The Impact of Extroversion and Introversion Personality Types on EFL Learners' Writing Ability

Ali Akbar Jafarpour Boroujeni
Shahrekord University, Shahrekord, Iran

Ali Roohani
Shahrekord University, Shahrekord, Iran

Asiyeh Hasanimanesh
Shahrekord University, Shahrekord, Iran

Abstract—The way we learn is very much affected by our personality. Practitioners have claimed that perception of personality type can help teachers to understand the reason why students perform differently in class activities (Wilz, 2000). Regarding the significant role of different personality types in language learning in general and in mastering L2 writing in particular, the present study aims at investigating the possible impact of extrovert/introvert personality types of Iranian EFL learners on their writing performance in terms of its different subsets (i.e., content, organization, language, mechanics, and vocabulary). In so doing, 50 writing samples, elicited from 50 extroverted and introverted university students were collected and rated by the researchers using Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel, and Hughey's (1981) analytic scoring scale. A one-way multivariate analysis of variance was run. Analysis of the results revealed that introverts significantly outperformed extroverts in all subsets except organization. This may be due to some of the introverts' personal characteristics that the extroverts lack, such as being careful, having more concentration in their solitude, and ability to generate much more ideas alone.

Index Terms—analytic scale, extroversion, introversion, writing, writing subsets

I. INTRODUCTION

People have different characteristics which affect their life affairs; even the way they learn is influenced by these personal characteristics. One reason for having these different and stable characteristics is related to personality types of individuals. According to Freguson (2000), the main assumption behind personality type is that people differ from one another in their style of behavior which is at least relatively consistent across time and place. Many definitions are suggested for personality by psychologists. As Funder (2007) states, personality refers "to an individual's characteristic patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior, together with the psychological mechanisms, hidden or not, behind those patterns" (p. 5). It is defined as "the organized, developing system within the individual that represents the collective action of that individual's major psychological subsystems" (Mayer, 2007, p. 14). Thus, from this definition it is inferred that peoples' personality types are exclusive to them and stable over time which would influence every aspect of their lives including learning in general and language learning in particular.

Writing is one of the four basic communication skills whose learning can lead to learning a second language. According to Bello (1997), writing increases language acquisition because learners deal with words, sentences, and other elements of writing to convey their ideas effectively and to reinforce the grammar and vocabulary they are learning in class. As Chastain (1988) states, writing is a kind of practice which helps writer to store the material in long-term memory, in other words, the vocabulary, grammar, and patterns are more easily learned through being carefully applied in a piece of writing. Undoubtedly writing is the most difficult skill for second language learners to master (Richards & Renandya, 2002). As a skill, production of a piece of writing which is coherent, fluent, and extended is probably the most difficult task to do with language, even for a native speaker (Nunan, 2003). Cumming (2006), emphasizing the role personality plays in writing, defined this skill as a "uniquely personal form of individual expression" (p. 473). The belief that each student, as an individual, has individual traits that uniquely influence his or her behavior and the difficulties most learners face in producing a coherent, fluent, and extended piece of writing persuades the present researchers to design this study focusing on EFL learners' personality type and its effect on their writing ability.

A. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

Different psychologists identified different personality traits based on different theories. In order to better understand individual learners' personality traits, many researchers have employed the Jungian personality traits measured by the Myers-Briggs type indicator (MBTI) (Matthews, Deary & Whiteman, 2003).

As Myers and McCaulley (1985) mention, the MBTI is a means to implement Jung's psychological type theory. Its mechanism focused on measuring individuals on four dimensions comprising of opposite pairs: Extraversion/Introversion (E-I), Sensation/Intuition (S-N), Thinking/Feeling (T-F), and Judgment/Perception (J-P), resulting in 16 possible psychological types (Carducci, 1998). Each type is introduced by a four-letter code. For example, ESTJ would identify a person with extroversion, sensing, thinking, and judging attributes.

