Curriculum Outline and Learning Activities* developed by Anderson (2003), *StrengthsQuest Guide: Introducing Strengths-based Development and StrengthsQuest to Higher Education* prepared by Braskamp (2006) and *StrengthsQuest Actvitity Book* prepared by Gallup in 2008.

The students in the experimental group filled in the scale on paper and the data were transferred into the related page at www.strengthsquest.com by the researcher one by one. Together with their five dominant talent themes, students got some reports exclusively designed for each of them in accordance with their talent themes. The titles of the reports were *Student Action Items, Professional Action Items* and *Teacher Action Items*, which provided important advice about what to do or not to do regarding their academic life, professional life in the future and teaching process. Students didn't take into consideration Teacher Action Items as they didn't intend to be teachers in the future. In addition, students were also given *Signature Theme Report, Strengths Comprehension Report* and *Strengths Comprehension and Action Planning Guide*, all of which were prepared to increase students' awareness on their talents and at the same time their potential strengths. All of the reports were in English and they were translated into Turkish by the researcher before they were given to students. As for the activities throughout the period of eleven weeks, the students in the experimental group were given information on SBA and they were

asked to choose five talent themes among the 34 themes given on a separate piece of paper before they took Clifton Strengthsfinder[TM]. The results of the test and students' choices were compared and a discussion was carried out on similarities and differences. The reports stated above were given to students and they were asked to read them carefully and critically. Another discussion was made on the personal reports of students and their views regarding the reports were obtained. Next, picture strips were given to students and they were asked to write picture strip stories. Students were asked to write their talent themes on badges and walk around the classroom so as to see each other's five dominant talent themes and make evaluations on them mutually. Moreover, students were asked to prepare and present PowerPoint presentations in groups on comparatives and superlatives using appropriate visuals. In addition, students were asked to comment on what talent themes they made use of before and during the midterm exam. Then, students were asked to talk about their talent themes to three people with whom they are closely acquainted (parents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and so on) and get feedback from them. Furthermore, students were asked to write the most pleasant experience in their life by associating them with their talent themes. Next, they were asked to write when and how they used their talent themes in their life by giving examples. A PowerPoint presentation was made for the students on the strengths of Steve Jobs and they were asked to talk about their similarities and differences with Steve Jobs. The researcher talked about his talent themes (as he also took Clifton Strengthsfinder) and how he made use of them in his life. In addition, students were asked to write their greatest success in life and associate their success with their talent themes. Finally, students were asked to talk about SBA and their strengths in the light of the activities performed throughout the semester. Meanwhile, the control group went on learning English at A1 level and they mostly studied grammar ad vocabulary through Grammar Translation Method and Direct Method.

2.5. Data Collection and Analysis

Students filled in Clifton Strengthsfinder[TM] on a hard copy and the data were entered into the related page at www.strengthsquest.com by the researcher. The evaluation was made online by the system and each student was given a sum of 7 reports about their talents, potential strengths, advice on what to do or not in their academic life, professional life and so on. The 20-hour English class was structured to make use of the data provided to each student in the experimental group by the system and to enable students to use their talents consciously to convert them into permanent strengths.

The attendance lists of students in the previous fall term were recorded by the researcher to be used as pretest data. And the data were entered into SPSS 16. Students got "1" for the weeks they attended and "0" for the weeks they were absent. The attendance data in the spring term were recorded and entered into the same programme in the same way. After the percentages and the mean of students' attendance were calculated, independent samples t-test was applied to compare the two groups with each other.

The data regarding academic achievement were collected through midterm and final exams as a pretest in the fall term and as a posttest in the spring term. The implementation process started in February 2012 and midterm exam was applied in the second week of April, final exam was applied in the first week of June. Students' exam scores were evaluated out of 100 and they were entered into SPSS. Independent samples t-test was applied to determine the difference of exam scores between the groups.

Motivation scale consisting of 30 items and three subdimensions were applied to the students in both groups as a pretest at the beginning of spring term. Posttest was applied in the last week of May. The five-point likert-type items were entered into SPSS in numbers ranging from 1 to 5 and multiple choice items from 1 to 3 as they were scored in the original scale developed by Gardner (1985). Both the total motivation scores and the scores belonging to each subdimension were calculated. To see how scores changed between groups, independent samples t-test was applied. The motivation scores of students ranged from 30 to 110 and they were converted into 0-100 score interval to make interpretations easier.

3. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

3.1. Talent Themes of Students

The frequencies of talent themes of students in the experimental group regardless of their rank in top 5 themes are given in Table 3 below.

