Accommodating and Assessing Extraverted
and Introverted Learners in Role-Play Projects
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Introduction

Through the years teachers have been challenged to accommodate all of their students' learning preferences, but many instructors have failed to recognize their students as individuals, opting to treat them equally through their instruction and assessments. I have found throughout my teaching experiences that not every student performs similarly on every assigned activity. I have also observed that students vary in their contributions to cooperative group work. Therefore, I have decided to explore ways to optimize my accommodation of students in the context of cooperative learning projects, with a special focus on the personality traits extraversion and introversion.

The intent of this research is to examine how dynamic and differentiated methods of assessment can be implemented in a foreign language class in a way that will accommodate both extraverted and introverted learners. Because not every student is of the same learning profile, nor of the same personality type, instructors need to be flexible and adjust their lessons and assessments for the benefit and success of all their students. This research provides options and ideas that LOTE teachers can use to dynamically assess both extraverted and introverted learners as they work together.

Extraverted students tend to demonstrate more language output in comparison to the introverted students. For example, last year I assigned a small group of students to create a restaurant role-play that could be presented to their classmates. The students that were the actors in the skit were the ones who were always outspoken and participated often. Although all of

these students performed well, and their grades were very high, the introverted students did not play significant roles in the acting part of the role-play. However, they did play a major role in organizing and developing the script for the skit.

This year, I plan to offer my students more options in selecting their roles, and based on the roles that they play in a group, I will evaluate them using an alternate set of differentiated criteria. Although the introverted students are not likely to be the main actors in a skit, I plan to offer options for these students to work collaboratively with their classmates and demonstrate the language they have acquired. The skits will be videotaped.

Since Spanish is a language, a tool for socializing, it is imperative for all students to communicate with each other in the language. According to De Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor (2007), language acquisition emerges through interaction with other human beings in a social context. Therefore, activities in which students can work cooperatively and communicate in the foreign language will allow them to be successful in acquiring the language. According to De Bot et al., language is transmitted culturally and the learning process exists both within an individual and socially among individuals. Consequently, socially bound activities may provide students an opportunity to acquire and become proficient in the language.

It is important for educators to consider a variety of factors that affect students' performances. Foreign language development consists of cognitive and social aspects (De Bot et al., 2007). We must consider these factors when evaluating our students' performances in collaborative and cooperative group work, while also considering how their personalities may influence their performance. The question that I pose and will examine throughout this research is "How can I optimize teaching and assessment of student performance on cooperative learning tasks in a way that accommodates learner differences, particularly with regard to introversion

versus extroversion?" The theoretical foundation of this project centers on dynamic systems theory and dynamic assessment. These two fields of research are useful in my effort to develop ways of teaching and assessing students' progress in cooperative learning activities, particularly role-plays, in a manner that accommodates their preferences and their inclinations toward extraversion or introversion.

Personality Types: Extraverted vs. Introverted Learners

According to Swiss psychologist Carl Jung, personalities have two contrasting dimensions, extraversion and introversion (Thompson, 1995). These two personality tendencies will be the main focus as I assess students during their development of a role-play in a foreign language class setting. According to Thompson, "Personality preferences do not determine the behavior but rather describe habitual ways of interacting with the environment, of gathering information, and of making decisions" (1995, p. 192). Therefore, to better understand our students and their decisions, and evaluate their performances dynamically, we must examine their personalities. Research suggests that instructors should investigate contributions made by variables such as personality in order to predict foreign language achievement (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, 2000). It is possible that by understanding both extraverted and introverted learners, we can foster their individual strengths and offer a learning environment in which they can all succeed.

According to Thompson (1995), it is important to understand personality preferences, especially when students are assigned to work collaboratively. Conflicts between preferences can lead to miscommunication and affect learning, but understanding how the preferences work can help people communicate more effectively. The preference for extraversion or introversion manifests itself in the direction toward which an individual's attention flows. For extraverts,

energy flows from the individual to the object; for introverts, it flows from the object to the individual (Thompson, 1995). Therefore, by developing a group assignment with different roles, one can assess how individuals with different personality preferences perform within the group setting. I will be able to distinguish how extraverts and introverts work within the group by observing and keeping records of which types of roles they select within the group and charting their progress through performance-oriented cooperative learning tasks.

