
Investigating Guided Discovery Learning and Personality Traits; Focusing on Speaking Confidence

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Abstract

This research study aimed to discover the relationships between guided discovery learning (GDL), personality traits, and creating self-confidence in speaking confidence among Iranian EFL learners. For this purpose, 60 participants out of 150 were chosen through convenience random sampling from two language schools in Tehran, Iran. They were assigned to experimental and control groups. The teaching techniques of the experimental group were managed by the guided discovery method to establish speaking confidence. Also, the ordinary technique was used to teach the control group. After completing a set of five-session treatments, the posttest on the speaking test was conducted. Questionnaires were then distributed among the participants within the allotted time. Finally, the results obtained from the tests and the scales were gathered and analyzed through multiple regression. The findings revealed statistically significant differences in three variables in terms of speaking confidence. Based on these results, the effectiveness of variables was ranked as follows: guided discovery learning, personality traits, and self-confidence in speaking, in the order of their appearance. Moreover, the results indicated that among the personality traits ‘extraversion’ made a significant contribution to Iranian EFL learners’ self-confidence.

Keywords: Guided Discovery Learning, Personality, Speaking Self-confidence, Traits

INTRODUCTION

Personality is conceptualized from various theoretical viewpoints and at different levels of breadth or abstraction (McAdams, 1995). Every such a level has made exclusive contributions to our comprehension of distinct differences in experience and behavior. Nevertheless, the number of personality features and scales designed for measuring them has increased endlessly (Goldberg, 1971).

Researchers and practitioners in assessing personality may encounter some confusing personality scales that had no overall rationale or little guidance. The negative point of these scales is that they often measure non-same

concepts, as well, and different scales often measure quite similar concepts. Although scientific pluralism and diversity are useful, the communication between researchers and the systematic accumulation of findings is difficult among the Babel of scales and concepts. Several personality investigators hoped that to devise a structure transforming the Babel into a community speaking of a usual language.

Personality psychology requires a descriptive model or its subject matter taxonomy. The definition of overarching domains is one of the central objectives of scientific taxonomies, within which numerous specific examples can be comprehended. Therefore, a taxonomy would allow researchers within the personality psychology to investigate the specified domains

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of personality features rather than assessing thousands of specific attributes separately that makes human beings unique and individual.

Based on the guided discovery learning (GDL) method of Bruner, any subject is effectively taught in some intelligently honest type to every child at any development phase. Constructivist method to teaching and learning is based on the notion that learners make their own information not the information being transferred into the brains of learners. The previous knowledge, the new knowledge timeliness, and the learner's capability to comprehend the connections all make the basis for the learners' construction of knowledge (Andres, 2002). By this procedure, learners focus on modifying the present knowledge or establish novel knowledge. Common instructional strategies reflect learning experiences oriented by constructivism like simulation-based learning, inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning (PBL), experiential learning, scenario-based learning, and service-learning. Numerous common features are shared within all constructivist instructional policies and an experienced educator utilizing the PBL method may utilize guided discovery principles very well (Balemir, 2009).

The guided discovery approach is a learning condition in which the learning principal content is not directly exposed by the teacher. Instead, learners reveal them that make students active participants and the teacher a guardian within the learning procedure. Ogunbiyi (2012) indicated that the vocational education curriculum requires to adopt more progressive strategies of inquiry, discovery, problem-solving, discussion, computer-assisted instruction, dramatization/role-playing, and other relaxed classroom teaching and learning activities. The relation between guided discovery technique and financial accounting is originated from the proposition that learners make knowledge out of their experiences based on the pedagogical methods promoting learning through performing or active learning (Akinbobola & Afolabi, 2009). Constructivist teaching has been established based on the fact that knowledge and skills acquisition are not based on rote learning and

passively receiving information, although they include the participation of active learners via knowledge construction, as well as minds-on and hands-on activities (Ado & Akinbobola, 2007).

Anders (2002) showed that language learning is affected by both the affective and cognitive domains of human behavior. Speaking confidence is one of the most significant affective domains affecting the language learning processes of the student (Yashima et al., 2004). In this regard, various characteristics of the individuals influence the speaking confidence including personality features that produce much more interest owing to its significant impacts on the learning processes of the EFL learners (O'Connor, & Paunonen, 2007; Shimizu, 1999).

