



Universidade Federal do Pampa

**MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO
UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PAMPA
(Lei nº. 11.640, de 11 de janeiro de 2008)
CAMPUS BAGÉ
LICENCIATURA EM LETRAS: PORTUGUÊS/INGLÊS E RESPECTIVAS
LITERATURAS**

THE ROLE OF PERSONALITY IN ESL LEARNING

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Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado como requisito parcial para aprovação no componente curricular Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso II.

BAGÉ

Mai de 2013

AGRADECIMENTOS

Primeiramente, gostaria de agradecer a Deus, que me proporcionou todo o sucesso no decorrer do curso através do apoio de familiares, da igreja, de amigos, da orientadora e dos professores do curso.

Gostaria de agradecer também aos meus pais, Hernande de Souza Dias e Nataice Alves da Silva Dias, e a meu irmão, Daniel Habacuque Alves Dias, que estiveram sempre comigo durante toda a minha vida e, principalmente, me ajudando no decorrer destes quatro anos de curso, me apoiando e me dando todo suporte necessário.

Também, aos professores do curso de Letras, que fizeram parte da minha vida acadêmica e me ajudaram a descobrir os prazeres de estar me formando nessa licenciatura que nos proporciona tantos saberes e nos faz crescer como cidadãos.

Um agradecimento especial à minha orientadora, Simone Assumpção, que me ajudou a construir este trabalho com muito esforço, mas que me proporcionou um aprendizado bastante significativo.

Quero agradecer também a todos os amigos mais próximos, que mesmo de longe estiveram me sustentando através da oração e acompanharam o andamento do curso pela internet: Anna Carolina Schneider Alves, Andressa Bencke, Andreza Marques Ferreira, Daniele Rech, Jéssica Caetano, Larissa Yasin Gonçalves, Marta Sperafico Batista, Rafaela Roque Queiroz, Rubmara Ketzer Oliveira e outros. Além disso, gostaria de honrar os meus queridos colegas de curso que estiveram presentes durante a minha formação, com os quais pude construir amizades muito importantes, as quais vou levar para toda a minha vida: Aline Souza, Aline de Lima Bazerque, Ana Paula Fontoura Pinto, Anderson Martins, Eduarda Schneider da Silva, Elen Oliveira, José Ricardo Costa, Luana Pires, Mariana Mello, Paula Costa, entre outros que foram de grande importância durante esta longa caminhada e, principalmente, a Priscila Fonseca, que compartilhou comigo esta investigação, para seu próprio TCC, e com quem escrevi algumas partes deste trabalho.

A todos vocês que participaram da minha vida e que fizeram com que eu me tornasse a pessoa que sou hoje, o meu mais sincero agradecimento.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

RESUMO	4
ABSTRACT	5
1. INTRODUCTION	6
2. THEORETICAL BASES	7
2.1. DROPOUT: A PROBLEM WITHOUT A SOLUTION	7
2.2. A BRIEF UNDERSTANDING OF AFFECTIVE FACTORS	8
2.3. PERSONALITY: INSIDE PANDORA’S BOX	10
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	12
4. RESULTS	13
5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS	21
REFERENCES	23
ATTACHMENTS	24

RESUMO

O objetivo principal deste artigo é discutir como os traços de personalidade extroversão e introversão, enquanto fatores afetivos que condicionam o comportamento, podem influenciar a aprendizagem de inglês como segunda língua. A investigação focou na possível correlação entre esses traços de personalidade e a evasão em um curso de licenciatura. A coleta de dados foi realizada mediante a distribuição de 20 questionários a estudantes de dois grupos diferentes: 10 alunos de português e inglês, e 10 alunos que acabaram desistindo do inglês. Nossa hipótese era de que o primeiro grupo seria mais extrovertido do que o segundo, uma vez que a maioria dos pesquisadores afirma que extrovertidos tendem a ser melhores aprendizes. Os resultados provaram não haver correlação entre evasão e extroversão-introversão. Ambos os grupos eram predominantemente extrovertidos em sua vida pessoal, mas apresentavam características de introvertidos nas aulas de inglês.

Palavras-chave: personalidade, introversão, extroversão, evasão, ESL.

ABSTRACT

The main goal of this paper is to discuss how the personality traits extroversion and introversion, as affective factors that condition behavior, can influence the learning of ESL. The investigation focused on the possible correlation between these personality traits and dropout rates in an pre-service teacher education undergraduate course in Brazil. Data collection was carried out by distributing 20 quizzes to students divided into two different groups: 10 students of Portuguese and English as a second language, and 10 students who eventually gave up the second language. Our hypothesis was that the first group would be more extroverted than the second, since most researchers claim that extroverts tend to be better learners. The results proved no correlation between dropout rates and extroversion-introversion personality traits. Both groups were predominantly extroverted in their personal lives but presented characteristics of introverts in the language classes.

Key-words: personality, introversion, extroversion, dropout rates, ESL.

