

Translation and Inner State: The impact of Interpreters' Extraversion/Introversion on Accuracy and Sentence Length

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Abstract

The present study investigated the impact of interpreters' extraversion/introversion on interpretation accuracy. It was also designed to explore the relationship between extraversion/ introversion and the length of interpreted sentences. To achieve these purposes, first a placement test (i.e. Oxford Placement Test), was administered to 65 senior university translation students at Feizol-Islam non-governmental institute of higher education in order to select a homogeneous population. Based on the results, 30 students with the same level of language proficiency were specified. Then, an extraversion/introversion test (Al-Shalabi 2003) was run to set apart extrovert and introvert participants. Finally, both groups were asked to interpret a VOA audio track. Analysis of the obtained results revealed that both extraversion and introversion affect interpretation accuracy, with the difference that introvert interpretation accuracy overweighed extrovert interpretation accuracy. Also, in terms of the length of the interpreted sentences, the results showed that the average length of extrovert interpreters' sentences was longer than those of introvert interpreters' sentences and source text sentences. The findings have implications for teachers of interpretation courses and workshops to test their students concerning extraversion and introversion before teaching, and to base their instruction on the fact that psychological moods affect the extent of their students' performance as regards translation accuracy.

Keywords: Introversion, extraversion, interpretation, accuracy, sentence length

1. Introduction

1.1 Introversion/ Extroversion

Introversion was introduced in ancient Greek psychological systems, attributable to Galen around 200 B.C. (McAdams, 2000). Introversion and extroversion were formally correlated with a number of traits by which the processes came to be operationalized. Jung's "introverted" personality invests psychic energy in one's own private thoughts, feelings, and fantasies. These individuals tend to prefer solitary, quiet activities, and he operationalized this construct through the use of a hospitalized population of dysthymic to represent "introverts" (Freyd, 1924). By making this connection, emphasis on subjective states, mood, and a tendency to avoid large groups of people, over stimulating situations, and a plethora of novel experiences came to characterize introversion.

Eysenck (1947) added enthusiasm, impulsivity, and "heedlessness" to the definition, though energy level and "social dominance" would continue as important parts of the extroversion definition, while impulsivity would become a mere correlate.

The definition of extroversion is complex, underdeveloped, and often contradictory. Eysenck (1947) used the term introversion as the opposite of extroversion, which he used to describe an outgoing, sociable, enthusiastic, and somewhat impulsive personality. The single continuum model for introversion-extroversion as a personality dimension was operationalized by McAdams (2000) as one of the five basic domains of personality. The five-factor model was subdivided by Costa and McCrae (1992) to create the NEO-PI-R, a personality inventory that measures the facets of the "Big Five" factors of Openness, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. There are six extroversion facets, including warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, activity, excitement-seeking, and positive

emotions.

According to Silverman (1993), the main difference between introverts and extroverts is the source of their energy, i.e. extroverts receive their energy from outside phenomena, while introverts get their energy from within themselves. Also, he adds, that the second outstanding difference is that extroverts possess a single-layered personality, while introverts have a private self and a public self (the persona). It means that introverts try to show themselves perfect at school, collect all their negative feelings inside and later, unload them at home with the one they trust the most and feel the safest with- usually Mom.

Jung (1938) created this terminology as he was an introvert, and he did not consider introversion of lesser value than extroversion he believed that individuals have degrees of introversion and extroversion in their personalities and the degree to which one pole dominates the personality can be measured with the Introversion and Giftedness *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (Myers, 1962), the basis of all personality and learning inventories today.

1.2 Interpretation

"Interpretation is an educational activity which aims to reveal meaning and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information". (Tilden 1957, p. 8). According to Alderson and Low (1976), interpretation is an attempt to create understandings. Interpretation is an approach to communication. It is separated from other forms of information transfer in that it is pleasurable, relevant, organized, and has a theme (Ham, 1992). Interpretation give(s) meaning to a foreign landscape or event from the past or present. (Beck & Cable, 1998).

1.3 Accuracy

According to Worth and Cowie (1997), accuracy is a term used in translation evaluation to refer to the degree of correspondence between the translated and original text. According to Larson (1984), accuracy in representing the meaning of the original text and using natural idiomatic expressions in the receptor language are the primary goals of the translator. The translator, as he contends, should be faithful to the meaning of the original text as well as to the structure of the receptor language. Moreover, in a good translation incomplete, extraneous, or different information must be avoided.

