Personality and Second Language Learning

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationships which exist between personality and second language learning and adds to the data available on the use of a highly respected personality indicator, the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Language learning and academic success are both highly correlated with intelligence, but research suggests that the importance of intelligence declines after high school age, partly because of the stronger effects of personality. This study places emphasis on the importance of personality in learning success and examines research evidence on the issue, discussing some of the inconsistent results that have been obtained. A study of 100 Hong Kong university undergraduates was carried out to add to this research base. The instruments used were the MBTI for personality traits, the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (S.I.L.L.) for learning strategies and a standardized test for language proficiency. Significant statistical relationships were not found and the reasons for this are discussed.

Keywords: Personality, Second language learning, Intelligence, Hong Kong

1. Introduction

The relationship between personality and second language learning ability, has received some research interest in the last few decades. The results that are available however, have sometimes been inconsistent, often because of methodological and conceptual differences in the way the studies were performed. This article will consider some of the research evidence which has examined these relationships and details a recent study of undergraduate students in Hong Kong which aimed to determine not only the connections between personality, language learning and learning strategies, but also to add to the available data on the personality profiles of Chinese students.

The study will first briefly clarify what might be meant by the terms intelligence, learning strategies and personality, before presenting details of the Hong Kong data collection.

2. Theoretical Perspectives

According to Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham, (2005, p. 40) researchers in cognitive psychology agree on a definition of intelligence which states that it........

"....is a very general mental capacity that, among other things, involves the ability to reason, plan, solve problems, think abstractly, comprehend complex ideas, learn quickly and learn from experience.... it reflects a broader and deeper capability for comprehending our surroundings- 'catching on' 'making sense' of things, or "figuring out" what to do...."

Many of the elements in the definition of intelligence given above have also been described as indications of the 'good language learner' and have been tabulated in lists of learning strategies that such learners use (Oxford, 1995). Learning a second language successfully requires using reasoning and problem solving abilities and it requires the ability to use and apply strategies which try to make sense of the structure and use of a new language, a clear overlap with definitions of intelligence. Strong elements of successful language learning have been the use of what are called *cognitive strategies* (the direct processing of language, e.g. memorizing, inferring meaning, solving problems, identifying or making sense of relationships) and *metacognitive strategies* (thinking about those processes). Both of these have been identified as of crucial importance in strategy research. (O'Malley, et al. 1985a). Attempts have been made to teach strategies for language learning, but these have not met with much success (Hassall, 1984, O'Malley, et al. 1985b). Among the reasons for this may be the fact that the ability to use strategies is related to general intelligence and thus subject to the same developmental, social and genetic influences which limit the effects of direct teaching.

Research has provided evidence of the power of general intelligence in predicting academic performance, including second language learning success (academic performance being estimated by written or oral examinations, continuous assessment, group work, essays or dissertations). (Gagne & St Pere, 2001, Neisser, et al. 1996, Sternberg & Kaufman, 1996). However, there is also evidence that general intelligence (as measured by IQ tests) is often not highly correlated with academic performance. (Singh, & Varma, 1995). Ackerman (1994) and Jensen (1980) report a

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Resources in Education ,1995-07 **Personality and Emotional Intelligence in Second Language Learning** Katarzyna Ożańska-Ponikwia,2018-07-27 This book addresses a particularly important area of second language acquisition research specifically the factors that mediate learning outcomes in learning a second or foreign language It provides a comprehensive up to date overview of studies in the field of second language learning and L2 use from the point of view of personality traits and emotional intelligence It also presents results of a mixed method study researching the possible influence of these variables on the process of learning a second language Furthermore the book represents the first systematic exploration of the role of emotional intelligence and the factors related to it in moderating attainment in the target language What is also unique here is the investigation of the role of personality with respect to different target language skills and subsystems which allows finer grained insights into this relationship The book will be of considerable interest to both researchers teachers and students in the fields of SLA TESOL applied linguistics and bilingualism

Personality as a Factor Affecting the Use of Language Learning Strategies Jakub Przybył,Mirosław Pawlak,2023-05-06 The book explores the relationships between the personality traits of Polish university students learning English as a foreign language and their use of language learning strategies LLS It provides a solid theoretical background for the investigation of the interface between the two constructs describes the applied analytical procedures in detail and reports the results and implications of a large scale study Chapter 1 presents multiple perspectives on the investigation of human personality and presents insights from a selection of studies into the role of personality in foreign language learning Chapter 2 addresses the construct of LLS while Chapter 3 links strategy use to other individual learner characteristics with a focus on personality Chapter 4 sets the methodological framework for the empirical investigation describes the rationale for conducting the study and includes a thorough description of analytical procedures Chapter 5 presents the results of the study and highlights their pedagogical implications Finally limitations of the study are presented and some directions for future research are suggested The monograph will be of interest to scholars investigating the role of personality in SLA as well as graduate and postgraduate students in applied linguistics **Personality and Second Language Learning** Virginia D. Hodge,1978-01-01 **Resources in Education** ,1995 **Mental Health and Psychiatric Nursing** Janet L. Davies,Ellen Hastings Janosik,1991 **Aspects of Personality in the Development of a Second Language** Patrycja Marta Kamińska,2012 *Personality and Slow Students* Zhijuan Cao,1988 **Personality Factors Affecting High School Students Learning a Second Language** Donald Barnett Westcott,1973 *The Big Five in SLA* Ewa Piechurska-Kuciel,2020-11-03 This book also focuses on analyzing each trait from the point of view of its higher and lower order structure as well as from the affective cognitive behavioral social and academic perspectives apart from outlining the field of personality psychology Personality traits are important in daily interaction and are a significant factor in achieving

