The Relationship between Iranian EFL Advanced Learners' Personality Types, Motivation and Language Learning Success

Marzieh Ebrahimi [1], Mohammad Heidarypur [*2]

1. *Department of English Language, Science & Research Branch, Neyshabur Islamic Azad University, Iran*
2. *Department of Linguistics, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran*
*Corresponding author: Mohammad.yours@gmail.com

Abstract

Affective factors are the most important factors in SLA and EFL studies. These factors include motivation, self-confidence, anxiety, etc. Researches on learners' characteristics have been investigated for over a century. In the same vein, the present research, strived at exploring Iranian's EFL learners personality types and motivation. In the article, the personality types and motivation of students were examined using Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and motivation questionnaire of Laine. For this purpose, 60 EFL students from one of the language institutions Mashhad (located in Iran) were chosen as the participants of this study. Through two instruments and considering the participants' previous semester scores, the data were gathered and analyzed by means of SPSS software. The correctional analyses revealed a significant relationship among motivation, personality and students' success. Multiple regression analysis was also conducted to examine the strength of the relationship among the variables. Among the affective factors, personality type was found to be the best predictor of students' success. The study provides some pedagogical implications and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: affective factors, motivation, personality types, student's success

Introduction

Psychologists have studied personality types to investigate human behaviors (Ramsdal, 2008; Zuckerman, Eysenck&Eysenck, 1978). Studies on learners' personality have been carried out in the field of language acquisition as well. Onwuegbuzie, Slate, and Schwartz (2001) explored the cognitive, affective, and personal dimensions of students registered in foreign language courses using the Self-Perception Profile for College Students, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, the Social Interdependence Scale, and the Study Habits Inventory. The authors discovered that as their level of anxiety is higher, their ability to learn a foreign language is more influenced. Oya, Manalo and Greenwood (2004) examined the role of personality and anxiety on English oral performance among Japanese who speak English as the second language.

In recent years, the relationship between personality and SL/ FL learning was regarded as a major focus of SL studies (Ehrman& Oxford, 1995; Verhoeven& Vermeer, 2002). Dornyei (2005) claimed that "personality factors are heavily implicated in the learning process generally and in SLA particularly" (p. 29). In general, they can function as "a powerful modifying variable" (p. 30). This is true for motivation (Dornyei, 2001, 2005; Gardner, 1985, Gardner &MacIntyre, 1991; Liu, 2007; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995) as well.

According to Dornyei (2005), Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is the best personality test which consistsof four dichotomies as its main focus: Extraversion-Introversion, Sensing-Intuition, Thinking-Feeling, and Judging-Perceiving. According to Dornyei (2005) and Ehrman (1996), the MBTI outline real, recognizable character types and thus the inventory had proved to be useful in a wide variety of contexts, from counseling to making personnel decisions in industry.

On the other hand, research suggested that motivation can influence language learning outcomes independently from language aptitude. Therefore, an examination of not only the contribution of motivation to learning outcomes, but also the ways to foster such positive motivation among students, was certainly relevant in improving language education for all the students (Gardner, 1972; Wigfield&Wentzel, 2007).According to Gardner and MacIntyre (1993), their undergraduate foreign language participants, who were

substantially motivated, tended to adopt more learning strategies and use them more frequently when compared to those relatively less motivated. Motivation plays a significant role in the process of learning a language. Language teachers cannot effectively teach a language if they do not understand the relationship between motivation and its effect on language acquisition. The core of motivation is what might be called passion, which relates to a person's intrinsic goals and desires.

As stated by Gardner and Lambert (1959), integrative motivation is defined as positive attitudes towards the target language group and the potential for integrating into that group while instrumental motivation refers to more functional reasons for learning a language to get a better job or a promotion or to pass a required examination. Gardner and Lambert (1959) asserted that learners with higher Instrumental orientation tend to be much more educational and career oriented. Students study a foreign language in order to perform well on tests, and for use in job career and for attaining professional achievement. According to Gardner and Lambert, motivation is a complex variable and will become even more complex when the target of learning is the mastery of a second/foreign language. They believed that, generally, learning a second language is different from other subjects since other variables such as learning cultural parameters that shape the framework of learning a language are also included. Therefore, the role of affective variables especially motivation becomes more crucial.

According to Schmeck (1988), learning process should be considered and evaluated in the context of the overall personality factors and motivation. So, it can be inferred that learners' natural abilities as well as their personality types and motivation can affect their language learners. It is argued that "Personality is the part of the field of psychology that must considers people in their entirely as individuals and as complex human beings" (Dornyei, 2005, p.10). The importance of the issue is that a psycholinguistics course, including themes of personality, is usually included in the curriculum of those students who are studying language learning or teaching academically. Finally, before examining the effect of motivation on second language learning it was important to realize that motivation is a variable, which combined with other factors can influence a learner's success.

