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A Cultural Inquiry into Personality Factors and Language Learning Strategies in an Iranian EFL Context

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Abstract

Though personality factors and language learning strategies have been extensively examined over the last three decades, we have witnessed a dearth of studies zooming in on these issues from a cultural perspective within the Iranian context. Additionally, few studies have investigated whether personality factors can predict the choice of language learning strategies in an Iranian EFL context. In response to these shortcomings, a group of Iranian EFL learners were administered Big Five Factors Inventory (Goldberg 1993), Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (Oxford 1990) and Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (Mokhtari & Reichard 2002). It was found that the Iranian EFL learners could highly or moderately used the language learning strategies. It was also found that personality factors could predict the use of some language learning strategies in the cultural context of Iran. It was concluded that cultural norms could modulate some aspects of personality and language learning strategies and consequently some aspects of personality could predict the choice of particular language learning strategies. An awareness of learners' personality factors and the way they shape the language learning strategies can contribute to successful language learning and optimally help teachers devise appropriate teaching techniques.

Keywords: Personality Factors; Language Learning Strategies; Culture.

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Introduction

Language learning is thought to be highly reliant on individual characteristics (Skehan, 1989). Learners' individual differences involving personality, intelligence, aptitude, motivation are proposed to be very influential for successful second or foreign language acquisition. Studies in this territory, however, have failed to come up with consistent research results (Lalonde & Gardner, 1984; Skehan, 1989) because of their complicated interactions (Oxford, 1992).

There is no doubt that all learners have very diverse personalities. In conjunction with this fact, in the context of language, a number of personality characteristics have been proved to play an important part in second language learning (Lightbrown & Spada, 2006). Personality is generally defined as "one's whole character and nature "(Dornyei 2005: 11), which includes stable feeling, thinking and behavioral patterns (Pervin & John, 2001). The issue of personality has undergone a bulk of research in the field of psychology as well as other branches of social and behavioral sciences (Saklofske & Eysneck, 1998). Moreover, the role of personality in learning is widely addressed (e.g. Bayne, 2004). More particularly, there has been consensus among scholars in favor of the idea that personality can affect the way a language is learned (e.g. Ehrman 2008; Leaver, Ehrman, &Shekhtman, 2005; Sharp 2009).

As particular to language learning, personality factors play an important role in the development of linguistic abilities (Ellis, 1985). Language learners are different in many fundamental ways and exploit different learning strategies (Brown, 2001). In order to optimize theirlearning, it is necessary to consider the relationship between personality traits and educational attainment (Eysenck, 1967). Theories on personality traits suggest that individuals are characterized by unique patterns of traits or dispositions which lead them to adopt unique learning strategies.

Language learners utilize diverse strategies to communicate more effectively (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). Considering this fact that they use these strategies for their language learning improvement and for more effective communication, an important figure in the realm of language learning strategies, Oxford (1999) defined the construct as "specific actions, behaviors, steps or techniques that students use to improve their own progress in developing skills in a second or foreign language". The primary functions of language learning strategies are believed to help the language learners "make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990: 8).

Research on personality traits and learning strategies can provide teachers and practitioners with clues to efficacious teaching, and enhances learners' academic achievement. There have not been enough studies zoomed in on the relationships between personality and language learning strategies (Kang, 2012). In addition to this, there have been few second language studies adopted the Big Five model which is expected to open a new avenue in the realm of the role of personality factors in language learning. Thus, to mitigate this problem, most notably in the Iranian EFL context, the current study targets the relationship of personality types and language learning strategies used by Iranian students.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Cultural Basis of Personality

The association of personality and culture has been a controversy over time. Scholars like Brunner (1974) and Shweder (1991) believed that individual psychological differences are minimally context-dependent or influenced by cultural patterns. With a focus on heritability, structural invariance across cultures and temporal stability, they argued that personality is generally shaped by biological factors than life experiences.

On the contrary, scholars like Lee *et al.* (1999) and McCrae *et al.* (2000) focused on global traits and personality types. Similarly, Maccoby (2000) believed that personalityis only minimally shaped by genes and hereditary factors; however, it is for the most part shaped by environment. During decades many studies have manifested the general function of situational and cultural factors in personality (Brass, 1984; Roberts, 2006; Wood & Roberts, 2006 among others). Generally speaking, personality not only can be conceptualized as a combination of biological and environmental factors, but also as the interaction between the two.

