

## RAISING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' AWARENESS OF INTROVERTS LEARNERS

Nesrine Ghaouar<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Badji Mokhtar University- Annaba (Algeria)

Email: [ghaouarnesrine@yahoo.fr](mailto:ghaouarnesrine@yahoo.fr)

### Abstract

In our classrooms, some students are all the time silent and very attentive; they take notes and maintain eye contact with their teachers while explaining the lessons. However, they prefer not to take part in class discussion and do rarely participate. When the teacher obliged them to speak, they feel blocked and blemish, but they are very good at writings. Hence, if novice teachers are not aware of the characteristics of introverted learners and how to deal with them, they will make the situation worse, and they will hurt them without even knowing. In this article, I provide my personal experience in the module of didactics with third-year students of English- Badji Mokhtar University, Annaba- and how I raised their awareness of how to deal with introvert learners as future teachers. The experiment was based on pre-service training that includes psychological preparation, classroom management, learner-learner interaction, cooperative learning, lesson preparation, rehearsal and performance. The results were very promising as the great majority of introvert learners became more engaged and involved in classroom participation and discussion as they developed their self confidence in speaking in public.

*Keywords:* Classroom management, cooperative learning, interaction, introverted learners, pre-service teacher.

### 1. Introduction

Certain individual variables affect foreign language learning as learners display different personalities and they react accordingly. In our classrooms, the most noticed students are those who participate, speak up their minds without fear or hesitation. These students are the active students who bring life into our classes. However, there is another type of students who keep quiet, just observing and taking notes- they are not outgoing and do not participate only when they are invited to do so by their teachers. Hence, this article intends to clarify the difference between these two personality traits: Extroversion and introversion. A special focus will be given to introvert learners through applying certain strategies to engage them in the classroom.

---

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding author : Nesrine Ghaouar  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6220-5755>

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Learners' Individual Variations

According to Saville- Troike (2006), Second Language Acquisition (SLA) studies focused on studying learners' individual differences and the characteristics of successful learners. Indeed, learners are different in aptitude, attitudes, motivation, personality, learning styles and strategies. In relation to personality, SLA research considered the following factors in the continuum as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.**  
*Personality Traits (Saville- Troike, 2006, p. 89)*

Anxious	—	<b>Self-confident</b>
Risk-avoiding	—	<b>Risk-taking</b>
Shy	—	<b>Adventuresome</b>
Introverted	—	Extroverted
Inner-directed	—	Other-directed
Reflective	—	Impulsive
<b>Imaginative</b>	—	Uninquisitive
Creative	—	Uncreative
<b>Empathetic</b>	—	Insensitive to others
<b>Tolerant of ambiguity</b>	—	Closure-oriented

Furthermore, Stern (1991) clarifies that teachers expect learners to behave and react in the same way, and they are often shocked by the variety of reactions on the part of learners. Contrary to their expectations their learners are not the same, rather they are different. Consequently, investigating learners' individual variations becomes the focus of educational psychology. Arif (2015) clarifies that the acquisition of the target language is affected by learners' attitudes and personalities. Ortega (2013) sees personality as traits and qualities that are resistant to change that affect a person's cognition and emotion. Harmer (2001) adds that people react differently to the same stimuli, and this developed curiosity to answer these questions: How might such variation determine the ways in which individual students learn most readily? How might they affect the ways in which we teach? (p. 45). Stern (1991) pinpoints that in educational psychology extrovert learners were stereotyped as successful learners in comparison with introvert ones. Then, what are the strengths and the weaknesses of these personality traits?

## 2.2. Introvert and Extrovert Learners

According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), extroversion and introversion have been discussed as personality factors in second language learning. Condon & Ruth-Sahd (2013) add that they were identified in educational psychology literature as significant aspects of personality as they mark the persons and how they react according to circumstances they find themselves in. Stern (1991) defines introversion as the tendency to withdraw from social interaction and be preoccupied with inner thoughts and feelings, while extroversion (extraversion) as the tendency to be outgoing and interested in people and things in the environment (extraversion). He adds that in interpersonal communication, the extroverts have more advantages than the introverts in language interaction as they are more fluent with more developed communication skills. Brown (2000) further clarifies,

