Relationship of Personality Traits and Writing Skills among EFL Learners at Post Graduation Level

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Abstract

English has attained the status of world language and is being spoken all over the world. Proficiency in English language assures a successful and bright future. There are four integrated skills (Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening) in English language that are crucial for EFL learners. Individual differences and personality traits of the EFL (English as a foreign language) learners can also affect their Writing Skills. The objectives of the present study are; 1) To search the correlation between introversion and extroversion with regard to language writing proficiency 2) To find out if introversion is a hindrance in second language writing proficiency. The introversion and extroversion are usually considered as a single continuum so that to be high on one is necessarily to be low on the other. Extroverts are risk-takers, social and interactive while Introverts are passive and avoid social gatherings. The researchers used the mixed method approach (quantitative and qualitative) for the study. The population of the study comprised all the graduate students of Department of English at Islamia University Bahawalpur, Pakistan. The researchers collected sample of the study from 200 Post Graduates and 20 English language teachers. The sample of the study was selected randomly. The researchers used the questionnaire, a free writing test and structured interviews as research tools. The questionnaire EPI (Eysenck Personality Inventory) was adopted and modified. The researcher collected data and analyzed it through SPSS. For the analysis of the study, researchers used the statistical techniques of mean, standard deviation and ANOVA Test. The findings of the study revealed that most of the learners were extroverts. The study concluded that introverts perform better in most of the subscales of writing as compared to extroverts. This study proved that introversion does not cause hindrance in acquiring writing skills; it was also found that introverts are more creative as compared to extroverts. Majority of the English language teachers validated the views of students that introverts are better writers as compared to extroverts.

Keywords: Personality Traits, Introversion, Extroversion, English Language Proficiency

Introduction

For many years, researchers have been examining and revising teaching methodologies to discover ways that can facilitate second language learning on student's part. On the way to this expedition, they started looking for reasons that are responsible for that why some students are better at language learning than others.

One of the factors discovered by the researcher is the individual differences of the learners. The learning styles, strategies, age, aptitude, and attitude towards the language learning, motivation, and learner's personality are all important factors varying from person to person and hence, are somewhat responsible for poor or better learning of the second language.

In the eyes of many language teachers, the personality of their students is a major factor contributing to success or failure in language learning. In order to determine how important, they rated personality and two other individual differences, Griffiths (1991), for example, piloted a survey of 98 teachers of ESL/EFL in England, Japan, and Oman. He reports a mean rating of four on a five-point scale_ slightly higher than rating for intelligence and just below that for memory. Learners also consider personality factor important. According to Naiman et al. (1978), found that of the 'good language learners', 31 percent believed that extroversion was helpful in acquiring oral skills.

The extroversion/introversion distinction refers to one of several dimensions or traits. In Eysenck's theory, for example, there are three major dimensions

1. Extroversion/introversion'

2. Neurotic/stable

3. Psychotic/normal

According to Carl Jung every individual has both personality traits introversion and extroversion but one trait is more prominent than the other. The terms are bit archaic as extraversion is not about being loud and introversion is not about being shy. It is about where people get their energy and motivation from, other people or themselves.

Objectives of the Study

- To search the correlation between introversion and extroversion with regard to language writing performance.

- To find out if introversion is a hindrance in Second Language proficiency.

Research Questions

1. Is there any relationship between extroversion-introversion and writing skills of L2 learners?

2. Is being an introvert a hindrance in Second language (English) learning in Pakistani context?
3. Are Extraverts better in all features of writing (Syntactic variety, clarity, organization of ideas and focus on the topic) in writing than Introverts?
4. Are introverts more creative than extraverts are?

Literature Review

Extroversion/ Introversion

Personality is one of the individual differences, which is widely accepted to have an effect on learning in general and second language acquisition (SLA) in particular. Extroversion/ introversion is not a matter of the sense that people should not be considered to be either extraverts or introverts. It is a scale, which shows degree of outgoingness of an individual. In second language learning, Extroversion and introversion are possibly important factors. The terms extroversion/ introversion is often misunderstood because of stereotype extroversion. Extroverted person are likely to be as a gregarious, 'life of the party' person. Introverted people are thought to be quiet and reserved, with tendency toward reclusiveness.

Carl Gustav Jung as part of his Type theories (Jung 1987) since then first developed the terms extravert and Introvert, which have become a widely and generally recognized and used personality concepts. E/I have been investigated broadly from two perspectives; the biological point of view, E/I can be discussed in relation to the arousal level in the cortex of the brain and the psychological point of view.