Table 3.
Frequencies Belonging to Top Five Talent Themes of Students

No	Talent Theme	Frequency	No	Talent Theme	Frequency	No	Talent Theme	Frequency
1.	Restorative	16	13.	Developer	6	25.	Consistency	2
2.	Responsibility	11	14.	Analytical	5	26.	Achiever	2

Table 3 continuing

No	Talent Theme	Frequency	No	Talent Theme	Frequency	No	Talent Theme	Frequency
3.	Deliberative	9	15.	Input	5	27.	Maximizer	2
4.	Ideation	9	16.	Includer	5	28.	Adaptability	2
5.	Learner	9	17.	Context	5	29.	Futuristic	2
6.	Harmony	8	18.	Competition	4	30.	Significance	1
7.	Individualization	7	19.	Focus	4	31.	Intellection	1
8.	Woo	7	20.	Connectedness	4	32.	Discipline	1
9.	Communication	7	21.	Relator	3	33.	Self-assurance	1
10.	Empathy	6	22.	Activator	3	34.	Command	0
11.	Belief	6	23.	Arranger	3			
12.	Strategic	6	24.	Positivity	3			

As can be seen in the table, the most frequent talent theme is restorative (f=16) and the second one is responsibility (f=11). There are three talent themes in the third rank with the same frequency (f=9); deliberative, ideation and learner. Harmony (f=8), individualization (f=7) and woo (f=7) follow the most popular talent themes. When the frequencies above are taken into consideration, it can be stated that the students in the experimental group usually like solving problems, want to correct something wrong, have a considerable level of responsibility and keep their promises. It is worth noting that *command* wasn't one of the talent themes of students. When the rank of the talent themes among top five dominant themes of students are taken into consideration in addition to their frequency, the order of themes changes slightly but is quite similar to the order given in the table above. The new, combined order of themes is as follows; (1) restorative, (2) responsibility, (3) learner and harmony. The only change is that *ideation* isn't included in the top 4 of the list this time.

3.2. Attendance

One of the aims of this study is to test the influence of Strengths-based Approach on students' attendance. So, students' attendance was registered throughout the term out of ten weeks. The students got "1" for the weeks they attended and "0" for the weeks they didn't. Table 4 given below demonstrates students' attendance rates in spring term both as mean scores and as percentage and their difference between the two groups.

Table 4.

Attendance Rates of Students and Difference between Experimental and Control Groups

Variable	Group	N	$\overline{X}$ (Weeks)	%	Sd	t	df	p
Attendance (Fall term)	Experimental	33	6,97	69,7	1,61			
	Control	33	7,21	72,1	1,69	-,596	64	,553
Attendance (Spring term)	Experimental	33	6,79	67,9	1,61			
	Control	33	5,88	58,8	1,51	2,357	64	,021*

*p < .05

As table 4 demonstrates, the average attendance rate of experimental group in fall term was 69,7% and that of the control group was 72,1%. Although the attendance rate of the control group was slightly higher than that of experimental group in fall term, it can be claimed that these two groups were similar prior to the intervention in terms of attendance, which is a desired situation in experimental studies. The result of independent samples t-test demonstrates that attendance rates of the students in fall term don't differ significantly between experimental and control groups (p>.05). When students' attendance rates in the spring term are examined, it is observed that there is a slight decline in the experimental group (67,9%) and a considerable decline in control group (58,8%). As it is seen in the table, there is a significant difference between the attendance rates of students in experimental and control groups (p<.05) in spring term. Thus, it can be maintained that the interventions that were performed as a requirement of Strengths-based Approach contributed positively to the attendance rates of the students in the experimental group.

3.3. EFL Motivation

In this part of the study, it was aimed to measure foreign language learning motivation levels of students using Gardner's (1985) scale and to test whether the scores differ significantly between experimental and control groups. The EFL motivation scores are expected to range between 30 and 110. In the Table 5 below, students' EFL motivation scores and their equivalents in 0-100 score interval are given with the mean scores in addition to the results of independent samples t-test.