While studies concerning both personality types and motivation have a long history in the first language contexts, studies about personality and motivation in the field of second language acquisition have failed to demonstrate overall robust finding. Hence, this brings about the feeling of scrutiny to make teachers aware of how they could balance their teaching methods on the basis of different personality characteristics and students' motivations to reach success in learning English as a foreign language.

It is undoubtedly true that learners bring many individual characteristics to the learning process which will affect both the way in which they learn and the outcomes of the process. However, just what those characteristics are and exactly how they affect the learning process is rather unclear. Intuitively, such apparently obvious factors come to mind as age, gender, personality, aptitude, intelligence and motivation as characteristic influencing their success in learning a foreign language. Among these factors, Motivation and personality types are the key factors to affect learners' success in learning foreign language (Carroll, 1965;Ehrman& Oxford, 1995;Gradman&Hanania, 1991; MacIntyre& Gardner, 1991; O'malley&Chamot, 1990; Oxford &Ehrman, 1992; Riding &Cheema, 1991; Willing, 1987; Witkin, Dyk, Fattuson, Goodenough, & Karp, 1962).

Personality types have been explored by many researchers in different parts of the world. A group of researchers conducted a research to determine the relationship between various socio-psychological variables like personality types, motivation, anxiety and instrumental orientation on performance in English as a second language. The results indicated that all of the four variables were significantly correlated with learners' performance in the English course conducted at Open University of Malaysia (Latif, Fadzil, Bahroom, Mohammad, & San, 2011)

Motivation also can be preserved when students feel that they can demonstrate a positive social image and show their strength. Similarly, learners' social image can be enhanced in an environment where learners are not criticized or humiliated and where students can work in groups so that the norms of tolerance and acceptance are established. In addition, many research studies in educational psychology(e.g., Dickinson, 1995; Switzer & Benson, 2007)have pointed out that encouraging learners' autonomy is beneficial to learning. Teachers can foster learning autonomy in different ways, including

sharing learning responsibilities, involving them in making decisions regarding classroom materials, and giving them positions of authority through peer teaching and project work (Ushioda, 2011). It is every teacher's dream to have in his/her class a motivated student, who is driven by the curiosity to learn and achieve his or her goals. However, this is rarely the case in L2 learning. In a longitudinal study carried out in a U.S. context Wong and Csikszentmihalyi (2014) realized that schoolwork was rated as the least rewarding activity among learners. Thus, it is the job of the teacher to generate students' motivation and help them build positive attitudes towards the L2.

To date, few studies had been carried out concerning different personality types and motivations, in Iranian context. Hence, the present study sought to investigate the relationship among the Iranian EFL learners' personality type, motivation, and their language learning success, and to find out which of the variables, namely personality type and motivation, can be a better predictor of the students' success. Therefore, the following research questions were posed:

RQ1. Is there any significant relationship between learners' motivation and Iranian EFL learners' success?

RQ2. Is there any relationship between EFL learners' personality type and their language learning success?

RQ3. Is personality type a better predictor of Iranian EFL learners' success than their motivation?

Method

Participants

The study took place in Mashhad, Iran in Kish Language Institute. The Institution's main focus was teaching English to EFL learners, but other language classes in Turkish, French and German were also held. The total student population for the study was 60. They were all male students with age range of 19 to 32 at advanced level. It is worth mentioning that the research sampling was based on convenience or opportunity sampling. Prior to the study, the researcher acquired the necessary permission and authorization from the principals of the institute.

Instrumentation

To answer the research questions of the study, two questionnaires were used. The first questionnaire, that is, the motivation questionnaire, was designed by Laine (1987) and validated by Salimi (2000). To avoid any confusion, and to enhance the validity, the Persian version of the questionnaire was utilized. By using this questionnaire, the researcher attempted to elicit the students' motivation toward learning English as a foreign language. The motivation questionnaire was a Likert-scale, including 36 items regarding the participants' degree of motivation in general. The participants selected a number on a five-point Lickert scale reflecting their degree of preferences or their tendency towards the items in the questionnaire. The choices ranged from 1 'strongly disagree' to 5 'strongly agree'. The second questionnaire, Myers-Briggs' questionnaire, consisted of 64 items. Each item included two alternatives in which learners should select one option. Moreover, the students' scores, in the previous semester, on the final test of the institute, that is, Passages Series Test, were considered as their language learning success.

Procedure

At the beginning of the study, the two questionnaires; that is; Laine's motivation and Myers-Briggs's personality type were administered simultaneously, each taking between 35 to 40 minutes to complete. The participants were asked not to spend more than a few seconds on personality questionnaire. Then, the researcher entered each student's data into the MBTI, Myers-Briggs online test and analyzed the result according to the result of this online tool. The researcher also used the results of the students'scores in the previous semester. The final test of the institute, Passages Series Test, was administered to learners for assessing their achievement in the basic skills received during the term. Two experts and the supervisor of the institute analyzed the content validity of this test.

