

# Personality Traits and Translation: The Effect of Introvert and Extrovert Personality Types on Translation Quality of Political and Journalistic Texts

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## Abstract

The current study is interdisciplinary research having a psychological look at the quality of translated texts. This work was an endeavour to probe the effect of the translators' personality- extrovert and introvert- on the translation quality of political and journalistic texts. It also explored the effect of the graduation level on the translation quality. To achieve the ends, the data was obtained from 50 graduate and 50 undergraduate students majoring in English translation at different Iranian universities. The translated texts were assessed by three ratters using Farahzad's model (1992) of translation quality assessment. The results of independent samples t-test revealed that the personality characteristics of the participants did not have significant effect on the translation quality. Moreover, the results of ANOVA indicated that the extrovert students had a better performance than the introverts in the accuracy scale, but the reverse pattern emerged in the case of style scale where the introverts outperformed the extroverts. The research has attempted to consider the interrelationship between psychology and translation field and can be beneficial for importing concepts and theories from the field of psychology. Regarding the results, "introversion" and "extroversion" can be considered as two sources of variation in translation process and outcome.

## Keywords

Personality traits; Introvert personality; Extrovert personality; Translation quality assessment.

## 1. Introduction

The term 'personality' is derived from the Latin word *persona* which means mask and actors or actresses used to play a role. The word in psychology has a very vast meaning which is different from its other meanings such as moral personality, philosophical personality, legal personality and psychology of personality. According to the psychological association, personality types are defined as individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. They are internal factors that

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have an impact on students' ability in language learning (Skellett, 2017). Also, in many psychologists' views, personality involves some aspects as individuals' motivation, intelligence, thoughts, ideas and values. The concept of personality is a dynamic organization of psychophysical system which determines an individual's behavior and thinking. The well-known personality traits refer to introvert and extrovert (Qanwal & Ghani 2019). The difference between individuals' personality stems from body and psycho differences, in fact there are not two people who are alike at all aspects of personality (Siassi 1970). Learning about other people's personality types helps us understand the most effective way to communicate with them, and how they function best.

The terms introversion and extraversion were first popularized by Jung (1921). According to Jung's theory of psychological types, human beings are all different in fundamental ways. One's ability to process different information is limited by their particular type. Jung (1921) stated that "Introversion" and "Extroversion" refer to the direction of psychic energy. If a person's psychic energy usually flows outwardly, he or she is labeled as extrovert, while if the person's psychic energy usually flows inwardly, the person is introvert. Extroverts feel an increase of perceived energy when interacting with a large group of people, but a decrease of energy when left alone. Conversely, introverts feel an increase of energy when alone, but a decrease of energy when surrounded by a large group of people. Ellis (1985, cited in Hadley 2003, p. 63) stated that most scholars agree that the individual learners' differences affect the success of second language learning. A number of studies have shown a positive correlation between extroversion and second language learning. It should be noted that extroversion is a salient factor for students who are studying a second language in a formal and structured learning environment (Kezwer 1987).

Wong and Shen (1999) maintain that personal factors which are subtle and complex, can account for many of the differences between various translations of the same source. They play a crucial role in translating and can be classified into two main types, i.e., personal competence (a translator has to be competent in SL interpretation and TL representation) and personal attitudes (the individual translator's subjective orientations within a certain historical and cultural context). One of the personal factors is personality traits of translators (Hubscher-Davidson 2009). The investigation of this idea will be expanded in the current study. Many researchers have highlighted the need for translation studies to enlarge translation by developing new ideas and new ways of thinking about it. More importantly, translation is a psycholinguistic formulation process through which the translator reproduces a message in a target language. The multidisciplinary link between the fields of translation studies and psychology has been growing stringer in recent years (Wilss 2003). As Munday (2008) uttered, regarding the interdisciplinary nature of translation studies, cognitive sciences and psychological

factors as translators' personalities have always had remarkable roles in translation studies. In fact, translators' personalities or characters are responsible for their behavior and thus, their success and failure in the process of translation. Therefore, studying translators' personalities or characters can be a means to understand what translators conduct during in the translation process.

