

The Relationship Between Iranian EFL Learners' and Instructors' Personality Type and Error Correction Preferences

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Abstract. In the present study the effect of personality type on individuals' preferences for corrective feedback on writing was examined. This study aimed at investigating Iranian EFL learners' and teachers' preferences for error correction. It also intended to find if there is any significant relationship between the most preferred aspect, type, and source of corrective feedback and the participants' personality type. To this end, three questions were posed and three instruments were used. The necessary data were collected from 41 EFL female students and 9 female teachers of some well-known institutes in Shiraz. The data were gathered through two preference survey questionnaires, one for teachers and the other one for the students, and a personality indicator questionnaire that was the NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI). Personality questionnaire used in the study was a sixty-item version of the larger Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R: Costa & McCrae, 1992). The results of the study revealed that there is no significant relationship between personality type and participants' opinions about method, delivering agent of error correction as well as aspect of language to be

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corrected. According to the results of the study both teachers and students agreed that grammatical error in writing should be more focused and the most favored type of corrective feedback was error identification which supplies the correct form and explanation. But teachers and students opinions regarding the source of error correction were different, the students preferred to be corrected by their teachers while the teachers wanted their students to correct their own mistakes.

Keywords: Feedback types, personality types, writing process, error correction preferences.

1. Introduction

Error analysis is one of the major topics in the field of second/foreign language learning research (Makino, 1993, p.337). Hendrickson (1980) contends that “it is virtually impossible to avoid errors when learning any new skill, particularly when learning a foreign language. It is logical, therefore, to ask a rather critical question: Can error correction benefit language learners?” (p.216). Also Lalande (1982) raises the question of how students can be brought to show an appreciable decline from course beginning to course end. Most of writing teachers invest so much time responding to students writing and these responses reveal the assumptions teachers hold about writing. Zamel (1985) believes that teachers’ marks and comments usually take the form of abstract and vague prescriptions and directives that the students find difficult to interpret. She suggests that we should change our responding to behavior so that students can better understand how to revise their writing. Also, Chastain (1990) states that students seem to agree with teachers on the importance of error correction. Several investigators have found that they expect correction and welcome it (Radecki & Swales, 1986; Leki, 1991; Satio,1994), although others have stated that in some cases constant correction may lower students’ self-image, decrease motivation, and diminish their willingness to use the language (Hendrickson,1980; Jacob,1989). However, despite considerable attention given to the issue of how to provide feedback to ESL/EFL students’ written work, there are still questions what would empower the effect of used error correction technique and improve students’ writing skill. As Dekeyser (1993) states, one of the questions that second language teachers most often address to second language

researchers is what to do about error correction. Therefore, research is needed which attempts to test various types and methods of feedback to determine their impact as facilitators in EFL learning. Enginarlar (1993) believes that the investigation of EFL students' reactions to teacher feedback is promising avenue of the research. Since these reactions are likely to reflect students' expectations in writing courses, obtaining information on students' attitudes to different types and agents of feedback, and also their personal features such as personality will be of value in designing more effective writing courses. In this regard, Brandl (1995) contends that: little is known about students' preferences for different types of feedback and how students interact with feedback (p.195).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Error correction and second/foreign language acquisition

Through feedback, learners can distinguish for themselves whether they are performing well or not. When they are not performing well, however, further feedback helps them to take corrective action about their writing in order to improve it and reach an acceptable level of performance (Freeman, 1987). Another valuable feature of feedback is that it serve as a good indication of how ESL students are progressing in learning the written language and, therefore, assists the teachers in diagnosing and assessing their students' problematic areas (Hedge, 1991). Tylor (1981) believes that although regular writing does improve students' writing, they also require feedback in order to achieve considerable improvement. Roen (1989) also believes that for writing assignment, students most receive the right kind of feedback at the right time. Makino (1993) believes that because teachers are under pressure from expectations of the students to treat errors, it is a significant issue for the EFL teachers to treat errors, which errors to treat, and how to treat them most effectively. Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) also believe that if teachers use effective interactive feedback in classrooms, they will observe the effects of their feedback through improvement on students' writing, and the students will welcome the feedback because of the benefits that they receive from it.

Additionally, feedback is helpful in encouraging students not to consider what they write as a final product and in helping them to write multiple drafts and to revise their writing several times in order to produce a much improved piece of writing (Asiri,1996). In teaching the writing skill, rewriting should be encouraged. Sommers (1982) asserts that it is not only student writers who need feedback to make revisions, but also professional writers seek feedback from professional editors ,and from their writer colleagues to help them know whether they have communicated their ideas or not. In the absence of feedback, students may become discouraged (Hedge,1988) ,and also lose sense of how they are doing and which aspects of their writing they should pay more attention to, by receiving feedback they can identify their weak points and try to revise their drafts.