Extroversion/ Introversion is considered to be biologically determined and inherited by many psychologists (e.g. Eysenck, 1965; 1985; Kerry, 1990; Cook, 1993), though the effects of environmental factors are not completely ignored. Eysenck in his personality theory has explained the difference in these two psychological types on the bases of the biological phenomena of *"cortical arousal"* and *"reactive inhibition"*. Extraverts in comparison to introverts have more mental reactive inhibition and less cortical arousal. Different kinds of behaviors are used by the individuals to balance the cortical under-arousal of extraverts and over-arousal of introverts. To this effect, extraverts would incline to seek more excitation which is mostly showed through impulsive and outgoing behavior. While in case of introverts, they would tend to show more reflective and less exciting behavior. According to Eysenck (1957), extraversion can be somewhat identified with fast accumulation and slow dissipation of reactive inhibition. In other words, introverts have much mental concentration as compared to extraverts who are mentally more easily inhibited, which suggests that they are more vulnerable to mental distraction.

The phenomenon of cortical arousal is believed to play a major role in learning and has been related to memory span (Eysenck, M.W., 1974; 1979). Researchers have hypothesized and to some extent confirmed by their research that introverts pose a wider long-term memory span while extraverts would have a wider short-term memory. An important theory was proposed

by Walker (1958) related to cortical arousal to memory called —Action Decrement Theory. According to this theory, as Eysenck (1985, p. 260) maintains:

> *"High arousal produces an active memory trace of longer duration; this in turn leads to consolidation and long term memory. However, during the time that the process of consolidation is continuing, there is a transient inhibition of retrieval (referred to as "action decrement") which protects the active memory trace from disruption. As a consequence, although high arousal is beneficial for long term retention, it impairs short term retention for periods of time up to several minutes after learning".*

Introversion/ Extroversion and Second Language Learning

According to Griffith (1999), there are two major hypotheses regarding relationship between extroversion and introversion and a second language learning. The first, which has been the most widely researched- is that extroverted learners will do better in acquiring basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS).The rationale for this hypothesis is that sociability will result in more opportunities to practice, more input and more success in communicating in the second language. The second hypothesis is that introverted learners will do better at developing cognitive academic language ability (CALP). The rationale for this hypothesis comes from a study which shows that introverted learners typically enjoy more academic success, perhaps because they spend more time in reading and writing.

Furnham (1990) points out, a relationship between extroversion and language use in foreign language learners. He also hypothesized that it is relatively easy to produce a reliable measure of this trait. The researchers have found negative or sometimes insignificant or mixed conclusions about the role of extroversion–introversion in SLA. Dewaele and Furnham (1990) claimed that the writing and oral language standards are not distinguished properly and this is a reason for mixed results of the studies. In such studies, extroversion scores are correlated with linguistic variables taken out from difficult verbal tasks (i.e. conversation) and a clear pattern emerges showing extroverts are found to be more fluent than introverts are both in L1, L2, and particularly in formal situations.

Wong (2011) did a chronological review of the effect of the extraversion/introversion on the second language acquisition and relationship between CALPS and BICS with extraversion / introversion. According to Eric, as a teacher in Japan, he observed a great influence of student's personality on learning abilities of English students. He observed and found out that introverts go for perfection and do not speak much as compared to extraverts who because of their outgoingness, speak and participate much. He studied the works already done by the researchers have still to do more research on confirming that extrovert do better in CALP. In addition, because of a wide range of personality tests available, the results vary in every

research. Therefore, according to him, a small group of personality tests must be used that give more accurate results.

Positive Correlation between Introversion-Extroversion and Language Proficiency

Naveh, Kaipour & Soltani (2011) explored the relationship among extraversion tendency, vocabulary learning strategies, and reading comprehension of EFL of undergraduates. He took sample of 164 EFL students in Kerman Province. The tests used to collect data from the learners, were VLSQ (Vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire), Eysenck Personality Inventory, TOEFL reading comprehension. For analysis, he used Pearson Product Moment Correlation, through his studied he found out that there was not a significant relationship between vocabulary learning strategies and reading comprehension. However, a noticeable and significant correlation between extraversion tendency and vocabulary learning strategies was found. The studies also showed that there is a relationship between reading comprehension and degree of extraversion tendency.

