STUDENTS' PERSONALITY TRAITS AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

The study looked into the concept of personality traits and choice of language learning strategies as major influences in the success of learning a second language. More specifically, it investigated university students' personality traits and language learning strategies towards learning English language.

A total of 230 college students took part in this research study. The measuring instruments used were the Manchester Personality Questionnaire Version 14 (MPQ) and for the English learning strategies, the Strategies Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) for Second Language (SL) designed by Rebecca Oxford was used.

The collected data were computed and analyzed via descriptive statistics, and Kendall's Tau-C. The findings of the study were generalized as follows: (1) the first result of the study is that out of the fourteen personality scales, communicativeness and independence had similar and the highest mean scores (2) the most preferred language learning strategies of the respondents was social strategies (3) when grouped according to curricular levels, 1st year and 4th year students' dominant personality trait was Independence; 2nd year and 3rd year students was Communicativeness (4) 1st year students preferred memory strategies; 2nd year and 3rd year students preferred social strategies while 4th year students preferred affective strategies when grouped according to curricular levels (5) There is a significant relationship between the predominant personality trait and language learning strategies of the respondents.

In conclusion, the need to identify students' personality traits and language learning strategies as basis for providing responsive instruction to the needs of the learners is important.

Keywords: Personality Traits, Language Learning Strategies, Strategies Inventory of Language Learning (SILL), Manchester Personality Questionnaire (MPQ).

INTRODUCTION:

Over the past two decades, research in second language (L2) education has largely focused on learner-centered approaches to second language teaching in an effort to lead learners towards autonomous and independent language learning (Reiss, 1985;Wenden, 1991; Tamada, 1996). At the same time, a shift of attention has taken place in second language acquisition research from the products of language learning to the processes through which learning takes place (Oxford, 1990). As a result of this change in emphasis, language learning strategies (LLSs) have emerged not only as integral components of various theoretical models of language proficiency (Bialystok, 1978; Canale and Swain, 1980; Ellis, 1985; Bachman and Palmer, 1996) but also as a means of achieving learners' autonomy in the process of language learning (Oxford, 1990; Benson and Voller, 1997; Cabansag, 2013).

Because of the numerous learner variables that appear to impose on the process of language learning (Blair, 1982), the emphasis on the individual differences among learners is indeed pertinent in modern language teaching and its associated learning environments. The success of second language learning is due not only to cognitive factors but also to affective, motivational, personality, and demographic factors of the learners (Brown, 2000; Carrel et al, 1996), among which personality is of great importance (Carrell et al, 1996).

Although the relationship between personality and many other concepts have been investigated in numerous studies, studies on the relationship between personality and learning are quite limited. However, the close relationship between personality and learning is generally accepted (Ibrahimoglu et al, 2013). It is logical that mere effort is not enough to learn effectively and acting according to certain learning strategies will make the process more effective. In addition, by using certain learning strategies, learners can achieve higher motivation in terms of cognition and they can adapt to the learning process better. Considering that these learning strategies emerge as habits, the interference of personality trait, which is a relatively more abstract entity, will affect the learning behavior (Ibrahimoglu et al, 2013). Hence, personality traits help in achieving specific objectives (Caligiuri, 2000) in learning. In other words, they facilitate learning behavior and motivate the person, and these traits are decisive for the person in persisting or giving up (Blickle, 1998) in his learning endeavor.

It is then the aim of this study to determine the relationship between language learning strategies and personality traits of learners and the BS-Criminology students from Isabela State University-Echague campus are the chosen respondents.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The study looked into the concept of personality traits and choice of language learning strategies as major influences in the success of learning a second language. More specifically, it investigated university students' personality traits and language learning strategies towards learning English language.

The research sought to answer the following questions: a) What is the predominant personality trait of the respondents? b) What is the most preferred language learning strategies employed by the respondents in learning English? c) What is the predominant personality trait of the respondents when grouped according to curricular levels? d) What is the most preferred language learning strategies employed by the respondents in learning English when grouped according to curricular levels? e)

Is there a significant relationship between the predominant personality trait and the most preferred language learning strategies employed by the respondents?