Table 5.
EFL Motivation Scores of Students and Difference between Experimental and Control Groups

Variable	Test	Group	N	$\overline{X}$	Sd	Equivalent out of 100	t	df	p
EFL Motivation	Pretest	Experimental	33	85,73	10,52	69,66	,885	64	,379
		Control	33	83,06	13,73	66,32			
	Posttest	Experimental	33	85,30	10,99	69,12	1,565	64	,123
		Control	33	80,03	15,92	62,53			

As is seen in the table above, the EFL motivation scores of students in the experimental group are around $\overline{X}$ =69,66/100 in the pretest and almost the same in the postest with a very slight decline, which is not worth noting. However, the motivation scores of the students in the control group in the pretest were around $\overline{X}$ =66,32/100 and a higher decline than that of the experimental group was observed in the posttest ($\overline{X}$ =62,53). As the independent samples t-test demonstrates, there is not a significant difference between the mean scores of EFL motivation in the pretest (p=.37). This shows that the two groups are similar with respect to motivation scores prior to the intervention. When the motivation scores of both groups in the posttest are compared, a significant difference hasn't been found (p=.12) although there is a decrease in the scores of the students in the control group. It indicates, as a whole, that the activities that were implemented throughout the spring term as a requirement of Strengths-based Approach didn't affect significantly the motivation levels of students. This may be due to the fact that the mean attendance of the students in the experimental group was %67,9 in the spring term due to the 50% attendance policy of the university administration to enable students to attend two undergraduate programs in the same year. It means that the students missed at least %32 (almost one third) of the courses in which the interventions were performed. Therefore, the expected influence of the intervention may not have come true.

It was stated above that EFL motivation was made up of three sub-dimensions; attitude towards learning English, motivational intensity and desire to learn English. In Table 6 given below, mean scores of students in each of the sub-dimensions of EFL motivation are given.

Table 6.
Mean Scores of Students in Each of the Sub-dimensions of EFL Motivation

Sub-dimension	Score Interval		Pretest $\overline{X}$	Sd	Posttest $\overline{X}$	Sd	Pretest + Posttest $\overline{X}$	Equivalent out of 100	N
	Min.	Max.							
Attitude towards Learning English	10	50	40,38	1,15	39,68	1,16	40,03	75	66
Motivational Intensity	10	30	21,27	0,66	20,99	0,63	21,13	55	66
Desire to Learn English	10	30	22,77	0,60	22,01	0,61	22,39	62	66

As the table above demonstrates, all of the mean scores pertaining to the sub-dimensions of EFL motivation in both pretest and the posttest are above the midpoints which correspond to 50 out of 100. When the mean scores are transformed into scores out of 100, it is observed that the mean score of Attitude towards Learning English is 75/100, that of Motivational Intensity is 55/100 and lastly Desire to Learn English is 62/100. This is also evident in the relative share of the three sub-dimensions of EFL motivation in the total EFL motivation scores of students. The share of Attitude towards Learning English is %39 whereas the share of Motivational Intensity is %29 and that of Desire to Learn English is %32 respectively. It can be claimed, taking into account the above rates, that Attitude towards Learning English is the most dominant one among the three sub-dimensions of EFL motivation in this study.

3.4. Academic Achievement

Academic achievement is another variable on which the influence of Strengths-based Approach is examined in this study. As stated above, two written exams were applied to obtain the academic achievement scores of students, the first one was midterm and the second one was final exam. In Table 7 below, the total scores consisting of midterm and final exam scores and the mean scores were shown together with the results of independent samples t-test to demonstrate whether there is a significant difference between experimental and control groups.

Table 7.

Academic Achievement Scores of Students and Difference Between Experimental and Control Groups

Variable	Group	N	Total Midterm+ Final exam	Sd	$\overline{X}$ out of 100	t	df	p
Academic Achievement (Fall term)	Experimental	33	116,82	42	58,41			
	Control	33	113,48	42,12	56,74	,322	64	,749
Academic Achievement (Spring term)	Experimental	33	107,94	38,45	53,97			
	Control	33	104,88	42,16	52,44	,308	64	,759

As is seen in the table, academic achievement scores of students in both groups in the fall term are quite close to each other as is the case with EFL motivation scores and attendance rates. The mean academic achievement score of the students in the experimental group in fall term is 58,41 whereas that of the control group is 56,74. Independent samples t-test shows that the mean scores of students don't differ significantly (p>.05) between the two groups prior to the intervention as expected. After the interventions were performed in the spring term, academic achievement scores of students changed in the similar direction. Both mean scores decreased almost at the same rate with $\overline{X}$ = 53,97 for the experimental group and $\overline{X}$ = 52,44 for the control group. When independent samples t-test was implemented, it was discovered that there wasn't a significant difference between the mean academic achievement scores of students in the experimental and control groups. The decline in the academic achievement scores of the students in the experimental group can be accounted for by mentioning the additional tasks that were given them regularly as a requirement of strengths-based approach. The additional tasks occupied some of their time that could be used for studying English.

4. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Discussion

The first finding of the study is concerned with the dominant talent themes of students. Clifton strengthsfinder[TM] was mainly implemented in US as it is the country where research on strengths was launched first. Therefore, the dominant talent themes of the students in this study were compared with those in US. Only Schreiner and Hulme (2009) have shared statistical information on talent themes of the participating individuals in their study. When the list of talent themes prepared by Schreiner and Hulme (2009) was compared with the findings of this study, it was observed that only two talent themes out of 34 were grouped among the top five talent themes in both studies. *Responsibility*, which ranked second in this study was on the fourth place in the study carried out in US. Another talent theme, *learner* was on the third place in this study and it was on the second place in US. As for the higher education students, *restorative*, which was the first on the list in this study was on the third place of the list belonging to the higher education students in US. In other words, there is only one talent theme among top five shared by higher education students in both countries. When the cultural, historical, geographical and socio-economic characteristics of both countries are considered, it is quite a low possibility that there may be similarities between the two countries with respect to first five dominant talent themes. Furthermore, strengthsfinder[TM] was implemented on only 33 students in Turkey whereas it was implemented on thousands of students in US. Increasing the number of participating students in Turkey could enable the researchers to make a more balanced comparison and get more reliable data.

The only variable that was affected significantly by SBA in this study was attendance. When the literature on the effect of SBA on attendance was reviewed, it was observed that the findings of some studies (Harter, 1998, as cited in Louis, 2012; Cantwell, 2005; Gillum, 2005) were consistent with those obtained in this study. In all of three studies, it was concluded that SBA increased the attendance rates of students. Departing from this finding, it can be concluded that the students who are aware of their talent themes and try to transform them into strengths attend classes more than the ones who don't have any information about their strengths. Students' attending classes is of great importance in terms of permanent learning as it enables them to listen to what is taught in the class, to participate in the course, and ask about unclear points (Railsback, 2004; Kablan, 2009; Hancock et al., 2013). Attendance isn't included among the most frequent problems in k12 education as it is seriously monitored and sanctions were applied whenever necessary during this period, however, it is a serious problem in higher education especially at the universities which allow students not to attend classes for a particular period.

EFL motivation levels of the students involved in this study are consistent with those obtained in other studies carried out in Turkey (Kennedy, 1996; Yılmaz, 2007; Dellal & Günak, 2009) and in the world (Lee, 2012). In all of these studies, the EFL motivation levels of students were found to be 65% per cent or above as is the case with this study. In other words, EFL motivation scores of students are generally high. Thus, it can be asserted that EFL

motivation of students can't be regarded as a common problem in foreign language education in Turkey. On the other hand, it was discovered, in this study, that EFL motivation isn't influenced significantly by SBA. When the related literature was reviewed, some studies (Austin, 2005; Cave, 2003) were found suggesting that SBA doesn't affect EFL motivation significantly. Austin studied motivation as extrinsic and intrinsic motivation separately and pointed out that SBA increased intrinsic motivation but not extrinsic motivation. In addition, Cave (2003) stated that SBA doesn't increase student motivation. Estevez (2005), on the other hand, indicated that SBA increased student motivation. Phenomenological approach was used in the study, data were obtained through student feedback rather than a scale and a control group wasn't used. Some studies (Cave, 2003; Austin, 2005; Estevez, 2005; Louis, 2008) reviewed in the literature limited their implementation period with several weeks. It could be a good idea to restrict the implementation period of this study instead of a whole term so as not to allow students to lose their interest in the intervention that they displayed at the beginning of the study. Thus, their EFL motivation could be kept high.