2.2. Cultural Basis of Language Learning Strategies

Chamot (2004) and Oxford (1990) have defined it in terms of the learning processes used by learners to acquire knowledge. According to Griffiths (2004), although the definition of learning strategies still remains unclear, majority of the definitions conceptualize language learning strategies as deliberate and conscious methods used by learners to learn or acquire a second language. In the last three decades, many researchers have studied language learning strategies and factors related to their choice and use such as motivation, learning style, gender, nationality, and self-efficacy (Chamot, 2005; Ellis 1995; Oxford and Nyikos 1989; Zhang, 2008).

One of issues recently studied in relation to language learning strategies is culture. It is generally believed that culture includes beliefs and values which affect language learning strategies (Deneme, 2010). Empirical studies have also revealed the influence of cultural background on strategy use. For instance, Politzer and McGrogarty (1985) found that Spanish learners used learning strategies more frequently than their Asian counterparts. Studying Puerto Rican students, Green and Oxford (1995) found that they highly use metacognitive strategies, whereas social, cognitive, compensation, affective and memory strategies are used moderately. Touba (1992) also found that Egyptian language learners had a high use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, but less memory strategies. Finally, Niles (1995) reported some similarities and differences in the use of strategies by Australian and Asian students. Rahimi & Riazi (2005) also came with similar findings among Iranian EFL learners.

2.3. The Association of Personality and Language Learning Strategies

Personality factors play an important role in the use of language learning strategies (Ehrman, 2008). The impact of individual variations on language strategies has gained prominence following the shift from the teacher-centered to learner-centered language instruction. Due this role transformation, unlike the traditional view regarding the learner as a passive receiver of presented knowledge, learners are now seen

as responsible for their learning. In spite of the fact that personality factors may greatly determine the use of language learning strategies, only few studies have investigated their association.

2.3.1. The Association of Personality and Language Learning Strategies in Foreign Context

Wakamoto (2000) explored the relationship between personality and language learning strategies of 254 Japanese learners of English by focusing on extroversion and introversion. It was revealed that extraversion significantly and positively correlates with functional practice strategies and social/affective strategies. Contrary to the study of Ehrman and Oxford (1990), introvert learners did not prefer to adopt any specific language learning strategies.

One study among the few investigations devoted to this association adopting Big Five personality model, is the study run by Verhoeven and Vermeer (2002). They proposed a thirty statement instrument including five personality domains and asked a teacher to evaluate 241 native and second language learners in the Netherlands. Their purpose was to examine the effect on communicative competence. The findings disclosed that L2 speakers' openness to experience was related to all aspects of communicative competence; extraversion was related to strategic competence; conscientiousness was related to organizational competence. They concluded that extraverted learners are more likely to utilize strategies to compensate for their limited language skills.

Komarraju, Karau, & Schmeck (2009) conducted a study on 308 learners to see the personality and learning styles roles in affecting academic achievement. The analysis unfolded that two of the Big Five traits, conscientiousness and agreeableness, were positively related with all four learning styles (synthesis analysis, methodical study, fact retention, and elaborative processing), while neuroticism was negatively related with all four learning styles. Moreover, extraversion and openness were positively related with elaborative processing.

In one study, Liyanage and Bartlett (2013) tried to investigate the relationship between Sri Lankan learners' preferences for language learning strategies and their personality types. The results generally showed that personality traits were predictors of the participants' specific language learning strategies. The findings further disclosed that such prediction is ascertained even more by the particular contexts of ESL learning.

Chen and Hung (2012) examined the personality types, perceptual style preferences and language learning strategies of 364 Taiwanese senior high school learners. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCaulley, 1985), the Perceptual Learning Preferences Survey (adapted from Kinsella's 1995 survey), and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (Oxford, 1990) were exploited as the instruments for data collection. Findings revealed a significant relationship between introvert/extrovert personality and language learning strategies. The significant relationship was also uncovered between the sensing/intuitive personality type and memory, compensation, social, and metacognitive strategies.

In a recent study, Ayhan and Türkyılmaz (2015) examined the relationship between metacognitive language strategies use and personality traits among Bosnian university students. The

findings of their study revealed that the four personality traits extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness were in relation with metacognitive language learning strategies.

2.3.2. The Association of Personality and Language Learning Strategies in Iranian Context

After a comprehensive search of the issue in the Iranian context, it was unfolded that we are suffering from the dearth of studies in this realm in the Iranian academic context. In fact, much has remained to do in order to have a clear picture of the association between personality type and language learning strategies employed by the Iranian EFL learners.

