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*Study of Theories of Personality and Learning
Styles; some Implications and Sample Activities to
Support Curriculum Change in a Higher
Education TESOL Program in Syria*

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Every one is special and unique in her or his own way.

Abstract:

This dissertation studies theories of personality and learning styles and introduces sample communicative activities to support the change in the Syrian curriculum. Chapter one gives an idea of the present TESOL (teaching English to speakers of other languages) situation in Syria highlighting the increasing need for change which was a consequence of using direct method as the only teaching method. It clarifies why we, in Syria, need to look for new methods of teaching that would result in better learning environment. As a step towards achieving the change, this dissertation looks closely at theories of personality and learning styles because they are relevant to teaching and learning process.

Chapter two looks at theories of personality and focuses specifically on those which have close relation to English language learning. Chapter three lists learning styles with their definitions and looks in more detail at styles that have clear relation to the learning process. In chapter four, examples of communicative activities are suggested. These activities aim to unlock learners' awareness of themselves and to give teachers, in Syria, an opportunity to collect data about prevalent personality

traits and preferred learning styles among learners. An action research, that involves English teachers and learners in Syria, is suggested in chapter five to achieve the aim. Finally, a number of problems that might be faced are identified and some recommendations are given for overcoming them.

CHAPTER ONE:

Introduction to my TESOL context in Syria, and an overview of individual differences.

1.1 My TESOL context in Syria:

In Syria there has been a lack of response towards the issues of personality and learning styles. The direct method of language teaching is used for all students regardless of the differences that exist among them. We use the direct method in Syria partly because we were influenced by French pedagogy which uses it and partly because of the shortage of teacher training programs which would inculcate modern theories of teaching. Individuality and individualization have no place in our curricula. Hence it becomes important for our staff, and for learning environment and curricula to be exposed to new ideas. The need to develop a more modern teaching style has been proposed by many principals in the government. Furthermore, it has

recently been highlighted by the president of the Syrian Arab republic, Dr. Bashar Al Assad when he addressed the Parliament in March 2003 saying: “We have to focus, in our schools, on collaborative work. We have to develop our teaching methods in order to increase the learners’ ability to analyze. We have to foster their sense of creativity and innovation.” This speech reflects an increasing interest in developing and improving the Syrian educational system. Looking at concepts of personality and learning styles could be a step towards achieving these objectives. This has given me motivation to choose this topic since I am not aware that it has been studied yet by any one involved in TESOL in Syria. Allen and Valette (1972) describe learning and teaching status, which entirely applies to the Syrian situation, saying that learning has always been a highly individualized process. But teaching has usually taken place as if all learners required the same strategies in presentations, the same amount of time, and the same learning materials (In Logan, 95: 1980).

Syrian teachers need to improve their teaching quality by: making a better teaching and learning environment, being able to make the classroom a place where students like to be, and creating motivated students who are able to achieve maximum possible amount out of learning. Because I am going to teach in Syria, I have developed a great interest in this field of study.

In Syria, each university has an institute for English language teaching. These institutes help university students as well as other groups of learners to develop their English. In each one of these institutes, there are two kinds of courses; the first is designed for university students who are attaining their higher degrees in various specializations. These courses usually take place in the mornings. The second is private courses for all levels of English which take place during evenings. These institutes have recently been under an extensive process of development. One step forward has been to recruit well qualified teachers who have teaching experience in schools or universities.

The problem with these institutes, as well as schools and other educational organizations, is that the recruited teachers bring with them their methodology which is basically based on the direct method, the prevalent teaching method in Syria. This

methods of teaching English (Clark, 1987). As a school student and later as a school teacher, I was taught and then used a version of direct method that usually, in more advanced stages, depends on translation, analysis of text, and excessive teaching of grammar. It is a very clear and specific model of teaching which leaves little place for individualism. Moreover, it has a negative consequence because teachers and students are not encouraged to develop flexibility and self-awareness. A typical lesson that uses the direct method often proceeds as follows.

Teacher introduces the students to a new text by reading it and explaining new vocabulary. Students then read the text aloud and answer the reading questions. One grammatical rule, or more, is always taught with the lesson. It is usually explained in English and students apply it doing the provided exercises. The homework, in most cases, is to put the new words in sentences and to do more exercises that deal with the introduced grammatical rule. Discussing the sentences produced and correcting the exercises are usually the topic of the following class.

There has been an increasing awareness among the principals of the Ministries of Education and Higher Education of the troublesome effects of using only one method for teaching all types of learners. Therefore, there seems to be a consensus that limiting English teaching to one method is not a forward step in reforming English language teaching in Syria. Such facts, in addition to the president's requests, have led principals in the Ministry of Higher Education and the management of the language institutes to take further steps in initiating change in present teaching methods. One such step is sending teachers abroad to get higher degrees in teaching English obtain new ideas. I believe that studying the concepts of personality and learning styles more deeply and considering possible classroom implications should prepare me to support moves for change when returning to work in such an institute.

The institute that I am possibly going to teach in is the English Languages Centre in Damascus, where I will be teaching the morning and evening courses. Consequently, I will teach two different target populations of learners. The learners that I am going to deal with in the morning classes are mostly at upper intermediate level. Their ages range between eighteen and twenty-five. All of them are university students majoring

English language skills is quite essential for their studies. Furthermore, some of their subjects are taught in English, so they need a higher proficiency in order to cope with them. There are a few problems that might exist in these classes. One such problem is the number of students in classes that might, in some cases, exceed twenty. Another problem might be the shortage of teaching equipment. Moreover, having dramatically different levels of English proficiency among students with their different needs and motivations is the most likely problem which is going to add complexity to the management of classes.

In the evening courses, I will have a wide range of students with different English language levels. The aim of most of these learners is to improve their English language skills so they get better marks in their schools or because it is a prerequisite for their jobs. Therefore, in such classes, wide combinations of students who are of different ages and educational backgrounds meet in one class. Problems in the evening courses are similar to those of the morning ones with the added difficulty of having a diversity of ages in one class. This makes it extremely difficult for teachers to deal with these classes. Catering to the different needs of students is not an easy job.

1.2 Overview of individual differences:

One of the most significant characteristics of human beings is that each person is a unique combination of feelings, mentality, concepts, aims and reactions. This list can be extended to hundreds of terms if coverage of all the complexities of personality is needed. These combinations create the individuality that every individual enjoys. Differences among individuals create reasons for negotiations, arguments, and discussions and lead to the development of humanity as a whole. Knowledge of the backgrounds lying behind these differences enhances the flexibility and the understanding of the different individuals. It is assumed that having more awareness of theories of individual differences and an ability to incorporate them in the teaching process should enable teachers to help their learners enjoy their learning and get more out of it. Moreover, learners should be aware of themselves, their personalities and learning styles in order to approach the learning process in a constructive way.

Individual learner differences are the variables that characterize learners and give each one her/his individual uniqueness. The goal of investigating individual differences is to explore the diversity of intellect, forms of cognitive processes, and different mental functions. Example categories used by various researchers, e.g. Ellis (1994), Skehan (1989), Eysenck (1957), and Eysenck (1994), for investigating these differences are: personality, learning styles, motivation, intelligence, autonomy, learning strategies, gender, age, language aptitude, anxiety, affective states, and need for power.

Our differences in each of these categories are likely to affect our general learning and our language learning. “Individual differences produce variation in the rate of learning and the ultimate level of second language attainment.” (Ellis 1994: 523). For the purposes of this dissertation, differences of personality and learning styles will be looked at closely. I am interested in these two categories of individual differences and believe that they have an important role in the level of success in learning English as a second language. Therefore, I have decided to examine both concepts in depth and to consider implications, and some applications for TESOL at university level in Syria.

As a teacher, it is important to take learners’ individual differences of one’s student into consideration. The more a teacher knows about these differences, the better she/he can be in showing understanding of all learners with their different needs and goals. Moreover, the teacher can show better accommodation of learners’ preferred learning styles that correspond with their individualities. Individual differences have received their importance in teaching from studies which state that people learn in different ways, no two brains learn the same way (Cast Universal Design for Learning, 2001). “Any two human beings, even identical twins, may respond quite differently to the same stimulus.” (Hampson and Colman, 1994: ix). Different studies and research have found that learners acquire and learn their second/foreign language in different ways. Logan points out that students learn even the same material in different ways, and that they can learn from a variety of sources, even if they have the same final goal (1980: 95). Biological studies, Positron Emission Tomography (PET) studies, have confirmed that “brain activity occurs in roughly the same areas

signature of brain activity for that task” (Meyer & Rose, 1998, quoted in Cast Universal Design for Learning, 2001).

1.3 Proposal of the dissertation:

In this dissertation I am proposing that individual differences in general and concepts of personality and learning styles in specific might be important to know by teachers and to be included in curriculum. Introducing learners to activities based on these concepts could have a positive role in making learners more responsible for their learning and consequently having a more learner-centred system. There should be a place for individuality and individualism for learners where they express themselves without constraints and fear of punishment. Within the framework of the Syrian curriculum for TESOL at university level, we need to think more carefully about individual differences and learners’ personalities and learning styles. We need to know more about relevant theories. We also need to think of implications and applications for classrooms. Accommodating for different learning styles and personality traits of learners is what other teachers and I hope to see happen in Syria. To achieve this aim, an action research might be a good idea to try identifying preferred learning styles and prevalent personality traits among Syrian learners. My dissertation is dedicated to exploring topics of personality and learning styles.

In the following chapters, I am going to report in detail the concepts of personality and learning styles, suggest some example activities that are based on the studied concepts, and finally provide some recommendations for action research with other English teachers to explore these themes further and to deal with problems that might be faced. More specifically, in chapter two, light will be shed on personality and its psychological construction. I will list definitions of concept of personality and illustration of most important theories that talk about this topic. A distinction will be made between the ‘types’ theory and the ‘traits’ one. Then, I will concentrate on the dimensions of extroversion/introversion and risk-taking because they have potentially important roles in the learning process.

In chapter three, I will introduce some definitions of learning styles showing how individuals learn differently. I will present the most important learning styles that

have been mentioned in the literature with a greater focus on the field-dependence and field-independence styles because they appear to be most closely related to the learning of English as a second language. In chapter four, I will exemplify some exercises that should allow learners to identify their personality traits and learning styles within a communicative framework. These exercises will also allow teachers, like myself, to identify preferred learning styles of our learners through carrying out research with as many students as possible. Identification of these styles, I suggest, could be one very important element in developing a new and more flexible curriculum. I hope that in the future, in English language institutions and TESOL departments, teachers have more authority and can be more involved in decision about curriculum. Developing curriculum, as Richards (2001: 2) states, “includes the processes that are used to determine the needs of a group of learners, to develop aims or objectives for a program to address those needs, teaching methods, and materials”. Finally, in chapter five, I will identify some difficulties and make some recommendations to go along with the reform process.

CHAPTER TWO:

PERSONALITY

2.1 Definitions of personality:

Personality is considered a very important category of individual differences since the individual is often judged depending on her/his personality. "Personality refers to those relatively stable and enduring aspects of the individual which distinguish him from other people, and at the same time, form the basis of our predictions concerning his future behaviour" (Wright et al., 1970: 511, quoted in Shackleton and Fletcher, 1984: 46). It is also regarded as referring to stable internal factors or traits which underlie consistent individual differences in behaviour. These internal factors, according to Eysenck, are called traits. He says that it is assumed that individuals differ in terms of the extent to which they possess any given trait (Eysenck, 1994: 38). Another definition that captures much of what psychologists mean by

personality is what Child's description personality characteristics as more or less stable, internal factors that make one person's behaviour consistent from one time to another, and also from one situation to another and different from the behaviour and reaction other people would manifest in comparable situations (1968: 83, quoted in Eysenck, 1994: 38). Therefore, it is expected that any given individual will behave in a reasonably consistent manner on different occasions.