Allwright and Bailey (1991) point out that teachers need to be careful when providing corrective feedback. Error correction may have both negative and positive effects. The positive effects of error correction is that it can make language learning more effective since it helps L2 learners notice the gap between their utterances and the target forms, which elicits uptake or repair. This can promote changes in their interlanguage systems and lead them to the next linguistic developmental stage. Moreover, if learners consider the fact that making mistakes is a part of the learning process, and that their teachers try to help them learn target forms, they are likely to take risks and build up confidence through practice. On the other hand, if error correction is not used appropriately, its negative effects can hinder learners' language development rather than facilitate learning and may raise the students' level of anxiety. This can prevent students from acquiring communicative ability by making them hesitant to speak or write and afraid to make mistakes (Burt, 1975).

Hendrickson's (1978) study investigated whether, when, which, and how student errors should be corrected and who should correct them. The findings are: correction promotes language learning; there is no general consensus as to when errors should be corrected; frequently occurring errors and errors that impair communication should be corrected; and various corrective feedback types are used by teachers.

2.2. Teachers' and students' preferences for error correction

Horwitz (1988) notes that teachers need to know learners' beliefs about language learning in order to foster more effective learning strategies in their students because mismatches between students' expectations about language learning and the realities they encounter in the classroom can impede language acquisition. Schulz's (1996, 2001) in his study, found some mismatches between teachers' and learners' perceptions of error correction and revealed that students' attitudes toward grammar instruction and error correction were more favorable than their teachers' attitudes; that is, learners want more error correction. Thus, when the teachers do not pay attention to their students' instructional expectations, their motivation can be negatively affected, and they may question the credibility of the teacher. Ancker's (2000) action research investigated teachers' and students' expectations toward error correction by surveying teachers and students in 15 countries. This survey asked whether teachers should correct every error students make when using English. According to the results, a big gap between the teachers and the students was found, 76% of students mentioned that teachers should correct every error students make when using English, while 25% of teachers were agree. Another study which investigated the learners' and teachers' opinions is Fukuda's (2004) study. The participants were teachers and students in Japanese high school oral communication classes. The results of the survey revealed significant differences between the teachers and students regarding error treatment. Overall, the students wanted more error treatment than their teachers believed. Additionally, in a survey of 47 EFL students' attitudes towards classroom feedback procedures, Enginarlar (1993) reported that surface-level error correction is what students want and perceive as effective teacher feedback. Satio (1994) and Ferris (1995) also reached similar conclusions based on their respective surveys of students' attitudes towards feedback in an ESL context. Schulz (1996) reported in a study investigating 824 FL students' and 92 FL teachers' beliefs about error correction and the benefit of a focus on form in language learning.

In an investigation by Zacharias (2007), the researcher showed that generally teachers and students have a marked preference for teacher

feedback. The high preference for teacher feedback was mainly the result of the respondents' positive attitudes toward teacher feedback. Interestingly, students' preferences for teacher feedback also stemmed from their awareness that teachers control grades. The data collected from the questionnaires and interviews indicated that students' preferred teacher feedback that was specific since this kind of feedback would facilitate students in the revision process. Students also show a high preference for feedback which focused on form, compared to feedback on content.

Makino (1993) investigated to what degree teacher cues or hints help students correct their own errors in EFL written compositions, or what kinds of cues are more effective in self-correction. Sixty-two Japanese students were sampled in this study and were required to correct their errors by themselves using the cues provided by their teachers. The finding of the study revealed that the more detailed the cues to the errors, the higher the ratio of learner self-correction achieved. That is, learners demonstrated that they could activate their linguistic competence to some extent in order to correct their own errors in written English compositions.

Leki (1991) investigated 100 ESL students' preferences for error correction in college level writing classes. The findings of her questionnaire show that students consider perfect grammar, spelling, and choice of vocabulary to be important, but not all of them pay as close attention to the mode of correction in these areas. Furthermore, the majority of her subjects (67%) indicated preference that their teacher show the location of the error and provide a clue about how to correct it. Twenty-five students wanted the teacher to give the correct answer, and no student wanted the teacher to tell the students about the existence of errors, leaving them to find the errors themselves. The majority of the subjects considered the teacher the best source of help during the error correction process. Yoshida (2008) investigated teachers' and learners' preferences for corrective feedback types in Japanese classrooms through audio recording and stimulated recall interviews with participants. The findings showed that recasts were the teachers' most favored corrective feedback type over elicitation and metalinguistic feedback due to the time limitation of classes and their awareness of learners' cognitive

styles. On the contrary, the learners preferred to have an opportunity to think about their errors in order to come up with the correct forms before receiving correct feedback from their teachers. Schulz's (1996, 2001) studies, found that students favored grammar teaching over communicative instruction. The teachers also strongly felt that grammar practice needed to be embedded in meaningful contexts.

