



Katarzyna Ożańska-Ponikwia,
Personality and Emotional Intelligence
***in Second Language Learning.* Newcastle upon Tyne:**
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The monographic volume authored by Katarzyna Ożańska-Ponikwia and entitled *Personality and Emotional Intelligence in Second Language Learning* consists of two parts, a theoretical and an empirical one, each of which fulfils the aims set by the author. According to Ożańska-Ponikwia, the book has two objectives: to give an overview of second language acquisition (SLA) studies focusing on personality traits and emotional intelligence and to present the results of an empirical study measuring the influence of personality traits and emotional intelligence on learning a second language in the context of formal instruction.

The monograph consists of six chapters covering 121 pages of text, a bibliography of over two hundred entries and, additionally, it contains two indexes: a three-page *Author Index* including the author sources quoted in the publication and a *Subject Index* listing the main constructs discussed and studied empirically in the project presented. However, what might be considered missing are appendices, which could for example contain the questionnaires used as instruments of data collection in the present study. The book opens with Chapter 1—The Concept of Personality, followed by Chapter 2—Personality in the Context of Second Language Learning and Use, Chapter 3—Methodology, Chapter 4—Quantitative Data Analysis, Chapter 5—Open Question Data Analysis and is completed with Chapter 6 Discussion and Conclusions.

Chapter 1—The Concept of Personality (pp. 1–13) offers a comprehensive review of approaches to personality and emotional intelligence, firstly by defining these terms. The construct of personality is discussed here from a diachronic perspective. Comments are made on the earliest approaches and models of personality, for example, Eysenck’s model of “Big Three” (1947) and a more contemporary treatment of personality structures in the “Big Five” models of Costa and McCrae, with their most recent developments (1985–1992). Here the discussion focuses on the individual components of the higher-order personal-

ity traits of Costa and McCrae, that is, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism. These are illustrated with an in-depth description of the NEO-FFI Inventory of Costa and McCrae (1992). Next, the lower-order personality traits of emotional intelligence (EI) are commented on with reference to the most comprehensive presentation of the concept of Trait Emotional Intelligence by Petrides and Furnham (2001). It is illustrated with a data collection instrument, the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue, Petrides & Furnham 2001) measuring the EI of informants. Again something is missing here; I think it might have been interesting if the author had traced back emotional intelligence as a personality trait not only to Howard Gardner, in his theory of multiple intelligences, but also more comprehensively to Daniel Goleman, the classic exponent of EI theory. Also here, the author introduces the reader to the research instruments mentioned above, which were used as the main data collection tools in her study—(Chapter 4–6).

The theoretical considerations of Chapter 1 are illustrated with examples of studies in second language learning. Chapter 2—Personality in the Context of Second Language Learning and Use (pp. 15–42) offers a fairly comprehensive overview of both older and more recent research in the area and so it can serve as a point of reference for those interested in this area of research, especially since it covers a whole range of language learning contexts (formal instruction, immersion of immigrant language learners and users, study abroad). After a general introduction to the relation between personality and learning, the author presents studies focusing on each personality trait of the higher-order, in the context of SLA, as well as a lower-order trait of personality, emotional intelligence in immersion (immigration) and study abroad environments. Here the reader will find references to such distinguished scholars as Susan Gass, Zolan Dörnyei, Peter MacIntyre, Aneta Pavlenko, and importantly Jean-Marc Dewaele, whose contribution to this area of research (especially in relation to emotions) needs no further acknowledgement. The author also refers to the contribution of some, but perhaps too few, Polish scholars investigating the issues of personality in SLA (Adrianna Biedroń, Ewa Piechurska-Kuciel, Joanna Bielska).

Chapter 3—Methodology (pp. 43–52) presents the research questions and hypotheses as well as the design of the empirical project, its participants and data collection instruments. The author poses seven questions and formulates seven hypotheses all related to correlations between individual personality traits of higher-order (e.g., Extraversion, Openness to Experience) and emotional intelligence, and written and oral scores on the examination, grades in grammar, writing and integrated skills, also self-reported preferences in skills, L2 acquisition and self-perceived L2 proficiency. The sample selection of 140 participants in the study was chosen from an English department of a tertiary education institution. The group consisted of students from the first and second years of B.A. studies, a fairly homogenous group in terms of their learning

histories and language competence level. The research instruments employed for data collection were a questionnaire focusing on the personal background of the subjects, their self-perceptions of learning preferences and difficulties, their grades, a personality trait test (NEO-FFL) and the TEIQue of emotional intelligence (described earlier in Chapter two). The author also adds a reliability analysis for each of the instruments to demonstrate that they are indeed appropriate and thus can be used in the study.

The following chapters, four and five, constitute the empirical part of the book. In Chapter 4—Quantitative Data Analysis (pp. 53–80), the author focuses solely on the presentation and analysis of the data analysed by means of statistical instruments (correlations, multiple stepwise regression and t-test). For readers not familiar with statistical measures, this may be a bit of a mine-field, as the author does not offer an explanation of how these statistics are applied and assumes a general knowledge of these, in fact, pretty basic statistical measures. At the same time, this knowledge is not absolutely essential to understanding the findings as they are commented upon by the author. In the concluding part of the analysis, the author states that “the relationship between personality traits and SLA is quite complex and nuanced” (p. 79). At the same time, certain correlations appear as stable, among them a general belief that Extraversion will be conducive to the development of speaking and Conscientiousness to grammatical accuracy, and were confirmed by these statistical data. Also, as is widely believed, Emotional intelligence appeared to have a significant influence on speaking abilities and pronunciation scores. The chapter offers many new and interesting findings as well as confirms generally held beliefs concerning foreign language learning and personality traits.