Regarding the above discussion, the main purpose of the researchers is to find the possible effects of personality factors on the quality of translation and whether some of the students' personality traits and individual differences will be perceivable in some way to their target audience or not. Also, the study is aimed to investigate the issue more specifically by trying to determine the effect of translators' educational level on quality of translation. Thus, the following two hypotheses were examined in this study:

1. There is not any significant difference between the translation quality of extrovert and introvert students.

2. The educational level of translator does not have any effect on the quality of the translated texts.

## **2. Literature Review**

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, very few studies have been conducted in this area and according to Hubscher-Davidson (2009) personality research in translation studies is still in its fancy. But the topic has been analyzed in other areas such as language learning and job finding. Reiss (2000) worked on individuality of the translator in the evaluation of all kinds of translations. It may be inferred that the offensive person would hardly be inclined to undertake translating, because for all its importance and creative potential, translating is primarily an act of service (Reiss 2000). She also believed that the theoretical person as the one who avoids subjectivity, would be good at translating technical and philosophical works, because understanding and dealing with things rationally is his forte. The economic person which is characterized by a utilitarian view of life, is the best qualified to translate appeal-focused texts and content-focused texts, while being less well suited to translate form-focused texts. Content-focused text concerns the linguistic elements to be considered when translating. Content-focused type would include news reports, commercial correspondence, treaties, official documents and so on. Reiss claimed that the personality of the translator is a separate entity to those authors, and that the translator's temperament is as important a factor in the translating process as the author's is still somewhat novel. Also, Barboni (1999) as cited in Hubscher-Davidson's article (2009) explored translators' behavior and believes that certain personality types are more at ease when translating specific texts. Barboni argues that when faced with stressful situation, a translator's reaction is linked to his or her

personality and translators apply a number of defense mechanism to protect themselves. Her analyses of defense mechanism are fascinating and insightful, as she draws from her knowledge of clinical psychology. Although lacking in experimental evidence, Reiss and Barboni's applications of psychological theories to the study of translators are innovative examples of interdisciplinary that further contribute to our understanding of individual differences in translation process.

In a recent study, Paul and Whyatt (2016) carried out interdisciplinary research on the translators' personality and translation. They examined the possible link between personality features and translation performance. The achieved results confirmed that personality characteristics are important building blocks for further development of translation expertise and competence. In a similar vein, Daisy (2009) in a related study noted that the personality profile of translators could be helpful in exploring their behavior. It is not fair to conclude about the translated works without regarding the translators' personality.

In Iranian context, Tavajoh and Yaqubi (2019) analyzed personality traits and translation quality. The outcomes of the study proved a positive relationship between personality traits and translators' performance quality in different text types and also, psychological model of translators' personality had a remarkable effect on assessing the translated works. In another related study, Shaki and Khoshsalighe (2017) investigated personality type and translation performance of Persian translator trainees. The results indicated that the translation quality of the participants with intuitive and thinking types was significantly better than the sensing type counterparts in translating expressive texts. Moreover, Kariminia and Mahjoubi (2013) examined the relationship between translation students' personality types and the quality of their English-to-Persian translations of different text types. They concluded that the only dichotomy showing a significant difference was that of intuition versus sensation. In other words, the intuitors outperformed their sensor counterparts in the translation of the expressive text.

### **3. Methodology**

The current study followed quasi-experimental design examining the casual impact of personality on the quality of translation for the target population. The research measured the effect of personality types as an independent variable and translation quality assessment as the dependent one. The selected participants were 50 undergraduate students of English translation at Payamenoor and Jahad universities of Yazd and 50 graduate students of English translation studying at Islamic Azad university of Yazd and Alborz university of Qazvin, Iran.

In order to homogenize the 100 students, a short paragraph of a simple prose text (written by Nilipour 1984) was given to them to translate it. The simplicity of the text was verified and validated by some professors of Yazd University. After evaluating these translations, the higher-level subjects whose scores ranged from 15 to 20 were selected for the next step which was translating two texts. That is to say, the corpus of the study composed of the two related texts, i.e., political text (selected from *Translating Texts in Politics* by Tajvidi 1997) and journalistic text (selected from *Translating Journalistic Text* by Tajvidi 1995). The length of both texts was 378 words and the time allocated was 20 minutes. It should be noted that the participants were allowed to use dictionary. In general, different types of personality tests have a quantitative look at personality which is itself a qualitative issue. The psychological test of the present study was adopted from Gauqueline (1928). The test included 44 items for self-knowledge translated by Zaman (1999). The time devoted to the test was 15 minutes.