Negative Correlation between Extraversion and Language Proficiency

Busch's (1982) study in Japan tried to determine the relationship between the extroversion and English proficiency of 185 Japanese learners of English in a junior college and a night school in Kobe, Japan. This study concerns with Japanese learners and offers some questions regarding E/I gender-related social behavior ', language proficiency. Busch use the Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI) to measure English proficiency. The standardized written test (YTEP, YMCA test of English proficiency) were also used that consisted sections on grammar and vocabulary, reading, aural, comprehension, and dictation. In her study, she found no positive significant correlation between and sections of YTEP and extroversion and the sections of vocabulary /grammar and reading. Furthermore, she examined the relationship between extroversion and oral proficiency because extroverts were assumed to be better than introverts in oral skills. She used an oral interview test that measured comprehension, pronunciation, fluency, and grammar. All the correlation in her result, that would indicate the relationship between extroversion and those subcomponents were negative though not significant. A significant negative correlation was found between extroversion and learners' pronunciation that means introverts had better pronunciation than extroverts did. The results were conflicting to her hypothesis and those of people. The results were further examined by focusing on gender, which revealed a positive relationship between overall oral proficiency and extroversion only in male participants not in females.

The relationship between extroversion/introversion and grammaticality among the Iranian EFL students has been investigated by Razmjoo and Shaban (2008). They conducted the study with 124 EFL students at Guilan University, Rasht. The test employed was Farhady's TOEFL Test. Several results were led by the study: First, there was no meaningful difference between the extravert and introvert students in the English proficiency. Second, there was no significant difference between the extravert and introvert in grammaticality judgment. Third, there appeared a positive relation between language proficiency and grammaticality judgment. The

last was that language proficiency predicted the grammaticality rather than the extroversion/introversion.

Neutral or No Impact of Extroversion on Language Learning Attainment

Many studies have been done in which the researcher found no significant correlation between language proficiency and introversion/extraversion traits of the learners or a slight correlation between some of the features were found.

For example, Bergeland (1974) executed a study among 80 students from three high schools in Illinois of eleventh grade; the study revealed that there is no association between extroversion and structured interaction while introversion is positively correlated with group social modeling. Rossier (1976) also investigated the issue with a sample of Spanish speaking adolescents learning English as a second language. A positive relationship between extraversion and oral fluency was found by Rossier. The instrument used was a non-standard interview. No correlation between performance on discrete point and knowledge based items with EXT-INT was found at all. Sutter (1976) investigated on a sample of 61 university students with different L1 background and could not find any relationship between a numbers of predictive variables including EXT-INT and English pronunciation.

Research Methodology

The researchers implied mixed method approach for the current study. The researchers would use the quantitative as well as qualitative techniques in the collection of data from the said population. For data collection, researchers would use the research tools of questionnaire (quantitative data) and interviews for (qualitative data).

The population of the study comprised all the students of English Department at The Islamia University of Bahawalpur. The subjects in this research are Post graduate students who are studying in BS English program and some doing Masters in Linguistics. In the study, the researchers used convenient sampling method as it is an appropriate technique for such type of studies. This study involves 200 students and 20 teachers.

The researchers collected the data in the months of April and May, 2015 by themselves. A questionnaire Eyscenk Personality Inventory (EPI) which has been used as a data collection tool by many researchers (Nejad, Bijani, and Ahmadi, 2012). EPI is widely used by researchers all over the world to measure personality traits. The researchers themselves administered the questionnaire from learners after giving instructions regarding the filling of questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 34 questions, which helped to assess the personality type of the learners. The learners were then asked to write a paragraph on a topic given to assess their writing skills. The researchers conducted interviews with the teachers of department to know about the personality traits of their students.

For data analysis, researchers used the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences 20). The researchers used the statistical techniques of frequency, mean score, standard deviation, ANOVA for quantitative data and used thematic analysis for teachers' interviews.

Data Analysis

The researcher collected the data in Islamia University of Bahawalpur by using Eysenck Personality Inventory as the data collecting tool. The questionnaire was used to assess the personality of the students of students studying in Department of English. In order to find the results, percentage of answers obtained is being collected for each statement by using SPSS. After that the ANOVA test was applied to find the results.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for the questionnaire

Sr	Statement	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Mean
1	I long for excitement	32	82	60	18	8	1.20
2	I do and say things quickly	26	66	54	34	20	1.40
3	I am carefree	26	54	54	28	38	1.50
4	I like going out a lot	58	40	60	26	16	1.30
5	I shout back when someone shouts at me	12	22	56	36	74	1.80
6	I gossip	66	48	46	34	6	1.20
7	People think of me as being lively	76	58	32	28	6	1.10
8	I like doing things quickly	86	68	20	22	4	1.00
9	I become late for an appointment or work	20	22	48	60	50	1.70
10	I am self-confident	58	64	34	26	18	1.20
11	I can get life into a dull party	32	54	54	30	30	1.40
12	I like to be surrounded by the people	36	42	66	38	18	1.40

