



Students' personality types and their choices concerning writing in English as a foreign language

Types de personnalité des étudiants et leurs choix concernant l'écriture en anglais comme langue étrangère

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Abstract

The article attempts to present the results of a pilot study conducted in January – June 2020 among Polish high school students. The main aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between students' personality type and their choices concerning writing in English as a foreign language. The study consisted of two stages – in the first stage students took an online personality test (MBTI), in the second – they filled in a questionnaire to express their views concerning writing skill.

The first, theoretical, part of the article depicts different definitions of personality from the perspective of psychological types and psychological traits and summarises basic information connected with writing skill. In the second part the results of the study are presented and some conclusions are drawn, focusing on what implications the knowledge of students' personality types can have on teaching writing.

Keywords: Personality; Psychological types; MBTI; English as a foreign language; Teaching writing

Résumé

L'article tente de présenter les résultats d'une étude pilote menée entre janvier et juin 2020 auprès de lycéens polonais. L'objectif principal de l'étude était d'étudier la relation entre le type de personnalité des étudiants et leurs choix concernant l'écriture en anglais comme langue étrangère. L'étude s'est déroulée en deux étapes : dans la première étape, les étudiants ont passé un test de personnalité en ligne (MBTI) et dans la seconde, ils ont rempli un questionnaire pour exprimer leur point de vue sur leurs compétences rédactionnelles.

La première partie, théorique, de l'article décrit différentes définitions de la personnalité du point de vue des types psychologiques et des traits psychologiques et résume les informations de base liées à la compétence rédactionnelle. Dans la deuxième partie, les résultats de l'étude sont présentés et quelques conclusions sont tirées, en se concentrant sur les implications que la connaissance des types de personnalité des étudiants peut avoir sur l'enseignement de l'écriture.

Mots clés: Personnalité; Types psychologiques; MBTI; Anglais langue étrangère; Enseignement de l'écriture

INTRODUCTION

Since William Stern, a German psychologist and philosopher, published his significant work entitled “On psychology of individual differences” at the beginning of the 20th century, researchers have been particularly interested in the relationship between different aspects of human own self and their second language acquisition. It is believed both by theoreticians and practitioners in the field of second language teaching and learning that there are no universal methods applicable to all learners which determine either their educational success or failure, so diverse methods and techniques should be used by educators so that all students will benefit during language classes. In general, individual differences are divided into cognitive (e.g. language aptitude), affective (e.g. motivation) and social (e.g. views). One of the affective factors significantly influencing foreign language learning is personality.

The following article presents a brief overview of different definitions of personality in the walk of glottodidactics and briefly summarizes the main theories of psychological traits and types, as well as depicts writing in English as a foreign language. The main aim of the paper, though, is to analyze whether there is any relationship between students’ personality type and their choices concerning writing in English as a foreign language and show how this knowledge can facilitate the process of second language teaching and learning.

PERSONALITY IN PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES

Personality as defined by American Psychological Association in “Encyclopedia of Psychology” (Kazdin, 2000) is referred to as “individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving”. It includes both innate and acquired patterns that differentiate one individual from other human beings. Since no single universal description of personality can be found, several theories have emerged to explain and clarify specific aspects of the phenomenon. These theories are focused on the one hand on personality traits, on the other – on personality types.

Gordon Allport was one of the first psychologists to describe personality as a set of individual traits. He defines personality as “the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environment” (Allport, 1937, p. 48). By examining 1925 edition of Webster’s New International Dictionary he extracted almost 18000 trait adjectives (reducing it to approximately 4500 words) – by trait understanding “a generalized and focalized neuropsychic system (peculiar to the individual), with the capacity to render many stimuli functionally equivalent, and to initiate and guide

consistent (equivalent) forms of adaptive and expressive behavior” (Allport, 1937, p. 295). The psychologist divided personal attributes into three main categories: cardinal (being at the top of the hierarchy, dominating and shaping individual behavior), central (gradable general characteristics found in every individual) and secondary (less conspicuous and consistent than the previous two groups). Raymond Cattell created his theory of personality basing it on more empirical data. To determine which attributes are dominant in a particular person he analysed three sources of data – L-data (referring to people’s everyday behaviour and activity), Q-data (using the questionnaire called 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire) and T-data (studying human reactions to experimental situations created in a lab). Using these three sources of information, Cattell (1965) created an inventory of sixteen personality traits - abstractedness, warmth, apprehension, emotional stability, liveliness, openness to change, perfectionism, privateness, intelligence, rule consciousness, tension, sensitivity, social boldness, self-reliance, vigilance, and dominance. The 16-PF does not show the possession or the lack of certain feature, but it does indicate the intensity of a certain quality over a continuum. Two main theories most widely used in second language research are Eysenck’s three-component model and ‘Big Five’ model. According to Hans Eysenck “human personality can be described in terms of traits, such as sociability, impulsiveness, activity, worry-someness, carefreeness, etc. which are intercorrelated and form higher-order ‘superfactors’” (Eysenck, 1981, p. 6). Eysenck believed that individuals differ depending on their prevailing traits, and the traits are mostly regulated by hereditary factors (Eysenck, 1981, p. 3). What is more, personal attributes can be identified by means of factor analysis studies and measured thanks to questionnaire-obtained data. These three ‘superfactors’ depicted by the researcher are E (extraversion – introversion), N (neuroticism – stability) and P (psychoticism – superego / socialization). The first dichotomy refers to the degree to which people are socially outgoing or socially withdrawn – people with high level of extraversion are gregarious and eager to connect with others, while those with high level of introversion tend to be reserved, solitary and quiet. The second dimension (N) refers to the extent people have control over their feelings – neurotic individuals are anxious, moody and likely to lose their temper, whereas emotionally stable human beings are calm and level-headed. Finally, people who achieve a high score on psychoticism are hostile, antisocial and impulsive, when those high on socialization tend to be altruistic, emphatic and cooperative. The latter construct, ‘The Big Five’ has gained its popularity thanks to the fact that it can be described as “a fairly straightforward and parsimonious system that still captures a considerable proportion of the variance” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 14). The five main components of the contrast form an

