

## UNDERSTANDING PERSONALITY

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### ABSTRACT

Educational can not be separated from learning. To support the successful of teaching learning process, it must be supported by some aspects, such as: learning styles, teaching strategies, affective factors, and socio-cultural factors. One of the affective factors that must be pay attention in language learning is personality. Personality is a term in psychology which is depict the character of a person in everyday life. As human beings experience growth and development, personality also experiences development and change. That is why personality can be measured. One way to measure personality is by using psychometric.

Pendidikan tidak dapat dipisahkan dari yang namanya pembelajaran. Ada beberapa aspek yang mendukung kesuksesan proses pembelajaran yakni, gaya belajar, strategi pengajaran dan faktor sikap dan sosial budaya. Faktor sikap dalam hal ini lebih ditekankan pada personaliti atau kepribadian seorang pembelajar bahasa. Kepribadian merupakan istilah psikologi yang digambarkan sebagai karakter seseorang dalam kesehariannya. Sama halnya dengan manusia yang tumbuh dan berkembang, kepribadian seseorang juga mengalami perkembangan. Oleh sebab itu kepribadian dapan diukur. Salah satu cara untuk mengukur kepribadian adalah dengan menggunakan psikometrik.

***Keywords: personality, personality development, personality change, and personality measurement***

## A. Introduction

Talking about personality will never be endless. Personality has always been an interesting topic to discuss. It is undeniable that one's success in work, study, home, and so on is influenced by personality. Personality is a term in psychology which depicts the character of a person in everyday life.

According to Long (2000:99), personality refers to:

“those stable characteristics by which individuals differ from each other and which acts as the basis for what they do. It is a label normally applied to interpersonal behaviour and we would for instance typically say that a person who is socially outgoing has an extraverted personality”.

According to Pervin and John (2001) in Dornyei, standard definition, “personality represents those characteristics of the person that account for consistent patterns of feeling, thinking, and behaving”.

Based on these two definitions, it can be seen that both of the experts emphasize on behavior. It means that personality can be separated from behavior, or someone behavior shown his/her personality. McAdams (2005 : 15) stated that personality is:

a unique *variation* on the general design of human nature. Human nature itself—what we human beings have in common with each other by virtue of the fact that we are all human beings—is a product of our species' evolution. Whereas personality develops across the individual life course, from birth through old age, human nature has “developed” over millions of years of evolutionary history. And it continues to develop, of course, for evolution never goes away.

From the definition of personality according to McAdams, it can be seen that someone personality develops throughout his/her life. In regards to personality, the Holly Qur'an also describes the importance of personality, good and bad personality, and the model of human personalities. Many researches over the worlds also have been conducted to see the affect of personalities, and/ or the role of personalities in second language learning.

Zhang, Su, and Liu (2013 : 58) conducted a research of Chinese EFL learners' personality traits and motivation in relation to their contributions to achievement in English at the tertiary level. The research result revealed that: .....(3) the personality traits were significantly related to all or many of the motivation measures; and (4) most of the personality and motivation scales were significantly correlated with the students' attainment

in English, among which, language requirement, intrinsic motivation, psychoticism and lie were good predictors of the latter.

In this theoretical studies, this article purposes to describe 3 things related to understand personality, namely: (1) personality development; (2) personality change; and (3) measuring personality.

## **B. Discussion**

### Personality Development

Personality development can be defined as the continuities, consistencies, and stabilities in people over time *and* the ways in which people change over time. Each of these two facets—stability and change—requires definitions and qualifications (Randy J. Larsen and David M. Buss, 2008 : 138). In fact, there are some theories of personality development, such as personality development in person centered theory, the developmental theories of Erikson and Levinson, and psychoanalytic developmental theories. In terms of personality development, this paper discuss the developmental theories of Erikson.

Cited from *Personality Development*, Pearce and Simanowitz (2003 : 30-42) explained the developmental theories of Erikson. One of Erikson's most significant contributions to developmental theory is the emphasis he placed on the relationship of *society* and *the interpersonal* to the unfolding of personality.

