Language Learning of Gifted Individuals: A Content Analysis Study

El aprendizaje de idiomas en estudiantes talentosos: un estudio de análisis de contenido

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This study aims to carry out a content analysis of the studies on language learning of gifted individuals and determine the trends in this field. Articles on language learning of gifted individuals published in the Scopus database were examined based on certain criteria including type of publication, year of publication, language, research discipline, countries of research, institutions of authors, key words, and resources. Data were analyzed with the content analysis method. Results showed that the number of studies on language learning of gifted individuals has increased throughout the years. Recommendations for further research and practices are provided.

Key words: Content analysis, giftedness, gifted education, language learning.

Este estudio tiene como objetivo realizar un análisis documental de artículos sobre la enseñanza de lenguas a individuos dotados y determinar las tendencias en este campo. Los artículos sobre el aprendizaje de idiomas de individuos superdotados publicados en las bases de datos de Scopus se examinaron sobre la base de ciertos tipos de publicaciones, año de publicación, idiomas, disciplinas de investigación, países de investigación, instituciones de autores, palabras clave y recursos. Los resultados muestran que los estudios sobre enseñanza de idiomas a estudiantes dotados se han incrementado en los últimos años. Al final, se ofrecen recomendaciones para futuras investigaciones y aplicaciones.

Palabras clave: análisis de contenido, aprendizaje de idiomas, dotes, educación para dotados.

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Introduction

Individuals who show a significant difference from their peers in terms of developmental and individual characteristics and educational competencies need special education (Ataman, 2003; Baglama, Yikmis, & Demirok, 2017). Gifted individuals also appear in the continuum of individuals with special needs (Genc & Ozcan, 2017). The National Association of Gifted Children (2017) describes gifted individuals as those individuals who have high performance in one or more fields or who have a high level of potential in displaying this performance.

It is widely accepted by many researchers and educators that regular school curriculums cannot afford to provide the educational needs of gifted children and that the education programs for gifted individuals need to have multi-dimensional and creative features. It is important for these features to support gifted individuals' learning process in terms of improving individuals' potential. Gifted education leads gifted individuals to develop their potential intelligence to the highest level and motivates them to study independently. Qualified and sufficient education, appropriate guidance, and motivation improve the potential of gifted individuals (Demirok & Ozcan, 2016; Turalbayeva et al., 2017).

Gifted students show differences from their peers in terms of individual characteristics and needs (Bruning & Horn, 2000) and these differences include being more competent in terms of language development, focusing and long duration of attention, creativity, critical thinking and strong memory, high levels of interest, being active, perfectionism and idealism, being irrational, high level of confidence, sense of humor, sensitivity, and impulsivity (Sak, 2016). Gifted individuals should receive a different education from their peers since they show different developmental characteristics (Karatas & Saricam, 2016).

Language Learning and Giftedness

Communication with the environment is really important for humans as social beings (Uzunboylu,

Hursen, Ozuturk, & Demirok, 2015; Yavuz, 2017). Therefore, it can be said that language teaching is an important component for gifted individuals as well. Language and thinking development are regarded as the bases of interaction with the environment and learning among individuals. Language is a tool for individuals to transfer their emotions, ideas, desires, and experiences to others and interpret the external world. Language plays an important role in intellectual development and reflects thinking. Therefore, language skills include *receptive language,* which enables individuals to listen and perform an action, and *expressive language,* which enables them to talk with others in an effective way and establish verbal communication. In addition, speaking, listening, reading, and writing as the four basic skills of languages are regarded as tools for achieving this competence (Soubhi, 2016). Gifted students have unique characteristics and have different ways of thinking and learning. In addition, they generally tend to have a higher linguistic ability and this ability leads them to use language in an effective way in receiving, understanding, and expressing information (Yunus, Sulaiman, & Embi, 2013). Al-Khasawneh and Al-Omari (2015) stated that gifted individuals are highly motivated to learn English. It is revealed that gifted learners know the importance of learning English to succeed in all life fields since the importance of being competent in English language is accepted worldwide (Harris, Rapp, Martínez, & Plucker, 2007).