Those who study human personality are often interested in individual differences. They assume that there are considerable individual differences in personality and that these differences will be revealed by difference of behaving and reaction in a given situation (Eysenck, 1994: 38). That is why one feature common to the majority of personality theories is the emphasis on the individual. Researchers, during the last few decades, have done a lot of work in order to find a comprehensive definition of personality. Personality can be defined on many levels like educational, psychological, and social. At the level of teaching and learning, we are looking for those aspects of personality that affect the nature and the quality of learning process. In this chapter, definitions of personality will be presented, looking at the personality dimensions from a psychological point of view. I will review the theories and hypotheses that deal with personality, especially Eysenck's distinction between personality 'types' and personality 'traits'. To talk about personality at the level of TESOL, I have found that most of the literature focuses on two dimensions of personality, closely related to the learning process; and these are extroversion/introversion and risk-taking.

2.2 The 'types' and 'traits' theories of personality:

Eysenck, (1994: 39-40), talks about two approaches to personality: the 'types' approach and the 'traits' approach. His discussion endorses the Greek theory of types of personality. Personality theorists of the past often used to identify personality types rather than traits. Traditions of establishing dichotomies of types have generally been developed from Greek thinking. In essence, type theorists assume that all individuals can be allocated to one of a relatively small number of types or categories such as:

Melancholic i.e. a pessimistic non risk-taker

Sanguine which means thoughtful and cynical, i.e. sensible and balanced in an optimistic way

Choleric i.e. impulsive

Phlegmatic which means slow and lazy

These types were identified by ancient Greeks. They are quite deep and constant and there are not many of them so we are not likely to change them. There are problems with these types; it is hard to accept the Greeks' four kinds of personality because people have more than these four kinds. Eysenck doesn't agree as well, because he considers that these four types are not enough to explain personality. He goes on to say that our every day experience indicates that most people have non-extreme personalities, flexibility always exists and he claims that this view is supported by personality research (1994: 40). When the TESOL is taken into consideration, these types are most likely still going to be of limited use since they are very general and consequently have limited applications.

In another approach, personality theorists have argued that personality consists of a number of traits, which have been defined as "broad, enduring, relatively stable characteristics used to assess and explain behaviour" (Hirschberg, 1978: 45, quoted in Eysenck, 1994: 39). Another definition is given by Mischel: a "trait is a relatively stable and long-lasting attribute of personality" (1968, quoted in Eysenck, 1994: 53). Traits are more shifting, more specific, more changeable and more learnable in that they are more accessible to learning. The number of traits mentioned in this literature is quite large. Therefore, this approach looks more reasonable since it provides a number of traits that account for the diversity of human personality in a more variable but specific way. The approach also suggests that a person may possess a trait with different changeable levels. I think that these traits are more useful for looking at learning from a critical point of view.

The most obvious difference between the type and trait approaches, as Eysenck states, is that "possession of type is regarded as all-or-none, whereas individuals can possess a trait such as sociability in varying degrees" (1994: 40). More specifically, most theorists have assumed that traits are normally distributed in the population.

type approach because the latter fails to capture the complexity of human personality, and because most people have non-extreme personalities. Most traits have been found to be normally distributed. Some theories take personality to mean all enduring qualities of the individual while others limit their use of the term to observable traits that are not predominantly cognitive in nature (Shackleton and Fletcher 1984:45).

It is suggested that the clearest aspect of personality is its interpersonal nature. The first psychologist to explore the interpersonal nature of personality is William James (1890). He said that “the self only exists in relation to other selves and that a person has as many selves as people with whom he or she interacts” (quoted in Hampson, 1997: 73). According to Sullivan (1953), “the individual can not exist apart from his or her relation to others, the study of personality is the study of interpersonal behaviour” (quoted in Hampson, 1997: 73). An implication of this approach of psychology implies that each one of us has a lot of personalities which can be changed according to the person or situation we are dealing with. This in turn implies that bilingual people may have more than one personality since each language represents part of a different culture. It is worth mentioning here that these arguments are not proofs. They are hypotheses which may be right or wrong. In general, it appears that embracing the hypothesis of multi-personality has more positive implications for understanding foreign language learning and this seems to be supported by the literature related to TESOL (e.g. Ellis, 1994 and Skehan, 1989).

Personality is usually inferred from behaviour, because judgements about people tend to be based on their behaviour. Eysenck (1994:61-68) points out that three main approaches to interpreting personality and behaviour have appeared. These approaches are situationism, interactionism, and constructivism. Situationism emphasizes the role of the situation rather than intrinsic personality in determining behaviour. Situationists say that our behavior is largely decided by our environment, and not by heredity. Interactionism, which is a social theory, says that, as human beings, we do not exist except within society. Interactionism is based on the idea that the interaction between person and situation is a more important determinant of behaviour and reaction than either one on its own. Constructivism claims that our behaviour and personality are moulded to some extent by the views that we believe

approach, interpersonal interactions play a key role in the development of personality. Moreover, the way in which one behaves in an interpersonal situation is determined to a large extent by the behaviour and attitudes displayed by another person or people towards one. In other words, we change depending on our experiences so we keep re-evaluating our experience (in Eysenck, 1994: 66).

According to the constructivist model, as Hampson (1997: 73) argues, personality is composed of three elements: actor, observer, and self-observer. The study of the first component is usually associated with the psychological context of the personality. The second, the self-observer, is the direct consequence of the human capacity for self awareness. The third component, namely the observer refers to the way the actor is perceived by other people and in the educational context. We can use such a model to examine how teachers may perceive their learners and deal with them and vice versa. From this position, we can infer that a teacher can make judgements about a learner's behaviour. A teacher's capacity to respond to different kinds of behaviour and characters in the classroom may, thus, benefit from a wider theoretical knowledge of different types of personality. It is worth mentioning that teachers, learners and peers are all important observers in the educational process. The students' criticism may, sometimes, be more important than the teachers'. Hampson (1997: 74) says that "the actor's behaviour is used by the observer to construct an impression of the actors' personality, and this is done by adding social significance and meaning to observed behaviour". Looking at these classifications from a purely psychological point of view, these three components have reciprocal influences as Hampson expands: "The actor's behaviour is interpreted in a certain way by the observer who then responds accordingly". The actor's subsequent behaviour is influenced by the observer's response. The actor's ability to be a self-observer will allow her/ him to make some inferences about the impression that is probably forming in the observer's mind, and the actor may wish to adjust his or her behaviour in order to modify this impression. It is inferred that it is possible to control other people's impressions about us. The ways in which we manipulate other people's impression is a crucial factor in our effective performance as social beings.

2.3 Factor theories of personality:

Due to the huge number of personality traits, one concern of any theorist is to include all the basic traits in her/his theory. Moreover, “the most important issues that personality theorists have to consider are the number and nature of the traits which together form human personality” (Eysenck, 1994: 50). Several factor theories of personality have been proposed. However, Eysenck, M.W (1994: 50) says that the two best known and most influential are those of Raymond Cattell and H.J. Eysenck.

Cattell has derived sixteen personality traits which have been extracted after having a research for all the words that can describe personality. In doing this he made use of the work of Allport and Odbert (1963) who uncovered eighteen thousand words in the dictionary which were of relevance to personality. This number then dramatically decreased after they had eliminated and excluded all synonyms and unfamiliar words. The remaining words were examined in further rating studies which suggested to Cattell that there are approximately sixteen factors in rating data (Eysenck, 1994: 51). Cattell has done a huge effort to identify all possible traits of personality using questionnaires and objective test data. Cattell and Child (1975) went on to argue that personality consists not only of the way we do things, but also of the reasons why we do things. Eysenck (1952a) stated: “to the scientists, the unique individual is simply the point of intersection of a number of quantitative variables” (quoted in Shackleton and Fletcher, 1984: 46).

Eysenck, H.J, on the other hand, agreed with Cattell that factor analysis is a useful tool to use to discover the structure of human personality, and disagreed with Cattell’s conception of the importance of first-order factors (the sixteen factors). Eysenck claimed that second-order, orthogonal¹ (or uncorrelated) factors are preferable because first-order factors are often so weak that they can not be discovered consistently since it proved impossible to confirm the existence of the sixteen different first-order factors in the 16PF (Cattell’s Sixteen Personality Factor Test) (Eysenck, 1994: 51-53). Eysenck was trying to identify the orthogonal factors so he did his own research and found three factors: introversion-extraversion,

¹ Orthogonal means that knowing an individual’s score on one factor doesn’t allow prediction of his or

neuroticism-stability, and psychoticism-normality. These factors are very broad in that each one of them can contain within it a big range and degree of the sixteen factors. They were called “superfactors” by Eysenck, H.J himself (quoted in Eysenck, 1994: 54).

2.4 Extroversion/introversion:

Ellis (1994) and Skehan (1989) have studied personality as an aspect of individual differences and have tried to relate the personality dimensions to language learning in general and TESOL in specific. Skehan has borrowed a few conclusions in which he prefers to relate the dimensions of extroversion-introversion and risk-taking to the issues in TESOL (1989: 100-109). Ellis has found that only extroversion-introversion dimension of personality is closely related o TESOL and has therefore concentrated on this (1994: 519-520).

I shall now review the literature reporting some applications of personality theory (e.g. ‘traits’ and ‘types’ theories) to language learning in TESOL. The focus, in the following pages, will shift from psychology to education and TESOL.

Ellis reviews six types of personality and focuses in particular on extroversion/introversion, since he considers that this variable relates to a well-established theory while the others are based only very loosely on constructs in general psychology:

- 1- **The Extroversion/ Introversion:** In a study by Busch (1982) and Strong (1983) using Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI), they found that extrovert learners are sociable, lively and active, and introvert learners are quiet and prefer non social-activities. Strong found that extrovert children learned faster.
- 2- **Risk-Taking:** A study done by Ely (1986a) using the self-report questionnaire shows that risk-takers show less hesitancy, are more willing to use complex language, and more tolerant of errors. They are less likely to rehearse before speaking. Moreover, risk-taking is positively related to voluntary classroom participation.

- 3- **Tolerance of ambiguity:** Naiman et al. 1978 and Chapelle and Roberts 1986 have used the Budners scale; MAT60 which is a self-report measure to conclude that learners who enjoy a kind of tolerance of ambiguity of the input are entailed an ability to deal with ambiguous new stimuli without frustration and without appeals to authority, yet this ability does not increase the learner's proficiency. However Naiman et al found that tolerance of ambiguity was significantly related to listening comprehension.
- 4- **Empathy:** Naiman et al. (1978) and Guiora et al. (1967), using the Hogan Empathy Scale, which is a Micro-Momentary Expression Test that measures perceptions of changes in facial expression found two contradicted results. Naiman et al have found empathic learners who are able to put one self in the position of another person in order to understand him/her better, are not necessarily proficient learners. However, Guiora et al have reported a positive correlation with proficiency.
- 5- **Self-esteem:** Self-esteem refers to the degree to which learners feel confident and believe themselves to be significant people. Self-esteem is manifested at different levels (global, situational, and task). In a research carried out by Heyde (1979), Gardner and Lambert (1972), Heyde found, using the self-report questionnaire that self-esteem correlated positively with oral production. Using the same method, Gardner and Lambert 1972 have failed to find significant relationship.
- 6- **Inhibition:** Guiora et al. 1972 and 1980 have administered some alcohol and valium to reduce their inhibition. Subjects given alcohol showed better pronunciation while valium had no effect. Inhibition means the extent to which learners build defences to protect their egos. Learners vary in how adaptive their language egos are in that how they are able to deal with the identity conflict involved in L2 learning.

(Ellis 1994:518)

I find all these six factors very relevant to discussion of language learning in a way or another.

There is one fact in common among all these dimensions and interpretations of personality: it is difficult to relate the dimensions of personality to the learning of

personality and the lack of empirical evidence for these theories means that it is difficult to consistently apply the results of any research (Ellis, 1994: 517-523).

Ellis observes that these personality variables are sometimes “vague and overlap in ill-defined ways”. He adds that “the instruments which have been used to measure the personality variables are varied and, in some cases, of doubtful validity and reliability” (1994: 517-519). These worries appear to have led Ellis to exclude most of these variables from his studies of their relation to language learning. Instead it appears that he went to Eysenck’s Traits Theory which argues that personality consists of three dimensions, namely introversion-extraversion, neuroticism-stability, and psychoticism-normality. Ellis found that the dimension of extroversion/introversion is of clearer relevance to TESOL. Therefore, he limited his discussion of the effects of personality variables on language learning to the dimension of extroversion/introversion. He says that “by choosing to investigate the extroversion/introversion distinction, we are investigating only one aspect of learners’ personality” (1994: 20).