Erikson writes Personality can be said to develop according to steps predetermined in the human organism's readiness to be driven towards, to be aware of, and to interact with widening social radius, beginning with the dim image of a mother and ending with mankind, or at any rate that segment of mankind which counts in the particular individual's life. Erikson integrates these developmental ideas into his theory encompassing an overview of the human life cycle, in the eight discrete stages. At each stage of life Erikson seeks to describe how baby, child or adult encounters his/her environment. Each stage involves a crisis because 'incipient growth goes together with a shift in instinctual energy, yet causes specific vulnerability'.

In the following are the eight stages of personality development according to Erikson.

#### *a. Stage 1. Infancy: trust versus mistrust*

Erikson considers that *basic trust* is the cornerstone of the healthy personality. The need for taking in food through the mouth is overwhelming in early babyhood, but the visual and tactile senses are also important. Erikson refers to this stage as the incorporative stage;

the baby is receptive to what is being offered. After 6 months the baby has to learn to seek the nipple without biting and to get used to a form of mutual *regulation*. At this stage there may be a sense of loss as complete unity with the mother is gradually destroyed. ‘When/if the baby has the impression of being deprived; divided or abandoned, a residue of mistrust can form.’

However, Erikson highlights that the cultural aspects may be as significant as the instinctual ones. Some cultures swaddle the baby; others leave limbs free. What is good for children and what may happen to them depends on what they are supposed to become and where. Although the establishment of trust is the first task of maternal care, Erikson concludes that in the current times of change mothers have often lost their own sense of trust in themselves.

*b. Stage 2. Early childhood: autonomy versus shame and doubt (2 to 4 years)*

Freud called this stage the anal stage, but Erikson sees it as a time when there is emphasis on general muscular achievement and not just on sphincter control. At this stage the infant battles for autonomy and ‘the growing ability to hold on and let go, with discretion, to stand “on his own feet”’. Shame and doubt, the negative consequences of seeking autonomy, are associated with ‘being completely exposed and conscious of being looked at’. Doubt is linked particularly with having ‘a back, an area behind which one cannot see but which may be the source of evil and decay – it is the source of fear of attack from behind.

At this stage Erikson thinks the adult needs to be firm but tolerant, but that the dignity and autonomy of the child are often dependent on the parents’ dignity within the social hierarchy. He considers that much of the ‘shame and doubt, the indignity and uncertainty which is aroused in children are a consequence of the parents’ frustrations in marriage, work and citizenship.

*c. Stages 3 and 4. Play age: initiative versus guilt (4 to 5 years); School age: industry versus inferiority (5 to 12 years)*

By this stage the child has often identified herself as a little person, but must find out what kind of person she wants to be. Concurrent with the development of movement, language and imagination, the child develops a sense of unbroken initiative. The child often becomes intrusive, invading others’ space, sometimes by physical attack, and acquiring knowledge with a consuming curiosity. The child can perform ‘Acts of aggressive manipulation and coercion’. This evokes a reaction from significant others and can make the

child aware of the hazards in the environment. A sense of badness and fear of punishment evolves, and thus a sense of guilt is born.

This is the stage in which children develop ‘a sense of industry’ and learn to ‘win recognition by producing things’. They often feel ‘I am what I learn’. Children want to be shown how to get busy with something and how to get busy alongside others.

Trends in educational philosophy have varied between making schools ‘an extension of grim adulthood emphasizing self-restraint and a strict sense of duty’ and a place where children can learn by doing what they like to do. Erikson thinks that different children can thrive in both these approaches and that schools need to steer a middle course between work and play. Play can help a child ‘restore a sense of mastery and introduce a child to a world shared with others’. It helps a child ‘master experience by meditating, experimenting, planning and sharing’.

There is a danger at this stage of the development of a sense of inferiority, particularly if the previous conflicts of the earlier stages have not been resolved. Children may still want the mother or they may not be acknowledged by the teacher for what they have learned to do well earlier at home. The calibre of teachers and the degree to which they understand the child’s behaviour are vitally important factors in a child’s development.

