Psychological aspects of SLA: How gender and personality traits (i-e) direct an L2 acquisition process in teenage learners

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From about 1970s, in the time of ‘cognitive revolution’ in psychology, emotions have been given considerably less importance than the cognitive aspects. However, in 1998 Rosenberg coins the term affective factors arguing that emotions constitute enduring aspects of our personality. At the present time scholars are in general agreement that these aspects strongly influence behavior, cognition and emotions.

This case study investigates how pupils’ affective traits, strictly speaking introversion and extraversion, influence an overall L2 language competence. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected in two secondary schools in Serbia, whereby the overall sample includes 295 participants. Pupils were given a test battery consisted of three major parts: a) personal data sheet; b) C-Test; and c) Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ). By means of correlation analysis a negative relationship between the two variables, C-Test and introversion-extraversion continuum, is established.

This relationship suggests that the lower score on the dimension of introversion relates to higher language test score, and vice versa. These findings indicate that introverted characteristics in teenage learners of English as a second language in the two secondary schools are beneficial for acquiring language in the school environment. Nevertheless, the research has also shown an enormous disparity between the male and female learners. First discovery reveals that males are generally more successful learners than the females; whereby, a high statistical difference between the two groups of learners is obtained. The final results reveal that a high language competence in female learners increases with introverted characteristics, while extraversion is beneficial for successful language acquisition in male learners.

Bibliography:

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