

## **EFL Teachers' Personality Type and Their Effectiveness in Teaching: Investigating the Relationship**

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**Abstract** – The purpose of this study was to investigate the probable relationship between EFL teachers' personality type and their effectiveness in teaching from university students' point of view. In order for this to be investigated, two validated and reliable questionnaires including Eysneck Personality questionnaire (EPQ) (1985) as well as a questionnaire on Characteristics of Effective Teachers by Khodadady (2010) were administered. Based on Morgan's sample population table, the participants in this study included 171 EFL university students, mostly those studying at different departments of Islamic Azad University, and 20 EFL university teachers who have been teaching courses of General English or ESP at different universities (Islamic Azad University, and Sama college) in Mashhad Iran. Firstly, the EFL teachers were asked to fill out the personality questionnaire and following that their students were to fill out the "effective teacher" questionnaire. In order to facilitate the process of answering the questions for the students, Khodadady's questionnaire was translated into the participants' native language i.e. Persian. Finally, to come up with a tangible result, the collected data were analyzed through Spearman Correlation. The analysis proved the existence of a significant relationship between teachers' personality type and their effectiveness in teaching. The results of the study could be of benefit to teachers in having a more comprehensive awareness of their personality and accordingly do their best to boost their teaching performance and outcome.

**Keywords:** Effective Teaching, Personality, EFL Teachers

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Traditionally, teaching and learning has been of great priority and importance in all educational settings. Moreover, in recent years it seems that with the introduction of different teaching methods and the emerging role of psychology in education and also the bitter fact that some of the EFL learners are reluctant to get immersed into the language learning process, it has turned into a highly effective issue for linguists and language specialists to pin point the probable relation of teachers' personality type and their effectiveness in teaching which is of course of great benefit and advantage to both teachers and learners.

According to Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (2010) personality type is referred to as “those aspects of an individual’s behavior, attitudes, beliefs, thought, actions and feelings which are seen as typical and distinctive of that person and recognized as such by that person and others. Personality factors such as self-esteem, inhibition, anxiety, risk-taking and extroversion, are thought to influence second language learning because they can contribute to motivation and the choice of learner strategies. Therefore, how teachers approach their teaching style can be a clear-cut issue only in case they are aware of their own personality type.

Additionally, effectiveness has been defined differently in different contexts and based on different purposes. Therefore, the researchers tried to focus on the notion of effectiveness presented by James and Sammons (2013) as, the ability to produce gains on student achievement scores; taking account of a baseline measure of students’ prior attainment and other characteristics of student intake, the teacher effect is identified in relation to students’ progress measured by later attainment. Such measures are often calculated in terms of progress over a school year.

Finally, as personality types are considered as one of the subcategories of psychological factors underlying teachers’ characteristics and personality, it seems to be an investigation of great worth. Moreover, as a persons’ personality, whether its extrovert or introvert etc., is partly formed as the result of environmental influences, it can be concluded that the effect of personality on achievement needs to be reexamined in each cultural setting (as cited in Araghi, Fam, and Ziaei, 2012).

### **1.1 Limitations of the Study**

Like any other study, some limitations are posed on the present study. First of all, due to the availability of the participants to the researcher, this study was carried out on university students who passed English as an ESP course or as a general knowledge requirement. Secondly, variables such as gender and personal factors are not taken into account. Thirdly, as effective teaching has got many dimensions and possible explanations, the researchers have used the one which is operational for the present paper i.e. the teaching learning context.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Personality may be viewed as the dynamic organization of those traits and characteristic patterns of behavior that are unique to the individual (Callahan, 1966). Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics defines personality as follows: "Those aspects of an individual's behavior, attitudes, beliefs, thought, actions and feelings which are seen as typical and distinctive of that person and recognized as such by that person and others. Williams and Burden (1999, as cited in Larenas, Moran, & Rivera, 2011) referred to personality as an individual's characteristic patterns of thought, combination of behavior and emotion with mechanisms of psychology behind those patterns.