*d. Stage 5. Adolescence: identity versus identity diffusion (12–18 years)*

The need for ego identity Erikson affirms that in human existence there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of ego identity. This term ‘identity’ is the one most associated with Erikson’s work. Adolescence is the period when the young person often attempts to form a lasting ego identity which is ‘the accrued experience of the ego’s ability to integrate all identifications with the vicissitudes of the libido, with the aptitudes developed out of endowment, and with the opportunities offered in social roles’. They need to develop a sense of ego identity such that they do not feel a discrepancy between their own sense of who they are and their concept of how they appear to others.

Ego identity develops from a gradual integration of all earlier identifications, but the whole has a different quality to the sum of its parts. Erikson asserts that a lasting ego identity cannot exist without the trust of the first oral stage and that the establishment of a confident sense of identity rests on the ongoing promise of fulfilment from significant adult figures in the person’s life. The dangers of identity diffusion Erikson recognizes that a watering down

of the emergent sense of identity, by what he calls 'identity diffusion', causes many of the problems experienced by adolescents. This can happen when the adolescent is assailed by doubts about her ethnic, sexual, religious or class identity.

*e. Stage 6: Early adulthood: intimacy versus self-absorption*

Erikson was one of the first theorists to identify and focus on life stages in adulthood, and thus gave a lead to later writers such as David Levinson and Naomi Golan. He asserts that it is only after a young person has established a real sense of identity that true intimacy with another can occur. Intimacy is 'the capacity to commit. Relationships and marriage can often be the abortive attempt to find the self through finding another.

The alternative to intimacy is *distantiation*, the readiness to destroy those people and forces that seem to threaten one's own identity. This kind of behaviour can be an extension of reactive adolescent intolerance of difference; it often surfaces and is exploited in politics and war. Sometimes intimate, competitive and combative relations can be experienced with and against the self-same people.

*f. Stage 7. Adulthood: generativity versus stagnation*

Erikson thinks that sexual mates who have a fulfilled sexual relationship 'will soon wish to combine their personalities and energies in the production and care of offspring'; he calls this *generativity*. He considers this stage a crucial one because it is the link between generations. Again, his focus on the heterosexual couple excludes alternative lifestyles. If people do not engage with this stage 'they can experience an obsessive need for pseudo-intimacy with a pervading sense of *stagnation* and interpersonal impoverishment'. Such stagnation is important because it affects successive generations.

*g. Stage 8. Old age: integrity versus despair*

Erikson is one of the few theorists of personality development who saw old age as a separate life stage with its own tasks and crises and who lived to experience it and reflect upon it personally (he lived to the age of 92). Integrity in the later stages of life is the culmination of the seven stages. It can be achieved 'only in him who in some way has taken care of people and things and has adapted himself to the triumphs and disappointments adherent to being the originator of others or the generator of products and ideas'.

Erikson claims that people who have achieved this state accept their life cycles and those of significant others. They no longer wish that their parents were different and they

accept that they are responsible for their own lives. People at this stage have a sense of connection with other human beings who have come before them and who have created ‘order, objects and sayings conveying human dignity and love’.

Erikson adds that clinically he has found that despair and a fear of death signify the lack or loss of this ego integration. This despair can take the form of disgust, misanthropy and contempt for institutions and people, and it reflects the individual’s own contempt for themselves. Ego integration implies emotional integration, which includes dependency as well as leadership. It involves an awareness of ‘the relativity of all the various life styles’ but also a readiness ‘to defend the dignity of his own life style against all physical and economic threats’. It applies to all aspects of living and all fields of human activity.

## Personality Change

Like achievement and motivation, personality also can change. According to Larsen and Buss (Randy J. Larsen and David M. Buss, 141), personality change has two defining qualities. First, the changes are typically *internal* to the person, not merely changes in the external surroundings, such as walking into another room. Second, the changes are relatively *enduring* over time, rather than being merely temporary.

