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THE EFFECT OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' LINGUALITY ON THEIR GENERAL ENGLISH PROFICIENCY KNOWLEDGE REGARDING THEIR LEARNING STYLES

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ABSTRACT

Many factors have been studied to determine how students learn a foreign language, one of which is learning style. Students especially EFL students from different English language backgrounds may have different learning styles. With such a view, it is essential to consider the differences in learning styles and language proficiency because this would have an impact on the learning process. The present study was carried out to investigate the interaction between Iranian EFL learners' linguality, learning styles and their general English proficiency. In order to address this relation, 380 high school students in second grade both male and female had been invited. They also had been monolingual and bilingual. All of them were from Markazi province (Arak, Farahan). In order to have homogenate student, out of the original pool of 380 participants, merely 214 were found qualified to be included in the final analysis of data. To test the research hypotheses set forth in the present study, independent sample t-test, levenes' test and Chi-square were run as the main statistical analysis. The results indicated that there was a significant relationship between general English proficiency of the subjects and the personality characteristic, i.e. extroversion vs. introversion. Extrovert students were better in general language proficiency than introvert counterparts. The next hypothesis showed that linguality of Iranian language learners had significant impacts on their learning styles. Investigations proved that extroverted monolingual students are better than other groups in general language proficiency. The results showed that there is a strong relationship between learning styles and learning.

Keywords: *Learning Style; Extroversion; Introversion; Bilingualism*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, one of the main issues in the learning and teaching English language is to raise the awareness of learners' individual differences in a classroom. In the history of language teaching, the issue of selecting the most appropriate method for teaching has been the most debated one. For this reason, awareness of one's inner personality plays a significant role in the teaching process of teachers. Understanding the determining processes and factors of SLA has motivated numerous researchers to meticulously examine various and diverse variables (Van-Hell and Dijkstra, 2002; Hakuta *et al.*, 2003; Hulstijn, 2000; Lantolf, 2002).

(Fazeli, 2012) conducted a research on the relationship between extroversion and using language learning strategies and found that there was a direct relationship between extroversion and three types of learning strategies (mnemonic, metacognitive and social strategies). In another study (Gholami *et al.*, 2011) indicated that more extrovert students were presented and that introversion and extroversion had no effective impact on the students' performance (in these three domains of information gap, reasoning gap and attitude gap).

Naveh *et al.*, (2011) conducted a research titled "the relationship between extroversion tendency, vocabulary learning strategies and reading comprehension" and found that there was a positive relationship between four, of total 5, vocabulary learning strategies and extroversion, but no significant relationship was found between reading comprehension and extroversion. In addition to the above mentioned research, other researchers have also been conducted in which the effect of monolingual or

Research Article

bilingual students on the learning of subsequent language have been investigated. Maghsoudi (2010) did a research and found that monolingual students are better in English language skills compared to bilingual students. Maghsoudi *et al.*, (2008) did another study on monolinguals and bilinguals and asserted that the scores of bilingual and monolingual students were significantly different on reading comprehension. Besides, they found that scores of proficient language learners and less proficient learners with previous experience of monolingualism and bilingualism were very different from each other. There is the fact that students comprehend new information in different manners. Some prefers to learn individually whereas others prefer to interact with their peers. Just as we are different in the way we feel, act and look, we are also different in the way we learn. Each of us has a learning style. Learning styles are internally based characteristics of individuals for the understanding of new information. It is manifest that students learn differently and at different ways because of their psychological and biological differences.