acronym OCEAN (Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion – Introversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism – Emotional stability) and “(...) represent the five fundamental ways along which people’s personality varies. What is important to highlight is the fact that ‘The Big Five Inventory’ measures ten personality factors instead of five as each of the ‘Big Five’ personality traits has its counterpart presented on the linear scale” (Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2018, p. 4). All those five factors are quite wide-ranging including diverse vital aspects which are referred to as *primary traits*. The ‘Big Five’ is sometimes criticized for not being comprehensive enough since the answer to the question “whether the five dimensions subsume all there is to say about personality” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 18) is negative: “(...) whereas almost any personality construct can be mapped onto the Big Five, we cannot derive every personality construct from the combinations of the Big Five” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 18).

Trait perspective of personality is ordinarily appreciated for its objectivity. Factor analysis is believed to be a credible source of information about one’s personality providing fair criteria of measuring behaviour over time and in varying situations and circumstances. On the other hand, trait theories are at times criticized for supplying a limited amount of data as they determine which traits evoke certain actions, but they do not explain why individuals act in a particular manner. Moreover, they usually rely upon self-report questionnaires or personal observations, both of which require time and effort and demand a human being to be either self-contemplative or highly sensitive to others.

Trait theories focus on distinct attributes along which people on the one hand differ, on the other – these differences are stable and consistent. Type theories of personality, however, feature human behaviour on the basis of broader patterns of their activities. While trait theories concentrate on the degree to which people manifest a particular characteristic, type approaches “are an all-or-none phenomenon – if a person is assigned to one category, he or she does not fall into any other category within that system” (Malim & Birch, 1998, p. 709). The first person to attempt to divide human beings into peculiar types was the Greek physician Hippocrates who “assigned individuals to one of four types of temperament on the basis of a predominance of particular body fluids” (Malim & Birch, 1998, p. 709). The dominance of blood is characteristic of sanguine people who tend to be cheerful and active. Phlegmatic organisms (with phlegm prevailing) are apathetic and inactive. Melancholic types (with the dominance of black bile) tend to be sad and contemplative, whereas choleric types (with the dominance of yellow bile) are irritable and excitable. The breakthrough in the type psychology is claimed to have

been made by Carl Gustav Jung in his pioneering book *Psychological types*. In this work Jung distinguishes two main general attitude types and secondary function-types. The former are introverts and extraverts. Jung alleges that “the introvert’s attitude to the object is an abstracting one; at bottom he is always facing the problem of how libido can be withdrawn from the object, as though an attempted ascendancy on the part of the object had to be continually frustrated. The extravert, on the contrary, maintains a positive relation to the object. To such an extent does he affirm its importance that his subjective attitude is continually being orientated by, and related to the object” (Jung, 1953, p. 412). Function-types (and by function Jung understands, 1953, p. 547 “a certain form of psychic activity that remains theoretically the same under varying circumstances”) are depicted in the book basing on the function the individual uses to adjust to inner or outer world and classified into rational (thinking and feeling) and irrational (sensing and intuitive). Sensing is connected with using senses to learn about the reality, thinking is associated with drawing conclusions through logical reasoning, feeling deals with subjective evaluation and intuition relies upon subconscious perception. What should be taken into account when talking about Jung’s theory, though, is the fact that general attitudes of introversion and extraversion are closely related to the intensity of the existence of primary function. Therefore, we cannot distinguish introverts and extraverts per se, but we can recognize introverted or extraverted feeling / sensing etc. types, which amounts to at least eight different psychological patterns of behaviour. C.G. Jung’s theory was developed and extended by Katherine Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers and is said to enable people “to expect specific personality differences in particular people and to cope with the people and the differences in a constructive way. Briefly, the theory is that much seemingly chance variation in human behaviour is not due to chance; it is in fact the logical result of a few basic, observable differences in mental functioning” (Briggs Myers & Myers, 1995, p. 1). Myers and Briggs Myers’ classification is built upon a person’s attitude towards outer world (extraversion versus introversion), different ways of perception (sensing versus intuition), opposing methods of making judgments and decisions (thinking versus feeling) and contrasting approaches to engaging in tasks and taking action (judging versus perceiving). Extraverts focus on the outer world of people and things, relying on interaction with other people and being ready to take initiative, whereas introverts concentrate on the inner world of their own ideas, preferring to think rather than act, being reserved and even-tempered. Sensing types experience the surrounding world through their senses, are down-to-earth and observant and value practical solutions while intuition types perceive reality subconsciously, tend to be creative and imaginative and seek novelty. Thinking types come