1. INTRODUCTION

Affect can be defined as “emotion, feeling, mood or attitude which condition behavior” (ARNOLD & BROWN, 1999:1). According to these authors, a good understanding of the affective domain is important for two reasons. First, it can lead to more effective language learning, since dealing with students’ affective side can help overcome problems created by negative emotions and create and use more positive, facilitative emotions. Anxiety, fear, stress, anger or depression can compromise students’ learning potential, while self-esteem, empathy or motivation can foster learning. The second reason is that language teachers are also educators for life. Since the eighteenth century, Western civilization has concentrated on our rational, cognitive side. Meanwhile, “selfishness, violence, and meanness of spirit seem to be rotting the goodness of our communal lives (...) There is growing evidence that fundamental ethical stances in life stem from underlying emotional capabilities” (GOLEMAN, apud ARNOLD & BROWN, 1999:3). It is about time to bring together mind and heart in the classroom.

Affective factors are difficult to trace, but many are already under study, like self-esteem, risk-taking, anxiety, empathy, extroversion, inhibition, motivation, learning styles, beliefs, personality, among others. This research will explore two individual personality traits, extroversion and introversion, and their influence on the process of learning English as a second language (ESL). The main goal of this paper is to discuss how personality, as an affective factor that conditions behavior, can influence the learning of ESL in an undergraduate pre-service teacher education course in Brazil. The focus of this research is on the possible correlation between introversion/extroversion and students’ will to study English despite the difficulties they find on the way.

As Arnold and Brown (1999:1) state, a good understanding of affective factors is important, firstly, because it can lead to more effective language learning and, secondly, because language teachers should also think in terms of a holistic education, aiming not only at students’ rational, cognitive side, but also at their ethical, emotional, social skills. Besides, personality is one of the most complex and less studied affective factors. This research intends to help fulfill this lacuna as I believe that people with different personality traits have distinct ways of learning the target language. During my undergraduate studies, I saw many classmates give up their major. So I intend to find out if there is a correlation between extroversion/introversion and dropout, if there is a common personality trait in students who

quit and another in students who keep their English studies. I think this work could be very useful to see why many people give up studying English in the middle of the program. I believe that the introversion/extroversion factor may be a strong reason. My hypothesis is that most students who have not given up have a common personality trait, extroversion, which can help students to remain in the program despite the difficulties they find along the way.

2. THEORETICAL BASES

2.1. DROPOUT: A PROBLEM WITHOUT A SOLUTION

According to Silva Filho (2007), dropout has proved to be a problem in almost every university not only in Brazil, but also around the world. Studies about this subject are very recent but, as Silva Filho claims, they are also very important since dropout is considered as a social, academic and economic waste that can be really harmful to a country's economy, as huge amounts of money are usually invested in universities both by governments and private companies.

Silva Filho (2007) also studied dropout in general in each region of Brazil. The state of Rio Grande do Sul, in the south region of Brazil, has one of the highest levels of college dropout, considering both public and private institutes. UNIPAMPA is a public university sponsored by the federal government and is very new, as the first programs were opened in 2006 in ten campi, one in each town of the region. The campus of Bagé offers ten undergraduate courses, but I am going to focus on the Languages Program, more specifically on the Portuguese/English major, because of its considerable level of dropout.

According to Rodriguez (2011), the Brazilian Ministry of Education (MEC) reports that 46% of the students who enter the university actually graduate. So, 54% of the students who enter the university quit the program for reasons of various natures. Gaioso (2005) points out many factors that can contribute to the high levels of college dropout, such as: low-quality education, poor public policies for education, absence of career guidance, students' immaturity, successive failure, financial trouble, lack of perspective on finding a job, poor affective bonding, family imposition on choosing a program, personal problems, among others. It is possible to say that many of these factors are related to affect rather than intellect.

No doubt, affective factors are important to the analysis of the high dropout levels in the university in Brazil and, more specifically, at UNIPAMPA, as we will see in the next sections.

2.2. A BRIEF UNDERSTANDING OF AFFECTIVE FACTORS

Affective factors are an important part of Applied Linguistics. Since I started to study how to do research in the ESL classroom, I became able to understand many aspects of teaching and learning a second language. Reading authors such as Brown (2004), Arnold (1999), Ellis (2008) and others in this area, I came into contact with research that provides differentiated information about the learning of a second language which will be very important to this study.

As long as the theme of this study is universal, since the study of affective factors applies to the learning process of every language, Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia (1964) affirm that there are five steps that should be considered to go beyond the research of the process of acquiring a second language. The first step of acquiring a language is **receiving**, in which learners are supposed to be aware of all the things around them that can provide language input. The second is **responding**, as students must not only have the right stimuli, but also practice what they are trying to learn. This is, for me, the most important step of the language learning process. The third one is **valuing**, in which learners should be able to evaluate what is worth for them on learning a language, what is the most important thing for them in this process. The fourth is **organization**, since students need to organize themselves into a system of beliefs, establishing what is their priority in life and in their learning process. The fifth, and last step, is the one in which students become able to understand themselves in terms of their **value systems**, as individuals who are now, after these four steps, ready to act in accordance to the values and beliefs they have already acquired in their process of learning a language.

The second step, for me, is the most important because, according to Brown (2004), **responding** is the step in which students practice what they have received as input. It is also the moment when teachers can check if learning is actually taking place. When students respond, we can see if they understand what we, as teachers, are trying to show them. Without this step, it is impossible to notice how capable the student is to learn the content the teacher is trying to teach. It is also because of the responding step that linguists are able to study how

the affective factors influence students' responding process by applying different kinds of questionnaires in which personality traits could be evaluated.