No.	Statement						
13	I find it hard to take 'no' for an answer	60	48	54	22	16	1.20
14	I am a big risk taker	38	54	48	30	30	1.40
15	People think of me as mellow	76	50	32	26	16	1.10
16	I am quiet with other people	48	56	44	26	26	1.30
17	I think things over before doing anything	46	70	52	20	12	1.20
18	I am troubled with feelings of guilt	32	44	56	20	28	1.30
19	I like to look up in a book to know something	32	62	64	24	18	1.30
20	I get palpitations	28	64	68	28	12	1.30
21	I like work that needs close attention	76	68	16	24	16	1.10
22	I get attacks of shaking or trembling	16	26	52	52	54	1.80
23	I am an irritable person	16	10	40	34	100	2.00
24	People think that I am a good listener	58	46	52	24	20	1.30
25	I worry about awful things that might happen	46	46	64	30	14	1.30
26	I am slow in the way I move	36	28	60	26	50	1.60
27	I need friends to cheer me up	88	48	38	20	6	1.00
28	I would call myself a nervous person	38	34	44	32	52	1.60
29	I prefer reading instead of meeting people	28	36	70	30	36	1.50
30	I am easily hurt if people find fault in me	62	54	52	22	10	1.20
31	I find it hard to enjoy at a lively party	24	32	56	26	62	1.70
32	I am troubled with feelings of inferiority	20	44	54	38	44	1.60
33	I prefer to have few but special friends	134	40	10	10	6	0.80

| 34 | I daydream a lot | | | | 38 | 40 | 46 | 28 | 48 | 1.50 |

In table 1 the mean score goes from 0.80 to 2.00 that indicate post graduate learners are more extroverts. The statement 'I prefer to have few but special friends' has the mean score of 0.80 which strengthen the idea that most of the learners prefer to socialize and make more friends instead of having few friends. The item 23 in the questionnaire describes, 'I am an irritable person' (mean score 2.00) supports the idea that most learners were not irritable and like to interact with the individuals of society freely, that makes them extroverts. The mean score of 1.30 indicates, that majority of the learners are keen to go out a lot, on contrary majority of the learners have the feeling that they do not talk much when around with other people.

Table 2

Comparison of Language Proficiency among Introverts and Extroverts

Language Proficiency		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Err.
Introverts	Syntactic Variety	22	25.91	5.338	1.609
	Vocabulary	18	24.44	5.434	1.811
	Clarity	68	37.35	9.393	1.611
	Organized	44	37.32	9.183	1.958
	Focused	48	37.21	6.679	1.363
	Total	**200**	**34.89**	**9.301**	**.930**
Extroverts	Syntactic Variety	22	34.73	6.002	1.810
	Vocabulary	18	30.11	5.085	1.695
	Clarity	68	21.09	6.653	1.141
	Organized	44	22.18	6.292	1.341
	Focused	48	21.04	5.575	1.138
	Total	**200**	**23.63**	**7.610**	**.761**

Table 2 reveals that Introverts and Extroverts in case of Language Proficiency at subscales of Syntactic Variety, Vocabulary, Clarity, Organized and Focused. Through data analysis of

above table it is found that introverts have higher rate of clarity, being organized and having focus with the mean values of 37.35, 37.32 and 37.21 respectively, which are higher among all other values of all the subscale of introverts, while in extroverts the mean values of syntactic variety and vocabulary is higher as compared to the rest of values in the extroverts table.

Table 3

ANOVA of Comparison of Language Proficiency among Introverts and Extroverts

ANOVA		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Introverts	Between Groups	2334.163	4	583.541	8.899	.014
	Within Groups	6229.627	95	65.575		
	Total	**8563.790**	99			
Extroverts	Between Groups	2159.273	4	539.818	14.349	.015
	Within Groups	3574.037	95	37.621		
	Total	**5733.310**	99			

P-Value significant at level .05

The table 3 shows that ANOVA test of Introverts and Extroverts in case of Language Proficiency at subscales of Syntactic Variety, Vocabulary, Clarity, Organized and Focused. Through data analysis of above table, it is found that introverts have higher rate of clarity, being organized and having focus with the mean values of 37.35, 37.32 and 37.21 respectively, which are higher among all other values, while in extroverts the mean values of syntactic variety and vocabulary is higher as compared rest of values in the extroverts table. Thus, it is proved from above analysis that learners with introversion trait are more efficient at clarity, being organized and focus and the learners with extroversion trait are good at vocabulary and syntactic variety. The p-values shown in table 4.36 mean square of introverts and extroverts are 583.541 and 539.818 respectively. Since the average square of introverts is higher than extroverts, so it is concluded that introverts show more language proficiency than extroverts and the p values .014 and .015 respectively show that the results are significant at level 5%.

