



## Do Personality Traits Matter in Preferences of Translation Strategies?

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### ABSTRACT

Translation is closely related to languages, linguistics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, culture etc. and because of these relations, there are also a lot of theories which give importance either to source language or target language. Linguistic and other features of the source and target texts have been examined for years. But translator is an important element with an important role in translation process as well, and the influence of translators' personality traits on their translation has been emphasized. Therefore, the aim of the current study is to investigate whether there are relations between translators' personality characters and their translation strategy preferences. The BFI Test (Big Five-Factor Inventory) is administered to 28 English Translation and Interpreting students at Cappadocia University to determine the personality traits of the participants. Then they are asked to choose one of the suggested translations in accordance with the translation model. The data are analyzed through SPSS (v. 22). The findings indicate that there are significant relationships between personality traits of participants and their use of translation strategies. According to results, agreeableness personality trait has a significant relationship with borrowing strategy, openness and neuroticism have significant relationships with modulation strategy, and conscientiousness has a significant relationship with adaptation strategy. Only extraversion does not correlate significantly with any of the strategies.

### KEYWORDS

Personality traits; translation studies; translation strategies

## INTRODUCTION

Translation studies have kept features of source and target languages, linguistics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, culture etc. in the center. There have been many translation theories; some of them regard source texts as starting point and some give importance to target texts, that's to say to texts produced in the target language by the translators. Translation process also includes translators who produce the target texts. Translators may apply many methods to translate different texts. This means that translators approach a text with appropriate methods and have the best translation at the end. The skills, knowledge and experience of the translator have important roles in the end product. However, it may be important to take the role and personality traits of translators. It can be suggested that the investigations on relationships between the personality traits of translators and their individual preferences in translation have been very recent. According to Reiss (2000), a translator's personality type may affect her/his translation performance. For this reason, these subjective differences in personality traits result in various TL texts of the same SL texts. And again, according to Wuilmart (2007), besides their approaches and methods in translation, translators' preferences are affected by their personality traits as well. Hubscher-Davidson (2007) investigates the relationships between their performance and translators' personality traits and the results show that the personality traits of translators affect their behavior and as a result of this, their translations are also influenced by their personalities. In accordance with these developments, it may be important to investigate the relationships between personality traits of translators and their translation strategy preferences, because it seems obvious that personality traits are important in translation and translators' decision in their approaches to SL texts. Therefore, this study investigates the relationships between translators' personality traits and their strategy-use preferences.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Costa et al. (1995) personality characterizes the thinking, acting, and feeling of an individual in an enduring style. In old times personalities were classified according to the humours but later this evolved into adjectives which described personality traits of the people. The 1960s witnessed the emergence of five dimensions of personality which was called the Big Five. End of 1980s and 1990s witnessed the intense research on the Big Five which has been accepted and used as an important personality trait model to distinguish the dimensions of human personality; these are neuroticism, agreeableness, extraversion, openness, and conscientiousness (John et al., 1991). It has been proved that professional performances of people are influenced by their personalities (Avunduk, 2021; Barrick, 2005; Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick et al., 2001; Lounsbury et al., 2004; Ones et al., 2007; Rothstein & Goffin, 2006;). Personality traits are also important in education, in learning a foreign language, and they are important for various language skills (Başok & Sayer, 2020; Dewaele & Furnham, 1999; Gazioglu & Güner, 2021; Guerra et al. 2020; Patimo & Lucero, 2021; Vural, 2017). For example, the study

done by Vural (2019; 2020) indicates a significant relationship between personality traits and learners' foreign language speaking anxiety and self-efficacy.

Knowledge development may depend on personal varieties as well. Personality traits can be accepted as noncognitive individual differences, and in accordance with these big five personality traits are related to academic success (O'Connor & Paunonen, 2007). Besides, neuroticism and extroversion are strongly related to affect (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985; Costa & McCrae, 1992) and openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness are related to confidence and self-esteem (Watson & Clark, 1992).

Investigations on relationships between the personality traits and translators' performance have been new in the field. According to Reiss (2014), personality traits of translators are important during translation training, and each translator has different and personal ways and styles of translating. According to Wuilmart (2007), together with the elements which affect translator's decisions and preferences in his approach to the source language and source text and figuring out his methods of translation and the final text in target language, translator's personality traits can be among the other factors that influence translator's preferences. Translator's feelings and mood are directly related to his performance and the quality of the translated text.

A similar investigation was performed by Hubscher-Davidson (2007) about the performance and translator's personality. In this study she investigates the personality traits of the translators and how these traits may affect translators' decision-making process. According to the results, there are significant relations between translators' personality traits and their behaviors and decision making in translation.

Translators have different personality traits, and these traits may affect their decisions and behaviors in translating. Therefore, these individual differences may affect the translation process and their final products in target language are different from each other (Coba, 2007). For that reason, it may be suggested that the work of a translator is up to his personality traits and attitudes, and these personality traits may play a salient role in preferences, behaviors and success or failure of the translator in translation process.