Although studies focusing on both the speaking ability and personality traits have a long history in the first language contexts, investigations regarding the personality and the speaking confidence within SLA (second language acquisition) or foreign language learning failed to reveal strong and consistent results. SLA studies of language success and personality often suffer from some methodological flaws. In several studies, the most crucial flaw is small sample sizes regarding the number of measured variables. Various studies of foreign language learning have utilized questionnaires with the number of items almost equal to the contributors in the investigation. Additionally, several researchers indicated a lack of comprehension of the statistical factors and have recommended the discovery of "factors" that are explained by three or fewer items (Friday, 2004).

According to Clement et al. (2001), self-confidence is the most imperative factor influencing second language learners' inspiration. According to Clement (1986) cited in MacIntyre et. al. (1998), self-confidence is classified into two main groups of *L2 self-confidence and situation-specific self-confidence*, which both correspond to the student's affective and cognitive sphere. L2 self-confidence is associated with language utilization anxiety. Hypothetically, a state of self-confidence is created by levels of perceived anxiety and

competence in L2. Combined with for example a classroom's setting, it may lead to the willingness for communicating in certain situations (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

One of the major problems of EFL learners is that they are not sure about their ability to learn and speak English. The problem even deteriorated in an EFL-based study in Iran, in which learners had little and no exposure to the target language outside the classroom (Barjesteh, 2012). There is not adequate opportunity for the students for practicing English such that they can practice only in the classroom environment. Despite some studies on factors influencing the Iranian speaking ability of the EFL learners (e.g. Araghi et al., 2014), there is not any emphasis on guided discovery learning and personality traits of the students as a probable construct assisting the speaking confidence of the learners across gender. Furthermore, the gender of learners has not been considered in this regard.

It is believed that there might be a relationship between guided discovery learning, personality traits, and speaking confidence. To the best of our knowledge, such a relationship has not been assessed especially in an EFL context. Therefore, the current work attempted to discover the relationship between guided discovery learning, personality traits, and speaking confidence. To this end, the following question was proposed:

RQ: *Is there any statistically significant relationship among guided discovery learning, personality traits, and self-confidence in speaking confidence of Iranian EFL learners?*

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the 1990s, Ehrman (1990) conducted a study regarding the personality searching for habits and traits of good language learners. He used the results of various Likert-scale questionnaires like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (M/BTI) to examine the theory that extraverts were superior communicators and learners of a foreign language compared to the introverts. Nevertheless, regardless of the high sample sizes of over 1,000 students, the researcher could not discover any statistically

significant difference between introverts and extraverts. The researchers further assumed that the extraverts were more likely to gain advantages in larger groups like full-classroom contribution activities.

In another study, Vermeer and Verhoeven (2002) assessed the association between communicative competence and Big Five personality features among non-native and native Dutch-speaking children. The results indicated a significant correlation between Big Five traits of the individuals like openness and conscientiousness with various features of communicative competence.

Also, Alfieri et al. (2011) indicated that across various educational domains such as mathematics, science, verbal skills, and computer skills as well as age groups including adults, children, and adolescents, greater learning happened in groups using some types of "improved discovery" (e.g. guided discovery and other methods). They made a comparison among students experiencing enhanced discovery with others experiencing unassisted discovery (also known as pure discovery) and those still experiencing traditional explicit instructions. The groups experiencing improved discovery approaches of instruction such as guided discovery handouts showed a better performance compared to the learners experiencing the other instruction methods. The authors deduced that in guided discovery learning learners would usually need more time to complete the tasks and create the necessary explanations.

Yusef-Hasirchin (2014) assessed the impacts of introversion and extraversion on fluent speaking of Iranian EFL students. The results showed that the extravert students overtook the introvert ones significantly, although no significant differences were found between the performance of extravert female students and extravert male students.

In another study, Barekat and Tabatabaei (2013) assessed the relationship between the Big Five personality traits and Iranian EFL learners' speaking ability. The results revealed that only the conscientiousness trait had a significant correlation with the learners' speaking ability. Moreover, it was found that

the conscientiousness trait can act as the best predictor of learners' speaking ability.

Moghaddas, Gol, and Haqshenas (2013) examined the relationships between personality features and speaking ability of Iranian EFL learners. The results indicated no relationships between students' personality traits and their speaking ability.

