

THE ROLE OF EXTROVERT AND INTROVERT PERSONALITY IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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ABSTRACT

Personality plays an important role in acquiring a second language. For second language learners to make maximum progress with their own learning styles, their individual differences must be recognized and attended to. Personality is considered to be a pattern of unique characteristics that give a person's behavior a kind of consistency and individuality. Therefore, the enclosed study, which is entitled "The Role of Extrovert and Introvert Personality in Second language Acquisition", tends to shed light on the relationship between learners' personalities and second language acquisition process. In other words, it aims at drawing attention to how individual differences of students as being extroverts or introverts could affect the language acquisition process. As a literature review, this paper discusses the results of some studies concerning this issue as well as the point views of researchers and scholars who have focused on the effect of extrovert and introvert personality on acquiring a second language. To accomplish the goals of this study, which is divided into 5 chapters including introduction, review of related literature, research method and design, results and discussions and conclusions and recommendations, 20 students of English Department, Faculty of Arts, Misurata University ,Libya were handed out a questionnaire to figure out the effect of their personalities on the learning process. Finally, to be surer about the role of personality in a second language acquisition process, the same students who were given the questionnaire were observed in their ESL classes.

1. INTRODUCTION

Second language acquisition is a process that can be affected by several factors, one of which is the learner's personality. A number of theories hold that personality factors significantly influence the degree of success that individuals achieve in acquiring a second language (Gass & Selinker, 1994) based on the assumption that some features of the learner's personality might encourage or inhibit second language learning (Cook,1996)

This research paper is intended to discuss certain points related to the relationship between personality and the process of second language acquisition. The research study limited its questions to the following:

- 1- How could students' personalities be different?
- 2- Could these differences affect students' performance while acquiring a second language?

The following hypotheses were formulated:

- 1- Students personalities could be different
- 2- There is a significant relationship between students' personalities and their linguistic performance

This current study attempts to address the following research question:

Do extrovert students acquire a second language better than introvert students?

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study are claimed to be significant to:

Teachers: Based on the information gathered as a consequence of this study, it can be said that extrovert-introvert domain is a gateway through which teachers can manipulate their teaching process.

Students: Recognizing the role of students' personalities in second language acquisition process gives a great chance to acquire the language successfully

Future Research: This might serve as a related study for other research papers dealing with other personality factors that have been delimited in this research.

3. DEFINITION OF KEY WORDS

The following definitions are provided in order to improve understanding.

Extrovert: It means a person who is more concerned with what is happening around him than in his own emotions and thoughts

Introvert: It means a person who is more concerned with his own emotions and feelings than in issues outside himself. In other words, it means being too shy to join social activities.

Performance: The actual linguistic behavior of particular individuals on particular occasions, memory lapses, slips of the tongue or processing difficulties arising from long or complex structures (Crystal, 2008)

Personality Factors: It is a feature or a quality that is assumed to distinguish one student from another.

4. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A number of studies have been conducted in order to investigate and explore how the personality of the learner can be of influence on his/her second language acquisition endeavor. According to Wright and Taylor (1970), personality refers to those relatively stable and enduring aspects of the individual which distinguish him from other people, and at the same time from the basis of our predictions concerning his future behavior. Another definition that captures much of what psychologists mean by personality is Child's (1968) description of personality characteristics as more or less stable internal factors that make one person's behavior consistent from one time to another and from one situation to another. Personality, as Peterson (1992) says, has the following features:

- i- It is an integrated part of an individual – something a person is, does, or has. People bring their personalities to situations and take them when they leave.
- ii- It is psychological- refers to the individual actions, thoughts and feelings and not to material things such as possessions and status.
- iii- It is made up of smaller units called characteristics- the combination of these characteristics creates a unique psychological signature.

Furthermore, findings of some studies that investigate personality traits are based on the assumptions that learners bring to the classroom not only their cognitive abilities, but also effective states which influence the way they acquire the language. Brown (2000) lists self-esteem, inhibition, risk-taking, anxiety, empathy and extroversion as personality factors. Many language acquisition theories claim that extroverts are the better language learners since they tend to be sociable, more likely to join groups and more inclined to engage in conversations both inside (Cook, 1994) and outside the classroom (Swain, 1985). Likewise, Naiman, Frohlich, Stern and Todesco (1978) believe that extroverts who are sociable and open to other people are more successful in learning languages than introverts. Swain and Burnaby (1976); however, believe that well-organized and serious introverts are seen better learners as far as the systematic study is concerned.

5. RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

When first conducting the research and starting to collect data, a survey (questionnaire) was the tool for doing that. However, as it came to analyzing the collected data, the problem dealing with some students' inaccurate responses arose. Therefore, it seemed urgent to resort to another instrument, i.e. classroom observation to be surer of the research item. Because of the analytical-descriptive nature of the data that were collected, this paper could be seen as both quantitative- qualitative research.

The current study adopted such methods to identify the role of students' personalities and their relationship with their second language acquisition process.

The participants were the fourth year students (seniors) of Misurata University, Faculty of Arts, English Department. They were twenty students (10 males and 10 females)

6. RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The data of this study were collected via using a questionnaire and a classroom observation. The questionnaire, which uses a 4-likert scale, has 10 items, 5 of them show what kind of personality students

have while the other five ones show if their personalities affect the way they acquire the language. Students, who were given the questionnaire to be answered individually, were asked about their behavior inside ESL classes to figure out the effect of their personalities on language progress. (The questionnaire form is shown in appendix I) The second tool for collecting data was classroom observation, which is as stated by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) is an instrument that could include seeing how well a learner was coping with using the language in their work or outside. The main aim behind observing certain ESL classes was exploring the connection between the student, introvert or extrovert type of personality and their language progress. Due to the uncertain answers that some students who got the questionnaire provided, it was important to attend certain classes to observe them while being in class. The classroom took place in six International Testing classes where students were observed according to a list of points (See appendices table B) that includes how well and how effective they work in groups, do the bulk of talking, speak fluently inside the class using different word types, willing to read topics with clear pronunciation and high speech rates, show trust when they answer. However, it should be noted that what is to be analyzed here is what had been observed in six classes in relation to three main points: speaking, listening comprehension and reading comprehension. It was difficult to observe the effect of personality (extroverts or introverts) on students' writing classes as there was not much to be really discussed doing such classes.

7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The participants were informed about their names, levels and right to withdraw from participation. It is worth mentioning that the samples were carefully selected. They were the students who were thought they were punctual, careful and honest.

8. DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected were compiled and arranged in a table (see appendices) so that it would be easy to figure out the exact percentage of both extrovert and introvert students and the effect of their personalities. Percentage distribution, mode (most frequent) and bar charts were the satirical tools used to analyze the collected data. Tables of percentages were used to answer the question (Are you extrovert or introvert?) and illustrated how many of them there are, mode to facilitate the reader's job so that he/she can recognize whether the vast majority of the sample agrees or disagrees as he/she reads it. Analyzing the students' answers in the second part, it was not easy to use tables because the percentages could not be of great help to determine the effect of extrovert or introvert personality on language acquisition. Alternatively, bar charts were thought to be better in showing the findings using Microsoft Excel.

9. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tables are used here to show the kind of personality students have and its effect on language progress. The results are given in percentages as well as in Mode form.

Table 1

Are you usually the party that does the bulk of the talking?

Students' number	Percentage	Mode
7	35%	Agree
13	65%	Disagree

Table 1 indicated that 35% of students do the bulk of the talking when they engage in conversations, whereas 65% of students do not show interest in conversations

Table 2

While speaking, do you feel comfortable even if someone is watching you?

Students' number	Percentage	Mode
13	65%	Agree
7	35%	Disagree

Table 2 shows that 65% feel comfortable and unstressed while speaking even if someone is watching them. Meanwhile, 35% of students feel distracted being watched by others.

Table 3

Do you strike up (initiate) a conversation with a stranger easily?

Students' number	Percentage	Mode
10	50%	Agree
10	50%	Disagree

Table 3 provides information on the percentage of students who find it easy to initiate a conversation with people they do not know. According to the table which is based on the analysis of students' answers to the questionnaire, the percentages are equally divided as half of them (50%) think it is easy to start up a conversation with strangers while the second half (50%) think it is the opposite.