B. Extroversion and Introversion

Extraversion (E) and introversion (I) dichotomy deals with the way people prefer to attain energy and focus their attention. Extroverts prefer to get energy from outside sources or outer world, but introverts prefer solitary activities and the inner world of ideas as the source of their energy (Eysenck & Chan, 1982). According to Jensen and Ditiberio (1984), it is the first dimension of Jung's system identified a person's general orientation toward life. Extroverts mainly focus their energy outward and tend to interact with people and things. Outer experience (i.e., talking and acting) is so highly important for them that they often begin performing tasks with little planning, then rely on trial and error to complete the task. Since they spend more time dealing with outer experience rather than inner experience (i.e., reflecting and observing), they think most clearly and develop more ideas in action or in conversation. Moreover, they state that introverts mostly focus their energy inward; they tend to consider and contemplate. More cautious about the outer world; they anticipate and reflect before becoming involved in action to avoid errors. When they are alone and uninterrupted by people and incidents, they think best and develop more ideas.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of *type* emerged in the work of Swiss psychologist Carl Jung (1921) and two American women, Katharine Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers (Myers, 1962). Jung, a psychoanalyst, found that the seemingly unpredictable behavior could in fact be anticipated through understanding the underlying mental functions and attitudes people preferred (Tieger & Barron-Tieger, 1995). In 1921, Jung's theory of personality was published in a book called Psychological Types, theorizing that "individuals have mental or psychological preferences for performing certain tasks, just as they have physical preferences such as a dominant hand" (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004, p. 38).

When Katharine read the English translation of the book published in 1923, she realized that Jung had already discovered what she had been looking for, so she adopted his model and began a serious study of his work. Also, she made her young daughter Isabel interested in her pursuit (Tieger & Barron-Tieger, 1995). They expanded Jung's psychological type theory and gave it practicality. This mother-daughter studied under Jung and desired to develop a method to test Jung's theory and put it into practice (Myers & Myers, 1980). They accomplished their goal by developing a psychometric measurement instrument called the Myers-Briggs type indicator.

Many studies have tried to investigate the impact of different personality types on different aspects of life including: vocation, education, sports, business, and psychology, etc. Regarding education, much works have been done on the relationship between personality types and language learning. In a study, in 1973, Smith, Irey, and McCaulley found that personality types can influence L2 learners' attitude and performance in self-paced instruction. Milton and Cranney (1979) conducted a study on the relationship between personality type and learning style in reading comprehension and found a significant relationship between personality types of introversion, intuition, and perceiving and learning style. Besides, Busch (1982) investigated the relationship between extroversion/introversion and English proficiency among the EFL students in Japan. He rejected the hypothesis that the extraverts are more proficient than the introverts. Pazhuhesh (1994), also, examined the relation between extroversion/introversion and reading comprehension among EFL Iranian students. It was indicated that the introvert students were more successful than their extrovert counterparts. Another study was conducted by Dewaele and Furnham (1999) on the relationship between personality type and speech production. They concluded that extrovert bilinguals speak more fluently than introvert bilinguals, especially in interpersonal stressful situations. In another study, Badran (2002) attempted to determine if there existed any relationship between extroversion/introversion and the pronunciation accuracy in English as a foreign language with respect to the gender variable. He found firstly a positive relationship between extroversion/introversion and English pronunciation accuracy, that is, the extroverts outperformed the introverts in English pronunciation. Secondly, males were better in pronunciation accuracy than females. Alibakhshi (2011), also, conducted a study on 280 male and female Iranian EFL teachers investigating the impacts of personality and gender on their teaching activities preferences and their teaching efficacy. Using MBTI, Teaching Efficacy, and Teaching Activities Preference questionnaires; he found no significant influence for personality and gender on teachers' teaching efficacy, but a significant influence was observed for both personality and gender of teachers on their teaching activities preference.