Design

The present study has a correlational design, with three variables: motivation, personality type, and language learning success.

Results

In this quantitative study, correlation coefficients were calculated and multiple regression analysis was conducted to analyze the data. The variables of the study were student success, personality type and motivation. The normality

of the distributions were checked using Kolmogorov-Smirnov test , the results of which are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

	Personality types	Motivation	Students' achievement
N	60	60	60
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.584	1.342	1.128
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.884	.055	.083

A Kolmogorov significance value more than .05 indicates the inclination toward normality. As indicated in Table2, the obtained p. values are .884, .055, and .083 for personality type, motivation, and students' achievement, respectively. This means that all of the stated variables met the normality assumption, and that parametric analyses can be conducted.

Regarding the first research question, correlation coefficient analysis was conducted. Table 2 shows the result of the correlation between the participants' motivation and their success.

Table 2.
Correlationsbetween learners' motivation and Iranian EFL learners' success

		Students' Achievement
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.409*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	60

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As Table 2 represents, the correlation between the students' motivation and their success was significant, r(60) = .409, p = .000, indicating that the students' success in learning English was related to their motivation. Therefore, there was a significant relationship between motivation and students' success, considering the p value (.000< .05). So, the first null hypothesis could be rejected.

Regarding the second research question, another Pearson product moment correlation was used to determine if personality type was related to the students' success in learning a foreign language. Table 3 illustrates the result.

Table 3.
Correlationsbetweenpersonality types and Iranian EFL learners' success

		Students' Achievement
	Pearson Correlation	.514*
Personality Types	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	.000
	N	60

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As shown in Table3, the correlation between personality type and students' success was significant, r (60) = .514, p = .000< .05, indicating that the students' success in learning English was related to their personality types. Thus, the second null hypothesis could be rejected.

Regarding the third research question, multiple regression analysis was used to see whether personality type or motivation variable best predicts students' success since this analysis permits the examination of the influence for each predictor variables on a criterion variable in a given model (Field, 2009).As with any regression analysis, it was important to ensure that the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity were met. The residual scatterplots, which depicted the standardized predicted dependent variable and the errors of prediction, were used to test for linearity and homoscedasticity. Figure 1 illustrated the scatter plot of the regression standardized predicted value.
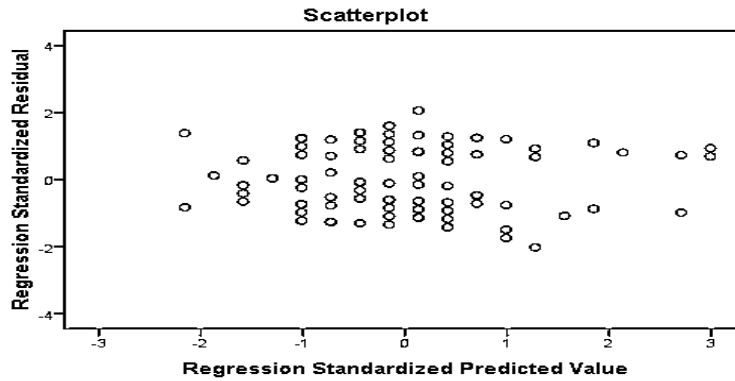
*Figure 1.*Scatter Plot of Regression Standardized Predicted Value

You can find a residual plot of a regression where the personality types and motivation of learners are used to predict students' success. These data are normally distributed in that the cluster of points is of approximately the same width all over the residuals and the residuals about the zero line appear equally to those below the zero line. So, they do appear to be fairly normally distributed.

The coefficients yield the prediction equations. Table 4 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 4.
Multiple regression ,Dependent Variable: Students' Achievement

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1.524	.126	---	2.516	.000	---	---
Personality	.84	.024	.91	3.247	.000	.954	1.048
Motivation	.63	.026	.72	2.781	.002	.954	1.048
R^2(adj)	Model Sig		Durbin- Watson		Kolmogorov-Smirnov Sig		
0.419	0.000		2.00		0.138		

The Durbin-Watson value in Table 4, which tests whether errors in regression are independent, equals 2; this indicates that the errors in the

regression are independent. The results in Table 4 also show that theresiduals are normally distributed regarding the predicted dependent variable, and that the residuals have a straight linear relationship with the predicted dependent variable scores, and that the variance of residuals around the predicted dependent variable scores was the same for all predicted scores. Thus, the assumptions of linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity were met.

