

Review of Bachelor's Thesis

Opponent: I. Hvorecka Ph.D.

Bachelor Thesis Title:

The Role of Extroversion and Introversion in Second Language Classroom Behavior among Young Adult Learners

Written by: Iryna Rozinko

Ms Iryna Rozinko wrote her bachelor thesis on the topic "The Role of Extroversion and Introversion in Second Language Classroom Behavior among Young Adult Learners".

From the very start it should be noted that the work meets all the formal requirements applied to bachelor papers. It has the required number of pages, all the structural parts typical for an empirical study, a list of references, appendixes. The student attempts diligently to formulate the aims, specify the object, research subjects, and questions. There is even a bold attempt to point out to possible significance of the work and give recommendations.

The topic Ms Rozinko has chosen was widely researched in the field of SLL in late sixties and early seventies, when the question of possible influence of learners' personalities on the process of SLL and its outcomes was investigated. Later the focus shifted to much more refined and nuanced issues, e.g. investigations how precisely certain individual differences (aptitude, motivation, cognitive learning preferences, anxiety, etc.) affect the learning of specific language skills. Today it is generally agreed in the field that personality variables (esp. extroversion and introversion) are interrelated with so many other cognitive, social and educational factors that hardly any study can reasonably expect to demonstrate a single personality trait to have a significant effect on SLL or its outcomes. Therefore, although the study tasks and questions formulated by Ms Rozinko are not illegitimate in themselves, they seem to be overly general and lacking a speck of ingenuity.

The part called "Literature Review" is divided into chapters "Learning Strategies and Attitudes", "Segments of Second Language Learning", "Personality Traits", "Definition of Extroversion and Introversion", "The Importance of the Level of Extraversion for Learning Strategies and Attitudes".

The first and the last chapters contain the word "attitude" in their titles but apart from a short paragraph that gives the definition of what language attitudes are there is nothing else in the thesis that would be even remotely related to that concept as defined on pg. 5. The student should know that "*Language attitudes*" might not be the same as "*attitudes towards different language learning aspects*". And whatever follows next in the part "Literature Review" demonstrates the same lack of consistency and explicitness.

What is more, pages 7 and 8 contain paragraphs that seem to be almost a straightforward copy of the text by Dorney Zoltan and Skehan Peter "Individual Differences in L2 Learning". Compare (the language used by the student and quoted here and further after is not edited):

Bachelor thesis:

According to a outwardly direct functional definition of language learning strategies offered by Oxford (1989), "behaviours or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed, and enjoyable" (p. 235). However, while describing the subject of these strategies in her widely known taxonomy (Oxford, 1990), there was also included cognitive and affective strategies that

implicated mental processes rather than 'behaviours or actions.' In order to solve this ambiguity, the 1990 volume instead of the phrase 'behaviours and actions used by the learner' used the more general 'steps taken by the learner,' to which is possible to adjust both behavioural and mental steps. (pg. 7)

Dorney Zoltan and Skehan Peter "Individual Differences in L2 Learning", pg. 608, <http://www.zoltandorneyi.co.uk/uploads/2003-dorneyi-skehan-hsla.pdf> (accessed: 27th, January, 2017)

Oxford (1989) provided a seemingly straightforward functional definition for language learning strategies - "behaviours or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed, and enjoyable" (p. 235) - but when she described the scope of these strategies in her well-known taxonomy (Oxford,1990), she also included cognitive and affective strategies that involved mental processes rather than "behaviours or actions." In order to eliminate this inconsistency, the 1990 volume simply replaced the phrase "behaviours and actions used by the learner" with the more general "steps taken by the learner," which could accommodate both behavioural and mental steps.

