PERSONALITY TRAITS AND PREFERENCES TOWARDS AUTONOMY ENHANCING CLASSES

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Abstract

The benefits of fostering students` autonomy have been widely researched and acknowledged. However, on the basis of causality orientations concept formulated by E. Deci and R. Ryan it may be assumed that people differ in their attitudes towards events demanding independent decisions. Moreover, there seems to be scarcity of empirical evidence concerning individual differences among learners in terms of their preference of autonomy enhancing classes.

Therefore the research was conducted to answer three following questions: What is the distribution of students` declared choices between classes differing in the level of autonomous decisions that will be demanded of learners? How do students justify their choice among classes which vary in terms of the level of learners` autonomy involved? Are students` preferences towards fostering autonomous learning related to their personality traits?

To answer the questions NEO-FFI by P. Costa and R. McCrae was used as well as three short descriptions of classes. The first class demanding low level of students` autonomy consisted of presentation and obligatory exercises prepared solely by a teacher. The second class involved students` choice from the materials, questions and exercises prepared by a teacher, with discussion following learners` independent work. The third class involved a project which involved students` independent decisions concerning topic, performance and reflective evaluation of the results. Data were gathered from 117 Polish university students. The practical conclusions for autonomy – fostering teaching methodology will be drawn.

Key words: personality traits, fostering learner autonomy