In Eysenck's model of personality, Extraversion is characterized by being outgoing, talkative, high on positive affect (feeling good), and in need of external stimulation ( Bartol ,

2008). According to Eysenck's arousal theory of extraversion, there is an optimal level of cortical arousal and Extraverts are chronically under-aroused, bored and are therefore in need of external stimulation to bring them up to an optimal level of performance. About 16 percent of the population tend to fall in this range. Eysenck also asserts that extraverts tend to seek interaction with others, novel experiences, complex, varied and intense stimuli, prefer their own company and prefer the familiar and unfamiliar. Introverts, on the other hand, (also about 16 percent of the population) are chronically over-aroused and are therefore in need of peace and quiet to bring them up to an optimal level of performance. Most people (about 68 percent of the population) fall in the midrange of the extraversion/introversion continuum, an area referred to as ambiversion. Mount and Barrick (1995) mentioned that extraversion is most often described as the degree to which an individual is sociable, gregarious, talkative, assertive, adventurous, active, energetic and ambitious. Tallman and Bruning (2008) also stated people high in extroversion tend to be high performers and committed to the organization and their work. They will develop psychological contracts that reflect their hard work, commitment and willingness to work with others.

According to Hjelle and Ziegler (1992) most of the efforts have been aimed at determining whether there are significant differences in behavior associated with individual differences along the introversion-extroversion continuum. Some empirically established ways in which introverts and extroverts have been found to differ include:

1. Introverts prefer theoretical and scientific vocations (e.g., engineering and chemistry), whereas extroverts tend to prefer people oriented jobs (e.g., sales and social work).
2. Introverts attain higher grades in college than extroverts. Also, students who withdraw from college for psychiatric reasons tend to be extroverts.
3. Introverts show higher arousal levels in the mornings, whereas extroverts show higher arousal levels in the evening. Furthermore, introverts work better in the morning, and extroverts work better in the afternoon.

Neuroticism or emotionality is characterized by high levels of negative affect such as depression and anxiety. Neuroticism, according to Eysenck's theory, is based on activation thresholds in the sympathetic nervous system or visceral brain. Neurotic people — who have low activation thresholds, and are unable to inhibit or control their emotional reactions, experience negative affect in the face of very minor stressors — are easily nervous or upset. Neuroticism is always related to the characteristics of people who have negative affect and are low in self-esteem. According to Watson and Clark (1984) negative affect is defined by a propensity to view the world in a negative emotional state. Similarly with Levin and Stokes (1989), which mentioned that individuals high in negative affect tend to focus on the negative aspects of other people and themselves. Turban and Dougherty (1994) mentioned that individuals with low self-esteem tend to withdraw from challenging situations, are less confident in their abilities, less likely to seek feedback, and see themselves as less appealing to others. Based on Mount and Barrick (1995), neuroticism as “emotional stability” (reverse scale) by some researchers and can be further conceptualized as the extent to which a person is emotional, insecure, nervous, fearful and apprehensive.

Based on Eysenck's theory, psychoticism is associated not only with the liability to have a psychotic episode (or break with reality), but also with aggression. Psychotic behavior is rooted in the characteristics of tough mindedness, non-conformity, inconsideration, recklessness, hostility, anger and impulsiveness.

There have also been various studies on the relation between personality and teaching. Research on teacher personality is based on the assumption that the teacher as a person is a momentous variable in the teaching-learning process. Personality influences the behavior of the teacher in various ways, such as interface with students, methods selected, and learning experiences chosen (Murray, 1972). The successful use of a teacher's personality is vital in conducting instructional activities. Personality aids teaching, for communication takes place between the teacher and the learner— even in the absence of the spoken word (nonverbal communication). Callahan (1996) mentioned that the teacher whose personality helps create and preserve a classroom or learning environment in which students feel contented and in which they are provoked to learn is said to have an enviable teaching personality. Each individual has characteristic attributes of personality which manipulate both the manner in which he behaves toward others and the ways in which they act in response to him. Harkin and Turner (1997) believed that teaching is a complex activity that is influenced by, among other things, teachers' personality, characteristics, and teachers' beliefs in their ability to affect students' outcomes. According to Dickson and Wiersma (1984) and Gibney and Wiersma (1986), there is ample evidence supporting the view that personality of a teacher is a very important determiner of successful teaching, and that teacher effectiveness is perceived to exist as a consequence of the characteristics of a teacher as a person. No wonder, then, that a majority of earlier studies in the area of teacher effectiveness have linked teacher effectiveness with outgoing, extraverted tendencies, confidence (Solomon, 1965; Srivastava and Bhargava, 1984); emotional stability, emotional maturity, calmness, low anxiety, warm and empathetic personality, sensitivity and warmth (Gage, 1965); problem-solving ability (Gage, 1965; Matteson, 1974); less inhibition, control, less impulsive personality, sense of humor and flexibility. Further, those teachers have also been found to be effective who are not dominated by a narcissistic self and a neurotic need for power and authority (Hamacheck, 1969; Mohan, 1995).