Extroversion is the extent to which a person has a deep-seated need to receive ego enhancement, self-esteem, and a sense of wholeness from other people as opposed to receiving that affirmation within oneself. Extroverts actually need other people in order to feel "good."... Introversion, on the other hand, is the extent to which a person derives a sense of wholeness and fulfillment apart from a reflection of this self from other people. Contrary to our stereotypes, introverts can have an inner strength of character that extroverts do not have (p.167)

Therefore, introverts have inner strength whereas extrovert's strengths come from the outside world. The introverts focus on inner thoughts and feelings, while the extroverts are outgoing and like public speaking. Larsen-Freeman & Long (2004) highlight that extroverts are mostly considered as successful learners, while in certain cases introverted learners exceeded the extroverted ones. Accordingly, Saville-Troike (2006) explains that extroverts are better in speaking while introverts do better in study; however, in some SLA studies, extroverts are stereotyped as successful learners.

Ortega (2013) clarifies that the belief that extroverts are better than introverts is misleading as "an advantage in fluency for extroverts was counterbalanced by an advantage in complexity and lexical richness for introverts" (198). Condon & Ruth-Sahd (2013) highlight that introverts are different from extroverts in how they process information, classroom interaction, and assignments' preferences. They provide a comprehensive comparison between introvert and extrovert learners, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.**

*Introverts and extroverts ( Condon & Ruth-Sahd, 2013, p. 505)*

<b>Introverts</b>	<b>Extroverts</b>
Quiet, reticent	Talkative ; comfortable in the spotlight
Reflective; introspective, reserved	Active; highly engaged with the outside world
Serious	Light-hearted
Think before speaking	Think while speaking
Reclusive	Gregarious; outgoing
Risk-averse; cautious	Bold
Uncomfortable with conflict	Assertive; dominant
Prefers small gatherings with friends	Comfortable in larger groups that include strangers
Tentative; deliberate	Enthusiastic; make quick decisions
Drained by the outside world; need time to spend alone to recharge	Energized by the outside world; prone to boredom when alone

Furthermore, Jacobs (2014) provides the following differences between Introverts and extrovert learners:

- ***Introverts***
  - ✓ Tend to prefer less stimulation as being alone or with a small number of familiar people; listening to fairly quiet music.
  - ✓ Tend to prefer to do one task at a time; are less inclined to take risks; often proceed more cautiously.
  - ✓ Tend to prefer listening more than talking; like to think before speaking; would often rather write to speak.
  
- ***Extroverts***
  - ✓ Tend to prefer more stimulation as being with many people, including new people
  - ✓ Tend to prefer multitasking; enjoy risks; are less cautious
  - ✓ Tend to prefer talking to listening; can speak well with little preparation; would often rather speak than write (p.84)

Therefore, throughout this work, extroverts are easy-going, talkative, confident public speakers, risk-takers, and interested in others opinions while their counterparts, the introverts, are silent, good listeners, reflective persons, preoccupied with their inner thoughts, avoid public speaking, and with a certain level of anxiety and shyness.

### *2.3. Empowering Introverts*

Engaging introvert learners in class discussions or participation is not easy. It needs that the teacher develops awareness of the different personality traits displayed by introverts and in order to effectively involve them without frustrating them. Dow (2013) warns,

An educator who idealizes one trait over another will risk alienation and stigmatization of students as well as the prohibition of their success. It is crucial then for educators to genuinely understand the differences, recognize the behavior patterns of introverts and extroverts (without pigeon-holing students, diminishing/celebrating either type with prejudice, or using it as a weapon against or excuse for a student), differentiate their classroom community to enable both /types to equally share space and attention, and help students learn to recognize, adapt, and include the other type in their everyday lives. (p.1)

Hence, teachers should be cautious not to privilege one personality over the other. It is important to develop awareness of the qualities of every personality and identify the differences. Teachers should involve both personalities on an equal basis in the classroom. In his turn, Jacobs (2014) proposes the following guidelines:

- a) **Maximum peer interaction** through cooperative learning through group and pair work led by the teacher
- b) **Heterogeneous Grouping:** students from different backgrounds working together as equals toward common goals.
- c) **Positive interdependence:** students are accountable within the group; they are responsible for their learning.
- d) **Cooperation as a Value:** Students exchange, share and help each others.

- e) **Equal Opportunity to Participate:** no dominance of some students- extroverts-, they are all equal in participation.
- f) **Teaching collaborative skills:** as group brainstorming, problem-solving, critical thinking, time management.
- g) **Individual accountability:** students become autonomous and rely on themselves.