### a. Moderators of Change

Personality change itself can be affected by some factors. Costa and McCrae said that there are 3 kinds moderators of change. They are as follow.

#### 1. *Psychological characterisitcs*

One approach is to look for those characteristics of people that might make certain individuals susceptible to change. McCrae examined several of these. One obvious candidate is personality itself—especially the dimension of Openness to Experience. Some people are much more willing to explore their world, to listen to different views, and to reflect on their own feelings. Perhaps this continued processing of new information might lead to changes in emotional maturity or patterns of social interaction, or dedication to goals—to changes in personality from which the closed individual would be insulated. The changes might be in either direction: Some open people might discover reasons to become more sociable, whereas others might find new meaning in solitude. The former would become more extraverted; the latter, more introverted. We would not, therefore, expect an overall increase or decrease. But

we would expect that people high in Openness would be less predictable over time: Retest correlations should be lower for them than for people low in Openness.

McCrae (1993) used the same design with three other variables that were potential moderators of change. *Private self-consciousness* refers to a tendency to be introspective and interested in understanding oneself. (This construct must be distinguished from neurotic self-consciousness, which refers to feelings of discomfort in social situations.) Because people high in private selfconsciousness know themselves well, they may be more consistent in their self-descriptions and thus show higher stability coefficients.

*Personal agency* is a cognitive construct that concerns the way people think about their own behavior. People high in personal agency view behaviors as steps toward long-term goals, whereas people low in personal agency take a more immediate and concrete view. *Self-monitoring* is the tendency to watch what one is doing and modify it to fit the situation. At best, high self-monitors are socially sensitive and functionally flexible people; at worst, they are other-directed chameleons without any enduring principles of their own. Because they can change to suit the occasion, high self-monitors might be expected to be lower in trait stability.

## 2. *Life Events*

Perhaps a more likely candidate for a moderator of change is some external event that alters one's life and thus one's personality traits. Costa, Herbst, and colleagues (2000) conducted exploratory analyses based on this premise. In their large midlife study, they asked participants to report which of 30 specific life events they had experienced in the past 6years. Events included *got married*, *your parent died*, and *your spouse was fired*. Individual events were relatively rare in this sample, so an index of total life events was created by summing across the 30 events.

Contrary to the hypothesis, there was no evidence that more events led to more change in personality traits from before the 6-year period to after it. However, analyses of selected events did show small effects. A small group of people (4% of the sample) were fired from a job; compared to the group of people who were promoted during the same period, these individuals increased in Neuroticism and decreased in Conscientiousness. Again, women who were divorced became a bit higher in Extraversion and Openness

compared to women who got married. It remains to be seen how replicable these findings are and how enduring the changes may be.

### 3. *Physical and Mental Health*

There is one last category of potential moderators of personality change: health status. There is, however, a more direct test of this hypothesis. In collaboration with a BLSA physician, we examined the medical histories of men and women on whom we had before-and-after personality measures (Costa, Metter, & McCrae, 1994). Initially, 153 volunteers were considered healthy, 93 had a minor disease (e.g., treated hypertension), and 27 had a major disease (e.g., a history of cancer). Over time, 175 volunteers stayed the same or improved in health whereas 98 had worse health status. These two groups did not differ in longitudinal changes in any of the five personality traits, and retest correlations were equally high in both groups. Deterioration in physical health status was unrelated to change in personality in this group. It should be noted, however, that all of the subjects in this study were sufficiently well at the second administration to complete a personality questionnaire. More serious illness might have affected personality scores.

## **b. Two Universal Observations of Personality Change**

In contrast to the aforementioned *theoretical* impossibilities, most theories of personality cite two *observations*, which they assert are nearly always involved in personality change. They are (1) major personality change involves some sort of intense affective or feeling process occurring in the individual; (2) major personality change occurs nearly always in the context of an ongoing personal relationship. For more clearly, the two universal observation of personality change (Eugene T. Gendlin, 1964 : 5-7) will explain in the following.