Skehan considers three crucial factors of language learning: intelligence, the ability to take risks, and the tendency to be extrovert or introvert. He argues that the latter two dimensions of personality have an affective influence on language learning, arguing that risk-taking together with extroversion-introversion are associated with language learning. The rest of my review of the literature, in this chapter, will focus mainly on the extroversion/introversion and risk-taking traits of personality as this discussed by Ellis, Skehan, and others.

Extroversion and Introversion are terms used to gauge two styles. Extrovert characters tend to be gregarious, while the introverted tend to be private. The activity of the extrovert is usually seen as usually directed toward the external world and that of the introvert inward upon himself or herself (Infoplease, 2003). Extroverts are sociable, like parties, have many friends and need excitement in everything they do; they are sensation-seekers and are lively and active (Eysenck, 1965, quoted in Skehan, 1989: 100). Eysenck (1957) suggests that extroverts will be easily distracted from studying, partly as a result of their gregariousness and partly because of their weak ability to concentrate for long periods (In Skehan, 1989: 101). Conversely,

introverts are quiet, prefer reading rather than meeting people and talking to others, have few but close friends and usually avoid excitement (Eysenck and Chan 1982: 154, quoted in Ellis 1994:520). In other words, Extroverts are motivated from "without" and their attention is directed outward. They are people who appear relaxed, confident, and have trouble understanding life until they have lived it. When they are feeling bad, low in energy, or stressed, they are likely to look outside themselves for relief. They get energized from the outside world, and they look for meaning outside of themselves (Johnston, 1999-2003). Introverts, on the other hand, are motivated from "within" and they are oriented towards the inner realm of ideas, imagery, and reflection. They get their energy from within rather than from the outside world. An introvert values quiet time alone for thinking while an extrovert wants time with others for action. Introverts believe that they cannot live life until they have understood it. They are seen as reserved, quiet, shy, aloof, and distant. When an introvert is tired, stressed or feels bad he is likely to withdraw to a quiet place and engage in reflective activity that only involves herself/himself. Introverts look to the inner world for energy and meaning (Johnston, 1999-2003).

Personally, I don't think that these two divisions of personality cover the diversity of learners' personalities. It may be easy to spot extreme extroverts and extreme introverts; otherwise it is really difficult to differentiate an extrovert from an introvert. This becomes even complex when a learner (e.g. myself) is an extrovert in a certain situation and an introvert in another. Moreover, distinctions between extroverts and introverts are not clear cut. Each individual varies from time to time in her or his desire to be expressive and in company, or reserved and in seclusion. The two expressions namely, expressive and reserved, are mentioned by David Keirse (1998) as alternatives to the extrovert introvert dimensions because when someone is observed to be talkative and sociable (the so-called "extrovert") she or he can be described as "expressive." In contrast, people who are more quiet and private (the so-called "introverts") can be described as "reserved." "Reserved persons tend to hold their fire verbally, they tend to listen carefully to what others say, while expressive persons tend not to listen very well, so eager are they to tell others of what they have on their minds. So in general, the expressive are quick to speak and slow to listen,

while the reserved are quick to listen and slow to speak”. Pierce (1996) thinks that “Introversion and Extroversion are best seen as preferences.”

Ellis (1994: 520) points out that the relationship between extroversion/introversion and second language learning has been hypothesized in two different ways. The first suggests that “extroverted learners will do better in acquiring basic interpersonal communication skills”. Skehan, in relation to this idea, points out that there is a tendency for extroverts to underperform slightly compared to introverts in that they show poorer recall after a delay while introverts may code material more efficiently into long-term memory (Skehan 1989:101). The second states that: “introverted learners will do better at developing cognitive academic language ability”, but with no clear empirical support. However, Ellis points out that other studies have given different results which fail to lend much support to the hypothesis that introversion aids the development of academic language learning (1994: 521).

Many investigators have suggested that sociable learners, which means extroverts, will be more inclined to talk, more inclined to join groups, more likely to participate in class, more likely to volunteer and to engage in practice activities, and more likely to maximize language-use opportunities outside the classroom by using language for communication . Thus an extrovert would benefit both inside and outside the classroom by having the appropriate personality trait for language learning since learning is best accomplished, according to most theorists, by actually using the target language (Skehan 1989:101). Though there is some social bias toward extroverted learners, reserved persons, however, have no reason to feel that there is anything wrong with them. As a result, Skehan (1989:104-105), indicates that extroversion and introversion each have their positive features, and that an extreme way is likely to work against some aspects of target language development.

2.5 Risk-taking:

Risk-taking is a developmental trait that consists in moving toward something without thinking of the consequences. Learning is expected to flourish in an atmosphere in which the learner is willing to take risks, and it is the task of the instructor to create such an atmosphere for learning (Svinicki, University of Texas-

Austin). McClelland and McClelland et al (1953, 1958, and 1961) propose that “some learners perceive the likelihood of achieving goals as constituting medium-risk tasks, and respond to such challenges on the basis of a past history of success with such tasks. Unsuccessful learners, as McClelland argues, will tend to be those who set excessively high or low goals for themselves, with neither of these outcomes likely to lead to sustained learning” (Quoted in Skehan 1989:106). In the same regard, Skehan thinks that successful learners will be those who construe the tasks that face them as medium-risk in that these tasks are achievable. This will lead them to engage in the cumulative learning activities that lead in turn to longer-term success (1989: 106). Risk-takers tend to rehearse, they tolerate vagueness, are not worried about using difficult things and getting them wrong, and they don’t hesitate.

A study by Ely (1986, quoted in Skehan 1989:108-109) suggests that class proficiency, class participation, and risk-taking are interdependent factors. It is worth saying that aptitude and motivation are thought to influence both classroom participation and proficiency. A result of this study might lead to the assumption that risk-taking learners participate more in the classroom and consequently, they may increase their language proficiency, especially if we take into our consideration that language proficiency appears to increase remarkably by more usage of the language (Skehan, 1989: 108). Ely elaborates that four dimensions underlie the risk-taking construct:

1. A lack of hesitancy about using a newly encountered linguistic element.
2. A willingness to use linguistic elements perceived to be complex or difficult.
3. A tolerance of possible incorrectness or inexactitude in using the language.
4. An inclination to rehearse a new element silently before attempting to use it aloud (1986, quoted in Skehan 1989:108).

Skehan notices that within the ESOL field, risk-taking has been seen, in situations that contain social interaction, as likely to increase opportunities to hear language and obtain input. Risk-takers are not afraid to get involved in any kind of interaction with others, to speak language, and use output and engage in functional practice because they prefer what they want to say without worrying about the small details

more likely to be one who takes his existing language system to the limit. He imagines such kind of learner to be more likely to change and more resistant to fossilization.

However, there are problems when we try to relate general psychological theories to work on risk-taking specifically within ESOL. Skehan thinks that the problem is to decide if people vary in their social risk-taking stability from situation to situation. Is the timid learner in one situation likely to be quite venturesome in another? Do people vary from day to day, from mood to mood, in terms of how adventurous they are with language structure hypotheses? We need to know, as Skehan points out, whether we are dealing with behaviour which is influenced by a risk-taking inclination or alternatively whether we are dealing with social habits so it is possible to decide that risk-taking is a psychological aspect of personality that has noticeable influence on language learning (1989: 107).

When taking the risk-taking into consideration and how it should be applied into the classroom, many other factors should be taken into consideration. In a traditional Syrian classroom, risk-takers are not encouraged to express themselves. In a sense, this might be justifiable since they can learn the language outside the classroom and the inside learning opportunity is left for the nonrisk-takers. In another sense, it is the risk-takers' right to learn inside the classroom which is why they are going to the school. Therefore, the teacher should be equipped with awareness of how to create a suitable atmosphere for both types of learners. An interesting study entitled "if learning involves risk-taking, teaching involves trust-building", the author argues that the learners should be encouraged to take risks to improve their learning suggesting that risk-taking is an important feature of learning. Moreover, she calls for building trust between teachers and learners because this trust is able to turn any situation into a learning opportunity and where learners will expect their instructor to value their efforts, they will be willing to take the chances that lead to learning and to view failures as learning opportunities (Svinicki, University of Texas-Austin).

Risk-taking in Syria is not encouraged and that is why I will go in much more details on Svinicki ideas because they are particularly relevant to the Syrian situation.

Svinicki presents four characteristics of an instructor who would support student risk-taking:

1. **Model how to take risks:** One way to build student confidence is to be willing to take risks yourself. A great deal of emotion and social behavior is learned through modelling (Bandura, 1977 quoted in Svinicki, University of Texas-Austin). By the way the teacher handles errors and wrong turns; she/he demonstrates to students that even experts make mistakes.
2. **Exude organization and competence:** When the students are convinced that the instructor is "in control" and knows where the class is going, they will feel more comfortable about taking risks. They will be confident that if they make a mistake or go off on a wrong tangent- the instructor will be able to bring them back on target. Therefore, the instructor must be well-organized and solidly grounded in the content such that he or she can handle any eventuality.
3. **Minimize the pain of making an error:** One reason many students are reluctant to take risks is the fact that our classrooms have such a strong evaluation component. They are afraid that if they make an error in class, it will affect their grade. Therefore, it would be useful to separate the learning from the evaluating. Does everything assigned have to be graded? If in-class activities are known to be "preparations" for the evaluation, but not themselves graded, students are just as motivated to use that opportunity to prepare. Evidence from the mastery learning literature has demonstrated the value of letting students check their learning prior to the "real" test (Bloom, 1984, quoted in Svinicki, University of Texas-Austin).
4. **Provide risk-taking opportunities:** In order to help students take risks, the instructor must provide opportunities. This means not doing all the talking yourself. Outside observers of classrooms are struck by how much work instructors do in class and how little their students do (Weimer, 1989). Instead, instructors must let the students do some of the work, then stand back

wrong turns helps them learn something from the process. This requires your not being rigidly tied to your own agenda. You will always have an ultimate goal in mind, but there may be many wrong paths which would be just as instructive and possibly more interesting because they would reflect the students' own struggle with the task rather than your preconceived notion of the "correct way" to do something. In the long run students will learn more from following their own wrong path than from following the well-worn footsteps of the experts.

If we accept this view of learning as risk-taking, we can begin to confront the factors that discourage students from taking risks and build a class environment where learning becomes less of a risk, or where the risk-taking in learning becomes valued instead of being scary. Both of these directions require that instructors develop a trusting relationship with Students (Svinicki, University of Texas-Austin). The teacher who has all these characteristics will be more able to maximize students' participation in the classroom by making them aware of the advantages of being risk-takers. In order to do that, teachers should work on the dimensions which contribute to the risk-taking in their students as well as enhancing any other dimension and factor that will support students' risk-taking like the trust-building between the teachers and the learners. However, it is interesting to notice that at the TESOL level, personality is restricted to these two dimensions only and this leads one to wonder why it is specifically related to these and why it doesn't look at potential implications and applications of other aspects of personality

In this chapter, I have summarised the main literature sources on theories of personality. In chapter four, materials based on these theories will be recommended as a basis for communicative activities and as a way of facilitating for teachers to find out more about prevalent personality traits among their learners. In the following chapter I plan to make more detailed study of learners' different learning styles which, in turn, will contribute to suggesting activities for learners.

CHAPTER THREE:

LEARNING STYLES

3.1 Illustration of learning styles:

Given the same kind of information, two learners might learn two totally different things. This is not only because of the differences between their individualities, but also because they process information in different ways as well. Ways in which learners process information, or in other words learn, are called learning styles. The teacher should be aware of different styles and able to accommodate for them. This may lead to better learning outcomes. Every learner processes information in her/his

how she/he processes information best, she/he can learn things more efficiently and in less time (Middle Tennessee State University, 2003).