Gifted individuals acquire language competence earlier than their peers and the majority of gifted individuals have many characteristics based on their higher verbal competencies. These characteristics involve reading before time (before their education begins at school or just after starting school), extensive vocabulary, advanced level of comprehension skills, low amount of performing tasks for beginning the reading process or no need for doing any preparation task for reading, extensive interest in language skills

and reading a wide range of subjects in an interesting and curious way (Clark, 2009). In general, reading skills and high-level thinking abilities are more emphasized in teaching language skills (Foster, 2017; Osokina, 2016).

In preparing a language sciences curriculum of gifted and talented students, differentiation is required since they acquire language skills earlier than their peers and they show progression in a more rapid way. When differentiating the curriculum, an advanced level of content is required for gifted and talented individuals and the teaching process must be prepared and expedited to be able to satisfy their needs (Al-Khasawneh & Al-Omari, 2015; Ozcan & Katlav, 2016). It is a widely known fact that gifted students need to be busy in terms of mental work when they are performing a task, studying a specific subject, or learning new skills (Callahan, Moon, Oh, Azano, & Hailey, 2015; Kitsantas, Bland, & Chirinos, 2017). In this regard, a curriculum which would make them think and force them through the introduction of new and different resources is constituted for gifted and talented students (Altintas & Ozdemir, 2015).

Using a high level of skills such as questioning, critical thinking, problem-based teaching, and creativity as well as motivating gifted students to perform open-ended activities is really important (Kronborg & Plunkett, 2015; Zeidner & Matthews, 2017). On the other hand, there are great differences between an ordinary language skills curriculum and a language curriculum for gifted individuals. A language curriculum for gifted individuals involves an advanced level of content and materials, open-ended activities, provides opportunities for gifted students to produce, advanced level of reading and vocabulary tasks, various writing and investigating opportunities, and multi-disciplinary work. Combining these components, a holistic structure is presented for gifted students who are more talented at verbal tasks in terms of language skills curriculum (Horak & Galluzzo, 2017).

Aim of the Study

This study aims to carry out a content analysis of the studies on language learning of gifted individuals and determine the trends in this field. In line with this general aim, answers to the following questions were sought in the study:

1. What is the distribution of studies based on type of publication?
2. What is the distribution of studies based on year of publication?
3. What is the distribution of studies based on the language of publication?
4. What is the distribution of studies based on the research discipline?
5. What is the distribution of studies based on the countries of authors?
6. What is the distribution of studies based on the institutions of authors?
7. What is the distribution of studies based on the authors?
8. What is the distribution of studies based on the key words?
9. What is the distribution of studies based on the resources used in the studies?

Method

In this section, research model, data collection tool, and data analysis are explained in detail.

Research Model

The document analysis method as a quantitative research method was used in the study and the data were analyzed with content analysis. Document analysis involves analysis of written materials about the targeted phenomenon or subjects. Moreover, document analysis is described as an extensive analysis of a group of documents which were produced at a period of time about a research problem or produced by more than one resource about a specific subject (Yildirim & Simsek, 2008).

Data Collection

In line with the aim of the study, SCOPUS International Network database was searched in order to determine the trends in the studies on language learning of gifted individuals. Data for the study were collected through scanning the publications which revealed a total of 115 articles on language learning of gifted individuals.

Data Analysis

"Language" and "gifted education" as key words were used in the study and articles were obtained in this way. The articles' metadata were analyzed based on certain criteria involving type of publication, year of publication, language, research discipline, research countries, institutions of authors, keywords and resources.

Data were analyzed with content analysis and each article was reported based on certain criteria. The aim of content analysis is to reveal expressions and relationships to explain the collected data. In content analysis, similar data are brought together within the frame of certain themes and concepts and interpreted in a clear and effective way (Uzunboylu & Ozcinar, 2009; Yildirim & Simsek, 2008).

