

## **Extrovert vs Introvert: Investigating Students' Characteristics in Relation to Students' English Proficiency**

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### **Abstract**

The objective of the present study was to investigate whether there was a correlation between students' characteristics and students' English proficiency. The sample was made up of 44 English Education students in a private university in Bandar Lampung. A set of online questionnaire with a total of 30 questions was distributed in order to collect information about students' characteristics as well as their English proficiency score. Results suggest that there was a significant difference between extroverted and introverted students in relation to their English proficiency. The findings indicate that the significance value of the p-value is 0.005 ( $<0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is accepted. The magnitude of the correlation is -0.440 which indicates that the correlation is a moderate negative (downhill) linear relationship. As the EPT score increases, the students tend to be more introverted.

**Keywords:** students characteristics; English proficiency

### **Abstrak**

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui apakah terdapat korelasi antara karakteristik siswa dan kemampuan bahasa Inggris siswa. Sampel terdiri dari 44 mahasiswa Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di salah satu universitas swasta di Bandar Lampung. Serangkaian kuesioner online dengan total 30 pertanyaan dibagikan untuk mengumpulkan informasi tentang karakteristik siswa serta skor kemahiran bahasa Inggris siswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada perbedaan yang signifikan antara siswa ekstrovert dan introvert dalam kaitannya dengan kemampuan bahasa Inggris mereka. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nilai signifikansi p-value adalah 0,005 (0,05). Oleh karena itu, hipotesis nol ( $H_0$ ) ditolak dan hipotesis alternatif ( $H_a$ ) diterima. Besarnya korelasi adalah -0,440 yang menunjukkan bahwa korelasi tersebut merupakan hubungan linier negatif sedang (menurun). Saat skor EPT meningkat, siswa cenderung lebih tertutup (introvert).

**Kata kunci:** karakteristik siswa; kemampuan Bahasa Inggris

## **INTRODUCTION**

In learning second or foreign language, individual differences have to be highlighted and taken into consideration as they take an important role that affect students' learning. Students, even in similar learning environments and background, may experience many differences and thus lead them to have different level of language proficiency (Roberts & Meyer, 2012). Each individual has their

own distinctive characteristics and learning strategy that makes them different and unique from each other (Mandasari & Oktaviani, 2018). These uniqueness and personality refer to individual's characteristics in which one's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors are shaped by both time and experiences (Gazzaniga & Heatherton cited in Travolta et al., 2018). Allport as cited in Sukmadinata (2017) correspondingly expressed that personality is formed as an individual adapts himself to his environment and therefore it creates reactions to that social stimuli. Septianah et al. (2019) stated that "personality traits are expressed in learning styles, which are in turn reflected in learning strategies." Thus, the personality of learners can affect the way they grasp knowledge and learn new things.

There are many ways of classifying one's personality, one of which is by categorizing them into extrovert or introvert type. The term extrovert and introvert was first introduced by Carl Gustav Jung. Jung (1971) stated that people with extrovert personality tend to focus their attention outside themselves, while people with introvert type tend to focus their attention towards themselves. This means that extroverts are more interested in their surroundings rather than their own thoughts and ego, whereas introverts are more interested in their own thoughts and ego (Zhang, 2008). Many studies and experts claimed that extroverts are more talkative, sociable, and impulsive in solving problems than their introvert counterpart. This impulsiveness can be an advantage for them in which they will be freer in doing activities in extremely stressful situations (Revelle, 1997), yet it can also lead them to act quickly but less correctly in doing compound cognitive tasks (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985). According to Ali as cited in Azzuhria (2017), extroverts tend to have problems in concentration. Zabihi (2011) believed that the characteristics of extroverts lead them to have little time to study meticulously. On the other hand, introverts prefer to involve themselves in activities like writing and reading rather than being involved in activities that require them to have social contact with others (Naik in Zainuddin, 2016). Introverts concentrate more in doing something (Marashi & Dibah, 2013) and are also more serious and anxious (Muharrami et al., 2013) than extroverts. Therefore, they are more cautious in doing anything and are more likely to be more precise in using linguistic forms (Zainuddin, 2016). These differences between extrovert and introvert have become an interesting issue in relation to the effect of personality type on language proficiency.