Language learning styles are considered one of the affective factors contributing to learners' learning outcomes. In the eyes of many language teachers and learners personality factors includes a major factor contributing to success or failure in language learning. These learning styles also can be varied among bilingual and monolingual learners. Pashler *et al.*, (2009) assert “the learning-styles view has acquired great influence within the education field, and is frequently encountered at levels ranging from kindergarten to graduate school” (p. 1). Some researchers (Maghsoudi, 2007) have even claimed that “in theory, there are as many learning styles as there are learners, and the practical implication of learning styles for teaching-learning interactions are numerous” (p. 3) and (Brown, 2007) asserts that “styles vary across individuals (p. 119). It is argued that monolinguals and bilinguals are different in their individuals' learning styles (Esfandabad and Emamipour, 2008). For example, studies have shown that the African-American bilingual individuals have a more holistic view and are more kinesthetic. Furthermore and regarding the independent vs. dependent learning styles, they argue that monolinguals are less dependent to the background. Extraversion-introversion can be nominated as one of the most and best examined variables of personality styles. Furthermore, it is argued that extraverts have high quantity of interpersonal interactions, act very actively and usually are more, merciful and talkative (Vorkapić, 2012). That is, they tend to join groups more and try to be engaged in conversations outside the classroom (Swain, 1985) or inside it (Cook, 1991).

Having looked at the literature on learning styles and personality traits in particular, it is evident that the researchers have investigated the extroversion vs. introversion dichotomy far more than other personality traits (MacIntyre and Charos, 1996), although some inconsistencies are vividly acknowledged by some researchers (Busch, 1982; MacIntyer and Charos, 1996). Vogel and Vogel (1988) examined 89 German students in terms of oral proficiency and showed that extraverted students were more fluent. Most recently, Ehrman (2008) conducted a very large scale study of 3145 students in an intensive training in more than 60 languages and finally concluded that introverts outperformed extroverts in speaking and reading assessment.

So, in recent years, there has been an increasing interest in studying the personality traits of Extroversion and Introversion in relation to second language learners, language proficiency and there are different results about the impact of Extroversion and introversion on language proficiency. Thus, there is a need to assess the learning styles of the students as well as other relevant variables such as: gender, age, language proficiency and etc to accommodate different learners. From this point, the researcher decided to investigate learners' personality type in accordance with their language proficiency and their bilinguality, because their personality and bilinguality might have affected their way of benefiting from the existing language learning sources and opportunities.

Research Hypotheses

In line with the pedagogical objectives of the study, the present researchers have formulated the following hypotheses:

- H₁. Introverted and extroverted Iranian EFL learners have different general English proficiency knowledge.
- H₂. Linguality of Iranian EFL learners has a significant impact on their learning styles.

Research Article

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

Initially, 380 monolingual and bilingual both male and female students were invited to this project. They were randomly selected from the second grade of high school. All of them were from Markazi province (Arak, Farahan). To have homogenous participants those whose language proficiency tests scores did not fall between 1.5 standard deviation above and below the mean score were excluded. Accordingly, 214 out of 380 (106 males, 108 females) were found qualified to be included in the rest of study. By using a background questionnaire and Eysenck personality questionnaire the subjects were divided into 2 groups:
Group A: (61 Extroverted and 60 Introverted Monolinguals)
Group B: (68 Extroverted and 25 Introverted Bilinguals)

Materials

The different materials which were used in this paper include:

A background questionnaire: It had been covered issues as the subjects' age, gender, level of education, and linguistic status. It had been given to subjects to fill it out in order to elicit some basic information about the participants.

General English Proficiency Test (GEPT): It had been utilized to evaluate the language skills of participants. Transparency Test was used by the researcher as the general English proficiency test. It was included 50 multiple-choice questions, i.e. 30 grammar, 10 vocabulary and 10 reading comprehension questions.

The Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-revised: It is the Extroversion scale (E-scale) of Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (1973) that has translated into Persian language. It should be mentioned that the whole questionnaire consists of 57 Yes/No questions. Some of these questions are related to N-scale, that shows subject's neurotic. Some other questions are related to the L-scale. They show the honesty of the subjects in answering the all questions.