As for the Iranian studies, Fazeli (2012a) explored the relationship between agreeableness and English language learning strategies of 113 Iranian EFL learners. The results indicated that there was only a significant relationship between agreeableness trait and the use of compensation strategies. In another study, Fazeli (2012b) tried to find the relationship between the use of metacognitive language learning strategies and personality traits among 213 Iranian EFL learners. The findings indicated a significant relationship between personality traits and metacognitive strategies, but personality traits proved not to be strong predictors for the use of strategies.In his other study, conducting the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis, Fazeli (2012c) proposed that three types of language learning strategies, namely memory strategies, meta-cognitive strategies and social strategies, were significantly correlated with learners' extroversion trait. In other words, the extroverted students in the study employed these three types of learning strategies more than their introverted counterparts.

In one study, Rasekh and Ranjbari (2003) found that, in contrast to the introverted learners, the extroverted learners used more Metacognitive Strategies which resulted in better lexical knowledge. Naveh, Kafipour and Soltani (2011) also found that learners' use of Social Strategies was positively correlated with the learners' extroversion tendency. Recently, Nikoopour and Hajian (2015) investigated the relationship among Big-Five personality traits and language learning strategies of 150 Iranian EFL learners us. The findings showed relationships between personality traits and language learning strategies.

3. This Study

Although it is reflected in the literature that there are global personalities and language learning strategies which are molded by cultural norms within a regional or national context, there are few well-documented studies of the Iranian context to clarify the Iranian norms in this regard. More specifically, the few existing studies have yielded some contradictory findings. Additionally, in spite of the fact that the fundamental roles of personality and strategies in language learning have been numerously addressed, to the best of our knowledge, few studies have been devoted to a simultaneous inquiry into personality types and language learning strategies. Likewise, few studies have been conducted concerning personality factors and language learning strategies in an Iranian context. In response to these inadequacies, a survey was conducted to answer the following research questions:

1) What are Iranian EFL learners' norms of personality factors and language learning strategies?
2) Are personality factors significant predictors of language learning strategies of Iranian EFL learners?

3.1. Participants

A total of 100 BA and MA students whose ages ranged from 18 to 28 participated in the study. The sample included 69 females and 31 males. They were studying translation, applied linguistics and the English language and literature in Isfahan University and Islamic Azad University of Isfahan and were selected based on convenience sampling. Majority of the participants were bachelors studying English language and literature and translation and were heterogeneous in terms of age and language proficiency. Only a minority of 24 participants were MA students who were studying applied linguistics in their second or fourth semesters.

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. Big Five Factors Inventory (BFI)

Goldberg's (1993) BFI is a measure of Big Five factors of personality. The main rationale for the use of Goldberg's (1993) inventory was that it includes fewer items in comparison to other versions of big five factors of personality, which makes it more practical. This inventory includes 44 five-point Likert items which measure *Extraversion vs. introversion* (8 items), *Agreeableness vs. Antagonism* (9 items), *Conscientiousness vs. Lack of direction* (9 items), *Neuroticism vs. Emotional stability* (8 items) and *Openness vs. Closeness to experience* (10 items). Reliability indices estimated through Cronbach's alpha was 0.78 for *Extraversion*, 0.82 for *Agreeableness*, 0.76 for *Conscientiousness*, 0.83 for *Neuroticism* and 0.73 for *Openness to experience*.

3.2.2. Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

SILL developed by Oxford (1990) includes 50 five-point Likert items which measure language learning strategies. This inventory has been translated into 19 languages. The inventory has six sections measuring *Memory Strategies* (9 items), *Cognitive Strategies* (14 items), *Compensation Strategies* (6 items), *Metacognitive Strategies* (9 items), *Affective Strategies* (6 items) and *Social Strategies* (6 items). Cronbach's alpha was 0.85 for *Memory Strategies*, 0.72 for *Cognitive Strategies*, 0.80 for *Compensation Strategies*, 0.73 for *Metacognitive Strategies*, 0.71 for *Affective Strategies* and 0.70 for *Social Strategies*. The overall reliability of the inventory was 0.87.