Language proficiency refers to "one's ability to use language for a variety of communicative purposes" (Renandya et al., 2018). In order to measure one's language proficiency, there are several assessments (tests) that can be used such as TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), IELTS (International English Language Testing System), TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), and many more. In Indonesia, TOEFL is one of the preferred types in testing English proficiency level. Some universities provide a TOEFL prediction test which is called as English Proficiency Test (EPT). There are four English skills that must be mastered by EFL learners: reading, listening, writing, and speaking. From four skills mentioned earlier, EPT, much like TOEFL, only involves two skills out of four skills to be assessed, which are reading and listening.

Besides, the test also covers structure and written expression. The test lasts for 2.5 hours and is divided into three sections, namely, listening comprehension section (50 questions), structure and written expression section (40 questions), and reading comprehension section (50 questions). Similar to TOEFL PBT, the score is on a scale of 310 to 677.

Listening is generally assumed as a complex process. Prastiyowati (2019) described listening comprehension as an active process that enables the listeners to form meaning. Structure and written expression in TOEFL test is a section which focuses on English written form to measure test-taker's ability in identifying and recognizing the appropriate language used in standard written English (Zhuang cited in Handayani, 2019). Reading is an exceptionally multiplex process (Sari et al., 2020). According to Hamdani (2020), reading comprehension involves a series of cognitive process such as using prior information to conclude as well as reading critically and creatively in order to comprehend figurative language, determining the purpose of the text, evaluating the presented ideas, and implementing the ideas to actual situation. At a glance, it could be presumed that EPT will be more advantageous for introverts who like to work alone, prefer profound study such as reading and writing, are more serious and cautious, and are better listeners than extroverts.

Therefore, this present research was conducted to discover whether there is a correlation between students' personality (extrovert-introvert) with their language proficiency by comparing their personality and their EPT score. The researchers decided to conduct this research to find out how different personalities can have different preferences in learning a language. Thus, the researchers will not only attempt to uncover the relationship between personality and language proficiency, but also attempt to tell and explain how extrovert students and introvert students have different strengths and weaknesses in language learning.

## **METHOD**

This current study employed a quantitative approach as it tried to find the relationship between students' personality and their English proficiency. The population of the research was the sixth and eight semester English Education students in the academic year 2020/2021. The sample consists of 39 students. The research was carried out from February to March 2021 in a private university in Bandar Lampung. The instrument used was in the form of questionnaire which was distributed online using google form.

The questionnaire distributed to the participants consists of 30 questions. The questionnaire was developed and divided into two main sections. The first section consists of 16 questions for extrovert and the second section consists of 14 questions for introvert. Both sections use 5 points Likert Scale ranging from 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'neutral', 'agree', to 'strongly agree' which requires the respondents to indicate a degree of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements related to the stimulus.

In analyzing the data, the researchers used SPSS version 25. A series of analysis was conducted, starting from analyzing the reliability of the questionnaire,

analyzing the descriptive statistics of the EPT score obtained, and analyzing the correlation between the score and students' personality.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to uncover the relationship between students' personality and students' English proficiency at tertiary level. The characteristic of respondent based on gender is presented in the following table.

**Table 1. Characteristic of Respondents Based on Gender**

Gender	N	%
Male	12	30%
Female	27	70%
Total	39	100%

From the table above, it can be seen that from a total of 39 respondents, 12 (30%) are male students and 27 (70%) are female students.

### Students' Personality

The instrument used was adopted from Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) which incorporates 30 items: 16 items for extrovert and 14 items for introvert. Below is the questionnaire for extrovert:

**Table 2. The Item Specification of the Questionnaire**

No.	Extrovert ( $X_1$ )				
	Indicator	Statement	N	Mean	SD
Q1	Activity	I often take on more activities than I have time for.	39	3.56	1.07
Q2		I have many different hobbies.	39	3.67	1.18
Q3		I like plenty of bustle and excitement around myself.	39	3.59	1.04
Q4		I am a talkative person.	39	3.23	1.20
Q5	Sociability	I usually let myself go and enjoy the moment at a lively party or gathering.	39	3.28	1.10
Q6		I enjoy meeting new people.	39	3.67	1.13
Q7		I usually take initiative in making new friends.	39	3.56	1.17
Q8		I can easily get some life into rather dull party.	39	3.21	1.03
Q9		I call myself happy-go-lucky.	39	3.51	1.05