In the study, 115 scientific research articles about language and gifted education are grouped based on type of publication, year of publication, language, research discipline, countries of authors, institutions of authors, authors, keywords, and resources. Tables for numbers and percentages were created for the data. Nevertheless, key words were handled and evaluated as language and gifted education. All of the articles analyzed in the study are written in the English language.

Results

In this section, the results of the study are presented and discussed with relevant literature in line with the aim of the study.

Results on Type of Publication

Distribution of the studies based on type of publication is provided in Table 1.

As can be seen in Table 1, 89.7% of the studies are articles, and 11.5% of them are published as articles. Therefore, it can be said that researchers prefer publishing research articles more than reviews.

Table 1. Distribution of the Studies Based on Type of Publication

Document Type	N	%
Article	78	89.7
Review	10	11.5
Book chapter	9	10.35
Conference paper	9	10.35
Book	5	5.75
Article in press	3	3.45
Note	1	1.15
Total	**115**	**100**

Results on Year of Publication

Distribution of the studies based on year of publication is shown in the Figure 1.

Figure 1. Distribution of the Studies Based on Year of Publication
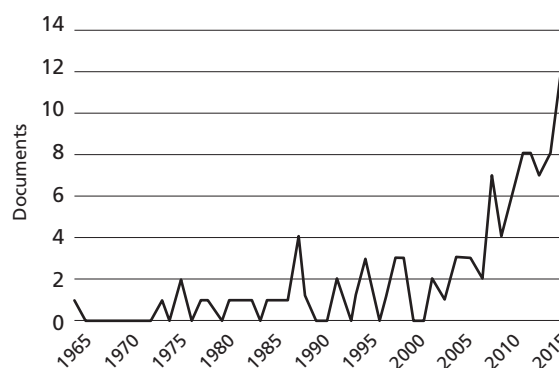
As can be understood from Figure 1, most of the studies were carried out in 2015. In addition, it can be seen that the number of articles in 2016 is higher than the number of articles in 2011, 2012, and 2014.

Results revealed that gifted education is not handled and examined in the studies, especially between the years of 1966 and 1973. On the other hand, trends in gifted education were increased after 2000. The number of studies in 2013 and 2016 was dramatically increased, improved, and became more prevalent. However, a decrease was observed in 2009 in terms of number of publications on language and gifted education when compared to 2005.

Results on Language of Studies

Distribution of the studies based on language of publications is shown in Table 2.

As can be seen in Table 2, 108 articles were written in English, and three of them in German. Results indicated that researchers tend to produce publications in English. It is also seen that a few researchers published their articles in German.

Results on Research Disciplines

The distribution of the studies based on research discipline is shown in Table 3. Some articles are registered under more than one discipline.

Results showed that studies on language and gifted education are written in research disciplines including social sciences, psychology, medicine, and arts and humanities. Therefore, it can be inferred that authors of the articles are more commonly from these research disciplines.

Table 2. Distribution of the Studies Based on Language of Publication

Language	N
English	108
German	3
French	1
Lithuanian	1
Portuguese	1
Turkish	1
Total	**115**

Table 3. Distribution of the Studies Based on Research Disciplines

Research discipline	N
Social sciences	82
Psychology	33
Medicine	20
Arts and humanities	16
Health professions	8
Computer science	6
Engineering	5
Economics, econometrics, and finance	2
Environmental science	2
Neuroscience	2
Biochemistry, genetics, and molecular biology	1
Business, management, and accounting	1
Chemical engineering	1
Mathematics	1
Multidisciplinary	1

Results on Countries of Research

Table 4 shows the distribution of the studies based on countries of the research.