As Larson (1984) puts forward, "accuracy forces the translator to assess a range of all possible word choices in the structure of the language and carefully decide on the most contiguous word which equates with the vocabulary used in the source language" (p. 529). He adds:

"In general, the three main characteristics of translation evaluation can be referred to as accuracy, clearness, and naturalness. Accuracy of meaning, however, can be checked by a careful semantic comparison of the translated text with the source text. The comparison may include factors such as omissions and additions in the translated text, zero meaning (when the form used does not communicate any meaning at all) and differences in meaning" (p.529).

Accuracy is defined by Rahimi (2004) as the suitable and detailed explanation of the source message and the transmission of that message as exactly as possible. A translation, according to Rahimi, will be considered inaccurate if it inadvertently omits some piece of information, adds some information which is not available in the source text, and makes mistakes in analyzing the meaning of the text. Khomeijani Farahani (2005) believes that accuracy refers to the extent to which the writer translates a text accurately and precisely. He believes that there are two possible ways in which one can determine the degree of accuracy of the translation. The first way is to identify and underline the key (or content) words of the original text and their equivalents in the target language text and compare them to establish how close the two sets of vocabulary items are. The point, here, is the selection of the best possible equivalents for the source language keywords. If the translator has been successful to do so, it can be concluded that he/she has managed to convey the same message as the source text and thus the translation is acceptable in terms of accuracy criterion.

There are many studies about the impact of introversion and extroversion on learning English language, but interpretation seems to have been ignored by the researchers. Actually, investigators have focused more on the impact of psychology on teaching and learning than interpretation. Therefore, the researchers in the present study aimed at exploring the possible effects of psychological states, i.e. extroversion/ introversion, on interpretation

Based on what was stated above, the present study addressed the following two questions:

1. To what extent do extroversion and introversion affect the length of sentences in interpretation?
2. To what extent do extroversion and introversion affect interpretation accuracy?

2. Method

2.1 Participants

The population in this study comprised 65 senior university translation students at Feizol-Islam non-governmental institute of higher education, from which 30 homogeneous students were selected as the participants of the present study.

2.2 Material

An audio track from VOA Special English (Appendix B) was used as the material for the purposes of this study. The researchers tried to comply with the related standards; namely, the selected audio track was not specialized, and was at the intermediate level of language proficiency for the students to interpret it with no need for a dictionary. Also, it was not too long and tedious, i.e. it took the students approximately five minutes to translate. The track was about implementing measure security at the airport of Washington DC.

2.3 Instruments

The two main instruments used in the present study were 1) a placement test (i.e. Oxford Placement Test) to choose homogenous participants in terms of language proficiency, and 2) the introversion/extroversion test developed and validated by Al Shalabi (2003). This test is actually a questionnaire consisting of 6 items to distinguish extraverts from introverts. (Appendix A)

2.4 Procedures

To conduct the study, the following steps were taken:

1. Oxford Placement Test was administered to 65 senior university translation students at Feizol-Islam non-governmental institute of higher education, and 30 homogeneous participants were selected.
2. Al-Shalabi's (2003) extroversion/introversion test was run to set apart extrovert and introvert participants.
3. Both groups were asked to interpret the mentioned VOA audio track. They were actually required to listen to the audio track three times. The first time, they were just asked to listen carefully, but in the second listening, the researchers halted the audio track after each sentence and asked them to interpret it. Finally, they were inquired if they had forgotten to interpret any of the sentences.

3. Analysis of the Data

3.1 Comparison of the Length of Sentences

Here, the analysis of 2 exemplar interpretations by extroverts and introverts are presented:

Example1:

ST: Passengers will be questioned or searched at least two times before getting on their flights.

Extroverts

1. حد اقل دو بار قبل از پرواز مسافران توسط گارد امنیتی مورد بازرسی و بازرسی قرار می گیرند.
2. مسافران حداقل دو بار قبل از سوار شدن به پرواز هایشان مورد بازرسی و پرسش قرار می گیرند.
3. همه مسافران قبل از سوار شدن به هواپیما به وسیله نیروهای امنیتی پرواز مورد بازرسی و بازرسی قرار می گیرند.

Introverts

1. مسافران قبل پرواز حداقل دو بار مورد پرسش و بازرسی قرار می گیرند.
2. مسافران حداقل دو بار پیش از سوار شدن مورد سوال قرار گرفته یا بررسی می شوند.
3. مسافران حداقل دو مرتبه قبل از سوار شدن مورد بازرسی و بازرسی قرار می گیرند.

