The relationship of being introvert/extrovert and the preferences of choosing vocabulary learning strategies among Iranian students

By: Roghayeh Momenpoor

Supervisor: Dr. Amir Mahdavi Zafarghandi

First advisor: Dr. Behzad Barekat

Second advisor: Dr. Vali-o-Allah Mousavi

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In the name of God

The most compassionate
The merciful

Dedicated to:

My parents that there is no doubt in my mind that without their continued support and counsel I could not have completed this process, and to my lovely sister, Forugh, who supports me in everything and I could not have completed this effort without her assistance, tolerance, and enthusiasm, my professors, for their support of my academic pursuit and contributing ideas, feedback and advice.

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Abstract

The relationship of being introvert/extrovert and the preferences of choosing vocabulary learning strategies among Iranian students

The present research intends to focus specifically on the effect of introversion/extroversion on choosing vocabulary learning strategies by Iranian EFL learners, intending to examine if there is any significant relationship between being introvert/extrovert and the preferences in choosing Vocabulary Learning Strategies. To conduct the study, 200 EFL learners randomly chosen among four Universities were given two different questionnaires: the questionnaire of vocabulary learning strategies based on Schmitt's classification system and adapted from Bennet (2006) and the second one was Eysenck's personality character questionnaire. According to the analysis of Eysenck's questionnaire, the participants were classified into two introvert and extrovert groups. Next, the analysis of the other questionnaire specified the preferences made by the learners in each group in choosing five classes of vocabulary learning strategies. The preliminary results revealed a significant difference between introverts and extroverts in choosing two classes of strategies, i.e. determination and social: Introvert learners tend to use determination strategies more than extroverts whereas extroverts used social strategies more than introverts. However, there was no significant difference between introverts and extroverts in choosing the other three (memory, cognitive and metacognitive) strategies.

Key words: introversion, extroversion, vocabulary learning strategy

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List of abbreviations

COG = cognitive strategy

COM = compensation strategy

CONS = consolidation strategy

DET = determination strategy

DISCOV = discovery strategy

DOP = depth-of-processing

EFL = English as a foreign language

ESL = English as a second language

ESP = English for specific purpose

FL = foreign language

ICALL =

KTT = keirsayan temperament theory

L1 = first language

L2 = second language

MBTI = Myers-Briggs type indicator

MEM = memory strategy

MET = metacognitive

MSA = modern standard Arabic

SL = second language

S-R = stimulated response

SILL = strategy inventory language learning

SLA = second language learning acquisition

SOC = social strategy

TOEFL = test of English as a foreign language

VLQ = vocabulary learning questionnaire

VLS = vocabulary learning strategy

Chapter one

Introduction

Chapter one

INTRODUCTION

1.1. preview

The importance of vocabulary knowledge in learning a L2 is nicely summed up by Michael McCatrhy, when, in an interview for Cambridge Connection ("interview," 2001), he explained why he was interested in vocabulary:

"Vocabulary forms the biggest part of the meaning of any language, and vocabulary is the biggest problem for most learners. So I've always been interested in ways of helping learners in building up a big vocabulary as fast and as efficiently as possible." (p.2)

As for the "secret to vocabulary learning," McCarthy remarked on the same occasion:

"The successful learners are those who develop techniques and disciplines for learning vocabulary; it might just be a question of keeping a notebook, or using a dictionary properly or perhaps disciplining yourself to look over your notes or to read a lot outside of class. The more independent you become as a learner, the better and stronger your vocabulary becomes, I think. (p.2)

The notion of independent successful learners is closely related to the learner-centered approach to language teaching, which is based on the assumption that language learners who take greater control of their learning will become more successful than those who do not.

Accordingly, the strategies employed by successful or good language learners have become the focus of attention among teachers and researchers alike.