Table 4

When there is a group activity, do you behave more like a participant than an observer?

Students' number	Percentage	Mode
11	55%	Agree
9	45%	Disagree

As table 4 shows, 55% of students take a part in group activities and act as participants more than as observers while 45% of them do not.

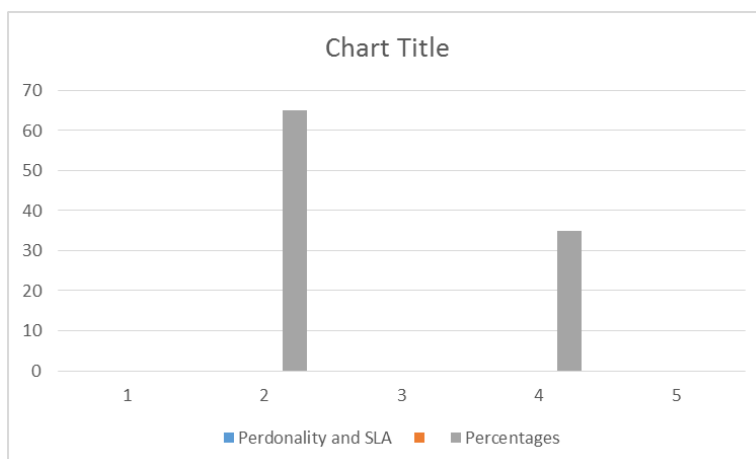
Table 5

Do you like watching movies more than reading novels?

Students' number	Percentage	Mode
14	70%	Agree
6	30%	Disagree

According to table 5, 70% of the sample is interested in watching movies than reading novels.30% of the sample; on the other hand, prefer reading to watching.

As mentioned earlier, it was not easy to get to the exact precise results via using the questionnaire as the only tool because of the inaccurate answers of sample members to some questions. Therefore, it was necessary to use a bar chart to analyze the rest of the questionnaire.



Based on the students' answers to questions from 6-10(Appendix I), this bar chart shows the percentage of the effect of students' personalities on their second language acquisition. According to the figure, 65% of students' kind of personality affects their language acquisition progress, while 35% of them are not affected.

10. RESULTS

According to has been indicated in the previous tables (1-5), some students like to imitate a conversation and do the bulk of the talking easily even with a stranger, participate in group activities. All these characteristics illustrate that students' personalities can be different and it became clear which students are extroverts and which ones are introverts. As it is shown in the figure, 55% of the samples were extroverts while 45% of them were introverts. On the other hand, the bar chart shows the percentage of the effect of personality type on the process of language acquisition as 65% of students' personalities affected their acquisition while 35% of them did not show that they had been affected by their personality type.

As far as classroom observation is concerned, it can be said that extroverts are unlike introverts concerning second language acquisition. It has been found that extroverts easily communicate in English classes, even when they were not sure of their answers, they would succeed. Besides, they were likely to try out a large amount and variety of different word types with high speech rates and legible pronunciation. Meanwhile, introvert students seemed to avoid interaction in English classes because they might be afraid of embarrassing themselves when speaking incorrectly or being unable to speak. When they spoke; however, they produced well-formed sentences taking time to compose them. In addition, when they were asked to read out loud in the class, they were reading slowly and carefully with good pronunciation but with low speech rates.

Based on classroom observation, it has been noticed that extrovert students communicate more fluently in English than introvert students who were often shy and unwilling to speak or join collaborative activities.

11. CONCLUSIONS

According to the findings of this research paper, personality traits, and in particular extroversion and introversion have a major effect on second language acquisition process. It seems obvious that extroverted learners, who use the second language to interact without inhibition, talk more fluently, tend to take actions with less reflection, work better in groups and excel during classes with high levels of activity. It is to accommodate their need to communicate outside of class time without the pressure of the classroom. Extroverted students easily communicate in the second language even though they might not produce accurate output. These characteristics influence their ways of learning in the second language so it is believed that extroverts are more successful in communication. On the other hand, introverts tend to be extroverts talk less and reflect more before acting, like to be quiet, like to work independently or with one or two other people. They tend to be more passive rather than actively social. In addition, many introverted students have an obsession with producing accurate grammatically sentences with native- like accent.