METHODOLOGY:
PARTICIPANTS:

The participants were 230 BS-Criminology students of the Isabela State University, Echague, Isabela, Philippines enrolled in the 2nd semester school year 2013-2014. The population of the study were allocated using Yamane's (1967:886) formula of allocation were 42% (96) freshmen, 24% (55) sophomore, 21% (49) junior and 13% (30) senior students were allocated respectively.

DESIGN:

The design of the study is quantitative in nature i.e., descriptive and inferential as well. Thus, an adapted questionnaire was utilized as a measuring instrument. The participants were required to answer all the items of the questionnaire honestly, giving their own perceptions about their personality traits and language learning strategies employed in learning the English language.

INSTRUMENT:

The instrument used in gathering data for personality traits was the standardized test Manchester Personality Questionnaire Version 14 (MPQ) and for the English learning strategies, the Strategies Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) for Second Language (SL) designed by Rebecca Oxford was used. Overall, there were 90 items for personality traits and 50 items for the English learning strategies.

MANCHESTER PERSONALITY QUESTIONNAIRE (MPQ):

The Manchester Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) factor version 14 is a 90-item standardized questionnaire which provides a profile on 14 primary dimensions as well as a "big 5" dimensions summary profile. Items are short statements which require a response to describe the way the respondents tend to think, feel and act; responses are placed in terms of a rating scale of never; occasionally; fairly often; generally and always.
Scales include: *Originality, Rule Consciousness, Openness to Change, Assertiveness, Social Confidence, Empathy, Communicativeness, Independence, Rationality, Competitiveness, Conscientiousness, Perfectionism, Decisiveness, and Apprehension*. Big-Five Scales include: *Creativity, Agreeableness, Achievement, Extroversion and Resilience*.
The reliability of a personality questionnaire is assessed by looking at internal consistency reliability, a measure of homogeneity of scale items. Coefficient alphas for the MPQ fall within the benchmark range for psychometric test scales that is 0.6 – 0.8. Nine scales have values above 0.70 and the remaining five are above 0.6.

STRATEGIES INVENTORY FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING (SILL):

The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL version 7.0 for ESL/EFL learners, 50 items), a self-report questionnaire, was used to assess the frequency of use of language learning strategies (Oxford, 1990). The SILL has been employed as a key instrument in numerous studies. Studies have reported reliability coefficients for the SILL ranging from .85 to .98 making it a trusted measure for gauging students' reported language learning strategy use (Bremner, 1998; Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995; Park, 1997; Sheorey, 1999; Wharton, 2000). A Cronbach's Alpha calculated for this study also revealed an acceptable reliability (.67).
In the SILL, language learning strategies are grouped into six categories for assessment: Memory strategies for storing and retrieving information, Cognitive strategies for understanding and producing the language, Compensation strategies for overcoming limitations in language learning, Metacognitive strategies for planning and monitoring learning, Affective strategies for controlling emotions, motivation, and Social strategies for cooperating with others in language learning.

DATA ANALYSIS:

The collected data was analyzed using the SPSS Program aiming to answer the research questions quantitatively. To answer the first four research questions, descriptive statistics was conducted to determine the mean of the gathered data. Kendall's Tau-C was used to measure question number five to find out if there is a significant relationship between the variables.

RESULTS:

The data gathered was measured and analyzed using descriptive statistics for the first four research

questions to determine the predominant personality traits and the most preferred language learning strategies employed by the respondents in learning English. The last research question was measured and analyzed using Kendall's Tau-C to find out the relationship of the predominant personality trait and the most preferred language learning strategies used by the respondents. This section presents the results and the analysis of the data.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics on the predominant personality trait

Personality Traits	Mean Score	Descriptive Equivalent	Rank
Originality	6.51	Average	6
Rule Consciousness	7.17	Average	3
Openness to Change	4.73	Average	9
Assertiveness	4.91	Average	8
Social Confidence	5.37	Average	7
Empathy	3.77	Average	14
Communicativeness	**7.62**	**Above Average**	1.5
Independence	**7.62**	**Above Average**	1.5
Rationality	4.34	Average	12
Competitiveness	4.54	Average	10
Conscientiousness	6.57	Average	5
Perfectionism	3.79	Average	13
Decisiveness	4.52	Average	11
Apprehension	6.82	Average	4