Moreover, as Table 4represents, the regression coefficient yields the prediction equations. The $R^2$of 0.419 indicates that, on the whole, about 41.9% of the variation in the dependent variables could be accounted for by these two independent variables of the study. The coefficients labeled "Beta" is the standardized coefficient. These coefficients indicate the direction and strength of the relationship between each predictor variable and the outcome measure is used to estimate the strength of the effect of independent variable on the dependent variable. The independent variable with the largest standardized Beta has the strongest effect. The results of the regression analysis revealed that both of these variables predict the students' success. The beta weight for personality type was a positive value of .84, and the beta weight for motivation was a positive value of .63, indicating that the students' success could be predicted by their personality type. Additionally, the students' motivation could be considered a smaller contributor to the students' success.

Discussion

The results of the present study revealed that motivation leads to enhanced learning of a foreign language. Regarding the first research question, as shown earlier in the correlational analysis, there was a significant relationship between motivation and students' success, leading to the rejection of the first null hypothesis. With regard to the second research question, as implied by the results of the other correlational analysis, it could be observed that there was a significant relationship between personality type and students' success. Finally, as the results of the multiple regression analysis for the third research question indicated, personality types contributed more to the students' success than motivation.

Based on the findings of the present study, it was revealed that motivation had a major role in the students' success. But to be more specific, in Salami's questionnaire, motivation could be analyzed in terms of two categories;

instrumental and integrative motivation. In Iranian EFL context, English learners do not come into contact with native speakers of English very often, hence even if they are motivated integratively and have the tendency to speak like a native speaker, they might not be able to fulfill this demand and make a significant difference with their instrumentally motivated peers; this idea was in line with Brown and Miller's (1993) and Dornyei's (1990) findings.

The research has demonstrated the importance of affective factors (e.g., motivation) in the second language learning, the finding which is in line with the findings of Gardner (1985) and Gardner and Lambert (1972)who have repeatedly shown that it is motivation which promotes student achievement.

Another empirical study in line with the present study was done by Clark and Schroth (2010). In their study regarding personality and motivation, the correlations between the two have also been analyzed. In particular, they investigated the relationship between academic motivation and personality type among college students. The results proposed different reasons for college students to pursue their academic degree: those who lacked motivation were supposed to be disagreeable and careless; those students who were intrinsically motivated tended to be extraverted, agreeable, consciousness, and open to new experiences; while extrinsically motivated students were felt to be extraverted, agreeable, conscientious, and neurotic.

Additionally, the results of this study were in line with the work of Ni (2012), who found that the affective factors can help students to cultivate an all-round development. Zhang, Su, and Liu (2013) also, in a similar study, concluded that most of the personality and motivation scales were significantly correlated with the students' attainment in English. Finally, in their study, Ghapanchi, Khajavy, and Asadpour (2011) investigated L2 motivation and personality as predictors of the second language proficiency. This study also showed that there is a relationship between personality traits, L2 motivational self-system, and second language proficiency.

Researchers are interested in the subjects related to language learning and teaching in second and foreign language learning and teaching contexts and the related issues from different perspectives. Some researchers pursue researches regarding language teachers while others are more inclined toward topics related to the learners of second or foreign language. The present study

examined the predictability of Iranian EFL learners' language learning success by their personality type and motivation. The results indicated that second language success was related to personality types and motivation, and that personality types contributed more to students' success than motivation, which can be due to the fact that they cover a larger scope of learners' affective factors. Thus, it can be concluded that language teachers need to be concerned with their students' personality type and motivation in order to help them improve their language learning in general. This study provided a good foundation for second language learners, teachers, researchers, material developer, in the way that they can consider personality and motivation in improving second language proficiency among students. One challenge for teachers and researchers is to look for defining students' personality factors that are significant for the learning of a foreign language, and to continue to find effective means for applying those findings into their classrooms.

Since, boys and girls may have different personality characteristics, participants' age and sex can be controlled in future researches as affective variables. Additionally, as personality type and motivation are regarded as two affective factors, they are under the influence of some environmental factors. So, further researches on these affective factors need to be carried out in different cultural setting. Finally, an interesting line of further researches could be investigating how different Personality types and motivation affects one special skill of language learners specifically.

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Biodata

Marzieh Ebrahimi is an English language graduate, holding an MA (TEFL) from Science and Research Azad University Neyshabur, Iran, and an BA (English Literature) from Hakim Sabzevari University, Sabzevar, Iran. Her areas of interest include language teaching methodology, vocabulary learning, discourse analysis, and educational pedagogy of current teaching in Iran.

Mohammad Heidarypuris is a Ph. D. candidate of linguistics studying at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad. He also holds MA in linguistics and BA in English Literature. He is the foubder of and CEO in Ayandeh Translation Group, a leading company that provides Translating and proofreading services for journals and authors. He has experience in the areas of computational linguistics, teaching and psycholinguistics.