#### Spring 2023, 3(1)

# Relationship between EFL Learners' Personality Traits (Extroversion/ Introversion) and Their Productive Skills



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#### Citation

Mirhosseini, A. S., & Rostami Abousaeedi, A. A. (2023). Relationship between EFL Learners' Personality Traits (Extroversion/ Introversion) and Their Productive Skills. *International Journal of Language and Translation Research*, *3*(1), pp. 85-100. http://doi.org/ 10.22034/IJLTR.2023.170185

#### **Research Article**

تحلیل رابطه ویژگیهای (صفات) شخصیتی زبان آموزان زبان انگلیسی و مهارت های تولیدی آنها

پژوهش حاضر با هدف تحلیل رابطه بین ویژگیهای شخصیتی زبان آموزان زبان انگلیسی (برون گرا/ درون گرا) و مهارتهای تولیدی آنها انجام شد. بدین منظور، از ۴۶ دانش آموز مقطع متوسطه که بر اساس نمونه گیری در دسترس انتخاب شدند، ۴۰ نفر در این پژوهش شرکت کردند. سپس پرسشنامه شخصیتی مرتبط بین آنها توزیع شد. با توجه به مقیاس نمره، شرکت کنندگان به عنوان برون گرا و درون گرا مشخص شدند و برای شرکت در این پژوهش در دو گروه، برون گرا و گروه درون گرا قرار گرفتند. سپس، پیش آزمون نوشتاری و گفتاری انجام شد و نمرات زبان آموزان ثبت شد. پس از دریافت آموزش یکسان ، پس آزمون نوشتاری و گفتاری برای ارزیابی پیشرفت شرکت کنندگان از نظر ویژگی های شخصیتی انجام شد. در نهایت، نمرات همه دانش آموزان برای تجزیه و تحلیل رابطه احتمالی بین ویژگیهای شخصیتی و مهارتهای تولیدی آنها، جمعآوری و وارد نرم افزار اس پی اس اس شد. یافتهها نشان داد که برون گرایی بر مهارتهای تولیدی دانش آموزان تأثیر دارد، زیار یی زبان آموزان برون گرا و دستاوردهای آنها در مهارتهای نوشتاری و گفتاری رابطه مثبت یافته نشان داد که برون گرایی بر مهارتهای تولیدی دانش آموزان تأثیر دارد، زیار بین زبان آموزان تبون گرا و درمارت انها در مهارتهای تولیدی انش آموزان تأوی و مهارتهای شد. برای ارزیابی دانش آموزان تفاوت قابل نوشتاری و گفتاری رابطه مثبت یافت شد. بر اساس اطلاعات دریافتی، بین ویژگی شخصیتی برون گرایی و مهارتهای نوشتاری و گفتاری دانش آموزان تفاوت قابل توجهی وجود در دار ا در گروه یادگیرندگان درونگرا پس از آموزش، هیچ ارتباط معناداری بین ویژگی های شخصیتی و نوشتاری و گفتاری دانش آموزان تفاوت قابل توجهی وجود که هر چه برون گرایی در زبان آموزان بالاتر باشد، در مهارتهای تولیدی موفی ش

**واژگان کلیدی**: ویژگی های شخصیتی، برونگرایی/ درونگرایی، مهارت نوشتاری، مهارت گفتار

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# Introduction

The result of language skill achievement can be influenced by Personality traits (Introversion/Extroversion), as Boroujeni, Roohani and Hasanimanesh, (2015) argued that "the way we learn is very much affected by our personality". Based on the knowledge that all individuals have different personalities, behaviors, opinions, and abilities, they may have different aspects of learning a foreign language. This process is a complex one which can be influenced by many factors, one of the most important of which is personality traits (Özbay, Aydemir, & Atasoy, 2019). Personality traits especially extroversion and introversion are the two important types that have an influence on learning a foreign language which improves the fact that there is a close connection between the personality of EFL learners, the style, and the strategy that they develop in order to learn and succeed in learning a foreign language (Erton, 2010; Özbay et al., 2019). Introverted personalities retrieve their energy from the inner world, and tend to be quiet and reserved, in contrast, extroverted personalities focus on the outer world and can be characterized as sociable and impulsive (Costa & McCrae, 2008).