to conclusions thanks to logical reasoning, depend on facts and objective laws, value impartiality, regularity and effectiveness. On the contrary, feeling types make judgments referring to their own subjective beliefs and are emphatic towards themselves and other people. Finally, judging types pass judgments and make decisions when they feel they have collected enough amount of data, but perceiving types draw conclusions only when they have access to all possible information, analyzing it from different angles and being open to learning new facts. Myers and Briggs Myers created MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) to classify people according to certain groups, not to measure their preferences. MBTI is called an inventory, because its “dimensions (...) do not refer to traditional scales ranging from positive to negative (e.g. like those in NEO-P). Rather, they indicate various aspects of one’s psychological set-up and, depending on their combinations, every type can have positive or negative effects in a specific life domain” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 19).

PERSONALITY IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Without doubt, individual’s own self develops thanks to a variety of factors. These factors include biological determinants (e.g. genes), as well as parental upbringing and the influence of the surrounding world. All of these should be taken into account when thinking about education, including second language acquisition. Kaczmarzyk (2018, pp. 12-17) says:

When we observe a group of peers playing on the school field, we assume that they are similar to each other, so one common set of didactic materials can be created to meet their needs. This universal education system should enable them to develop competencies they will need in the future. But, in fact, the group comprises children of different needs, interests and goals, with their own unique ways of dealing with the world. If we treat them equally, we may expect failure. For children it means undiscovered talents, lack of motivation and the feeling that it is wrong to think for themselves. For the society it means misfortune in the future if we lack in people thinking in a non-standard way and being able to solve problems we cannot even imagine now. (the author’s translation)

Kaczmarzyk (2018, p. 101) continues with sound reasoning about modern education system which should be “a process of looking for compromise, and school – a natural ground of this search. School attempting to equip its students with the same amount of knowledge and doing it in the same way cannot be such a ground. It is not that it seems impossible. It is simply dangerous for our future” (the author’s translation).

Understanding the requirements of the modern world, Council of Europe issued in 2001 the document called “Common European Framework of Reference

for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment” whose aim was to provide “a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 1). As one of the most important educational objective Council of Europe considers “to promote methods of modern language teaching which will strengthen independence of thought, judgment and action, combined with social skills and responsibility” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4). Language learning and language use are described in the paper as the process which requires possessing certain general and communicative competences. General competences include knowledge, skills, existential competence and ability to learn. And this is where the importance of personality factors in second language teaching and learning is emphasized, since *existential competence* is understood as:

The sum of the individual characteristics, personality traits and attitudes which concern, for example, self-image and one's view of others and willingness to engage with other people in social interaction. (...) These personality traits, attitudes and temperaments are parameters which have to be taken into account in language learning and teaching. (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 10-11)

The document mentions a list of character attributes that not only influence the process of communication in the second language, but also affect students' ability to learn. These features are *inter alia*: optimism / pessimism, introversion / extroversion, open-mindedness / closed-mindedness, rigidity / flexibility, proactivity / reactivity, meticulousness / carelessness, (lack of) self-esteem, etc. Making use of the knowledge of learners' character should become an educational goal itself as it might help answer some vital questions concerning academic achievement:

The extent to which personality development can be an explicit educational objective; (...) which personality factors a) facilitate b) impede foreign or second language learning and acquisition; how learners can be helped to exploit strengths and overcome weaknesses; how the diversity of personalities can be reconciled with the constraints imposed on and by educational systems. (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 106)

In general, personality research may go in three different directions (Braden, 1995, pp. 621-622). First of all, the influence of different personal traits on second language acquisition might be analyzed. Second of all, different deviations from the standard, including either learning difficulties or exceptionally gifted learners, might be investigated. Finally, some studies focus on the teachers' perspective and inspect in what way they can use the knowledge of their students' character to facilitate the process of teaching and learning. In the early 21st century linguists (e.g. Deawale & Furnham, 1999, 2000) concluded that there was relatively little research on the relationship between personality and second language learning and