The research on affective factors in second language learning is based on how human beings feel, respond, believe and value the learning of a language. There are many studied affective factors and each one can influence the process of learning in a different way. We can divide the affective factors into five – Self-Esteem, Risk Taking, Anxiety, Motivation and Personality.

Self-Esteem

Brown (2004) states that self-esteem is crucial to a successful learning because students must believe in their own capabilities. According to Coopersmith (apud BROWN, 2004) "self-esteem is a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes that the individual holds towards himself". When learners depreciate themselves, low self-esteem is established, which is very harmful to students, as they think that they are not able to learn the language. Believing in one's own incapacity usually turns out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy, since no-one would bother to make the necessary effort to learn something he/she believes to be impossible to learn.

Risk-taking

This factor is very important because if the student is afraid of taking risks and exposing him/herself, he/she will not successfully develop the language abilities needed. According to Brown (2004), the risk-taking factor comes up because students are afraid of making mistakes. As they are afraid, they do not talk in class, work in pairs, read out loud; that is, they do not respond to the teacher's stimuli. Consequently, if they do not respond, they cannot learn, as they will probably not have their doubts clarified, not know what they need to improve, and they might have serious problems with their speaking skills in the future.

Anxiety

This factor is essential to the study of the affective domain because it is frequently more related to the moment the person is living than to how this person actually is. That is, it is more related to student's performance at a given moment, but depending on the number of occurrences, it can become a personality trait. Arnold (1999) gave more attention to researching this aspect because, different from other aspects, it is a combination of trait and situation-specific anxiety. Arnold claims that there are two kinds of anxiety: one that is harmful and another that is helpful. Anxiety is harmful when it mines learners' performance, and it is helpful or "facilitating" when it keeps students alert.

Motivation

Motivation is usually considered very relevant to the learning process. Ellis (2008) affirms that “no single individual difference factor in language learning has received as much attention as motivation”. This affective factor has three different perspectives according to Brown (2004): behavioral, cognitive, and constructivist. Behavioral motivation happens because of external forces such as parents, teachers, educational requirements, and so forth. Cognitive motivation is about the decisions students make when they want to avoid certain things or need to make an effort to learn what they want. Constructivist motivation comes from the society we are born in and grow up with, since the environment can influence our choices. Motivation is not only one affective factor, but rather an amalgam of factors or perspectives worth investigating.

Personality

Ellis (2008) defines personality “as those characteristics of a person that account for consistent patterns of feeling, thinking and behaving”. These consistent patterns are what shape our character and our way of acting, and according to many studies, it can drive us to be a good or a bad learner. Personality is an affective factor that is, at the same time, very interesting to analyze and very complex and personal. It is usually difficult to come to terms to the fact that personality can shape the way we learn. That is why I chose this aspect to analyze in this work. It is a big challenge to me to research why something so personal can change the process of learning a language, contributing to its success or failure.

2.3. PERSONALITY: INSIDE PANDORA’S BOX

In order to study this factor, many different instruments need to be used, since there are many variables to be measured in each personality. However, the main problem, according to Ellis (2008), is that “there was no clear theoretical basis for predicting which personality variables would be positively or negatively related to which aspects of L2 proficiency”. This is why personality is one of the least studied affective factors. It is really hard to define the real influence of specific personality traits on the learning process. So far, literature in the area has considered as personality traits: (1) extroversion-introversion, (2)

sensing-intuition, (3) thinking-feeling, and (4) judging-perceiving. The table below shows a summary of each personality trait, according to Myers-Briggs (apud BROWN, 2004) studies.

Major Assets Associated with Each Preference	
Extroversion	Willing to take conversational risks
Introversion	Concentration, self-sufficiency
Sensing	Hard, systematic work; attention to detail, close observation
Intuition	Inferencing and guessing from context, structuring own training, conceptualizing, and model building
Thinking	Analysis, self-discipline; instrumental motivation
Feeling	Integrative motivation, bonding with teachers, good relations lead to good self-esteem
Judging	Systematic work, get the job (whatever it is) done
Perceiving	Open, flexible, adaptable to change and new experiences

Major Liabilities Associated with Each Preference^a	
Extroversion	Dependent on outside stimulation and interaction
Introversion	Need to process ideas before speaking sometimes led to avoidance of linguistic risks in conversation
Sensing	Hindered by lack of clear sequence, goals, syllabus, structure in language or course
Intuition	Inaccuracy and missing important details, sought excessive complexity of discourse
Thinking	Performance anxiety because self-esteem was attached to achievement, excessive need for control (language, process)
Feeling	Discouraged if not appreciated, disrupted by lack of interpersonal harmony
Judging	Rigidity, intolerance of ambiguous stimuli
Perceiving	Laziness, inconsistent pacing over the long haul

Table 1: Assets and liabilities of Myers-Briggs types (BROWN, 2004:178)

Although there are these four personality dichotomies that could be considered in this study, we are going to concentrate onto extroversion/introversion, which is, according to Ellis (2008), the dimension of personality that has attracted the most attention from researchers, since it has shown more results on questionnaires related to the differences in the learning process. Such studies have pointed out how these differences on personality traits can influence on the process of learning not only a second language, but also the first language, as Dewaele and Furnham (apud ELLIS, 2008) concluded after reviewing 30 studies of personality:

Extraverts were found to be generally more fluent than introverts in both the L1 and L2. They were not, however, necessarily more accurate in their L2, which reinforced the view that fluency and accuracy are separate dimensions in second language proficiency (DEWAELE & FURNHAM, apud ELLIS, 2008:32).

