FEATURES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING PROCESSES; MOTIVATION AND PERSONALITY

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Abstract

In the globalizing world, it has become almost a necessity for nations to learn and teach a foreign language, which has become a common language apart from their mother tongue. The rapid and unavoidable changes in science and technology have made learning a foreign language important in our country as well as in other developed countries. In the process of learning a foreign language, both personality traits and motivation are two main factors that have great importance in the success of learners. All learners learn and are motivated differently. From this point of view, in this study, the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in foreign language learning, the relationship between students' personality traits and foreign language learning, and finally, studies to increase the motivation of learners in foreign language learning will be discussed. As a result, individuals learning a foreign language differ from each other in various dimensions. Some of these dimensions are related to personality, motivation, learning style, ability, and age. The purpose of this article is to highlight and summarize the relationship between personality traits, motivation, and foreign language learning.

Keywords: Personality traits, Motivation, Foreign language

YABANCI DİL ÖĞRENİMİ SÜREÇLERİNDE MOTİVASYON VE KİŞİLİK

Özet

Küreselleşen dünyada milletlerin ana dilleri dışında, ortak bil dil haline gelen yabancı bir dili öğrenmeleri ve öğretmeleri, neredeyse zorunluluk haline gelmiştir. Bilim ve teknolojiye yaşanan hızlı ve önlenemez değişimler yabancı dil öğrenmeyi diğer gelişmiş ülkelerde olduğu gibi ülkemizde de önemli hale getirmiştir. Yabancı dil öğrenme süreçlerinde hem kişilik özellikleri hem de motivasyon, öğrenenlerin başarısında büyük öneme sahip iki temel faktördür. Tüm öğrenenler farklı şekilde öğrenir ve farklı şekilde motive olur. Buradan hareketle yapılan bu çalışmada, yabancı dil öğreniminde içsel ve dışsal motivasyonun rolü, öğrencilerin kişilik özellikleri ile yabancı dil öğrenme arasındaki ilişki ve son olarak yabancı dil öğreniminde öğrenenlerin motivasyonunu artırmak için yapılan çalışmalar ele alınacaktır. Sonuç olarak, yabancı dil öğrenen bireyler birbirinden çeşitli boyutlarda farklılık göstermektedir. Bu boyutlardan bazıları kişilik, motivasyon, öğrenme stili, yetenek ve yaş ile ilgilidir. Bu makalenin amacı, kişilik özellikleri, motivasyon ve yabancı dil öğrenimi arasındaki ilişkiyi vurgulamak ve özetlemektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kişilik özellikleri, Motivasyon, Yabancı dil

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INTRODUCTION

Learning a foreign language, which is one of the most important parameters of the modern world, is considered very important for the well-being of individuals and society, as well as for social and economic development. The benefits of learning a foreign language are gaining more importance day by day in the wake of globalization. Learning a foreign language is an important tool that opens doors to art, music, dance, fashion, cuisine, film, philosophy, and science, as well as prestige, easy access to job opportunities, educational opportunities at foreign universities, and freedom to travel (Latimer, n.d.)

In countries where foreign language learning and teaching are based on the assumption that every individual can learn at the same speed and in the same way using the same learning techniques, success in learning a foreign language declines in parallel with these false practices. Studies have shown that interest, attitude, personality traits, empathy, and motivation influence success in learning a foreign language. According to Richards (1985), motivation is a factor that affects a person's desire to achieve something. Personality is another important factor that influences success and failure in the foreign language learning process, according to Wakamoto (2000).

Learners who desire to learn are more likely to succeed than those who do not, and also have a personality. However, among them, personality and motivation stand out as two important factors. Personality traits and motivation, which are known to influence learners' success, especially in foreign language teaching, are among the factors that linguists and educators focus on and which have a direct impact on foreign language learning. Some factors affecting second language learning are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Factors Affecting Foreign Language Learning. (Ellis, 1985)

Factors affect learning; it covers personal, social, and attitudinal domains. These characteristics include a range of variables such as gender, age, previous and current educational

experiences, language proficiency levels, use of technology in education, and motivation to learn. Considering that students exhibit different approaches according to their different individual characteristics when learning a second language (Cotterall, 1999),

Some researchers have examined the factors affecting the foreign language's ability to achieve success in a foreign language and have divided these factors into internal and external factors (Ellis, 1997; Gonzales, 2001). According to Gonzales (2001), internal factors are students' biological, physical, psychological, cognitive, and social characteristics; external factors are socioeconomic and socio-cultural characteristics such as school and family, parent's education level, profession, family structure, and language used at home. On the other hand, Ellis (1985) states that the internal factors are the linguistic and non-linguistic experiences that the individual has had so far, the person's mental readiness and willingness to learn a foreign language, and the absence of a physical barrier to language learning. All kinds of external effects that affect, direct, and evaluate the behaviour of the individual are also included in external factors. It can be said that the effect of internal and external factors on the way to success in the foreign language learning and teaching process is too high to be ignored.