Table 4. Distribution of the Studies Based on Countries of Research

Country	N	%
United States	63	77.49
Undefined	17	20.91
United Kingdom	7	8.61
Canada	5	6,15
Australia	4	4.92
Malaysia	3	3.69
South Korea	3	3.69
Others	21	25.83
Total	**123**	**100**

Since some of the 115 articles were written by two or more authors, the total number of authors was found to be 123. As can be seen in Table 4, 77.49% of the studies were conducted in the United States; 8.61% of the articles were conducted in the United Kingdom; 6.15% in Canada; 4.92% in Australia; 3.69% in Malaysia and South Korea. In addition, 20.91% of the studies were shown as undefined since the countries were not mentioned. Results revealed that most of the studies on language and gifted education were carried out in the United States.

Results on the Institution of Authors

Table 5 shows the distribution of the studies based on institution of authors.

Some authors exhibit more than one affiliation. As can be seen in Table 5, 4.41% of the authors were from these institutions: Universiti Kebangsaan, Malaysia,

Arizona State University, University of South Florida, Tampa, Stanford University, University of Virginia, University of Iowa; 2.94% in Florida State University, Ohio State University, Eastern New Mexico University, University of Southern Mississippi, uc Irvine, University of Windsor, The College of William and Mary, uc Berkeley, University of New South Wales unsw Australia, University of California, Santa Barbara and Kazan Federal University.

Results on Keywords

Distribution of the studies based on key words is shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Distribution of the Studies Based on Key Words

Key word	N	Percentage
Education	24	68.4
Human	21	59.64
Child	17	48.28
Article	15	42.6
Gifted child	14	39.76
Teaching	12	34.08
Child, gifted	11	31.24
Students	10	28.4
Adolescent	9	25.56
Humans	9	25.56
Male	9	25.56
Language	8	22.72
Child, preschool	7	19.88
Gifted students	7	19.88
Cognition	6	17.04
Female	6	17.04
Gifted education	6	17.04
Child, exceptional	5	14.2
Curriculum	5	14.2
Education, special	5	14.2
Intelligence	5	14.2
Learning disorder	5	14.2
Priority journal	5	14.2

Table 5. Distribution of the Studies Based on Institution of Authors

Institution	N	%
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	3	4.41
Arizona State University	3	4.41
University of South Florida Tampa	3	4.41
Stanford University	3	4.41
University of Virginia	3	4.41
University of Iowa	3	4.41
Florida State University	2	2.94
Ohio State University	2	2.94
Eastern New Mexico University	2	2.94
University of Southern Mississippi	2	2.94
uc Irvine	2	2.94
University of Windsor	2	2.94
The College of William and Mary	2	2.94
uc Berkeley	2	2.94
University of New South Wales unsw Australia	2	2.94
University of California, Santa Barbara	2	2.94
Kazan Federal University	2	2.94
Others	107	41.2

Key word	N	Percentage
Problem solving	5	14.2
Psychological aspect	5	14.2
Sign language	5	14.2
Case report	4	11.36
Child development	4	11.36
Child language	4	11.36
Gifted learners	4	11.36
Giftedness	4	11.36
Intelligence quotient	4	11.36
Language development	4	11.36
Achievement	3	8.52
Adult	3	8.52
Child behavior	3	8.52
Child parent relation	3	8.52
Computer aided instruction	3	8.52
Curricula	3	8.52
ESL	3	8.52

Table 7. Distribution of the Studies Based on Resources

Resource	N	%
Journal for the Education of the Gifted	7	6.08
Gifted Child Quarterly	5	4.34
Roeper Review	4	3.47
Exceptional Children	3	2.6
Foreign Language Annals	3	2.6
American Annals of the Deaf	2	1.73
Asian Social Science	2	1.73
Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry	2	1.73
Journal of Language and Literature	2	1.73
Perceptual and Motor Skills	2	1.73
Proceedings Frontiers in Education Conference	2	1.73
Others	81	70.43
Total	**115**	**100**

As can be seen in Table 6, 68.4% of the key words were education; 59.64% were human; 48,28% were child; 42.6% were article; 39,76% were gifted child; 28.4% were students; 25.56% were adolescent, human, male; 22,72% were language; 19.88% were child, preschool, gifted students; 17.04% were cognition, female, and gifted education; 14.2% were child, exceptional, curriculum, education, special, intelligence, learning disorder, priority journal, problem solving, psychological aspect, sign language; 11.36% were case report, child development, child language, gifted learners, giftedness, intelligence quotient, language development; 8.52% were achievement, adult, child behavior, child parent relation, computer aided instruction, curricula, and ESL.