Chapter 5—Open Question Data Analysis (pp. 81–109) constitutes the qualitative part of the study. First, it looks at the subjects’ responses to the question: “What, from your point of view, is the most difficult thing in foreign language learning? Explain why.” The top aspects enumerated are: vocabulary, lack of fluency, being afraid of making mistakes and stress, among many others. Each of them is illustrated with a short narrative comment by the subjects to explain their choice of a particular difficulty. Secondly, the author analyses the data from personality and emotional intelligence tests and compares them with the questionnaire results in relation to high-order and low-order personality traits. In the concluding section of these analyses, the author points to a certain uniformity of all the informants in rating speaking as the most difficult aspect of FL learning. However, she observes that different types of difficulties are pointed out and these are related to individual personality traits (profiles) of the subjects.

The closing Chapter 6—Discussion and Conclusions (pp.111–121) sums up the purpose of this study and juxtaposes it with previous research, emphasising both continuity and novelty of the project. It focuses on giving answers to the research questions and confirmation/partial confirmation of the hypoth-

eses formulated. At the same time, the author recommends that more research should be done to further isolate the complexity of the role personality (itself a complex construct) plays in second/foreign language learning. I believe that some didactic implications for teachers of foreign languages, not included here, should have been proposed.

Having presented briefly the content of individual chapters, I would like to point out the strengths of this publication as well as some areas of weaknesses. First of all, as to the formal aspects of the book, it is written in correct academic English, it is well-structured and reader-friendly. Each chapter starts with an introduction briefly presenting the contents and concludes with a short summary of the content. As to the content, I applaud the choice of topic and the extent to which the author has managed to present the most up-to-date research on personality as a psychological construct (both its theoretical underpinnings and models) and especially emotional intelligence as a significant trait in the affective functioning of a person, at the same time locating it all in the context of second/foreign language learning and use. The sources used and the discussion provided present the issues in a very clear and concise manner. Perhaps for the psychologist reader, the text might be considered a bit summary, however, for a second language researcher there is no need for a more elaborate discussion of the psychological constructs of personality and emotional intelligence. The author thereafter makes her own choices as to adopting certain theoretical models and consequently (and consistently) using the research instruments required by them.

Despite the fact that personality (and especially affectivity) has long been known to be of primary importance, not much research has been systematically carried out on it so far. In other words, despite some general (folk) beliefs as to how personality traits affect learning and performance in a foreign language, researchers have come up only with sample studies that cannot substantially confirm or at least only partly confirm the above belief. The author of this publication poses research questions that could perhaps be answered intuitively. For example, the role of extraversion in language achievement has always been considered facilitative in the development of speaking skills, whereas introversion has always been seen as more conducive to grammar accuracy and learning preferences in this area. Of course, the research questions posed by the author are much more intricate and demonstrate the author's understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of the problems investigated. Following the most recent personality models and understandings of the construct of emotional intelligence, Ożańska-Ponikwia looks at personality as a complex construct of intertwined traits, interacting with each other. Thanks to meticulous statistical analysis, the author was able to point out the correlations between the individual traits and their effects on different areas of language development in the learning process (speaking, grammar, integrated skills, etc.). The mixed methods

study presented by the author also offers some qualitative data derived from the subjects' responses to the questionnaire. These responses were analysed by means of the Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA), a model offered by Philip Mayring (2000, 2001). It is a pity that the author did not make it clearer how the model works and did not offer a more detailed description of the procedures. It is a relatively under-used model in English studies and so explaining it would have been an additional advantage of this publication.

Although the answers given to the research questions provide a fairly thorough discussion and summary in the findings, it is a pity that the author did not try to construct profiles of FL learners/users based on her results, which was at a certain point suggested by the author herself as the aim of the conducted study. Thus, the concluding comments in the last chapter may leave the reader with a feeling of incompleteness. Additionally, although the author did not intend to present any implications of her findings for the FL learning and teaching context, it would perhaps have been of value as an addition to a quite short concluding section. One general point I would also like to make is that the author, like some other SLA researchers, deploys the term "a second language," instead of "a foreign language" (or uses them interchangeably). The context of the study refers exclusively to that of formal instruction and not to immersion or acquisition in the natural context of language use (L2). So, for example, the qualitative data express learners/users perceptions and beliefs in relation to a language learnt by means of formal instruction and not in the target language environment. The latter might create a different picture the impact of personality traits on language acquisition would have, for example, in relation to the lower-order trait of emotional intelligence.

These critical remarks above do not have any serious consequences for the value of this publication. I can sincerely recommend it—as one of not very many in this research area—to anyone interested in studying personality and the affective dimensions of language acquisition and learning processes, as well as in second/foreign language use. This monograph is also valuable for any bilingual language learner/user as it demonstrates very visibly that one's personality plays a key role in language learning/communication success and suggests how we could perhaps learn to control and to some extent manage emotions (emotion labour). I also believe that this book is a reference source that may be of great help to second/foreign language teachers in developing their awareness of how their students' personalities (and indeed, their own) impact their language performance and achievement, as well as the wellbeing of the learners and the teacher. This book demonstrates these things very clearly.

Danuta Gabryś-Barker
University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland