

Investigating the Relationship between Teacher's Thinking vs. Feeling Personality Type and Iranian Pre-Intermediate EFL Learners' Speaking Skill

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Abstract

This study was an attempt to investigate the relationship between teacher's personality type (feeling vs. thinking) and speaking skill of pre- intermediate EFL students in Iranian context. Twelve teachers and forty eight students from a local language institute participated in the study. The Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), an instrument based on Jung's personality theory, was taken from teachers and students were administered Preliminary English Test (PET) interview. SPSS was used to calculate the required analyses. The results showed a statistically significant positive relationship between teachers' personality type and learners' speaking skill. It was also indicated that there is a statistically significant difference between speaking skill of learners taught by feeling teachers vs. thinking teachers. In fact students in the feeling group had higher speaking scores than their counterparts in the thinking group.

Keywords: Thinking Personality Type, Feeling Personality Type, EFL, MBTI, PET

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1. Introduction

This study is investigating the effect of teachers' thinking vs. feeling personality type which relates to the third dimension of Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) on speaking skill of EFL learners. MBTI is used worldwide today as a psychological aid kit in any fields that has to do with human beings, and teaching is not an exception; it even gets more prominent because the process of language learning is long-term, and teachers need to know how to behave with students in order to motivate them or sustain their motivation.

MBTI is a personality type questionnaire based on Jung's theory of psychological types. He believed there are patterns in people's personality preferences which are of three types, each with two dimensions. The first is about energy source, we can be extraverts or introverts (whether we get our energy from the outer world or the inner world), the second is about how people take in information, we can be sensors or intuitive (whether we use our five senses to take in information or our intuition), and the third is about how decisions are made (based on logic or personal values), we can be thinkers or feelers. Later, an American mother and daughter (Myers-Briggs) added another dimension which is about how individuals choose their lifestyle, we can be judgers or perceivers [whether we follow a plan or go with the flow] (Albritton & Pearman, 1997). What is worth mentioning is that no preference is better than another and it is just about which one an individual feels more comfortable with. Also, human behavior is quite complex and it can be unpredictable sometimes. Lawrence believes each type is a distinctive dynamic organization of mental energy in which these dimensions relate to (1993). There are a lot of other factors involved that have to be taken into consideration.

2. Problem and Purpose

It is a long-held belief that thinking people decide better and more logically than feeling people. But does this ring true in a language classroom as well? How are students affected by decisions a thinking or a feeling teacher makes?

Learners' whole personalities are involved in leaning a language. They experience different feelings of fear, anxiety or uncertainty in the process (Keshavarz, Kiani, Rakhshani, & Sepehri, 2013). Brown believes "language is so pervasive a phenomenon in our humanity that it cannot be separated from the larger whole-from the whole persons that live and breathe and think and feel" (2007, p. 154). So unlike what many people think, learning is an emotional experience that includes every aspect of human behavior. According to Harmer (2007), teachers can have a dramatic effect on students' feelings; students are more likely to stay motivated over a period of time if the teacher cares about them. As a result, teachers need to know how to make decisions and what consequences their decisions might have on students. Good teacher decisions lead to students' motivation and bad teacher decisions can yield opposite results. Thinking teacher types make their decisions based on logic; they do a cause and effect analysis whereas feeling types make decisions based on personal values. The effect of their decisions on people around them matters. How students are affected by teachers' decisions, and which teacher type is superior is what this study is concerned about.

3. Research Questions

The following questions were addressed in the present study:

- Q1. Is there any statistically significant relationship between teachers' personality type (thinking and feeling) and speaking skill of Iranian pre-intermediate EFL learners?
- Q2. Is there any statistically significant difference between speaking performance of Iranian pre-intermediate EFL learners taught by teachers with thinking and feeling personality types?

4. Method

4.1. Participants

There were 12 teachers of PI4 (which is the last term of Pre-Intermediate level in English after that students were supposed to take Cambridge's PET mock exam) from Hermes institute of science and technology in Tehran (this institute was chosen because of its various branches and most importantly because they cooperated in this research). Twelve teachers were chosen, because it is the maximum number of PI4 classes the institute can often have in a specific term. The sampling was generally purposeful because the teachers for this specific level were chosen by the institute itself. They were all females aged from 25 to 35, holding B.A. or M.A. degrees in English language (TEFL, Translation Studies, and Literature). And there were 48 EFL Pre-Intermediate students (two pairs of students or four students as the average number in a PET course in the same institute from the twelve intact classes); the sampling was non-random, as all and only PI4 students of the institute were chosen who were all females aged from 14 to 60. Forty one of them were high school students, two of them were university students and seven were housewives.

