

Personality Dimensions in Distance Language Learning

Hassan Rasouli Khorshidi

Department of English,
Neka Branch, Islamic Azad University, Neka, Iran

Abstract: *Many studies have been recently devoted to the role of mental processes in human learning. Yet, the role of personality in language learning has not been dealt with as it deserves. The aim of this study is to study the relationship among Jung's personality dimensions (introversion-extroversion E/I, intuition-sensing N/S, thinking-feeling T/F, perceiving-judging P/J) based on Jungian personality types and leaning English. A total number of 80 distance education university students from Payam-e Noor University in Mazandaran province in the north of Iran were randomly selected through Hogan-Champagne Personal Style Inventory (PSI) which assesses the personality dimensions based on Jungian personality types. Their pre- and post-test marks were obtained to compare in different personality dimensions. Comparing the obtained means in each type, helped the researcher judge on the amount of gain by different types of personalities. Findings indicated that there is a significant and positive relationship between learning English and personality type. Because English language learning has somewhat analytical and grammatical topics, and distance education system needs distance learning and usually without direct and face to face attendance of teacher, different types of personality gain different amount of language based on their personality type characteristics.*

Keywords: *personality trait, personality dimension, distance learning, language learning.*

Introduction

This fact is clear that most of the surprising advances and growing developments are due to learning. The educational experts strongly believe that students who actively participate in learning process with great interest are supposed to be more successful. Hartmant (1995, cited in Donclark, 2000) believes that when learners take part actively in learning process, their feeling of authority will increase and they intend to orient their own personal development themselves. Although in recent decades, along with the growing developments in the field of psychology there were multitudes of studies, few of them addressed the role of personality on learning and specifically on institutional learning. The surveys mostly dealt with the relationship between personality and illness or mental health. When people are aware of their personal capabilities, they can utilize their abilities in communications, learning and even in their jobs. By the knowledge about their own and others' personality, they get to know that how they can understand others, and how to respond to the others' personalities and behaviors. Chapman (2006) asserts that personality awareness means how to communicate with others to get information and how to solve problems and manage oneself successfully when conflicting with others. Jung (1959) one of the greatest leading theoreticians who did lots of studies on

personality, mental analysis, psychotherapy and psychic energy believes that once we recognized the construction, nature and direction of psychic energy inside a person, we can discover where he is coming from, where he goes and what he thinks. Therefore, by understanding and describing inner feelings of an individual and presenting a descriptive framework, one's characteristics can be determined easier and we can have a profound comprehension in order to cure or increase self awareness (cited in Chapman, 2005).

To this end, Jung presented his own concepts on personality and called them Psychological Types in 1921. He believed that human inner forces are two kinds: conscious and unconscious. These two usually are balanced. When conscious is dominant the unconscious appears to bring balance. The unbalanced situation may appear in the form of dreams, mental imaginative pictures or mental illnesses. These types of personality psychological types are described as follows: Introversion, Extroversion, Intuition, Sensing, Thinking, Feeling, Perceptive and Judging.

Introverts: Introverts are oriented to the inner world i.e. they are motivated from "within" and they are oriented towards the inner world of ideas, imagery, and reflection. Introverts get their energy from within rather than from the outside world. These people tend to be independent in decision from conditions, culture, people and things around them. They are analytic, quiet and studious. They are interested in their own thoughts and feelings and do not intend to have unexpected visits and therefore do not make them. Their work is well alone. They also tend to forget names and appearances. Fundamentally, an introvert is a person who is energized by being alone and whose energy is worn out by being around other people. Introverts are more concerned with the inner world of the mind. They enjoy thinking, exploring their thoughts and feelings. They often avoid social situations because being around people drains their energy. This is true even if they have good social skills. After being with people for any length of time, such as at a party, they need time alone to "recharge."

Extroverts: Extroverts are oriented to the outer world i.e. they are motivated from "without" and their attention is directed outward. They are people who are sociable, friendly, self-confident and outgoing. They appear relaxed and confident. These people tend to be in accordance with people, culture and things around them and like to make decisions considering others demands. These people are interested in what is happening around them and are mostly open and often talkative. Extroverts compare their own opinions with the opinions of others. Basically, an extrovert is a person who is energized by being around other people. This is the opposite of an introvert who is energized by being alone. They do not like time taking tasks and do not like to spent time on a special issue. They like to finish a task as soon as possible.

Intuitive: Intuition is an ability to deal with the information on the basis of its hidden potential and its possible existence. These people like theories, possibilities, innovation and new issues and avoid trivial, concrete, real and unrelated concepts. An intuitive person has the ability to deal with the information on the basis of its hidden potential and its possible existence. They are mostly in the past or in the future and worry about the future more than the present. Intuitive people are interested in everything new and unusual and do not like routine and are more attracted to the theory than the practice often have doubts about things. They are interested in solving problems.

Sensing: Sensing is the ability to deal with information on the basis of its physical qualities and its affection by other information. These people prefer tangible, concrete and real things and don't like to work on abstract theories and topics. A sensing person uses senses and powers of observation. He or she works through step-by-step analysis and likes precision. Sensing people prefer established methods. They are patient with routine and work steadily.