The importance of vocabulary knowledge in second language (L2) learning is supported by the schema-based approach to language learning. The learning theory based on information processing and the role of cognitive processes suggests that "the information from long-term memory can be used to enrich the learners' understanding or retention of the new ideas by providing related information or schemata into which the new ideas can be organized" (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, p.18).

Despite the fact that vocabulary is central to language and crucially important for 2nd language learners, lexis has traditionally been the Cinderella of the field of 2nd language acquisition research. This stands in a sharp contrast to the fact that lexical errors are the most common among second language learners, as evidence from large error corpora suggests. Moreover, not only do vocabulary errors seem to be the most serious ones for students but the most disruptive ones for native speakers in terms of interpret action (Segler, pain an Sorace, 2002)

Studies such as O'malley and Chamot (1990, cited in Dornyei and Skehen, 2003) not only confirm that most language learning strategies are used for vocabulary tasks, but also indicates that the most popular language learning strategies require little cognitive processing of learning materials. The importance and popularity of vocabulary learning strategies in terms of actual use are reflected by the fact that the vast majority of language learning strategies listed in taxonomies such as oxford's are either vocabulary learning strategies (all strategies in the memory category), or can be used for vocabulary learning tasks.

In spite of this, research into language learning strategies has tended to neglect vocabulary learning strategies, preferring to focus on language learning as whole. Most research on VLS has focused on various methods of vocabulary presentation, and their effects on retention, i.e. the most studies vocabulary learning strategies are memory strategies (Gu and Johnson, 1996). They investigated the VLS used by L2 Chinese learners of English and the relationship between vocabulary learning strategies used and learning outcomes in terms of vocabulary size and general language proficiency.

When a person approaches a relatively challenging task, she or he adopts certain strategies to solve the problem. This problem-solving process is constrained by the learning context where the problem is being tackled. Language learning in general and vocabulary learning in particular, are such problem-solving tasks at different levels of complexity. The strategies a learner uses and the effectiveness of these strategies depends on the learners herself.

One way to see the overall task of vocabulary learning is through the distinction between knowing a word and using a word. In other words, the purpose of vocabulary learning should include both remembering words and the ability to use them automatically in a wide range of language contexts. Vocabulary learning strategies, therefore, should include strategies for "using" as well as "knowing" a word (Gu, 2003b).

Another way to view vocabulary learning is to second it as related tasks. When learners first encounter a new word, they might guess its meaning and usage from available clues. Some learners might proceed to look it up in the dictionary. Others might take down notes along margins, between the lines, or separate vocabulary notebook. Some learners may repeat the new word a number of times until they are comfortable with it. Others will go beyond simple rote

repetition to commit the word to memory. Some would even try to use the word actively. Each of these task stages demands meta-cognitive judgment, choice and development of cognitive strategies for vocabulary learning. And each strategy a learner uses will determine to a large extent how and how well a new word is learned (Gu, 2003a)

Mercer (2005) asserted that it would be useful to teach students strategies for dealing with unfamiliar words. Furthermore , since most vocabulary learning takes place out of the classroom setting and tends to be done alone at home, it would be beneficial if students were given guidance on how best approach this task on their own. If we wish to continue learning efficiently after class and to be able to cope confidently without this support, then we should equip them with skills to do so. Oxford (1990, cited in oxford, 2001) pointed out, directly instructing students in vocabulary learning strategies is recognized as a way to empower students to take control of and responsible for their own learning.

The notion of learning strategies was born in two fields that have developed it independently: cognitive psychology and second language learning. The former tried to analyze the strategies that experts employ and then train novices to use them as well. The latter preferred to describe the kinds of strategies that are used.

The cognitive approach has changed our concept of the teaching-learning process in several ways. Instead of viewing learners as passively recording the stimuli that the teacher presents, learning is viewed as an active process that occurs within the learners and which can be influenced by the learners. Instead of viewing the outcome of learning as depending mainly on what the teacher presents, it is supposed to rely jointly on what information is presented and how the learner processes that info.

