

Impact of Personality on English Language Learning in Bangladesh

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Abstract: This paper is a report on a study which attempts to examine the relationship that exists between personality and English language learning. The Myer-Briggs Personality Type Indicator was used to carry out the research. The study sample was made up of twenty students with varying personality types who were doing their third foundation course in English at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh. Standardized spoken and written tests were used in the research to see if there is any relation between personality type and English language learning. The study shows that variations in the personality traits of students positively or negatively affect English language learning. This paper also investigated what students think about their teachers' personality and how it affects their personality and English language learning success.

Introduction

The difficulty of having a classroom comprised of introvert students is quite understandable. In an ideal situation, a teacher would like to have a good proportion of extrovert students in their class.

The outgoing nature of the extroverts makes their positive personality traits very apparent to all. Therefore, their positive traits often overshadow their negative ones. On the other hand, introverts are likely to be undervalued as they tend to be quiet and thus fail to showcase some of their very unique potentials in a short period of time. So, it is not unlikely for a teacher to consider a student's quietness as their lack of proficiency. As a result, the role of the class teacher is very important to help the introverts get rid of their social stigma.

A teacher is successful when students possess similar attitudes towards the target language, classroom activities and develop the target language at a quasi-equal level. It is important for the language instructor to understand their own personality as well as the personality type of students in order to develop materials which would benefit them with varying personality types (Ellis, 2005).

The personality types of our students at the tertiary level are probably very diverse for various reasons. One of the reasons is that our students come from three kinds of education systems – Bangla medium, English medium, and the Madrasha system (Asadullah, 2006). Asadullah (2006) posits that in these three streams of education the status of English and the teaching/learning approaches differ considerably. Based on the findings of his study it has been suggested that these differences among the mediums not only bring disparity in the students' standards of academic performance in English but also in their beliefs about the language learning approaches. In light of his findings, it may be reasonably argued that the social and cultural backgrounds of the students may also impart a role on students' personality.

This study will investigate whether students think that teachers' use of language, their appearance, approaches to teaching, choice of topics for materials and class activities, are in sync with students and how gestures and body language affect students' personality traits and performance in English language tests.

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The study seeks to investigate any significant relationships between personality and success in second language learning. Specifically, the researcher will look for answers to whether it is difficult for extroverts to reach accuracy in both speaking and writing. Another purpose of this study, if the findings are significant enough, is to find the techniques that can be used in post-secondary education to tackle the difficulties occurring as a result of personality variations as a culture bound trait.

Definitions of key terms:

Personality: Personality refers to a dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by a person that uniquely influences his or her cognition, motivation and behavior in various situations (Myers & McCaulley, 1986).

Extroverts: According to the Myer-Briggs personality type theory, extroverts are those who are very social, prompt and always take part in classroom activities (Myers & McCaulley, 1986).

Introverts: Myer-Briggs say introverts are those who find it very difficult to get along with the classroom activities as they tend to be reflective and reserved (Myers & McCaulley, 1986).

Balanced: Balanced students are in the middle of introverts and extroverts. So, they enjoy both the aspect of being an introvert and an extrovert (Eysenck, & Eysenck, 1985).

Literature Review

i. Personality:

In general parlance we perceive personality as one's preferred way of being or doing things in life. So, personality is likely to be predictable as one's preference for certain actions tends to be consistent. For example, one who tended to be quiet and reserved today may tend to be quiet and reserved tomorrow as well. The notion of a rigid personality type is further strengthened by the static-character research, which is typically based on a definition of personality comprising five features called the five-factor model (Brody & Ehrlichman, 1998), including openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism.

