

Students' Personality Type and Attitudes

Toward Classroom Participation

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Participation usually means students speaking in class: answer and ask questions, make comments, and join in discussions. Students who do not participate in those ways mentioned above are often considered to be passive and are generally penalized when participation is graded. Brown (2000) argues that personality is one of the affective factors that are equally important for explaining differential success among second language learners. While extroversion is associated with risk-taking, introversion is subsumed under the concept of self-esteem. In addition, students from Galvan and Fukada's (1997/1998) study explained they were unable to participate in class because they were not used to a student-centered class setting.

Literature Review

According to Myers (1962), extroverts tend to prefer learning situations that afford interaction, while introverts tend to prefer small groups. A study conducted by Galvan and Fukada (1997/1998) found that students who were outgoing participated more than introverts. The study also determined that participants who self-reported as having passive personalities were least likely to initiate a question or volunteer an answer to a teacher's question. Additionally, knowledge of personal preferences can help teachers and administrators understand and predict student performance so they can restructure the situation to facilitate more student participation.

According to Barrett and Connot (1986), introverted students are least involved in school activities and have lower academic achievement. As Carskadon (1978) states, extroverts generally produce more action with fewer thoughts whereas introverts produce numerous thoughts with little action.

Research Questions

Two general research questions were posited: whether ESL students' participation in class was consistent with patterns normally thought to promote greater involvement in class discussions, and to what extent students participated in activities that promote language development.

Method

Twenty students participated in the study: ten Chinese; five Indonesians; and one each from Iran, Cambodia, Japan, Guatemala, and Armenia. All were enrolled in a reading and writing class where their participation was observed. They completed a three-part questionnaire. The first section included demographical questions. In the second part, participants responded to 14 statements indicating whether their learning style was independent-oriented or group-oriented. The third section consisted of 10 questions designed to determine participants' personality type. Those who scored in the middle range were labeled as undetermined (i.e., neither extrovert nor introvert). Three whole-class discussions were videotaped in order to count actual participation.

Findings

The result of students' preferences for studying reveals a pattern of difference based on culture: Indonesian students prefer to study independently, whereas other students distributed their preferences evenly on studying independently and in groups. However, the difference was rejected by using the One-Way ANOVA ($F = 2.527, p < .05$). The finding was very unexpected because introverted students had a higher response than those extroverts regarding the item of preference for speaking in class. In both comparisons, the lowest response means were on the items "students ask teacher questions in class" and "students answer teacher's questions spontaneously".

In the whole-class discussions, the total number of participation moves by students was 126. Seven of the students did not participate at all during these three sessions. However, four students participated more than others, with their participation occupying 72.9% of the total. Moreover, two were classified as undetermined personality types and the other two were classified as introverts. Combined with gender and personality to investigate students' whole-class participation, Table 1 shows that their participation was evenly distributed by female and male students, but female

students scored higher than male students on means. Additionally, introverted students participated more in total than those extroverts. However, the means shows that the group of not determined had a greater participation rate than the other two groups ($M = 8.71$, $M = 0$, & $M = 6.5$).

Table 1
Distribution of Actual Classroom Participation

	Total	Moves	%	Means
Gender				
Female	7	64	50.8	9.14
Male	13	62	49.2	4.77
Personality Type				
Introverted	10	65	51.6	6.50
Extroverted	3	0	0.0	0.00
Not determined	7	61	48.4	8.71

Table 2
Correlations between Students' Actual Participation, Personality Type, and Language Proficiency

	Participation	Personality	Proficiency	Gender
Participation	--			
Personality	.092	--		
Gender	-.235	-.121	-.104	--
Ethnicity	.492*	-.182	.245	-.095
Length of stay	.575**	-.150	-.164	-.199
Extent of English use outside of class	.241	-.020	.321	-.447*

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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

Table 2 shows the correlations between student personality type and participation, as well as other factors that were expected to affect student participation. The findings indicate no significant correlation between student personality type and participation. However, there was a significant correlation between students' cultural background and their participation ($p < .05$). The correlation between students' participation and their length of stay in the United States was also significant (p

< .01). In addition, another significant correlation was found between gender of the students and the extent of English used outside of class.

Discussion and Conclusion

Student personality type was the main focus in the study. However, the findings were not clear-cut and need further investigation. A larger sample and different measurement to classify student personality types are recommended because the self-reported data might have skewed the results. Group discussions should be taken into consideration as well. Although the results regarding the role of gender in participation were not significant, gender does play an important role in second language acquisition. Classroom management and atmosphere under the teachers' control may have been an affecting factor that correlated with class participation as well. Given the small sample size of only 20 subjects, further segmentation of demographic variables was not feasible, but would certainly be warranted in a larger sample. As a result of the low correlations and few direct relationships between personality types and language learning variables, we should be more circumspect in drawing implications and cannot draw the conclusion that introverts participate more than extroverts, though the results from the study support the idea.

References

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