In studying language, there are basically four language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. On the other hand, language educators tend to talk about the way we use the language in terms of the four skills which are divided into two group as "Receptive skills" that are used for reading and listening, and "Productive Skills" which are used for speaking and writing (Harmer, 2007; Ginting, 2018). In the EFL classes, writing skill is normally taught after the three other skills, one reason is that writing is the most complicated skill and many language learners do not like this skill or do not interest in this skill (Ginting, 2018). Erton (2010) claimed that the impact of personality traits on writing competence and performance is considerable. On the other hand, speaking is a skill that is highly used in daily life. It is the tool to create social relationships as a human being (Harmer, 2007). Speaking can serve as one of the two main functions that are transactional, transfer of information, and interactional maintenance of social relationships (Brown & Yule, 2003). The importance of speaking instruction is clear because it helps students acquire EFL speaking skill and thus converse spontaneously and naturally with native speakers (Torky, 2006).

Writing as one of the language skills must be learned deeply. In the EFL classes, the students not only wish to learn writing as an essential component of learning, but also to apply it to their academic and professional life (Dhanya & Alamelu, 2019). However, writing in English was not

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easy for EFL students, it entails a lot of practice, good vocabulary, and high-quality grammar. Writing skill held an extremely important place compared to the other three language skills and it is difficult to instruct (Dixon & Nessel, 2003). Additionally, based on Lazaraton (2001), speaking in a second or foreign language had often been viewed as the most demanding of the four skills. She moreover added that "for most people, the ability to speak a language is synonymous with knowing that language since speech is the basic means of human communication (p.103)." The problem of the study will be supported by the findings of some related studies as Ghanem (2003), Touky (2006), and Al Khuli (2000) emphasized the fact that speaking skill was neglected in the secondary classes, which led to the observable shortage in EFL students' ability to communicate.

More importantly, the problem is sometimes not only caused by students' external factors, but also students' internal factors like personality traits (Faisal, 2019; Fatimawati, 2015). Personality factors within a person contribute in some ways to the success of language learning (Brown, 2000). Each language learner had different types of personality traits that need different learning methods with different results (Dewaele, 2005). Dealing with students' personalities, there were two types of personalities studied here: extrovert and introvert as these two types were the most researched personality aspect in L2 studies. Based on the statements above, it could be logically seen that there was a correlation between personality traits and some language learning skills. Accordingly, it is very important to carry out such a quantitative and correlational study through analyzing the relationship between the personality traits (introversion & extroversion) and EFL learners' productive skills, i.e., writing and speaking which had not been investigated before. Since there have been a few recent studies to highlight the importance of introverts and extroverts in language skills, such a study is essential and requires to be done. Therefore, the present study tried to analyze the relationship between the two main personality traits (extroversion & introversion) and productive language skills (speaking & writing). In order to meet the research objectives, the following questions have been designed.

Is there any relationship between extroverted EFL learners and their writing skill?

- 1. Is there any relationship between extroverted EFL learners and their speaking skill?
- 2. Is there any relationship between introverted EFL learners and their writing skill?
- 3. Is there any relationship between introverted EFL learners and their speaking skill?

# Significance of the Study

The present study explored the potential of the individuals' personality traits in productive skills that will offer good views in this field. In fact, this study reveals how people can be different from each other in many aspects, particularly in personality. Moreover, learners' personality has a considerable effect on how to achieve the tips of writing skill and produce them. Thus, the methods which will be used by teachers can be more efficient to have a good result. Additionally, the result can help the teachers and researchers who would like to know the types of learners' personalities to guide them to improve their written text and can give some ways or suggestions to learners in order to improve their learners' achievement in writing and speaking skills.

#### **Literature Review**

In a more recent study, Kafryawan (2020) worked on the influence of extroversion personality towards EFL Learners' writing skills. The research study goal was on finding out whether there is a noticeable correlation between EFL learners' extroversion and their writing skills. The sample consisted of 50 participants of university. Both personality traits questionnaire and writing test were taken. The finding indicated that there was a medium correlation between EFL learners' extroversion personality and their writing skills.