### 1. *The Feeling Process*

When major personality change occurs, intense, emotional, inwardly felt events are usually observed. I would like to give the name "feeling process" to this affective dimension of personality change. The word "feeling" is preferable to "affective," because "feeling" usually refers to something concretely sensed by an individual. In personality change the individual directly feels an inward reworking. His own concepts and constructs become partly unstructured and his felt experiencing at times exceeds his intellectual grasp.

In various contexts it has been noted that major personality change requires not only intellectual or actional operations, but also this felt process. For instance, psychotherapists (of whatever orientation) often discuss the presence or absence of this feeling process in a

particular case. They discuss whether the individual, in a given psychotherapy hour, is engaged in "merely" intellectualizing, or whether (as they phrase it) he is "really" engaged in psychotherapy. The former they consider a waste of time or a defense, and they predict that no major personality change will result from it. The latter they consider promising of personality change. Now, although this difference is universally discussed, it is most often phrased so unclearly, and the words following "merely" ("merely" intellectualizing, defending, avoiding, externalizing, etc.), and the words following "really" ("really" engaged, facing, dealing with) are so undefined that we may as well simply refer to this difference as the difference between "merely" and "really." Although it may not be phrased well, what is always meant or referred to by "really" is a *feeling process* which is absent when something is termed "merely."

A similar distinction between "merely" and "really" is talked about in education: There has always been much concern with the contrast between "mere" rote learnings of facts and "really" learning something (making it one's own, becoming able to "integrate," "apply," and "creatively elaborate" it). "Really" learning is predicted to result in observable behavior changes, while "mere" rote learning is predicted to result in little (or different) behavior change. The learning process is said to differ in the two instances, depending upon the degree of the individual's "internal motivation," his way of "taking the new material in," his "application of himself to what he learns," his genuine grasp of meanings. These metaphoric phrases indicate that, here again during learning, the difference between "really" and "merely" refers to a certain participation of the individual's feelings in the learning process.

## 2. *The Personal Relationship*

Just as the feeling process is observed as essential in personality change-while little is said to delineate, observably define, or theoretically account for it-so also the personal relationship is always cited. Can theory define this enormous and critical difference which it makes to the individual to live in relation to another person? We observe that when the individual thinks about his experiences and emotions by himself, there is often little change. We observe that when he speaks about these things to *some* other people, equally little change occurs.

However, when we come to the "therapeutic" or "effective" personal relationship, we say that "suggestion," or "libidinal support," or "approval and reinforcement," or the other

person's "therapeutic attitudes," or the "conversation between the two unconsciousnesses," somehow obviates the factors which otherwise shape all his experiences and personal relations to keep the individual as he is. Somehow, now, he is said to "become aware" of what he previously could not be aware of, he is "influenced" by suggestions, he "overcomes" the transference, his "libidinal balance" is altered, he somehow now "perceives the attitudes" of the therapist, where he has always distorted and anticipated the attitudes of others. This is really the problem, not the explanation, of personality change.

Rogers discovered how, in practice, the individual can be helped to overcome the repression model. His discovery is that defensiveness and resistance are obviated when one responds to an individual "within his own internal frame of reference." This phrase means that the psychotherapist's response always refers to something which is directly present in the individual's own momentary awareness.

Rogers at first found that even if the therapist did nothing, more than to rephrase the patient's communication-that is to say, if the therapist clearly showed that he was receiving and exactly understanding the patient's moment-by moment communications-a very deep and self-propelled change process began and continued in the patient. Something happens in an individual when he is understood in this way. Some change takes place in what he momentarily confronts. Something releases. He then has something else, further, to say; and if this, again, is received and understood, something still further emerges which ;he individual would not even have thought of (nor was capable of thinking), had not such a sequence of expressions and responses taken place.

But we do *observe* that almost always these changes occur in the context of a personal relationship. Some definitions of the kind of relationship which does (and the kind which does not) effect personality change have been offered (Rogers, 1957, 1959*b*). Very little has been said about how relationship events affect the conditions making for repression and the nature of contents, so that these alter.