Such discrepancies about corrective feedback between students and teachers may obviously cause miscommunication and result in unsuccessful teaching and learning; therefore, it is especially important to continue to explore this area of research in ESL and EFL writing.

2.3. The application of individual differences in language learning context

Fukuda (2004) suggested that the effective error treatment is extremely complex since it depends on many factors, including students' needs, preferences, personalities, proficiency levels, and motivation. Personality psychology is "the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behavior and thought" (Allport, 1961, p.28).

Personality is considered to be a very important category of individual differences since the individual is often judged depending on her/his personality. Therefore, it is expected that any given individual will behave in a reasonably consistent manner on different occasions. Those who study human personality are often interested in individual differences. They assume that there are considerable individual differences in personality and that these differences will be revealed by differences in behaving and reacting in a given situation (Eysenck, 1985).

Horwitz (1999) points out "language learners are individuals approaching language learning in their own unique way" (p.558). In such a situation, the teachers must make the students aware of the range of the strategies they can adopt (Cook, 2008); and they must be aware of the relationship between personality and academic performance of the students (Eysenck, 1967; Cattell & Butcher, 1968). Writing reveals differences in the kinds of words people use and how they combine them, irrespective of the topic they write about. Thus, differences in what

people write about themselves, as well as differences in the writing style itself might be connected to the expression of personality traits (Fast & Funder, 2008).

According to the result of Callahan's (2000) analysis, extravert students respond to reflecting about the outer world better than the others, they are also better talkers than writers and so they are not interested in keeping journals or preparing documents, in which metacognitive processes are involved. As she mentions, for these students, reflecting on their writing processes seems "awkward". Moreover, this group wishes the teacher to set goals for them. On the other hand, for introvert students reflection is pleasant and quite "natural". As opposed to extravert students, the introvert group is in favor of setting goals and standards. As a matter of fact, teachers have a key role in the classroom and the changes in class work are greatly affected by teacher personality type. Therefore, extravert teachers would not choose to assign reflective writing, while the introvert teachers would include and even emphasize such assignments. Regarding the thinking/feeling dichotomy, Callahan states that the thinking group is interested in describing their strengths and weaknesses in writing. This group reveals rich notions in their arguments that would otherwise remain hidden. They are mostly interested in using "organizational patterns" and "rhetorical features" in their writings, while the feeling group would be excited mostly by strong feeling. She also investigates that teachers with thinking preference would like impersonal reflective writings whereas those teachers with feeling preferences would comment more on the thinking quality of the writer.

Callahan concluded that the reader would agree that the first group would set goals for future improvement easily; because they offer tidy, organized projects. In contrast, the second group would resist thinking about their future planning and find it difficult to draw conclusions. In fact, their work is always in progress. As she argues, a teacher who has a judging preference, would certainly appreciate an organized, neat writing handed to her as an end-of-the-semester assignment and a teacher with a perceiving preference would find a last-minute reflective writing invaluable. In sum, there are now a number of interesting results indicat-

ing that (a) personality expresses itself in self-related linguistic content, and (b) observers are able to infer a person's personality when they read stream-of-consciousness essays or self-descriptions of that person. Therefore, the content of writing which is related to the targets' own lives and their minds certainly has contributed to the accurate perceptions of targets' personalities.

3. Research Questions

The following research questions are addressed in the study:

- 1.** What is the relationship between personality type and error correction preferences of Iranian EFL learners and instructors?
- 2.** To what extent do Iranian EFL learners' and instructors' aspects of preferences for error correction overlap: Aspect of language & source of corrective feedback.
- 3.** Are there any significant differences among Iranian EFL learners' and instructors' preferences for error correction?

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Participants

The participants of the present study were 70 female students (average age: 19 years) and 20 female teachers. The age of the participants ranged between 15 to 33. Most of the learners were high school students and a few of them were university students. They were all chosen randomly from among the most popular institutes in Shiraz (Setareh, Pooyesh, Soha, and Payam). The institutes were chosen from different parts of the city to make the result more accurate. None of the learners had received any private instruction in English writing. Among the filled out questionnaires only 50 were usable because the remaining ones were not completely answered by the participants, so the number of subjects reduced to 50 people.