For evaluation purposes, the researchers, based on characteristics of the five features – accuracy, appropriateness, neutrality, cohesion and style - prepared some tables for each part of the theory and identified 4 scores for each. Therefore, the translations were scored out of 20. The researchers evaluated the quality of the translated passages based on Farahzad's (1992) model. After that, they analyzed the personality tests and divided the participants into extrovert and introvert groups. Then, For the sake of validity, translations were checked by the two raters (researchers) who were completely familiar with the Farahzad's model. Both the raters (researchers) were the university instructors. Also, they were trained to rate the political and journalistic translated texts of the students. To address the research hypotheses, "finding the significant difference between the translation quality of extrovert/ introvert students", and "the effect of educational level of translator on the quality of the translated texts", an independent-samples t-test was used along with a mixed between-within subjects ANOVA to assess the possible interaction effect among the five scales of accuracy, appropriateness, naturalness, cohesion and style with the personality type and graduation effect.

Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) refers to a “branch of translation studies concerned with both linguistic analysis and comparison of source and target texts and social value judgment” (House, 2011, p.119). The rationale behind choosing this model was the comprehensiveness of it. The theoretical model (Farahzad, 1992) is presented as follows:

A. Holistic Scoring: Since the item assesses a wide variety of competencies, the examiner may find it convenient to approach the text as the unit of translation and adopt this system, especially with a large number of students. The examiner may, for instance, come up with the scheme as demonstrated in the following table.

**Table 1.** A rubric based on text as the unit of translation (Farahzad 1992 p.133)

Item	Score
Accuracy	20 %
Appropriateness	20 %
Naturalness	20 %
Cohesion	20 %
Style of discourse / choices of words	20 %

B. Objective Scoring: In this system, the target text must be read twice, first to check the accuracy and appropriateness and then for cohesion and style. The first option was adopted for this research.

#### 4. Results

A detailed analysis of the translated texts is presented to serve as evidence for the effect of personality as an integral part of translation process. There were two categorical variables, namely personality (extrovert/introvert) and graduation (graduate / undergraduate). Also, there was a continuous variable, i.e., translation quality score. In this study, the researchers used independent samples t-test to compare the data and find the effects of personality and graduation on the translation quality. The independent samples t-test compares the mean scores of two groups on a given variable.

In the first step, the researchers used frequencies to obtain descriptive statistics of categorical variables. Table 2 shows the frequency of extrovert and introvert subjects.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics of personality

		Frequency	Percent
<b>Valid</b>	Introvert	20	33.3%
	Extrovert	40	66.7%
	Total	60	100.0%

According to Table 2, 20 students (33.3 %) were introvert and 40 students (66.7 %) were extrovert. Concerning the effect of personality, Table 2 indicates the mean and standard deviation for extrovert and introvert students. It also presents the sig value, DF and T value of variables.

**Table 3.** Total personality mean scores

Personality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error mean	T. value	Df	Sig(2-tailed)
Total Introvert/ Extrovert	20	15.2000	1.98945	.44485	.077	58	.939
	40	15.1500	2.51712	.39799			

The descriptive statistics shows that the mean score of introverts (15.20) and extrovert students (15.15). Standard Deviation of introvert students (1.99) was less than extrovert students (2.52). Based on the results of the independent sample t-test, there was no statistically significant difference between introvert students (M=15.20, SD=1.98) and extrovert students (M=15.15, SD=2.51,  $T_{(58)} = .077, p = .939$ ).

The subjects participating in the study included 30 undergraduate and 30 graduate students of translation. The researcher used independent-samples t-test to analyze the data and find the effects of graduation on the translation quality. The test will tell us whether the graduate and undergraduate students differ significantly in terms of their translation scores or not. Table 3 demonstrates the mean and standard deviation for each of the given groups. It also presents p-value (Sig), DF and T value of variables.