Since extroverts seem to be more fluent than introverts, apparently they would be better students than introverts, as they are not afraid of taking risks and making mistakes. Extroverts are more easy-going and practice more their language abilities, even without much accuracy, because they do not think much before speaking. Introverts are more accurate, more individualists, they think before speaking and, because of that, they make fewer mistakes, but they do not practice their language abilities as they are supposed to.

Extraverts are sociable, like parties, have many friends, and need excitement; they are sensation-seekers and risk-takers, like practical jokes and are lively and active. Conversely introverts are quiet, prefer reading to meeting people, have few but close friends and usually avoid excitement (EYSENCK & CHAN, apud ELLIS 2008:673).

It is because of these characteristics that linguists affirm that extroverts are better learners than introverts. Ellis (2008) claims that “extroverts are less easily distracted when operating from short-term memory, are better equipped psychologically to resist stress and thus have lower levels of anxiety, which allows for greater attentional selectivity”. That is why I chose this personality dichotomy to study in this investigation. Although, the majority of theoreticians claim that extroverts are better learners than introverts, Gass and Selinker (2008) say that “both extroversion and introversion lead to success in second language learning, although in different ways”. Considering that, I intend to verify if these personality traits, extroversion and introversion, can really influence students’ capabilities of learning a language and keeping studying it in spite of all the difficulties they face during the learning process.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative research, in which the data analyzed, according to André (1995), is more valid than in the quantitative research, because there are selected subjects and selected questions. The first step of this investigation was a bibliographical research followed by the development of a quiz (Attachments 1 and 2) about the two personality factors under study: extroversion and introversion. I chose Oxford’s (1998) quiz, adapted it and translated it into Portuguese for those students who quitted the English major.

The quiz was applied to twenty undergraduate students in the Languages Program, a pre-service teacher education course at Universidade Federal do Pampa – UNIPAMPA

(Federal University of the Pampa), in the city of Bagé. Half of these students were still studying English when I collected the data and said they would keep studying it until the end of the program, while the other half had given up English and were going to graduate only in their mother tongue, Portuguese. The results reveal if there are more extroverts or introverts in each of those two groups.

I also analyzed a table containing the number of students who dropped out from the Languages Program. The table makes it possible to compare the dropout rates of the three modalities of the Languages Program (Portuguese, Portuguese/English and Portuguese/Spanish) and to notice how the institution categorizes its dropout figures.

As this is a qualitative research, it is important to analyze students' answers closely since all data must be considered as relevant to the final result of this paper. Each student has different answers, even if they have the same personality, and these differences are important to characterize possible reasons for the high levels of dropout. Finding if these reasons are related to the differences in personality is the aim of this paper.

4. RESULTS

According to Gaioso (2006), there are many reasons for the high levels of dropout in the universities of Brazil. Considering that, it is relevant to analyze the table below, which shows the kinds of dropout at UNIPAMPA, Campus Bagé.

MAJOR	Quitted	Changed language	Changed program	Changed university	Diseased	Graduated	TOTAL
PORTUGUESE 2009	11	49	0	0	0	0	60
PORTUGUESE 2010	49	0	0	1	1	0	51
PORTUGUESE 2011	41	22	0	4	0	13	80
TOTAL	101	71	0	5	1	13	191
PORTUGUESE /ENGLISH 2006	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
PORTUGUESE /ENGLISH 2007	12	0	0	0	0	0	12
PORTUGUESE /ENGLISH 2008	27	0	3	2	0	0	32
PORTUGUESE /ENGLISH 2009	21	26	0	1	0	0	48
PORTUGUESE /ENGLISH 2010	15	0	0	1	0	0	16
PORTUGUESE /ENGLISH 2011	8	11	0	1	0	6	26
TOTAL	85	37	3	5	0	6	136
PORTUGUESE /SPANISH 2006	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PORTUGUESE /SPANISH 2007	12	0	0	0	0	0	12
PORTUGUESE /SPANISH 2008	13	0	1	2	0	0	16
PORTUGUESE /SPANISH 2009	16	22	0	1	0	0	39
PORTUGUESE /SPANISH 2010	11	0	0	1	0	0	12

PORTUGUESE /SPANISH 2011	7	16	0	0	0	11	34
TOTAL	59	38	1	4	0	11	113
SUM	245	146	4	14	1	30	440

As it is possible to see above, the levels of dropout in the three modalities of the Languages Program are not significantly different. These numbers have made me consider that the reasons for the high levels of dropout are not so simple to find out as I had previously thought. Since the city of Bagé is in the region of the Pampas, close to the border with Uruguay, people are used to saying that for the students of this region it is easier to study Spanish as a second language rather than English. This argument is usually pointed out as one of the reasons for English students to give up in greater numbers than students from other programs. However, the table shows it is not true, since the differences are not really expressive.