Rostami and Rohani Ravari (2012) assessed the relationship between English language proficiency and the Big Five personality features of Iranian EFL university students. The results showed that openness and conscientiousness to experience were positively and neuroticism was negatively related to language proficiency.

METHODS

Participants

This research study included 60 EFL participants (total number of participants=150) who were selected based on an Oxford Placement Test from two language schools in Tehran, Iran. For the sake of this study, only participants who did not participate in language course before the study were considered.

1. Instrumentations

The data collection instruments of this study include:

2. Oxford Placement Test

Using the Oxford Placement Test (OPT), the participants' general language proficiency level at the beginning of the study was examined and a homogenous sample was discovered. The items of OPT were taken from the '*Longman Complete Course for the TOEFL Test*' by Philips (2018). Moreover, the test's internal consistency (0.76) was determined (0.76) using the KR21 formula that was satisfactory. Moreover, its validity was confirmed by two language experts, and their comments were used in the follow-up version of the main study.

Speaking Pretest & Posttest

Another tool used in this study was a standard speaking pretest. It was aimed to define whether participants were homogeneous in their knowledge of English language profi-

ciency. This pretest included 10 open-ended questions asked by two raters. These questions were selected from TOEFL speaking sections exams from 2012 to 2015. Before conducting the pretest, its items were reviewed by two language experts of the field to guarantee validity. Moreover, this test was piloted by 10 participants with the same features as the main participants. KR21 was run to ensure its reliability, which was found to be satisfactory for the current study. The scoring procedure for both speaking pretest and posttest consisted of three sections: Organization (15 points), presentation (40 points), and content (45 points).

Next, another speaking test as the posttest was administered. The test consisted of 10 open-ended questions. The only difference between the pretest and this test was that the order of the items asked by the raters was changed to avoid "practice effect" (Bachman, 1990) on the part of the participants. To ensure the validity of the speaking posttest, its items were reviewed by two expert judges. Moreover, the reliability of reliability was calculated through the KR21 (0.77).

FLSC (Foreign Language Speaking Confidence Scale)

In this study, the foreign language speaking confidence questionnaire of students designed by Apple (2011) was utilized. The tool, which was adjusted based on our learners' cultural and social situations, contained six dimensions of perceived foreign language speaking self-competence (PFLSF), foreign language classroom speaking anxiety (FLCSA), past English classroom experiences (PECE), desire to speak English (DSE), perceived social value of speaking English (PCVSE), and current English classroom perception (CECP). The 52 items on the *FLSC* were ranked on a 5-point Likert scale format with labels from 1 (completely agree) to 5 (completely disagree). Although this scale was validated previously and used as a reliable scale by some researchers, the reliability and validity of this scaled were again calculated. The reliability of this scale was calculated to be 0.84 using the Cronbach Alpha. Further, the items of the scale were reviewed by expert judges to ensure its validity.

Big Five Inventory Scale (BFI)

The BFI scale (John et al. 1991) was used to measure the personality traits of the learners. The scale's items were made to provide 5 areas of personality traits including agreeable, extroversion, conscientiousness, openness, and neuroticism. BFI consists of 44 items, on a 5-point Likert scale rated from 1 (completely agree) to 5 (completely disagree). Like FLSC, the validity and reliability of BFI were recalculated. The reliability of BFI was estimated to be 0.81 using the Cronbach Alpha and rendered as suitable. Moreover, to ensure its validity, the items of the scale were reviewed by expert judges.

1. Data Collection Procedure

After selecting the participants and before the instruction, a pretest on speaking was run to guarantee the participants' homogeneity. Then, the participants were assigned to experimental and control groups. In the experimental group, the students were presented with related study guides (Guided Discovery Learning Instruction). Information was provided for them regarding the needed student activity along with short explanations considered in the guide and the associated resources. The study guides were prepared to teach and handle out the topics in the class. The study guides were mostly about learning management and content. The same teacher taught the lessons chosen for the instruction to the experimental group similar to the control group. The researcher selected a well-qualified teacher to perform the instruction. Eventually, the following stages were followed to implement instruction on guided discover learning:

Stage I (Warming-up and Providing Data)

In this step, the teacher posed primary questions for preparing the students for the subjects. The teacher helped students to remember the information from their own experiences and connect the formerly learned materials with the novel subject matter.

Stage II (Before they speak, Problem-Framing)

The teacher drew the attention of the students to the title and framed the lesson theme based

on a problem to study for the solutions by responding to the definite questions. The students individually work.

Stage III (Focusing Attention while they speak)

The keywords and topics were explained and discussed, the concentration was on the general and main idea. Students practiced speaking for the gist of the text.

Stage IV (Problem-Framing and Leading-Questions while they speak)

Students practiced speaking for particular information under the teacher's guidance asking the leading-questions. The teacher introduced a problem followed by the responses of the students and each question's answers to determine the relations between the ideas.

Stage V (While they speak, Giving Feedback)

The teacher summed up the supporting ideas and main idea of the lesson. Students received feedback regarding their learning.

Stage VI (While they speak, Asking Leading-Questions and Problem-Framing)

Students worked in pairs and practiced speaking for particular information regarding another idea involved in the text by responding to the leading-questions. Every question was created based on a problem requiring a solution and leading to another point until students discovered novel knowledge added to their former one.

Stage VII (Making Connections after they speak)

Students practiced relating and interpreting the knowledge they discovered to their own experience. The teacher asked students to work in groups and perform the tasks while giving opinions and suggestions in terms of their new learning.

Stage VIII, (Giving Feedback and Summative Evaluation)

Students worked in groups and practiced responding to the questions and interpreting the data. Then, the students and the teacher received feedback regarding the entire study.

A new topic emerged and students started this process again.

After completing the five-session treatment, the posttest on the speaking test was conducted. Next, all the questionnaires were distributed among the participants within the allotted time. Finally, the results obtained from the tests and the scales were gathered

and analyzed.

Data Analysis

To respond to the research questions of the work, the descriptive statistics of the Oxford Placement Test scores (OPT) were first calculated. Table 1 represents the descriptive statistics of the OPT results.

Table 1
The descriptive statistics of the Oxford Placement Test

	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD
OPT	150	72	84	78.8	1.708
Valid N	150				

According to Table 1, the mean and standard deviation of OPT scores were 78.8 and 1.708, respectively. Based on the OPT results, 60 out of 150 male and female language learners with the scores between 73 and 81 were randomly selected. Then, the chosen partici-

pants were classified into two equal groups (N=30), i.e., one control and one experimental group. Then, the normality distribution and the homogeneity of variances were examined by running the Levene's test, for which the results are provided in Table 2.

Table 2
The results of Levene's Test.

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Mean	0.084	1	59	0.722
Median	0.078	1	59	0.719
Median and with adjusted df	0.078	1	33.02	0.719
Trimmed mean	0.082	1	59	0.720

Based on Table 2, at $p \leq 0.05$, the Levene's test is non-significant. It indicates the insignificant and almost equal difference between the variances in groups; thus, the assumption of variances homogeneity is satisfied. Considering that the main suppositions of the parametric test were satisfied, the questions were responded through multiple regression analyses. As stated

before, the research question sought to discover any statistically significant relationship between guided discovery learning, personality traits, and creating self-confidence in speaking (speaking confidence) among Iranian EFL learners. For this purpose, the first descriptive statistics for each variable were developed. Table 3 displays the results.

Table 3
The Descriptive Statistics of the Main Variables

Variable	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD.
Guided discovery learning	90	6.00	41.00	31.92	5.75
Personality traits	90	14.00	41.00	33.35	4.81
Self-confidence in speaking	90	9.00	51.00	39.02	7.44
Valid N (Listwise)	90				

Then, the data were implemented via a multiple regression where the regression models were created using a stepwise technique. Based on Table 4, the standardized coefficient among variables (i.e., guided discovery learning, personality traits, and self-confidence in speaking) was *Beta*

= 0.148 at $p=.047$, representing a positive linear association between guided discovery learning and self-confidence in speaking. The *t* value ($t=2.427$) was significant at $p=0.047$, suggesting the significant effect of guided discovery learning on self-confidence in speaking.

Table 4
The model summary for Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Estimation error
1	0.148	0.19	0.18	7.7255

Moreover, some analyses were implemented to guarantee non-violation of the suppositions of

normality, linearity, or multicollinearity. The results are presented in Figs. 1 and 2.