In conclusion, extroversion personality gives a medium impact on EFL learners' writing skills, in other words, extroverted group learners tend to show good writing skills. In another recent study, Zaswita and Ihsan (2020) investigated the impact of personality types on students' writing ability. To do this, they selected the participants at a school and two classes were selected as samples (experimental class and control class). The data are analyzed by using a t-test. The finding of the testing proves that there is a significant impact on students' personalities on their writing ability. Students with introverted personalities have better writing scores than students with extroverted personalities.

Tung-hsien's (2019) study was on personality facets, writing strategy use, and writing performance of college students learning English as a foreign language. The case study was on the SEM technique to explore the predictive relations among personality facets, writing strategy use, and writing performance of college EFL students. 201 participants who composed an argument-based essay participated in the study. Before being surveyed, two self-report instruments were used which are the Personality Facet Scale, which measured 10 facets within the framework of the

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Five-Factor Model, and the Writing Strategy Scale which assessed six types of strategy. As suggested adding and treating strategy use as a mediator could help elaborate and elucidate the facet–performance relations in the EFL writing context. In another study, Niati and Nurhasanah (2018) analyzed students' personality traits and their speaking skills. The aim of this research was to determine whether there is a significant correlation between students' personality traits and their speaking skills based on the Big Five Personality theory. The result showed a correlation between personality traits and speaking skills which means the higher extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness the higher the speaking skill is. However, the higher neuroticism is the lower speaking skill will be.

Besides, Boroujeni, Roohani, and Hasanimanesh (2015) investigated the impact of extroversion and introversion personality types on EFL learners' writing ability. The researchers elicited 50 writing samples from 50 extroverted and introverted university students. They aimed to investigate the possible impact of personality traits, which are extroverted/introverted of Iranian EFL learners on their writing performance in terms of its different subsets. Analysis of the results revealed that introverts considerably outperformed extroverts in all subsets except organization which might be due to some of the introverts' personal characteristics that the extroverts lack, such as being careful, having more concentration in their solitude, and having the ability to generate much more ideas alone.

Khotimah and Saputri (2014) tried to investigate the correlation between introvert-extrovert personality and students' speaking ability. The research was based on three objectives. The first is analyzing the significant correlation between students' personality (introvert -extrovert) and their speaking ability performance. The second is finding out the speaking ability performance of introverted personality traits groups. The third objective is to find out the speaking ability performance of extroverted personality groups.

The result showed that the correlation between introvert-extrovert personalities in speaking ability performance indicates a high correlation between these variables. Furthermore, the study mentioned the extroverted group as better speakers than the introverted. Finally, the researchers concluded that introverted and extroverted personalities affected students' performance in English speaking skills.

## Method

# **Design of the Study**

This study seeks to answer the research questions formulated before. The present study used correlational research design to analyze the relationship between personality traits (Extroversion/Introversion) as independent variables, and the EFL learners' productive skills (Writing & Speaking) as dependent ones. In the present study, the quantitative method was employed to collect and analyze data, as well as interpret the results. In other words, this study was correlational research, and quantitative method was chosen to answer the proposed research questions.

#### **Participants and Sample**

This research was administered to intermediate EFL learners in Afagh Foreign Language Institute, Tehran, Iran. The participants were intermediate EFL learners of female gender whose ages ranged from 16 to 18. At the beginning of the term, two intact classes of 46 students were selected based on available sampling. After that, Oxford placement test was used in order to assess a homogenized sample. All the participants were native speakers of Persian and received English for 4.5 hours a week.

## Instruments

### **Oxford Placement Test (OPT)**

In order to homogenize the participants in terms of their language proficiency, Oxford Placement Test was employed. It is known as a standard test and since this test is in multiple-choice format, it is considered to be reliable in scoring. The test was administered at the beginning of the term and based on the test scores; 40 students labeled as the intermediate language learners.

# **Personality Questionnaire**

To explore the participants' personalities, the extroversion/ introversion questionnaire adopted by Skellett (2017) was used in this study. The questionnaire focused on the introvert and extrovert characteristics of individuals. For the ease of implementation, the questionnaire was translated to Persian. The validity of it was checked by two experts and they did not report any irrelevant points. Also, the reliability of the questionnaire was analyzed through Cronbach's Alpha which is .79.