Q10	Risk-taking	I am a person who brave to take risks.	39	3.59	1.09
Q11		I like doing something challenging.	39	3.72	0.86
Q12	Impulsiveness	I often make decisions on the spur of the moment.	39	3.56	1.05
Q13		Sometimes people say that I act too rashly.	39	3.62	1.04
Q14	Expressiveness	I am a person who anger quickly.	39	3.56	1.07
Q15	Reflectiveness	I like work that involves action rather than profound thought and study.	39	3.67	0.98
Q16	Responsibility	I often forget little things that I am supposed to do.	39	3.77	0.93

\*Adopted from Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) (Eysenck, Eysenck, & Barret, 1991)

There are seven indicators of the questionnaire, namely activity, sociability, risk-taking, impulsiveness, expressiveness, reflectiveness, and responsibility. The criteria of each indicator were adopted from Eysenck et al. (1991) as cited in Wulandari (2017). Regarding the first indicator, which is activity, extroverts are claimed to be active and enjoy physical activities. Extroverts like to immerse themselves in various interests. They like to be involved in social gatherings such as parties. They can get along with other people well and befriend them easily. Pertaining to risk-taking indicator, extroverts are fond of challenging activities and they do not really care about the consequences. As stated before, extroverts tend to be impulsive; they make decisions rather impetuously. Extroverts are reserved and cool-tempered. They are hard-headed, and act more rather than think more. As regards the responsibility indicator, extroverts are likely to be careless, unpredictable, and fancy-free. Moving on to the next section, the following table below elucidates the questionnaire for introvert side.

**Table 3. The Item Specification of the Questionnaire**

No.	Indicator	Introvert (X <sub>2</sub> )			
		Statement	N	Mean	SD
Q17	Activity	I am inclined to be slow and careful in my action.	39	3.10	1.27
Q18		I usually move about at a leisurely pace.	39	2.85	1.11
Q19	Sociability	I prefer to have few but special friends.	39	2.72	1.36
Q20		I am mostly quite when I am with other people.	39	2.97	1.31

Q21	Risk-taking	I tend to keep in the background on social occasions.	39	2.92	1.18
Q22		I am rather careful in new situation.	39	2.62	1.25
Q23	Impulsiveness	I usually stop and think things over before I speak.	39	2.87	1.08
Q24		I like planning things well ahead of time.	39	3.00	1.36
Q25	Expressiveness	My temper is well controlled.	39	3.21	1.26
Q26		When I am angry with someone, I wait until I cooled off before tackling him or her about the incident.	39	2.77	1.22
Q27	Reflectiveness	I like to have time to be alone with my thoughts.	39	3.10	1.37
Q28		I often spend an evening just reading a book.	39	3.33	1.15
Q29	Responsibility	I usually on time for task in my campus.	39	3.15	1.23
Q30		If I say I will do something I always keep my promise.	39	3.05	1.23

\*Adopted from Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) (Eysenck, Eysenck, & Barret, 1991)

Concerning the activity, introverts are inclined to be passive, sluggish, and get exhausted easily. They like to make their circle of friends as narrow as possible but with a strong bond. Therefore, they find difficulties in making friends and opening up to others. They are not brave enough to take risk since they prefer familiarity, safety, and security. Unlike the extrovert counterpart, introverts do not act in a spur of a moment. They make decision after considering and contemplating about it many times. They usually have a plan ahead of time and think before they speak or act. In expressing themselves, introverts are more sentimental, tender-hearted, labile, and emotional. In respect of reflectiveness, introverts have theoretical mindset and like to be immersed in ideas and introspection. Pertaining to the criteria of responsibility indicator, they are inclined to be reliable, trustworthy and conscientious.