Some others have investigated the effect of personality types on EFL writing, for example, in an empirical study on the role of personality types in writing among writers and raters, Carrell (1995) found that the writers' personality types affected the ratings their essays received, and the raters' personality types affected their rating process. But, no significant relationship was observed between writers' and raters' personality types. Callahan (2000), also, conducted a

study with student teachers investigating the relationship between student reflective writing and teacher feedback. Using the MBTI, three students whose personality types completely differed from hers were selected as raters. They read other participants' reflective writings and tried to identify the writers' types. It was revealed that as writer students need to go beyond their own interests and familiarize themselves with other choices, the readers' comment on student writing can play a vital role in forming their own preferences and in developing their less preferred approaches. Besides, Marefat (2006) investigated the relationship between learner's personality type and his or her writing ability in the first place, then, between rater personality and his or her rating procedure; it was revealed that the only dimension showing significant impact across writing ability was the sensing/intuition preference and a relation was observed between rater personality and her rating procedure. In another study, Layeghi (2011) investigated the relationship between EFL learners' extroversion/introversion personality types and their performance in the argumentative writing with regard to the content, form, and their overall performance; she found that introverted writers significantly outperformed extroverts in all three sections. Also, Mansouri Nejad, Bijami, and Ahmadi (2012) studied the extent to which extrovert/ introvert types of personality predict academic writing ability; it was revealed that there was no significant relation between personality and writing ability. Besides, the widespread assumption that extraverts outperform introverts in skills like writing was rejected.

III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Because of the popularity of extroversion and introversion both in theory and in research, and difficulties in instruction and mastering of EFL writing, the present researchers tried to investigate the possible effect of extroversion/introversion personality traits on different features of EFL writing, such as content, organization, language, mechanics, and vocabulary. Learners from one category of personality type may differ from other learners from different categories in following different features of writing, such as organization, sentence structure, development and support, choice of vocabulary, grammar, and mechanical conventions. The results of this study can help EFL teachers employ teaching strategies which fit different characteristics of extrovert and introvert learners and can make learners aware of their own characteristics in order to develop their most preferred strategy and practice their less preferred one to compensate for their weak points.

With regard to what mentioned above, the present study tried to answer the following questions:

1. Is there any significant difference between extrovert and introvert Iranian EFL learners in terms of their writing ability?

2. Is there any significant difference between extrovert and introvert Iranian EFL learners in terms of different subsets of writing, such as content, organization, language, mechanics, and vocabulary?

Accordingly, in line with the research questions above, the following null hypotheses are addressed in this study:

H_{01}: There is no significant difference between extrovert and introvert Iranian EFL learners in terms of their writing ability.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference between extrovert and introvert Iranian EFL learners in terms of different subsets of writing, such as content, organization, language, mechanics, and vocabulary.

IV. METHOD

A. Participants

The participants of the study were 50 undergraduate Iranian university students majoring in English Translation and English Teaching at Shahrekord and Yasuj Universities. They were both female and male EFL students with the age range of 19-26, passing at least three semesters in order to ensure that they have passed or are passing the Writing course.

B. Instruments

In order to homogenize the participants in terms of their language proficiency, the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP) was used. It consists of 100 items with three independent subtests, 40 multiple-choice structure items, 40 multiple-choice vocabulary items, and 20 multiple-choice reading comprehension items. To identify their personality types, the researchers administered the MBTI, a 94-item paper-and-pencil inventory with two options for each item. The Persian version of the questionnaire, which was translated and validated by Hoseini (2003), was used in this study. The third instrument was a free writing test; the participants were asked to write one paragraph about 250 words on the topic "Do You Prefer Team Sports or Individual Sports?" because the researchers thought it was a general topic which made it possible for almost all of the Iranian EFL learners to write about it.

C. Procedure

At first the researchers administered the MTELP to participants to homogenize them in terms of proficiency. Among the participants who took the test, only those whose scores was above 50% of the total possible score were selected as the sample for the study. Then, the MBTI was administered to them to identify their personality type. Finally, they were asked to submit a writing sample on the determined topic to assess their writing ability.

D. Data Collection and Analysis

To deal with the data collection procedure, firstly, the MTELP questionnaire, with the permission of teachers, was administered to be completed by the participants. Secondly, the researchers administered MBTI questionnaire to them. Then, they were asked to write a paragraph on the presented topic within the time limit of one hour. The participants were assured that any information given would be recorded anonymously and used only for the purpose of the very research. Besides, they were guaranteed that it would not affect their scores. The data collected were subjected to a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (one-way MANOVA) by the researchers, using SPSS (version 18) to answer the research questions.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Coefficient for the intra-rater reliability of the scores given was calculated. Using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, the intra-rater reliability coefficient was r = .98, n = 50, p <.05 (two-tailed). Therefore, there was a high level of intra-rater correlation.

