

Chapter - 1

Statement of Intent

Maqalana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University

Chapter 1

STATEMENT OF INTENT

1.0 Overview

The present chapter provides a broad outline of the main topic by discussing its background, key words, research methodology and such other aspects.

1.1 Background and Rationale of the Study

In the recent years necessity of developing CT skills and positive personality traits among students is considered as one of the main goals of higher education around the globe. In order to acquire this goal, many researchers and authors in the field of educational administration in different universities and colleges have been striving to develop plans and designing courses in CT skills and personality traits among the students. Regardless of formal plans and educational methods that have been designed so far to improve CT skills among students, there are little researches and studies about the traits and characteristics that help students acquire their objectives and goals. That is why acquiring some information on students' personality traits and characteristics is necessary to develop effective plans in order to evaluate these skills.

As a purposeful activity, CT influences all aspects of human life. Education is one of them and there is a great tendency to train people to become good critical thinkers. Hence, one of the most important goals of educational systems is developing learners' CT skills in order to figure out, analyzing and presupposition in arriving at scientific hypothesis for reasonable solution toward complex problem. By applying and conducting the CT skills, writing ability among students can substantially improve. Critical thinkers' feedback can be very fruitful to other learners in order to understand better and to make reasonable connection between different ideas, arrive at conclusions and finally successful international communication (Malmir & Shoorchech, 2012).

There are several studies which investigate relationship between personality traits, CT and learning. Hashemi & Ghanizade (2012) in critical discourse analysis and thinking research, study the effects of critical discourse analysis and thinking on students.

Shortly afterwards, Chan (2013) in CT and creativity in nursing, explores nursing student's perception towards CT and creativity. On the other hand, Wltink and Nelson

(2014) in relationship between personality traits and psychotic suggest that this relationship may partly account for higher level of depression in individual with certain personality traits. Mendolia and Walker (2014) also study the effect of personality traits on subject choice and performance in high school research.

In another study, Fahim and Azarniوشي (2011) tried to find whether there is any relationship between the CT ability of language learners and their performances by using rule-driven or discovery learning approaches to teach grammar. The results of their study showed that there was a positive correlation between the CT ability of the learners and their grammar test scores if the inductive teaching method is used. However, for the deductive teaching method, no specific relationship could be discovered between the CT ability of the learners and their grammar test scores.

Furthermore, Kamali and Fahim (2011) investigated the relationship between resilience, CT ability and reading comprehension of texts including unfamiliar vocabulary items. The conclusion showed that there is a significant relationship between CT ability, resilience, and L2 reading comprehension. Behdani (2009) also has done a research investigating the relationship between CT ability, autonomy, and reading comprehension of the Iranian EFL learners. The results displayed that a significant relationship between learners' autonomy and their performance on reading comprehension exists. In another study, the relationship between CT and lexical inference of EFL learners was examined by Mirzaie (2008). Here, the researcher found out a relationship between CT levels and lexical inference of learners.

In addition, Malmir and Shoorcheh (2012), Sanavi and Tarighat (2014) also conducted some researches in this area and they recognized the impact or any possible relationships between personality traits, CT and the other concepts and skills in TEFL.

Hence, it is obvious that the process of problem solving and using logical inquiry requires CT. based on this perspective, CT is a move from viewing learning as memorizing and repeating words to a constantly evolving process of discovering, questioning and formulating hypotheses (Pennycook, 1996). According to this significance, personality traits and CT training courses have been advertised as a boosting device to enhance language learning.

Therefore, this idea that improving CT and different aspects of personality traits may facilitate or frustrate the process of learning, motivated by individual difference in the

language learning in EFL/ESL classes on the one hand and the ideological conflict between psychologists and applied linguists on the other hand, the present study aims at investigating any relation between personality traits and CT on writing.

As there has not been any pertinent study to magnify the significance of relationships between personality traits and CT on writing, studies such as the present one are so essential. This study can theoretically enrich the findings in the applied linguistic as well as psycholinguistics. Furthermore, it can clarify the relation between psychology and language learning and teaching. The findings of the present study can also provide teachers and language centers with enough evidence to change or modify their outlook toward the role of personality factors and CT skill in language learning. In addition, the current study will be helpful for policy makers and syllables designers and based on the obtained result, they will encourage aspects of personality trait and CT that may have more effects on writing.