The table above shows that, from 2006 to 2011, the majority of students who dropped out the Languages Program simply quit (245), and an expressive number of students decided to try a different language (146). Only four decided to try a different program in the same institution. It is impossible to be sure if this number truly reflects students' wish to change, because the institutional rules for program change are very strict. I did not have access to the number of students who tried to change program, I simply know that four succeeded. Other 14 students moved to another university or college – these are usually students whose family has to move to a different city or students who simply found a more suitable program elsewhere.

Only thirty students completed the program up to the first semester of 2011. This is a very small number considering that a hundred students enter the Languages Program every year (except in 2007, when 60 students entered). So, there were only thirty graduates (6 in Portuguese/English, 11 in Portuguese/Spanish, and 13 in Portuguese) out of 160 (100 from 2006 and 60 from 2007). It does not mean that all the other 130 students dropped out, many may be still studying and will eventually graduate in the following years, but I do not have this information.

The table shows that language change started in 2009, when the Portuguese major became available. In three years (from 2009 to 2011), after at least two semesters studying Portuguese and one of the second languages, 71 students (23% of the 300) officially decided to make English or Spanish a permanent part of their college studies, while 75 students decided to quit the second language (37 from the Portuguese/English major and 38 from the Portuguese/Spanish). Most of these students started the program between 2006 and 2008

(when the Portuguese major was not available), and waited for the first opportunity to change, since the table shows that 48 students (26 from Portuguese/English and 22 from Portuguese/Spanish) quitted the second language in 2009. There were no freshmen among these 48, because freshmen were already officially enrolled in Portuguese only. Among the other 27 students who quitted the second language up to 2011, there might be other seniors as well as some of the 71 students who entered in 2009 or afterwards and, after having decided to keep a second language, eventually quitted and kept only Portuguese. The table does not show whether those who quitted a second language started another second language or kept studying only Portuguese, but our personal experience with the students strongly suggests that changing from one second language to another is very rare.

The number of students who quitted the second language but remained in the Languages Program studying probably only Portuguese is very significant (75), but the number of students who simply quitted the whole program is far more impressive (245), 44% of the 560 students who entered the Languages Program in that period. If we add the students who moved to another university and to another program in the same institution, it is 47%. It is also impressive to know that those 44% simply quitted without trying another language or even another program. Analyzing specifically the Portuguese/English major, it is possible to notice that 85 students quitted without trying to change to Portuguese/Spanish or to Portuguese. The other 8 students that dropped out the Portuguese/English major (3 changed to another program and 5 changed to another university) are not so significant in number, but they tried at least to keep studying and find out a program they like or a better fit somewhere else.

However, the focus of this work is on two specific groups: the ones who remained in the Portuguese/English major (group A) and those who quitted the English language but remained in the Languages Program studying only Portuguese (group B). The reasons for these students' decision are presented in the quizzes they answered. Ten quizzes were answered by students from group B, which is a meaningful number, considering that, according to the table, 37 students of English changed to Portuguese only. Our quizzes represent about 27% of the students that changed from Portuguese/English to Portuguese. Reading the quizzes, it was possible to see the reasons why students started to study and why they gave up English. The reasons are very similar to what was pointed by Gaioso (2005), as we will see below, confirming the national numbers.

REASONS TO START STUDYING ENGLISH	Group A - still studying English	Group B - studying only Portuguese	Total
Because they like English	9	6	15
Professional needs	6	7	13
Desire to teach English	2	2	4
Because they have always dreamed of learning English	3	0	3
Because they thought they would learn English during the course	0	3	3
Wish to have contact with other countries and cultures	2	1	3
Identification with the English language	0	2	2
Because learning English is a challenge	1	0	1
Desire to be fluent in English	0	1	1
The possibility of earning more money	1	0	1
The possibility of keeping their studies in a master's and doctorate program	0	1	1

Considering the data provided by the table above, we can see that most students (9 out of 10) from group A started studying English because they like it, though they had other reasons. Enjoying the language is definitely a good start, but it was not enough for the ones that gave up. So we are going to analyze if the other reasons are much different and relevant for them to keep studying. It is possible to notice a very relevant difference between the two groups right in the first answer of the quiz, as only one student that did not give up said that started the English/Portuguese major because he needed it to earn money. Another reason pointed out by group A was that they (6 out of 10) needed it for the professions they were intending to exert. Here it is possible to see another difference, as they were not only studying English to have a better job right now, but to use it in their future professions. Another big difference that could be noticed was that 3 out of 10 students wanted to study English because it was a dream from childhood. No student from group B said they studied English because it was a dream. They said they liked the language, but the number is less significant. The other reasons were: to communicate with foreigners (2 out of 10), to teach the language (2 out of 10), and because it was a challenge (1 out of 10).

The majority of students from group B (7 out of 10) said that they started the program because they thought English was important for their carrier. They explained it by saying that English is very important to find better jobs, to keep their studies (in a master's and doctorate program) and to travel abroad in order to study and know other cultures. Some of them started to study not only because they needed the language, but also because they liked it (6 out of 10). They said that they were used to listen to music and watch movies in English, and that they felt they were more identified with English than with Spanish. So, appreciating the language and studying it for professional needs are not enough stimuli to

prevent students from giving up the English major. Another reason pointed out by these students (3 out of 10) was that they thought they were going to learn the language during the program. The other reasons students had to start studying English were: the wish to be an English teacher (2 out of 10), identification with the language (2 out of 10), wish to be in contact with foreigners (1 out of 10), the opportunity of learning a second language in order to keep their studies in a master's and doctorate program (1 out of 10) and desire to be fluent in the language (1 out of 10). In sum, most students from both groups started studying English because they liked it and needed it. However, this did not prevent them from giving up. The table below shows the reasons why students quitted the Portuguese/English major.