The characteristics that are shown by introverts are believed that they are in certain components of the second language. Although introverts have all these characteristics, extroverts are still more successfully especially in communication.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

Since many studies have shown that extroverts or unreserved and outgoing people acquire a second language better than introverts or shy people, it seems also important for second language learners to develop personality. That is to say, they should try their best to be extroverts to acquire the second language effectively. It is believed that individuality is one thing and personality is another. Personality is built after one is born. Based on what has been mentioned, teachers' teaching methodology should be adapted to the individual differences in personality in order to enhance the progress for the second language learners. This is because different learners respond differently to the same input as a function of the ways in which their personality affects their perception and interpretation of the world, but may be more easily realized in multimedia CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning). One advantage of multimedia CALL is the potential adaptability. When users control their learning environment, they select the options best suited for the learning style preferences.

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Appendices

Misurata University
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English Department

Dear Students,

This questionnaire is handed out to you as a main practical part of a research study entitled "The Role of Extrovert and Introvert Personality in Second Language Acquisition". Your answers are assumed to be of great help to the research findings. So, please try your best to give as accurate, honest and authentic answers as you can.

You are kindly requested to tick the number of the corresponds to your degree of agreement (strongly agree=4 ; disagree= 3; agree=2; strongly agree=1)

NAME :

GENDER:.....

Students' Questionnaire

What kind of personality do you think you have, extrovert or introvert? Your answers to the following questions will tell.

1- When engaged in conversations, are you usually the party that does the bulk of the talk?

4 3 2 1

2- While speaking, do you feel comfortable even if someone is watching you?

4 3 2 1

3- Do you find it easy to strike up a conversation with a stranger?

4 3 2 1

4- When there is a group activity, do you behave more like a participant than an observer?

4 3 2 1

5- Do you like watching movies more than reading novels?

4 3 2 1

Do you think your personality affects the way you acquire the language in one way or another?

6- Do you prefer being in group classes (which include students' interaction) more than 1 teacher, 1 student class?

4 3 2 1

7- Do you prefer doing oral tests more than written tests?

4 3 2 1

8- Do you prefer being in social interaction more than working by yourself?

4 3 2 1

9- Do you prefer given an example first more than being given the rule first?

4 3 2 1

10- When you give your answers, do you tend to be trusting more than skeptical?

4 3 2 1

Table A Results of Students' Questionnaire

Students' number	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
2	2	2	2	3	1	2	1	1	3	4
3	3	1	2	3	1	2	2	2	3	3
4	3	3	2	3	4	2	4	4	1	4
5	4	1	4	3	1	1	1	1	4	4
6	3	3	4	2	3	3	3	4	2	3
7	2	3	3	3	2	3	3	2	4	3
8	3	1	2	2	1	1	1	3	2	4
9	3	2	2	2	1	2	3	3	2	2
10	2	1	4	2	3	3	2	4	1	4
11	3	2	3	4	4	1	3	3	1	2
12	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2
13	4	4	3	4	4	1	4	2	1	2
14	3	3	3	2	1	4	4	1	3	4
15	2	2	2	2	1	4	1	3	2	3
16	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	3	2	1
17	4	3	3	2	1	2	3	1	2	4
18	4	3	3	3	1	2	4	2	1	4
19	2	2	2	2	1	2	3	2	4	2
20	3	2	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	3

Table B Checklist of Classroom Observation

Points to be observed	S 1	S 2	S 3	S 4	S 5	S 6	S 7	S 8	S 9	S 0	S1 1	S1 2	S1 3	S1 4	S1 5	S1 6	S1 7	S1 8	S1 9	S2 0
	E	E	E	I	I	I	I	E	E	E	I	E	I	I	E	E	E	I	E	I
Willing to work in groups	+	-	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+
Do the bulk of the talking	-	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	+	-

Speak fluently	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	-
Use different word types	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
Legible reading	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
High speech rates	-	+	+	-	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Produce grammatical sentences	+	-	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+
Show trust when answering	-	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	+	+