Finally, the standard plans to develop and to expand CT skills focus on teaching the skills of rationalization and reasoning. Some theorists in the field of education suggested that individual differences and personality traits lead to differences in the CT and writing skill. While considerable studies have investigated the correlation between different aspects of CT and personality traits on different skills, few studies investigated the correlation between personality traits and CT in writing. So, the present study is an attempt to fill the gap by examining the correlation between personality trait and CT on writing of EFL learners.

1.2 Definition of Key Terms

1.2.1 Personality Traits

Funder (1997) believes that Personality is made up of the characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviors that make a person unique. In addition to this, personality arises from within the individual and remains fairly consistent throughout life.

According to Carver and Sheier (2000) personality is “a dynamic organization of psychophysical systems that create a person’s characteristic patterns of behavior, thoughts, and feelings” (p. 5).

1.2.2 Critical Thinking

Many definitions of CT exist, and most of these involve an ability related to assessing, judging, or evaluating a given problem or topic, as well as evaluating your own reasoning.

Paul (1990) stressed that CT is “thinking about your thinking while you’re thinking in order to make your thinking better” (p. 91). He also emphasized the importance of thinking that entails self-improvement and the incorporation of standards for assessing thinking. Elder and Paul (2010) identified CT as “the process of analyzing and assessing thinking with a view to improving it” (p. 38).

1.3 Context of the study

The present study will be conducted among foreigner students from EFL countries at Aligarh Muslim University. AMU is one of the leading educational institutions in India which figure among top five (5) Indian higher education ranked nationally by *Indian Today* and internationally by *Times Higher Education*, UK. It is a central university with 13 Faculties, 107 Department of studies, 16 Centers, 2 Institutes, 2 Polytechnics and a Women's college. It attracts students from all the states of the country and foreign students, mainly from Asia and African countries,

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to provide an insight into relationship between CT and personality traits on writing ability of EFL learners at AMU. Being critical thinker is very imperative, because it may lead students to involve in discussion, ask more questions, better and faster decisions and finally take more benefits in a short time and limited number of sessions. Moreover, the critical thinkers’ feedback may have positive impact on the other students in order to take a more dynamic role in their writing. Therefore, this study is going to find out the relationship between personality traits and CT on writing of EFL learners. According to this goal, this study is going to have the following research objective:

1. To investigate variance in writing that can be explained by personality traits and to investigate the most effective aspect of personality trait on the students' writing.

2. To investigate variance in writing that can be explained by CT and to investigate the most effective aspect of CT on the students' writing.
3. To investigate the relationships between CT and personality traits.
4. To investigate relationship between learners' CT and their age.
5. To investigate relationship between learners' personality traits and their age.
6. To investigate differences in Aligarh Muslim University EFL learners' CT in terms of gender.
7. To investigate differences in Aligarh Muslim University EFL learners' personality traits in terms of gender.

1.5 Research Questions

This study has focused on nine main research questions:

1. How much of the variance in writing can be explained by personality traits? Which aspect of personality traits is more effective on the students writing?
2. How much of the variance in writing can be explained by CT? Which aspect of CT is more effective on the students writing?
3. Is there any significant relationship between learners' CT and their personality traits?
4. Is there any significant relationship between learners' CT and their age?
5. Is there any significant relationship between learners' personality trait and their age?
6. Is there any significant difference among Aligarh Muslim University EFL learners' CT in terms of gender?
7. Is there any significant difference among Aligarh Muslim university EFL learners' personality trait in terms of gender?

1.6 Research Hypothesis

Based on the above-mentioned research questions, the following null hypotheses have been formulated:

1. Variance in writing can't be explained by personality traits and there is no difference between aspects of personality traits on the students writing.

2. Variance in writing can't be explained by CT and there is no difference between aspects of CT on the students writing.
3. There is no significant relationship between learners' CT and their personality traits.
4. There is no significant relationship between learners' CT and their age.
5. There is no significant relationship between learners' personality traits and their age.
6. There is no significant difference among Aligarh Muslim University EFL learners' CT in terms of gender.
7. There is no significant difference among Aligarh Muslim university EFL learners' personality traits in terms of gender.

1.7 Methodology

1.7.1 Design of the Study

The design of the current research is correlational one. This study is a primary research because the data will be derived from primary sources (EFL Students at AMU). It can involve questionnaires, surveys or interviews with individuals or small groups. Among types of research (qualitative and quantitative), this research is quantitative as the research questions is derived deductively. The researcher will start investigation by posing some hypotheses, and numerical indices that derived from the utilized tests which will be used through statistical analysis to test the hypotheses. This study will involve two independent variables including personality trait and CT. The dependent variable of the study is writing.