Out of these 57 questions, 24 are related to the Extroversion scale, 9 are related to the L-scale, and the rests are for scaling the subjects' neurotic. In order for the results to be exact, the whole questionnaire will be administered and then the 24 items related to the Extroversion scale will be corrected for the purpose of this study. Out of 24 items, 12 items are related to Extroversion and 12 items related to Introversion scale. Francis *et al.*, (2006) examined the reliability of the Eysenck extroversion questionnaire and found an alpha reliability of 0.84. In a cross-cultural study, Francis *et al.*, (1992), as cited in Francis *et al.*, (2006) for the short form extroversion scale achieved alpha coefficients of 0.78, 0.83, 0.85, and 0.87 in the four samples. Rocklin and Revelle (1981) also examined and approved the content validity of the questionnaire correlating it with Eysenck personality inventory (1986, as cited in Francis and Jones 2000), a questionnaire measuring personality trait of neuroticism, psychoticism, and extroversion (Rashidi *et al.*, 2011).

Procedure

Firstly, the investigators explained to the respondents the purpose and the procedures of the questionnaires and the test. The participants had been assured that their responses would be kept confidential and would not affect their schools' marks. The following steps were taken in the current study:

Phase 1: The Background Questionnaire was given to the participants to fill them out in order to elicit some basic information. The time requires for answering was about 10 minutes.

Phase 2: The next questionnaire (Transparency test) was administered to the whole study participants to identify the level of their general English proficiency. The time allots as determined at the pilot study was 30 minutes.

Phase 3: The last questionnaire (EPQ-R) was handed over to the subjects and they answered to the Yes/No questions in 50 minutes as determined at the pilot study. The EPQ-R was used to measure the students' degree of Extroversion and Introversion.

All the data were collected in a 90 minutes session because the entire questionnaires were related to each other. In order to avoid of interference of the questionnaires and tests, the researcher was attached each

Research Article

student's questionnaires and test to each other because there were not the subjects' names on the GEPT and EPQ-R.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Statistical Analysis of Subjects' Learning Styles

Table 1 and its corresponding figure 1 reveal frequency of subjects' Introversion and Extroversion. Drawing on the information given there, 45.3% of subjects (97 learners) were found to be Introvert and 54.6% (117 learners) were marked as Extroverts. Moreover, table 2 and chart 2 depict the descriptive statistical indices obtain from subjects' introversion and extroversion. As it is evident from the table 2 the mean score of English Proficiency for introverted subjects equals ($\bar{x} = 13.65$), and the standard deviation relevant to them is ($SD = 1.66$). On the other hand, the mean score and standard deviation obtained for extroverted subjects are ($\bar{x} = 14.82$) and ($SD = 1.58$), respectively. As the table 2 shows, the mean score of extroverted participants is more than introverted ones.

So, in order to analyze the data related to the first hypothesis, the independent sample T-test was applied to see whether the interaction between Learning Styles and general English proficiency is significant or not. In order to appraise the relation between extroversion / introversion and language ability, at first the Levene's Test was run then the t-test used. As the result shown in table 3, the first P-value (Levene's Test) is ($P = .158 > 0.05$) and it means the data support the assumption of equal variances. In other words the two groups of Extroversion and Introversion are identical in terms of scattering. But the next P-value (T-test) is related to equality mean language score is ($P < 0.05$). This means that the assumption of equality of means is rejected. So the H_1 is accepted.

Indeed, based on the upshots, extroverted subjects were characterized by a better performance on language skill compared to their introverted counterparts.

Throughout one study by (Badran, 2001), the researcher tried to determine the likely relationship between extroversion/introversion and the pronunciation accuracy in English and concluded that the former had a very positive and significant impact on the latter. Strong (1983) did a research on the possible impact of extroversion and introversion on communication skill and concluded that extroverted students are performed much better as far as communication skills were concerned.