Thinking: Thinking is an ability to deal with information on the basis of its structure and its function. These people judge about people, life and events based on logic, analysis, and evidence and avoid illogical and emotional judging. In other words, they are interested in systems, structures, patterns. A thinking individual is objectively analytical and exposes everything to logical analysis. He or she tends to be tough-minded and is relatively cold and unemotional. Thinking individuals are apt to evaluate things through cause and effect and tends to be impartial.

Feeling: Feeling is an ability to deal with information on the basis of its initial energetic condition and its interactions. Someone who makes decisions on subjective, personal values and standards uses feeling. Feeling people understand other people and are interested in people and their feelings, desire harmony and easily pass their own moods to others. They emphasize interpersonal skills and also pay great attention to love and passion. They evaluate things by ethics and good or bad and can be touchy or use emotional manipulation. They often give compliments to please people.

Perceiving: Perceiving types are motivated into activity by the changes in a situation. These people are called data collector because they like to gather more and more information before making decisions. They tend to be compatible, flexible and cheerful. These people may involve themselves in matters with no good results because they act impulsively following the situation. They prefer to have freedom from obligations and are curious and like a fresh look at things. Perceiving individuals work productivity depends on their mood and often act without any preparation.

Judging: Judging types are motivated into activity by their decisions resulting from the changes in a situation. They do not like to leave unanswered questions and plan to work ahead and tend to finish it. They do not like to change their decisions and have relatively stable workability. They easily follow rules and discipline. Hogan and Champagne (1985) described that if these people leave a task unfinished and started another task, they will not look back and only concentrate on new task.

Knowing all these about the role and importance of personality in learning, few works have been done regarding personality types and language learning. Rasouli (2002) in a study on introversion /extroversion and direct or translated composition writing ability in Iranian English language learners found that introverts performed better in translated while extroverts significantly performed better in direct mode of composition writing. He added that one explanation for this fact can be that because introverts are more analytic than extroverts and prefer silence for concentration, like ideas and concepts, rely on inner illumination and prefer to work alone and are energized by doing so. Therefore these characteristics helped them perform better at translated mode of writing while extroverts performed better at direct mode of

composition writing because they are open, are able to act quickly, communicate easily and are applications-oriented.

Correl and Monroe (1993, cited in Moody,1993) discovered that there is a relationship between personality types and language learning among which this relationship was statistically significant for intuitive, sensing and perceiving. In another study by Moody (1988) in a study on English language learners found that 60 per cent of them are intuitive.

Method

The population in this study was all the sophomore students studying at Sari and Behshahr Payam-e Noor University in Mazandaran, Iran studying English as a foreign language in B.A. degree. Payam-e Noor University is the only distance learning university in Iran. The students in these two universities were given a TOEFL in order to draw homogeneous participants. A week later the Hogan-Champagn's Personal Style Inventory (PSI) was used to classify the students into the required personality groups among which 10 students for each personality type were selected as the final subjects. This inventory was developed by Hogan and Champagn in 1979 to the purpose of determining the personal dimensions based on Yung's personality Types such as: introversion, extroversion, intuition, sensing, thinking, feeling, perceiving and judging. Later on a pre-test was administered to the selected participants. By the end of the semester, the post-test was given to the subjects to measure their gains after one semester education.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows that the difference between pre-test and post-test is significant at the level of $p=.05$ ($F_{(1)} = 000$ and $p= 1664$). The table also depicts that the relationship between personality type and distance language learning is significant at the level of $p=.05$ ($F_{(1, 7)} = 000$ and $p= 41$). This means that personality type affects the amount of gains in distance language learning. The characteristics comprising a special personality type can facilitate or impede language learning in a special teaching and learning method with specific techniques.

Table 1. Test of Within-Subjects Effects

Source	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
test	Sphericity Assumed	1	5546.025	1664.501	.000
	Greenhouse-Geisser	1.000	5546.025	1664.501	.000
	Huynh-Feldt	1.000	5546.025	1664.501	.000
	Lower-bound	1.000	5546.025	1664.501	.000
test * Type	Sphericity Assumed	7	138.868	41.678	.000

	Greenhouse-Geisser	7.000	138.868	41.678	.000
	Huynh-Feldt	7.000	138.868	41.678	.000
	Lower-bound	7.000	138.868	41.678	.000
	Sphericity Assumed	72	3.332		
Error(t st)	Greenhouse-Geisser	72.000	3.332		
	Huynh-Feldt	72.000	3.332		
	Lower-bound	72.000	3.332		
		0			

Table 2 illustrates the descriptive statistics on the amount of gains in each group. A glance at the differences in the means in each group reveals that among the personality dimensions, introverts seem to be the most successful group in distance language learning. This can be because of the non-face to face teaching method in distance learning and characteristics constructing the psychological and personality traits in this group of learners. Introverts prefer to study by themselves because they are more analytic than others and can get through when encountering problems. They move slowly but surely.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Different Personality Dimensions