#### Pre and Post-test of Writing and Speaking

To achieve the purpose of the study, the researchers employed writing and speaking tests as the third instruments to gather the data. Pre and post-tests were administered for both groups to investigate their productive language skills (writing & speaking). The purpose of the pre-test was to identify the two groups' level of productive skills before using the treatment, and the aim of the post-test was to compare the results of the pre-tests with the results of the post-test after the treatment. In both pre and post-tests, the EFL learners' knowledge of grammar and vocabulary were examined. All the tests were extracted from their textbook, American English File 3 (Intermediate Level) and the score of each test was calculated out of 20.

## **Data Collection Procedures**

At first, 46 students were selected based on the available sampling to collect data. All of the students had enrolled as the intermediate ones, but in order to be sure that all were at the same level of language proficiency, OPT was administered to them. Considering the scores, 40 of them were qualified as the intermediate language learners. In the second place, the personality questionnaire was distributed among the participants. Regarding the scoring scale provided by the questionnaire, the participants were labeled as extroverts and introverts and put in two groups, Extrovert Group (EG) and Introvert Group (IG) for receiving the same treatment by the teacher. In the third step, as pretest, the participants of both groups (EG & IG) were asked to write an essay in a limited time about describing a book or an article they have read recently and its effect on them. The allocated time was 30-35 minutes with the purpose to give them sufficient time for brainstorming, pre-writing/mind mapping, and final draft. For speaking pretest, an interesting topic was considered to discuss. They had to talk about the advantages and disadvantages of online classes which they had experienced. They were supposed to present their idea in 3-5 minutes.

After conducting the pre-test, the treatment started and both groups received the same treatment by the teacher. The treatment of writing was done in 8 sessions. The teacher who was one of the researchers taught different parts of writing skills, which consist of an introduction, main body, and conclusion. She also taught some vocabulary and grammar points. As an assignment, they had to expand their topics and write the details. It should be noted that during the writing class, all the practices had done in groups/pairs to reduce the students' anxiety. Furthermore, the students had an opportunity to learn from each other. Also, the teacher could have better monitoring. The speaking treatment was done in 7 sessions. The teacher explained how

to start speaking. Also, she taught some phrases which can help the participants to start speaking. After that, they practice through some topics in groups. Then, the students had to present a speech or send their voices in the group and the teacher checked them. The teacher checked the speaking parts based on task response, lexical, accuracy and fluency.

In post-test writing, the participants were asked to write an essay on the new topic. Their writing should be contained four paragraphs, an introduction, body, and conclusion in a limited time. The purpose of posttest writing was to measure their proficiency level in writing skill and to compare it with the previous one. The speaking post-test was done to evaluate the participants' speaking progress and compare it with the pretest scores. They were given a new topic to discuss. They had to present their views in 4-6 minutes. Also, the students were provided with some related pictures for discussing. Two raters (teacher & supervisor) scored their speaking through scoring checklist. They assessed their speaking based on accuracy; fluency, interaction, and coherence on a rating scale ranging from 0 to 20.

#### **Data Analysis Method**

The collected data were analyzed through SPSS software version 16 and EXCELL 2010. That is to say, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. In descriptive statistics, the researchers analyzed extroversion/ introversion questionnaire to highlight the students' personalities, and frequency tables were presented. In inferential statistics, in order to highlight the significant relationship between personality traits and productive skills, Pearson correlation test was used.

#### Results

# **Distribution of Research Variables**

Before examining the research questions, the normality of the distribution of the research variables was checked. To check the normality of variables, there are different ways, one of which is to use the Shapiro-Wilk test, if the significance level of this test exceeds 0.05, the distribution of that variable would be normal. Referring to Table 1, the significance level of the Shapiro-Wilk test for most of the variables was less than 0.05, it can be said that the variables of this research did not have normal distribution, thus non-parametric tests were used to investigate the research questions.

# Table 1

Distribution of Research Variables

Variable	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	<b>P-Value</b>
Extroverted Personality Trait	0.97	37	0.3
Introverted Personality Trait	0.94	37	0.04
Writing Skill (Pretest)	0.89	37	0.002
Speaking Skill (Pretest)	0.74	37	0.000
Writhing Skill (Posttest)	0.87	37	0.000
Speaking Skill (Posttest)	0.79	37	0.000

# **Examining the Relationship between Extroversion & Productive Skills**

Pearson Correlation Test was used to investigate the relationship between extroversion and writing skill after the treatment. Results of Table 2 indicated that according to the significance level which is less than 0.05 (P-Value = 0.02), with 95% confidence, it can be said that after teaching writing skill, there is a significant correlation between the extroverted students and writing skill (rs=0.39, n=37, p<0.05). It means that after teaching English, with the increase in extroversion, the students' writing skill improves and vice versa.