Analysis: Here, there are six randomly-chosen interpretations of the English sentence by extrovert and introvert participants. The English sentence contains 15 elements as counted by WORD software. The first interpretation of extrovert participants contains 18 elements, while the second and the third interpretations contain 17 and 19 elements

respectively. As for introverts, the first interpretation contains 14 elements, while the second third interpretations contain 16 and 15 elements respectively. Thus, the average number of elements for the extroverts' interpretations is 18, and for the introverts' interpretations is 15.

Example 2:

ST: Special new X-ray machines will examine all objects belonging to passengers before they are placed on the planes.

Extroverts

1. دستگاه های جدید ویژه اشعه ایکس تمام اشیاء متعلق به مسافران را قبل از اینکه سوار هواپیما شوند، مورد بررسی قرار می دهد.
2. تمام وسایل مسافران پیش از سوار شدن به هواپیما توسط دستگاه ویژه جدید اشعه ایکس مورد بررسی قرار خواهد گرفت.
3. دستگاه های اشعه ایکس جدید مخصوصی همه متعلقات مسافران را قبل از سوار شدن بر هواپیما مورد بازرسی قرار می دهند.

Introverts

1. دستگاههای اشعه ایکس تمام اشیا متعلق به مسافران ماقبل از اینکه داخل هواپیما قرارگیرند بررسی خواهند کرد.
2. قبل از اینکه مسافران سوار هواپیما شوند بار هایشان توسط دستگاه ویژه ی اشعه ی ایکس بازرسی می شود.
3. مسافران قبل از سوار شدن به هواپیما توسط اشعه ایکس مخصوص مورد بازرسی قرار میگیرند.

Analysis: The source sentence, in this example, comprises 18 elements. The extroverts' interpretations contain 23, 20 and 21 elements, while the introverts' interpretations contain 17, 18 and 15 elements, respectively. As a result, the average number of elements for the extroverts' interpretations amounts to 21.33, and for the introverts' interpretations to 16.66.

3.2 Comparison of extroverts'/ introverts' Interpretation Accuracy

According to Khomeijani Farahani (2005), to determine the degree of accuracy of the translation, one way is to identify and underline the key (or content) words of the original text and their equivalents in the target language text and compare them to establish how close the two sets of vocabulary items are. However, a careful semantic comparison of the translated text with the source text may include the comparison of such factors as omissions and additions in the translated text, zero meaning (when the form used does not communicate any meaning at all) and differences in meaning (Larson, 1984).

Example 1

ST: It was the last major American airport to re-open after the September Eleventh terrorist attacks in the United States.

Analysis: In the source text, the key (or content) words are: "*the last*", "*major*", "*American airport*", "*re-open*", "*September Eleventh*", "*terrorist attacks*", and "*United States*". As it is clear from the obtained data, "*the last*" has been interpreted by the three extroverts as "آخرین", and "*Major*" has been interpreted by the first extrovert interpreter as "بزرگ", while the second extrovert interpreter has omitted it and the third extrovert interpreter has interpreted it as "مهم". "*American airport*" has been interpreted by three extrovert interpreters as "فرودگاه آمریکا". "*re-open*", has been interpreted by the first interpreter as "دوباره راه اندازی شده", as "افتتاح" by the second and as "بازگشایی" by the third. "*September Eleventh*" has been interpreted by the three extroverts as "یازدهم سپتامبر". The first and the third interpreters have interpreted "*terrorist attacks*" as "حملات تروریستی", while it has been interpreted by the second interpreter as "حمله". The content word, "*United States*" has been interpreted by the first and the third interpreters as "ایالات متحده", while the second interpreter has omitted it.

Key or content words in the above example were 7. The analysis shows that from among the extroverts, the first interpreter has interpreted six content words accurately. Thus, according to the scoring system of this study mentioned before, the first interpreter's score was 2.57. The second interpreter has interpreted four key words accurately; so the score for him was 1.71, and the third interpreter's interpretations were all accurate, and the score for this extrovert interpreter was 3. As for introvert interpreters, the first interpreter has interpreted six key words accurately and scored 2.57. The second interpreter had two inaccurate key words, and thus the score for him/her was 2.14. The third introvert interpreter has interpreted six key words accurately and scored 2.57.

Example 2

ST: For example, armed federal guards will be on flights to and from the airport.

Analysis: In the source text, key or content words are "*armed federal guards*", "*on flights*" and "*to and from the airport*".

As obtained data show, "armed federal guards" has been interpreted by the first extrovert interpreter as "نگهبانان دولت فدرال", as "محققان مسلح دولت فدرال" by the second and as "گارد ارتش فدرال" by the third. "On flight" has been interpreted by the first extrovert interpreter as "در پروازها حضور دارند", while the second extrovert interpreter has omitted it and the third extrovert interpreter has interpreted it as "در حال پرواز خواهد بود". The last content expression "to and from the airport", has been interpreted by the first and third extrovert interpreters as "فرودگاه", while the second interpreter has omitted it.