4.2. Instruments

The following instruments were used in this study:

An MBTI inventory test taken from www.iranzeh.com site which had an 80-statement self-report inventory containing four scales, each corresponding to a personality preference in Jung's and Myers Briggs' theory of psychological types allowing respondents to rate themselves on a 3-point scale from "This is not my type at all" to "This is absolutely me" (this test was for measuring the personality type of the 12 teachers as part of the participants in this study).

The last was PET interview test, which was administered to measure speaking skill of students (as the other part of participants in this study) at Pre-Intermediate level of English.

4.3. Design

This is a quantitative research in which the correlation or the relationship between two variables (pre-intermediate Iranian EFL learners' speaking skill and teacher's thinking vs. feeling personality type) is analyzed. Point biserial correlation was used to estimate the correlation coefficient of the two variables, because one of them is interval (speaking scores), and the other is a genuine dichotomous variable on a nominal scale (feeling or thinking personality type of teacher). Also, independent sample t-test was used to compare the means in speaking scores of the two groups to see which was significantly different from the other.

4.4. Procedure

Teachers took the MBTI inventory online which lasted about 15 minutes. They did MBTI in their mother tongue (Persian), because complete comprehension

of the test items, as well as giving honest answers to the questions was of great importance. Then they were given their personality type which was a four letter code such as INFJ corresponding to their personality preferences (extravert/introvert, sensor/intuitive, thinker/feeler, judger/perceiver) as well as a percentage on each of the four scales, so it got specified what their third dimension of personality preference was (thinking vs. feeling) which was needed for this research. The numbers of feeling and thinking teachers were equal by chance (six feeling teachers, and six thinking ones), then all the students from the selected thinking and feeling type teachers' classes were chosen.

Students took the mock PET interview and final exam (the book which prepared students for the mock PET interview and final exam was book 3 of *Touchstone* consisting of 12 units which students finish in four terms, at the end of PI4 or the last term they take the mock interview and final exam that is like the real PET examination of Cambridge University for Pre-Intermediate level of English). Only scores of PET speaking test were collected. The interview was conducted in classroom environment and students took it in pairs for about ten to twelve minutes before their final mock PET exam. It consisted of four parts:

- a. First, each candidate interacted with the interlocutor and answered some questions asking for personal information for about two to three minutes.
- b. Second, candidates interacted with each other on a simulated situation which was based on a visual stimulus for about two to three minutes.
- c. Third, each one of the candidates talked for up to one minute about a photo on a related topic, this part generally lasted about three minutes.
- d. Finally candidates together had extended discussion on the topic of part three or the photographs. This part lasted for about three minutes as well.

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There were five criteria for speaking scores on vocabulary and grammar, discourse management, pronunciation, interactive communication and global achievement. The interlocutor scored for global achievement but the evaluator (who just listened and didn't get involved in the interview) gave marks to other parts. The band for each criterion was out of 5, the overall mark of the interview was 25. It was also tape recorded. It is worth mentioning that for results to have more reliability a third party or another rater (a second evaluator) listened to the recordings and gave second speaking scores.

5. Results and Data Analyses

5.1. Testing the Null Hypothesis Number One

The first null hypothesis of the current study proposed that “there is not any statistically significant relationship between teachers' personality type (thinking and feeling) and speaking skill of Pre-Intermediate Iranian EFL learners”. In order to analyze the data to test null hypothesis one, Point biserial correlation was run. The results of Pointbiserial correlation in Table 1 show that a significant positive correlation was observed between personality type (thinking and feeling) and speaking scores of Iranian Pre-Intermediate EFL learners with ($r=.40$, $p=.000$, $p < .05$) in which the p value, .000 was less than that of the selected significance level for this study, .05, and the degree of correlation, .40 exceeded the critical values of correlation, .27 with 48 degrees of freedom; consequently, the first null hypothesis of this study is strongly rejected, and we can say confidently that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between teacher's personality type (thinking and feeling) and speaking skill of Iranian Pre-Intermediate EFL learners.