3.2.3. Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSI)

MARSI, developed by *Mokhtari* & *Reichard* (*2002*), includes 30 five-point Likert items which measurement a cognitive reading strategies. The inventory has been used by many researchers and is more or less of the same importance as SILL. This inventory gives four scores for *Overall Reading Strategies*, *Global Reading Strategies*, *Problem-Solving Strategies* and *Support Reading Strategies*. The overall average score indicates how often reading strategies are used when reading academic materials. The average for each subscale of the inventory shows which groups of strategies are more frequently used when reading. Average scores equal or higher than 3.5 are regarded as HIGH, average scores between 2.5 to 3.4 are regarded as MEDIUM and scores equal to or lower than 2.4 are regarded as LOW degrees of strategy use. Cronbach's alpha for

Overall, *Global*, *Problem-Solving* and *Support Reading Strategies* were 0.73, 0.70, 0.72 and 0.75 respectively.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

A successful administration of all the inventories needed more than one session because they included a total of 124 questions which were really time-consuming. Accordingly, BFI, SILL and MARSI were separately administered in three successive sessions. In order to gather a rich and valid corpus of data, those questionnaires which had more than three unanswered questions were excluded from the study. Consequently, only the data collected from 64 participants were considered valid and were included in the study. In order to answer the first research question, a set of descriptive statistics were computed and for the second research question standard regression was run.

3. Results

3.1. Personality Factors and Language Learning Strategies

It was found that *Extraversion vs. Introversion* had the mean of 23.28 which was smaller than the highest possible score on the subscale which is 40. Similarly, *Agreeableness vs. Antagonism* did not have a very low or high mean (28.29). As for *Consciousness vs. Lack of direction*, the minimum and maximum scores were 17 and 34 with nearly 80 percent of the participants within one standard deviation above and below the mean. Such a leptokurtic distribution with the mean of 26.69 indicates that the participants were not highly oriented toward either sides of the continuum. Contrarily, the scores for *Neuroticism vs. Emotional Stability* were closer to the extreme points. More clearly, the lowest and highest possible scores of this scale were 8 and 40 which are close to 15 and 36 as the minimum and maximum scores reported. Similarly, the results of *Openness vs. Closeness to Experience* showed that there was less centeredness in the distribution of scores. Generally, the participants were found to be more homogeneous regarding *Extraversion vs. Introversion, Agreeableness vs. Antagonism and Consciousness vs. Lack of direction.* However, they were found to be less homogeneous regarding *Neuroticism vs. Emotional Stability and Openness vs. Closeness to Experience* (Table 1).

Table 1. Personality Factors Findings

Statistics	Extraversion vs. Introversion		Agreeableness vs. Antagonism		Conscientiousness vs. Lack of Direction		Neuroticism vs. Stability		Openness vs. Closeness to Experience	
	S	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S	P
Minimum	16.	3	22.	4	17	3	15	1	23	3
Maximum	29	2	35	1	34	3	36	3	41	5
Mean	23.28	-	28.29	-	26.65	-	25.78	-	32.15	-
SD	3.03	-	2.86	-	3.68	-	3.95	-	4.14	-
Total	-	100	-	100	-	100	-	100	-	100

Note: S = Score; P = Percent

As for SILL findings, the respective mean scores for *Memory*, *Cognitive*, *and Compensation*, *Metacognitive*, *Affective* and *Social strategies* were 30.60, 49.80, 21.70, 34, 68, 21.65 and 20.78. The division of the mean scores by the number of items creating

each subscale gives the respective average scores 3.40, 3.55, 3.61, 3.85, 3.60, 3.46. These show that differences between the average scores of the strategies are not very large. As stated by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002), average scores equal or higher than 3.5 are regarded as high which indicates a strategy is frequently used. Average scores between 2.5 to 3.4 are regarded as medium and scores equal to or lower than 2.4 are regarded as low indicating a less common reading strategy. Therefore, it was found that Iranian language learners use language learning strategies highly except *Memory* and *Social strategies* which are moderately used.

Table 2 SILL Findings

Statistics	Memory		Cognitive		Compensation		Metacognitive		Affective		Social	
	S	**P**	**S**	**P**	**S**	**P**	**S**	**P**	**S**	**P**	**S**	**P**
Minimum	15	1	31	1	8	2	23	2	10	4	12	3
Maximum	43	1	65	3	28	1	44	1	29	3	30	2
Mean	30.60	-	49.80	-	21.70	-	34.68	-	21.65	-	20.78	-
SD	7.86	-	8.86	-	4.55	-	5.27	-	3.98	-	4.11	-
Total	-	100	-	100	-	100	-	100	-	100	-	100

Note: S = Score; P = Percent; SD = Standard Deviation

As for MARSI, the average scores for *Overall*, *Global*, *Problem-Solving* and *Support* Strategies were 3.60, 3.68, 3.61 and 3.48 which are not very large and indicate a general similarity in the degree of language learning strategies choice by Iranian learners. Considering Mokhtari and Reichard's scale of average scores, it was found that *Overall*, *Global*, *Problem-Solving* strategies are highly used by Iranian EFL learners, while *Support* strategies are only moderately used. Generally, no large differences were found between the SILL and MARSI.