In order to examine the difference in the performance of extrovert and introvert Iranian EFL learners in different subsets of writing (i.e., content, mechanics, organization, vocabulary, and language), a one-way MANOVA was run. Besides, preliminary statistics were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homogeneity. Table 1 indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in writing performance of extrovert and introvert personality types.

TABLE1
EXTROVERTS AND INTROVERTS DIFFERENCE IN WRITING

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
pt	Pillai's Trace	.413	6.182[a]	5.000	44.000	.000	.413
	Wilks' Lambda	.587	6.182[a]	5.000	44.000	.000	.413
	Hotelling's Trace	.702	6.182[a]	5.000	44.000	.000	.413
	Roy's Largest Root	.702	6.182[a]	5.000	44.000	.000	.413

As Table 1 demonstrates, Wilks' Lambda value of .587 with a significance value of .000 is less than .05. Therefore, there is statistically significant difference between extroverts and introverts on a linear combination of the dependent variables. But, this difference should be investigated in relation to each of the dependent variables. Table 2 indicates the significance of difference in relation to each of the dependents variables.

TABLE 2
THE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EXTROVERTS AND INTROVERTS ON WRITING SUBSETS

Sourse	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
pt	vocabulary	50.000	1	50.000	12.225	.001	.203
	mechanics	12.500	1	12.500	12.315	.001	.204
	language	76.880	1	76.880	8.712	.005	.154
	organization	.720	1	.720	.094	.760	.002
	content	79.380	1	79.380	7.256	.010	.131

As Table 2 reports, the observed difference between introverts and extroverts is statistically significant in relation to most of the dependent variables (i.e., content, language, mechanics, and vocabulary) except organization. Using Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .01, the researchers found that extroverts and introverts differ in terms of content, $F(1, 48) = 7.25$, $p = .01$, partial eta squared = .131; language, $F(1, 48) = 8.71$, $p = .005$, partial eta squared =.154; mechanics, $F(1, 48) = 12.31$, $p = .001$, partial eta squared = .204; and vocabulary $F(1, 48) = 12.22$, $p = .001$, partial eta squared = .203. In all of the above mentioned dependent variables, introverts outperformed extroverts. Table 3 reports the mean scores of extroverts and introverts on all of the dependent variables.

TABLE 3
THE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EXTROVERT AND INTROVERT TYPES ON WRITING SUBSETS

Dependent Variable	personality type	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Vocabulary	extrovert	14.560	.404	13.747	15.373
	introvert	16.560	.404	15.747	17.373
Mechanics	extrovert	2.840	.201	2.435	3.245
	introvert	3.840	.201	3.435	4.245
Language	extrovert	17.280	.594	16.085	18.475
	introvert	19.760	.594	18.565	20.955
Organization	extrovert	15.160	.553	14.048	16.272
	introvert	15.400	.553	14.288	16.512

Inspection of the mean scores indicated that introverts reported higher content performance ($M = 21.16$, $SD = 3.659$) than extroverts ($M = 18.64$, $SD = 2.91$); higher levels of language ($M = 19.76$, $SD = 2.79$) than extroverts ($M = 17.28$,

SD = 3.14); of mechanics (M = 3.84, SD = 1.02) than extroverts (M = 2.84, SD = .98); and of vocabulary choice (M = 16.56, SD = 1.35) than extroverts (M =14.56, SD = 2.51).

As Table 3 indicates, the mean scores of introvert learners for all the dependent variables are higher than those of extrovert learners. But, the difference is statistically significant for most of these variables, (i.e., content with a large effect size of 13.1%, language with a large effect size of 15.4%, mechanics with a large effect size of 20.4%, and vocabulary with a large effect size of 20.3%.) But, the slight difference observed between their mean scores on organization subset turned out to be statistically insignificant.