Table 1: The frequency of extroverted and introverted students

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Introversion	97	45.3	45.3
	Extroversion	117	54.6	100.0
	Total	214	100.0	

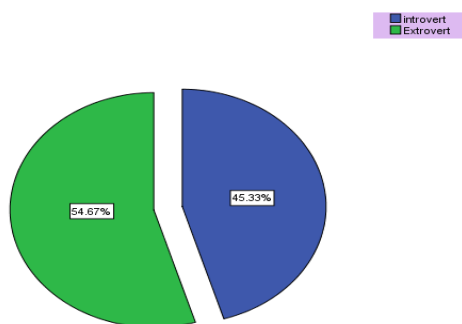


Figure 1: The percentage of extroverted and introverted participants

Research Article

Table 2: Mean scores and standard deviations for extroverted/introverted participants in language proficiency

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mark	Introvert	97	13.6598	1.66387
	Extrovert	117	14.8205	1.58449

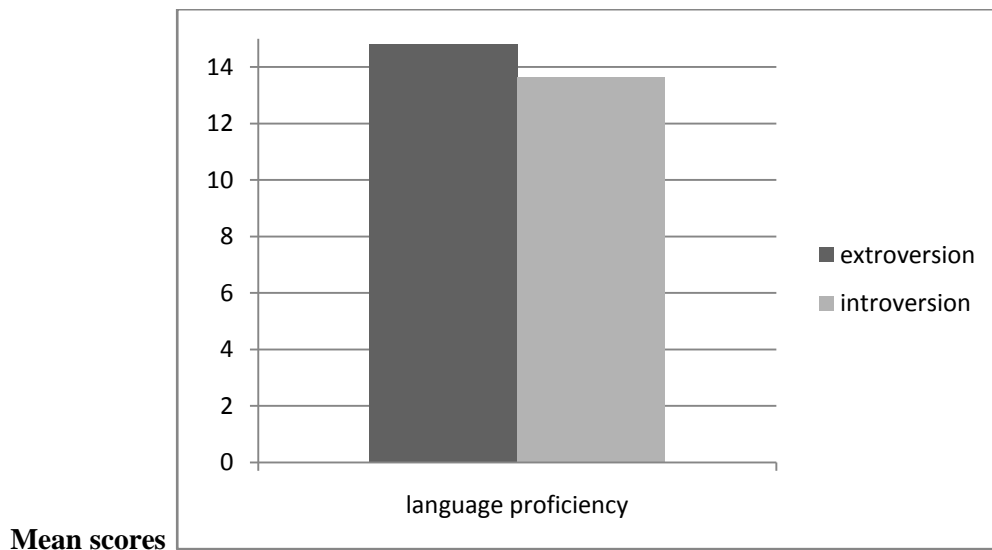


Figure 2: Mean scores for extroverted/introverted learners in language proficiency

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for extroverted/introverted learners in language proficiency with the result of Independent Samples't-test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	P-Value	t	df	P-Value	95% Interval of the Difference Lower	Confidence Interval of the Difference Upper
Mark	Equal variances Assumed	2.006	0.158	-5.215	212	.000	-1.59948	-.72196
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.191	200.721	.000	-1.60163	-.71980

Data Analyzes of Subjects' Linguality and Learning Styles

A subsequent chi-square test (X²) is a nonparametric test that is based on the frequency (number) of the observed and expected frequency of a variable in the study will be discussed. 214 students have been investigated in the present study. As shown in table 4 they were divided into 4 groups: 19 students were introverted bilingual, 74 students were extroverted bilingual, 78 students were introverted monolingual and 43 students were extroverted monolingual. And in total, there were 93 introverted / extroverted bilingual and 121 introverted / extroverted monolingual participants.

According to table 5 the P-value is less than 0.05 ($P = .000 < 0.05$) so assumption of independence of two variables is rejected. It means bilingualism and monolingualism of learners are related to their learning

Research Article

styles and they are not independent of each other. As shown in table 6 the mean score of extroverted monolingual students is more than other groups. So the third hypothesis is accepted, too.

The finding of the third hypothesis is in line with other researchers. It is argued that monolinguals and bilinguals are different in their individuals' learning styles (Esfandabad and Emamipour, *ibid*). For example, studies have shown that the African-American bilingual individuals have a more holistic view and are more kinesthetic. Furthermore and regarding the independent vs. dependent learning styles, they argue that monolinguals are less dependent to the background.

The result of this hypothesis is precisely the opposite of Maghsoudi's conclusion. Maghsoudi (*ibid*) has done a research to investigate the interaction between the learners' learning styles (field dependent / independent) and their linguality in language acquisition. The researcher concluded that there is no significant relationship between students' learning styles and their linguality in English Achievement Test scores.