It was found out in this study that SBA doesn't have a significant influence on the academic achievement of students. Among the five studies that aimed at figuring out the effect of SBA on academic achievement, the finding of only one study (Austin, 2005) was similar to that of this study but remaining four studies (Harter, 1998 as cited in Louis, 2012; Williamson, 2002; Turner, 2004; Cantwell, 2005; Louis 2012) concluded that SBA had a significant effect on academic achievement. The fact that academic achievement isn't affected significantly by SBA can be attributed to the relative low attendance levels of students. Research suggests that students should attend classes regularly so as to attain academic achievement (Kablan, 2009) and absence of students affects learning performance negatively (Strickland, 1998; Wadesango & Machingambi, 2011). The studies (Harter, 1998 as cited in Louis, 2012; Williamson, 2002; Turner, 2004; Cantwell, 2005; Louis 2012) which concluded that SBA contributes to academic achievement didn't take attendance as a dependent variable and thus the researchers took additional measures to increase the attendance levels of students. However, no precautions were taken in this study to increase attendance levels of students as it was one of the dependent variables. If the students in the experimental group had been exposed to SBA interventions more, probably a different result could have been reached. Also, the studies which found that SBA had a positive effect on academic achievement differs from this study in some respects. Harter (1998 as cited in Louis, 2012) studied on a large sample (n=1648), Williamson (2002) carried out SBA interventions out of class hours, Turner (2004) implemented SBA for two semesters and Cantwell (2005) accepted oral exams for achievement criterion instead of a written exam as the intervention was realised in speaking class. Another interpretation on the relation between SBA and academic attendance can be made taking into consideration the relation between motivation and academic achievement. There is a great deal of research suggesting that motivation is of great importance for academic achievement and a prerequisite for learning (Acat & Demiral, 2002; Atay, 2004; Dellal & Günak, 2009; Ulusoy, 2009; Schunk, 2009; Dereli & Acat, 2010; Lee, 2012; Selçuk, 2012). Thus, it can be claimed that there is a positive correlation between motivation and academic achievement. As it was stated above, SBA doesn't have a significant effect on EFL motivation. Departing from this positive correlation, it can be concluded that if motivation isn't increased, then we may not expect academic achievement to increase in the same study.

Finally, SBA is a new approach in the domain of education, especially in foreign language education. It can be considered as a fundamental approach as it opposes to traditional paradigm focusing on the weaknesses of students rather than their strengths. It is not easy to change the conception of education that was sustained for hundreds of years. In addition, all the students, teachers and administrators were educated in the dominant paradigm and they can't be expected to admit a fundamental approach easily, that's why the effect of the intervention of this study may have been weak. Therefore, more review and empirical studies are needed to change the dominant paradigm. In the period of searching for the better in education, having more alternatives means more hope in the long term. SBA is just one of those alternatives.

4.2. Conclusion

This study aimed at revealing the effect of SBA on attendance, EFL motivation and academic achievement. SBA was introduced for the first time in Turkey with this study and higher education students learned about their talent themes. This way, the idea of making use of the talents and strengths of individuals in the process of education was raised.

When the findings of the study are reviewed, it is observed that the dominant talent themes of students are *restorative, responsibility, deliberative, ideation* and *learner* respectively. It is noteworthy that none of the students have the talent theme *command*. The first three talent themes fall into the *Striving Themes* category that was classified by Louis (2008) and *Executive* category which was classified by Rath and Conchie (2009). Thus, it can be asserted that students generally have talent themes which require exhibiting an actual performance. When attendance rates of students are taken into consideration, it is observed that strengths-based activities have influenced the attendance rates of students positively. This may result from their close interest in the strengths-

based activities especially in the first period of implementation. The EFL motivation levels of students are above average and it demonstrates that EFL motivation is not an impeding factor in learning English. What is more, it is discovered that strengths-based approach doesn't affect EFL motivation of students significantly. This may be attributed to the fact that students may have been tired of activities that require them to do more experiment-related work compared to the students in the control group. Finally, academic achievement scores of students haven't been influenced significantly by strengths-based approach, which may be caused by less time allocated to teach the content of the class when compared to the students in the control group as strengths-based activities have taken up approximately 20 percent of the class hour every week.

Strengths-based Approach is a fundamental approach in that it opens up a new dimension in treating the individuals who need to be educated. It may change the dominant paradigm, which focuses on the weaknesses of individuals in the process of education in the long run. However, a great deal of empirical research should be carried out before it is accepted as an efficient way of developing individuals' existing talents and making use of them to attain educational objectives. This study can be considered as one of those empirical studies that aim at revealing how strengths-based approach functions in educational settings.

4.3. Recommendations

4.3.1. Recommendations on the Findings

Strengths-based approach is a relatively new field of study in Turkey although a considerable amount of research was carried out in US on this subject. Students with varying characteristics are admitted to schools every year and decision makers in the field of education need a variety of approaches, methods or techniques to address the expectations and needs of students. SBA seems to be a workable alternative, which has the potential to change the direction of the dominant paradigm from the weaknesses of students towards their talents and eventually strengths. Students' learning about their talents and strengths is important when the idea that individuals should know themselves (Petrov, 2003; Sajiene, 2009) is taken into consideration. Adequate amount of descriptive and empirical research should be carried out on SBA before it is implemented in the field of education in Turkey.

As it was stated before, SBA has a positive effect on attendance. SBA should be used as an ancillary factor in the institutions of education where attendance is regarded as a major problem on condition that the implementation period is not too long. Knowing about their latent talents or strengths and getting advice about their academic life will probably help to increase the enthusiasm of students.

