



EFFECTS OF PERSONALITY AND MOTIVATION IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: A TENTATIVE STUDY ON ADULT ESL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

The present comprehensive study represents the interconnections between personality and motivations in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The two types of personality- 'introvert' and 'extrovert' are considered to associate with the 'extrinsic' and 'intrinsic' motivations affecting the individuals' second language (L1) learning. The present qualitative study used a descriptive approach with an extensive literature review to relate the hypothesis and data analysis. In fact, the most supportive method for the study was direct interviews. The key participants of the study were three adult ESL (English as Second Language) learners who learn English mostly for personal and academic developments. The interviews were first recorded and afterwards analyzed by the researchers considering the relevant aspects of personality and motivations that affect their learning usually. Finally, the study depicts some focal points that affect L2 learning and recommends some suggestions to enhance the positive L2 learning experience.

KEYWORDS: *Personality, Motivation, Acculturation Process, ESL, Oral Proficiency*

1. INTRODUCTION

A major variance between first and second language acquisition is the circumstance that all ordinary people attain expertise in the first language (L1), but great variations are revealed in the extent to which they acquire a second language (L2). When a language learner learns a second language, success of his language learning depends on various factors. Acquisition of first language is a natural process. However, learning a second language is influenced by the learner's age, aptitude, motivation, filter, personality, learning setting, learning strategy, L1 influence and many other factors. Learner's personality and learner's motivation are two major influential factors for Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and most of the personality and motivation scales were eloquently interrelated with the students' achievement of L2 in English (Zhang, Su and Liu, 2013). Linguists and researchers have worked on different types of learner's motivation and personality. In this exploratory study, the researchers wanted to investigate the link between learner's motivation and personality on individual ESL learner's perspective.

Personality has many types but the researchers consider extroversion and introversion aspects for this study. Learner's motivation also has different variations but the study worked on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for this study. One of the bases of the ESL learning experience of an individual participant, the study actually observed how these aspects of motivation and personality are linked and how did they work in the learning context of that particular learner.

However, extrinsic-intrinsic aspects of motivation and extroversion-introversion aspects of personality has association with other language learning factors as well. The first language of the researchers is Bengali and English is their second language to learn. So, the researchers were curious to observe that whether another participant with the same learning pattern and background had similar experience or not.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to investigate how the motivation and the personality of individual learners are linked to each other. After completion of the study, the second language learners will be able to understand the real-life implementation of different concepts of SLA.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Importance of motivation and personality in SLA

Learner's motivation and personality is important in SLA because these two factors are two major determiners of the success of language learning. A learner can have exposure to good curriculum,

instructor and favorable learning environment but if he is not motivated and his personality is not in favor of learning then he might fail to achieve the desired level of language proficiency. Moreover, learner's motivation is often influenced by his culture, age and learning environment and these factors also plays its part in developing an individual's personality. According to Dornyei and Ryan (2015), good language learners are characterized by a unique personality set up (P. 16). Ellis (2008), emphasized the fact that motivation is the key behind the development of ideal L2 self. Motivation and personality of a learner also play an important role in the amount of input a learner can take and how much input he can convert into intake. Learner's motivation and personality also help him to deal with the learning instruction and social factors of learning (Grass, 2013).

3.2. Learner's motivation

"Motivation deals with the fundamental question of why people think and behave as they do, and we should never assume that we know the full answer" (Dornyei, 2005). Motivation is a phenomenon that varies from person to person and it has a crucial role to play in language learning. Ellis (2008) talked about a few key motivational constructs like integrative motivation, instrumental motivation, attributions, self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation. Ellis (2008) also focused on 3 motivational phases proposed by William and Burden (1997). They are: reason for doing something, decision of doing something, continuing the effort. However, Dornyei (2001) talked about 2 stages of motivation which are pre-actional stage and post-actional stage. In this paper, the authors used the motivational phases (while interviewing the participant) proposed by William and Burden (1997) and investigated the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of the participants.

3.3. Learner's Personality

Personality refers to those characteristics of a person which are the determiner for consistent pattern of feeling, thinking and behaving (Dornyei and Ryan, 2015). In their book, Dornyei and Ryan (2015) talked about the 'The big five' which refers to the five dimensions of personality. They are: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion-introversion, agreeableness and neuroticism-emotional stability. Learner's learning context often shapes the personality of an individual and learning is also dependent on the 5 dimensions of our personality (Dornyei and Ryan, 2015). For this paper, the researchers considered the extroversion-introversion aspect of personality and investigated its associations with extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.

4. METHODOLOGY

For this exploratory study, the researchers conducted a structured interview of three individuals

who are the key participants of the study. This qualitative study has the characteristics of a case study but it also provides a broader idea about the linkage between learner’s personality and motivation. However, this study is based on individual learning experience and doesn’t provide a valid generalized picture.