Many definitions of learning styles have been presented in the last few decades. All of them evolve around the same idea which describes them as methods, approaches and ways of learning. Learning styles are simply different approaches or ways of learning (Learning styles and multiple intelligence, 2003). Kahtz & Kling, (1999) think that “learning styles are relatively stable ways of how a learner approaches a learning task across a range of different domains” (Quoted in Pithers, 2000), and that a learning style is an individual's preferred way of learning (Santo, 2003). The idea of learning styles comes from general psychology. It refers, as Ellis points out, to “the characteristic ways in which individuals orientate to problem-solving” (1994, 499). According to Keefe, learning style is “a consistent way of functioning that reflects underlying causes of behavior” (1979, quoted in Ellis 1994: 499).

Learning styles reflect, as Willing (1987) sates, “the totality of psychological functioning” (Quoted in Ellis, 1994: 499). “They are general approaches that students use in acquiring a new language” (Oxford and Lavine, 1992:38, quoted in Oxford and Anderson, 1995: 203). ‘These styles are the overall patterns that give general direction to learning behaviour’. (Cornett, 1983: 9, quoted in Oxford and Anderson, 1995: 203). “Learning style is the biologically and developmentally imposed set of characteristics that make the same teaching method wonderful for someone and terrible for others” (Dunn and Griggs, 1988: 3, quoted in Oxford and Anderson, 1995: 203). Ellis believes that an individual’s learning style can be viewed as “relatively fixed and not readily changed” (1994: 499). The best learning is thought to happen when the teaching style matches the learner’s style.

Oxford and Anderson (1995: 203) suggest that learning styles have six interrelated aspects:

- 1- Cognitive elements include preferred or habitual patterns of mental functioning.
- 2- The executive aspect deals with the degree to which the person seeks order, organization and closure and manages his or her own learning processes.

- 3- The affective aspect reflects clusters of attitude, beliefs and values that influence what an individual will pay most attention to in a learning situation.
- 4- The social aspect concerns the preferred extent of involvement with other people while learning.
- 5- The psychological aspect involves at least partly anatomically-based sensory and perceptual tendencies of the person.
- 6- The behavioural aspect is where the learning style relates to a tendency to actively seeking situations compatible with one's own learning preferences. (Oxford and Anderson, 1995: 203).

The number of learning styles mentioned in the literature is quite large and diverse. I am going to give a summary of the different distinctions and classifications that researchers use. A focus, then, will be made on two prevalent and opposite styles, namely field-dependence and field-independence.

Many researchers (e.g. Goodnow, Austin, Pask, Scott, Willing, Reid, Oxford, Anderson, Lavine and Krashen) have investigated the styles of learning that learners appear to follow. Many theories have emerged, but also many inconsistencies, contradictions, and different results have appeared (e.g. Pask and Scott (1972), Willing (1987), and Gieve (1991)). Since individual personality is a complex area of research and very imperfectly understood (as mentioned in chapter two), it is not surprising that research aiming to define and describe learning styles is likewise complicated.

In cognitive psychology, which is the aspect of psychology in the learning process, a number of learning style distinctions has been made. Pask and Scott (1972) have come up with two styles that actually represent the same idea, namely, serialists and holists (In Ellis, 1994). Serialists usually operate with complex hypotheses and holists do with simple ones. This appears to be a refinement of an earlier theory developed early in the second half of the twentieth century about focusers and scanners. As the two words imply, a 'focuser' learner is one who tackles a problem by concentrating on one aspect at a time, in a step-by-step process, while a 'scanner' learner can deal with several issues at the same time and allow their ideas to

Ellis are impulsive v. reflective thinkers, and divergent c. convergent thinkers. These styles, as Ellis says, “reveal personality differences as well as learning styles differences” (1994: 500).

Therefore, a relation could exist between one’s personality trait and style or styles of learning. An action research is suggested in chapter five to find out whether learners with certain personality traits would have certain styles of learning and learners with a specific personality trait would avoid a specific learning style and vice versa.

A number of researchers have used survey techniques to collect data on learners’ stated preferences. Reid (1987) distinguishes four main kinds of learning styles: Visual learning, auditory learning, kinaesthetic learning, and tactile learning (In Ellis, 1994: 506). Visual learners need to see the teacher's body language and facial expression to fully understand the content of a lesson. They may think in images and learn best from visual displays including: diagrams, illustrated text books, overhead transparencies, videos, flipcharts and hand-outs. During a lecture or classroom discussion, visual learners often prefer to take detailed notes to absorb the information (Learning styles and multiple intelligence, 2003). Auditory learners learn best through verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say. They interpret the underlying meanings of speech through listening to tone of voice, pitch, speed and other aspects of the voice. Written information may have little meaning until it is heard. Tactile/Kinaesthetic learners, on the other hand, learn best through a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted, during a class, by their need for activity and exploration (Learning styles and multiple intelligence, 2003).

Another survey has been done by Willing (1987) by giving Australian students a questionnaire. The responses were analysed by means of factor analysis². Willing was able to identify two major dimensions of learning styles, “one was cognitive and corresponded closely to that of field- independence/dependence. The other was more affective in nature; it concerned how active learners were in the way they reported

²A statistical procedure designed to discover if there are any combinations of items which afford parallel

approaching L2 learning tasks” (Ellis, 1994: 507). According to Ellis, these two dimensions were used by Willing as a basis to differentiate four general learning styles:

- 1- Concrete learning style: Learners use direct means of processing information; they are people-orientated, spontaneous, imaginative, and emotional. They dislike routinized learning, and prefer kinaesthetic modality.
- 2- Analytical learning style: Learners who have this style usually focus on specific problems and proceed by means of hypothetical-deductive reasoning. They are object-orientated, independent, dislike failure, and prefer logical and didactic presentations.
- 3- Communicative learning style: Learners of this style are fairly independent, highly adaptable and flexible. They are responsive to facts that do not fit. They prefer social learning and communicative approach. Taking decisions is an enjoyable activity for them.
- 4- Authority-orientated learning style: This type of learners relies on other people. In a classroom environment, they need the teacher’s directions and explanations because they like structured learning environment. They are intolerant of facts that do not fit properly especially in problem-solving cases. They prefer sequential progression and dislike discovery learning (1994: 507).

The same questionnaire has been used by Gieve (1991), but using the cluster³ analysis instead. Five clusters have been resulted from this analysis:

- 1- Learners with instrumental motivation together with communicative orientation.
 - 2- Learners with no motivation.
 - 3- Learners interested in general intellectual development.
 - 4- Learners with strong motivation but with no clear aims.
-

5- Learners with integrative motivation.

(In Ellis, 1994: 507).

Clearly Gieve's study employs motivation as a major variable in identifying learning style of the learners (Ellis, 1994: 507).

Hatch (1974) and Krashen (1978), in studies of second language acquisition, refer to other learning styles. Hatch talks of rule-formers, and data-gatherers, while Krashen distinguishes monitor over-users, monitor under-users and the optimal monitor users. Rule-formers are "learners who pay close attention to linguistic form, who sort out the rules and who develop steadily". Data gatherers, on the other hand, show greater concern for interaction and make extensive use of formulaic chunks (Ellis, 1994: 507). Mitchell and Myles explained Krashen's (1978) thinking as follows: monitor over-users are learners who are very careful in their production and who do not like to make mistakes. Their speech is consequently slow and not very fluent. Under-users care a lot about their fluency and speed in speech and do not care that much about their mistakes. Optimal users use the monitor when it is appropriate, i.e., when it does not interfere with communication (1998: 37).

Among other learning styles that have been investigated are the two contrasting types identified by Dechert (1984a), namely analytic, showing long pauses at chunk boundaries with few corrections and serial processing, and synthetic, whose owner manifests shorter pauses throughout, needs more corrections, and follows episodic processing.

3.2 Field-dependence and field- independence:

With all the mentioned styles, "only the distinction between field dependence and field independence has attracted much attention in SLA research" (Ellis, 1994: 500). The rest of this chapter is going to focus on these two styles and their relation to the learning process. Various studies and research suggest that learners may approach a learning task with a field- independent tendency or the opposite field-dependent one. Witkin, Oltman, Raskin, and Karp (1971) have done painstaking work on these two styles in an attempt to identify them and find their relations to the process of learning a second language.

They say that “in a field-dependent mode of perceiving, perception is strongly dominated by the overall organisation of the surrounding field, and parts of the field are experienced as fused. In a field- independent mode of perceiving, parts of the field are experienced as discrete from organised ground.” (Quoted in Ellis, 1994: 500). Skehan (1989: 111) also describes these two styles saying that “field-dependent individuals are thought to be person-oriented, interested in other people and sensitive to them. They are also thought to be outgoing and gregarious. However, field-independent learners tend to be more impersonal and detached, less sensitive and more aloof; they are cerebral and object-oriented.” The characteristics of field-dependent and field- independent learners are given in table one.

	<i>Field-independent learners</i>	<i>Field-dependent learners</i>
1.	Are able to break up an organized visual field and keep part of it separate.	Are unable to separate figures from background.
2.	Excel at remembering names.	Excel at remembering faces.
3.	Understand visual cues and are better at math.	Have trouble understanding visual cues, for example, recognizing icons on a computer screen.
4.	Prefer learning environments that require minimal interaction	Prefer well-structured learning environment with much positive feedback.
5.	Enjoy discovery learning and individualized self-paced learning	Enjoy the social aspects of learning.
6.	Are more likely to be males.	Are more likely to be females.

Table one: The characteristics of field- independence and field-dependence learners

Witkin and his associates have developed many tests to decide whether a learner is field- independent or field-dependent. The version that is most widely used in SLA research is the Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT). This provides, as Ellis points out, a measure of the extent to which individuals are field- independent. In most of the research that have been done in this area, the GEFT test was one of the most useful ways used when field-dependence/independence tendency is required to be known.

Santo (2003,) says that Field independence and field dependence are sometimes referred to as "cognitive controls" in that they control the ways that learners process information. Assessed by Group Embedded Figures Test, the idea behind field independence is that performance on perceptual/spatial tasks can diagnose an individual's ability to learn and perform on non-perceptual tasks. Field independent students will prefer situations that allow them more freedom in working toward their goals and finding solutions to their problems. These learners like to work on their own. Students who are field-dependent prefer group work and need more assistance from the teacher. One way to help these students is to make sure that any diagrams and illustrations used as visual aids explaining a project contain decent information explaining them.

In the field of second language learning, the study and research of the learning styles has got a lot of attention since the relation between the two is quite tight. Among styles identified to date, the field-dependence-independence dimensions appear to be the most extensively studied and have had the widest applications to educational problems. It appears that it is unknown why only this dimension has been studied with relation to second language learning, yet it is quite interesting to investigate the reasons.

Field-independence, in particular, has been found to correlate positively and significantly with second language learning in school settings where the target language is taught formally. Genesee and Hamayan (1980) reported significant and

positive correlations between field-independence and both general achievement in French and French listening comprehension skills. Naiman, et al. (1978) also obtained significant correlations between field-independence and L2 learning for English speaking learners of French (In Salmani-Nodoushan, 2002). Given the interesting relationship between field-independence and tutored L2 learning, Brown (1987, quoted in Salmani-Nodoushan, 2002) suggests that “field-independence may be an advantage in classroom L2 learning”. Conversely, he implies, field-dependence may be suitable in natural L2 acquisition where language is acquired from the environments in which language is being spoken around the subject. This reminds us of Krashen’s Learning- Acquisition hypothesis which says that “ ‘acquisition’ is the result of natural interaction with the language via meaningful communication, and that ‘learning’ is the result of classroom experience, in which the learner is made to focus on form and to learn about the linguistic rules of the target language” (Mitchell and Myles, 1998: 37).