use. They assigned this situation to a number of facts, the first reason being a lack of interest in the relationship on the part of both psychologists and linguists. Moreover, scientists also emphasized the existence of a great variety of psychological tests measuring personality, which made it difficult to interpret the results and draw conclusions. Dörnyei (2005, p. 25) suggests that past research concerning the correlation between person's self and second language learning might be divided into four main groups: "(a) early studies, (b) the study of extraversion and introversion, (c) research using the MBTI, and (d) other investigations". Dörnyei examined a vast number of works and came with certain conclusions connected with each group of research. He stated that early studies were mainly concerned with the characteristics of a successful language learner, focusing on whether being gifted is interrelated with any character features. In the second field of research "(...) the emerging picture about the role of extraversion – introversion has been rather negative, with scholars either concluding that the relationship between this trait and learning was insignificant or mixed" (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 26). On the one hand, there is some research (e.g. Dewaele & Furnham, 2000) that shows the superiority of extraversion over introversion in particular areas of language use (especially in oral communication), but on the other hand, there are studies (e.g. Ehrman & Oxford, 1995) that prove slight advantage of introverts over extraverts in other areas (e.g. reading). Generally speaking, "with regard to L2 learning, both extraversion and introversion may have positive features, depending on the particular task in question" (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 27). Similarly, investigations using the MBTI (which is currently one of the most commonly used inventories in different fields of life, including education) have presented results which are either weak or mixed. For example, Carell et al.'s (1996) research analyzing the relationship between personality and different areas of language use (vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing) showed that there is some correlation between extraversion / introversion and vocabulary acquisition and judging / perceiving and grammar, but there are no other significant analogies between other personality types and second language learning. Correspondingly, in Safdarian et al.'s (2014) study of personality and reading it turned out that any noteworthy correlation is only between extraversion / introversion and reading skill with the dominance of introverts (which is quite a conspicuous result bearing in mind the fact that reading per se involves e.g. individual work and following a certain order of action).

PERSONALITY AND WRITING

The ability to write various types of texts serving different needs (e.g. utilitarian, aesthetic, entertaining) is an inseparable part of everyday life. It is also an integral component of first or second language exams. People are taught to create texts from an early childhood and, in view of the above, it seems quite peculiar that writing is thought to be the most difficult skill to teach and learn. In 2011 the Educational Research Institute in Poland carried out a study *European Survey on Language Competencies (ESLC)* (Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, 2013) as a part of international cooperation of 14 European Council member countries. The aim of the research was to determine the level of language proficiency in English (as described in *Common European Framework of Reference*) among European students and compare the results obtained by students of different nationalities. In Poland 3324 students of the last grade of middle school were surveyed. One of the skills tested was writing. The outcomes of the research appear to be alarming. It turned out that more than one third of Polish 16-year-olds (having been learning English in formal education for at least 8 years) reached A1 level of language proficiency in writing, and only every fourth student was able to achieve A2 level. Over twenty per cent of teenagers were not capable of creating a communicatively understandable text. There are numerous reasons for such a state of affairs (Iluk, 2012, p. 17, Lipińska, 2000, pp. 10-19). First of all, in English writing is not an accurate reflection of speech, which may cause difficulties for students, particularly those with specific educational disorders, like dyslexia. In turn, it can result in the decrease of motivation or even language anxiety. Moreover, there is a common belief (emerging from the phases of acquisition of both first and second language where writing is the last skill to be obtained) among learners that writing is the least valuable out of language skills. Apart from this, the range of materials and tasks provided in textbooks is limited and not varied. Finally, in recent years the most prominent approach to language teaching and learning has been communicative approach, which is often wrongly referred to as the ability to convey meaning in speaking, forgetting about written communication. Yet, the benefits of writing in second language acquisition cannot be neglected as, despite some obvious advantages like the durability of message, social mode or increasing popularity of electronic interaction, “text production involves the complex interplay of several different sub-processes and functions (content generation, content organization, lexicalization, transcription, reading) and for this reason is likely to be resource demanding. (...) What is sometimes referred to as ‘the writing process’ is composed of a number of different activities each associated with different cognitive processes, and, consequently,

with different cognitive demands” (Torrance & Jeffery, 1999, pp. 1-2). This process of creating a piece of work involves in fact three activities (Torrance & Jeffery, 1999, p. 5) – first writers *plan* what they want to say (content) and how they want to say it (form), next move on to *translating* it into words and sentences, and finally *reexamine* their work to check whether the message it conveys is compatible with what they wanted to convey. Because writing is such a multi-dimensional operation, research into this skill focuses on its different areas (Archibald & Jeffery, 2000, pp. 1-2) – the process of writing, the product of writing, the content of writing, the teaching of writing. When analyzing the process of writing itself scholars direct their attention to different issues, such as “how can the processes in writing be modeled? What patterns of writing differentiate between good and bad writers? Are there ways of structuring the writing task which are more effective than others? What benefits do writers get from jumping between processes and why do they do it?” (Archibald & Jeffery, 2000, p. 2). The product of writing is often examined in terms of error and contrastive analysis, as well as of searching for internal regularities and structuring in texts, and in respect of attempts to find any similarities and differences between texts to create typologies. Writing is a social phenomenon *per se*, so a considerable number of studies has been devoted to investigate it in its context, focusing on language in society, examining genre and intertextuality. Finally, a considerable amount of research has been dedicated to the teaching of writing. As Kormos (2012, p. 391) states it (following Manchón, 2011) there are three major dimension of writing in the field of education: “learning to write in another language, using writing to learn the target language, and writing in order to learn a specific content area”. In this area linguists mainly concentrate on writing instruction, on effective ways to facilitate writing for students and on assessment (either of classroom work or the product itself).