Table 3 MARSI Findings

Statistics	Overall		Global		Problem solving		Support reading	
	S	**P**	**S**	**P**	**S**	**P**	**S**	**P**
Minimum	2.73	3	2.77	1	2.13	3	2.67	3
Maximum	4.43	4	4.54	3	5	2	4.44	3
Mean	3.60	-	3.68	-	3.61	-	3.48	-
SD	0.41	-	0.44	-	0.59	-	0.42	-
Total	-	100	-	100	-	100	-	100

Note: S = Score; P = Percent; SD = Standard Deviation

3.2. Personality Factors as Predictors of Language Learning Strategies

In order to answer the second research question, a set of standard multiple regression analysis was run. As for SILL, it was found that *Conscientiousness vs. Lack of Direction* significantly correlated with *Compensation Strategies* (R = .274, $p< .05$). *Neuroticism vs. Emotional Stability* had a correlation with *Memory* (R = .396, $p< .01$) and *Metacognitive Strategies* (R = .361, $p< .01$). Finally, *Openness vs. Closeness to Experience* significantly correlated with *Cognitive* (R = .248, $p< .05$) and *Metacognitive Strategies* (R = .337, $p< .01$). No other cases of significant relationship were found between the personality factors and SILL strategies.

A look at the model summary shows that the regression model was a significant predictor of *Memory* (F = 2.60, $p< .05$) and *Metacognitive Strategies* (F = 4.03, $p< .01$). As for the individual contribution of each predictor to the model, it was found that *Conscientiousness vs. Lack of Direction* was a significant predictor of *Compensation Strategies* (T=2.24, $p< 0.05$). *Neuroticism vs. Emotional Stability* could significantly predict *Memory* (T = -2.94, $p< 0.05$) and *Metacognitive strategies* (T = -2.52, 0.01, $p< 0.05$). Finally, *Openness vs. Closeness to Experience* was a significant predictor of *Metacognitive strategies* (T = -2.68, $p< 0.05$) (Table 4).

Table 4 Personality Factors as Predictors of Oxford's (1990) Language Learning Strategies

		Memory	Cognitive	Compensation	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
Model Summary	**R**	0.42	0.31	0.37	0.50	0.39	0.33
	R^2	0.18	0.09	0.14	0.25	0.15	0.11
	Adjusted R^2	0.11	0.01	0.06	0.19	0.08	0.03
	Df	5	5	5	5	5	5
	F	2.60	1.23	1.93	4.03	2.18	1.46
	Sig.	0.03*	0.30	0.10	0.003**	0.058	0.21
Constant	**B**	61.01	84.99	9.59	44.77	7.77	11.95
	Beta	-	-	-	-	-	-
	T	4.07	4.78	1.07	4.67	1.00	1.46
	Sig.	0.000*	0.000*	0.28	0.000*	0.31	0.14
Extraversion	**B**	-0.33	0.03	0.26	-0.14	0.06	0.21
	Beta	-0.12	0.01	0.17	-0.08	0.04	0.15
	T	-1.06	0.09	1.44	-0.72	0.39	1.25
	Sig.	0.29	0.09	0.15	0.47	0.69	021
Agreeableness	**B**	-0.01	-0.26	0.06	0.27	0.31	0.03
	Beta	-0.00	-0.08	0.04	0.15	0.22	0.02
	T	-0.03	-0.63	0.33	1.26	1.84	0.17
	Sig.	0.97	0.52	0.73	0.21	0.071	0.86
Conscientiousness	**B**	0.08	-0.33	0.35	0.33	0.17	0.07
	Beta	0.03	-0.13	0.28	0.23	0.16	0.06
	T	0.30	-1.05	2.24	1.96	1.29	0.48
	Sig.	0.76	0.29	0.02*	0.054	0.20	0.63
Neuroticism	**B**	-0.72	-0.27	-0.23	-0.39	-0.02	-0.23
	Beta	-0.36	-0.12	-0.20	-0.29	-0.02	-0.22
	T	-2.94	-0.95	-1.61	-2.52	-0.20	-1.78
	Sig.	0.005*	0.34	0.11	0.014*	0.84	0.07
Openness to experience	**B**	-0.18	-0.39	-0.00	-0.41	-0.23	0.22
	Beta	-0.09	-0.18	-0.00	-0.32	-0.24	0.22
	T	-0.77	-1.38	-0.01	-2.68	-1.91	1.71
	Sig.	0.44	0.17	0.98	0.009*	0.06	0.09