Aim of the Study

The study aims to explain foreign language learning in terms of personality traits and motivational concepts. First, the relationship between a foreign language and personality traits is discussed, then the relationship between a foreign language and motivation is discussed. Finally, the factors that constitute personality are discussed in the context of the relevant literature.

METHODOLOGY

A review article describes the current state of knowledge on a particular topic. Rather than providing new information or analysis, a review article reviews and summarizes previously published findings. A literature review examines books, academic papers, and other sources on a particular topic, area of study, or theory and provides a description, summary, and critical evaluation of these works in the context of the research problem being studied. Literature reviews are designed to give readers an overview of the sources you have used in studying a particular topic and to show them how your research fits into a broader field of study (Fink, 2014).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Personality

The concept of personality is a phenomenon that has been frequently studied for a long time. Since personality is individual and its specificity is universal, the concept of personality continues to be the subject of research (Çiçek & Aslan, 2020). Personality is the set of attitudes and behaviors that each person exhibits in different ways. There are as many different personalities as there are people in life. No two people are alike in personality. Just as everyone's fingerprints are different, so are their personalities. There are many subsets of personality. There is no single definition. Also, personality is a clue to how people react in different situations. These situations differ from person to person (Özok, 2018). Furthermore, each individual uniquely learns a foreign language based on his or her personality.

Figure 2. Myers Briggs Personality Types. (Adapted from Myers, 1995)

Figure 2 indicates a chart with Myers Briggs personality types: extraversion and introversion, sensing and intuition, thinking and feeling, and perceiving and judging. Personality is often defined as something completely random and personal. It is shaped by being influenced by environmental factors, relationships, and beliefs. However, according to theories examining personality types, there are certain factors in the process of people's perception and judgment of outsiders. These personality factors consist of 16 different types and 4 different personality traits.

These are respectively; the inspector, the crafter, the protector, the artist, the advocate, the mediator, the architect, the thinker, the persuader, the director, the performer, the caregiver, the champion, the giver, the debater, and the commander.

According to the Myers-Briggs (1962) personality type classification, each of the 16 personality types consists of different combinations of the 4 subcategories of personality. The character traits that make up these four sub-categories consist of four different bipolar dimensions: extraverted–introverted, sensory–intuitive, intellectual–emotional, and judgmental–perceptual.

Personality is a key factor in explaining individual differences in the foreign language learning process. For this reason, several variables, such as anxiety, risk-taking, tolerance, empathy, self-esteem, extroversion, and introversion, which are personality traits, have been studied with foreign language acquisition (Ellis, 1994). However, the most prominent trait in the foreign language learning process is extroversion.

Extroversion is considered to be a factor that positively affects the development of interpersonal skills, as extroverted learners are generally more likely to interact with other foreign language learners. Introverted learners, however, may find themselves in advantageous situations because they find it easier to acquire basic foreign language knowledge in grammar and writing and thus develop higher cognitive academic language skills (Carrell et al., 1996).

However, some studies have shown that extroverted students do indeed have an advantage when it comes to "using a foreign language as a language of communication" (Strong, 1983), and according to the results of similar studies, extroverted students have better personality scores than other personality types in 6 out of 8 studies showing that they have learned a foreign language. Dewaele and Furnham (1999) examined about thirty studies on the relationship between personality and foreign language learning and concluded that "extroverts are generally more proficient than introverts in both their native language and foreign language".

The five-factor personality traits can be summarized as follows:

Responsibility. Tendency to be self-disciplined, responsible, and success-oriented; planned rather than spontaneous.

Openness to Experience. The art of openness is appreciation, feeling, adventure, unusual ideas, daydreaming, curiosity, and diverse experiences.

Agreeableness. This personality trait represents humility, compassion, altruism, compassion, and honesty. Acceptable people are kind and helpful and generally tend to see the best in people. They value good relationships with others.

Emotional stability. A tendency to easily feel unpleasant emotions such as anger, anxiety, depression, or irritability; sometimes called emotional instability.

Extraversion. A tendency to seek energy, positive emotions, and the partnership and encouragement of others.