Personality has, however, been studied in a variety of ways. Some other studies have accepted the idea that personalities are also changeable. So, personality is not permanently stamped into our genes. Therefore, the personality traits such as perceiving, acting, thinking, reacting, coping mechanism, feelings, beliefs, etc. are not exclusively definitive.

ii. Instructional Methodology:

Wakamoto (2000) indicates that a diversity in instructional strategy may cater to the needs of all the students and a blend of instructional approach may avoid bias towards any particular type of personality and thus no single personality type will receive preferential treatment (Ellis, 2005). Some studies show that the introverts are better language learners as they tend to be reflective and thus produce accurate language (Ellis, 2008; MacIntyre and Charos, 1996). On the other hand, many other studies show that introverts perform poorly in speaking tests (Furman, cited in Zafar and Meenakshi,

2012). It is very unlikely that all teachers and students would be introvert by nature. Since Bangladeshi classes usually feature only one style of instruction (teacher centered/lectured based), it may satisfy some learners but unfairly challenge other types of learners with varying personalities (Nesa, 2004). So, eventually, all learners are shortchanged by a specific style of teaching/ learning approach and thus develop mastery in specific skills of a language that is facilitated by their preferred mode of learning.

iii. Personality and SLA:

There has been a great deal of interest in the last 10 - 20 years on what makes a good language learner. And most studies have commonly attributed credit to learners' language learning styles, which is determined by one's personality, for successful second language acquisition (SLA). The Kolb/McCarthy learning-styles model (as cited by Brody & Ehrlichman, 1998) suggests that different things are best learned through different learning styles and techniques. This sounds very practical and logical, particularly with reference to the language learning objectives of a language course and the means/techniques of achieving those goals. For example, a good write up requires the learners to be reflective, focused, reserved and independent thinkers, whereas a speaking class would appreciate learners who are more social, prompt and risk-takers.

Brown (2001) opined that a learner's personality determines the ways a learner controls his/ her emotions and feelings during the learning process. Based on certain studies, a learner's pattern of perceiving, acting, thinking, reacting, coping mechanism, feelings, beliefs, etc. are all considered to be influenced by his/her personality type (Brown, 2001, Ellis, 2008; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985, Oxford, 2003).

Many research findings show that extroverts are better language learners as they are more social than the introverts (Oxford, 2003, Vygotsky, 1962). However, researchers like Naimen (1978) believe that personality types have nothing to do with language learning and therefore Naimen argues "there is no significant relationship between extroversion/introversion and proficiency" (64). On the other hand, Vygotsky focuses on the qualities of the extroverts for better language learning and says "By working with friends, classmates and same age students they can share and exchange their knowledge and in this way they may learn unknown things. By following those qualities of extroverts the introverts can acquire more knowledge" (Vygotsky, 1962).

Spada (2000) points out that it is necessary to bring some kind of combination in the personality type in order to help the learners learn the language quickly. Neither introvert nor extrovert is good for learning as none are flawless and both need to be aided by the other. For example, the extroverts are so talkative that they often miss many important discussions of the class and thus fall behind. On the other hand, the introverts speak so less that it becomes very difficult for the instructor to understand the learners lacking and to provide appropriate feedback.

Methodology

A quantitative research design will be used in exploring the issue. The study selected an entire class consisting of 20 students (Dörnyei, 2007, p.95) through random sampling strategy since the class is typical of all the English language classes at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) in Bangladesh. The selection criterion is based on the participants' age, background of education, personality types, and finally on their experience of getting along with the class activities. Though the questionnaire contains

some open-ended questions which were supported by relevant studies in this realm, the study relies heavily on the numbers of the gathered data from the questionnaire, exam grades and class performance, etc. to investigate the research questions.

Research questions

1. How do introverts differ from extroverts and balanced students in terms of personality traits?
2. Is the development of language learning related to personality type?
3. Does the personality type of the teacher influence students' personality and success in language learning?

Participants and setting

The study sample was made up of the undergraduate students of ULAB who were enrolled in the foundation course (ENG-103), which is the third and last foundation course in English. Twenty students participated in the study.

Personality has been classified into different types by different researchers based on one's preferred ways of doing things in life. This study used Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (Myers & McCaulley, 1986), based on Carl Jung's concept of archetypes to categorize learners' learning preferences. This instrument defines personality as a dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by a person that uniquely influences his or her cognition, motivation and behavior in various situations. This type indicator of personality includes four types of scales, of which only two types, extroversion and introversion will be used and the Balanced personality type discussed by Ellis (2005) is included in this study to understand learner's role in acquiring second language.