As it was mentioned before, writing as a process involves a variety of sub-processes as it requires operating on words, sentences and paragraphs, is based on the knowledge of lexis, syntax and stylistics and demands translation, paraphrasing, clarifying, etc. In fact, writing does not belong to the scope of linguistics, but it more a psycho-linguistic phenomenon, and while teaching it educators should take into account both language tools and students’ individual characteristics. What should be emphasized here, however, is the fact that „although the role of individual differences in second language (L2) speech has been extensively studied, the impact of individual differences on the process of second language writing and the written product has been a neglected area of research” (Kormos, 2012, p. 390). Studies into the relationship between personality (as one of the individual

differences) and writing focus on different areas – some examine sub-components of the text (syntax, lexis, cohesion, coherence), other concentrate on the content. There is research that takes into consideration all personality traits under study, but there are investigations which only consider selected attributes (most often extraversion *versus* introversion). Eventually, there are works in which scholars refer to students' own opinions about their writing skills and those which take into consideration teachers' perspective. The three major tools to measure learners' personality have been Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI), NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI®). Most of the research shows positive correlation between certain personality traits and examined areas of writing (although there are studies that prove there is no evidence, e.g. Nejad et al., 2012). Extraversion is believed to positively interact with creativity (e.g. Wolfradt & Pretz, 2001), writing in general (e.g. Sangkala, 2012), argumentative essay writing (e.g. Marwa & Thamrin, 2016) or such components of writing as lexical diversity (e.g. Vaetz & Kafshgar, 2012). Introverts, on the other hand, perform better in 'technical' elements of writing, such as syntactic diversity, content, organization of arguments (e.g. Boroujeni et al., 2015, Vaetz & Kafshgar, 2012, Zainuddin, 2016).

While teaching writing, three different approaches can be applied (Jensen & DiTiberio, 1984, pp. 285-286). Firstly, educators can teach writing the way they were taught and demand that students use one single way. Secondly, teachers can advise learners to try a number of approaches and choose the one that suits their need. Finally, it might be recommended to learn about students' individual differences and how these differences affect the writing process. Having examined students at the University of Illinois, Chicago and at Georgia State University, Jensen and DiTiberio (1984, pp. 288-296) came up with a set of certain characteristics concerning different personality types (measured with MBTI®) and their attitude to writing. *Extraverts* tend to collect ideas by talking about the topic, write with little or no planning and rely on oral feedback after preparing the first draft of their work. *Introverts* seem to enjoy writing since it is an individual activity in its nature. They usually follow a traditional sequence of pre-writing – writing – re-writing. They pay great attention to the content and form. *Sensing* students prefer being given explicit, concrete and exact instructions. They also need to be informed about the word limit or precise framework to apply as they tend to collect too much data and find it difficult to eliminate any of it. Such learners usually follow a traditional step-by-step process of writing. *Intuitive* students, on the other hand, favour general instructions and topics in which they can present their originality. They like

playing with words, using symbols and finesse. They write almost sub- or unconsciously since ideas simply materialize to them. *Thinking* types must be presented with topics which have clear purpose, otherwise they will treat the task as meaningless. While writing they focus more on clarity and conveying the message directly rather than flattering the audience. *Feeling* types, nonetheless, call for problems they can relate to personally. In writing they aim to draw the readers' attention and evoke certain reactions rather than to enchant them with content or form. *Judging* learners are likely to prepare a strict schedule of writing, particularly concentrating on the deadline and follow the plan (sometimes too) rigidly. They also have a tendency to narrow down the topic. *Perceiving* types look at the topic from a broad perspective, including different points of view, so their works are usually comprehensive.

PILOT STUDY

The aim of the study

The study was conducted in January – June 2020 and designed to analyze the relationship between students' personality type and their choices while writing in English as a foreign language.

Participants

The participants of the study were 20 secondary school students. The school is located in a big city (with about 300,000 inhabitants) in the north of Poland and is considered to have high academic standards and results in external exams. All the students were 16 at the time of the study and had been learning English since they were in the first grade of primary school (when language education starts to be compulsory). The learners participated in the study voluntarily and were informed that the results would be used for research purposes.

Instruments

In the first stage of the study the students took an online personality test based on Jungian's type classification and Myers-Briggs theory of psychological types. There were a number of factors influencing the choice of this particular instrument. First of all, being online, it provides test-takers with instant results and their analysis. Secondly, it has been used with great success in various parts of the world, which means it also includes a Polish version. Moreover, the test is reliable, as to ensure maximum accuracy and reliability of the results, statistical analysis of the test is

performed. Finally, according to the information on the website, its authors are qualified to conduct a variety of personality tests and are professionally involved in typology and personality testing. The test consisted of 44 pairs of statements for the participants to choose which was more accurate about them.