Seliger (1977), Stansfield and Hansen (1983), Chapelle and Roberts (1986), and Carter (1988) have made considerable number of studies that have investigated the relationship between field-independence, field-dependence and second language learning and found that in general, field-independent learners do better on measures of formal language learning (discrete point tests). Nevertheless, studies by Hansen (1984), Chapelle and Roberts (1986), and Carter (1988) have revealed slightly contradicting results. They show that field-independence learners also do better on integrative tests and tests of communicative competence that were originally created to favor field-dependence learners (Ellis 1994: 501). Carter (1988) found that field-independence learners did better than field-dependence in both a formal and a functional language course. Moreover, Brown (1987) and Bialystok/Fröhlich (1978) postulated that field-independent learners may have the advantage in classroom where foreign languages are taught because of the formal, or structure-oriented, nature of the classroom task, as opposed to a more natural or functional use of language used for communication of meaning. Abraham (1985) “discovered that field-dependence students were happier in classrooms where rules were not emphasized, while field-independent liked classrooms where deductive, rule-oriented learning was the dominant approach” (Oxford and Anderson, 1995: 205).

The implication is that the supposed superiority of a field-independent cognitive style in formal classroom learning may be related to a distinction between the usual formal linguistic achievement orientation of classrooms, tests and what Omaggio has called real competence, which means functional language proficiency (Salmani-Nodoushan, 2002). Another interesting study suggests the possibility of a learner to be field-independent and field-dependent simultaneously. Brown (1978) suggests that some learners may have flexible cognitive styles, combining field-independence and field-dependence modes of processing and adapting their approach to suit different learning tasks (Ellis 1994: 502).

People differ in how they approach learning situations. They also differ in what they learn and how they learn, both in the sense of what type of situations they seek out, and in what they notice when in the same situation as each other. In other words, different learning styles suit different people. Santo (2003) suggests that when it comes to the educational process and more specifically to the classroom, a match or mismatch between the learner's preferred style and the teacher's teaching style can play a role in the speed of the learning process and to some extent in the success or failure of the learner. When a teacher's teaching style matches a student's learning style, that student typically experiences greater satisfaction and a more positive attitude toward the learning process. However a major mismatch between teachers' style and learners' learning styles can lead to some difficulties. The implication for education in general and TESOL in particular is presumably that teachers need to provide opportunities for students to learn in ways which suit their preferred styles of learning. If teachers adopt too extreme a method of teaching, perhaps reflecting only their own learning style, one or more groups of students will find the approach alien to their way of learning (Entwistle, 1981: 95). Cohen (1969) and Oxford, Ehrman & Lavine (1991) have found that conflicts may occur when a student has a learning style that differs from the instructional style of the teacher, especially when the teacher does not understand the cultural and personal reasons lying behind these differences (quoted in Oxford and Anderson, 1995: 202). Many teachers value most the students who seem to have the same cognitive skills and learning styles (Claxton and Murrell, 1987), and this is "an insidious and often unrecognised form of educational prejudice" (Oxford and Anderson, 1995: 202). All the above implies that

teachers should be helped to be more aware that such differences in learning do exist and that they are likely to discriminate against those whose style does not match theirs. Finally they should be helped to respond constructively to other styles.

Santo (2003) suggests that the teacher should never rely totally on any one method, but try to vary them. If a student does not seem to be learning, the teacher should consider whether her/his learning style might be at odds with the teaching style. The teacher is recommended to remain flexible and be able to change planned learning activities if students are having trouble in a given area. She suggests three approaches to deal with the issue of learning styles:

- **The first approach** is to identify a person's individual learning style and then adapt instruction toward that person's strengths and preferences. A profile of the learner can be developed using several different learning style instruments. This approach is useful in the case of helping a learner who is having difficulty in the course by assessing that person's style and then revising some of the instruction to meet that style. This can be particularly helpful in reassuring students who believe they are slow or stupid, when intelligence is not the real issue.
- **The second approach** is to identify a person's preferred style and then to give instruction aimed toward the opposite preference in order to strengthen that student's weaknesses.
- **The third approach** does not even attempt to identify an individual's style, but rather uses different instructional methods and media in the overall course design. This approach represents an attempt to reach all learners and assumes that every student will find something in the course that appeals to her or him. The goal of this "one size fits all" method is to have all learners achieve a set of predefined instructional objectives.

According to the third approach, the important thing is to include as many different methods as possible. The importance of this approach, as Santo states, is based on the assumption that if a learning activity doesn't fit that person's natural style, the person is experienced enough to be able to compensate.

Finally, it is important for teachers to have an idea about the learning styles that their learners have. Matching and mismatching between the teacher's style and the learner's plays an important role in the success or failure of the entire process. Santo's third approach appears to be a good compromise. Therefore, I will discuss how this approach could be introduced as a suggestion to teachers in order to accommodate for most learning styles.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Need for Individualism and Implementations & Applications of Personality & Learning Styles

4.1 Need for individualism:

The concepts of personality and learning styles have hardly had any place in curricula in Syria. They are not given enough attention when designing textbooks and materials. This situation has happened because of the time limit and order of priorities of principals in the concerned ministries. However, these two categories and the other ones of individual differences are proving increasingly important. Individualisation in educational systems has received attention in literature during the last decade (e.g. Cooper and Varma, 1997, Eysenck, 1994, Oxford, and Ehrman and Lavine 1991). Moreover, the British Council, which is considered one of the

biggest employers of English teachers in the world, published a book in 1978 entitled *Individualisation in Language Learning*. On the 24th of July 2003, the council put an advertisement in the Guardian newspaper to employ teachers who teach English and Individualism (appendix 1). These events show clearly the increasing importance of the concepts of individualism in TESOL.

In this chapter, I will try to suggest some example activities that would allow learners to discuss and become more aware of issues relating to personality and learning styles. The success or otherwise of implementing activities like these will eventually allow me and other teachers to evaluate their usefulness. I can argue that one of the advantages of doing exercises that introduce the learners to the different possible learning styles is that it allows learners to identify their styles and help teachers to identify their preferred styles. Adult learners are usually interested in themselves so giving them a chance to identify what kind of personality they have might be an attractive activity. It will be interesting to know whether these activities function as learning motivators and whether they attract learners to get more involved in the learning process. To reach such answers, teachers, in Syria, can be involved in an action research with a commitment to find out about learning styles and personality traits of their students. If the answer is 'yes', this might be part of a revolution for reaching changes in the ways of teaching English in English language institutions. "Action Research in education is study conducted by colleagues in a school setting of the results of their activities to improve instruction" (Glickman, 1992. Quoted in South Florida Centre for Educational Leaders, 2003). It is a group of research methodologies which pursue action or change and research or understanding at the same time (Dick, Bob, 1999).

As stated earlier, direct method and teacher-centeredness are still prevalent in most Syrian classrooms. I referred earlier to an increasing need to change present ways of teaching and adopt more flexible methods of teaching. However, I think that it is not very desirable to adapt ready made methods that have been introduced in either east or west. Syrian society, like any other society, has individual citizens and learners, each with her/his own uniqueness. We, in Syria, need to know all the theories about the new methods, and to identify our learners' preferred ways of learning. A needs

analysis might be needed to be done about the educational system in Syria so it finds its way forward to achieve what is needed. Richards points out that one of the assumptions of curriculum development and reform is that a sound educational program should be based on analysis of learners' needs. He defines needs analysis as "the procedures used to collect information about learners' needs" (2001: 51). A step forward would be to try to identify most preferred styles of learning among my learners and their prevalent personality traits, comparing them with what other colleagues find, so we could cater for them.

The following exercises are important examples of types of psychological activities for introspection and self-analysis. They are self-awareness exercises which are directed specifically at self-analysis. The outcomes of such exercises are going to be useful for matching, making decisions, and reflecting on them. They are ways in which teachers can help learners to use information from previous or parallel activities in order to help them evaluate such exercises.

These exercises are examples of communicative methodology because the principles in which they are planned to be introduced are communicative. The materials used in the exercises are authentic because they are taken from real contexts. The target language is used in all discussions and interactions. These exercises focus on the process of communication more than mastering language forms (Larsen-Freeman 2000: 126). Pair work and group work are often used in the following exercises. Working in groups increases the amount of communication in that it gives students chances to express themselves. "Students should be given opportunities to listen to the target language as it is used in authentic communication" (Larsen-Freeman 2000: 128). Introducing exercises and activities using communicative method represents an alternative to the direct method used in Syrian classrooms.

Group work should be encouraged in Syrian classrooms because the President has highlighted this need and because it dramatically increases the amount of talking and interaction for individual students (Larsen-Freeman 2000). Moreover, group work, according to Harmer (2001) is advisable and relevant in all classrooms. Since Syrian classrooms are not different from others, presumably this applies to Syrian classes

broaden the students' horizons because working in groups shows them that other opinions can also be correct. Moreover, group work encourages broader skills of cooperation and negotiation. It is a good way to promote autonomous and collaborative learning because it allows students to make their own decisions in the group in addition to the level of participation without the interference of the teacher (Harmer, 2001: 117). Group work will encourage Larsen-Freeman's idea that the target language should be used as a vehicle for classroom communication, where English is used among the group members, not just the object of study (2000: 126). This kind of work encourages cooperative and collaborative relationships among students. It gives students an opportunity to show their individualism and to work on negotiating meaning (Larsen-Freeman, 2000: 127). However, teachers have to work out themselves suitable staging of tasks for their students to do group work effectively.

Here are examples of some integrated skills sequences of activities:

4.2 Activity (a):

4.2.1 (a), section 1:

The first sample activity is concerned about learning styles that might be best introduced in a session on speaking skills. The students are introduced to sixteen personality traits (table two) and are asked to decide which one of these traits best describes themselves. To do this, they are given a handout with all the adjectives which are going to be used in deciding the traits (table three). They should look these words up in their dictionaries as homework. So when they come to the class next time, they should know what these words mean and say which adjective describes each one. They are asked to give themselves scores on the forms that will be provided. The words that explain each contrasting pair of traits are put on a scale (Appendix: 2). Students are to choose a number, from 1 to 5 that corresponds to her/his personality. The results are then added up to decide whether a learner is an extrovert or an introvert, a sensing or intuitive, a thinking or feeling, and whether she/he depends on judgement or perception. Each learner should arrive to a

combination of four adjectives. A full description of these combinations is given to the students as a handout (appendix 3).

1	a) Extroversion:	Social, expressive, broad, interactive, outward and action before thought.
	b) Introversion:	Private, quiet, deep, concentrate, inward, and thought before action.
2	a) Sensing:	Facts, experience, present, practicality, enjoyment, and realism
	b) Intuition:	Possibilities, novelty, future, aspiration, development, and idealism.
3	a) Thinking:	Analysing, objective, logical, criticism, onlooker, and decides on principles.
	b) Feeling:	Sympathising, subjective, personal, appreciation, participant, and decides using values.
4	a) Judgement:	Close, decide, structure, organise, firmness, and control.
	B) Perception:	Open, explore, meander, inquire, flexibility, and spontaneity.

Table two: adjectives used in deciding the personality traits

It might be interesting to compare their results with the provided descriptions and see whether learners agree or not. In pairs they are encouraged to talk about each other's

personality type, then in fours. Teacher could get those who are similar to work together or put students in opposites and get them to argue why they could or couldn't work together. This can be done by asking students who have scored between 25-30 to work together, those who scored between 20-25 to work together, and so on. Opposites can be asked to work together by asking students who scored 25-30 to work with those who scored 6-10. They will supposedly disagree on how to do a learning task. If, for instance, two opposite students are asked if they prefer role play, it is expected to have rather different answers. An aim of this activity is to prepare and encourage students to work in pairs and groups, something crucial for oral communication skills practice because they are obliged to use the target language to talk. The differences and similarities among students could possibly be used to practice the language of agreeing and disagreeing. Another advantage of this activity is that it serves as a communicative activity itself. Teachers will be able, using the results of the activity, to identify the common personality traits of their students.

ESTJ	INFP	ESFP	INTJ
ESFJ	INTP	ENFP	ISTJ
ESTP	INFJ	ENFJ	ISTP
ENTJ	ISFP	ENTP	ISFJ

Table three: Personality traits

{E = extroversion, I = introversion, S = sensing, N = intuition, T = thinking, F = feeling, J = judgement, P = perception}

Such kinds of activities might attract the learners because they are assumed to be interested in their own and others' personalities. Discussing how they like to learn, they are given opportunities to discuss a presumably motivating topic which would consequently increase their interest in target language. This activity or others like can be used by teachers and other interested people to do some research about common personality types among their learners. Awareness of typical types will help positively in creating relevant and local curricula and materials.