4.3.2. Implications for Future Research

This study was carried out on a small sample in Turkey as it was an experimental study. More studies should be made, either experimental or descriptive, in order to have more comprehensible data about the talent themes and potential strengths of students in Turkey.

The interventions should be implemented out of class hours as the implementation during class hours may decrease the time allocated to the teaching of the content for the experimental group if a true or quasi experimental design is to be applied. Second, attendance shouldn't be taken as a dependent variable as a hundred percent attendance is preferred so as to help students transform their talents into strengths. When students are missing, it is quite hard to compensate the activities carried out during the class in the absence of students. Thus, additional measures are needed to keep the students in the class and it is impossible to do this if attendance is one of the dependent variables in the study. Finally, implementation period shouldn't last for too long or the frequency of activities should be decreased to enable the students think about and evaluate their talents slowly to internalise them.

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UZUN ÖZET

1. Giriş

Günümüzdeki eğitim anlayışında bireysel farklılıkların çok önemli bir yeri vardır. Eğitim süreçlerinde bireysel nitelikler ne kadar dikkate alınır, hatta onlardan ne kadar yararlanılırsa öğrenilecek içeriğin de o denli etkili ve kalıcı olarak öğretilebileceği düşünülmektedir. Bireylere özgü bu nitelikleri bireyi tanımayı amaç edinen Psikoloji biliminden ve bu niteliklerin eğitim ortamlarında değerlendirilmesini de Eğitim Psikolojisinden ayrı düşünmek olanaksızdır. Özellikle II. Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonra savaşın yol açtığı travmalara odaklanılmasıyla ruh sağlığı bozuk olan kişilerle özdeşleşen Psikoloji biliminin bu görüntüsüne itiraz eden psikologlar bu bilim dalının sağlıklı bireylerle de ilgilenmesi gerektiğini belirterek *pozitif psikoloji* tabirini ortaya atmışlardır. Pozitif psikolojinin eğitim ortamlarına uyarlanması çabalarının sonucu olarak ortaya çıkan bir diğer kavram da *pozitif eğitim* kavramıdır. Pozitif eğitimi savunan bilim insanları öğrencilerin olumlu duygulara sahip olmalarını sağlamak, mevcut olumlu duygularını geliştirmek ve onlara güçlü yönlerinin farkına varmalarında destek sağlamak suretiyle eğitimin niteliğinin ve veriminin yükseltilmesi arayışına girmişleridir. Bu arayışların bir sonucu olarak Güçlü Yön Temelli Yaklaşım (GYTY) ortaya çıkmış ve bireylerin yeteneklerinin keşfedilmesi ve bu yeteneklerin bilinçli bir şekilde işlenerek güce dönüştürülmelerine odaklanmış ve böylece eğitim ortamlarında öğrencilerin sahip olduğu niteliklerden faydalanma çalışmaları başlamıştır. İyi olana ulaşmak için iyi olanın incelenmesi gerektiğini savunan GYTY öğrenenlerin öğrenme ortamına girdiklerinde belirli bilgi, beceri ve yeteneklerle donanmış olduklarını ve bu bilgi, beceri ve yeteneklerin bilinçli bir şekilde tespit edilip işlendiğinde öğrenenleri üst düzey başarıya götürebilecek potansiyele sahip olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Türkiye'de yabancı dil öğrenme söz konusu olduğunda, ülkemizde yabancı dil eğitiminde başarısız olunduğu ve bu konuda farklı arayışlar içine girilmesinin kaçınılmaz olduğu bir gerçektir. Bu bağlamda değerlendirildiğinde, ciddi bir paradigma değişimini de gerektiren GYTY'nin yabancı dil eğitimi alanında kullanılması farklı bir alternatif olması açısından önem arz etmektedir. Özellikle de yetersiz yabancı dil eğitiminin telafisi için son şans olarak görülen yükseköğretim alanında yabancı dil öğretiminde yararlanılabilecek farklı bir bakış açısının varlığı olumlu bir gelişme olarak değerlendirilebilir. Bu çalışma, yeni bir yaklaşımın akademik başarı, devam ve motivasyon gibi eğitim araştırmalarında çok sık kullanılan bağımsız değişkenler üzerindeki etkisinin irdelenmesi açısından önemlidir. Bu bağlamda, çalışmanın amacı, Güçlü Yön Temelli Yaklaşımın İngilizce dersinde devam, akademik başarı ve motivasyon üzerindeki etkisini incelemektir.