REASONS TO STOP STUDYING ENGLISH	Students from group B
Affective problems with the teacher	5
Absence of stimuli by the teacher	4
Difficulties on learning the language	4
Feeling depreciated by the teacher	3
Unsatisfactory performance	2
Lack of time to dedicate to learning a new language	2
Difficulty to conciliate English with other disciplines	1
Disagreement with the teacher	1
Financial problems	1
Feeling ashamed and inferior compared to classmates	1
Absence of previous knowledge	1
Low-quality education (the second language)	1
Interest in teaching the mother tongue (Portuguese)	1

The table shows that students gave up for different reasons, some of them cited by Gaioso (2005). The majority of the students (7 out of 10) cited as a reason to give up problems with an English teacher. There were four kinds of reference to these problems in the quizzes: absence of stimuli by the teacher (4 out of 10), affective problems with the teacher (5 out of 10), feeling depreciated by the teacher (3 out of 10) and disagreement with the teacher (1 out of 10). Those are significant numbers, since 7 different students said that these problems were really important for their decision of giving up the Portuguese/English major.

There was also a student from group A that said that she felt ashamed in the English classes, not because she was ashamed of speaking in class, but because there was a teacher that made her feel uncomfortable by giving her negative feedback in front of all the classmates. This statement shows that she also went through what the majority (7 out of 10) of students in group B endured, but she is still studying English. She is one of the students who said they wanted to teach the language. Ultimately, these interpersonal problems seem to be related to one of the reasons pointed by Gaioso (2005): poor affective bounding.

Another reason that was pointed out by 4 students was the difficulty to learn a second language. They said they felt that they were not learning the language the way they should. Since they did not have previous knowledge of the language and they claimed they did not have enough time to dedicate to the study of a second language, they gave up. This reason could be related to what Gaioso (2005) refers to as “successive failures”, as the students decided to give up because they felt they were not able to learn the language the same way their classmates did.

The other reasons that appeared in the quizzes were: shortness of time (2 out of 10), financial problems (1 out of 10), feeling ashamed for knowing less than the classmates (1 out of 10), difficulty to conciliate English with the other disciplines (1 out of 10), absence of previous knowledge of the language (1 out of 10), low-quality education (1 out of 10), and shift in vocational orientation (1 out of 10). Some of these reasons can be related to the reasons pointed out by Gaioso (2005), as we can see in the table below.

Reasons pointed out by Gaioso (2005)	Reasons pointed by the students who quitted	Number of students
Poor affective bonding	Affective problems with the teacher Absence of stimuli by the teacher Feeling depreciated by the teacher Disagreement with the teacher	7
Successive failures	1. Unsatisfactory performance 2. Difficulties in learning the language 3. Difficulty to conciliate English with other disciplines 4. Feeling ashamed and inferior compared to classmates' performance	6
Low-quality education	Low-quality education	1
Absence of career guidance	Shift in vocational orientation: interest in teaching Portuguese instead of English	1
Financial problems	Financial problems	1

As we can see above, almost all the reasons cited by the students who quitted can be related to the reasons pointed out by Gaioso (2005), as seen in the first column of the table above. It is also possible to say that most students gave up basically for two reasons: poor affective bounding and successive failures. This result corroborates the relevance of affective factors for learning.

However, besides showing the reasons why the 20 participants started the English major and why 10 of them gave up, I intended to verify if their personalities have anything to do with the way they faced the problems found in the university. According to Ellis (2008), “extroverts are less easily distracted when operating from short-term memory, are better equipped psychologically to resist stress and thus have lower levels of anxiety, which allows

for greater attentional selectivity”. Most theoreticians say that extroverts would be better learners than introverts, since they are able to better face the problems that learning a second language can cause. So, we analyzed the quizzes in order to understand if this contrast between personality types can really influence students’ decision of giving up their English studies.

The quizzes answered by group B (those who gave up) showed that most of them (7 out of 10) are extroverts, only one is an introvert and two shared both types of personality (scoring the same for introverted and extroverted characteristics) – I will call them hybrids. However, if we analyze the first three questions (“How do you feel when you are in an English class? Do you feel ashamed to talk or you don’t care about making mistakes?”; “Is it easy for you to communicate in English? Yes or no? Explain your answer.”), which were added to the quizzes in order to understand students’ behavior in the English classes, it can be noticed that not all the seven extroverts really had extroverted behavior in class. Most extroverted students (5 out of 7) said that they were worried about making mistakes in English. This concern might also reveal a conception of language in which successful learning means getting rid of all possible mistakes. The two hybrids said that they had problems with speaking because they did not have enough knowledge of the language to speak shamelessly in class. These are typical characteristics of introverts. Ellis (2008) claims that introverts are more accurate and more individualistic, they think before speaking, as they do not like to make any mistake, and because of that, they do not practice their language abilities as they are supposed to. So, apparently, people who are extroverted in their personal lives can present introverted behavior in a second language class.