Furthermore, Martin (2014) sees *intellectual safety, collaboration and encouraging autonomy* as important conditions for engaging and empowering introvert learners.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Context

Our classrooms are marked with the participation of the same three or four students. They dominate class time, and they have answers to major questions even if they are not sure. They are very active and they explain their ideas without hesitation or fear. However, the majority keep listening attentively without taking part in class discussion. These last are very good at writing and get good marks in written exams and tests, but when it comes to speaking, they are blocked.

#### 3.2 Participants

In the module of didactics, 60 third year LMD students in the department of English -Badji Mokhtar University- Annaba were involved in the experiment.. The majority of the students are the project of future teachers, and they need to develop the skill of speaking up their minds and sharing their ideas with others. Besides, the nature of didactics as a module aims at developing learners' skills since it is their final year at the licencedegree and as part of pre-service training.

#### 3.3 The study

This study intends to answer the following research: How to involve the introvert learners and engage them in classroom participation and discussion? We hypothesized that involving learners in pair/group work based on individual accountability and intellectual safety will guarantee their engagement in-class participation. An experiment will be conducted with a special focus on introverted learners and the possible changes in their interaction in the classroom.

Before the experiment, only four to six students regularly participated in the classroom, while the others were satisfied by taking notes and listening attentively. From the first session of the experiment, the researcher started raising students' awareness through the following procedure:

1. Developing a positive atmosphere where students feel comfortable and trust- mutual respect and care in addition to opportunities for students to provide their opinions (*Intellectual safety*-Martin 2014).
2. Recognizing the introvert learners in that classroom and asking them about their personality and how they feel (anxiety, self-esteem, preparation, participation, etc.) The aim was to clarify deeply the personality attributes of introvert learners. It has been found that the majority (90%) were introverts and shy as they fear being embarrassed or judged by others and anxious in social interactions.
3. Recognizing the extrovert learners in that classroom (10%) and asking them about their personality traits and how they keep talking and participating in every session. Besides, the researcher asks them about their strengths and weaknesses in learning.
4. Extrovert learners will provide pieces of advice to introverts.

5. The teacher explains that contrary to previous beliefs that stereotypically extroverts are better learners, both extroverts and introverts have their weaknesses and strengths.
6. Finally, the teacher provides strategies mostly concerned with classroom management, learner-learner interaction, cooperative learning, lesson preparation, rehearsal, and positive self-talk.

In order to assure introvert learners gradual engagement in classroom interactions, the pre-service training was divided into two semester plans as follows:

### **First semester plan**

**Objective of the first semester:** raising learners self confidence through lesson preparations and interaction with others by focusing primarily on individual work then pair/group work. The teacher proceeds as follows:

To raise their interest:

- a) The teacher explains the merits of participating, hearing one's own voice and developing confidence before being obliged to do so as future teachers.
- b) The teacher explains that it is ok to be blocked, to feel shy, not sure, make mistakes, but the most important thing is to give it a try.
- c) The audience is just your teacher and your classmates; another day, you will be responsible for learners and be inspected from time to time.
- d) Imagine another day, standing in front of students unconfidently and more than that, the inspector comes? Which type of teacher you would be?

To motivate them, the teacher takes notes of all the done works as part of TD mark

- a) Individual work: Lesson preparation is an obligation, Participation is needed.
- b) Pair-work: exchanging the homework and adding extra information
- c) Group-work (heterogeneous groups that they choose the members themselves): Methods' performance.

Moving gradually toward cooperative work- pair/group- will enable them to acquire skills from each other and enhance their self confidence in speaking.

### **Second semester plan**

**Objective of the second semester:** Promoting learners confident engagement in public speaking and in interaction with the *whole class*.

- As part of the TD mark, all students were required to play the role of future teachers where their classmates became their students, and the teacher became observers.
- The role-play is based on lessons from the syllabus that students should prepare and rehearse at home
- In addition to the oral presentations, the written format should be submitted later to the teacher.
- Student -teachers will behave as real teachers using the whiteboard, asking questions, moving around the classroom.

- Following certain criteria, the classmates will assess the student-teacher then it will be the turn of the researcher- the real teacher.