Table 1 indicated that out of the fourteen personality scales, communicativeness (M= 7.62) and independence (M= 7.62) had similar and the highest mean scores. There were two personality traits that came out to be predominant from among the other personality scales in this study. This entails that the personality traits of the respondents as a whole group correlate with other types of personality traits. This proves that people generally would have more than one predominant personality traits.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics on the most preferred language learning strategies

Language Learning Strategies (LLSs)	Mean Score	Rank
Memory	3.47	5
Cognitive	3.55	4
Compensation	3.45	6
Metacognitive	3.60	3
Affective	3.61	2
Social	**3.67**	1

3.56 = Grand Mean

Table 2 presented the most preferred language learning strategies used by the respondents and the results indicated that Social strategies has the highest mean score (M= 3.67). Although social strategies had the highest mean scores, there were three others which fell on the same scale of "usually true of me" these were affective, metacognitive and cognitive strategies which mean that the respondents are employing a combination of different strategies in learning English. According to Oxford's (1990) classification, learners with a mean of 2.5 and under are low strategy users, learners with a mean of 2.5–3.5 are moderate strategy users, and the mean for high strategy users is more than 3.5. The grand mean as the table showed was 3.56 in other

words, the respondents are high strategy users.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics on the predominant personality trait when grouped according to year level

Personality Traits	1st Year		2nd Year		3rd Year		4th Year	
	Mean Score	Descriptive Equivalent	Mean Score	Descriptive Equivalent	Mean Score	Descriptive Equivalent	Mean Score	Descriptive Equivalent
Originality	6.77	Average	6.45	Average	6.10	Average	6.47	Average
Rule Consciousness	7.17	Average	6.91	Average	6.86	Average	6.77	Average
Openness to Change	4.96	Average	4.55	Average	4.35	Average	4.93	Average
Assertiveness	5.43	Average	4.75	Average	4.20	Average	4.73	Average
Social Confidence	5.97	Average	5.31	Average	4.71	Average	4.67	Average
Empathy	4.16	Average	3.75	Average	3.29	Below Average	3.33	Below Average
Communicativeness	7.95	Above Average	**7.71**	Above Average	**7.20**	Average	7.10	Average
Independence	**8.02**	Above Average	7.51	Above Average	7.18	Average	**7.23**	Average
Rationality	4.81	Average	4.40	Average	3.69	Average	3.80	Average
Competitiveness	5.11	Average	4.29	Average	4.08	Average	3.90	Average
Conscientiousness	7.02	Average	6.42	Average	6.02	Average	6.30	Average
Perfectionism	4.60	Average	3.45	Below Average	3.06	Below Average	3.00	Below Average
Decisiveness	5.01	Average	4.49	Average	4.16	Average	3.57	Average
Apprehension	7.34	Average	6.55	Average	6.20	Average	6.67	Average

Table 3 indicated that comparisons among the year levels specified that 1st year (M=8.02) and 4th year (M= 7.23) students' predominant personality trait was Independence; 2nd year and 3rd year students was Communicativeness with Mean scores of 7.71 and 7.20 respectively. It is also apparent from the table that for 1st year and 4th year students, though their predominant personality trait was Independence, the next dominant trait was communicativeness and in the same way among 2nd year and 3rd year students wherein the predominant personality trait was Communicativeness, their next dominant trait was independence this goes to show that these two personality traits are in fact the predominant traits of the respondents which is in direct agreement with the result of the first research question. Nevertheless, this still leads to mean that different year levels have different personality traits.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics on the most preferred language learning strategies when grouped according to year level

Language Learning Strategies (LLSs)	1st Year Mean Score	2nd Year Mean Score	3rd Year Mean Score	4th Year Mean Score
Memory	3.74	3.38	3.59	2.57
Cognitive	3.65	3.64	3.61	3.00
Compensation	3.64	3.42	3.51	2.83
Metacognitive	3.67	3.64	3.82	2.97
Affective	3.69	3.62	3.80	3.03
Social	3.72	3.78	3.88	3.00

Table 4 indicated that comparisons among the different year levels showed 1st year students preferred memory strategies (M=3.74); 2nd year (M= 3.78) and 3rd year (M= 3.88) students preferred social strategies while 4th year students (M= 3.03) preferred affective strategies. This result is in consonance to Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006) in one of their research findings that different group levels of learners have different language learning strategy preferences.