Table 1. Correlation between Teacher’s Personality Type and Speaking Score

Personality type		Speaking score
	Point biserial correlation	.405**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004
	N	48

This relationship between teachers’ personality type and speaking scores of Iranian Pre-Intermediate EFL learners is demonstrated in Figure 1 below. The figure illustrates that as the personality type increases (from 1=thinking G. to 2 = feeling G.) so do the speaking scores.

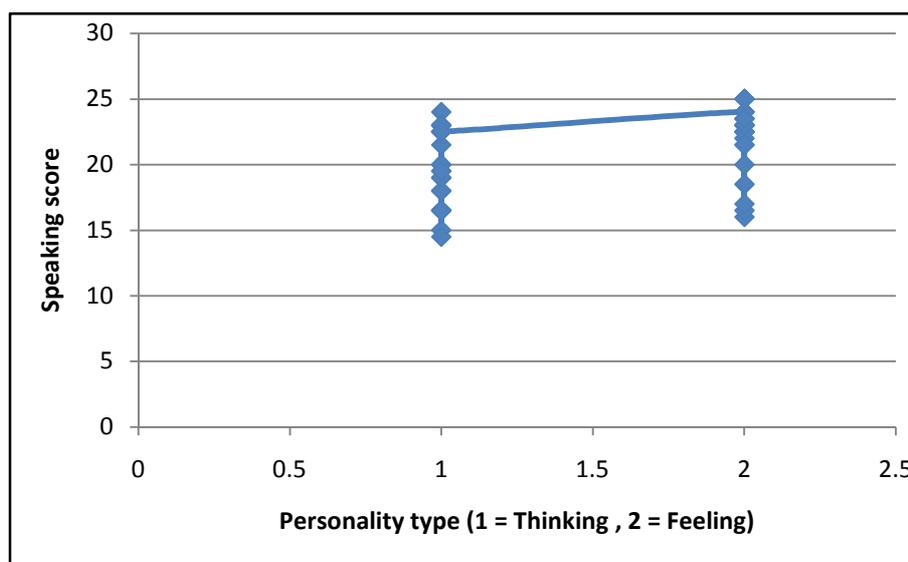


Figure 1. Scatter Plot of Correlation between Personality Type and Speaking Score

5.2. Testing the Null Hypothesis Number Two

The second null hypothesis of this study predicted that “there is not any statistically significant difference between speaking performance of Iranian Pre-Intermediate EFL learners who were taught by teachers with thinking and

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feeling personality types". In order to analyze the data to check the null hypothesis two, first the descriptive statistics of participants' performances of the thinking group (see Table 2), and feeling group (see Table 3) on Speaking Test by the two raters were computed.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Thinking Group's Speaking Scores by the Two Raters

Group	N	Range	Min	Maxi	Mean	Mode	Median	SD
Thinking (R1)	24	10	14	24	19.96	24	20.00	3.029
Thinking (R2)	24	9	15	24	19.50	22	19.00	2.654

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Feeling Group's Speaking Scores by the Two Raters

Group	N	Range	Min	Maxi	Mean	Mode	Median	SD
Feeling (R1)	24	8	17	25	22.33	24	23.00	2.278
Feeling (R2)	24	10	15	25	21.79	23	23.00	3.107

Then, the averages of the two raters' speaking scores in the two groups were calculated for testing the second null hypothesis as provided in Table 4. The table shows that the average mean speaking score of thinking group was 19.72 with the standard deviation of 3.02 while the mean score of feeling group was 22.06 with the standard deviation of 2.65. Participants of the feeling group exceeded those in thinking group.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Thinking and Feeling Groups' Speaking Scores

Group	N	Range	Min	Maxi	Mean	Mode	Median	SD
Thinking	24	9.5	14.5	24.0	19.729	22.5	19.500	3.029
Feeling	24	9.0	16.0	25.0	22.063	22.5	22.750	2.654

Figure 2 below depicts the graphical representation of the results.