Following the test, the learners received a survey in which they were to express their approach to writing in English as a foreign language. As it was a pilot study, the author decided to use this instrument as “the survey is particularly useful in pedagogical research as a tool to investigate characteristics of communities, phenomena, opinions about events, etc. Its role cannot be overestimated, especially in the initial stage of research. The results collected through the survey require confrontation and comparison with material collected using other research methods” (Krajewski, 2006, p. 20). The survey consisted of 8 multiple choice questions and it was conducted in Polish as the participants' native language. The author designed the questionnaire basing it on earlier research in order to compare their findings.

Figure 1. The survey concerning students' approach to writing

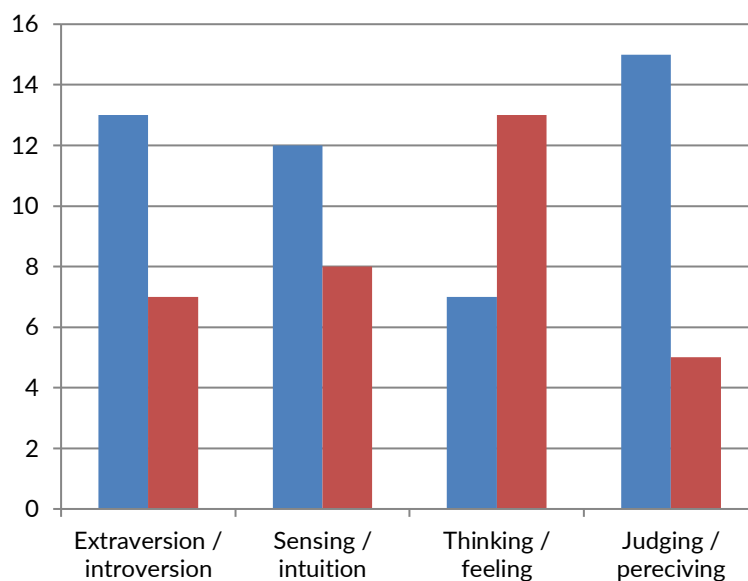
- | | |
|----|---|
| 1. | My personality type: _____ |
| 2. | Before I start writing (you can choose more than one answer): |
| | a) I like to collect data working in pairs / groups. |
| | b) I create the plan. |
| | c) I presuppose the time limit for writing. |
| | d) I collect and write down ideas in my mother tongue (Polish). |
| | e) I collect and write down ideas in the target language (English). |
| | f) I never create the plan. |
| 3. | While writing I often talk to the teacher or other students to make sure whether my ideas are accurate. |
| | a) Yes |
| | b) No |
| 4. | I always write in chronological order and according to the bullet points in the instruction. |
| | a) Yes |
| | b) No |
| 5. | I prefer instructions which (you can choose more than one answer): |
| | a) are explicit, concrete and detailed |
| | b) are general |
| | c) clearly state the purpose of the text |
| | d) are connected with my personal experiences |
| 6. | Word limit: |
| | a) facilitates writing |
| | b) impedes writing |
| 7. | When I write (you can choose more than one answer): |
| | a) I try to be original. |
| | b) I try to justify arguments. |
| | c) I give examples to clarify myself. |
| | d) I focus on the content. |
| | e) I try to make impression on the reader. |

- f) I focus on lexis.
 - g) I focus on grammar.
 - h) I try to narrow down the topic.
 - i) I try to broaden the topic.
8. Having written my paper (you can choose more than one answer),
- a) I check and rewrite it.
 - b) I don't check it – I hand it in to the teacher without rereading it.
 - c) I count words and cross out some of them not to exceed the word limit.
 - d) I don't count the words.

Results

Figure 2 shows dominant personality types within the group under study. It can be noticed that the discrepancies are quite meaningful with extraverts significantly outweighing introverts (13 to 7), sensing types dominating over intuitive students (12 to 8), feeling learners prevailing thinking types (13 to 7) and judging – perceiving (15 to 5).

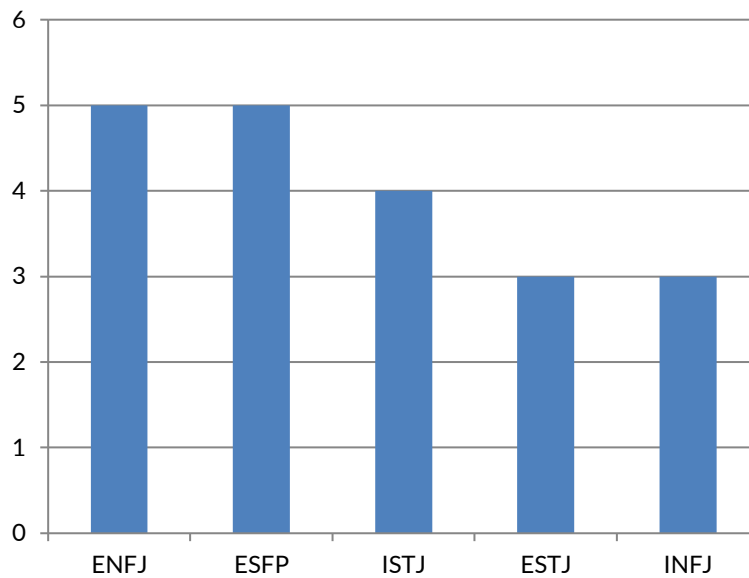
Figure 2. Dominant personality types (out of 20 students)