Table-1: Number of Students at Each Level and the Gender Composition:

Personality Type Distribution

Personality Type	Gender		Total by personality type
	Female(8)	Male(12)	
Extrovert	1	4	5
Balanced	2	4	6
Introvert	5	4	9
Total number of students			20

The setting of the study was informal as the researcher was the instructor of the course. As a result, students' response to the questionnaire and classroom activities had some chance to be affected by the presence of the teacher.

The researcher stored the writing portfolio, grades of writing and speaking tests, and the researcher also kept records of class participation of each student in order to match it with the findings of the research questionnaire and also to see if the students were able to minimize their deficiencies based on their personality type.

The format of the questionnaire is shown in the Appendix.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher administrated the questionnaire to the students on the first day of their Foundation English Course (Eng-103). This questionnaire was divided into three parts, the first part named "Part A." It comprised eight questions and these close ended questions were made based on the Myer-Briggs Personality Type Indicator. The answers to the questions elicited the personality types of the learners. The second part of the questionnaire was named "Part B" and was made up of five close-ended questions. This questionnaire was used to form an idea about the students' attitude towards the target language, target language instructor, the materials used in the class and how the students behaved in the language class. This part of the questionnaire was very important in the research as it was thought to give a clear diagnosis of each student's personality deficiency as a second language learner. The researcher used the answers of this part to compare the students' performance throughout the course including the final grades. The third part of the questionnaire was called "Part C," which had four open-ended questions. This part was used to supplement some additional ideas regarding the students' personality type.

To judge the improvement rate of the three different types of students over the semester, two speaking tests [one impromptu (Midterm Exam) and one prepared presentation (Final Test)] and two written tests (Pre-announced Midterm and Final Test) were taken by students.

Data Analysis Procedure

The description of the personality type was sorted out by reason. The extrovert (25%), balanced (30%) and introvert (45%) students approved the classroom activities at 40%, 67% and 22% respectively. The table below will show the students' impression of classroom activities.

Table-2: An Impression on Classroom Activity:

Reason	Total Number of students 20		
	Extrovert (5)	Balanced (6)	Introvert (9)
Enjoy Speaking	3	1	1
Like writing	2	3	7
Like reading	1	4	7
Enjoy listening	1	2	7
Enough time to finish tasks	4	3	2
Group discussion	3	2	1
Work alone	3	3	6
Role play	2	3	2

Analysis of the Grades

Comparison of the speaking grades:

Comparing the speaking midterm grades with the final speaking grades of the three different types of students, it is seen that the extroverts made very little progress (the number of students getting Grades ranging from A to B-) in their final from the midterm, whereas the balanced and the introverts made reasonable and huge progress in their final from their midterm respectively. Surprisingly, the ratio of extrovert students who did poorly in the midterm speaking test did slightly better in the final speaking test.

Table-3: Speaking Grades:

Personality type	Midterm speaking grade		Final speaking grade	
	Grade range A to B-	Grade range C+ to below	Grade range A to B-	Grade range C+ to below
Extrovert: 5	3	2	5	1
Balanced: 6	4	2	5	1
Introvert: 9	5	3	6	3

Comparison of the writing grades:

If we compare the writing midterm grades with the final writing grades of the three different types of students, then we see that the extroverts made very little progress (the number of students getting Grades ranging from A to B-) in their final from the midterm, whereas the balanced and the introverts made reasonable and huge progress in their final from their midterm respectively. See Table-4 (Grades for Midterm).

Table-4: Writing Grades:

Personality type	Midterm writing grade		Final writing grade	
	Grade range A to B-	Grade range C+ to below	Grade range A to B-	Grade range C+ to below
Extrovert: 5	3	2	3	2
Balanced: 6	3	3	5	1
Introvert: 9	5	4	7	2

Personality traits of a teacher:

Table 5 was designed to find out which personality traits of teachers are associated significantly with the students' English language learning. While filling out this questionnaire, the students were asked to rate not only the class teacher but also other English teachers they had in previous semesters at the university. According to the students, they do well in a language course due to some of those qualities of their teachers, which are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Personality traits of teachers	Students' responses
Voice (Dull/Monotone)	18 (90%)
Use of language	20 (100%)
Appearance	9 (45%)
Approaches to teaching	18 (90%)
Selection of materials	19 (95%)
Rapport with students	20 (100%)