The questionnaires above were adjusted from a yes/no questions into a 5-point Likert scale. The participants are required to fill out the questionnaire by marking each question to assert their degree of agreement, disagreement, or neither of them in which strongly disagree has a value of 1, disagree 2, neutral 3, agree 4, and strongly agree 5. This scale was only used for the extrovert questionnaire. On the other hand, the scale was reversed for introvert questionnaire, in which strongly agree has a value of 1, agree 2, neutral 3, disagree 4, and strongly disagree 5. Thus, the higher the score, the more extroverted the students. After the data was collected,

the researchers then categorize each student into extrovert or introvert category by using the criteria of score interpretation below.

**Table 4. The Interpretation Table of Characteristic**

Score	Interpretation
31-90	Introvert
91-150	Extrovert

Based on the table above, students who scored 31-90 are identified as introvert, while students who scored 91-150 are extrovert. Since the students are required to fill out all of the questionnaire, the smallest data value that can go into the class (lower-class limit) is 30 and the largest data value that can go into the class (upper-class limit) is 150. However, the researchers decided not to include the lower-class limit so the range will be the same for two classes which is 60. Table 5 below identified the personality of the students based on the interpretation above.

**Table 5. The Item Interpretation of Students' Characteristics**

Characteristic	N	%
Introvert	15	38.5%
Extrovert	24	61.5%
Total	39	100%

Accordingly, there are 15 (38.5%) students who are described as introvert, and 24 (61.5%) students who are extrovert. This showed that most students in English Education study program in a private university in Bandarlampung, specifically the sixth semester students and several eight semester students who became the sample are extroverts.

### The Results of Students' EPT Scores

After that, the researchers moved to the next step. In this study, students' English proficiency was measured which is indicated by the result of their English Proficiency Test (EPT). The descriptive statistics of students' EPT score is described as follows:

**Table 6. The Results of Students' EPT Score**  
**Descriptive Statistics**

	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	
EPT_Score	39	236.00	317.00	553.00	451.3333	51.71599	2674.544
Valid N (listwise)	39						

The findings in Table 6 showed that the mean score of students' EPT score was 451.3333. The highest score acquired was 553, whereas the lowest score was 317. The range score between the highest and the lowest score was 236 with the standard deviation of 51.71599 and the variance of 2674.544.

**Table 7. The Reliability of Instrument Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.927	30

From the table above, it could be viewed that  $r_{\text{result}} = 0.927$ . It was compared to  $r_{\text{table}}$  with  $N = 30$  and 1% significance, in which the  $r_{\text{table}} = 0.463$ . Thus, it can be deduced that the instrument used for this research is reliable because  $r_{\text{result}} > r_{\text{table}} = 0.927 > 0.463$ .

### Correlation between Students' Personality and English Proficiency

This study seek to reveal the correlation between students' personality and their English proficiency. Therefore, in order to ascertain the relationship between student personality and students' English proficiency, a Pearson's correlation was run as can be seen in the following table below.

**Table 8. The Correlation between Students' Personality and EPT Score Correlations**

		EPT_Score	Student_Personality
EPT_Score	Pearson Correlation	1	-.440**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.005
	N	39	39
Student_Personality	Pearson Correlation	-.440**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	
	N	39	39

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the table above, it could be seen that the significance value of the p-value is 0.005 ( $< 0.05$ ), so the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is accepted, which means that there is a significant relationship between student personality and students' EPT score. The magnitude of the correlation is -0.440 which indicates that the correlation is a moderate negative (downhill) linear relationship. As the EPT score increases, the students tend to be more introverted.

### The Result of Students' EPT Score of Extrovert Group

The following table will explain the descriptive statistics of the EPT scores obtained by students who belong in extrovert group.



### Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std.	Variance	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Deviation	Statistic	
						Error	Statistic	Statistic	
EPT Score	24	177.00	353.00	530.00	10685.00	445.2083	9.40128	46.05666	2121.216
Valid N (listwise)	24								

The table above showed that the highest score of the extrovert group was 530 and the lowest score of the extrovert group was 353. The mean score of the extrovert group was 445.2083 with standard deviation 46.05666.

### The Result of Students' EPT Score of Introvert Group

The following are the descriptive statistics of EPT scores obtained by students who belong in introvert group.

### Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std.	Variance	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Deviation	Statistic	
						Error	Statistic	Statistic	
EPT Score	15	236.00	317.00	553.00	6917.00	461.1333	15.50787	60.06171	3607.410
Valid N (listwise)	15								

Based on the table above, the highest score gained by the introvert group was 553 and the lowest score gained by the introvert group was 317. The mean score of the introvert group was 461.1333 with standard deviation 60.06171.

In general, many studies show that introverts are more verbally intelligent than extroverts. According to Stahl & Rammsayer (2008), people with introversion personality tend to take a longer time processing information than the ones who are extroverted. Kahnweiler as cited in Breit (2018) argues that the reason is because introverts process more thoughtfully than extroverts do and they take extra time to understand ideas before moving on to new ones. Research supported these arguments by suggesting that “introverts may exhibit higher IQ scores due to their calculated and analytical predisposition because they are more prone to think through things rather than being impulsive” (Trotsiouk et al., 2016).

In language learning, Hasan & Yulianti (2018) asserted, “as extroverts and introverts have different characteristics and preferences in learning a foreign language; so, they might have different ability to grasp each of the four language skills”. As introverts are more passive than extroverts, they usually are better in receptive skills which include reading and listening skills than their extrovert counterparts who are most likely to be better in productive skills such as speaking and writing. Moreover, some experts including Beth Buelow, a professional coach, author and founder of the Introvert Entrepreneur, claimed that introverts are good

listeners in nature (Breit, 2018). They prefer to listen rather than to talk and they are good observers who pay more attention on details. This means that introverts tend to be more equipped in grasping nuances in conversations including listening comprehension.

Furthermore, since introverts are more cautious, they may perform fewer errors than extroverts in doing memory tasks (Trotsiouk et al., 2016) and have more obsession to produce accurate grammar (Suliman, 2015). Gass and Selinker (2008) stated that introverts prefer to read books rather than meeting people and this can affect their reading comprehension in a positive way. Introverts also prefer profound thought and study rather than work that involves action meaning that they might be better in theory. English Proficiency Test (EPT) includes structure & written expressions, listening comprehension, and reading comprehension, which means in doing EPT, students need to use their memory and answer the questions carefully as well as utilize their listening and reading skills more. This answers why students with introvert traits have better EPT score than those with extrovert traits.

Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that introverts are absolutely and always better than extroverts in language learning. Many studies found that extroverts might be better in learning a second or foreign language than introverts do. It is because they are a risk-taker who like to challenge themselves and are able to utilize their potential maximally. Suliman (2015) suggested that extroverts talk more fluently, even though they might not produce grammatically accurate output. In addition, extroverts expert in the class which includes many activities and actions. This is in line with the arguments before that extroverts might perform better in productive skills such as speaking. On the other hand, introverts tend to be less active and talk less because they reflect too much before saying or acting. It hinders them to explore what they can do in learning a language. However, this is not always the case, because we have to take other factors besides students' personality into consideration.

## CONCLUSION

Referring to the statistical results above, it can be seen that the correlation value between students' personality and students' English Proficiency Test (EPT) score was -0.440. To put it all together, there is a moderate negative (downhill) linear relationship between the two variables. The result suggests that as the EPT score increases, the students tend to be more introverted. Introverts tend to prefer profound study which includes deep thought rather than works that involves action. Introverts also prefer reading books rather than meeting people, and are naturally good listeners. Since EPT includes structure & written expressions which require good memory skills as well as listening and reading comprehension which require good listening and reading skills, introvert students benefit more in this case. This explains the reason introvert students perform better in EPT than their extrovert counterparts. On the other hand, extroverts might be better in other language skills than introverts do. Taking into account the different characteristics and preference of extroverts and introverts in learning a language, it can be concluded that

extroverts might perform better in speaking and writing, whereas introverts are better in listening and reading. However, there are some limitations regarding the data sources. Most of the EPT scores were obtained on 27 August 2020 and expire one year later on 27 August 2021. Moreover, the test is still a prediction test, not an actual test, and therefore the scores do not accurately reflect students' English proficiency.

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