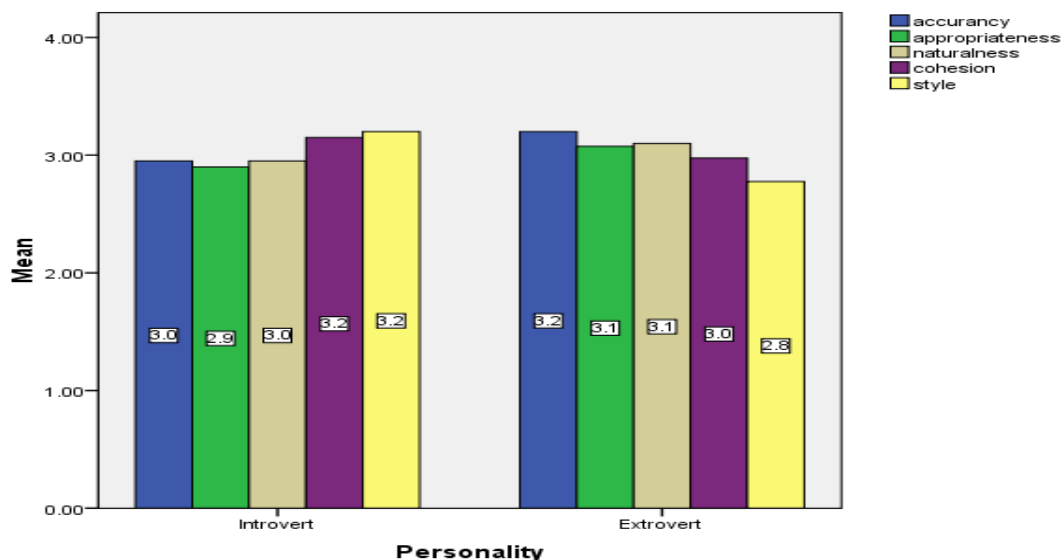
**Table 4.** Mean performance of the subjects in different graduation levels

Graduation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T. value	Df	Sig(2-tailed)
Total Graduate/Undergraduate	30	15.3000	2.21515	.40443	.439	58	.662
	30	15.0333	2.48420	.45355			

The statistics of table 4 show the slightly better performance of graduate students (15.30) than that of undergraduate students (15.03). Also, standard deviation of graduate students (2.21) was less than that of undergraduate students (2.48).The results of independent-samples t-test revealed that there was no substantial significant difference in scores between the graduate (M=15.30, SD=2.21) and undergraduate students, M=15.03, SD=2.48;  $t_{(58)} = .439, p = .66 > .05$ .The homogeneity of variance was assumed (Sig = .96,  $p > 05$ ).To find out the possible interaction effect among the five scales of accuracy, appropriateness, naturalness, cohesion and style with the personality type and graduation effect, a mixed between-within ANOVA was conducted. The ANOVA

results obtained indicated that there was no statistically significant difference for the scale variable [ Wilks' Lambda ( $_{4, 53}$ ) = 0.988,  $F = 0.158$ ,  $p = 0.958$ ]. Indeed, none of the five scales mentioned above were significantly different from each other.

Regarding the interaction effect, a statistically significant effect was found between scale and personality type [ Wilks' Lambda ( $_{4, 53}$ ) = 0.255,  $F = 4.544$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ] with a large effect size (Eta Squared = 0.255). Concerning scale and graduation, no statistically significant interaction effect was found [Wilks' Lambda ( $_{4, 53}$ ) = 0.853,  $F = 2.288$ ,  $p = 0.072$ ]. Figure 1 offers an overall view of the mean scores of the different factors of quality assessment – accuracy, appropriateness, naturalness, cohesion and style – among extrovert and introvert students in the study. According to the figure, the extrovert students performed more successfully in accuracy (3.2), naturalness (3.1) and appropriateness (3.1) whereas the introvert students had higher scores in cohesion (3.2) and style (3.2).



*Figure 1.* Bar Graph of translation quality factors across personality

Figure 2 shows the mean scores of translation quality factors between graduate and undergraduate students. The graduate students had higher scores in accuracy (3.3) and appropriateness (3.1) whereas the undergraduate students performed better in naturalness (3.1) and cohesion (3.1). The mean scores of the style factor (2.9) were equal between the groups.