By habitually attending to the environment, extraverts tend to develop such characteristics as sociability, ease of communication, reliance on the environment for stimulation and guidance, and an action-oriented way of meeting life (Thompson, 1995). Extraverts seek excitement. According to Gregersen (2000), they enjoy a wide range of social, interactive learning tasks, conversations, discussions, debates, role-plays, and simulations. Offering extraverts the opportunity to develop a role-play will allow them social interaction with their peers. In additional, extraverts tend to focus their perception and judgment on people and objects (Carrell, Prince, & Astika, 2000). Offering the extraverted students the opportunity to focus on an audience, or at least a video camera, will accommodate their learning preferences.

In contrast, introverts prefer independent work and tend to develop contemplative detachment, interest in clarity of concepts, and reliance on enduring concepts for guidance (Thompson, 1995). Gregerson (2000) suggests that introverts enjoy writing and that lower producers in a foreign language class tend to be introverted learners. Carrell (2001) agrees and asserts that introverts "tend to prefer more solitary or small-group learning situations, and written performances" (p. 82). These students are likely to prefer to express themselves by writing and developing a script rather than by acting and speaking in the skit. Furthermore, students will be required to include a variety of new and old vocabulary in their scripts. Because introverted

learners tend to outperform extraverts on vocabulary tests (Carrell, 2001), it is probable that the introverts will assist their extraverted classmates in this endeavor.

Thompson (1995) suggests that personality preferences may color our views on what kinds of assessment are appropriate for different goals in different settings; they may color our specific classroom practices as well. By understanding my students and becoming more aware of their preferences, I can develop assessments that are appropriate for their learning styles and create learning groups in which students may benefit from each other's strengths. For example, because the extraverts have the ability to express themselves orally, they may articulate ideas shared within a group to the rest of the class. On the other hand, the introverts may be the ones to come up with the ideas. According to Thompson (1995), "In the classroom—as outside the classroom—people with different preferences simply have different ways of making sense of the world" (p. 204). Because different individuals perceive things differently, they learn differently as well. If one student learns differently from another, it would be inappropriate to evaluate and assess both students in the same manner. Becoming aware of the varying personality types and preferences leads us to a conscious effort in modifying and changing the way we teach and assess our students.

Since students are complicated and the learning process is composed of many changeable variables, I intend to use differentiated instruction to modify and adapt lessons, instructional materials, and assessments to accommodate the learning preferences and needs of my students. Teachers may need to evaluate their assessments by looking at different personality preferences, specifically extraversion and introversion, throughout learning activities, particularly projects and role-plays. My perspective on differentiated instruction draws from two theoretical positions

that are gaining prominence in second language acquisition: Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) and Dynamic Assessment (DA).

Dynamic Systems Theory

According to De Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor (2007), DST holds that all variables are interrelated and a change in one variable may have a significant impact on other variables. Therefore, as evaluators of our students' performances, we must assess our students throughout the process of developing a project, such as a role-play, because one aspect of the project may affect the final product. Forms of assessments include a "short-three" questionnaire, which requires students to evaluate their own performance or the performance of the entire group. We should also monitor the students during class time and ask questions related to the topic of study as a quick and effective form of assessment. Intensive and appropriate assessment throughout the process would be especially helpful in providing effective feedback. By looking at one variable, such as students' competencies with a particular grammar topic, we can offer timely and helpful suggestions that can positively affect the final product. Although we may not be able to determine the final outcome or product, by leading our students through the process, we can significantly influence their performance and success.

DST research (De Bot et al., 2007) suggests that language learning is a complex and unpredictable process. Therefore, it seems inappropriate for an instructor to evaluate his or her students only at the end of a unit or at the end of project. Foreign language instructors should become more aware of the process than the end product when evaluating a project, particularly one that involves cooperative group work in a situational role-play.