4.2.2 (a), section 2

A second stage would be to introduce students to learning styles (table four), ask them to look up these words in dictionaries as homework, and see which of these styles best describes their own personal style. Before students actually start the exercise, they will be given a handout with all the definitions of these styles. They are required to choose either field- independence or field-dependence first and then another learning style that goes with either one. Discussion should be autonomously led by the students with minimal teacher interference. The writing skill can be approached through asking each student to describe their learning styles in a few lines. A comparison is then made, by teachers, between the descriptions of every two or more learners who have the same learning style. To know one's learning style might be everyone's wish. Therefore, having such an activity in the classroom with different people having different styles is most likely going to create diversity that might have positive effect on students' motivation. Again, identifying preferred learning styles among Syrian learners might be very helpful for curriculum designers.

<i><u>LEARNING STYLES</u></i>			
Field- independence		Field-dependence	
Serialist		Holist	
Impulsive		Reflective	
Visual Learning	Auditory Learning	Kinaesthetic Learning	Tactile Learning
Concrete	Analytical	Communicative	Authority-Orientated

Table four: learning styles

It is interesting for teachers to know whether learners who have the same personality trait would necessarily share the same learning style. Therefore, students who have the same personality types can be asked to work in groups compare their learning styles to develop their communicative skills at the same time. It might be useful to know whether learners who have a certain personality trait have a fixed learning style

personality type 'A', for instance will not have learning styles 'B' and 'C'. The above exercise might be quite motivating in itself as part of an English course in the university. In addition it might be helpful for, us as teachers, to make recommendations to the ministry based on our findings. Learner themselves are invited to provide their opinions and suggestions to the project. Their opinions might be of great importance if they are studying social sciences like sociology, psychology and anthropology.

4.3 Activity (b):

Another activity to present students to different learning styles that they might adopt in their learning might be introduced by negotiating with them the way they prefer to be introduced to one lesson. An example lesson might be about a scene taken from the movie of "Notting Hill". In such lesson the skills of listening and speaking are heavily involved. The lesson is planned in a way that caters three learning styles and the four possible ways of doing tasks (i.e. working alone, in pairs, in group, and the class as a whole). The lesson steps are shown in appendix 4. To start negotiating, each student is asked to write down her/his preference whether she/he prefers to watch the scene on TV, to listen to it from the tape, or to read it on handouts. The other question is about their preference of working in pairs or groups. Breen and Littlejohn (2001: 9) say that "learners' own unfolding interpretations of what is done in the classroom and how it relates to their learning agendas are rarely the focus of overt consideration."

I will get them to reflect on their choices and how these choices relate to their learning styles. Then they will be left with the following question: shall I try a different approach which is not my learning style because now I have learned something new. Learners, as Breen and Littlejohn point out, must engage in personal negotiation as a psychological process in order to learn to interpret and express meaning in English (2001: 10). The classroom is a microcosm of the wider community that exist in Syria, so the success of these methods within the classroom

gives the green light to the start of thinking of including these concepts and aspects of individual differences into curricula.

After the papers have been collected, the students are shown that the three answers have been given, and that this is an evidence that each one of us may prefer to learn in different ways. Through the activity, learners will be presented with all three ways, and my objective is trying to broaden their awareness of the existence of these styles and that adapting one style doesn't mean failure in case the task was presented in another style. Moreover, I want students to be persuaded that they can be flexible in that a different style could be adapted if the task requires that. Flexibility plays an important role in the improvement of their learning process. Adapting one fixed learning style is a disadvantage. Moreover, if a student is of learning style 'X' for instance and it is known that learners of style 'Y' do a better job in learning. This student could be advised to try out style 'Y'. Learners need to be flexible. They need to be able to adapt to different teachers and teacher-centred systems, different examinations, different group settings, and decide which one to use at different times. The same concepts entirely apply to teachers who should be flexible as well and adapt to their learners' preferred styles.

After a lesson, students can be asked to evaluate it in terms of their learning styles. They can be asked whether the way the lesson presented was appropriate for them and whether it was useful. Such discussion allows more space for all students to negotiate, discuss, evaluate, and reflect on how a lesson took place and how they prefer lessons to be organised and developed. This discussion could take the form of pair work or small groups who are required to report to the class their points of view. It is worth mentioning here that this exercise is only one example of how to introduce different learning styles to students and how to conduct such styles in a communicative way. What is important is the principle rather than the exercise itself, and consequently this principle can be extended to other learning activities that have similar objectives. We teachers should carry on comparing all such exercises that use communicative method, discuss them with each other and reflect on them to improve them. Principles of Communicative activities apply to all the example activities that I am introducing in this chapter.

To encourage negotiation with students, using such exercises, teachers can ask students to keep their evaluations in diaries, or forms of self-report (Hedge, 2000: 86-95) and keep doing this for the rest of the classes. At the end of the course, it might be interesting to go back and compare their evaluations with their learning styles. This will pave the way for more negotiation in the classroom and lead to a better awareness of their styles and a better ability to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

Negotiation is one of the basic aspects of individualism especially each individual's opinion will find listening ears. Negotiation, according to Breen and Litlejohn (2001: 20-27), has many advantages:

1. Negotiation is a means for responsible membership of the classroom community.
2. Negotiation can construct and reflect learning as an emancipatory⁴ process.
3. Negotiation can activate the social and cultural resources of the classroom group.
4. Negotiation enables learners to exercise their active agency in learning.
5. Negotiation can enrich classroom discourse for language learning.
6. Negotiation can inform and extend a teacher's pedagogic strategies.

4.4 Activity (c):

Personality questionnaires might be among the activities that attract and motivate learners. Such a questionnaire (appendix 3) is recommended for online uptake. The questionnaire is a test called the temperament sorter. It has been "Created to help people gain new understanding of their traits, motivations, and behaviors, the Temperament Sorter analyzes one particular aspect of personality: temperament⁵. The Temperament Sorter examines these innate facets of personality to arrive at an integrated picture of an individual." (Advisor team, 1998-2003).

⁴ Free from constraints.

⁵ Temperament is a set of inclinations that each of us is born with; it's a predisposition to certain

This personality test results in four temperaments: artisan, guardian, idealist, and rational. Artisans are people who value freedom and spontaneity. They hate constraints, and like to have freedom to act in their impulses, play, and create. Guardians value belonging to a groups and communities. They tend to be stable through responsible, conservative, traditional behavior. Idealists value personal growth, authenticity, and integrity. They yearn to develop themselves fully as individuals and to facilitate growth in others. Rationals, on the other hand, value competence and intelligence. They like to learn, know, predict, and control the resources in their environment (Advisor team, 1998-2003).

The teacher can ask each student before actually doing the test, to think and predict her/his type and partner's type. They can be asked further to give examples of why they think that about themselves, and to negotiate with a partner. Then they would actually do the test and compare the results with their predictions, agree or disagree and discuss the reasons of their argument. It is expected that such homework will be an interesting task for students. Moreover, this type of activity, getting students to do a questionnaire and discuss results in this way fits well with the requirements for a communicative approach to language teaching and learning. Communicative learning could be useful because learners of English as a second or foreign language have difficulties in communicating in English, "they need more than linguistic competence; they need communicative competence" (Hymes, 1971, quoted in Larsen-Freeman, 2000: 121). This questionnaire, I think, should be done in as many classes as possible and learners are given options to do it with their friends and relatives. However, I think that I should pilot such an activity in my own classes first and see whether students like it or not. Confidentiality and anonymity of the information provided in the personality test must be ensured to students.

Such types of activities require understanding the vocabulary and thinking about it. This consequently requires quite a lot of reflection from students. They need to look up words in the dictionary and to think through what they mean. Doing such activities could be done in one session or could be extended over many sessions where more reflection is promoted and reporting back is allowed. When done over many sessions, a greater opportunity is given for pair and group work so the

decision is left up to teachers keeping in mind to make the most use of them as communicative activities. However, in implementing such exercises, the teacher might be faced with some obstacles. The language required might be difficult for some students which might result in demotivating them. Organising these activities and making sure that all students manage to do them is not an easy task for the teacher.

With the move to change that is currently going on in Syria, especially on the educational level, such research could be valuable for those who are responsible for designing new curriculum. Information from areas of personality and learning styles might be a part of a study of whole aspects of education and therefore, such research could represent a push forward in the reform process

CHAPTER FIVE:

Need for Communicative activities, Recommendations for Syrian Teachers, Problems That Might be Encountered, and Conclusion.

It appears that we, in Syria, suffer from a wide gap between the methods we have been using and more up-to-date methods that are typically being used elsewhere. Bridges are needed to cover this gap and move us on to the future. The process of change and bridge building should be carefully undertaken. It should involve experts, theoreticians, academics, English departments, teachers, and principals in hard work

in a process of reflection, research, and innovation to reach the objectives and achieve the reforms we want. One issue of evident importance is developing new educational process that considers personality and learning styles and their influences on learning.

As a typical Syrian English teacher, who lacked any kind of teacher training and had limited experience, I was using the traditional way in my teaching. However, after reading and learning about new concepts for teaching and learning, considerable change may occur in my teaching strategies. Examples of such change may be the activities that I have suggested in chapter four: identifying learners' personality types and learning styles, doing personality tests, and negotiating with students their preferred ways of learning. These exercises have two basic goals: to use them as communicative tasks and to identify the preferred learning styles for my students and their personality traits in order to use the outcomes as participation in the process of developing the curriculum in Syria. I have realised that developing our educational system in Syria will inevitably involve teachers, students, and their interchangeable relationships. Teacher-student, student-teacher, and student-student relationships should be reframed through unlocking awareness about new theories and their applications in education. Each one of us, Syrian teachers and students, should reflect on the past and look forward to the future, making use of all the previous mistakes and the others' experiences. Therefore, in order to do some change in the educational system, the two basic parts of the system, namely teachers and learners should be included as participants in the search for new directions. This dissertation has tackled the issues of individual differences in general and the personality types and learning styles in specific. In chapter four, I provided examples of ways of using these ideas with students to explore possibilities of change in classroom methodology. In this chapter I suggest ways of sharing these insights with other colleagues through teacher development sessions. I also identify some possible obstacles and ways of surmounting them.

5.1. The need for communicative activities:

The first point, I think, should be directed to teachers because they are the managers of classrooms. It is recommended for teachers to organise activities which require

their students to interact with each other and to rely on each other. Teachers and students should know that teacher should not be the centre of class. Interaction among students helps learning more than when the teacher holds all power in her/his hands. Assuming that we, teachers, have to move to more student-centred methods and think about finding solutions to our problems. I would recommend, if I had the opportunity to meet with other teachers, to introduce these ideas which are new for me and a quite large percentage of my colleagues. Teachers could be motivated to do so if they can publish their findings, participate in conferences, and issue newsletters that discuss these issues.

It is arguably better for me to try such activities out with my own students first and try to evaluate them. Afterwards, I would try to find suitable situation where I can introduce these ideas to other teachers who may be equals to me in their lack of teaching experience. The subject of personality and learning styles is quite complicated. Therefore, ways of responding to these ideas about individualism are not simple and there could be unlimited number of ways of conducting them. It is unlikely that I have all of the answers. It is more likely that if we as a group of teachers work together, we will be able to get useful answers.

Attending to differences within one classroom appears to become quite important in today's classrooms, yet it is clearly complex. However, those who understand their students' personalities and learning preferences and are aware of alternative teaching/learning strategies can structure their classrooms to accommodate the differences and help all students succeed. Teacher development sessions, where teachers share ideas and share problems, might be a quicker and more effective way of achieving change. Therefore, the Ministries of Education and Higher Education may wish to organise English language teaching sessions because if principals want to improve the English language learning, as their plans say, they should support any teacher training programme. The kind of issues I have learned about might be useful to introduce in these session. Therefore, I would like to be given the opportunity to participate in teacher development programmes or any workshops that have the same objectives. Sending teachers for higher education in the field of English teaching is a step towards the aim that should be followed by a series of steps to guarantee the

However, in launching this process in real classrooms, caution and alertness should be taken in their highest degrees. The dilemma in methodology and in education, when personality and learning styles are taken into account in the system, is to accommodate for the individual differences without sacrificing method. There might be a negative consequence if we concentrate too much on individualising the system because it may become very complex and fragmented that it is difficult for the individual to express her/him self. A very complex system tends to be rigid and to leave little flexibility for expression of personal and individual choice (Prabhu, 1990: 165-174).