4.1. Participants

The participants of the study were two male (P1 and P2) and one female (P3). All the participants were Bangladeshi by nationality and did their schooling and

bachelor’s degree from Bangladesh. P1 did his post-graduation from UK and then involved himself in government service of Bangladesh. Currently he is doing his PhD in Australia. P2 is also a PhD student in Bangladesh. He is working at a private university as an Associate Professor. P3 completed her Bachelor in Bangladesh and MA degree from Australia and is working at a private firm in Australia. She is also trying to enroll in an PhD program. However, the demographic profile of the participants is given in the following table.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the participants

Participants	Age	L1	L2	Other known languages	Nationality	Job	Qualifications
P1	38 Y	Bengali	English	French, Hindi	Bangladeshi	Govt. Service	PhD (On Study)
P2	41 Y	Bengali	English	Hindi	Bangladeshi	Teaching	PhD (On Study)
P3	31 Y	Bengali	English	Hindi	Bangladeshi	Private Job	MA

4.2. Procedure

The researchers conducted individual oral interviews of the participants. They developed a set of questions for this interview in a structured way. However, the interviews were conducted in a casual manner to give the participants the feeling that they can express whatever they want about their ESL learning experience. Each of the interviews lasted for around 40 minutes. P1 and P2 were interviewed concurrently. P3 got interviewed in another session. Afterwards, their opinions and perspectives were combined to develop the paper.

4.3. Data Analyses

The researchers applied a theme-based approach for data analyses and interpretation. Once the recording was done, the researchers listened to it a few times and then worked on that. The themes were developed on the basis of the learning experience of the participants. I felt the themes that are presented on this paper are the standout features of the participants’ ESL learning experiences. While analyzing the data, the researchers tried to ensure the privacy of the participants and used a pseudonym numbers (P1, P2 and P3) for them throughout the paper.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the results and discussion part, the researchers used pseudonyms of P1, P2 and P3 as the participants. From the interview outcomes, it is evident that P1 and P3 were mostly introvert persons and they had both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for learning English as second language whereas P2 was an extrovert having extrinsic motivation for L2 learning. The study adopted a theme-based approach for results and discussion part. The claims that the researchers

made in those themes are not valid for every learner and those are not generalized claims. Claims are made on the basis of the learning experience and perspective of the interviewed participants.

Role of learners’ personality and motivation in his acculturation process

Correlation between integration, motivation of the L2 and attitudes toward the learning circumstances was found among the student groups in the study of Bao and Lee (2012). Acculturation is an important aspect in L2 learning of P1 and P2. P1 travelled to United Kingdom to get his postgraduate degree and during the study period he was in Australia for his Ph.D. There, acculturation process was proved to be a major influence in his L2 learning. Acculturation is the process in which groups or individual having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with the target language culture in order to learn the target language (Barjesteh & Vaseghi, 2012). When P1 travelled to UK, he tried to become a part of that community so that he can improve in English language skills. By the time he went to UK, he was already 28 years old and he had around 20 years of English learning experience. His age and experience helped him to minimize the possibility of language shock or culture shock and helped him to adopt the target the culture better.

P3 also showed the similar attitude. She was continuously trying to adopt the target language culture and accent to get fluency in SLA. She had around 15 years of EFL learning experience when she was enrolled in MA in Applied Linguistics and TESOL program in Australia. As the culture was quite different than that of Bangladesh, she faced difficulties

at the very outset of her study. Nevertheless, she got involved in acculturation of L2 learning.

P1 and P3 opined similarly that they used to communicate with native speakers and making friendship with few of them. Then they shared his feelings with those people about their not being satisfied with the level of their English language use and willing to make improvement on that.

P1 started working as a safety steward at Lords Cricket Ground in London. He used to work there with an intention to understand the culture and language of English people. Both these instances showed his intrinsic motivation for learning English. During his stay in UK, P1 also tried to change his personality trait from introvert to extrovert according to the demand of the situation. He claimed to be an introvert person but he tried his best to communicate with people as much as possible and he tried to create scope for communication as well.

Again, P3 used to have regular interaction with the people of L2. She started part-time job in a private company in Australia and worked for six hours in a day. Thus, she got involved in their culture and lifestyle what supported her to acquire L2 in a more practical way.

Thus, P1 and P3 verified the Dornyei and Ryan's (2015) opinion that certain individual characteristics tend to be stable over time and across situations, however there are other characteristics that tend to be highly dependent on immediate situations (p.23). P3 was consistent in maintaining her motivation and shaping up her personality to maintain the approach of her acculturation.