* = $p < 0.05$

Regarding the relationship between personality factors and MARSI, it was found that only *Extraversion vs. Introversion* was correlated with *Overall* (R = .455, $p< .01$), *Global* ((R = .424, $p< .01$), *Problem-Solving* (R = .402, $p< .01$) and *Support Strategies* (R = .325, $p< .01$). Surprisingly, no other personality factor correlated with metacognitive language strategies. A look at the model summary shows that the regression model was a significant predictor of all the metacognitive strategies, namely, *Overall Strategies* (F = 4.41, $p< .01$), *Global Strategies* (F = 4.11, $p< .01$), *Problem-Solving Strategies* (F = 3.22, $p< .01$) and *Support Strategies* (F = 2.86, $p< .01$). As for

the individual contribution of each predictor to the model, it was found that *Extraversion vs. Introversion* was a significant predictor of *Overall* (T =4.23, $p< 0.05$), *Global* (T = 3.87, $p< 0.05$), *Problem-Solving* (T = 3.73, $p< 0.05$) and *Support strategies* (T = 2.72, $p< 0.05$). Other personality factors had no contribution to the model (Table 5).

Table 5 Personality Factors as Predictors of Mokhtari and Reichard's (2002) Metacognitive Language Strategies

		Overall Strategies	Global Strategies	Problem-Solving Strategies	Support Strategies
Model Summary	**R**	0.52	0.51	0.46	0.44
	R^2	0.27	0.26	0.22	0.19
	Adjusted R^2	0.21	0.19	0.15	0.12
	Df	5	5	5	5
	F	4.41	4.11	3.27	2.86
	Sig.	0.002*	0.003*	0.011*	0.02*
Constant	**B**	2.61	2.47	3.49	2.05
	Beta	-	-	-	-
	T	3.54	3.04	3.16	5.54
	Sig.	0.001*	0.004*	0.002*	0.014*
Extraversion	**B**	0.06	0.66	0.08	0.04
	Beta	0.48	0.44	0.44	0.32
	T	4.23	3.87	3.73	2.72
	Sig.	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*	0.009*
Agreeableness	**B**	-0.00	0.10	-0.03	0.01
	Beta	-0.01	0.06	-0.19	0.09
	T	-0.13	0.51	-1.54	0.74
	Sig.	0.89	0.612	0.12	0.45
Conscientiousness	**B**	0.00	0.00	-0.00	0.02
	Beta	0.06	0.02	-0.01	0.21
	T	0.59	0.17	-0.14	1.73
	Sig.	0.55	0.86	0.88	0.08
Neuroticism	**B**	-0.61	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02
	Beta	-.19	-0.22	-.12	-0.23
	T	-1.57	-1.78	-1.06	-1.94
	Sig.	0.12	0.79	0.29	0.056
Openness to experience	**B**	0.00	0.00	-.00	-0.00
	Beta	0.00	0.05	-0.04	-0.00
	T	0.05	0.46	-0.36	-0.05
	Sig.	0.95	0.64	0.71	0.96

* = $p< 0.05$

4. Discussion

The results showed that Iranian EFL learners were generally moderately-oriented in terms of *Extraversion vs. Introversion*, *Agreeableness vs. Antagonism* and *Consciousness vs. Lack of direction*. It is in contrast with what emerged from the study conducted by Noprianto (2017) finding that Indonesian students were mostly introvert with 89.6% (i.e., 52 out of 58).It also does not come to terms with Asmali's (2014) work conducted to explore the relationship between the personality and language learning strategies of Turkish university students studying at a two-year vocational high school in a Turkish state university concluding that Among the five domains, Agreeableness showed the highest mean. Of course, the results of the current investigation is echoed in a study by Carrell,

Prince, and Astika (1996) unfolding that Indonesian EFL students are almost evenly divided between Extraverts and Introverts, with over 50% of the students.

However, they were found to be more widely distributed across a platykurtic bell curve with regard to *Neuroticism vs. Emotional Stability* and *Openness vs. Closeness to Experience.* It is somehow in harmony with was claimed by Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham (2009) in an investigation on 852 students from five British and two American Universities asserting that only Openness to Experiences from the Big Five personality traits relates to learning approaches.