# Table 2

Correlation between Extroverted Students and Writing Skill After Training

Variables	Spearman's rho	<b>P-Value</b>	n
Extroverted Personality Trait	0.39	0.02	37
Writhing Skill			

In addition, Pearson Correlation Test was used to investigate the relationship between extroversion and speaking skill after the treatment. Results of Table 3 displayed that according to the significance level which is less than 0.05 (P-Value = 0.02), with 95% confidence, it can be said that after teaching speaking skill, there is a significant correlation between the extroverted students and speaking skill (rs=0.37, n=37, p<0.05). That is, after teaching speaking, with the increase in extroversion, the students' speaking skill improves and vice versa.

# Table 3

Correlation between Extroverted Students and Speaking Skill After Training

 Variables	Spearman's rho	<b>P-Value</b>	n
 Extroverted Personality Trait Speaking Skill	0.37	0.02	37

## **Examining the Relationship between Introversion & Productive Skills**

Once again, Pearson Correlation Test was used to investigate the relationship between introversion and writing skill after the treatment. Results of Table 4.10 indicated that according to the significance level which is more than 0.05 (P-Value = 0.021), with 95% confidence, it can be said that after teaching writing skill, there is no significant correlation between the introverted students and writing skill (rs=-0.21, n=37, p>0.05).

# Table 4

Correlation between Introverted Students and Writing Skill After Training

Variables	Spearman's rho	<b>P-Value</b>	n
Introverted Personality Trait	-0.21	0.2	37
Writhing Skill			

Finally, Pearson Correlation Test was used to investigate the relationship between introversion and speaking skill after the treatment. Results of Table 4.12 showed that according to the significance level which is more than 0.05 (P-Value = 0.1), with 95% confidence, it can be said that after teaching speaking skill, there is no significant correlation between the introverted students and speaking skill (rs=-0.27, n=37, p>0.05).

# Table 5

Correlation between Introverted Students and Speaking Skill After Training

Variables	Spearman's rho	<b>P-Value</b>	n
Introverted Personality Trait	-0.27	0.1	37
Speaking Skill			

#### Discussion

The study discussed four questions to investigate the analysis of the relationship between EFL learners' personality traits (Extroversion/ Introversion) and their productive skills (Writing/ Speaking). Pearson Correlation test was used to investigate the relationship between the research variables. Regarding the first research question, "Is there any relationship between extroverted EFL learners and their writing skill?", Pearson Correlation test was done to investigate the relationship between the mentioned variables. Results of the related table indicated that according to the significance level which is more than 0.05 (P-Value = 0.02), a significant correlation was achieved between the extroverted students and writing skill. That to say, after teaching English with the increase in extroversion, the students' writing skill improves. Therefore, there is no relationship between extroverted learners and their writing skills. For analyzing the second research question "Is there any relationship between extroverted EFL learners and their speaking skill?", Pearson Correlation test was used the relationship between extroversion and speaking skill after the treatment. Findings of the related table showed the significance level which is more than 0.05 (P-Value = 0.02), a significant correlation was seen between the extroverted students and writing skill (rs=0.37, n=37, p<0.05). It means that after teaching speaking the students' speaking skill improves. Thus, based on the careful analysis, there is no relationship between extroverted learners and their speaking skills.

Considering the third research question "Is there any relationship between introverted EFL learners and their writing skill?", once again Pearson correlation test was done to evaluate the relationship between the mentioned variables after the treatment. Based on the related table and the significance level which is more than 0.05 (P-Value = 0.021), no significant correlation reported between the introverted students and writing skill after teaching (rs=-0.21, n=37, p>0.05). Hence, based on the received data, there is no relationship between introverted learners and their writing skills. The last research question "Is there any relationship between introverted EFL learners and speaking skill?", examined the relationship between introversion and speaking skill and result of Pearson Correlation test revealed no significant correlation between the introverted students and speaking skill (rs=-0.27, n=37, p>0.05) with a significance level which is more than 0.05 (P-Value = 0.1). Accordingly, it can be said that, there is no relationship between introverted learners and their speaking skills.