## **2.1 Research Questions**

In order for the researchers to find out the relation between the two variables i.e. effectiveness in teaching and personality type, the following research questions are put forward;

RQ1. Is there any relationship between EFL teachers' personality type and their effectiveness in teaching?

RQ2. Is there any relationship between any of the four sub-categories of EFL teachers' personality type and their effectiveness in teaching?

## **2.2 Research Hypothesis**

To come up with reasonable results on the basis of the aforementioned research questions, the following null hypotheses were proposed:

HO1. There is no significant relationship between EFL teachers' personality type and their effectiveness in teaching.

HO2. There is no significant relationship between any of the four sub-categories of EFL teachers' personality type and their effectiveness in teaching.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Participants**

As for the participants of this study and based on Morgan's sample population table, 20 EFL university male and female teachers, teaching courses such as General English and ESP at different universities (Islamic Azad University and Sama) in Mashhad Iran, were asked to fill out a personality type questionnaire. Majority of these teachers had an average teaching experience of 4 to 8 years whose native language was Farsi and their educational status was M.A. and above. The second group of participants consisted of 171 Iranian EFL male and female university students who were studying majors other than English and were mostly in first up to third semester at university whose ages ranged from 20 to 30.

### **3.2 Instruments**

#### **3.2.1 Eysneck Personality Questionnaire**

In order to come up with what the personality type of each of the teachers was, the previously validated and reliable personality questionnaire (Eysneck, 1985) was employed. This questionnaire consisted of 48 items, 12 for each of the traits neuroticism, extraversion, psychoticism, and 12 for the lie scale. Each question has a binary response, yes or no and each dichotomous item was scored 1 or 0. Teachers were asked to fill in the questionnaire within 15 minutes.

#### **3.2.2 Characteristics of Effective Teachers Questionnaire**

In order to check how successful teachers have been with regard to their teaching, students were asked to mark their opinions on the Effective Teachers Questionnaire (Khodadady, 2010). The questionnaire consisted of 47 five point likert scale ranging from completely agree to completely disagree. The instrument mainly asked students' opinion with regard to different factors that leads in a teachers' success in teaching such as "having creativity in teaching". As the university students who attended in this research were studying majors other than English, the researchers decided to facilitate the process of answering the items by translating the questionnaire into students' native language i.e. Persian. Afterwards, in order to make sure of the validity of the translation, two experienced teachers in the field were asked to check the English and translated versions of the questionnaire. Finally, students were asked to fill in the questionnaire within 15 minutes.

### 3.3 Procedure

The researchers in this study aimed at finding out whether there exists any relation between what the personality types of the teachers are and how successful they can be in teaching from students' point of view. To this end two questionnaires were employed to two groups of teachers and their students at different universities in Mashhad, Iran. In order to collect the required data, the date and time were arranged with the teachers for the researcher to be present all throughout the administration and also for easing the process of data collection.

The researchers started the data collection in March 2015 and ended in May 2015. The students and teachers of different universities in Mashhad Iran attended the data collection process including Islamic Azad University and Sama. The required data were collected in a quantitative mean through two questionnaires. The researchers tried to be present all through the data collection process in order to increase the reliability of the answers. Finally, as the study was a correlational one, once the data was gathered, it was entered into SPSS 16 software and was analyzed with the use of Spearman Correlation and finally the results were discussed in the teaching learning context.

### 3.4 Data Analysis and Results

As the purpose of this study was to investigate whether there exists a relationship between teachers' type of personality and how effective their performance is when it comes to teaching in the class, from participants' point of view, two research questions have been proposed by the researchers and in order to find out the result the collected data were analyzed and processed through SPSS. Each of the research questions are discussed accordingly.

In order to depict the results for the first research question, whether there exists a relation between teachers' personality type and their effectiveness in teaching, Pearson correlation was employed and the results are depicted in Table 1.

**Table 1: Effective Teaching and Teachers' Personality**

		Total 2	Effective Teaching
Total 2	Pearson Correlation	1	.663*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.019
	N	20	20
Effective teaching Level	Pearson Correlation	.663*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019	
	N	20	20

As the results in Table 1 show, there is a positive (.663) and significant relationship (0.19) between teachers' personality and their effectiveness in teaching. So the first null

hypothesis, There is no significant relationship between EFL teachers' personality type and their effectiveness in teaching, is rejected.