On the other hand, P1, around 8-10 years after his post-graduation, came to Australia and even today he seems interested to communicate with people who are native English speakers. Both P1 and P3 regularly visited library, participated in language workshops and attended different programs organized by the university. P1 visited the Muse building also. However, he (P1) feels that time constraint has become a major issue for him to work on his English skill. Both of P1 and P3's language anxiety helped them in their acculturation process as they felt that staying in Bangladesh was not supportive to improve English skills. P1 and P3 opined that their anxiety helped positively to strengthen their motivation to improve his English and also made them determined to bring changes in his personality traits according to the needs of the situations.

The study then focuses on P2's views on everything. He thought that he is petrified with his English language skills in Bangladesh. P2 opined that he attended seminars, workshops and symposiums organized by different language related organizations. But as he is living in Bangladesh, he can not get the

acculturation process. So, he thought to have limited scopes for improving his skills for L2.

Learners' attempt to bring changes in personality with motivation over time

One of the major differences between the first and second language acquisition is that normal human being gain proficiency in the first language naturally but gaining proficiency in the second language is dependent on various factors (Schumann, 1975). Factors like age, aptitude, ego boundary, culture, learning setting plays important role in SLA. Learner's motivation and personality is also influenced by these factors. As a result, a learner can face variations in his learning motivation over time and it can bring changes in his personality traits as well.

In the case of P1, he felt that his ESL learning motivation was at its peak when he was doing his bachelor's degree in Bangladesh and when he went to UK to do his master's later on. When he was in primary school, he wasn't aware of his learning motivation and his personality traits. At that time, he used to learn English as he thought that English is just another subject like other academic subjects. P2 and P3 had the same views in this regard. As the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) was used to teach them English in schools and intermediate colleges, they did not get opportunity to learn. As all the participants are from Bangladesh, P3 also had similar admission. At that time, the classes that he attended were less interactive and lessons were mostly grammar, vocabulary and translation focused. Teacher's in Bangladesh had positive attitude towards extensive reading but their actual practice in the classroom mostly encourage intensive reading only (Haider & Akter, 2012). As a result, the lack of intrinsic motivation at that time didn't let the participants' as well as the Bangladeshi EFL learners' introvert personality to come out of shell. If the learner gets comprehensible input, then they can convert more input into intake and better intake results in better output (Gass, 2013).

When P1, P2 and P3 were studying in Bangladesh, by that time they gained proficiency in their ESL reading and writing skills. However, they weren't happy with speaking and listening. They felt, they had strong intrinsic and extrinsic motivation at that time as they realized that knowing English will not only give self-satisfaction but also will help in jobs and higher study as well. However, they were still mostly introvert persons due to their learning setting and culture. When P1 and P3 went to abroad, with an exposure to much friendlier ESL learning setting, they focused more on communicating with native people and tried to develop extroversion in his nature.

Now, P1 and P3 feel that they experienced gradual decline of SLA motivation and they can put more focus in their academic studies. But P2 is still

trying to develop his language skills along with the academic studies. Though he is enough extrovert and feels strong motivations, he doesn't get the proper opportunities.

Effects of Personality Types on Learner's Motivation for Oral Proficiency

P1 is a type of person who likes to stay within himself in a party or in a gathering. He doesn't feel comfortable to speak out loud in a classroom. Even when teachers ask him question, he prefers to answer that in written form rather than answering that orally. These traits of P1 demonstrate that he is an introvert person by nature and he feels that his introvert nature is a major barrier for him to develop his oral proficiency in English.

P3 also feels that her reluctance of speaking English hampers his learning motivation a great deal as well. When she was in 8th standard, she secured the highest marks in English (writing) but when her teacher asked her to express her feelings, he failed to utter her happiness in English. That incident made her frustrated and it damaged her intrinsic motivation of learning English to a large extent. Both P1 and P3 believe that schools in Bangladesh do not provide a favorable learning environment and atmosphere for the learners in which a learner can speak English freely.

According to Ahmed (2012), successful language learning requires equal emphasis on all four macro skills. Bangladesh just tried to replace GT method with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) for teaching English but these efforts were not bringing the expected outcome. This is what made them weak in practicing English orally in public despite of having the resources within themselves to talk. Their introvert nature resulted in lack of confidence and that lack of confidence affected their motivation. P2 agreed considering him an unsuccessful person having not to study abroad. He believed that extrovert attitude even could not develop his natural EFL speaking skill though he is adroit in reading and writing pretty well.

P1 opined that when he travelled to UK, he had strong extrinsic and intrinsic motivation at that time to improve his English. He also got favorable learning atmosphere in UK but he feels that his improvement of spoken English wasn't up to the mark. Although he tried to act like an extrovert person at that time, his efforts didn't bring him his desired outcome. After coming back from UK, he served the government of Bangladesh for next 10 years where he hardly had to speak in English to perform his tasks.