Bachelor thesis of Ms Rozinko:

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) proposed a disjunctive definition of language learning strategies, according to which they involve "special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (p. 1). The definition has a difference with Oxford's functional definition in a way that it placed greater emphasis on the cognitive aspects of strategy use. In spite of the fact that the prudent wording of the definition in fact did allow learning strategies to be 'behaviours,' the addition of 'thoughts' was an important adjustment, as was the limitation of the intention of strategy use to comprehending, learning, and retaining new information. The above mentioned highlighted the fact that O'Malley and Chamot intended to ground learning strategy research in general cognitive psychological theory by Anderson(1983, 1985). Yet when the authors named concrete examples of learning strategies, it can be seen that an inventory is not at all dissimilar to Oxford's (1990). Finally, to exclude the area of concern of the interrelationship between 'behaviours and thoughts' in their definition, O'Malley and Chamot (1994) followed in the steps of Oxford (1990) and replaced these words with more general methods and techniques that individuals use. (pg. 7-8)

Dorney Zoltan and Skehan Peter "Individual Differences in L2 Learning", pg. 608-609, <http://www.zoltandorneyi.co.uk/uploads/2003-dorneyi-skehan-hsla.pdf> (accessed: 27th, January, 2017):

An alternative definition of language learning strategies was offered by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), according to which these strategies involve "special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (p. 1). This conceptualization differed from Oxford's functional definition in that it highlighted the cognitive aspects of strategy use. Even though the cautious wording of the definition did actually allow learning strategies to be "behaviours," the addition of "thoughts" was an important alteration, as was the restriction of the purpose of strategy use to comprehending, learning, and retaining new information. All these reflected the fact that O'Malley and Chamot attempted to ground learning strategy research in Anderson's (1983, 1985) general cognitive psychological theory. However, when the authors listed concrete examples of learning strategies, we find an inventory that is not at all dissimilar to Oxford's (1990).

(...) Also, it is interesting to see that in order to eliminate the problematic issue of the relationship between "behaviours" and "thoughts" in their definition, O'Malley and Chamot (1994) followed a strategy similar to Oxford's (1990) by replacing these words with the more general formula of "methods and techniques that individuals use."

Dorney Zoltan and Peter Skehan's article **is not included in the thesis' List of References. I would consider this kind of straightforward "borrowing" to be plagiarism.**

The aim of the whole chapter "Segments of Second Language Learning" is not explicitly explained and related to the empirical part of the paper and the promise that "*In this work there will be further discussed the importance of developing oral skills and how teachers can succeed in facilitating this development* (pg. 9) is nowhere fulfilled.

The chapter "Personality Traits" presents an enumeration of a couple of definitions of what a personality is and it is suddenly interrupted by a short paragraph on a possible link of second language learning and personality. Again, a lack of consistency is glaring.

The chapter "Definition of Extroversion and Introversion" could have been a subchapter of "Personality Traits" and it too suffers from a complete lack of consistency.

The title of the chapter "The Importance of the Level of Extraversion for Learning Strategies and Attitudes" seems not to correspond to what the chapter is supposedly trying to present (I say "supposedly" here because the text is jumbled up so much that its message escaped me completely). Is it supposed to show that extroversion is important in SLL or is the chapter just discussing the differences of introverts and extroverts learning a second language? Is it claiming that personality type is generally considered to play a role in SLL or that it is not? Weird combinations of claims are too numerous to quote but just to illustrate the point I would like to give the following extracts as an example:

Alternatively said, extraverts [...] are more successful in verbal performance. However, introverts do not behave as extraverts, and they are more reserved. It could be the reason behind the introverts' weak second language oral performance. At the same time some results show that extraversion is significantly connected with second language oral proficiency, introversion is also significant in L2 oral performance. As a result of this controversy, the problem is continuously investigated, and there is an agreement that extraverts are good at learning language. At the same time many researchers reported negative results on extraversion with morphological and pronunciation accuracy. It is increasing difficulty to deny personality characteristics in L2 learning. In the past twenty years amount of researchers have examined how personality affects SLL. (pg. 14)

... The same way, Roger Griffiths (1991) mentioned that variables of personality are currently corresponded a little of importance in research opinions. This is because of the fact that studies where the role of personality variables was investigated in correlation to learning of language failed to explore consistently significant findings. (pg.16)

At some points the author's English is so bad that certain statements lack any sense of what so ever:

He designed experiment where six students were observed in a classroom environment. He realized that input with high generators scored incredibly higher than input with low generators, that means that students who are passive in language communication situations. He summarized that input with high generators is tended to learn a L2 faster, because they contact more often by second language outside the classroom... (pg.15)

I should admit that after a couple of tries I gave up to trace any logic in the chapter. To my mind, the absence of consistent outcomes of the studies should not be an excuse for the absence of consistency in the text that reviews them.