As for the second research question and in order to check the relationship between each of the four sub-categories of personality (neuroticism, extraversion, psychoticism, and lie) and teachers' effectiveness in teaching, correlation was run and the results are depicted in each of the four following tables.

**Table 2: Effective Teaching and Neuroticism**

		Effective Teaching	Neuroticism
Effective Teaching Level	Pearson Correlation	1	-.325
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.303
Neuroticism	Pearson Correlation	-.325	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.303	

Table 2 reveals the result for the relation between Neuroticism and teachers' effectiveness in teaching. It is shown that, there is a negative relationship (-.325) between neuroticism trait of personality and teachers' effectiveness in teaching and this negative relation is not a significant one (.303).

**Table 3: Effective Teaching and Extraversion**

		Effective Teaching	Extraversion
Effective Teaching Level	Pearson Correlation	1	.660*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.020
Extraversion	Pearson Correlation	.660*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.020	

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

Table 3 focuses on the relation between Extraversion and teachers' effectiveness in teaching, accordingly, the results reveal that the level of significant is smaller than 0.5 (.02) therefore, the relationship is a significant positive one since Pearson correlation depicts a degree of .66. between two variables .

**Table 4: Effective teaching and psychoticism**

		Effective Teaching	Psychoticism
Effective Teaching Level	Pearson Correlation	1	.165
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.609
Psychoticism	Pearson Correlation	.165	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.609	

As the result in table 4 shows, the relationship between effective teaching and psychoticism as the third personality type, is a positive (.16) but not a significant one ( $60 > 0.5$ ).

**Table 5: Effective Teaching and Lie**

		Effective Teaching	Lie
Effective Teaching Level	Pearson Correlation	1	-.186
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.564
Lie	Pearson Correlation	-.186	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.564	

The last type of personality is lie, the relation of which with effective teaching is displayed in table 5. As it reveals, there is a negative relation (-.18) between the two variables and since the significant level is greater than 0.5 (.56), the relation is not a significant one!

In sum, we come up to the conclusion that personality in total has a significant positive relation with effectiveness in teaching, but based on aforementioned results, the extraversion personality trait of teachers turned out to be more dominant as compared to other remaining three personality traits and proved to have a positive correlation with effective teaching. It means that extroverted teachers are more successful in their teaching.

#### 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As it was clearly illustrated in data analysis and results, there existed a significant positive relation between EFL teachers' personality type and their effectiveness in teaching from students' point of view. Also, in order to check whether there existed any relation between teachers' effectiveness in teaching and each of the four sub-scales of the personality variable i.e. neuroticism, extraversion, psychoticism, and lie, Pearson Correlation was run

once again and the obtained data proved the existence of a positive or negative relation between each of the four sub scales of personality and teachers' effectiveness in teaching. One of these personality traits, topped the chart compared to others which was the Extraversion which can imply that extroverted teachers can come in as more successful ones! However, one can surely come up with the idea that the type of personality teachers possess can chiefly be apparent in the teaching they provide their students with.

The results of the present study are also in line with other reputable researches in the area. For instance, Madrid (1995), investigated the "Internal and external factors in language teaching" and came up with the conclusion that, except for the factors related to learners, are teachers' personality traits and his/her behavior in class which can directly affect language teaching.

After all, as teachers, specifically EFL ones, it is of great importance to be aware of the personal factors that might affect our teaching process and outcomes which might as well affect our own outlook and perspectives towards teaching. Moreover, in case teachers are aware of their personality types, they can predict what kinds of activities and tasks students will enjoy, what sort of teaching methods they require and what their learning styles are (as cited in Mall-Amiri and Nakhaie ,2013). On the other hand, and more important than the previously mentioned factor, it is important for practitioners, and all those directors of educational settings to accumulate enough background about their teachers' different personality characteristics since teachers also bring individual characteristics to the L2 classroom that may have an influence on the students' performance and in their final results (as cited in Madrid, 1995).

In conclusion, many internal and external factors affecting a teachers' effectiveness in teaching can be located, one of which could be named as personality types. In all, the results of this study is in line with other researchers in the field including Madrid (1995). Thus, it is of crucial importance to bear in mind and highlight the fact that the teacher's social class, ideology and beliefs derived from his/her background may also influence his/her behavior and performance in class and the type of attitudes and beliefs (s)he transmits, supports and develops in his/her students are among other issues to be investigated and the need for the research in these areas are felt since sometimes the teacher's ideology may be related to his/her compromise and commitment with the type of instruction and education (s)he provides.

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