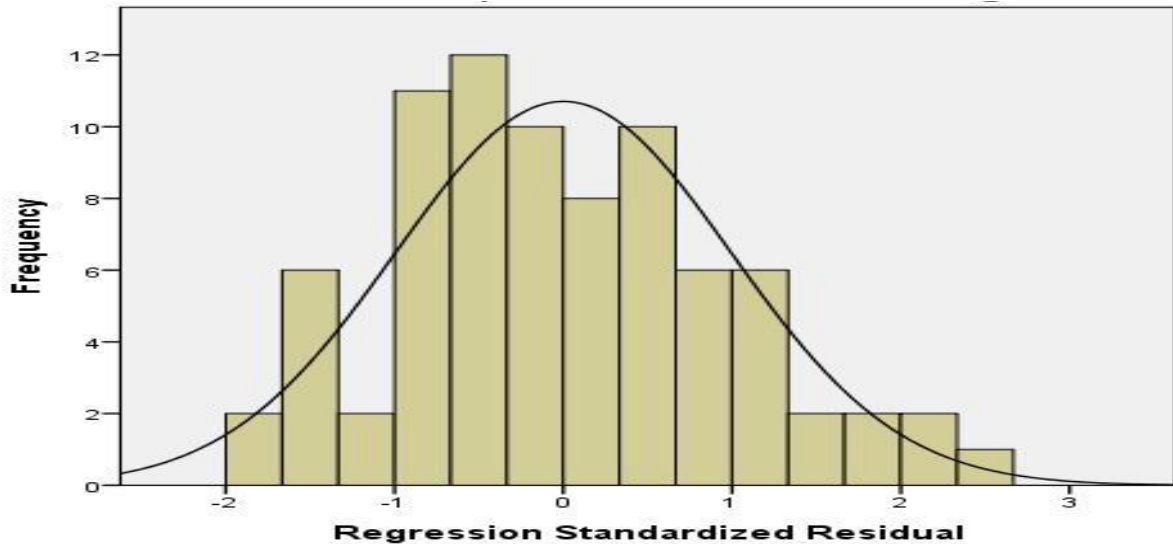


Figure 1
The regression standardized residual

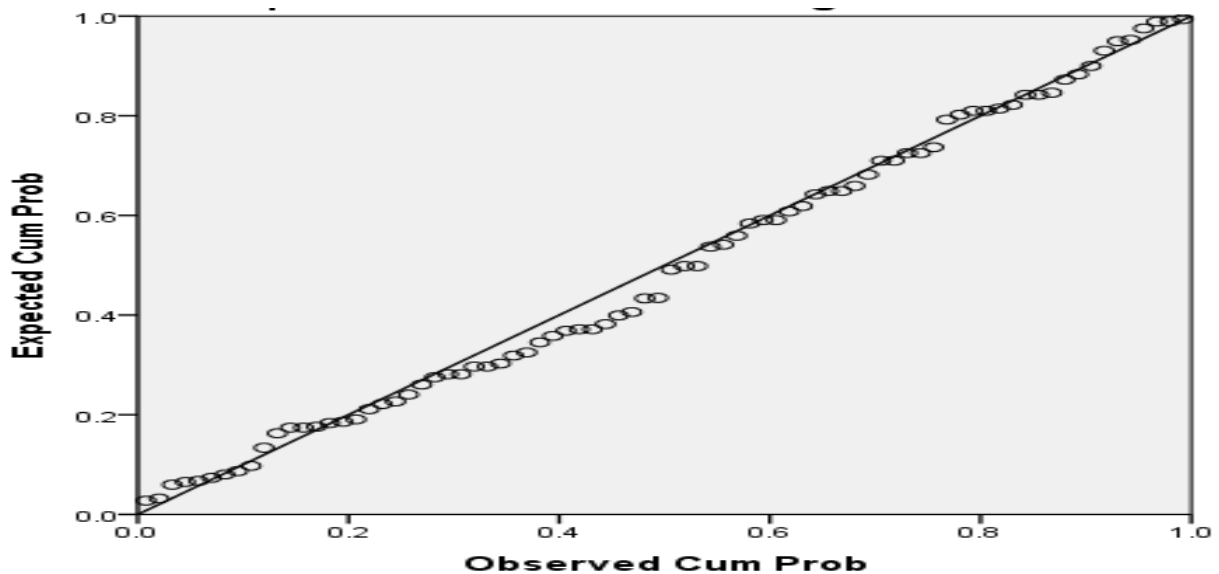


Figure 2
The observed Cum Prob

Based on Table 4, there are some relations between the studied variables ($R^2=0.19$, $p<.05$, and $\text{sig}=.043$). It was proved that 18% of the variance of the dependent variable was caused by the independent variables of the study. Moreover,

the Friedman Test was used to understand the exact differences and grading among variables. In this process, the values of ranks by columns are taken into account to rank each row (or block). The results are provided in Table 5.