1.7.2 Participants

The population of the present study will include students who are learning English at Aligarh Muslim University as foreigner students from EFL countries. This study will comprise of two phases including the validation of questionnaires (pilot study) and the main survey. Each of these phases will have its own participants with their distinct characteristics. In order to clearly show who will participate in each phase, the following subsections are provided.

1.7.2.1 Participants and Sampling for the validation Phase (Pilot Study)

The participants for the validation phase will be Aligarh Muslim university EFL learners from two language proficiency levels, different ages, both genders, and various educational backgrounds. The respondents to the personality trait questionnaire will include EFL learners for reliability estimation, and the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Moreover, the respondents to the critical thinking questionnaire will include EFL learners for these analyses.

1.7.2.2 Participants and Sampling for the main Survey Phase

For the second phase of this study, convenience sampling is going to be employed. The participants for this part will be EFL students from Aligarh Muslim University from different age groups, genders, language proficiency levels, and countries holding different academic degrees. The reason for doing so is to accomplish diversity and hence generalizability of the findings.

1.7.3 Instruments

This study is going to use two questionnaires and a writing test: one questionnaire on CT and the other one big five factor personality traits. After ten days interval, the researcher will administer a writing test to find whether there is any correlation between personality traits, CT and students'.

1.7.3.1 Personality Trait Questionnaire

In this study a *Personality trait questioner* developed by Goldberg (1992) will be used. This questionnaire includes 10 items on conscientiousness, 10 items on extroversion, 10 items on agreeableness, 10 items on neuroticism, and 10 items on openness to experience.

1.7.3.2 Critical Thinking Questionnaire

In this study Peter Honey's (2004) CT questionnaire will be used. This questionnaire includes 30 items to evaluate the skills of analysis, inference, evaluation and reasoning.

1.7.3.3 Writing Test

In this study researcher is going to use a writing test (writing on a topic) to measure the students writing skill.

1.7.4 Procedure

1.7.4.1 Data Collection

This study as discussed above, is a two-phase research with validation of the questionnaires as the first phase, followed by the main survey as the second phase.

1.7.4.2 Discussion and Interpretation of the Study/ Analysis

After the data collection, the data will be coded and entered into the SPSS software (version 24) and Amos software (version 24). Data analysis, similar to the data collection, will be executed differently for the two distinct interrelated phases. The following two subsections demonstrate the data analysis procedure for the two phases of the current study.

Data analysis for the first phase of this research will include Cronbach's Alpha (for reliability and item consistency), and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). In the present thesis, in order to validate critical thinking and personality trait questionnaires, CFA is going to utilize through AMOS software and to examine the reliability of the scales, Cronbach's alpha will be used.

To put it in a nutshell, for the final administration of the questionnaire as the second phase, different statistical methods are going to be used based on the research questions which have raised at the beginning part of this chapter. The main statistical methods will be path analysis, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and independent sample t-test.

In statistics, path analysis is going to be used to describe the directed dependencies among a set of variables. It can be viewed as a special case of structural equation modeling (SEM) in which only single indicators are employed for each of the variables in the causal model. That is, path analysis is SEM with a structural model, but no measurement model. Other terms will be used to refer to path analysis and include causal modeling, analysis of covariance structures, and latent variable models. To answer the third and fourth research questions, Path analysis will be utilized. In the present thesis to find possible relationship between learners' critical thinking, personality trait, writing score and their age, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is going to be used.

1.8 The Significant Scope of Study

This study is significant for three reasons. First, it is going to validate two scales (critical thinking and personality trait) at Aligarh Muslim University through confirmatory factor analysis. The results of CFA will indicate valid number of item in critical thinking scale and personality trait scale. Hence, these two newly validated questionnaires may be applied in diverse area of research to fill the gaps in the area of English language teaching and learning. Moreover, numerous researches could be conducted with this questionnaire to discover their association with diverse pedagogical, psychological, and sociocultural constructs.

Second, the present thesis is going to propose two new models of the relationship between critical thinking, personality trait, and writing scores. To the researchers' best knowledge, no empirical study to date has examined these variables within a single framework. The study might be a useful and practical guide for language teachers and their understanding of teaching critical thinking and personality trait.