So, seven students from group B scored as extroverts, but only two behaved as extroverts in ESL classes. The two hybrids behaved as introverts, and the introverted one presented all the characteristics expected of this personality type both for her personal life and for her behavior in the English classes. She said that she was very shy and afraid of making mistakes. She could not communicate in English because she did not know much of the language and she did not want to take risks. The only two extroverts who behave as such in ESL classes gave up the Portuguese/English major because they would take too long to graduate. When a student fails in one semester, graduation is delayed in at least one year because the program is offered yearly.

In sum, though most students from group B (7 out 10) scored as extroverts, only two of them present extroverted behavior in the ESL class. These results are relevant because they

reveal that students' behavior can change when they are in class. Gass and Slinker (2008) add that the extrovert and introvert stereotypes

have implications for second language learning success, but the implications are somewhat contradictory. (...) Hence, there are good reasons to think that both extroversion and introversion lead to success in second language learning, although in different ways (p. 433).

The data provided by the quizzes from group A, on the other hand, showed that the majority of the students (8 out of 10) are extroverts, while only two are introverts. Analyzing the introverted ones first, it is possible to notice that they consider themselves extroverted in their personal lives. However, according to Ellis (2008), introverts are usually worried about making mistakes and not being accurate enough, and these two students are just like that. One said that she started to speak confidently in class after she had acquired enough knowledge to do it, so that she would not feel ashamed. The second introverted student said he was not ashamed of speaking, since he was among adults, but in order to do it he studied hard, so as he could speak without having problems with the language. Both of them cared about being accurate before feeling confident to speak. This is an important characteristic of introverted people.

The extroverted students (8 out of 10) presented some differences among them. Each one has a different way of thinking about the English classes. Gass and Selinker (2008) claim that these differences are acceptable, since each student deals with language classes in a different way. Even though extroverts are not expected to feel shy or embarrassed to speak, as Ellis (2008) claims, some of them (2 out of 10) felt this way, but they did not let this feeling prevent them from speaking in class when they needed or wanted to. This behavior was also pointed out by Gass and Selinker (2008) when they refer to risk taking, which is a characteristic of extrovert students.

Thus, a risk taker should undertake relatively riskier activities in either situation, but this personality trait is not necessarily more important than the framing. What we would need to know in studies of second language learning is whether the learners frame their situations in terms of gain or loss (p. 434).

Other two students said that they felt ashamed in class depending on who the teacher was. They usually felt uncomfortable when the teacher corrected them in front of the other students in class or when the teacher said something that undermined their confidence. In terms of "gain or loss", as Gass and Selinker (2008) said, those students did not feel they would gain something from the situation, since the teacher made them lose their confidence in class.

One student said that she really wanted to speak English as correctly as her mother tongue, which is a characteristic of introverted people, and a somewhat distorted conception of language. However, she kept studying the language, as extroverts would be expected to do, since, according to Ellis (2008), extroverts are psychologically better prepared to face problems. The other three students did not present any peculiarity, they all said they did not mind making mistakes, and their characteristics as students matched the scores in the quiz. They said they were not ashamed of speaking in class because there was no reason to feel this way, since they could only learn by practicing. But these are just three students out of 10. So, out of the 8 extroverts in this group, 5 present some kind of introverted behavior in class, though it did not prevent them from keeping studying English.

In sum, according to the overall results of the quizzes, the majority of students are extroverts (eight in group A and seven in group B). But five of the extroverts in both groups presented characteristics of introverts in the language classes, such as avoiding the risk of making mistakes, embarrassment and lack of confidence. These data indicate that personality traits which are determinant in one's personal life might not be as relevant for language learning, since students' behavior inside the classroom may be different from their general behavior. Indeed, what differentiated group A from group B was not their personality, but the choices they made and how they faced their problems in class. Some gave up (10 out of 20) and some did not (10 out of 20), they decided to keep studying English even with all the different problems they had to face.

Evidence has been given in support of the advantages of both extroversion and introversion. It is probable that there is no correct global answer. The likely solution is that extroversion is beneficial for certain methods of language teaching, whereas introversion is beneficial for others. The task of researchers is to determine what the precise patterns are (GASS & SELINKER, 2008:433).

Each student has to learn how to take advantage of their personality traits, since their success on the process of learning a second language depends on the way they deal with the problems they face along their academic life.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This paper intended to research into the individual personality traits extroversion and introversion, and their influence on the process of learning English as a second language. Since some authors, such as Brown (2004), Arnold (1999) and Ellis (2008), among others, claim that extroverts are better learners than introverts, I hypothesized that extroversion was

an important reason for students to keep studying English in the Languages Program investigated, as long as, according to Ellis (1994), extroversion can help students to remain in the program despite the difficulties they find along the way.

However, my hypothesis has proved wrong. The results show, as Gass and Selinker (2008) claim, that personality traits are not as determinant to success in second language learning as it is the way students deal with the problems they face. Ten questionnaires were applied to students who remained studying English (group A) and ten to students who changed to Portuguese (group B), and the overall results reveal that the majority of students in both groups are extroverts in their personal lives (8 in group A, 7 in group B), but not in the ESL class. Most students from both groups present some kind of introverted behavior in the English classes (7 in group A, 8 in group B). The reasons why they started studying English apparently did not make a difference either. Most students in both groups justified their choice saying that they liked the language and considered it useful for their carrier.