<u>Dynamic Assessment</u>

DA, a concept derived from Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), is an interactive approach to conducting assessments (Poehner & Lantolf, 2005). It proposes a process for evaluating student performance by integrating instruction and assessments, an approach that differs from conventional approaches like summative evaluations (Poehner & Lantolf, 2005). DA provides information about the learners' success and their responsiveness to instruction. Because instructing and assessing students is a merged process in DA, it can enlighten the teacher about students' success and allow him or her to identify strengths and weaknesses (Poehner & Lantolf, 2005). DA suggests that an instructor actively and intensively intervene to help students perform better (Poehner & Lantolf, 2005). In my proposed role-play project, I will intervene and evaluate my students' progress, bearing in mind their personality preferences (introversion or extraversion).

Assessing students' skills with a pretest and closely assessing their development of the role-play will allow me to become attuned to their strengths and weaknesses. Students will be asked open-ended questions about their skit in the target language, and the writers of the role-play will be required to submit their script prior to recording. If I notice any difficulty with grammar or vocabulary usage, I can address the problems prior to the recording of the skit. Furthermore, if students are having difficulty in a particular area, I can reteach the material so that students achieve understanding. DA encourages educators to observe and guide student progress while it is emerging (Poehner & Lantolf, 2005).

Students will be assessed using varying rubrics that take into account their extraverted or introverted preferences. They will be offered the opportunity to select their preferred role for the

role-play, and I will construct the groups in such a way that there is at least one introvert and one extravert in each group.

Design of the Study

Within a dynamic approach to LOTE teaching and learning, learners are seen as active participants in shaping their own progress, and the teacher acts as a facilitator who closely mediates the learning process. The interrelationships among the aforementioned theories, DST, DA, and differentiated instruction, are fundamental to establishing engaging instructional practices and cultivating a nurturing learning environment. Adding the extraversion-introversion component offers the opportunity to gauge the extent to which students behave in fixed vs. variable ways in LOTE learning.

I will begin assessing my students' personalities at the start of the school year by developing my own 15-item questionnaire derived from the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, which attempts to identify individuals' basic preferences (Carrell, 2001).* Once the questionnaire has been administered, I will create group activities in which the students will work to together with someone of the opposite personality tendency. During their work, I will observe them and have them evaluate their own performance and the performances of their group members. In alignment with DST, DA, and differentiated instruction, it is important that I observe the students and determine the extent to which the questionnaire used to determine their personalities was predictive. After the groups are assigned and students have completed the project, they will

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* Jung's Personality Type Theory was later expanded by Katharine Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers, who developed the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (Thompson, 1995), a 126-item paper-and-pencil instrument that indicates a preference score on each of the four dimensions encompassed in Jung's theory (Thompson, 1995), However, the dimension that is central to this study is the determination of extraverted or introverted preferences, so I will be selecting only questions that determine whether or not a student possesses the characteristics of an introvert or an extrovert.

complete a short survey that asks them to express their thoughts and opinions about the role they selected and how the activity went.

I have created a set of directions for each of the roles, including one writer, one producer, and two actors in a role-play about food. In addition to accommodating the extraverted and introverted learners, cooperative groups may improve self-esteem for some learners (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, 2000). Because the strengths of some students may compensate for the needs of others, the treatment may lead the introverted learners to build a sense of personal confidence in their own contributions to the project. Based on the students' selections of roles, the design will also allow me the opportunity to determine whether or not the characteristics of extraverted and introverted learners are accurate.

As students develop their projects within their group, they will review old and learn new vocabulary. To reveal the students strengths and needs in regard to the topic, I will be assessing them through short quizzes that involve labeling pictures representing a variety of food. Students will also be asked several written and oral questions concerning the topic. They will be required to use a variety of verbs related to the food unit, such as *desayunar* (to eat breakfast), *almorzar* (to eat lunch), *cenar* (to eat dinner), and *comer* (to eat). Moreover, this unit will include expressions that require students to make requests for food at a restaurant and to verbalize at what times they eat their meals. As students develop their skits, I will identify errors in their language usage, by examining the results from their quizzes and their responses to my questions.

Conclusion

This study is designed to facilitate the success of foreign language learners. By becoming aware of the complexity of learners and accommodating the intricacies of their personality styles and learning preferences, teachers can more accurately and appropriately assess that success.

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