Table 5. The correlation between personality traits and language learning strategies

LLSs / Personality Traits	Memory		Cognitive		Compensation		Metacognitive		Affective		Social	
	Tc	p	Tc	p	Tc	p	Tc	p	Tc	p	Tc	p
Originality	0.12754	0.01189	0.17580	0.00037	0.15295	0.00112	0.19252	0.00003	0.12993	0.00812	0.19214	0.00010
Rule Consciousness	0.17687	0.00014	0.21900	0.00000	0.16241	0.00071	0.23016	0.00000	0.17193	0.00031	0.19306	0.00004
Openness to Change	0.05317	0.28418	0.16350	0.00065	0.10463	0.02992	0.15057	0.00110	0.12892	0.00837	0.14108	0.00292
Assertiveness	0.06566	0.18161	0.14875	0.00249	0.13636	0.00442	0.17795	0.00021	0.16270	0.00079	0.14736	0.00243
Social Confidence	0.15346	0.00140	0.17038	0.00022	0.12972	0.00590	0.16202	0.00100	0.14459	0.00358	0.14211	0.00358
Empathy	0.09149	0.06292	0.13415	0.00715	0.09800	0.04948	0.13049	0.00763	0.12815	0.00828	0.13887	0.00184
Communicativeness	0.16163	0.00161	0.14040	0.00744	0.04585	0.36287	0.18846	0.00021	0.13930	0.00501	0.14848	0.00217
Independence	0.17932	0.00034	0.20378	0.00002	0.17655	0.00031	0.28382	0.00000	0.18761	0.00014	0.21641	0.00000
Rationality	0.17974	0.00038	0.15125	0.00248	0.16256	0.05072	0.18523	0.00007	0.21339	0.00001	0.20760	0.00000
Competitiveness	0.21339	0.00001	0.20760	0.00000	0.18089	0.00009	0.18649	0.00006	0.14829	0.00316	0.21122	0.00000
Conscientiousness	0.16522	0.00055	0.20172	0.00003	0.14690	0.00237	0.17227	0.00024	0.13879	0.00348	0.16992	0.00072
Perfectionism	0.19517	0.00007	0.19206	0.00007	0.16169	0.00100	0.09910	0.04725	0.14140	0.00191	0.15488	0.00075
Decisiveness	0.13728	0.00386	0.19114	0.00005	0.16702	0.00033	0.16959	0.00041	0.15235	0.00155	0.16915	0.00072
Apprehension	0.15235	0.00155	0.16915	0.00072	0.15831	0.00104	0.17800	0.00028	0.19382	0.00009	0.19076	0.00006

Table 5 presented the relationship between personality traits (as measured by personality scale) and language learning strategies (as measured by language learning strategies scale) was investigated using Kendall's Tau-C. Since there were two personality traits that emerged dominant, they were both considered. For communicativeness trait and social strategies, there was a small positive correlation Tc = 0.14848, p= <0.05. For independence trait and social strategies, there was a moderate positive correlation Tc = 0.21641, p=< 0.01. With this result, this means that there is a significant relationship between the variables.

DISCUSSION:

The first result of the study is that out of the fourteen personality scales, communicativeness and independence had similar and the highest mean scores. Although this study is not focused on skills, one research study conducted by Hayaha et al (2012) on The Relationship between Personality Traits and Reading Proficiency, they discovered that certain personality traits correlate with other types of personality traits. This proves that people generally would have more than one personality traits. The differences, however, is in terms of the degree of the traits.

This study also found out that the most preferred language learning strategies of the respondents was social strategies. This result is in consonance with Su's (2005) research finding with Taiwanese vocational college students majoring in Applied Foreign Languages. This result of the study is also in agreement with Wharton (2000) who examined the language learning strategy use of university students in Singapore, and indicated a high mean and ranking of social strategy use. However, this result is in conflict with previous research done by Politzer (1983). Politzer reported that Asian students preferred rote strategies, such as memorization, and Hispanic students used more social interactive strategies. Politzer and McGroaty (1985) reported similar findings that Asian students were less likely to engage in certain communication-type strategies than Hispanic students. Thus it could be assumed that in the past decades, students' use of language learning strategies have changed. The researcher supposes that this change of high use in social strategies in language learning could be due to the development of the Internet, the social media in particular. This development could stimulate the interaction and merging of different cultures, which could also lead to many different social changes in such a way a language is learned. This assumption, nevertheless, warrants further research.