### Measuring Personality

Measuring personality is one of the areas studied in personality. To measure personality, we can use psychometric.

“The word **psychometric** originates from the terms ‘psycho’ referring to mind, and ‘metric’ meaning measurement, and simply means measurement of the mind, or measurement of an aspect of the mind. Examples include the measurement of intelligence, attitudes and personality, and would typically involve the use of questionnaires or tests” (Abbot, 2001:11).

Meanwhile, Mathews (2009:13) states that

“psychometrics provides statistical techniques which tell us how good a measuring tool a particular questionnaire is, just as we might assess the accuracy of a thermometer or balance in the physical sciences. The sophistication of modern techniques, and the number-crunching power afforded by computers, provide the contemporary researcher with powers of data analysis far beyond those envisaged by the pioneering trait researchers”.

In *Social and Personality Development*, Abbot (2001:6-7) states that historically, research into personality has tended to be split between two approaches: the **idiographic** approach and the **nomothetic** approach. This division reflects an important difference of opinion in the way psychologists view people as the subject matter. When studied idiographically people are seen as unique individuals, whereas taking a nomothetic approach assumes that people are essentially similar and share characteristics with each other. The difference between these two approaches is discussed in more detail below.

### 1. *Idiographic approaches*

The *idiographic* approach (from the Greek ‘idios’ meaning personal or private) takes the view that we are unique individuals and should be studied as such. This means that we cannot rely on descriptions of common behaviours to describe certain types of people, such as people who are shy or people who are aggressive, but should treat each person as uniquely different from any other.

So how can this approach be applied to the study of personality? Taking a purely idiographic approach would require a detailed analysis of an individual’s thoughts, feelings and behaviours, and would not assume that the resulting profile could be applied to anybody else. The idea of universal features or general behaviours put forward to explain human behaviour does not belong to, and is not the language of an idiographic approach.

The main advocates of the idiographic approach are from the humanistic school of thought. This school includes prominent theorists such as Carl Rogers who took a person-

centred approach to therapy, George Kelly who developed the personal construct theory, and Gordon Allport who described people as possessing ‘unique personal characteristics’. Sigmund Freud was another theorist who took an idiographic approach, by focusing on the individual as the main unit of study. Freud’s personality theory was developed from case studies of his patients. A final example is Eric Erikson, who put forward a whole life theory of psychosocial stages, through which each person must pass during their lifetime. Both Freud and Erikson will be discussed in detail later in the book.

To conclude, taking an idiographic approach means researching a theory or phenomena by studying people individually and recognising their uniqueness, without trying to categorise them.

## 2. *Nomothetic approaches*

The nomothetic approach (from the Greek ‘nomos’ meaning law) relies on the assumption that we share many characteristics with our fellow human beings, and that the study of behaviours we hold in common will lead to a more useful understanding of people. It is typically characterised by the use of experimental methods, such as measuring individuals on a scale, or carrying out controlled studies where variables can be isolated, in order to uncover universal laws that can be applied to everyone. Taking a nomothetic approach involves categorising people in order to describe or uncover the causes of common behaviours, such as sociability or generosity.

This approach has been employed by cognitive psychologists such as Raymond Cattell and Hans Eysenck, both of whom believe that the basic core of human personality is made up of a number of traits or dimensions. As a well-known example, Eysenck put forward introversion/extroversion as a universal personality dimension that can be employed to describe and measure part of any individual’s personality in varying degrees.

## **C. Conclusions**

Based on the two discussions of personality above, it can be concluded that understanding personality development is an important thing for everyone, especially both for parents and teachers. For parents, they have to emphasize on stage 1 to 5, and, for the teachers, they should pay attention on stage 3 to 5. Personality as one of the areas studied in psycholinguistic not only affect learning, but also affect the lives of every human being in all aspects.

Personality also not stable. It can change because of some moderators, such as psychological characters, life events, and physical and mental health. Understanding personality measurement is also important for those who want to conduct research, particularly in considering which approach will be used based on the type of research.

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