### **Criteria**

- Lesson planning
- Using the board
- Teacher's confidence/ hesitation
- Voice quality: good/low/medium
- Eye contact
- Interaction with the students
- How the teacher provides information (directly or through asking questions).

## **4. Results**

Following the strategies in every session and being attentive to students' engagement and self-confidence in presenting their lessons have assured the positive effects of the experiment on the introverted learners. The main results are as follows:

- Students became more confident in public speaking as they presented whole lessons and acted as real teachers with their classmates as part of their pre-service training in didactics.
- For certain cases of introverted learners, they ask for a second chance as they did not like what they presented and wanted to take the teacher's and their classmates' feedback into consideration.
- The introvert learners are no more embarrassed by others' remarks or assessments because they know it is for their own benefit as students and even future teachers.
- The new developed skills of introverts are: speaking confidently in public, accepting assessment, rethinking one's performance, lesson preparation. Some students said by the end: "In the beginning, they did not like teaching, but now they are ready to be good teachers". An introverted student said, "I only participate in your session; I feel very comfortable and not afraid of speaking up my mind".

By the end of the experiment, 60% of the Introvert students were participating in a confident way in the didactics session. They became more open to accept others' assessments, and lesson preparation helped them gain knowledge confidence. However, it is important to develop a comfortable atmosphere in the classroom based on respect and trust to come to self confidence in speaking in public.

## **5. Discussion**

Raising pre-service teachers' awareness of the personality variations between introverts and extrovert learners is the first step towards understanding how to deal with introverts and what kind of classroom atmosphere they need in order to participate in and speak openly. The hypothesis has been confirmed as involving learners in group work based on individual accountability and intellectual safety will guarantee their engagement in class participation. Here are some suggestions for how to take care of introverted learners:

- Respect their need for privacy.
- Never embarrass them in public; make them feel comfortable and respected.
- They need first to observe the new situation.
- Give them time to think.
- Don't interrupt them.

- Honor their introversion and don't compare them with extroverts.
- Involve them in cooperative work with students of different personalities; so that they learn from each other.
- Invite them to participate and value their contribution.

## 6. Conclusion

It is important to honour the differences between introvert and extrovert students rather than try to fix them. Teachers are the keys to success and change in their classroom if they are empowered with the psychology of learning and are aware of introverted personality traits and learning preferences. The research experiment proved that introverted learners could be as good at speaking as in writing; they only need a comfortable atmosphere full of respect, understanding and attention from teachers' part and even their classmates. It has been also proved that involving learners in pair/group work based on individual accountability and intellectual safety will guarantee their engagement in class participation. Therefore, pre-service teachers should be aware that introverted students have a hidden power that they need to bring to the surface using different strategies and applying diverse students groupings.

## References

- Arif, R. H. (2015). Experienced EFL teachers' challenges and strategies in teaching speaking for introvert students. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 48 (4), 437-446. <http://www.europeanjournalofsocialsciences.com/>
- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. Pearson
- Condon, M., & Ruth-Sahd, L. (2013). Responding to introverted and shy students: Best practice guidelines for educators and advisors. *Open Journal of Nursing*, 3, 503-515 [https://www.scirp.org/pdf/OJN\\_2013112715261760.pdf](https://www.scirp.org/pdf/OJN_2013112715261760.pdf)
- Dow, S. E. (2013). The invisible students in the classroom: How to include the introverts without excluding the extroverts. *Education and Human Development Master's Theses*. 268. [http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/ehd\\_theses/268](http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/ehd_theses/268)
- Harmer, J. (2001). *The practice of English language teaching*. Longman
- Jacobs, G. M. (2014). Introverts can succeed with cooperative learning. *Parole*, 4(1), 83-93. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED573764.pdf>
- Larsen-Freeman, D., & Long, H.M. (2004). *An introduction to second language acquisition research*. Routledge
- Martin, L. E. (2014). Tips for teaching: The brain game-teaching strategies for introverted vs. extroverted students. *Bulletin for the study of Religion*, 43 (3), 39- 46 <https://journal.equinoxpub.com/BSOR/article/view/14766/16976>
- Ortega, L. (2013). *Second language acquisition*. Routledge : Taylor & Francis Group
- Richards, J.C., & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics*. Pearson Education Limited
- Saville-Troike, M. (2006). *Introducing second language acquisition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Stern, H.H. (1991). *Fundamental concepts of language teaching*. Oxford University Press.