Introversion. people who draw their energy from their inner world are called an introvert. These people place more emphasis on their spiritual selves and prefer to focus on mental energy rather than physical energy (Roccas et al., 2002).

As a result, personality has been defined as a set of traits that characterize a person. This concept is difficult to define and measure due to its complex nature (Khasinah, 2014). Research on personality traits suggests that students affect not only their cognitive abilities but also their emotional state, which in turn affects the way they acquire a language. Some personality traits are considered beneficial and others detrimental to second language learning Bailey & Krashen, 1974). The most important personality traits for learning a foreign language are introversion and extroversion, self-esteem, risk-taking, anxiety, and empathy.

The Psychology of Personality Formation

It is very difficult to determine the factors that influence the formation of personality. An old debate in personality research is whether a person's personality is the result of heredity or interaction with the environment. However, it is generally believed that personality is an interaction or the result of both hereditary and environmental factors (Robbins & Judge, 2011). Some studies have shown that inherited factors are more important than environmental factors in the formation of personality. The heredity approach states that a person's personality lies in the molecular structure of the genes in the chromosomes (Robbins & Judge, 2011). Personality is composed of many variables, the number, and importance of which vary depending on the theorist. Nevertheless, scholars interested in personality theory assume some commonalities. The most important of these are biological structure, the physiology of the individual, group membership, role behaviour, and social status.

Şimşek et al., 2003, list the factors that determine personality as follows:

- Biological factors.
- Hereditary Factors.
- Physical Structure
- Environmental Factors.
- Family Factor
- Cultural Factors.
- Other Factors.
- Birth order

Language and Personality

Although they have similar learning mechanisms from birth, it is an inevitable fact that individual characteristics have an important place among the reasons why some people learn languages faster and easier than others. In addition, different characteristics of foreign language learners, such as age, attitude towards language, and interest, are factors that affect the language learning process. Each individual differs in terms of past experiences, psychological and biological structure, and living conditions to which he or she is exposed, and these differences can positively or negatively affect foreign language acquisition and success in education (Memduhoğlu & Kozikoğlu, 2005).

Personality traits are unique not only in foreign language teaching but also in social, psychological, and cognitive contexts. When a student is learning a language, character as an internal element and the dimensions of the educational process as an external element are important in terms of their needs and goals.

Figure 3. Dimensions of the Educational Process

Motivation

One of the most important aspects of learning a second language is motivation. Motivation, according to Richards (1985), is a factor that influences a person's desire to achieve. Learners who have the desire to learn something are more likely to succeed than those who don't. Gardner and Lambert (1972) studied the function of attitudes and motivation in SLA and defined motivation as "the learner's overall goal or direction" and attitude as "the learner's persistence in striving toward a goal" (Ellis 1985; Patsy Lightbown et. al., 2000). They distinguish between two forms of motivation:

Integrative motivation. A learner learns a language because he/she is interested in the people and culture of the target language or because he/she wants to communicate with people from other cultures who speak that language.

Instrumental motivation. The goals a learner has in learning a second language are functional and useful, e.g., to get a better job, to pass exams, to be able to read foreign newspapers, etc.

Motivation, one of the fundamental concepts of developmental and learning psychology, like many other psychological concepts, is difficult to define. Therefore, it is difficult to assign the Turkish term precisely. When we examine the origin of the word, we find that the concept of motivation is derived from the word's "motive" in English and "movere" in Latin (İlgar, 2000). In Turkish, on the other hand, the word "motive" is generally used in response to this word, or the word "motivation" is used without any translation.

As mentioned earlier, motivation is a difficult concept to define. If we try to define the concept of motivation starting from its Turkish equivalent, we first encounter the expression "the activated". But this statement only gives one aspect of motivation, because motivation also has the aspect of "continuing the movement". From these two expressions, we may define motivation in the most general sense as follows: Motivation is the force that enables an individual to initiate a behaviour to achieve a goal and to continue that behaviour until the goal is achieved. As can be seen from this definition, motivation has three aspects: the initiation of the behaviour, the maintenance of the behaviour, and the achievement of the goal. Here, the direction of goal attainment should not be misunderstood. The achievement of a goal does not mean that the motive has disappeared. After the individual achieves the goal, that motive can be reactivated and direct the individual to perform the behaviour. For example, a hungry child begins his eating behaviour by going to the kitchen with a hunger instinct, and by filling his stomach, he satisfies his hunger, i.e., he achieves the goal.