4.2. Instruments

Three instruments were used in the study. The first instrument was the NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI). It has been shown to be a satisfactory tool for assessing relationships between personality and a number of academic variables. This well-established 60-item questionnaire measures the “Big Five” personality factors, i.e., Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. It was a version of the larger Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R: Costa & McCrae, 1992) that measures the five factors of Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness (O), Agreeableness (A), and Conscientiousness (C). It consists of five 12-item scales. Each of these sixty items includes five choices. The choices are as: a) Strongly Disagree, b) Disagree, c) Neutral, d) Agree, e) Strongly Agree. Each personality dimension is measured by 12 items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Some items were scored negatively. A Persian translation of the inventory was used in order to obtain more reliable results and make it easier for the learners to answer.

The second and third instruments used in this study were error correction preference questionnaires for teachers and students which were designed by the researcher and approved by the advisor. A time limit of 30 minutes was given to participants for the first questionnaire and 10 minutes for the second or third one. The preference survey questionnaires for teachers and learners were conducted in English. They included two parts: part one was about the students’ demographic information, which included the students’ gender, age, and the number of years they have been studying English. This part was designed to obtain learners’ personal information. Part two was designed to elicit required information concerning the participants’ reactions or opinions about different error correction aspects.

4.3. Procedures

4.3.1. Data collection

To gather data, NEO-FFI inventory was administered to 90 participants (70 learners and 20 instructors). And then the preference survey questionnaires were given to them, the forms which were answered com-

pletely and correctly were selected (41 learners and 9 teachers). All the data collection was carried out by the researcher herself. The participants were assured on the confidentiality of the results and the advantages of the study. According to the results of the questionnaire, the participants were classified into three groups of weak, fair, and strong in each of five categories of neuroticism, extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness. These five major personality dimensions are sufficient to describe people's standing to a great deal (Norman 1963; Digman and Inouye 1986). Before distributing the questionnaires, the students were informed that their participation was voluntary and the survey was anonymous. The teachers were asked to leave the classroom in order to make the students feel comfortable as they were answering the questions. The researcher distributed the questionnaire to EFL teachers in their classrooms, the teacher's office, and via e-mail. When the teachers informed the researcher they had completed the questionnaire forms, the researcher collected them in person.

4.3.2. Data analysis

The required data gathered through the two sets of questionnaires namely, the Big Five Personality Test and Error Correction Preferences Survey. After the data were collected, they were put into spreadsheets and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency, valid percentage, cumulative percentage, and standard deviation were computed for the instrument. Also 19 Pearson Chi-square tests were used by the researcher. Analysis was performed using SPSS software at $p < .05$ level of significance.

Participants' responses to personality test based on Likert scale were analyzed to divide them into groups of the five factors and then their preferences for the chosen error correction aspect, type, and source were identified. Descriptive statistics to find the frequency of answers in preference survey questionnaires and 19 Pearson Chi-square to find the probable relationships between variables were used to answer the research questions.

5. Results and Discussion

In order to answer the first research question Pearson Chi-square was utilized to determine probable relationship between the five personality types and error correction preferences. In all five personality traits no statistically significant relationship was found at $p < .05$ level. Also, the Chi-square calculated between the learners' preferences for the error feedback (aspect of language & source of corrective feedback) did not show significant amount, which answered the first and second research questions negatively.

Calculated descriptive statistics indicated the mean, mode, and median in each of five personality type among learners and teachers who participated in the study. (Table 5.1)

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations (SD) of the five traits of personality in the current study

		neuroticism	openness	conscientiousness	agreeableness	extraversion
N	Valid	50	50	50	50	50
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		19.6400	20.7800	25.6200	19.2000	23.9600
Median		21.0000	21.0000	26.0000	19.0000	24.0000
Mode		21.00 ^a	21.00	26.00 ^a	19.00	24.00 ^a
Std. Deviation		6.21637	4.41375	5.23290	3.09047	4.10555

Table 2. Total frequency of preferred corrective feedback source

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	teacher correction	31	62.0	62.0	62.0
	peer correction	7	14.0	14.0	76.0
	self correction	12	24.0	24.0	100.0
Total		50	100.0	100.0	

The total frequency of the preferred delivery agent of corrective feedback is shown, from this amount 80% selected the first alternative that is teacher correction as their most favored, while 60% of the teachers preferred self-correction of the learners to be used in their classrooms (Table 5.2).