Perception of Teachers about Introverts/Extroverts in the ESL Classroom

Question 1: What are your views about the personality traits of the students in your class?

Majority of the teachers (80%) shared their experiences regarding different personality traits in the classroom environment. The teachers communicated researchers that some of the students in class are very active and showing their interest to participate in classroom activities

related to language learning. And there are some students who are shy and do not like to participate in the classroom but they are good at writing. They do not participate in speaking activities and stay quiet in classroom usually.

Question 2: Who performs better at writing skills, extroverts or introverts?

Perception of English teachers regarding the qualities of extroversion and introversion in EFL learners is that the active (extrovert) learners were better in speaking while the shy (introverts) were better at writing. When asked to compare the writing skills of both types of learners, the teachers claimed that introverts were better at writing skills in comparison to extroverts.

Question 3: Do you think Introversion trait causes hindrance in acquiring language competency?

Eighty five percent (85%) teachers responded that introverts were even better at acquiring language competence rather they are shy in their speaking habits. In view of ESL teachers introverts are good at their writing skills. The quality of introversion is no more hindrance in the way of introverts in acquiring proficiency in second/foreign language.

Question 4: Who shows creativity in writing and on what level?

Eighty percent (80%) ESL teachers have the perception regarding creative writing among introverts and extroverts were that introverts focus on the language patterns keenly. So, they write the things according the rules of language and utilize their abilities in writing a creative piece of art. As a whole, teachers have the perception that introverts are more creative writers than extroverts. They have the proficiency at the level of vocabulary.

Question 5: What types of learners are better to handle the syntactic variety in writing?

As a whole ESL teachers have the view that the extroverts were better at syntactic variety in their writing.

Findings and Discussion

It is found that Introversion is not a hindrance in the learning of a foreign language. Out of the five features of writing skills, introverts were found better at three features, while extroverts performed better at two features (syntactic variety and vocabulary).

The study established that the introverts were better at clarity of the content and were able to clearly convey in their writing what they wanted to say. The writings reflected that introverts were clear about their ideas that make them write the expressions in a clear way, taking proper use of the grammar in account. Similarly, introverts were also found good in clarity but most of them tried to write descriptions in detail. On contrary, the extroverts were low at clarity, conveyed their thoughts in a much precise way and avoid long descriptions. The writing of

extroverts was much like communicating, and it showed they tend to just communicate what they wanted to communicate without considering grammar rules.

Regarding the use of sentences, the study clears the idea that the introvert writers used many types of sentences to convey their views. Most of the sentences were complex, compound and compound-complex sentences. On the other hand, most of the extrovert writers used simple sentences and avoided use of complex sentences. They think that the purpose of language is to convey the message, whether through verbal communication or non-verbal communication.

Going forward the study explored the use of appropriate vocabulary in introverts and extroverts. The extroverts had good knowledge of vocabulary. The researchers found that learners have a grasp on vocabulary but not on appropriate use of vocabulary. Moreover, repetition of words was rare, but the use of words at inappropriate places was found common in extroverts. The repetition was a factor that could be seen in some of the introverts' writings. They use the same word again and again. They knew fewer words but they seemed to know the exact meaning of the words they use. The study discovers that extroverts were poor at organizing ideas and thoughts in a sequence. On contrary, introverts were good at organizing and sequencing their ideas in hierarchical manner.

Introverts were found to be better at grasping the topic assigned to them. They were able to write more relevant to the topic. Most sentences in the writing of extroverts were off-topic or irrelevant. Ultimately the findings of the study revealed that there is a positive correlation between the personality traits and writing proficiency of the English learning learners. The study of Mann (2003) supported the findings of the current study in a way. According to Mann's (2003) there was a positive correlation between emotional stability and institutional attachment and extroversion and agreeableness had a positive relation with academic and social adjustment; however, a low (negative) relation between conscientiousness and college student adjustment was also clarified by the study.
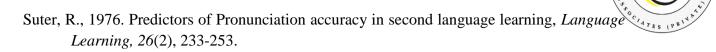
Conclusion

The study concluded that there is a positive correlation between the personality traits and writing ability of the English Learners. The study revealed that introverts were much better at writing as compared to extrovert. This proved that introversion is not a hindrance in acquiring writing skills and language proficiency of Second Language Proficiency. Most of the introverts are more creative to some extent as compared to extroverts.

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