

# EMPOWERED LEARNER: MATCHING STUDENT PERSONALITY WITH DIFFERENT LEARNING PREFERENCES

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to identify students' personality types with their learning preferences for different Pre- University programmes in Sunway College Johor Bahru. It is important to acknowledge students' learning preferences by using an effective teaching method in order to enhance students' learning curve. This paper will first identify the characteristics of students' personalities through the use of Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Thereafter, the common personality types among Pre-University students will be recognised to match their preferred learning style. Through a review of related studies, this paper aims to shed some light on matching students' personalities with their learning preferences so as to design a more effective teaching method.

Keywords: Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), personality types, learning preferences

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

As a result of the lack of understanding of the connection between teaching and learning in real settings, teachers who engage in inappropriate teaching methodologies are often ineffective in the teaching and learning process. Both teachers and students perceive the root cause in different paradigms. From the teachers' perspective, ineffectiveness is derived from the students' deficient learning abilities. Students are likely to be regarded as not doing their level best, or showing no aptitude in their study. In contrast, a lack of requisite teaching qualities may account for the failure. Teachers are often regarded as being unenthusiastic, or not employing the latest technology in their teaching methods.

However, educational researchers have shown that students are unique in their own ways, including the way they learn (Raven et al. 1993). Although students have the basic capability to learn, their learning capability is constrained by the same teaching method. Brown (2000) stated that students whose learning

styles are compatible with the teaching styles tend to retain information longer, apply it more effectively, learn more and have a more positive attitude in their study.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

At the beginning of semester 1 in the 2014 academic year, a total of 209 January 2014 intake students from Pre-University Programmes (Monash University Foundation Year, Cambridge GCE A-Levels and Australian Matriculation) participated in this study by taking the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) instruments. The MBTI test is a 72 item survey where by students were required to choose their appropriate response from the two responses given. Students completed the instrument online and a report for each student's MBTI profile was generated. There are sixteen possible personality types as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Myers Briggs Type Indicator

<b>ISTJ</b> Introversion Sensing Thinking Judging	<b>ISFJ</b> Introversion Sensing Feeling Judging	<b>INFJ</b> Introversion Intuitive Feeling Judging	<b>INTJ</b> Introversion Intuitive Thinking Judging
<b>ISTP</b> Introversion Sensing Thinking Perceiving	<b>ISFP</b> Introversion Sensing Feeling Perceiving	<b>INFP</b> Introversion Intuitive Feeling Perceiving	<b>INTP</b> Introversion Intuitive Thinking Perceiving
<b>ESTP</b> Extroversion Sensing Thinking Perceiving	<b>ESFP</b> Extroversion Sensing Feeling Perceiving	<b>ENFP</b> Extroversion Intuitive Feeling Perceiving	<b>ENTP</b> Extroversion Intuitive Thinking Perceiving
<b>ESTJ</b> Extroversion Sensing Thinking Judging	<b>ESFJ</b> Extroversion Sensing Feeling Judging	<b>ENFJ</b> Extroversion Intuitive Feeling Judging	<b>ENTJ</b> Extroversion Intuitive Thinking Judging

For the purpose of this study, the most common combination of personality was identified by combining the highest percentage of the two preferences from each of the dichotomous pairs as shown in Table 2.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The extroversion or introversion dimension explains how one deals with the world around them. The sensing and intuition dimension suggests how one takes in information and the ways that they become aware of things, people, events, or ideas. Thinking or feeling dimension provides insight into the ways people evaluate and come to conclusions about information while the judging or perceiving dimension suggests the type of life style and work habits people prefer

Table 2: 4 Dimensions of Dichotomous Pairs

Extroversion (E)	.....	Introversion (I)
Sensing (S)	.....	Intuition (N)
Thinking (T)	.....	Feeling (F)
Perceiving (P)	.....	Judging (J)

Then, the preferred learning and teaching styles were suggested to enable teachers to incorporate students' learning preferences into their teaching plan. This is to provide a more conducive learning environment to enhance students' learning curve.

The learning preferences of each of these personality dimensions are shown in Table 3. This table shows that each personality dimension are different in terms of their learning preferences.