Since *Extraversion vs. Introversion* is identified in terms of some facets such as sociability, assertiveness, energeticity, excitement-seeking, enthusiasm and warmth (John & Strivastava, 1999), it can be argued that Iranian EFL learners were neither highly adventurous nor enthusiastic to engage in social interactions nor did they prefer totally individual activities. Since personality factors are gradually shaped by cultural norms (Cheung et al. 2011), though not completely, it can be proclaimed that it is the cultural aspects of Iranian society that call for a less extreme tendency toward extraversion and/or introversion. It is noteworthy that the participants' academic life and context could be quite influential in this regard. More clearly, the type of interaction between college students and their instructors could play a decisive role in developing this kind of personality.

Similarly, Iranian EFL learners were found to be moderately agreeable or antagonist. These personality traits which are defined in terms of some facets like trust, straightforwardness, altruism, compliance, modesty, tender-mindedness or sympathy (John and Strivastava, 1999), can also be culturally constructed. In other words, the interactional norms of a society would gradually affect the way people prefer to act and react in interactions. Correspondingly, *Extraversion vs. Introversion* and *Agreeableness vs. Antagonism* are two distinctive constructs apt to be influenced by social interactional norms.

In the same way, the participants were found to be moderately conscious and directed. The main attributes included in *Conscientiousness vs. Lack of Direction* are competence or efficiency, order, dutifulness, achievement striving, self-discipline and deliberation but not impulsivity (John and Strivastava 1999). This moderate level of being organized and directed towards some predetermined aims reflects individuals' everyday lives. The participants of this study were living in dorms and were spending their time interacting with peers and instructors. Hence, on the one hand, their life style in dorms could, to a great extent, influence their level of self-discipline. On the other hand, the nature of interactions between peers and instructors could affect the level of consciousness among them. Although consciousness seems to be a biologically-rooted personal trait, it can be moderated by social norms.

On contrary with the findings of the first three subscales, the scores for *Neuroticism vs. Emotional Stability* were more widely dispersed across the bell curve. In such cases, it would be almost impossible to track some common moderating factor even for argumentation. *Neuroticism vs. Emotional Stability* is a continuum comprising anxiety, hostility, depression, shyness, impulsiveness and vulnerability on one side and self-consciousness, self-confidence and stability on the other (John and Strivastava 1999).

Only the biologically-driven nature of *Neuroticism vs. Emotional Stability* can account for such dispersion, where the common cultural factors can only have a minimum influence.

In the same manner, *Openness vs. Closeness to Experience* showed a more heterogeneous sample of language learners. *Openness vs. Closeness to Experience*s identified with the facets of ideas, aesthetics, fantasy, actions, feelings and values and deals mostly with imaginative and artistic issues (John and Strivastava 1999). In contrast with *Neuroticism vs. Emotional Stability* that accounts for biological basis of personality, *Openness vs. Closeness to Experience* includes cognitive aspects such as values, beliefs and attitudes. Hence, it is not logical to attribute the heterogeneity in *Neuroticism vs. Emotional Stability* to biological factors, but to cognitive ones. By and large, some aspects of personality are greatly influenced by cultural patterns of the society, while others can be more biologically- or even cognitively-driven. These findings are partly contradictory with McCrae et al.'s (2000) who argued that the fundamental personality traits are not under the impact of cultural patterns. Dividing basic personality traits to cultural, biological and cognitive seems quite logical.

Regarding the language learning strategies, except for *Memory*, *Social and Support* strategies which were used moderately, others were found to be highly employed by Iranian EFL learners. These findings are in line with Touba (1992) who found that Egyptian English learners used cognitive and metacognitive strategies more than memory strategies. The study of Puerto Rican language learners by Green and Oxford (1995), also, revealed similar results for social, memory and metacognitive strategies, but contradictory findings in terms of cognitive, compensation and affective strategies.

A medium use of social strategies can be attributed to the medium scores the participants obtained on *Extraversion vs. Introversion*. More clearly, there seems to be a relation between the participants' preference to have social interactions and to use social strategies. Thus, the medium orientation of Iranian EFL learners toward social interaction could be due to the cultural patterns of Iranian society or the academic environment in universities. The high extent of focus on *Compensation*, *metacognitive* and *Problem-solving Strategies* and a less focus on *Memory Strategy* can be ascribed to the experience of the participants. Clearly, the participants' years of study could have presumably equipped them with the strategies required to compensate and manage the challenges of language learning. This may not be the case for the less experienced EFL learners who are more involved in linguistic aspects of the language. The same results emerges from Aljuaid (2010) asserting that Saudi Arabian English-major university students used learning strategies with high to medium frequency, and that the highest rank was for metacognitive strategies while the lowest was for memory strategies.