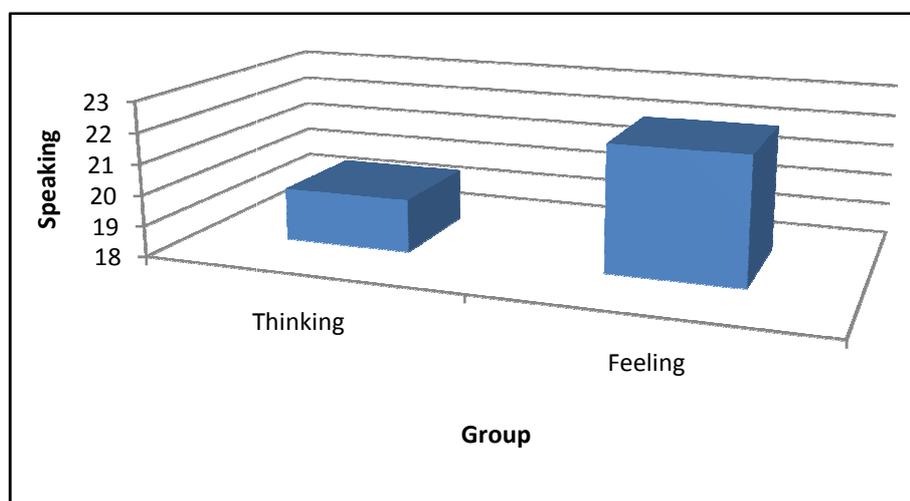


Figure 2. Mean Scores of Thinking and Feeling Groups on Speaking Test

To choose parametric or nonparametric data analysis test, the normality distributions of the scores were tested. One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was used to check the normal distribution assumption of speaking scores of the two groups, and the related results are presented in Table 5. The results indicated that two sets of scores were normally distributed since p values were .45 and .14 for thinking and feeling groups respectively which are both greater than .05.

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Table 5. One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of Normality for Thinking and Feeling Groups' Speaking Scores

Group	N	Mean	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Sig.
Group	24	19.729	.858	.454
Group	24	22.063	1.412	.148

Figure 3 and Figure 4 below graphically illustrate the normal distribution and frequency of speaking scores in thinking and feeling groups, respectively.

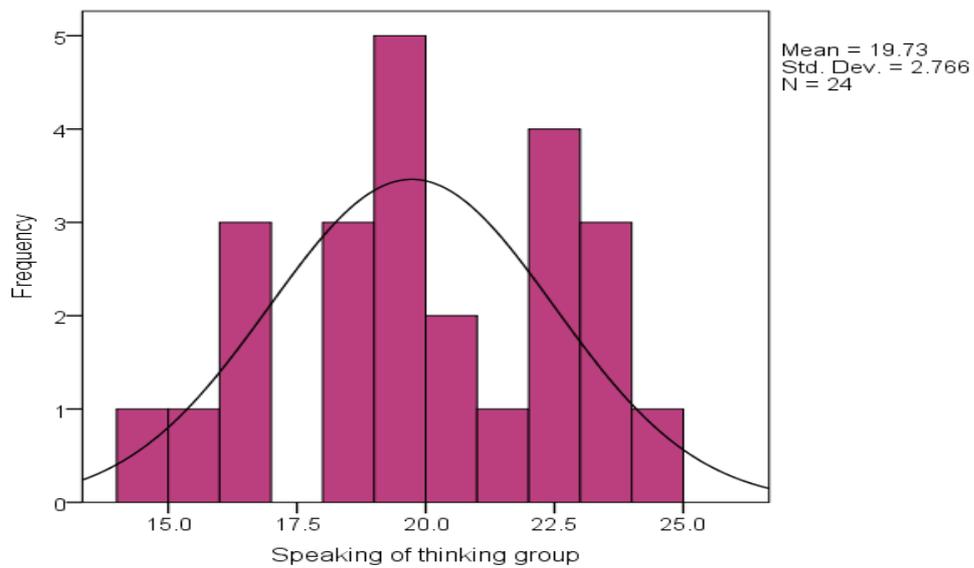


Figure 3. Normal Curve of Speaking Scores and Their Frequencies in Thinking Group

