



## The Relationship between Iranian EFL learners' Metaphorical Competence and Personality Type

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### Abstract

The present study tried to find out the relationship between Iranian EFL learners' metaphorical competence and their personality traits. To this end, 120 male and female EFL students were selected in order to participate in this study, based on their performance on English language proficiency test. They were native speakers of Azeri. They studied English at English language institute in Tabriz, Iran. The instruments for the present study were a personality type questionnaire and a metaphor test. Based on their scores of these two subscales, they were assigned to two different groups of extroverts and introverts. In order to collect the data of the metaphorical competence, the students' scores on metaphor test was collected. The Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated and probe a significant relationship between metaphorical competence and Iranian EFL learners' personality types. The results of one-way ANOVA also indicated a significant difference between introvert and extrovert personality type and EFL learners' metaphorical competence.

**Keywords:** extroversion, introversion, metaphorical competence personality type

### INTRODUCTION

In order to take advantages of social life and interact in an effective and confident environment, it is important to learn a complex set of social skills such as personality types. Social skills play a significant role in individuals' lives. A person with higher social abilities can achieve more success and happiness in his/her social interactions. This issue is highlighted when it is considered in teaching and learning environment. Educators must be aware of the impact of individual differences among learners and the personality types on their learning process. Educators must be aware of the research on personality, since one of the goals of education is the personal and social development of learners. Despite the significant role of personality features in differentiating individual learners, and potential effect it can have on learning, to date, very scarce number of studies have been conducted to explore the relationship between personality

type and metaphorical competence of learners. This issue is highlighted when it is considered in Iranian EFL context (Alberti, et al. 1974).

The importance of individual differences in language learning settings calls language practitioners' attentions to the researches and studies conducted on personality factors and individual differences. The findings of the present study would be helpful for English Foreign Language teachers who are dealing with a class as a whole, since it is sometimes necessary to consider the class consisting of individuals with different needs to be met. Teachers need to apply strategies that meet each student's needs while considering the whole context. As a result, knowledge of various personality types and their influences on communication skill are crucial to every language teacher or practitioner.

Literature is replete with a great number of studies conducted on the relationship between various personality factors and different aspects of language learning (Hashemian, Roohani and Forouzandeh, 2012; Behtarinezhad's, 2013; Benson, 2001; and Dam 2001)

, some of these personality factors may hinder learning and some others may facilitate it. In a socially interconnected society metaphor as a part of human conceptual system can hypothetically associate with different personality behaviors. Consequently, the present study is going to fill the felt research gap and find out the relationship between Iranian EFL learners' metaphorical competence and their personality types. The following research questions are formulated to run this study:

Q1: Is there any significant relationship between metaphorical competence and extrovert personality type?

Q2: Is there any significant relationship between metaphorical competence and introvert personality type?

Q3: Is there any significant difference in *metaphorical competence and introvert and extrovert personality types*?

## METHOD

### Participants

The participants of this study include 190 EFL learners, among it sample of 120 male and female EFL students were selected in order to participate in this study, based on their performance on English language proficiency test, i.e., Oxford Placement Test (Edwards, 2007). The criteria to select learners were 1 standard deviation below and above the mean. Their level of English language proficiency was intermediate. Their age range was between 17 to 28 years old. They were all native speakers of Azeri. They studied English at English language institute in Tabriz, Iran.

## **Instrumentation**

The instruments for the present study were a personality type questionnaire and a metaphor test. Prior to being given the instruments, the participants were briefly instructed about the constructs of the questionnaire of the study via some introductory paragraphs introducing the constructs and responding procedures. They were ensured that their information would be kept totally confidential, and their results were given to them, upon their request. The respondents were also asked to fill out the questionnaires at home and upon completion turn them back to the researcher at a specific date and time. Following is the detailed explanation of instruments.

### ***Personality Type Questionnaire***

The students were given the Myers-Briggs Type Indicators (MBTI). MBTI is a psychometric questionnaire designed to measure psychological preferences in how people perceive the world and make decisions (Briggs, Myers & Myers, 1995). This questionnaire was used as a measure of students' personality types containing 72 items. The administered questionnaire includes questions related to opinions, decision making, feeling and thinking. Learners were asked to answer the questionnaire in about 60 minutes. The best reason to choose the MBTI instrument is that hundreds of studies over the past 40 years have proven the instrument to be both valid and reliable. In other words, it measures what it says it does (validity) and produces the same results when given more than once (reliability). The internal reliability of the items is 0.77.

### ***Metaphor Test***

A metaphor test was designed and used to assess the participants' EFL metaphorical competence level. At first, a pilot study was conducted and 30 EFL learners were involved to identify the aptness of the metaphorical competence test items. The results pointed to its high reliability ( $\alpha = 0.86$ ). Then, one TEFL professor and two knowledgeable EFL teachers verified its validity. At last, the metaphor test being composed of 30 multiple-choice items was administered to the participants from the aforementioned universities to be answered in about 30 minutes. At the beginning of the study, this test was piloted to check out the reliability and the appropriacy of the test items.

## **Procedures**

In order to study the relationship between the Iranian English Foreign Language learners' metaphorical competence and their personality type a structured procedure was designed to collect data. All stages of study were conducted during normal class schedule in two weeks. Prior to the main study, pilot study was performed to determine the reliability of metaphor test. It was used to measure the vocabulary knowledge of the participants. A group of 30 intermediate EFL learners with almost similar age, sex, and proficiency level was selected to take part in the pilot study. The results of Cronbach's reliability analysis ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ) showed a satisfactory level of test reliability.