Content words in the above example were 3. The analysis shows that from among the extroverts, the first and second extrovert interpreters have interpreted two of them accurately. Thus, according to the scoring system of this study, each one scored 2. The third interpreter has not interpreted any content words accurately and therefore got no score. As for introvert interpreters, the first and second interpreters' interpretations were all accurate, and so the score for these two introvert interpreters was 3. The third interpreter has interpreted one accurate content word and thus scored 1.

Example 3

ST: Yet, it is located less than one minute by air from the White House, Capitol, Pentagon and other important government buildings.

Analysis: In the source text the content words or expressions are: "located", "less than one minute", "by air", "White House", "Capitol", "Pentagon" and "other important government buildings". "Located" has been interpreted by the first extrovert interpreter as "قرار گرفته است", as "فاصله دارد" by the second and as "قرار دارد" by the third. "Less than one minute" has been interpreted by the first and second extrovert interpreter as "کمتر از یک دقیقه", while the third interpreter has interpreted it as "کمتر از یک کیلومتر". "By air" has been interpreted by the three extrovert interpreters as "از طریق هوایی", "از راه هوایی", and "از طریق راه هوایی" respectively. "White House", "Capitol" and "Pentagon" have been interpreted by the first extrovert interpreter as "پنتاگون", "ساختمان کنگره", "ساختمان سفید", "پنتاگون", "ساختمان سفید", "پنتاگون" by the second and as "ساختمان سفید", "پنتاگون" by the third. It is clearly seen that the third interpreter has omitted the word "Capitol" here. "Other important government buildings" has been interpreted by the first extrovert interpreter as "دیگر ساختمان های مهم دولت", and as "دیگر ساختمان های مهم دولتی" by the first and third interpreters.

Content words or expressions in the above example were 7. The analysis shows that from among the extroverts, the first interpreter has interpreted four of them accurately. Thus, according to the scoring system of this study, the first interpreter's score was 2.4. The second interpreter has interpreted three content words accurately, so the score for him was 1.2, and the third one has only one accurate content word; so the score for this extrovert interpreter was 1. As for introvert interpreters, the first introvert interpreter's interpretations were all accurate, and so the score for him/her was 3. The second and the third introvert interpreters have interpreted a good number of content expressions accurately, and thus each one scored 2.4.

4. Results

It is obvious from the analysis of the above examples that the length of extrovert interpreters' sentences is more than that of the introverts. Also, it is clearly revealed that introvert interpreters have interpreted the sentences more accurately than the extroverts. The following figure represents the results of the analyzed data:

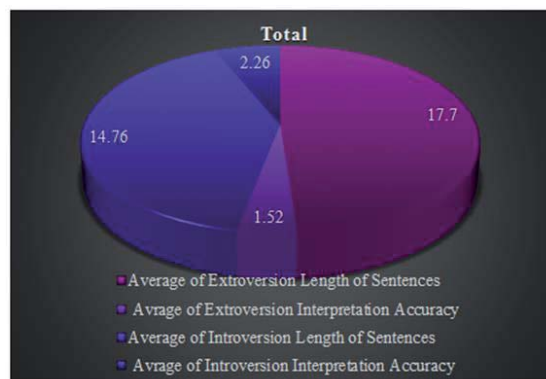


Figure: Distribution of extroverts'/introverts' sentence length and accuracy

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study investigated the impact of interpreters' extroversion and introversion on interpretation accuracy. Actually, the research questions of the study concerned the extent of the extrovert and introvert participants' impact on the sentence length as well as the accuracy of sentences in interpretation.

In the case of the length of sentences, as shown in the above figure, there was a significant difference between the two groups of interpreters concerning the average length of sentences. In fact, extrovert participants described everything and tried to interpret all words they heard which led to produce longer sentences in comparison with the introvert interpreters; the produced sentences were even longer than the source sentences. Also, the extrovert interpreters' explanations were more than introvert interpreters' explanations. In many cases, the reaction time of the extrovert interpreters was longer than that of the introvert ones, i.e. the speed of interpretation. This was a problem which caused extrovert interpreters to make more mistakes than introvert interpreters when doing their tasks.

In order to illustrate the interpretation accuracy and the interpreters' skills, some key or content words with their equivalents were underlined in the source sentences and interpreted sentences. It was revealed that extrovert interpreters had omitted some key terms in many cases.