Smiles	17(75%)
Assertive and Directive	20 (100%)
Feedback(Positive and constructive)	13 (65%)
Eye contact	19 (95%)
Physical position in the classroom	17 (85%)

Usually a second language classroom reciprocates the child language acquisition process, where learners are required to act more social, outgoing, motivated, confident. But studies show that learners' inauthenticity with the linguistic structures of the target language brings changes in their beliefs (Dornyei, 2003) and personality (Oxford, 1995). Oxford's (2003) study points out that a supportive facilitator through the virtue of her personality traits may help L2 learners reduce their inflamed anxiety, negative self-image, low confidence, demotivation, etc. So, the role of a teacher is important not only in developing classroom materials and classroom management but may also impart an effective role in helping learners build up a balanced personality through friendly behavior, gamut of tones, eye contact, classroom materials, rewards, praise, punishments and feedback.

Reasons for introversion:

The chart below was designed to elicit students' reasons for their quietness/introversion.

Table 6

Statements	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Total no. of introverts
They enjoy and learn more when the teacher has more talk time in the class.	0	5	5
They lack proficiency in English	2	3	
They are not comfortable sharing their thoughts aloud with others.	1	4	
They were quiet outside the classroom as well.	1	4	

The table reports that quietness does not necessarily signify students' incompetency in a language. So, quietness should not be considered a negative trait of students. Rather it should be carried by all types of students to a certain extent as we see from the midterm and final exam grades that quietness helped introverts to get better grades in language course. In support of these findings, it may be mentioned that MacIntyre & Charos, (1996) cited different significant studies, notably Wenden & Rubin (as cited by Patten & William, 2007), which points out that a learner's ability to process information relies on her/his attention capacity. Since different personality types have different preferred learning strategies, therefore, their attention capacity is likely to be different. Wenden & Rubin's (as cited by Patten & William, 2007) study

posits the fact that the introverts tend to possess a higher attention capacity to focus on form and meaning; so, their chances of acquiring accuracy in second language is greater.

Result Analysis and Discussion

Personality traits of students:

When the students' answers of the different parts of the questionnaire were matched, the following traits of each personality types were found:

Table 7

Extrovert	Balanced	Introvert
1. Talkative	1. Occasional speaker	1. Reserved
2. Winning mentality	2. Winning is not always important	2. Winning means accuracy
3. Not reflective	3. Quite reflective	3. Reflective- perfectionist
4. Fast in language formulation	4. Quite fast in language formulation	4. Slow in language formulation
5. Not Perfectionist	5. Moderately perfectionist	5. Perfectionist
6. Positive towards oneself and the surrounding	6. Positive more than negative about themselves and surrounding	6. They are more negative about their strengths
7. Good adapter	7. Good adapter	7. Not an adapter
8. Not a loner-they are not good listeners. Therefore, not a good memorizer.	8. Loner	8. Loner
9. Leader by nature	9. Active team player	9. Follower

The personality traits found through the questionnaire echoes the Myer-Briggs classification of personality.

Relation between personality and development of English:

From the research calculation (Table 3 & 4) it is seen that the five extroverts were good speakers but their speaking grades were not very satisfying as the rubric for the speaking test (Table 7) not only gave marks for spontaneity and confidence but also had marks on accuracy and organization. Initially the introverts had less confidence but they were relatively more accurate in their language formation and more organized in their speech and writing. Moreover, this point is further strengthened by Brown's (2001) remark that extroverts tended to focus on meaning rather than form, a strategy which has been confirmed as contributing to success in second language learning. So, the result shows that introverts got better grades at the end for being more focused on language form. The introverts' accuracy rate in writing and in speaking is higher

extroverts and more than the balanced students. So, it would be wrong on our part to say that introverts are slow or inferior learners. On the other hand, looking into the answers of the balanced students it was seen that the balanced students' grades in writing and speaking tests were fairly stable. So, we can then say that the characteristics of the three personality types are responsible for their individual grades.