5.2. Finding out about personality and learning styles through action research:

In the eyes of many language teachers, the personality of their students constitutes a major factor contributing to success or failure in language learning. Learners also consider personality factors to be important (Ellis 1994:517). The issues of personality and learning styles, like any issue, are going to be more fruitful if there is a commitment among teachers to do action research. I wish that teachers have such a commitment to be involved in action research through which to find out about the issues concerned. If exercises like those mentioned in chapter four are used to identify personality traits and learning styles in a form of action research, results might have invaluable advantages in any further research when they are especially when used as part of research in aspects of education in order to create new materials. Such information could be used in another action research in teachers' meetings, where teachers brain storm, suggest their own ways of catering for these styles, and then report the results to find out better ideas. However, how far to go on the project is negotiable depending on the success of the activities. Teachers' and learners' participation is most likely an important factor in deciding whether to stop or to go on.

All English teacher, in Syria, can try activities like the ones mentioned in the last chapter and then give their reflection and evaluation, suggest new ideas and new strategies and find out whether the application of these concepts is useful or not.

Evaluation, as Rea-Dickins and Germaine (1992) say, is an intrinsic part of teaching and learning. Teachers can discuss ways and means to accommodate for the found personality traits and learning styles within constraints. I think that such sharing of data will help teachers find better ways to conduct their teaching.

5.3.Recommendations and suggestions:

Since the President has stressed education as priority in Syria's development, the ministries concerned should find ways to implement the ideas mentioned in chapter one. If individualism and autonomy are to be priorities, a space has to be made for them. Teacher seminars posing questions related to the roles of teacher would be useful. Such seminars might help teachers plan for activities promoting discussion in class and give more freedom to students to express and appreciate their own and each other's individuality (Larsen-Freeman 2000: 126).

Another suggestion that might be useful is Santo's third approach, as mentioned in chapter three. The main idea of this approach is to reach as many learners as possible through using different instructional methods and strategies that accommodate for most of the students' learning styles. When this approach is applied, as Santo suggests, each student will find his preferred way of learning in the presented material. Another advantage of this approach, according to Santo, is that even when the learner can not use her/his style because the learning activity requires another style, this learner should be able to cope with the activity depending on his knowledge and experience of the other styles. That is why it is important for the learners to know who they are, to know more about different learning styles, to know each one's style and to learn how to be flexible. However, if, for example, I encourage other teachers to think about Santo's third strategy, several problems may arise. What are these learning styles that the teachers are supposed to cater for is one problem. Other one is how to organise lessons in such a way those different learners can learn in different styles?

Moreover, teachers may be encouraged to give examples of different teaching styles and then to negotiate preferences with their learners. Learners are expected to reach a point where they adopt a different learning style because it is, theoretically, assumed

to lead to better learning. Another approach might be for teachers to adapt their teaching styles to match students' learning styles. In order to match instruction more closely to learner differences, styles and needs, teachers may need to change their teaching styles (Altman, 1972, quoted in Logan, 95: 1980). Because students learn for many different reasons, teachers need to have multiple approaches for engagement of the students in the classroom (Cast Universal Design for Learning, 2001).

5.4. Difficulties and obstacles:

However, in applying such concepts, ideas, and methods in classroom, a number of obstacles may be encountered. One such obstacle might be lack of materials and shortage in financial resources. Another problem, in this respect, is that in Syria we don't have trainers who are professionally qualified to manage and conduct training sessions. A further serious problem is that we have a very clear top-down, ends means curriculum in which what I am supposed to cover and what assessment is to be carried out has already been decided by others. It is difficult for teachers to find any space to fit extra communicative activities, like the suggested examples, into their classes. Teachers' meetings or workshops could be good places to discuss these issues and suggest appropriate solutions. Cooperation and collaboration are needed to find reliable solutions. Since the principals of the Ministry of Higher Education have highlighted the need for using the communicative approach, presenting such kinds of exercises could be justified on this basis. Implementing such activities as recommended in chapter four, carrying out the research, and discussing and sharing the results might be just dreams unless a strong will from all responsible people paves the way to actually start the trip of a thousand miles.

Other serious limitation for my argument about the importance and motivating nature of activities is that they have not been applied in classes. Not all students would find such activities attractive. Therefore, I think that such kinds of exercises should be tried out in classes before generalising their importance. A further constraint in applying such activities is that teachers might find it difficult to apply the idea of applying communicative activities. That is because most of them have not gone through the process of learning not to be dictatorial, not to be prescriptive, and to

give time to things. Most of them might not know how to manage the methodology. So, training sessions might have the opportunity to allow teachers to learn more about the communicative method and consequently be able to apply it in class.

5.5. Conclusion:

I have studied the concepts of personality and learning styles more closely because I thought they were interesting and of importance to the learning process. Learning about them has indirectly widened my horizons in thinking about teaching methods. Moreover, I have realised that it is quite important for teachers to have level of knowledge and understanding of these concepts to be able to accommodate for their learners' different and diverse personality traits and learning styles. The concepts are complex and it is impossible to discuss them fully within the scope of this dissertation. Therefore, I would like to explore these ideas further in the future to know more about them, also to explore ways of applying them in real classrooms. I would like also to investigate these ideas collaboratively with other teachers to find ways forward, also to try to get them accepted among the ELT profession in the state sector.

If you always do what you do, you will only get what you have got.

Graffili.

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Appendix 1:

British Council advertisement in the Guardian Weekly July 2003

Teach English and Individualism.

At the British Council we aim to employ English language teachers from a mix of backgrounds and ages. In this way we will send out signals that in Britain we believe in the right of individuals to pursue their particular lifestyle.

This advertisement is taken from *Guardian Weekly* July 24-30 2003.

Appendix 2:

Forms to find out personality traits.

In order to identify each one's personality trait, each student should complete the following forms to decide what kind of person she/he is.

Form one: deciding whether you are an extrovert or an introvert:

1- Choose the numbers that correspond to you.

Social 1	Mostly social 2	In between 3	Mostly private 4	private 5
Expressive 1	Mostly expressive 2	In between 3	Mostly quiet 4	Quiet 5
Broad 1	Mostly broad 2	In between 3	Mostly deep 4	Deep 5
Interactive 1	Mostly interactive 2	In between 3	Mostly concentrative 4	Concentrative 5
Outward 1	Mostly outward 2	In between 3	Mostly inward 4	Inward 5

1	2	3	4	5
Action before thought 1	Mostly action before thought 2	In between 3	Mostly thought before action 4	Thought before action 5

2- Add your numbers up. If the total is less than eighteen, then you are an extrovert (E), and if it is more than eighteen, you are an introvert (I).

3- Write down the result, 'E' or 'I' in the first box provided at the end of the forms.

Form two: deciding whether you are a sensing or intuitive:

1- Choose the numbers that correspond to you.

Depends on facts 1	Mostly depends on facts 2	In between 3	Mostly depends on possibilities 4	Depends on possibilities 5
Depends on experience 1	Mostly depends on experience 2	In between 3	Mostly depends on novelty 4	Depends on novelty 5
Look at present 1	Mostly looking at present 2	In between 3	Mostly looking at future 4	Look at future 5
Appreciate practicality 1	Mostly practical 2	In between 3	Mostly aspired 4	Appreciate aspiration 5
Appreciate enjoyment	Mostly Appreciate	In between	Mostly Appreciate	Appreciate development

	enjoyment		development	
1	2	3	4	5
Appreciate realism	Mostly appreciate realism	In between	Mostly Appreciate idealism	Appreciate idealism
1	2	3	4	5

2- Add your numbers up. If the total is less than eighteen, then you are a sensing (S), and if it is more than eighteen, you are an intuitive (N).

3- Write down the result, 'S' or 'N' in the second box provided at the end of the forms.

Form three: deciding whether you depend on thinking or on feeling:

1- Choose the numbers that correspond to you.

Appreciate analysing 1	Mostly Appreciate analysing 2	In between 3	Mostly Appreciate sympathising 4	Appreciate Sympathising 5
Objective 1	Mostly objective 2	In between 3	Mostly subjective 4	Subjective 5
Logical 1	Mostly logical 2	In between 3	Mostly personal 4	Personal 5
Prefer criticism 1	Mostly Prefer criticism 2	In between 3	Mostly prefer appreciation 4	Prefer appreciation 5
Onlooker 1	Mostly onlooker 2	In between 3	Mostly participant 4	Participant 5

Decide on principles 1	Mostly Decide on principles 2	In between 3	Mostly decide using values 4	Decide using values 5
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2- Add your numbers up. If the total is less than eighteen, then you depend on thinking (T), and if it is more than eighteen, you depend on feeling (F).

3- Write down the result, 'T' or 'F' in the third box provided at the end of the forms.

Form four: deciding whether you prefer judgement or perception:

1- Choose the numbers that correspond to you.

Close 1	Mostly close 2	In between 3	Mostly open 4	Open 5
Decide 1	Mostly decide 2	In between 3	Mostly explore 4	Explore 5
Structure 1	Mostly structure 2	In between 3	Mostly meander 4	Meander 5
Organise 1	Mostly organise 2	In between 3	Mostly inquire 4	Inquire 5
Prefer firmness 1	Mostly Prefer firmness 2	In between 3	Mostly prefer flexibility 4	Prefer flexibility 5
Prefer to control 1	Mostly prefer to control 2	In between 3	Mostly prefer spontaneity 4	Prefer spontaneity 5

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

2- Add your numbers up. If the total is less than eighteen, then you prefer judgement (J), and if it is more than eighteen, you prefer perception (P).

3- write down the result, 'J' or 'P' in the fourth box below.

Your personality trait is:

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Appendix 3:

The definitions of the sixteen personality traits.

ESTJ: (extroversion, sensing, thinking, and judgement)

The ESTJ takes his/her energy from the outside world of actions and spoken words. He/she prefers dealing with facts and the present, and makes decisions using logic. His/her life is organised on a logical basis. He/she is therefore practical, and likely to implement tried and trusted solutions to practical problems in a businesslike and impersonal manner. He/she prefers to ensure that the details have been taken care of rather than spend time considering concepts and strategies.

INFP: (introversion, intuition, feeling, and perception)

The INFP takes his/her energy from the inner world of thoughts and emotions. He/she prefers dealing with patterns and possibilities, especially for people, and prefers to make decisions on the basis of personal values. His/her life is flexible, following new insights and possibilities as they arise. He/she is quiet and adaptable (up to a point - when his/her values are violated the normally adaptable INFP can surprise people with his/her stance). He/she will seem to be very interested in ideas, and he/she may sometimes make very creative contributions. He/she has a hidden warmth for people and a desire to see self and others grow and develop. He/she prefers to undertake work that has a meaningful purpose.

ESFP: (extroversion, sensing, feeling, and perception)

The ESFP takes his/her energy from the outside world of actions and spoken words. He/she prefers dealing with facts, which he/she usually takes at face value. He/she also prefers dealing with the present and with people, and probably derives much

enjoyment out of friendships. His/her life is flexible, living it very much in the present, and responding to things as they arise. He/she is impulsive and friendly, seeking enjoyment out of life, and makes new friends easily. He/she likes taking part in solving urgent problems, such as fire-fighting or trouble shooting. He/she operates best in practical situations involving people.

INTJ: (introversion, intuition, thinking, and judgement)

The INTJ takes his/her energy from the inner world of thoughts (and, maybe, emotions). He/she prefers dealing with patterns and possibilities for the future, and making decisions using impersonal analysis. His/her life is organised on a logical basis. He/she is a strategist, identifying long term goals and organising life to meet them. He/she tends to be sceptical and critical, both of self and others, with a keen sense of deficiencies in quality and competence. He/she often has a strong intellect, yet is able to attend to details that are relevant to the strategy.