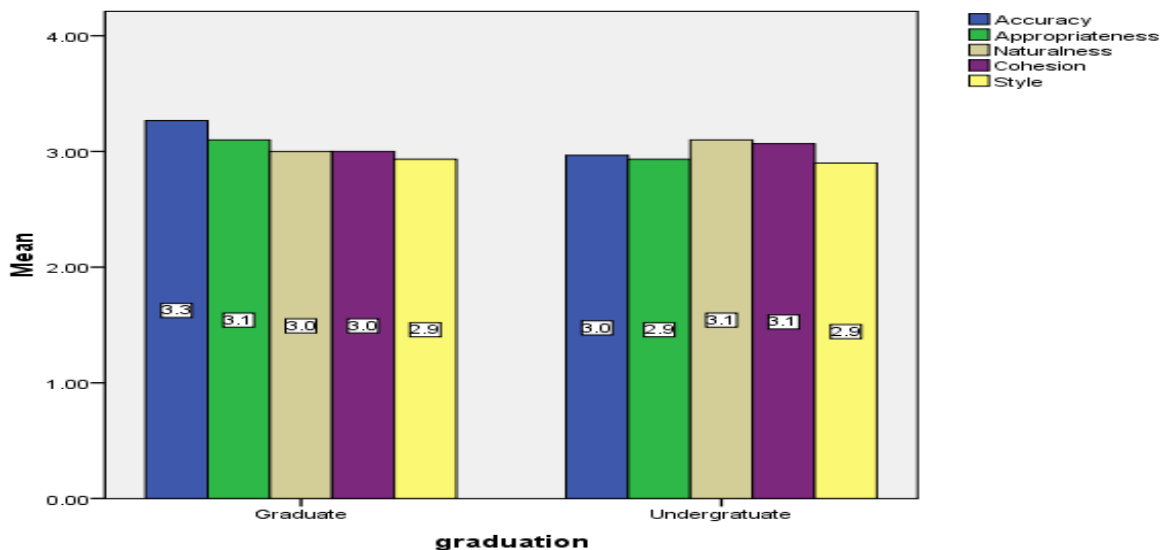


Figure 2. Bar graph of translation quality factors across graduation level

### 5. Discussion

The present section consists of three parts: the discussion of the results pertinent to the personality effect on the translation quality, the results of educational level and translation quality. The findings obtained can be indicative of the influence of a wide variety of factors on the translation output one of which is the translators' personality. The effect of the personality factors in general and extrovert/introvert personality types in particular cannot be ignored in translation studies although their contribution is not as effective as other factors such as the L1 and L2 proficiency. Personality characteristics can play a peripheral role in the translation process and may affect the overall quality of the translation. Therefore, considering a translation sample, as employed in this study, may not give us a comprehensive overview as to the quality of the translation. Comparing two translation textbooks by two different translators enjoying extrovert and introvert personality can shed more light on the issue.

The results of the study are not in line with Riess (2000) and Barboni (1999) – as cited in Hubscher-Davidson (2009) - who pointed out that certain personalities are better suited than others for translation. Although their observations are not supported by experimental evidence, the present study offers a qualitative and quantitative research investigating the effects of the selected personalities on the translation quality. The results may have been affected by a number of specific constraints. One possible reason for this result might lie in the difference of personality tests which are ambiguous. Ganji (2008) believes that the reason for the ambiguity is fancy work of test maker instead of accuracy and reality. Also, the number of subjects might not have been adequate for the research. Having a larger number of subjects at our disposal may lead to a better

overview of the contribution of personality factors. The students who took part in the study may have been influenced by other factors alongside potential personality traits. Hubscher-Davidson (2009) states that some factors such as translator experience and the time spent on the task can all affect the quality of a target text. The researcher used an independent-samples t-test to analyze the data and find the effects of educational level on the translation quality. The results of table 4 showed that, though the graduation levels of the students were different and a better translation was expected of graduated students, there was no significant difference in the translation quality between the graduate and undergraduate translation students ( $M=15.03$ ,  $SD=2.48$ ;  $t_{(58)} = .439$ ,  $p = .66 > .05$ ).