It is not uncommon to hear complaints about unsatisfactory results of 2nd language programs. A number of applied researchers in the field of 2nd language learning and teaching have tried to diagnose the causes of this problem. Until 1970s, the majority of l2 researchers have focused on evaluation of different teaching methods and instructional materials.

However, since early 1970s; great emphasis has been placed on the investigation of social, psychological and affective variables that enhance or hamper l2 success and achievement. Among these variables are: motivation, attitudes, personality, learning styles, and learning strategies. Birjandi, Mosallanejad & Bagheridoost (2006) has emphasized that "it is necessary to state that the language learner is or should be the central figure in any language teaching theory" (p.2)

Strategies are affected by a number of factors (e.g., Riazi and alavi, 2004). Different intended purposes for a strategy in different situations can affects its classification. Different tasks also demand different strategies. In this regard, Gu (2003) mentioned that the strategy a learner uses and the effectiveness of these strategies depend on the learner himself, the learning task at hand, and the learning environment.

To reach her goal, the researcher used stratified sampling method in choosing the required participants; the female students of ma'refat English institute have been chosen based on their TOEFL score range, above 480. VLQ and MBTI (Myers-Briggs type indicator) have been administered to these participants in order to gain their vocabulary learning strategy patterns and their personality types. The data was processed through statistical procedures and SPSS software for finding the meaningful relation(s) between personality type and participants' vocabulary strategies.

Since 1970s, considerable attention in second or foreign language learning has been devoted to studying individual differences in language learners. One of these differences is second language strategies that has gained momentum popularity among researchers and teachers interested in understanding how languages are learned. The fact that some important aspects of human personality such as freewill and human dignity are very important in every aspects of man's life paved the way for the development of the humanistic approach. The roots of this theory are European existential philosophy and the work of some American psychologists, especially Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow as well as the contribution of holistic learning theory with this basic premise that individual personality consists of many elements, specifically the intellect, emotion , the body impulse (or desire), intuition, and imagination. The other important theory is cognitive-gestalt psychology that emphasizes the man's interaction with his environment as a unitary function, and insists on considering individual as a whole. This theory gives importance to experience, meaning, problem-solving, and the development of insights (burns, 1995). Burns argued that individuals have different needs and concerns at different times, and that have subjective interpretations in different contexts.

Constructivism, which emphasized the fact that learning is an active process very much dependant on the person's background knowledge and his unique intellectual ability, is called another important foundation of this research.

Having felt the need to investigate the effects of being introverted or extroverted in choosing vocabulary learning strategies of Iranian English learners, the researcher decided to go through this descriptive study.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Despite the increasing popularity of research on learning strategies since the mid 1970s with the movement away from the audio-lingual method, the topic of learning strategies is a relatively new area in Iran, especially L2 vocabulary learning and remembering strategies. This needs to be taken into account by Iranian teachers because their students need to keep on learning foreign languages, even when they are no longer in a formal classroom setting. On the teacher's part, if they include learning strategies as part of their instruction, they can play an active and valuable part in helping their students to become successful learners of the target language. To reach this goal, there is a need to know learners' personalities and their preferences in choosing strategies suitable for learning vocabularies. Considering the significant role attributed to vocabulary learning in second or foreign language learning, one can implicitly understand the importance of vocabulary teaching as well. (Richards and Renandya, 2002). Thus the present research intends to focus specifically on the effect of introversion/extroversion on choosing vocabulary learning strategies by learners.

1.3. significance of the study

In the field of language learning and teaching, vocabulary acquisition is considered by many experts to the single most important aspect of foreign language learning (Singleton, 2007). The majority of students studying language cite vocabulary as their number one priority. It is considered a priority by teachers as well (Crow, 1986).

Most of the studies conducted on vocabulary learning have examined the effectiveness of the individual strategies (Cohen and Aphek, 1980) or have compared the results of the application of