From figure 3 concerning bi-polar dimensions of psychological types it appears that the combination that dominates is extraversion / intuition / feeling / judging and extraversion / sensing / feeling / perceiving. There are also some extraverts with sensing / thinking / judging attitude. As far as introverts are concerned, there are slightly more introverts with sensing / thinking / judging attitude than

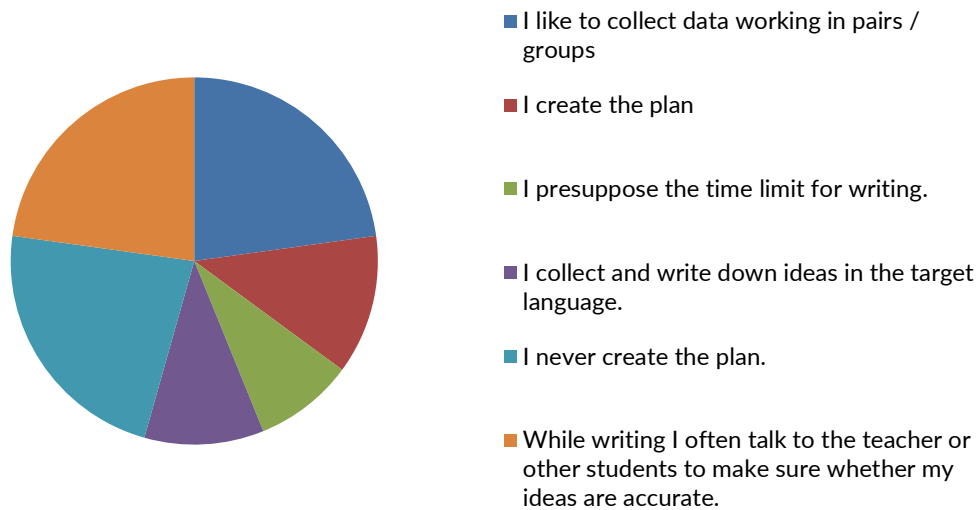
introverts with intuition / feeling / judging approach. What is, however, striking here is the fact that all introverts have judging attitude.

Figure 3. Bi-polar dimensions of personality types (out of 20 students)



As shown in figure 4, all extraverts (13) prepare to writing by talking about the topic with their peers and some of them (6) write down the ideas usually in the target language. They (13) also need feedback while writing and therefore, they often talk to the teacher or their classmates to review their concepts. Another thing they have in common is the fact that they do not create the plan. 5 learners presuppose the time limit for writing (all of them are judging types). On the other hand, every student representing introverted type (7) starts with designing the plan and never asks others for advice while working on their paper.

Figure 4. Pre-writing attitudes

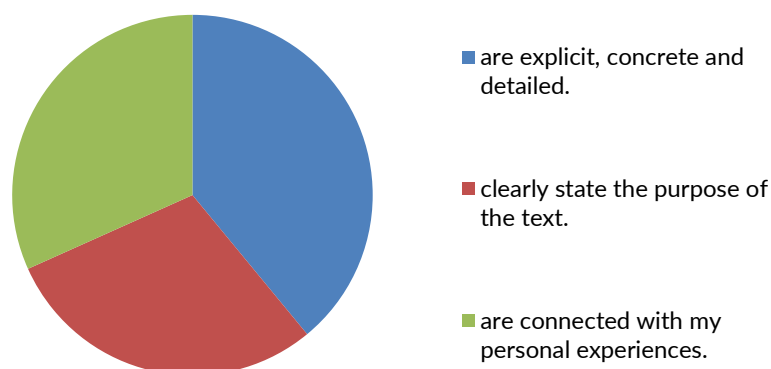


All learners under study (20) write their tasks in chronological order and according to the bullet points in the instruction (which is rather typical of introverts, sensing and judging types).

As the results presented in figure 5 indicate, most students prefer instructions which are explicit, concrete and detailed (16) and which clearly define the purpose of the task (12). There are also learners (13) who deal better with tasks which are connected with their personal experiences (all of the students declare themselves to be feeling types).

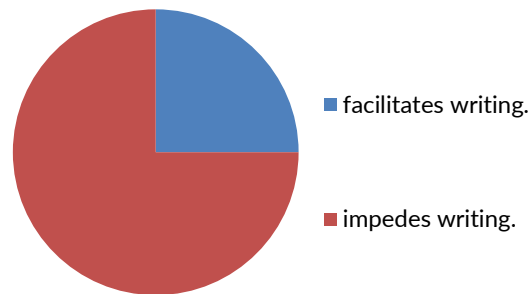
Figure 5. Instructions

I prefer instructions which:



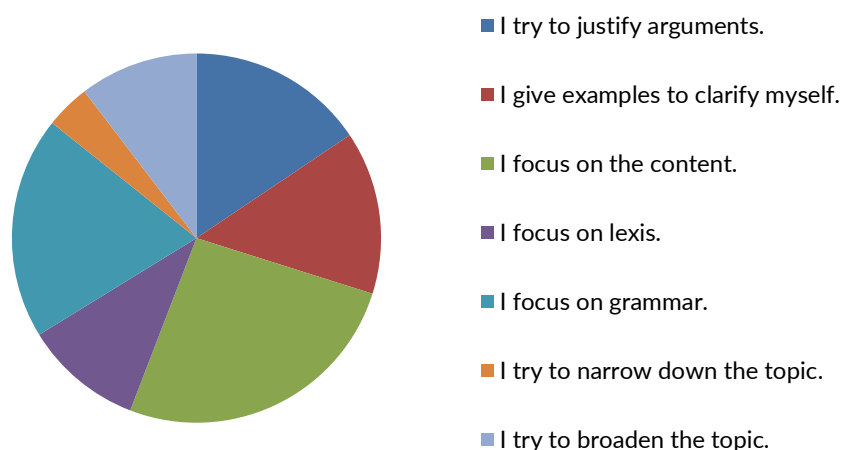
Out of 20 people being tested (See figure 6) 15 maintain that the given word limit impedes writing, only 5 students (4 of them representing sensing types and 1 – judging type) confess that they prefer being given a certain word limit.

Figure 6. Word limit



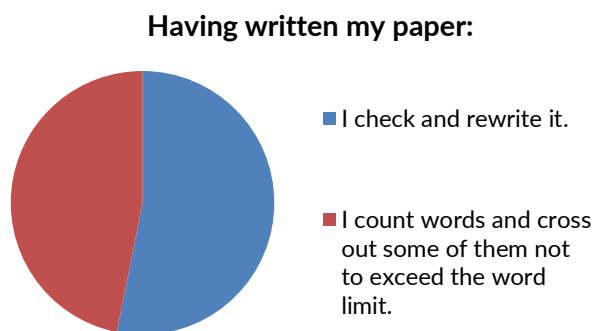
As indicated in figure 7, while writing students generally try to justify arguments (12), often giving examples to clarify themselves (11). For all learners (20) it is vital to convey all the information required by the task (they focus on content). Most students (15) concentrate on grammar structures, but some of them (8) pay more attention to vocabulary. 40% of tested individuals try to broaden the topic (most of them being perceiving types), and 15 % tend to narrow it (all of them being judging types).

Figure 7. While-writing



Having written their text (See figure 8), the majority of students (17) check and rewrite it, counting words and crossing out some of them in order not to exceed the word limit (15).

Figure 8. Post-writing



CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING WRITING

The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between students' personality type and the choices undertaken by students during the writing process in English as a foreign language. It turned out that in the research group dominate extraverts, sensing, feeling and judging types. In the light of the above, the results of the survey seem to be compatible with psychological types of learners under study. Extraverts prefer working with other people, and most students taking part in the study declare that they like to work in pairs / groups, either to collect ideas or to receive feedback as to their way of reasoning. Sensing and judging types tend to work according to the plan, in a step-by-step manner, setting out word and time limit, trying to eliminate unnecessary concepts in order to be clear and concise. They need to be given explicit and concrete instructions and to know the purpose of the task. All students surveyed maintain that they always stick to the order of the consecutive points of the instruction, and a great majority prefer tasks in which they precisely know what to do. Those students usually focus on the content and try to narrow down the topic. Feeling types are intensely engrossed in their own inner experiences and need to share them with the surrounding world. Such students do better in assignments which are closely related to their inner self.

“One of the great frustrations of teaching (...) is that you are always robbing Peter to pay Paul. You design something to reach one group of students, knowing that in so doing you are going to turn off another group” (Briggs Myers & Myers, 1995, p. 139). Being aware of the fact that one class consists of students of different personality types and learning about the characteristics of each type, may let

teachers comprehend why some students understand the new material more quickly, and others – more slowly and why certain teaching methods may be applied in case of one group and be fruitless for the other. The knowledge of learners' personality types may have diverse practical usage (Bielska, 2004, pp. 127-128) in second language learning, including writing. It might allow educators to use exercises provided in textbooks the way they suit various students' needs or to create teaching materials relevant to certain psychological types. It also lets teachers understand what motivates and discourages students, and it allows students themselves to take control over their own learning process. In terms of language aptitude this knowledge enables didacticians to predict which attributes facilitate and which hinder second language acquisition (e.g. introverts and intuition types are more likely to achieve academic success as formal system of education and assessment involves individual work, understanding of theories and abstract concepts, etc.). Features of character also determine goals students set themselves, types of tasks they prefer and approaches they choose to do the tasks.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that no matter how challenging or time-consuming it might seem, teachers should dedicate their attention to learning what psychological types their students represent and apply this knowledge in their teaching. Learners themselves should also become aware of their own character attributes so that they can help themselves learn in a more effective way.

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