Type	N	Test Pre=1 Post= 2	Mean	Difference In pre-test and post- test Means	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Introvert	10	1	65.100	21	10.31127	2.629
		2	86.000		7.57188	2.459
Extrovert	10	1	67.900	16	6.59040	2.629
		2	83.300		7.86059	2.459
Intuitive	10	1	72.300	12	7.27324	2.629
		2	84.200		7.11493	2.459

Sensing	10	1	71.90 0	9	7.32500	2.629
		2	80.40 0		7.45654	2.459
Thinking	10	1	72.50 0	9	7.01189	2.629
		2	81.20 0		6.87669	2.459
Feeling	10	1	71.70 0	6	10.65677	2.629
		2	77.70 0		10.48862	2.459
Perceiving	10	1	79.00 0	6	8.25967	2.629
		2	85.70 0		8.05605	2.459
Judging	10	1	70.60 0	16	8.09938	2.629
		2	86.70 0		6.00093	2.459

Extroverts and judging got the second place in the marathon of distance language learning. In these two groups the gain was better than other five groups probably because of their personality assets relating to extroversion and judging. Extroverts tend to use language and are not afraid to make mistakes and are not easily offended if people laugh at them for their mistakes and appear to be relaxed and confident. Judging individuals on the other hand, seem to be determined to find answers to all questions and fulfill a task. They intend to accept rules and disciplines. These characteristics may help these two groups to perform well in distance language learning program.

Intuitive personality group has placed the third in the amount of achievement in this kind of language learning program. As previously mentioned the individuals in this group are equipped with a sense of solving problems, innovation, and they also like to deal with the information on the basis of its hidden potential and its possible existence. These characteristics may help them to overtake the other four groups.

As it can be seen in the table 2, sensing and thinking groups placed fourth. In these two groups, the personality characteristics although different, had same effect on distance language learning. But these characteristics were not as efficient as the characteristics in the introvert, judging, extrovert, and intuitive groups. Feeling and perceiving on the other hand, have got the least achievement in distance language learning. The characteristics in these two groups were inefficient in distance language learning compared with the other six personality dimensions.

Conclusion

As it can be seen, among all the personality types discussed above, three of them namely: introverts, extroverts and intuitive types were more successful than others. Their success can be supported by the theories and characteristics related to each type. Distance learning system has also educational elements which are in accordance with these three types of personality characteristics. As explained before, Introverts are oriented to the inner world i.e. introverts are motivated from "within" and they are oriented towards the inner world of ideas, imagery, and reflection. On the other hand, **extroverts are oriented to the outer world i.e.** extroverts are motivated from "without" and their attention is directed outward. Introverts tend to be independent in decision from conditions, culture, people and things around them while, extroverts are sociable, friendly, self-confident and outgoing. They are interested in what is happening around them and are mostly open. Introverts are analytic, quiet and studious and are more concerned with the inner world of the mind. They enjoy thinking, exploring their thoughts and feelings and often avoid social situations because being around people drains their energy. On the other hand, basically, an extrovert is a person who is energized by being around other people which is the opposed to an introvert who is energized by being alone. By the same token, Intuitive learners have the ability to deal with the information on the basis of its hidden potential and its possible existence. These people like theories, possibilities, innovation and new issues and avoid trivial, concrete, real and unrelated concepts. They are interested in solving problems.

In closing, since English language learning deals with analytical aspects of learning, and distance education system needs the learners to study by themselves than direct face to face education with teachers, introverted students seem to learn English more successfully than extroverted learners and in turn extroverted ones exceed intuitive learners. The findings in this study can help the educational curriculum planners to consider the personality dimensions when developing a new curriculum. Some programs work well for some personality traits with characteristics which function as facilitator in learning. Therefore, knowing the learners' personality dimension can help curriculum developers to direct the learner in the right track of learning condition.

References:

- Chapman, A. (2006). *Kolb's learning Styles*. Retrieved from <http://www.businessballs.com/kolblearningstyle>
- Donclark, Q. (2000). *Learning Styles: how we move from the unknown to the known?* Retrieved from <http://www.learningstyles.com>
- Huang, H.I. (2005) Personality traits reflect employees job attitude in workplace. *The Concorium Journal*, 10 (1), 389-401 .
- Hogan, R.C. & Champagn, D.W. (1990). *How we come across others? Personal styles inventory*. Organization Design and Development.
- Hogan, R. C., & Champagne, D. W. (1985). *Personal style inventory*. Organization Design and Development.

- Moody, R. (1998). Personality References and foreign language learning. *Modern Language Journal*, 72(4), 389-401.
- Moody, R. (1993). Motivation, learning strategies and personality. *Journal of the freshman year experience*, 5(1), pp. 37-75.
- Rsouli, K. H. (2002). *The relationship between Introversion/Extroversion and Direct and Translated Composition Writing in Iranian English Language Learners* (Unpublished Master's thesis). Garmsar Azad University, Iran.