It is worthy to note that the sample texts given were of intermediate level of difficulty. Therefore, they could be attempted by both B.A. and M.A. students equally. The level of difficulty of the test was not quite tough so as to make the translation task cumbersome for the intermediate subjects. Given the above points, it can be argued that the level of the difficulty of the selected texts was not high enough to create discrimination between graduate and undergraduate participants. In other words, both groups could equally cope with them. Another possible reason for the lack of any significant difference between the undergraduate and graduate levels can be attributed to the translation programs offered in Iranian curricula for translation studies. In the researcher's experience, these translation courses are usually about the theoretical foundations of translation and some other fields such as linguistics and English literature. The practical courses which can improve the ability of translation at different educational levels are required more extensively at Iranian universities.

The result of ANOVA also shows that the extrovert subjects had a better performance than the introverts in the accuracy scale (Mean difference = 0.25) but reverse pattern emerged in the case of style scale where the introverts outperformed the extroverts (Mean difference = 0.43). The subjects did not significantly differ in the other scales, i.e., appropriateness, naturalness and cohesion. Concerning scale and graduation, no statistically significant interaction effect was found. The only difference is the accuracy style where the graduate subjects have outperformed the undergraduates. The reason of such result might be referring to the way of assessing the translated quality assessment. There are many different ways for the translation quality assessment each of which examines different aspects of a translation. Even some researchers stated that "we do not know well enough when a TT can be characterized as good or successful" (Schaffner 1997, p. 65). The selected model for the study examines the five factors of translation quality assessment (accuracy, naturalness, appropriateness, cohesion and style). These factors are different in other models. The use of other models like error analysis and holistic models may change the results.

The present paper has attempted to consider the interrelationship between psychology and translation and findings indicated that personality types seem to be a relevant factor in translation process. Hubscher-Davidson (2009) believes that findings of such studies could have important implications for translator training, and novice translators can be made aware of different ways in which they impact on target texts, and the resulting target readers' perception of their work. Moreover, being aware of translators' personality types, translation educators are able to select suitable texts. On top of that, the results can help extroverted translators to increase their motivation and improve their performance in translating by recognizing their personality types.

## 6. Conclusion

Riess (2000) states that "Without anticipating the results of any intensive research in the relations between basic personality types and translating, a few observations are necessary for a more complete definition of personal category of translation criticism and to develop some criteria that will foster greater objectivity in translation criticism" (p.110). The present study aimed to test the effects of two kinds of personality – extrovert and introvert – on the quality of translated texts. It also aimed to assess the effects of the graduation level on translation quality.

The first research hypothesis stated that there was no significant difference between quality translation of extrovert and introvert subjects. The results of the research verified the hypothesis. In other words, the results demonstrated that translator's personality had no effect on translation quality of political and journalistic texts. As it was shown before, the Sig value of mean score of this test was (Sig = .192,  $p > .05$ ). Thus, the first hypothesis was confirmed. The second research hypothesis asserted that the educational level did not have any substantial effect on the quality of the translated texts. The results revealed that the performances of the graduate translation students were slightly better than undergraduate translation students; however, the difference observed was not statistically significant. Thus, the second null hypothesis was also confirmed. The results of the present study indicated that the type of personality cannot have any effects on the quality of political and journalistic translations. Moreover, quality translation of graduate and undergraduate translation students is not significantly different in the selected translation texts. To find out the possible interaction effect among the five scales of accuracy, appropriateness, naturalness, cohesion and style with the personality type and graduation effect, the results did not show a statistically significant interaction effect between scale and graduation.

This research has provided multiple implications for some individuals in the field of translation. It devises an effective research instrument and a feasible research design for future empirical studies. Besides, the mapping of different individual competence development paths calls for more academic attention to individual learning paths in translation development. The effect of some individual factors as being introvert/extrovert on the quality of translation should not be ignored, and translation students should be given opportunities for self-awareness. The students will be able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses, leading to their success and helping them improve their potential abilities. Thus, the attention of curriculum designers of translation courses is necessary here. On top of that, translation educators should consider the important role of translators' personality in the act of translation. They should not expect all students to translate different text types equally well. Some are more capable of translating texts of certain functions. It is necessary to restructure the curriculum due to support students with different level and increase their output.

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