In a study by Ardelt (2000) set to test the "Personality Stability Theory", she concluded that personality tends to be less stable if the retest interval is large, if age at first measurement is low or over 50, and if a

change in individual aspects of personality rather than the overall personality is measured. In a similar study by Srivastava et al (2003), they compared the biological view of the Five-factor theory, the plaster hypothesis which is similar to the personality Stability Theory, stating that all personality traits stop changing by age 30 and the contextualist perspectives, the plastic hypothesis, which proposes that changes should be more varied and should persist throughout adulthood. The results of their study states that there are changes and that the findings suggest that people continue to mature well into middle adulthood. The present study, though not about maturity or adulthood, coincides with the major results of the previously mentioned studies and even that of the Personality Stability Theory and plaster hypothesis particularly on results such as personality changes when the age of the respondents change, in other words, when the learners belong to different age ranges and different year levels, their personality traits also change.

Furthermore, this study found out that first year students preferred memory strategies; second year and third year preferred social strategies while fourth year students preferred affective strategies. This result offers support to Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006) in one of their research findings that different group levels of learners have different language learning strategy preferences. In another research done by Al-Shabou et al. (2010), they concluded that learners employ a variety of learning strategies; different learners employ different learning strategies.

A significant relationship between the personality traits of the respondents and their preferred language learning strategy is also one of the results of the study. This result supports Khorshidi's (2013) findings that there is a significant and positive relationship between learning English and personality type. It is also in conformity with the findings of Chen and Hung (2012) that there is a significant relationship between language learning strategy and the introverted/extroverted personality type. They further found out that significant relationships were also found between the sensing/intuitive personality type and memory, compensation, social, and metacognitive strategies. Ibrahimoglu, et al. (2013) in their study also revealed a meaningful relationship between learning styles and personality profiles. Furthermore, another research by Nosratinia (2011**)** on The Effect of Personality Type, Learning Styles and Strategies on Iranian MA EFL Learners uncovered that there is a relationship between MBTI personality types and learning style preferences of Iranian MA EFL learners. On the other hand, Erton (2010) in his research on Relations between Personality Traits, Language Learning Styles and Success in Foreign Language Achievement stated that there is no statistically strong, but a low relationship between the personality traits of the learner and the way he/she establishes the learning styles and reflects these characteristics into success while learning a foreign language. Nonetheless, whether the correlation is low, the relationship is still significant.

CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS:

This study found out that the personality traits of the respondents prove that people generally have more than one personality traits and the differences is in terms of the degree of those traits. It also found out that as students advance in their curricular level, a change in their personality traits and strategies in learning the English language also takes place. Moreover, a significant relationship between the personality traits and language learning strategies is also revealed. With these results of the study, it is therefore proper to conclude that the need to identify students' personality traits and language learning strategies as basis for providing responsive instruction has never been more important than it already is. The instruction that is responsive to students' different personality traits and learning strategies is particularly critical as the pool of students who enroll in our course has become increasingly diverse. It is then essential to consider the following:

1) It is important to identify students' personality traits and use of language learning strategies before or during the course. By doing so, teachers will be able to offer the most appropriate courses to suit the students' needs and eventually achieve the best teaching and learning results.

2) Since social strategies are identified as the most commonly used strategy category in this study, teachers, schools, and the administration should give attention to this trend, and offer various opportunities for students to utilize these strategies in their language learning. In addition, teachers should also raise the students' consciousness of other strategies they use less frequently or not at all in

order to familiarize them.

3) Schools and universities should provide access to information for language teachers' in-service training for language learning strategies. Teachers should provide language learners with strategy training courses, or integrate strategy training in regular language courses as O'Malley and Chamot (1995) stated that it is the duty of language teachers to familiarize the learners with LLSs and incorporate strategy training into their teaching programs.

4) Personality tests, learners' satisfaction surveys and needs assessments, should be done regularly in order to determine the teaching methods to be modified.

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