Findings of the current research supported findings of Marwa and Thamrin (2016) who analyzed the effect of extroversion personality type on students' argumentative essay writing skills. The result showed a correlation between extroversion personality and students' argumentative essay writing skills. Additionally, findings of this research are in accordance with a more recent study by Zaswita and Ihsan (2020) on the effectiveness of personality types and students' writing ability as they concluded a significant impact of students' personalities on their writing ability. In their study, students with introverted personalities have better writing scores than the extroverted ones. Besides, in the same year, Kafryawan (2020) worked on the influence of extroversion personality towards EFL Learners' writing skills. The finding indicated a correlation between EFL learners' extroversion personality and their writing skill. In fact, extroversion personality gives an impact on EFL learners' writing skill and extroverted group learners tend to show good writing skills. However, the results are not in line with a study done by Shokrpour and Moslehi (2015) and no significant relationship was found between personality types and EFL writing skills. In another study, Boroujeni et al. (2015) studied the impact of extroversion and introversion personality types on EFL learners' writing ability. Analysis of the results revealed that introverts significantly outperformed extroverts in all subsets except organization. Also, findings of this study are not compatible with a recent study by Qanwal and Ghani (2019), reported that no difference is between the writing performance and extroverted learner groups. In another more recent study done by Zaswita and Ihsan (2020) who investigated the impact of personality types on students' writing ability. They found a significant impact on students' personalities on their writing ability. In fact, students with introverted personalities have better writing scores than the extroverted ones.

#### **Conclusion and Implications**

As recently stated, findings of this study concentrated on analyzing the students' personality traits (Extroversion/ Introversion) and their productive skills (Writing/ Speaking). The results indicated that the one of the personality traits, i.e., extroversion, had effect on the students' productive skills, as a positive relationship found between extroverted students and their achievements in writing and speaking. Based on the received information, there is a difference between the extroversion personality trait and the students' writing and speaking skills. That is to say, after teaching English, with the increase in extroversion, the students' productive skills will also improve. In other words, the extroverted students presented better performance and made fewer errors than the introverted ones in writing and speaking tests. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the higher extroverted

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learners, the more successful they tend to be in productive skills. This may be due to some of the extroverts' personal characteristics that the introverts lack, such as more being sociable, having more confidence, and having the ability to generate much more ideas in pairs or groups. However, in the introverted learners' group, before teaching English, a difference was seen between the students' personality trait and their productive skills, but after treatment, no significant correlation found between their personality and their scores of productive skills.

It is worthy to note that extrovert learners prefer to talk and are more active than the introverts. This personality type is very open and they are comfortable and felt more alive even in meeting new people. In contrast, introverted learners prefer to be quiet and solitary. They felt calm and at peace with their own world. Considering the ability to speak, certainly extrovert students are more apted. Not just talk, but also have good content. Thus, it can be said that there is a difference between extroverts and introverts toward speaking ability (Salsabila, 2021). Additionally, Hellystia and Gailea (2017) noted that personality traits have positive interactions in learning strategy and results of learning process. They also reported that extroverted students achieve higher learning results in cooperative and collaborative learning, which is more effective for this group. On the other hand, introverted learners are more active in individual works and do not prefer working in groups with their peers.

In the case of teaching language skills, knowledge of the language learners' personality types enables teachers to adjust their expectations with their students' abilities. Also, being aware of learner's personality traits enable the teachers to choose appropriate teaching methods. In addition, it is important to know the students' personality types before choosing the appropriate method or learning strategy. In fact, it is necessary for a teacher who is thinking of teaching language learning strategies in a real classroom setting, to make a careful plan to balance the teaching of subject matter and language learning strategies with focus on learners' individual differences. The administrators of English language departments should have concrete plans to develop and monitor their students' English language proficiency based on their personality traits. Also, they should establish bases and standards for allocating resources that contribute to the students' English language proficiency. Furthermore, they should provide professional development assistance for the faculty to inform them about their learners' personality traits and relevant approaches, methods, strategies and techniques in English language teaching. All in all, by knowing personality traits, EFL classroom teachers can be sensitized to both types of extroversion and introversion among their students. This may guide them to activate the guidance aspects for dealing with the introverted and extroverted students.

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