As it was revealed, introverts outperformed their counterpart in writing and its different subsets. As Jensen and Ditiberio (1984) claim, introverts generally have less difficulty in writing than extroverts. Although researchers such as Eysenck and Eysenck (1985) and Eysenck (1979) claim that introverts mostly attend grammatical and mechanical aspects of writing due to their attentional selectivity, it was shown that introverts also pay attention to content of writing. As Jensen and Ditiberio (1984) note, introverts generally want to clarify most of their ideas before writing; they can be encouraged to develop ideas while writing and they are usually able to generate their ideas in isolation. That is, their performance in content seems to be better than extroverts', who just easily express their thoughts in writing. Introverts are usually in search of the best vocabulary choice; for this reason they probably experience more difficulty in speaking an L2 fluently than extroverts. But, the same reason has made their writing much more professional.

Jensen and Ditiberio (1984) found the extraverts' writing with little planning, not writing from outlines; their writing process is quick, that is, they write down immediately whatever comes in their mind without so much contemplation. They further state that the difficulties that many extraverts have with writing is because of the isolation and the lack of oral feedback in writing process; writing seems too isolated a process for them which causes them become blocked. Extroverts' progress in generating ideas depends too much on talking about the topic, interviewing, or presenting reports. They understand the oral presentation better than the written version. Thus, they can revise their writing better through their advisers' talk and oral feedback.

The results of this study are in line with the findings of a study conducted by Carrell, Prince, and Astika, (1996) in which they found that introverts obtained better scores than extroverts in writing course during both the first and second semesters. Likewise, these results confirm Jahanbazi's (2007) investigation in Iran in which he found out that introverts were more successful than their extrovert counterparts in the overall writing quality. Findings also lend support to Callahan's (2000) claim that writing for extroverted learners seems to lag behind speaking, whereas, introverts are better at expressing themselves through writing rather than speaking. In a similar vein, findings of this study asserts the results of another study conducted by Layeghi (2011) on the relationship between learners' extroversion/introversion personality types and their performance in the argumentative writing with regard to the content and form; he found that introverts significantly outperformed extroverts in both form and content.

VI. CONCLUSION

Although extroverts were assumed to be good at expressing themselves through speaking, the findings of this study revealed that they were not as successful as introverts in writing. Introverts outperformed their extrovert counterparts in most of writing subsets, such as content, language, mechanics, and vocabulary. The results of this study make teachers aware of certain general realities that hold for most extroverted and introverted writers and they can more directly address students' needs. They can apply this knowledge to motivate extroverts to write diaries in order to improve their writing.

Having knowledge of learners' personality types enables writing teachers to adjust their expectations with writers' abilities. For instance, realizing that extroverts are not apt for writing causes teachers to reduce their expectations and affects the scores they assign to students. Being informed of learners' personality types, teachers are able to choose appropriate writing prompts. As Callahan (2000) suggests, extroverts show interest in thinking about the external world and their experiences, whereas, introverts prefer to reflect on their inner side. Thus, teachers are able to suggest choices of prompt to writers in which each group of writers choose their favorite topic.

Also, the findings can help extrovert learners to improve their motivation and enhance their performance in writing through realizing their personality types and their difficulty in different subsets of writing. Recognizing extroverts' difficulty in generating ideas in isolation, writing teachers should attempt to provide opportunities for them to discuss the topic before beginning to write.

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Ali Akbar Jafarpour Boroujeni is an assistant professor at Shahrekord University. His area of research includes ESP, ELT, and SLA research. He has published several articles in both national and international journals as well as a book on academic writing and ESP in Iran. Also, he has given lectures in national and international conferences.

Ali Roohani is a PhD holder in TEFL. He received his BA in English literature, his MA and PhD in TEFL from Shiraz and Allameh Tabataba'ii universities, respectively. He is currently a faculty member at Shahrekord University. His area of interest includes EQ, multiple intelligences, learning strategies and L2 skills. He has published 4 books and 24 papers and presented a number of papers in the national and international conferences.

Asiyeh Hasanimanesh got her B.A. in English Literature from Yasuj University and is an M.A. TEFL graduate of Shahrekord University. Her areas of interest include literature, psycholinguistics, and multiple intelligences.