The most significant difference between the two groups seems to be more evident in the reasons why students from group B left the Portuguese/English major. Poor affective bounding and successive failures, in Gaioso's (2005) terms, were determinant to their decision to quit. Since all the students (from both groups) had the same teachers, it seems relatively safe to affirm that the affective bounding with the teacher(s) they mentioned was poor to all (or most) of the students, but some responded to it by quitting, and so avoiding the problem, while others decided to endure. As to successive failures, we can say that most students in group B (those who quitted) had this problem, but we cannot affirm that they were the only ones. This would have to be further investigated.

In sum, most theoreticians affirm that extroverts are better learners because they are risk takers and practice the language more, while introverts are not as good because they are so worried about accuracy that they do not practice as much as they should. Though these two kinds of behavior are true, this research has shown that they do not determine success in learning or in completing a second language undergraduate course. As Gass and Selinker (2008) say, "the likely solution is that extroversion is beneficial for certain methods of language teaching, whereas introversion is beneficial for others." The question of which method is more suitable for each personality type needs further investigation. Besides, extroverted/introverted behavior might change depending on the context (as this research has shown) and maybe on the culture students are immersed, which is another relevant question for further investigation.

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ATTACHMENT 1 - Quiz for students who have kept studying English

I - For each item *circle* the response that represents your approach:

0 – Never	1- Sometimes	2 – Very Often	3 – Always
1. I prefer to work or study with others			0 1 2 3
2. I make new friends easily			0 1 2 3
3. I like to be in groups of people			0 1 2 3
4. It is easy to me to talk to strangers			0 1 2 3
5. I keep up with personal news about other people			0 1 2 3
6. I like to stay late at parties			0 1 2 3
7. Interactions with new people give me energy			0 1 2 3
8. I remember people's name easily			0 1 2 3
9. I have many friends and acquaintances			0 1 2 3
10. Wherever I go, I develop personal contacts			0 1 2 3
11. I prefer to work or study alone			0 1 2 3
12. I am rather shy			0 1 2 3
13. I prefer individual hobbies and sports			0 1 2 3
14. It is hard for most people to get to know me			0 1 2 3
15. People view me as more detached			0 1 2 3
16. In a large group, I tend to keep silent			0 1 2 3
17. Gatherings with lots of people tend to stress me			0 1 2 3
18. I get nervous when dealing with new people			0 1 2 3
19. I avoid parties if I can			0 1 2 3
20. Remembering names is difficult for me			0 1 2 3

II - Answer the following questions:

1. What do you think your level of English is? Basic, Low-Intermediate, Upper-Intermediate, Advanced? _____
2. How are your grades in English, in general? Excellent, very good, good, reasonable, bad?

3. Do you think English is easy? _____
4. Did you have any learning difficulties during the course? _____

ATTACHMENT 2 - Quiz for students who have given up English

I - Para cada item *circule* a resposta que melhor te representa:

0 – Nunca	1- Às vezes	2 – Frequentemente	3 – Sempre
1. Eu prefiro trabalhar ou estudar em grupo			0 1 2 3
2. Eu tenho facilidade em fazer amigos			0 1 2 3
3. Eu gosto de estar em grupos de pessoas			0 1 2 3
4. É fácil para mim falar com estranhos			0 1 2 3
5. Sempre sei o que está acontecendo com os outros			0 1 2 3
6. Eu gosto de ficar até tarde nas festas			0 1 2 3
7. Interagir com pessoas novas recarrega minhas energias			0 1 2 3
8. Eu lembro facilmente do nome de outras pessoas			0 1 2 3
9. Eu tenho muitos amigos e conhecidos			0 1 2 3
10. Onde quer que eu vá, faço novos contatos			0 1 2 3
11. Eu prefiro trabalhar ou estudar sozinho			0 1 2 3
12. Eu sou meio tímido			0 1 2 3
13. Eu prefiro hobbies e esportes individuais			0 1 2 3
14. Geralmente as pessoas não me conhecem bem			0 1 2 3
15. As pessoas pensam que sou diferente			0 1 2 3
16. Em um grande grupo, eu tendo a ficar em silêncio			0 1 2 3
17. Reunir-me com muitas pessoas me deixa estressado			0 1 2 3
18. Fico nervoso quando estou lidando com estranhos			0 1 2 3
19. Eu evito festas quando eu posso			0 1 2 3
20. Lembrar nomes é muito difícil para mim			0 1 2 3

II - Answer the following questions:

1. Qual você acha que é seu nível de inglês? Básico, Pré-Intermediário, Intermediário, Avançado? _____
2. Em geral, como eram as suas notas de inglês quando estava na licenciatura dupla? Excelente, muito boas, boas, razoáveis, ruins? _____
3. Você acha que inglês é fácil? _____
4. Você teve alguma dificuldade de aprendizado do inglês durante o curso? _____

Answers:

Add the score for items 1 – 10 ----- (extrovert)

Add the score for items 11 – 20 ----- (introvert)