Also, many extrovert interpreters, in many cases, changed the tense of the verbs, which negatively affected the meaning of the whole sentences, especially their accuracy. They further interpreted the sentences immediately, without thinking to find the best equivalents for the words; therefore, the validity and the accuracy of their interpretation were less than those of the introvert interpreters. In other words, the main problem which caused extrovert interpreters to produce less accurate sentences was the fact that most of them began to translate before thinking, and thus the quality of their interpretation decreased in comparison to that of the introvert interpreters.

Another problem with which both extrovert and introvert interpreters faced was the fact that in some cases some words had more than one equivalent. As a result, the translators or interpreters had to try to find the most suitable equivalent based on the context.

Roughly speaking, and as regards the accuracy of interpretation, it can be concluded that the introvert interpreters have interpreted the oral items more accurately than the extrovert interpreters. It does not mean that the introverts' interpretation was quite accurate and they did not make any mistakes at all, but in comparison with the extrovert ones their interpretation was more accurate. As indicated in the results, the average of extrovert interpreters' interpretation accuracy was 1.52, while the average of introvert interpreters' interpretation accuracy was 2.26.

As a final word, it should be noted that the main implication of this study for those who teach interpretation courses and workshops can be testing their students concerning extroversion and introversion before teaching, for as the findings of this study show, such psychological moods definitely affect the extent of their performance as regards translation accuracy.

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Appendix A

Personality trait questionnaire Form 1: introversion/extroversion scale

Decide whether you are extrovert or introvert. For each of the following items, choose the number that most closely represents the type of individual you are.

1) How social or private are you?

Social Mostly social In between Mostly private Private
① ② ③ ④ ⑤

2) How expressive or quiet are you?

Expressive Mostly Expressive In between Mostly Quiet Quiet
① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3) How broad or deep are you?

Broad Mostly broad In between Mostly deep Deep
① ② ③ ④ ⑤

4) How interactive or concentrative are you?

Interactive Mostly interactive In between Mostly concentrative Concentrative
① ② ③ ④ ⑤

5) How outward or inward are you?

Outward Mostly outward In between Mostly inward Inward
① ② ③ ④ ⑤

6) Do you think before you act or act and then think?

Action before thought Mostly action before thought In between
① ② ③

Mostly thought before action Thought before action
④ ⑤

SOURCE: © M, Fadi Al Shalabi. (2003). University of Edinburgh, Moray House School of Education

Appendix B

This is Steve Ember with the VOA Special English program In the news.

Reagan National Airport near Washington, D-C, re-opened Thursday with a limited number of flights. It was the last major American airport to re-open after the September Eleventh terrorist attacks in the United States. President Bush announced the decision Tuesday. He told reporters there was no greater sign that America is back in business than the re-opening of National Airport.

On September Eleventh, four hijacked American passenger planes crashed into the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon near Washington and an area in Pennsylvania. All airports in the United States were closed the day of the attack.

Stronger security measures have been established at all American airports to protect against possible terrorist attacks in the future. The new restrictions at Reagan National Airport are said to be the strongest security measures of any airport in the United States.

For example, armed federal guards will be on flights to and from the airport. Passengers will be questioned or searched at least two times before getting on their flights. The number of things they may carry onto planes also has been limited. Special new X-ray machines will examine all objects belonging to passengers before they are placed on the planes. Stronger security measures also will affect all airport workers.

Flight paths into and out of the Washington area are also changing. More air space over the nation's capital is expected to close.

The stronger security measures follow a recent debate within the Bush Administration about the future of Reagan National Airport. The airport is considered to be very important for the nation's travel industry. Yet, it is located less than one minute by air from the White House, Capitol, Pentagon and other important government buildings. President Bush settled the issue by approving a plan to slowly bring National Airport back to use under heavy restrictions.

The re-opening of the airport will happen in two steps. During the first step, six of the sixteen airlines that serve the airport will be permitted to fly to eight American cities. After several weeks, direct flights to ten other cities will be permitted. Four-hundred-fifty flights are expected to fly into and out of National Airport each day. This is about fifty-seven percent of the total number of daily flights before September Eleventh.

About forty-two-thousand passengers a day used Reagan National Airport last year. The airport employs more than ten-thousand people. Airport officials estimate the airport provides more than two-thousand-million dollars a year for the Washington area economy. Robert Grow is the Transportation Director for the Greater Washington Board of Trade. He says that re-opening Reagan National Airport will greatly improve the city's economy.

This VOA Special English program, In the news, was written by Jill Moss. This is Steve Ember.