Finally, the dependent variable of this study is writing skill. Of all language skills, writing is commonly rated as the most demanding and the most difficult to master. Educators and language art teachers in America complain that their students "have limited writing abilities and struggle to write compositions that convey their thoughts and ideas" (Unzueta, 2009: p.1). If this is the case with native speakers of English, one could easily imagine how nonnative speakers of this language would suffer when it comes to learning this skill. A lot has been said and done on the area of learners' achievement, their critical thinking ability and personality trait in language education, but not as much have been carried out about writing skill with these concepts. This thesis will focus on writing. Bearing in mind the importance of writing for such students and the possibility of impacts of these two important variables to teach this vital language skill, the researcher becomes interested in finding out whether these concepts would have any effect in improving the writing ability of EFL learners at AMU.

1.9 Outline and Organization of the Study

This thesis is going to be organized into the following five chapters:

Chapter 1: Statement of Intent

As discussed so far, this section provides background and rational, key words, aim and objectives, research question and such other aspects pertaining to the topic.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature:

This chapter will include an overview of literature available on personality traits, CT and writing.

Chapter 3: Personality Traits, Critical Thinking And Writing: A Theoretical Overview

This chapter will discuss theoretical overview on Personality Traits, CT and writing. It is organized into three major parts: 1) Personality Traits, 2) CT, and 3) Writing. The first part will contain definitions of personality traits, its measurement and big five personality traits scales, the second part will include the nature of thinking, definitions of CT and background of CT and finally in third part of this chapter theoretical overview on writing will be discussed.

Chapter 4: Relationship between Personality Traits, CT and Writing of EFL Learners: A Case Study at AMU

This chapter will discuss the design of the study, data collection process, data analysis and interpret. Furthermore, in this chapter the sample size, participants, setting along with the tests or questionnaires employed in the study will be discussed. Finally in this chapter the results of the data analysis obtained through some statistical procedures will be discussed.

Chapter 5: Conclusion, Limitation, Suggestion, Recommendation and Implication

This chapter will provide conclusions, discusses the results and analyzes the findings. In addition, implications and applications of the research in educational contexts as well as new insights into areas where further research can be carried out, will be explained.

1.10 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher present an outline of the current study. In first part of chapter researcher discussed background and rational, definition of key terms. Then in other parts of the chapter, researcher discusses statement of the problem, research methodology and significant scope of study. The next chapter will focus on the review of the literature on the empirical and theoretical issues about the variables under investigation.

References:

- Behdani Sheikhy, R. (2009). *The relationship between autonomy, critical thinking ability, and reading comprehension of the Iranian EFL learners* (Unpublished master's thesis). Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Campus, Tehran, Iran.
- Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (2000). *Perspectives on personality* (4th Ed.) Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Chan, Z. C. (2013). Critical thinking and creativity in nursing: Learners' perspectives. *Nurse Education Today*, 33(5), 558-563.
- Chance, P. (1986). *Thinking in the classroom: A survey of programs*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Elder, L., & Paul, R. (2010). Critical thinking: Competency standards essential for the cultivation of intellectual skills, part 1. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 34(2), 38-39.
- Fahim, M., & Azarniوشي, S. (2011). The relationship between critical thinking and deductive/inductive teaching of grammar to Iranian EFL learners. *The Iranian EFL Journal*, 7(2), 180-195.
- Funder, D.C. (1997). *The personality puzzle*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Hashemi, M. R., & Ghanizadeh, A. (2012). Critical discourse analysis and critical thinking: An experimental study in an EFL context. *System*, 40(1), 37-47.
- Kamali, Z., & Fahim, M. (2011). The relationship between critical thinking ability of Iranian EFL learners and their resilience level facing unfamiliar vocabulary items in reading. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2(1), 104-111.
- Malmir, A., & Shoorcheh, S. (2012). An investigation of the impact of teaching critical thinking on Iranian EFL learners' speaking skill. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 3(40), 608-617.
- Mendolia, S., & Walker, I. (2014). The effect of personality traits on subject choice and performance in high school: Evidence from an English cohort. *Economics of Education Review*, 43, 47-65.
- Mirzaie, Z. (2008). *The relationship between critical thinking and lexical inferences of Iranian EFL learners* (Unpublished master's thesis). Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Campus, Tehran, Iran.

Paul, R. (1990). In A. J. A. Binker (Ed.), *Critical thinking: What every person needs to survive in a rapidly changing world*. Rohnert Park, CA: Center for Critical Thinking and Moral Critique.

Pennycook, A. (1996). Borrowing others' words: Text, ownership, memory, and plagiarism. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30, 589-618.

Rivers, W. (1981). *Teaching foreign language skills*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University

Chapter - 2

Review of Literature

Mawlana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University