The first step of this study after sampling was administration of the personality type questionnaire. After a brief explanation about the questionnaire and providing the necessary instruction for answering the questionnaire items, the participants were asked to read and answer the questionnaire. Based on their scores of these two subscales, they were assigned to two different groups of extroverts and introverts.

In order to collect the data of the metaphorical competence, the students' scores on metaphor test was collected.

## RESULT

### Oxford (Quick) Placement Test (OPT)

To determine the level of the students, Oxford Quick Placement was administered. The results represented that the mean was 38.26 and the SD was 7.39. The reliability of the test then was calculated as 0.89 based on KR-21 method which is an acceptable reliability.

**Table 1.** Calculations of the OPT

Total Numbers	190
Mean (Average)	38.26
Standard Deviation	7.399
Variance	54.74

The Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to probe any significant relationships between metaphorical competence and Iranian EFL learners' personality types.

### Research Question 1

Is there any significant relationship between metaphorical competence and extrovert personality type?

**Table 2.** Pearson Correlation: metaphorical competence and extrovert personality type

Personality Type	Metaphorical Competence	
	Pearson Correlation	.381*
Extroversion	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012
	N	69

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).  $R^2=0.675$

Based on the results displayed in Table 2 there is a significant relationship between extrovert students and metaphorical competence  $r = .38$ ,  $P < .05$  and it represents a large effect size.

### Research Question 2

Is there any significant relationship between metaphorical competence and introvert personality type?

**Table 3.** Pearson Correlation: metaphorical competence and introvert personality type

Personality Type	metaphorical competence
	Pearson Correlation
	.434*
	Sig.(2-tailed)
Introversion	.000
	N
	51

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).  $R^2=0.704$

As Table 3 indicates, there was a significant relationship between metaphorical competence and introvert personality type  $r = .43 = P < .05$  and it represents a large effect size.

### Research Question 3

Q3: Is there any significant difference in *metaphorical competence and introvert and extrovert personality types*?

A one-way ANOVA was run to compare the means of the extrovert and introvert groups in the metaphorical competence. Before discussing the one-way ANOVA results it should be mentioned that the groups did not enjoy homogenous variances on the metaphorical competence (Levene's  $F = 24.81$ ,  $P < .05$ ).

**Table 4.** Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variances: Metaphorical Competence

Levene's Statistic	df1	df2	Sig
24.816	2	147	.000

Based on the results displayed in Table 4 ( $F(2, 147) = 302.53$ ,  $P < .05$ ). It can be concluded that there were significant differences between means of the introvert and extrovert groups and metaphorical competence.

**Table 5.** Descriptive Statistics: metaphorical competence and personality types

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
Extrovert	69	60.88	12.158	1.464	57.96	63.80
Introvert	51	112.65	19.061	2.525	107.59	117.71
Total	120	92.04	33.032	2.697	86.71	97.37

As displayed in Table 5, means of the extrovert and introvert groups on the metaphorical competence were 60.88 and 112.65 respectively.

**Table 6.** One-Way ANOVA: metaphorical competence by personality type

C.V	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	130800.372	2	65400.186	302.537	.000
Within Groups	31777.388	147	216.173		
Total	162577.760	149			

As Table 6 ( $F=302.5$  Sig=.000) indicate there are significant differences between the means of the introvert and extrovert groups on the metaphorical competence.

The post-hoc Scheffe's test (Table 7) was run to answer the third research question.

**Table 7.** Post-Hoc Scheffe's Test: Metaphorical Competence by Different Personality Types

(I)Proficiency Level	(J) Proficiency Level	Mean Difference(I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
	Introversion	71.783*	3.484	.000	63.17	80.40
	Extroversion	20.018*	3.578	.000	11.17	28.86

\*.The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Based on the results displayed in Tables, 5, 6 and 7, it can be concluded that; There was a significant difference between introvert ( $M = 112.65$ ) and extrovert ( $M = 60.88$ ) groups on the metaphorical competence ( $MD = 51.76$ ,  $P < .05$ ).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study has been done in order to investigate the relationship Iranian EFL learners' personality types and their metaphorical competence. To do this, a sample of 120 Iranian EFL learners was selected based on their performance on Oxford Placement Test (OPT). At the beginning of study, a pilot study was performed on 30 EFL learners of the same age and proficiency level in order to ensure the reliability of the metaphorical test. The result confirmed a satisfactory level of the test reliability.

The personality type questionnaire and metaphorical competence test were administered and statistical analyses were performed in order to investigate the null hypotheses of the study.

The results of Pearson correlation showed that there is a significant relationship between the personality types and metaphorical competence. In addition, it was found that extrovert and introvert types of personality significantly differ in EFL learners' metaphorical competence. The results of one way ANOVA showed that there is significant difference among two groups of learners regarding their metaphorical competence.

The findings of the present study supported those of Hashemian, Roohani and Forouzandeh (2012) who found a significant relationship between EFL learners' metaphorical competence and their intrapersonal intelligence.

The findings of this study also approved the findings of Behtarinezhad's (2013) findings on the relationship between personality traits and EFL learners' metadiscourse competence. She found a significant relationship between these two variables.

The findings of this study were in line with Benson, (2001) and Dam (2001) who found a positive correlation between L2 metaphorical competence level and learner independence and depicted that helping L2 learners to make their learning process more independent.

Regarding the significant predictability of assertiveness, the results of the study confirmed Yong's (2010) and Shahmohamadi and Hasanzadeh's (2011) findings in the expediency of assertiveness in second language acquisition.

To sum up, it is suggested that metaphors should be more regarded in the foreign language instruction in classroom in order to develop learners' metaphorical competence and consequently increase students' second language competence.

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