Results on Resources

Distribution of the studies based on resources is shown in Table 7.

As can be seen in Table 7, 6.08% of the articles were published in *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*; 4.34% were published in *Gifted Child Quarterly*; 3.47% in *Roeper Review*; 2.6% in *Exceptional Children* and *Foreign Language Annals*; 1.73% in *American Annals of the Deaf*, *Asian Social Science*, *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *Journal of Language and Literature*, *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, *Proceedings Frontiers in Education Conference* and 70.43% of them were defined as the others.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the studies on language learning of gifted individuals published in the SCOPUS database and to determine the trends in the research on language learning of gifted individuals. Results indicated that 78 of 115 studies were research articles and 10 of them were review. Therefore, it can be inferred that researchers give more importance to research articles than review articles in terms of type of publication (Hays, 1993).

Furthermore, studies on language learning of gifted individuals showed a normal distribution until 2010; then later there was a steady increase after 2015. When compared to before 2000, the dramatic increase was observed to be in the related field. It can be interpreted that gifted studies gained popularity after 2000. It is also seen that the language of publication was mostly English. It can be said that the language of science is predominantly English. It is necessary for researchers in this field to have a good level of English knowledge. As such, they will be able to follow the trends in the literature on gifted education and language. Similar to the results of the present study, Demirok, Besgul, and Baglama (2016) revealed that the number of studies on special education and gifted education showed a steady increase throughout the years.

According to the results of the study, the majority of the studies on language and gifted education were conducted in the discipline of social sciences. This might be because of the fact that the gifted education field is based on the social sciences discipline. In addition to this, collaboration with other disciplines plays an important role in terms of education of gifted individuals. It was also seen that most studies on language learning of gifted individuals were carried out in the United States. Furthermore, the first four countries are among the categories of developed countries. It can be inferred that developed countries give necessary importance to this field and contribute to the development of this field. Demirok, Baglama, and Besgul (2015) also found that studies on special education were mostly carried out in the United States.

Moreover, studies were mostly published in journals of gifted education and journals related to the field. However, it is seen that there is a limited number of journals dealing with gifted education and this leads to restrictions for the improvement of the field. Existing journals for the gifted field need to be indexed in scopus and the Web of Science databases which are prestigious databases of scientific and academic publications dedicated to the improvement of the field. Nevertheless, results also showed that the quantity of computer-aided instruction for gifted individuals to learn a language has also increased. This is an expected result since integrating technology in education of gifted individuals has become common and it is evident that technology enhances the performance of gifted learners (Ozcan & Bicen, 2016).

In conclusion, this study provided a framework for the trends in the field of language learning of gifted individuals for researchers and practitioners in the related field. Since there is a limited quantity of such studies in the literature, it is expected that this study would be a leading one for further research and practices.

Recommendations

In light of the results obtained from the study, the following recommendations for further research and practices are provided:

- Educational policies and programs for gifted individuals and language need to be improved in order to enhance knowledge and understanding of educators and practices in this field.
- Number of courses in teacher training programs at the universities might be increased in order to train teachers who are aware of teaching language skills to gifted students.
- Similar studies might examine the trends in other databases in order to provide an extended framework.
- Seminars, conferences, or in-service training sessions for teachers of gifted learners might be organized in order to increase their knowledge in this field.
- Families might be informed about the importance of language skills for their gifted child and more cooperation might be enabled between teachers and families.

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