Table 5
Friedman Rank Test Results

Variable	Mean Rank	Rank
Guided discovery learning	2.18	1
Personality traits	1.87	2
self-confidence in speaking	1.54	3
Test Statistics (Friedman Test)		
χ^2	df	p-value
32.12	2	0.001

The results of the Friedman rank statistics (Table 5) indicated the significant Friedman rank statistics ($p = 0.001$, $\chi^2 = 32.12$, $df = 2$). Regarding the mean ranks, an obvious reduction occurs in variables from the level of guided discovery learning to self-confidence in speaking. Indeed, the outcomes of the Friedman test represented a statistically significant difference in three variables ($2.18 > 1.87 > 1.54$). Hence, the variables are rated as Guided discovery learning (2.18), Personality traits (1.87), and self-confidence in speaking (1.54), in the order of their appearance.

DISCUSSION

The present study probes the existence of statistically significant relationships between guided discovery learning, personality features, and creating self-confidence in speaking confidence among Iranian EFL learners. The findings showed a statistically significant difference in three variables. Based on the obtained results, the variables can be ranked as follows: guided discovery learning, personality traits, and self-confidence in speaking, in the order of their appearance. This finding is supported by the results of the study by Bicknell-Hoffman (2000), Acero, Javier, and Castro (2000), Akinbobola, and Afolabi (2010). According to these researchers, guided discovery learning strategy enhances the academic achievement of the students compared to the traditional lecture process. The reason is that by the guided discovery learning strategy, the students can grasp and determine facts assisting them to provide a solution to financial accounting problems that may be difficult to conduct in a traditional learning situation.

In the same vein, Olorode (2016) affirmed that the guided discovery approach is an

instructional technique emphasizing the active inclusion of the students in the learning procedure via peer work. It enables the students to think and discover the knowledge under the teacher's guidance such that they can calculate the subjects such as financial accounting. The results also agree with the results of Etiubon and Udo (2011), who reported significant differences in the mean accomplishment test scores of female and male students taught using guided discovery strategy. The findings are also in line with the findings by Khany and Ghoreyshi (2013), who found that among personality traits, extraversion had the highest prediction of foreign language speaking confidence after neuroticism, openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study showed that Guided Discovery Learning (GDL) might be effectively run in English Language Learning classrooms and matched to support the regular curriculums. The results supported the findings of other works representing a positive effect of Guided Discovery Learning on English learners' speaking motivation and self-confidence toward speaking English (Stern, 1980; Coleman, 2005; Freebody and Stinson, 2006).

Although the sample size was too small to make any generalizable conclusion, the results show that GDL reduced the affective filter significantly for the learners. Most students were inspired by GDL since they perceived it as a fun activity. GDL activities helped foster group cohesiveness and develop community and helped reduce the anxiety of the students regarding speaking English in front of the group (Reichert, 2005).

Also, GDL activities indicate the small successes of the students building confidence in English communicating capabilities. Along with these positive impacts on the affective filter, other components of the Natural Approach are exemplified by GDL activities. GDL provides opportunities for practicing communication skills and represents the comprehensible and meaningful input essential for English language learners to obtain English successfully (Mabrook, 1990). Additionally, the pedagogical implications drawn from this study are twofold. The first is that guided discovery-based activities would lead to better speaking confidence on the part of the EFL male and female learners with different personalities. Hence, it is suggested integrating more guided discovery-based activities into the EFL/ESL lessons because each learner may discover their specific chance of meaningful interactions in one way or another, and thereby fostering their language development. Second, the speaking confidence should be included within the substances offered to the EFL learners such that to create very low levels to higher proficiency. Therefore, there would be some other implications for textbook writers and EFL/ESL instructors.

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