Teachers' personality and students' language learning success:

The deficiencies of both introverts and extroverts can be minimized if sufficient care is given by teachers in the class through proper classroom activities which would benefit students with different personality types. It is obvious from the questionnaire that all types of students believe that the personality type of the teacher also influences the formation of students' personality and English language learning success. So, modeling a positive personality is important. The findings suggest that students' performance in English is likely to increase when the teacher showcases some positive personality traits. The personality traits of a teacher can build up a friendly atmosphere for the students in the classroom and thus help students increase their confidence to perform better in English language classes. According to students, (Table 5), the following reasons are the most dominant traits of teachers' personality that positively affect students' personality:

- i. All the participants (100%) of the study believed that a teacher's non-assertiveness, rapport with them and use of language (uses "teacher talk") made students less shy in the class.
- ii. Among the participants, 95% of them said teachers' topic selection for materials and class activities positively contributed to their English language learning success.
- iii. 90% of the students claimed that teachers' monotonous voice and approaches to teaching significantly contributed to the language learning success.
- iv. According to the students, the physical position of the teacher in the classroom (85%), and the teacher's feedback (65%) help students learn English.
- v. Students' responses indicated that their personality and learning success were positively affected by teachers' smiles (75%) and appearance (45%).

The findings of the study show that a good percentage of introverts can also become excellent speakers if they are given enough support in the class by the instructor through positive personality traits. Moreover, the study shows that the balanced personality type students are usually the best performers on average.

Oxford's (2003) study also reiterates the fact that the function of a true teacher, although not necessarily that of a teacher as a scholar, is to master the art of sacrificing his or her authority and letting the students develop and feel their own productive capacity in acquiring or generating knowledge. Thus, a comfortable, trustworthy and positive atmosphere may make the classroom a safe place where learners with varying personality types will not hesitate to make language mistakes and express opinions.

Limitations

The sample size of the research comprised only 20 students. Therefore, it will be quite unjust to draw any generalization from the findings of the data. A greater number of

participants could have made the results more reliable. Initially the participants were divided according to their gender, but the research did not eventually contemplate on this fact for further queries and generalizations. Therefore, a series of interviews with a higher number of participants could probably resolve those encountered problems.

Conclusion

This paper shows that the teacher should not regret when they have a class where the introverts outnumber the extroverts as introvert students have some very unique qualities that assist English language learning. The findings of this study relates to Gardner and Clement's (cited in Oxford, 2003) findings where it was determined that both introvert and extrovert types of learners had equal opportunities for achievement, and that language teachers should address the needs of both personality types. This study suggests that introvert learners should possess some traits of the extroverts and the extroverts should acquire some traits of the introverts. In addition, the paper also puts forward the suggestion that the teacher should possess a positive personality to aid students in English language learning.

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APPENDIX

Part A

Questionnaire

Please help your instructor by providing some basic information about yourself. This information will be kept confidential.

Name:

How do you prefer to be called? (Nickname):

Age:

Native Country and City:

Local phone number:

The Personality Type “Questionnaire (part A)” is designed based on Mayer Briggs Personality Type Theory and Jenkins Activity Survey (Jenkins, Zyzanski, & Rosenman, 1971). For each of the 8 questions below, answer by clicking on the most appropriate statement.

1. Compared with other students, how quickly do you usually complete your class assignments?
 - a. I am usually finished before everyone else
 - b. I finish faster than most of my classmates
 - c. I finish right on time

2. How often do you worry about future events?
 - a. Never
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Constantly

3. When you are faced with an unfamiliar problem, what do you usually do?
 - a. Address the problem immediately
 - b. Sit back and let things work out for themselves
 - c. Think about what to do and then take action

4. Has anyone ever told you that you talk too much?
 - a. Yes, often
 - b. A couple of times
 - c. No, never

5. How often do you finish other people's sentences because they speak too slowly?
 - a. Frequently
 - b. A couple of times
 - c. Almost never

6. When you are playing a game, how important is it for you to win?
 - a. Never important

- b. Sometimes important
 - c. Very important
7. When you have free time, what would you prefer to do?
- a. Hang out with friends
 - b. Watch TV
 - c. Sleep
8. When you are in a group situation (like completing a group project), how do you usually act?
- a. I take charge
 - b. I act as a team player
 - c. I rarely participate