It was found that regression models were significant predictors of *Memory* and *Metacognitive* strategies. Concerning the contribution of each unique personality factor to the general model, *Extraversion vs. Introversion* could predict all *Metacognitive* strategies, namely, *Overall*, *Global*, *Problem-Solving* and *Support* strategies, though it was not predictive of any other strategies. This piece of finding is difficult to interpret because on the one hand, *Extraversion vs.*

Introversion is defined as the tendency towards excitement-seeking and sociability and on the other hand, *Metacognitive* strategies are known by monitoring, managing, planning and problem-solving activities. More clearly, *Extraversion vs. Introversion* is a cultural issue, but *Metacognitive* strategies are individual ways to approach a task or activity. Surprisingly, although environmental factors directly impact *Extraversion vs. Introversion*, they do not generally control the kinds of metacognitive strategies adopted by language learners; a finding which needs further investigation.

Consciousness vs. Lack of Direction associated with characteristics such as competent, achievement-striving and self-disciplined could predict *Compensation* strategies. Thus, it could be perceived that the more self-disciplined and competent a learner is, the more he or she uses compensation strategies for an optimal learning. That is, it is through compensation strategies that learners feel competent and achieve their goals. It was also found that *Neuroticism vs. Emotional Stability* was a significant predictor of *Memory* and *Metacognitive* strategies in a negative way. Neuroticism refers to the degree of anxiety, hostility, depression and vulnerability. Consequently, a higher neuroticism can be a negative predictor of some strategies. In fact, neuroticism functions like an aggravator which does not let learners use the proper learning strategies in the appropriate time and manner. Surprisingly, *Openness vs. Closeness to Experience* had a significant negative correlation with *Metacognitive strategies*. . *Openness vs. Closeness to Experience* which refers to imaginative and artistic aspects of personality positively predicts metacognitive strategies and include planning, monitoring and reflecting on learning. Then again, this finding is open to further studies.

5. Conclusion

It is concluded that Iranian learners are moderately set regarding their personality traits. Although some basic personality traits are biologically- and cognitively-based, some others can be moderated by situational and cultural norms. Iranian EFL learners' experience and cultural norms can be regarded as factors which affect the use of some language learning strategies more than the others. It was found that some aspects of personality can predict the use of some language learning strategies. As personality factors have cultural, biological and cognitive underpinnings, they predict different types of strategies. All in all, biological, cultural and cognitive factors which are the key elements in shaping an individual's personality can predict his/her language learning strategies preferences, as well. These findings can be inspirational for those applied linguists who are interested in learning about language learning strategy preferences in different contexts.

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نگاهی فرهنگی به عوامل شخصیتی و راهبردهای یادگیری زبان در میان زبان آموزان ایرانی

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چکیده

هرچند عوامل شخصیتی و راهبردهای یادگیری زبان، در سه دهه اخیر به‌طور گسترده، مورد بررسی علمی قرار گرفته‌اند، مطالعات کمی این مسائل را با رویکردی فرهنگی مورد واکاوی قرارداده‌اند. علاوه بر این، مطالعات اندکی به بررسی پیش‌بینی راهبردهای یادگیری زبان توسط عوامل شخصیتی در بین زبان‌آموزان ایرانی پرداخته‌اند. در پاسخ به این کاستی‌ها، پرسشنامه پنج عاملی شخصیت (گلدبرگ، ۱۹۹۳)، پرسشنامه استراتژی‌های یادگیری زبان (مختاری و ریچارد، ۲۰۰۲) و پرسشنامه راهبردهای فراشناختی خواندن (آکسفورد، ۱۹۹۰) در میان گروهی از زبان‌آموزان ایرانی اجرا شدند. نتایج حاکی از این بود که زبان‌آموزان ایرانی راهبرد یادگیری زبان را به‌طور متعادل مورد استفاده قرار می‌دهند. نتایج همچنین نشان داد که در بستر فرهنگی ایران، عوامل شخصیتی می‌تواند استفاده از برخی راهبردهای یادگیری زبان را پیشبینی کند. علاوه‌بر این، یافته‌ها حاکی از این بود که هنجارهای فرهنگی می‌توانند برخی از عوامل شخصیتی و راهبردهای یادگیری زبان را پیش‌بینی کنند. آگاهی یافتن از عوامل شخصیتی و راهبردهای یادگیری زبان زبان‌آموزان می‌تواند از یک سو به یادگیری موفقیت‌آمیز زبان توسط آنها کمک کرده و از سوی دیگر معلمان را در به‌کارگیری روش‌های تدریس مناسب یاری کند.

واژه‌های کلیدی: عوامل شخصیتی، راهبردهای یادگیری زبان، فرهنگ.

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