P2 faced the same quandaries having no English-friendly environment which can be supportive for EFL speaking. Still, P2 continues trying to develop more for his intrinsic motivation to assure himself that he can speak English in a satisfactory level.

P1 mentioned that when he came to Australia again, he lacked his extrinsic motivation and tried to work on his English mostly because of his intrinsic motivation. His experience shows us that his personality type had a strong influence of his learning motivation. Moreover, he was very proficient in reading and writing and his claim was supported by his high score in IELTS reading and writing section (scored 7.00 in both the modules) for consecutive times. It is generally believed that extrovert learners will do better in interpersonal communication skills and extroversion or introversion has less role to play in improving reading and writing skills (Ellis, 2008).

'Motivation' affects both learning and performing but 'personality' affects performing than learning

Learner's motivation is dependent on various factors. Factors like institutional system, teacher-student relationship, student's attitude plays crucial role in learner's motivation (Sakui and Cowie, 2011). Teacher's feedback is an important aspect of teacher-student relationship. Positive and constructive feedback from teachers can have far reaching effect on a particular learner's motivation. When the P1 and P2 were in high school, they had teachers who used to appreciate their effort of learning English. They (their teachers) promised to help further. Such mental support at such an early stage of ESL learning helped to develop strong intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Yet, P2 could not develop as per the expectations and for that he makes his luck responsible because Bangladesh has not that environment, situation and culture to practice proper English skills. Though he received MA degree and was about to complete PhD, he was not satisfied with his English speaking. Moreover, degrees can not get a promotion to P2, as his intuitional organogram does not offer rewards or promotion for better skills. So, he did not feel any extrinsic motivation also. So, he could not improve his oral proficiency up to his expectation despite having a good stock of grammar and vocabulary.

P3, again, did not get such teacher who could inspire her. Still, P3 had strong motivation for learning. She gained proficiency in reading and writing but she had less motivation for performing. However, when she went to Australia for her MA. She started getting both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation to enhance her skills.

On the other hand, extroversion or introversion do not play any major part in developing the learners' oral English skill. It's the strategy of the participants and their desires to improve their oral proficiency (Chen, jiang and Mu, 2015). In Bangladesh, the practice of GT method and lack of interactions in the classroom effected all the participants' oral performance. However, their reading or writing were not affected by their personality and the performance

of reading and writing also did not demand direct interaction with others. When it comes to learning English, personality trait had some impact on speaking. Rest of the three other macro skills were not much affected by their personality types. When it comes to performing, they also expressed that their personality had barriers to perform. P1 added that, at times he tried to bring changes in his personality (while staying in UK and Australia) to learn better but he found it difficult to bring changes in personality to perform better.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study shows that the motivation and personality of the interviewed learners went hand in hand in different stages of their ESL learning process. The participants experienced the changes of their motivation and personality traits over time. In different situations and learning contexts, learners' personality and motivations influenced each other. However, teachers have to play roles for developing L2 among their learners as Ramage (1990) urges that EFL teachers can take the responsibility to provide encouraging skill feedback to upsurge the learners' intrinsic motivation.

In acculturation process or in developing oral proficiency, the learners had mixed experience due to their personality types and changes of motivation. Learners having sturdy integrative direction can sustain more confident attitudes, sturdier craving and an advanced level of curiosity in language learning, and are more prospective to contribute to better socio-cultural adaptation toward the L2 group finally (Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Yu, 2010). So, adaptation and acculturation are imperatively needed for L2 development.

Regarding the ESL learning at the previous study levels, all the participants opined the similar in a point that the tertiary education in Bangladesh do not provide enough practical courses for ESL learning. There are some courses of general education compulsory for all but only one or two of those are related to L2 development that are more likely theoretical rather being practical. Another aspect they pointed that the students of other background (other than English) hardly get scopes for L2 development. The universities curriculum and syllabus are not at all related to improvement of L2. Rather, students get motivations only to achieve marks. In consequence, Bangladesh produces good students each year but not good learners or in many of the cases.

The present study showed the limitations and scopes of learning L2 affected by personality and motivations. The sampled adult participants faced problems for different reasons one of which was the inept and limited scope to practice L2 at the tertiary

level. In a 2007 study, Liu suggested that various discretionary courses should be offered at the tertiary level to provide to the requirements to different learners, targeting to uphold and additionally stimulate learners' attention in ESL learning and its culture.

However, the claims made in this paper cannot be generalized for everyone as it is not possible with only three participants to represent the overall ESL learning experience pattern. A large-scale study on this particular topic may also produce more reliable outcomes about the link between motivation and personality in ESL learning experience. Moreover, redundancy of issues discussed is a big setback for this paper. Learners' learning experiences in Bangladesh, UK and Australia were discussed repeatedly in several parts of this paper. However, the researchers felt that those repetitions were logically presented under different themes to support the claims in a trustworthy means.

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