2. Yöntem

Araştırmada öntest-sontest kontrol gruplu yarı deneysel yöntem kullanılmıştır. Çalışmaya 2011- 2012 akademik yılı Bahar yarıyılında bir devlet üniversitesinde İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Yönetim Bilişim Sistemleri ve Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümlerinde öğrenim gören birinci sınıf öğrencileri katılmıştır. Çalışmanın örnekleminde, deney grubu olarak Yönetim Bilişim Sistemleri Bölümünden 33 öğrenci ve kontrol grubu olarak da Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümünden 33 öğrenci olmak üzere toplam 66 öğrenci yer almıştır. Uygulama haftada iki saat olarak okutulan İngilizce dersinde yapılmıştır. Devam ve akademik başarı değişkenlerine ait öntest verileri aynı akademik yılın güz döneminde, motivasyona ait veriler ise uygulamanın yapıldığı bahar yarıyılı başında elde edilmiştir. Bütün bağımlı değişkenlere ait sontest verileri ise uygulamanın yapıldığı bahar yarıyılı sonunda elde edilmiştir. Çalışma kapsamında öğrencilerin yetenek temalarını belirlemek için Donald O. Clifton tarafından geliştirilen internet tabanlı Clifton güç bulucu ölçeğinden yararlanılmıştır. Öğrencilerin motivasyon düzeylerine ilişkin veriler ise Robert C. Gardner tarafından geliştirilen Tutum / Motivasyon Test Havuzundan alınan motivasyon ölçeği ile elde edilmiştir. Çalışmaya katılan öğrencilerin İngilizce dersine devam oranlarını gösteren veriler ise araştırmacı tarafından hem güz döneminde hem de bahar döneminde haftalık olarak alınan ders yoklama belgelerinden alınmıştır. Öğrencilerin akademik başarı düzeyleri hakkında bilgi edinmek için araştırmacı tarafından güz ve bahar yarıyılında uygulanan yıl içi ve yıl sonu sınavlarından alınan puanlar esas alınmıştır. Araştırmaya katılan öğrencilerin en baskın beş yetenek temasını belirlemek için kullanılan Clifton güç bulucu ölçeğinin ortalama güvenirlik katsayısı 0.79 olarak gerçekleşmiştir. Bir diğer veri toplama aracı olan motivasyon ölçeğinin öntest uygulamasındaki güvenirlik katsayısı 0.88, sontest uygulamasındaki güvenirlik katsayısı ise 0.91 olarak bulunmuştur.
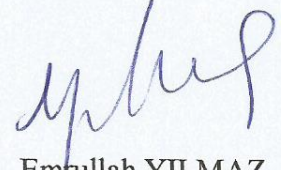
3. Bulgular, Tartışma ve Sonuçlar

Araştırma sonucunda, öğrencilerin yetenek temaları içinde en sık rastlanan yetenek temalarının 16 öğrencinin sahip olduğu *düzelten*, 11 öğrencinin sahip olduğu *sorumlu* ve 9'ar öğrencinin sahip olduğu *tedbirli*, *fikir* ve *öğrenci* olduğu anlaşılmıştır. Hiçbir öğrencinin *lider* temasına sahip olmaması ayrıca dikkat çekicidir. Ayrıca, öğrencilerin motivasyon puanlarının öntest ve sontest ortalamalarının deney grubu için 100 puan üzerinden 69, kontrol grubu için 64 olduğu belirlenmiştir. GYTY'nin öğrencilerin derse devam oranını deney grubu lehine olmak

üzere olumlu olarak etkilediği, ancak akademik başarıları ve motivasyon düzeyleri üzerinde anlamlı bir etkisi olmadığı araştırmada ulaşılan diğer sonuçlardır. GYTY'nin ortaya çıktığı ülke olan ABD'de bu konuda yapılan çalışmalara bakıldığında, üniversite öğrencilerinin sahip olduğu en baskın beş yetenek temasından bu çalışmada elde edilen en yüksek frekansa sahip yetenek temalarıyla ortak olan yalnızca *düzelten* teması mevcuttur. Türkiye ve ABD'nin sosyal, kültürel, ekonomik, tarihi ve coğrafi özellikleri göz önüne alındığında bu iki ülkede yaşayan bireylerin birbirlerine benzer yetenek temalarına sahip olma olasılıkları uzak görünmektedir. ABD haricindeki ülkelerde bu konuda çalışma olmadığı için elde edilen bulguların diğer ülkelerle kıyaslaması yapılmamıştır. Vurgulanması gereken diğer bir husus ise güç bulucu ölçeğinin Türkiye'de yalnızca bu çalışmaya katılan 33 öğrenci üzerinde yapılmış olmasına karşın ABD'de binlerce kişi üzerinde uygulanmasıdır. Türkiye'de bu ölçeğin daha fazla sayıda kişiye uygulanmasıyla daha farklı bulgular elde edilebilir.