ESFJ: (extroversion, sensing, feeling, and judgement)

The ESFJ takes his/her energy from the outer world of actions and spoken words. He/she prefers dealing with facts, and making decisions on the basis of personal values. He/she likes dealing with people, and organises life on a personal basis. He/she is a very warm person, seeking to maintain harmonious relationships with colleagues and friends, who are a very important part of his/her life. He/she can find conflict and criticism very difficult to handle. He/she has a strong sense of duty and loyalty, and is driven by a need to belong and be of service to people.

INTP: (introversion, intuition, thinking, and perception)

The INTP takes his/her energy from the inner world of thoughts (and, maybe, emotions). He/she prefers dealing with patterns and possibilities, and making decisions on a logical basis. His/her life is flexible, following new insights and possibilities as they arise. He/she is quiet and detached, and adaptable (up to a point - sometimes he/she may stop adapting, insisting that there is a clear principle at stake). He/she is not interested in routine, and will often experiment or change things to see if they can be improved. He/she operates at best when solving complex problems that require the application of intellect.

ENFP: (extroversion, intuition, feeling, and perception)

The ENFP takes his/her energy from the outer world of actions and spoken words. He/she prefers dealing with patterns and possibilities, particularly for people, and makes decisions on the basis of personal values. His/her life is flexible, following new insights and possibilities as they arise. He/she is creative and insightful, often seeking to try new ideas that can be of benefit to people. He/she may sometimes neglect details and planning, but he/she enjoys work that involves experimentation and variety, working towards a general goal.

ISTJ: (introversion, sensing, thinking, and judgement)

The ISTJ takes his/her energy from the inner world of thoughts (and, maybe, emotions). He/she prefers dealing with facts, and making decisions after considering the various options. He/she organises his/her life on a logical basis. He/she is quiet, serious and well prepared for most eventualities. He/she is a keen observer of life, developing a good understanding of situations, which is often not expressed. He/she has a strong sense of practical objectives, and works efficiently to meet them.

ESTP: (extroversion, sensing, thinking, and perception)

The ESTP takes his/her energy from the outer world of actions and spoken words. He/she prefers dealing with facts, which he/she usually views objectively, and he/she makes decisions on a logical basis. His/her life is flexible, consisting of a series of activities that interest his/her. He/she is an action oriented problem solver, and prefers to work with practical organisational issues. He/she can be impulsive, and likes taking part in trouble-shooting-type work. He/she can sometimes neglect follow-through, but will work best when there is a lot going on that needs organising and solving.

INFJ: (introversion, intuition, feeling, and judgement)

The INFJ takes his/her energy from the inner world of thoughts and emotions. He/she prefers dealing with patterns and possibilities, particularly for people, and makes decisions using personal values. His/her life is organised on a personal basis. He/she often has a private sense of purpose in life, and works steadily to fulfil that goal. He/she demonstrates a quiet concern for people, being interested in helping

them to develop and grow. He/she is good at developing insight into people, though it can often remain unexpressed.

ENFJ: (extroversion, intuition, feeling, and judgement)

The ENFJ takes his/her energy from the outer world of actions and spoken words. He/she prefers dealing with patterns and possibilities, particularly for people, and makes decisions using personal values. His/her life is organised on a personal basis, seeking to develop and maintain stable relationships with those people he/she likes. He/she is actively concerned with promoting personal growth in others. He/she is also highly sociable, and expressive of feelings towards others, but can find conflict and criticism difficult, particularly if it might damage long term relationships. He/she works best in situations involving people.

ISTP: (introversion, sensing, thinking, and perception)

The ISTP takes his/her energy from the inner world of thoughts (and, maybe, emotions). He/she prefers dealing with facts and making decisions on a logical basis. His/her life is flexible, demonstrating an interest in acquiring new information that leads to a practical understanding of the way the world works. He/she is quiet and detached, and adaptable (up to a point). He/she is often good at solving organisational problems that need to be thought through. He/she is curious about how and why things work, and can seem impulsive, sometimes producing surprising ideas or doing something unpredictable.

ENTJ: (extroversion, intuition, thinking, and judgement)

The ENTJ takes his/her energy from the outer world of actions and spoken words. He/she prefers dealing with patterns and possibilities, and making decisions after considering the consequences of the various courses of action. His/her life is organised on a logical basis. He/she tends to control life, organising systems and people to meet task oriented goals. He/she often takes the role of executive or director, using a business-like and impersonal approach. He/she may appear intolerant of people who do not set high standards for themselves or don't seem to be good at what they do.

ISFP: (introversion, sensing, feeling, and perception)

The ISFP takes his/her energy from the inner world of thoughts and emotions. He/she prefers dealing with facts and people, and making decisions on the basis of personal values. He/she is adaptable (up to a point), quiet and friendly. He/she is interested in people, enjoying their company preferably on an individual basis or in small numbers. He/she takes a caring and sensitive approach to helping others. He/she enjoys the present, and tends to dislike confrontation and conflict. He/she usually acts as a very supportive member of a team.

ENTP: (extroversion, intuition, thinking, and perception)

The ENTP takes his/her energy from the outer world of actions and spoken words. He/she prefers dealing with patterns and possibilities, and making decisions on a logical basis. He/she is adaptable, tending to focus on new ideas and interests as and when they arise, particularly if they involve increasing his/her competence or skill. He/she is an ingenious problem solver, constantly trying new ideas out, and can seem to enjoy a good argument. He/she is interested in instigating change, and operates best in overcoming new difficulties where the solution requires the application of creative effort.

ISFJ: (introversion, sensing, feeling, and judgement)

The ISFJ takes his/her energy from the inner world of thoughts and emotions. He/she prefers dealing with facts and people, and making decisions on the basis of personal values. His/her life is organised on a personal basis, seeking to enjoy relationships with people he/she likes. He/she is a quiet, serious observer of people, and is both conscientious and loyal. He/she prefers work that involves being of practical service to people. He/she is often concerned for and perceptive of how other people feel and dislikes confrontation and conflict.

<http://www.teamtechnology.co.uk/tt/t-articl/mb-simpl.htm>

Appendix 4:

Steps of the Notting Hill teaching-learning activity:

Step One: The scene is mutely shown and the students are asked to predict who these people are, what are the relationships among them, when and where this scene is taking place. The students are asked to work in groups of four to discuss these questions. The teacher asks the students for their expectations.

Step Two: Distribute handouts with the transcript of the spoken text that has some inaccuracies. Ask the students to listen carefully to the video to make all the needed corrections to the scripts. Allow five minutes for pair discussion to compare sentences and get some help.

Step Three: Give them handouts with the correct scripts and watch the scene again.

Step Four: Introduce the concept of turn-taking and show the role of phonology in marking the turn-taking. Ask the students to work in small groups of four to identify any places of turn-taking.

Step Five: Ask every pair of students to do an imitation of a part of the conversation as a kind of oral practice. After that, ask them to do a role play using their own words but playing the same personalities with the same way of talking.

Step Six: Introduce some of the phonological features of spoken language (Pitch movement), watch one minute of the conversation and mark the pitch movement and discuss then the possibility of making mistakes in doing such a job.

Step Seven: Assign another part of the conversation for the students to do in pair work where they have to mark the pitch movements.

The students are a given this form and ask to evaluate the lesson and give any suggestions that go with their learning styles.

Appendix5:

The Temperament sorter personality test.

1. Do you think of yourself as a:

tough-minded person

tender-hearted person

2. In stories, do you prefer:

fantasy and heroism

action and adventure

3. Are you more:

sensible than ideational

ideational than sensible

4. In most situations are you more:

spontaneous than deliberate

deliberate than spontaneous

5. Which rules you more:

your feelings

your thoughts

6. Are you more inclined to feel:

somewhat removed

down to earth

7. Are you inclined to be:

easy to approach

somewhat reserved

8. On the job, do you want your activities:

unscheduled

scheduled

9. When in charge of others do you tend to be:

firm and unbending

forgiving and lenient

10. Are you inclined to take what is said:

more figuratively

more literally

11. Are you more:

routinized than whimsical

whimsical than routinized

12. Are you the kind of person who:

is rather talkative

doesn't miss much

13. Is it your way to:

pick and choose at some length

make up your mind quickly

14. If you must disappoint someone are you usually:

frank and straightforward

warm and considerate

15. Children often do not:

make themselves useful enough

exercise their fantasy enough

16. Do you feel better about:

keeping your options open

coming to closure

17. Does interacting with strangers:

tax your reserves

energize you

18. Which do you wish more for yourself:

strength of will

strength of emotion

19. In making up your mind are you more likely to go by:

data

desires

20. Facts:

illustrate principles

speak for themselves

21. Are you inclined to be more:

hurried than leisurely

leisurely than hurried

22. When the phone rings, do you:

hope someone else will answer it

hurry to get to it first

23. Do you value in yourself more that you are:

reasonable

devoted

24. Is it easier for you to:

put others to good use

identify with others

25. Are you more interested in:

what is actual

what is possible

26. When finishing a job, do you like to:

move on to something else

tie up all loose ends

27. It is worse to be:

a softy

hard-nosed

28. Do you prize in yourself:

a strong hold on reality

a vivid imagination

29. Are you more:

observant than introspective

introspective than observant

30. Do you more often prefer:

final unalterable statements

tentative preliminary statements

31. Are you more often:

a warm-hearted person

a cool-headed person

32. Do you more often see:

what can only be imagined

what's right in front of you

33. Are you more comfortable:

after a decision

before a decision

34. At work do you tend to:

keep more to yourself

be sociable with your colleagues

35. Do you prefer contracts to be:

settled on a handshake

signed, sealed, and delivered

36. In a heated discussion do you:

look for common ground

stick to your guns

37. Are you more frequently:

a fanciful sort of person

a practical sort of person

38. Is it preferable mostly to:

just let things happen naturally

make sure things are arranged

39. Do you tend to:

say right out what's on your mind

keep your ears open

40. Do you see yourself as basically:

thin-skinned

thick-skinned

41. In sizing up others, do you tend to be:

friendly and personal

objective and impersonal

42. Do you find visionaries and theorists:

rather fascinating

somewhat annoying

43. Do you usually want things:

just penciled in

settled and decided

44. Waiting in line, do you often:

chat with others

stick to business

45. Which seems the greater fault:

to be too dispassionate

to be too compassionate

46. With people are you usually more:

gentle than firm

firm than gentle

47. Do you tend to be more:

factual than speculative

speculative than factual

48. Do you prefer to work:

to deadlines

just whenever

49. In hard circumstances, are you sometimes:

too unsympathetic

too sympathetic

50. Are you drawn more to:

fundamentals

overtones

51. Is it worse to:

be in a rut

have your head in the clouds

52. Are you prone to:

nailing things down

exploring the possibilities

53. Which is more of a compliment:

"There's a logical person"

"There's a sentimental person"

54. Are you more likely to trust:

your experiences

your conceptions

55. At work, is it more natural for you to:

point out mistakes

try to please others

56. Do you consider yourself:

a good listener

a good conversationalist

57. Are you more satisfied having:

a finished product

work in progress

58. Is it better to be:

just

merciful

59. Do you speak more in:

particulars than generalities

generalities than particulars

60. Do you tend to notice:

disorderliness

opportunities for change

61. Do you think of yourself as:

a private person

an outgoing person

62. Is clutter in the work place something you:

take time to straighten up

tolerate pretty well

63. Which appeals to you more:

consistency of thought

harmonious relationships

64. Common sense is:

frequently questionable

usually reliable

65. Would you say you are more:

easy going

serious and determined

66. At a party, do you:

interact with a few friends

interact with many, even strangers

67. Are you swayed more by:

a touching appeal

convincing evidence

68. Are you more comfortable in making:

critical judgments

value judgments

69. Do you like writers who:

use metaphors and symbolism

say what they mean

70. Do you tend to choose:

somewhat impulsively

rather carefully