educational goals also for second and foreign language L2 learners Consequently studying the role of personality in the field of second language acquisition SLA appears to be of primary importance especially because there has been little research on this subject Moreover general results pertaining to the role of personality in L2 are inconclusive This book s primary objective is to present a concise and updated picture of personality on the basis of the Big Five model which is accessible for non psychologists The middle part of the book focuses on discussing potential merits and drawbacks of each trait for the purpose of the process of SLA both from the formal and informal theoretical and empirical points of view The next part includes a description of an empirical study whose main aim is to sensitize the reader to direct and indirect influences that personality may exert on L2 learning The book closes with a concluding chapter aiming at clarifying directions for further empirical study of personality as well as issues in research methodology **Personality Traits Moderate the Relationship Between Statistical Learning Ability and Second-Language Learners' Sentence Comprehension** Elma Kerz,Daniel Wiechmann,Tandis Silkens,2020 *Looking at Personality Types and Learning Styles in Second Language Acquisition* Coleen K. Landheer,2000 **Sex-differences in Second-language Learning** Atken Armenian,1974 The Psychology of the Language Learner Zoltán Dörnyei,2005 The scope of individual learner differences is broad yet there is no current comprehensive and unified volume that provides an overview of the considerable amount of research conducted on various language learner differences until now **Personality Types, Learning Styles, and Second Language Acquisition** Iveta Evison,2002 **Personality Correlates of Second Language Acquisition** Judith Ann Sullivan,1985

The Role of Personality Variables in Second Language Behavior Alexander Z. Guiora,1971 **Emotions from a Bilingual Point of View** Katarzyna Ożańska-Ponikwia,2014-09-26 This book addresses a particularly important area of second language acquisition research specifically the factors that mediate learning outcomes in learning a second or foreign language It provides a comprehensive up to date overview of studies in the field of second language learning and L2 use from the point of view of personality traits and emotional intelligence It also presents results of a mixed method study researching the possible influence of these variables on the process of learning a second language Furthermore the book represents the first systematic exploration of the role of emotional intelligence and the factors related to it in moderating attainment in the target language What is also unique here is the investigation of the role of personality with respect to different target language skills and subsystems which allows finer grained insights into this relationship The book will be of considerable interest to both researchers teachers and students in the fields of SLA TESOL applied linguistics and bilingualism

Emotion and Identity in Second Language Learning Ana Blanco Canales,2022 This book brings together 18 theoretical and empirical chapters that analyze the role of emotion expression perception processing and identity notions and representations construction conflict in the process of learning a second language Studies on the differences in emotionality in L1 and L2 agree that in L2 there is an alteration that in many cases manifests itself as a decrease in the affective load

which can lead to a certain indifference to the emotional content transmitted and to a lesser involvement in communication It is also known that emotion plays a fundamental role in the construction of identity in a second language in the shaping of the self that feels and communicates and in the ability to cope with the learning process Most of the studies have focused on the understanding of these two dimensions in balanced bilingual speakers but there is little evidence on their functioning in speakers with other degrees of proficiency the case of second language learners and on their role in the learning process Advancing in this knowledge is fundamental for the improvement of everything related to second language acquisition We need new and innovate approaches approaches that lead to more effective programs increased interest in language learning and the consolidation of multilingual societies   Peer Interaction and Second Language Learning Jenefer Philp,Rebecca Adams,Noriko Iwashita,2013-11-07 Peer Interaction and Second Language Learning synthesizes the existing body of research on the role of peer interaction in second language learning in one comprehensive volume In spite of the many hours that language learners spend interacting with peers in the classroom there is a tendency to evaluate the usefulness of this time by comparison to whole class interaction with the teacher Yet teachers are teachers and peers are peers as partners in interaction they are likely to offer very different kinds of learning opportunities This book encourages researchers and instructors alike to take a new look at the potential of peer interaction to foster second language development Acknowledging the context of peer interaction as highly dynamic and complex the book considers the strengths and limitations of peer work from a range of theoretical perspectives In doing so Peer Interaction and Second Language Learning clarifies features of effective peer interaction for second language learning across a range of educational contexts age spans proficiency levels and classroom tasks and settings

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Table of Contents Personality And Second Language Learning Ccse

1. Understanding the eBook Personality And Second Language Learning Ccse
    - The Rise of Digital Reading Personality And Second Language Learning Ccse
    - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying Personality And Second Language Learning Ccse
    - Exploring Different Genres
    - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
    - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
    - Popular eBook Platforms
    - Features to Look for in an Personality And Second Language Learning Ccse
    - User-Friendly Interface
4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Personality And Second Language Learning Ccse
    - Personalized Recommendations
    - Personality And Second Language Learning Ccse User Reviews and Ratings
    - Personality And Second Language Learning Ccse and Bestseller Lists
5. Accessing Personality And Second Language Learning Ccse Free and Paid eBooks
    - Personality And Second Language Learning Ccse Public Domain eBooks
    - Personality And Second Language Learning Ccse eBook Subscription Services
    - Personality And Second Language Learning Ccse Budget-Friendly Options

- Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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~~top ai image generator for moms for workers 1496~~
pro credit score improvement usa for beginners 1460
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ultimate cheap flights usa step plan for beginners 437

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