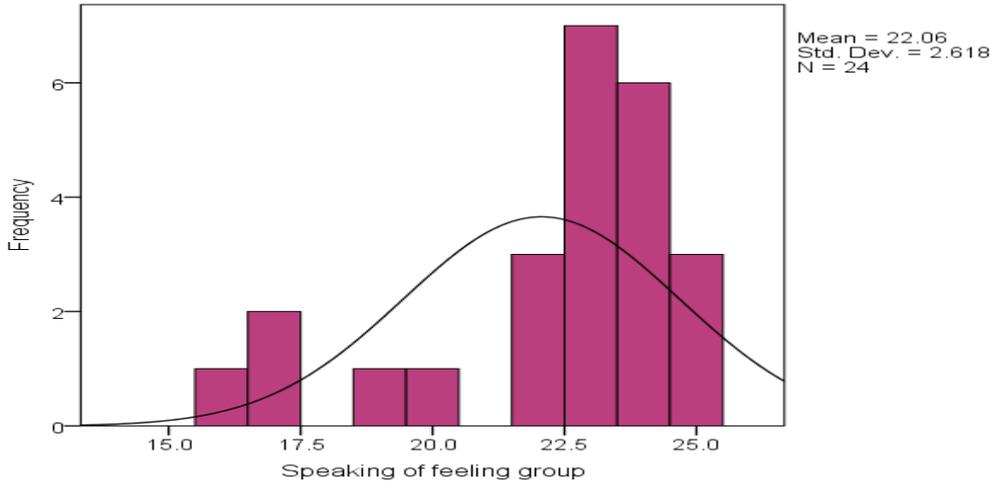


Figure 4. Normal curve of speaking scores and their frequencies in feeling group
 Since the two sets of scores had normal distribution, the parametric Independent Sample T-Test was run to compare the mean speaking score of the two groups. Table 6 shows the results of Independent Sample Test.

Levene’s Test in Table 6 showed that the assumption of equal of variances is verified since the Sig. .47 was more than .05.

Table 6.Independent Samples Test to Compare Thinking and Feeling Groups’ Speaking Scores

Levene’s Test for Variances			T-test for Means			
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Equal variance assumed	.524	.473	-3.001	46	.004	-2.333

Independent Samples Test in Table 6 indicates that there was a statistically significant difference in speaking scores between the two thinking and feeling groups with ($t=3.001$, $p=.004$, $p<.05$), in which the t -observed, 3.001 was greater than the t -critical, 2.02, and the p value, .004 was less than .05; therefore, the second null hypothesis of this study is rejected. Consequently, it can be claimed that there is a statistically significant difference between

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speaking skill of Pre-Intermediate Iranian EFL learners who were taught by teachers with thinking and feeling personality types. In fact, the students in feeling group exceeded those in thinking group with the mean difference (gained score) of 2.33.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study has yielded two key findings. First, there is a statistically significant relationship between teachers' personality type and Iranian pre-intermediate EFL learners' speaking skill. Second, speaking scores of learners in classes taught by feeling teachers exceed scores of learners in classes of thinking teachers (this might be due to the fact that feeling teachers are more concerned about how their decisions might affect students).

It can be concluded that students seem to be more comfortable with feeling teachers in speaking the language and that feeling teachers are more successful in facilitating students' speaking skill (of course in order to be able to generalize the results of this study more efficiently, the research needs to be done in other environments with different levels of students in different parts of the world as well). Therefore, thinking teachers can be asked to use the opposite side of their personality or their feeling part. In other words, they ought to make decisions more by having students in mind and they have to consider that every single thing that is done from the part of the teacher in the class can have its effect and consequences on students. According to Albritton and Pearman, if we know our habits, it is very clear what habits we don't have which is a critical aspect of type development, so when we know our type we can understand other dimensions of type we can use (1997). So when thinking teachers utilize another side of their personality or their feeling side, it is of use to students and at the same time it is a great opportunity for them to develop

their types. Cooper and Benis believe if certain patterns of teacher classroom behavior could be proved to relate to student achievement, then we would be in a position to guide the development of teacher's behavior which leads to student learning (1967, as cited in Garcia, Holland & Kupczynski, 2011). Successful people do not stay the same; they are dynamic and use different dimensions of their personalities. It seems likely that thinking teachers have even more opportunities for type development in this regard than their feeling counterparts!

Further research can also focus on investigating the relationship between other dimensions of teachers' personality type and learners' speaking or other skills such as writing, listening and reading.

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