GYTY'nin öğrencilerin derse devam oranlarına etkisini belirlemeyi amaçlayan çalışmaların (Harter, 1998, akt. Louis, 2012; Cantwell, 2005; Gillum 2005) bulguları bu çalışmada elde edilen bulgularla tutarlıdır. Bu çalışmalarda GYTY'nin öğrencilerin derse devamlarını artırdığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Bu bulgudan hareketle, yetenek temalarının farkında olan ve onları güce dönüştürebilmeyi başaran öğrencilerin bu konuda bilgi sahibi olmayan öğrencilere nazaran derslere daha fazla devam ettikleri sonucuna ulaşılabilir. Bunun nedeni olarak ise öğrencilerin kendi yetenek temaları veya güçlü yönlerini öğrenmelerinin kendilerini daha iyi tanımalarına olanak sağlaması ve bu konuya ilgi duyan öğrencilerin dersteki etkinlikleri kaçırmama eğiliminde olmaları gösterilebilir. Bu çalışmanın bulgularından biri de GYTY'nin öğrencilerin yabancı dil öğrenme motivasyonlarını artırmadığı idi. İlgili literatür incelendiğinde, Austin (2005) ve Cave (2003)'in de bu çalışmada ulaşılan bulgularla benzer bulgulara ulaştıkları görülmüştür. Buna karşın Estevez (2005) yaptığı çalışmada GYTY'nin öğrenci motivasyonunu artırdığı sonucuna ulaşmıştır. Estevez çalışmasında bu çalışmadan farklı olarak fenomenolojik yaklaşım kullanmış, verilerini bir motivasyon ölçeğinden elde edilen sonuçlar yerine öğrencilerin beyanlarına göre oluşturmuş ve bir kontrol grubu kullanmamıştır. GYTY'nin öğrencilerin motivasyonlarını artırmamış olmasının nedenlerinden birinin uygulamanın ders saatleri içinde yapılmış olması ve bir dönem boyunca sürmesi olduğu söylenebilir. Yapılan çalışmaların bazılarında (Cave, 2003; Austin, 2005; Estevez, 2005; Louis, 2008) uygulamaların birkaç hafta içinde bitirilmiş olması bu düşünceyi destekler niteliktedir. Çalışmada GYT'nin etkisinin incelendiği son değişken akademik başarı idi. Bu konuyu ele alan beş çalışmadan (Harter, 1998, akt. Louis, 2012; Williamson, 2002; Turner, 2004; Austin, 2005; Cantwell, 2005) sadece birinde (Austin, 2005) bu çalışmada olduğu gibi GYTY'nin akademik başarı üzerinde anlamlı bir etkisinin olmadığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Diğer araştırmacılar akademik başarı üzerinde GYTY'nin anlamlı bir etkisinin olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. GYTY'nin akademik başarı üzerinde anlamlı bir etkisinin olmamasının olası nedenlerinden biri öğrencilerin nispeten düşük devam yüzdesine sahip olmalarıdır. Her ne kadar deney grubunun devam oranı kontrol grubundaki öğrencilere kıyasla yüksek bulunmuş olsa da yine de devamsızlık oranları yaklaşık olarak uygulamanın yapıldığı dönemdeki toplam ders saatinin üçte birine denk gelmektedir. Devam yüzdesi düşük olan öğrencilerin akademik başarılarının da devam oranlarıyla doğru orantılı olarak düşük olması beklenebilir çünkü öğrencilerin başarılı olabilmeleri için derslere devam etmelerinin önemli olduğu (Kablan, 2009) ve devamsızlığın öğrenme performansını olumsuz etkilediğine işaret eden çalışmalar (Strickland, 1998; Wadesango ve Machingambi, 2011) mevcuttur. Sonuç olarak, hem dünya hem de ülkemiz için çok yeni bir çalışma alanı olan GYTY'nin farklı çalışmalara konu edilerek ayrıntılı olarak araştırılması, eğitim sürecinin daha verimli olmasını isteyen karar vericiler için yeni bir alternatif bulunması açısından önemli görülmektedir.

ETİK BEYANNAME

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Emrullah YILMAZ

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