Part B

1. What kind of activities would **you** like to do this semester? Please mark only what you like.

1.a. More Groupwork(GP)	2.a. Only Class work(CW)	3.a. Writing>Speaking	4.a. Only Impromptu speaking (IS)
b. More Pair work(PW)	b. Only Home work(HW)	b. Writing<Speaking	b. Only Prepared speaking (PS)
c. More Individual work(IW)	c. CW>HW	c. only speaking	c. Impromptu speaking> Prepared speaking
d. GP=PW=IW	d. CW<HW	d. only writing	d. Impromptu speaking <Prepared speaking
	e. CW=HW	e. Writing=Speaking	e. IS=PS

2. How do you find yourself in the English language class? Put a tick mark inside the box if it matches with you.

Work in groups	Talkative	Don't talk even when the teacher asks	Like to Listen more	Want to be credited for work	Leader/always want to be the central character	Open up only when I feel that the environment is suitable
Work in pairs	Talk only when asked	Shy	Never happy with own speech/a nswer	Don't work for being credited	Follower/don't want to be the central character	Don't give my best effort to learn the target language
Work alone	Talk only when you feel it's important to talk	Confident	Never happy with others speech/a nswer	Like to let others know what I know	Always want to be the winner	Want to learn English only for academic purpose
Open up only when I feel that the environment is suitable	Jump into answering the question without being confirmed of the	Think a lot before answering correct	Always impressed with others speech/a nswer	Don't want to share, rather want others to identify	Never think of going for challenges	Want to learn English only for socializing
	correct answer			my qualities		

3. How are you as a person outside the classroom? Put a tick mark inside the box if it matches with you.

1a. Your friends call you talkative	1b. Listener
2a. Like being alone most of the time	2b. Never talk with strangers
3a. Busy finding fault with others	3b. Busy finding own faults
4a. Hang out with others most of the time	4b. Don't hesitate to talk even with strangers

4. How do you want to see yourself in the classroom?

Work in groups	Talkative	Don't talk even when the teacher asks	Like to Listen more	Want to be credited for work	Leader/always want to be the central character	Open up only when I feel that the environment is suitable
Work in pairs	Talk only when asked	Shy	Never happy with own speech/answer	Don't work for being credited	Follower/don't want to be the central character	Don't give my best effort to learn the target language
Work alone	Talk only when you feel it's important to talk	Confident	Never happy with others speech/answer	Like to let others know what I know	Always want to be the winner	Want to learn English only for academic purpose
Open up only when I feel that the environment is suitable	Jump into answering the question without being confirmed of the correct answer	Think a lot before answering correct	Always impressed with others speech/answer	Don't want to share, rather want others to identify my qualities	Never think of going for challenges	Want to learn English only for socializing

Part C

1. Why do you want to learn English?
2. Is it easy or hard for you to speak English in front of other people? Give at least two reasons for your stand.
3. Describe at least two of your strengths and weaknesses as a language learner?
4. Answer this question only if you think you are more silent than others in the class. What are the factors you think are responsible for you being silent in the class?
5. What was the last school you attended? Where was it? What was it like?

Tables

Table 8: Rubric for Eng-103 (Speaking/Listening)

Category	Sub categories	Marks (10)
Content and organization	<i>Have a clear introduction</i>	0.5
	<i>Body must include at least two major points with an example</i>	1.5
	<i>Conclusion has to be smooth</i>	0.5
Devices	<i>Description of the fact must be clear and vivid through the use of some techniques like transition for logical coherence+sensory words, adjectives and other devices for vividness</i>	1+1=2
Body language	<i>Eye contact, looks relaxed and confident, Movement of body parts (hand, leg, etc.)</i>	1
Spontaneity and clarity	<i>Natural flow in speech (does not sound like a memorized speech), looks relaxed and confident, loud and clear voice, intonation, speech rate</i>	2
Politeness	<i>Use of social expressions in question-answer and feedback session</i>	1
Vocabulary	<i>Variety in words</i>	0.5
Complete sentences	<i>Sentences are complete</i>	1