According to the administered descriptive statistic, the frequency tables revealed that the majority of the participants preferred grammar as the most important language aspect to be corrected in writing, and they favored error correction with explanation of error. However, the last Pearson Chi-square revealed the difference between the learners and teachers group which was matter of the third research question. The learners preferred teacher-correction, while the teachers preferred self-correction by the learners. The two groups were significantly different from each other with regard to their preference for the source of feedback (Table 5.3).

Table 3. The Difference between Students' and Teachers' preferences source

	Value	DF	Sig. Level
Pearson Chi-Square	7.885a	2	.019
Likelihood Ratio	7.631	2	.022
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.648	1	.006
N of Valid Cases	50		

6. Conclusion

The findings show that both the teachers and the students regardless of their personality type agreed that students' errors should be treated. Furthermore, unlike the teachers selected self-correction as the most preferred source of writing error correction, the students preferred

teacher correction, among other alternatives. The findings show that the teachers and students had significantly different opinions about delivering agents of error correction, 82% of the students wanted to receive error treatment from their teachers rather than their peers and classmates. Regarding the source of providing error correction statistically significant relationship was indicated and the third hypothesis which mentioned no difference exists among teachers' and learners' preferences is refused. The big gap between the students and teachers may be due to the students' lack of self-confidence. The most preferred type and method of error correction in writing both for teachers and students was error identification with providing correct form and explanation. In addition, the majority of the participant favored grammar as the most important language aspect to be corrected in writing classes, that is, both instructors and learners regarded grammar as the most important language aspect to be focused in mastering writing skill. Students should know that they can learn by trial and error, by taking risks, and thus improve their writing skill. Also, language learners need both time and opportunity for repair in the classroom. Teachers should help their students become capable of self-correction, they can help learners gain confidence by providing them with a less stressful environment. By trying to highlight and acknowledge students' beliefs, teachers can minimize conflicts that may contribute to student frustration, anxiety, and lack of motivation (e.g., Schulz, 1996).

According to the results obtained from the data analyses, it was found that Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness did not have any significant relationship with the personality type. The researcher noticed that Pearson Chi-square did not yield a significant result at 0.5 level, so the hypothesis regarding existence of no relationship among personality traits and error correction preferences retained.

Another finding of the study was that there were no differences in terms of personality type between teachers and learners. But it indicated that teachers select self-correction as the most preferred source of error correction to be used in the classroom, while the learners prefer to receive corrective feedback from their teachers.

As a matter of fact, one of the primary objectives in foreign language learning and teaching today is certainly learning more about the students and increasing the awareness of the teachers in personal differences of the learners in the language classroom. In the history of language teaching, there were a lot of arguments about which methods the teachers need to apply to the teaching-learning process. However, in modern language teaching today, attending to learners' differences in academic fields and trying to learn more about their needs have advantages for the language learner and the teacher to consider the program goals and objectives. And the personality of the student appears to be one of the important factors in this matter because the students have different personality characteristics which make them have different worldviews, and thus they behave differently in various social and educational settings. Considering such a fact can help teachers recognize their students' individual differences.

As a result, personality traits should be studied by the language teachers to provide a more fruitful learning and teaching environment both for teachers and the learners because there is a close connection between the personality of the student, the style and the strategy that the student develops in order to learn and succeed in his academic performance and writing skill as well, even individual's personality affects the extent to which he is able to achieve information (Murray and Mount, 1996). Therefore, teachers should develop the teaching styles and strategies in a way to meet the various needs of the learners. Naturally, developing strategies and teaching styles according to learners' interests can result in the development of a more humanistic approach to teaching for the language teachers. In this respect, the teacher himself should be a model for the student by choosing methods and assignments that encourage and support individual learning styles. This has also a chance for the teachers themselves to understand their own strengths and weaknesses in the teaching profession.

7. Pedagogical Implications

The results of this study have implications for the teachers. Ancker (2000) suggests that to close the gap between teachers' and learners'

expectations, teachers should establish clear objectives in lesson plans, discuss the learning process with students, and employ alternative types of corrective feedback that can be effective and encouraging to students. Attention to students' personality characteristics, and differences should make an explicit feature of teacher education in such programs, and teachers should be taught to assess personality traits of the students that is accompanied by their writing evaluation or a personality test. Finally, it would be desirable for the teachers to include some measures to identify the most preferred error correction method, or source of receiving feedback.

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