Next, having read the chapter "Methodology" I would like Ms Rozinko to answer the following questions:

How was the information on the participants' nationality obtained and what role does it play in the study?

How was the participants' level of language performance claimed to be "*between intermediate and pre-advanced*" (pg.19) measured? On what grounds does the student claim that no participants demonstrated "*extremes as Pre-Intermediate and Advanced*"? (ibid.)

How could the participants' level of performance affect the results of the study? By the way, the level of the participants' language performance on page 21 is stated to be "*upper- intermediate and advanced.*" (???)

On page 21 the student claims the questionnaire she used had 10 items, on page 22 the number grows to 13 (???).

On what grounds are the results given in Table 4 (the unexpectedly evenly distributed answers of both introvert and extrovert groups to the question "I prefer doing oral tests more than written tests" dismissed by simply stating that "*Such considerable part of the students from both groups has chosen neutral or negative reaction as the question presumes many other factors like level of preparation, interest, etc. that may determine the choice.*" (pg.25) Does that mean the results given in other tables could be as easily dismissed?

What is the meaning of the comment given on page 29? "*But it is explained by the student from personal information due to big sympathy to the subject*"? What kind of an interfering variable could the "sympathy" be?

The parts "Interpretation and Discussion" and "Recommendations and Conclusions" suffer, as the whole thesis does, from the same absence of ideas' organization and clarity. Paragraph 3 states "*However, the difference in the amount of manifested classroom activity between extrovert and introvert type is not as significant as the questionnaire has displayed.*" (pg. 30)

Paragraph 4 claims "*As far as classroom observation is concerned, it can be said that extroverts and introverts behave in a similar way in ESL classroom. Still, there is some insignificant difference in the result as extraverts are more active in overt activities and less active in covert activities.*"

The last part of the thesis "Recommendations and Conclusions", however, summarises "*The results of the three techniques applied in this research show that extraversion and introversion characteristics of second language learners' personalities affect their preferences in language learning activities and the way they behave in L2 classroom, which was initially expected and confirmed by a number of researches and investigations described in the literature review part.*" (pg.32)

So do introverts and extroverts behave differently in classrooms or not? Is it worth studying anything if you initially expect something that has already been confirmed many times before?

As though all this would not be enough Ms Rozinko is giving the following recommendations on the "*improvement of L2 learning techniques.*"

Since many studies have proved that extroverts or unreserved and outgoing people learn a second language better than introverts or shy people, it also seems important for the learners to develop personality. Alternatively speaking, it is recommended for them to use best endeavours to activate and apply their social skills as much as possible in order to acquire the foreign language effectively. (pg.32)

Ignoring the fact that the suggestion to “develop personality” sounds more like a joke I would still like to ask Ms Rozinko what studies have proved that extroverts are generally **better** language learners than introverts and what kind of learning technique “*using best endeavours...*” is.

The List of References of the thesis does not contain the following items referred to in the text:

Brown (1993), Child (1968), Cook (1994), Daele (2005), Depue and Collins (1999), Dudley Evans and St John (1998), Ellis (1994), Leary (2005), Lounsbury, Sundstro, Loveland, and Gibson (2003), MacIntyre and Thivierge (2009), Naiman, Frohlick, Stern and Todesco (1978), Peterson (1992), Premuzic and Furnham (2003), Seliger (1977), Vogel and Vogel (1986), Wright and Taylor (1970).

Too many entries that are given in the List of References are not written in accordance with the accepted rules.

The language mistakes that the thesis contains are numerous and seriously hinder understanding. Paragraph and overall text consistency is completely missing. Generally speaking, the language of the work is a great disappointment.

Given the number of the enumerated problems I would suggest rewriting and resubmitting the work or mark 3 only in case the defence of the thesis is excellent and my suspicions regarding plagiarism are proved to be ungrounded.

I.Hvorecka Ph.D.

Prague, 27th January, 2017