Table 4: The frequency of linguality and learning styles

Learning	Introversion	Extriversion	Total
Styles			
Linguality			
Bilingual	19	74	93
Monolingual	78	43	121
Total	97	117	214

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for Linguality and learning style with the result of Chi-Square

	Category
Chi-Square	41.144 ^a
Df	3
P-Value	.000

Table 6: Mean scores and sd for Extroverted/Introverted bilingual and Extroversion/Introversion monolingual in English Language proficiency

		Extroverted Bilingual	Introverted Bilingual	Extroverted Monolingual	Introverted Monolingual
N	Valid	74	19	43	78
	Missing	4	59	35	0
	Mean	14.2568	14.1053	15.7907	13.5513
	Median	14.5000	14.0000	16.0000	13.0000
	Std. Deviation	1.51758	1.85277	1.18639	1.60880
	Variance	2.303	3.433	1.408	2.588

Conclusion

To bring the main aims of the present study into readers' notice and to refresh the readers' minds it is worth rementioning the hypotheses here:

H₁. Introverted and extroverted Iranian EFL learners have different general English proficiency knowledge.

H₂. Linguality of Iranian EFL learners has a significant impact on their learning styles.

In order to collect the needed data in the present study background questionnaire, GEPT and EPQ-R were used. To find the linguality of the participants the background questionnaire was used. To achieve the students' language proficiency level, the Transparency Test was applied. And in the last phase Eysenck Personality Questionnaire- was used to determine who is extrovert and who is introvert. The obtained data

Research Article

analyzed by Independent sample t-test first hypothesis showed that there is a significant difference between extroversion and introversion in general English language proficiency. Based on the findings the investigator concluded that the extroverts outperform introverts in general English language proficiency. Numerous studies have investigated the relations and impacts of extroversion and introversion in EFL and ESL. Among them, one can points to the following studies: the relationship between affective variables and speaking skill (Do˝rnyei and Kormos, 2000; Kormos and Trebits, 2012), the effect of extroversion/introversion on evaluation of writing (Carrell, 1995), the relationship between personality and academic performance (Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham, 2003; Rindermann and Neubauer, 2001; Sanchez-Marin *et al.*, 2001; Pulford and Sohal, 2006), and influence of personality factors on reading skill (Li and Chingell, 2010).

The next hypothesis was to investigate the relationship between linguality (monolingual / bilingual) and learning styles (extroversion / introversion). The obtained information from analyzing data by using chi-square showed that bilingualism and monolingualism of learners are related to their learning styles. Mean score of extroverted monolingual students was more than other groups. So the third hypothesis was accepted.

Numerous researchers have investigated and proposed the most effective and influential models and instruments of learning styles. The following names are but a few of the most well-known researchers in this regards (Allinson and Hayes, 2001; Apter and Williams, 1998; Allinson and Hayes, 1996; Biggs, 1987; Broverman, 1960; Vermunt, 1996; Riding, 1991; Dunn and Dunn, 1979; Felder and Silverman, 1996; Galbraith and James, 1984).

In a study conducted recently by (Heidarzadegan, 2013), the researcher investigates the "Relationship between Learning Style and Intelligence in Learning English among Monolingual and Bilingual Students". The investigator concluded that "monolinguals are better at visual learning styles and bilinguals are better at verbal learning styles. Bilingualism requires more mental activity; bilinguals use two means for communication and also learning. Thinking is a verbal process therefore they use two languages for thinking and other mental activities, and their potential capabilities develop and their cognitive learning are than monolinguals."

Another research has been done by (McCann, 2006) to examine the relationship between learning styles, learning environment and students' success. The researcher discovered that there is no significant difference between learning style and students' scores in post test after using some instructional method. In the light of these findings, much care should be taken to find out the other factors on learning English process in all educational levels. The methods of teaching should be developed providing more class time engagement between the students and teachers.

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Research Article

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