Table 3: Learning Preferences based on Myers-Briggs Personality Types

<i>Extroversion</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Takes part in group activities such as cooperative learning group.</li> <li>- Learns or memorises by moving activities.</li> <li>- Have discussions, dialog and debate.</li> <li>- Reads orally.</li> </ul>	<i>Introversion</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does independent work.</li> <li>- Takes part in deductive learning.</li> <li>- Reads silently, listens to others and writing.</li> <li>- Observes reflectively.</li> </ul>
<i>Sensing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learns best with audio-visual materials (charts, graphs, diagrams, and flow chart).</li> <li>- Likes materials with real life example.</li> <li>- Prefers computer-assisted instructions and hands on activities.</li> <li>- Expects clear expectation and instruction.</li> <li>- Prefers step by step exposition.</li> </ul>	<i>Intuitive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- See the "whole" rather than in parts.</li> <li>- Likes impressions.</li> <li>- Prefers fast paced learning environment.</li> <li>- Carries out project creatively and innovatively (art projects, drawing, designing things).</li> <li>- Works well in self-instruction, both individually and with a group.</li> </ul>
<i>Thinking</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learns best with sequentially organized material, timelines and diagram.</li> <li>- Expects clear course and topic objectives that are precise and action-oriented.</li> <li>- Prefers lecture and assignments.</li> </ul>	<i>Feeling</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Works in team as to develop relationship.</li> <li>- Has interpersonal connection.</li> <li>- Learns by appreciation (teacher feedback &amp; person-to-person communication).</li> </ul>

<i>Judgment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prefers detailed outline.</li> <li>- Likes to plan in advance.</li> <li>- Prefers structured lesson.</li> <li>- Is decisive.</li> </ul>	<i>Perception</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is spontaneous.</li> <li>- Prefers more choices in task.</li> <li>- Is flexible.</li> </ul>

(Source: Adapted from Montgomery & Groat 1998)

### 3 FINDINGS

The representative personality for Cambridge GCE A-Levels students, is ISTJ. ISTJs are practical, realistic, matter-of-fact, traditional, and accountable. They are more comfortable staying alone and only interact with a selected group of close friends. Much of their energy is focused inward and they take in information that is real and tangible. Sensing types like concrete facts, organization and structure. They are good at memorization and are relatively conventional. They love to talk, participate, organize, and socialize as a means to process their thoughts and ideas.

ISTJs work best when they can work independently and given sufficient time for them to think. Discussion in a small group using case study can benefit them as they will be able to control their task directly. They are also concerned with their personal goals in the classroom, in which quizzes and tests can give them an indication of their progress. As for science students, laboratory reports and practical tests will be suitable to allow them to develop their thinking ability. ISTJs benefit from the use of colour images and video teaching where it will attract their attention and improve their learning ability. The use of rubrics will allow ISTJs to follow the lecture and assignments better to increase their understanding.

MUFY and AUSMAT's students are dominated by ESFJ. ESFJs lead with good communication skills and warmth to gain cooperation towards meeting their individual ideals. They are willing to accept responsibilities beyond the call of their duty. They prefer to know the expectation and to be provided with information and rely mainly on their senses to learn and to gather information. They genuinely care about people surrounding them and they often apply their value in solving problems.

ESFJs thrive when they are given time to think aloud, such as in classroom discussions, or when working with another student. They rely mainly on their five senses to learn and thus they need to see the practical application of any assignment given to them. Instructions in a given task to the ESFJ are expected to be clear and consistent. ESFJs genuinely care about pleasing their teachers and appreciate personal coaching and compliments. Therefore, regular feedback to ESFJs in their assignments and homework will enable them to improve their learning capabilities.

## 4 CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATIONS

It is important to bear in mind that everyone uses all eight preferences every day despite having more preferences for one of the four dimensions in the dichotomous preference scales. Therefore, educators can facilitate learning by using various types of teaching and learning techniques (Jessie et al. 2006). For instance, educators can deliver context and facts of a concept (S) by introducing abstracts and symbols (N), or to provide a lecture in a sensory rich context (S) in the “big picture” (N) context. For the reasoning function of feeling and thinking, educators can provide feedback to inform students with what they have accomplished (T) with an appreciative manner that acknowledges their efforts (F). When possible, students must be offered various types of learning opportunity that can motivate and enhance their learning progress.

## 5 FUTURE WORK

To verify the effectiveness of customizing the teaching method to students' personality types and their learning preferences, a sample of first semester students will be studied. They will be participate in this designed teaching method mid-way in their course. By comparing the feedback and academic performance before and after the implementation, the response of the students will be consolidated. The results were form a repository of the responses of different personality types aligned with different methods of teaching.

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