However, the hunger instinct will reappear after a while. Here we see that this process has a cyclical character. When we examine this cyclicity, we come across a process that consists

of different stages. We refer to this process as motivation, which activates the individual and enables him to achieve the goal. We can explain this process using the following figure (İlgar, 2000).

Language and motivation. According to Dörnyei (2005), motivation is the driving force required to begin and continue the language learning process. When the learner is motivated, he is more likely to acquire knowledge or start and complete an activity. Generally, it can be stated that motivation affects the student's participation in class, attitude toward class, and academic success.

A person may be motivated or unmotivated for many reasons. For example, reasons such as getting a better job or better educational opportunities, traveling, successfully passing an exam, and learning about other cultures all argue for high motivation in foreign language learning. Conversely, if one is not interested in the subject, does not receive enough support from family and teachers, or has learning difficulties, motivation decreases.

Learner motivation and personality, which have been of great interest to foreign language professionals in recent decades, are widely recognized as one of the individual differences that may play an important role in language learning success (Gardner, 2006). They introduce the concept of the social-psychological process, which states that motivation is related to social and psychological factors in the individual's environment. According to Gardner and Lambert's research, there are two types of motivation: integrative and instrumental. While integrative motivation reflects the individual's desire to communicate with people from other cultures, instrumental motivation refers to a specific goal to be achieved in the language learning process. As a result of these studies, Gardner (2006) stated that motivation is a central issue in the language learning process. According to him, motivation not only reflects the achievement of a goal; at the same time, the efforts made, the desires emanating from the person, and the attitudes shown are also part of the motivation.

Without motivation and a positive attitude, it is very difficult to have a successful learning process. The answers to the question of why people learn a foreign language naturally vary from person to person. Moreover, Trigos-Gilbert (1999) declines that, most people today need to speak a new language for personal and professional reasons. These purposes are:

- Better employment opportunities;
- A higher salary expectation;
- Higher opportunities for career advancement;
- She defines it as a better understanding of another's culture.

On the other hand, Thanasoulas (2002) states that learners have an innate curiosity to explore the world, so they are likely to have spontaneous learning experiences. In reality, however, this "curiosity" is overridden by inexorable factors such as compulsory schooling, curriculum content, and grades—and, most importantly, by the differences between the programs they are offered at school and their real-life counterparts.

All in all, according to Ellis (1985), learners' motivation and needs have always been at the heart of theories of foreign language acquisition, and Savignon (1976) argues that motivation is the most important factor in foreign language acquisition. Linguists have identified different types of motivation. However, Brown and Ellis (1985) defined three types of motivation. These

- General motivation consists of a general orientation towards a language learning goal.
- Situational motivation is the general motivational orientation of the person towards his environment.
- Task-oriented motivation is the motivation to accomplish specific learning tasks. Consequently, motivation plays a major role in language learning or retention. Success in learning or retaining a language largely depends on the motivation of the learners (Kasap, 2015).

CONCLUSION

Consequently, the learner's personality traits (extraversion or introversion) and language motivation are factors that influence the process of foreign language learning. From this point of view, it can be said that individual differences and motivation are two important factors in foreign language learning. Learning how to learn and exploring one's learning style can lead to an increase in achievement motivation and language learning. Teaching that does not take into account learners' characteristics and motivation for the language they are learning may not be effective and may even discourage them from learning a language.

Learners' attitudes towards the language they are learning, their personality traits, and their empathic tendencies towards the language affect the outcomes of language acquisition, learning, and teaching. Personality traits are important not only in foreign language learning but also in social, psychological, and cognitive aspects. Furthermore, it is critical to consider cultural factors when understanding a person's personality and teaching a foreign language (Tanhan & Demir, 2007). We can state that all of the characteristics of the individual are among the important factors affecting the language learning process. (Çekiç, 2016).

Being a good language learner does not mean learning languages easily and quickly, but having the ability to continue continuously and determinedly despite difficulties, to overcome disappointments, and to be willing to make many trials and errors before succeeding (Naiman et al., 1978). Every student in today's language classroom has their unique personality; how to inspire kids in learning a second language to match individual students' learning requirements is critical for instructors and educators. In short, personality traits and motivation can never occur exactly the same way in any two individuals (Allport, 1937). Therefore, motivation, personality traits and foreign language learning have been briefly discussed in this paper.

All in all, there is a clear need for as much research as feasible in this sector to contribute to our existing understanding of the elements influencing second language learning. The findings of research can impact teaching techniques and improve the quality of assistance provided to youngsters as they strive to acquire a second language.

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