### **Translation Procedures of Vinay and Darbelnet**

Two French scholars, Jean Paul Vinay and John Darbelnet investigated the relations between linguistics and translation in 1950s. However, their studies were accepted as comparative literature because translation studies were not considered as a field of science in those years. Actually, they tried to find the differences between languages to understand both languages better through translation, and for that reason the contrastive linguistics term can be applied to their work as well. In their book 'Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation' Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) mention about seven direct or oblique translation procedures or processes. Direct ones are literal translation, borrowing and calque and these can

be called as source-oriented procedures. And the oblique ones are transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation. These seven procedures or as the following:

- **Borrowing:** This is maintaining a word in source language (SL) in the target language (TL). This may happen when there is no existing term in the target language to fill a metalinguistic gap in it.
- **Calque:** Sometimes some expressions in source language are translated literally into target language. This is called calque.
- **Literal Translation:** This is translating word for word from source language to target language with proper grammatical and idiomatic equivalence.
- **Transposition:** In transposition, word type in source language is changed into another word type in target language, such as changing nouns into verbs without any semantic change.
- **Modulation:** According to Vinay and Darbelnet this procedure can be used when the translations from other procedures sound awkward. Modulation may help translator to keep the meaning and accuracy of the source language and to be natural.
- **Equivalence or idiomatic translation:** Here the equivalence means cultural equivalence. A situation is expressed by two different texts from two different languages.
- **Adaptation:** Sometimes a translation may sound strange and unfamiliar in target language. It is similar to equivalence, but the translation must be relevant and meaningful to the originals.

## METHODOLOGY

### Model of the Study

Since this study needs comparative and correlational analysis, quantitative research design features have been applied. Empirical statements and methods are used in data collection in quantitative research (Cohen et al., 2013), and numerical data and their generalization to clusters of people for a particular circumstance are important (Babbie, 2015). Besides, the obtained data are analyzed in a correlational way; that is the correlation between translations strategies and participants personality traits. Therefore, relationships between more than two variables are investigated and according to the results, predictions are made to understand those relationships (Johnson & Christensen, 2004).

### The Sample

A sample can be accepted as a small unit of a population to illustrate the general situation of the participants. The participants of the current study were chosen according to their availability, accessibility, and proximity during the application of questionnaire; for that reason, the current sampling can be called as convenience sampling (Gay et al., 2011). The participants are 28 Translation-Interpreting Department sophomore and junior students. 22 of them are females and 6 are males from Cappadocia University in Turkey. They have already been acquainted with models and theories of translation during their studies. There was no

intervention during the current research and the participants were assessed during Fall 2021 semester. Since all the questions in the questionnaire are answered fully and acceptably, the final n-size is 28.

### **Research Instruments**

#### ***Instrument to Collect Data on Personality***

The data are generated from the Big Five Inventory; Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness construct the big five personality traits. The participants answer the BFI questionnaire first. This Big Five Inventory has 44 short-phrase items to assess the personality traits of individuals (John et al., 1991; John & Srivastava, 1999; Benet-Martínez & John, 1998; John et al., 2008). It has a five-step scale from 1 'disagree strongly' to 5 'agree strongly'. It has an average above .83 reliability ranging from .79 to .88. the validity correlations are .88 for Extraversion; .81 for Openness; .84 for Neuroticism; .79 for Agreeableness and .47 for Conscientiousness, and it has totally an average of .82 (Rammstedt & John, 2005; 2007). For the current study the internal reliability of BFI is determined separately, and Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is calculated for each personality trait with the results of .62 for Agreeableness, .68 for Openness, .63 for Extraversion, .67 for Conscientiousness, and .62 for Neuroticism; and the average is .65. These results are enough for the current study to have a good internal consistency.

#### ***Instrument to Collect Data on Translation***

Seven strategies introduced by Vinay and Darblenet (1995) are taken into consideration to design to translate the source text sentences in the study. For the model of Vinay and Darblenet 7 sentences in Turkish (1 sentence for each of the translation strategies) and their English translations are prepared. Here 2 translated texts are assigned for every sentence, and totally there are 14 translated texts. Each strategy of Vinay and Darblenet's model is applied to only one translation, and the other is translated without any strategy. In other words, for each sentence two translations are given, one according to the related strategy and the other without any strategy. Later they are asked to choose one of the two translations to determine their translation strategies preferences. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is calculated for Vinay and Darblenet's model in this study is 0.61. The participants are expected to have answered the questions accurately.

### **Data Collection**

The current study is quantitative study, and the data are collected through structured questionnaires. The questionnaires of current study contain dependent-independent variables such as personality traits and translation strategies. At the beginning of every questionnaire the aim and the content are explained for the participants. The survey is conducted by the researcher of the current study himself. Data are collected from sophomore and junior students attending Translation-Interpreting Department at Cappadocia University in Turkey. The current study does not require any data manipulations or experiment, and therefore, just two different

questionnaires are applied. There was no intervention during the current research and the participants were assessed during Fall 2021 semester. Since all the questions in the questionnaire are answered fully and acceptably, the final n-size is 28.

### **Data analysis**

Data are collected through two inventories in two stages. First the participants give their responses to the Big Five Inventory in order to determine their personality traits. Then at the second stage, they are asked to choose one of the two English translations of a Turkish sentence; here, one out of the two translations is in accordance with a strategy of translation.

In the current study, participants are asked to indicate their agreement levels by the help of some statements, and this is called as interval scale (Pfeiffer et al., 2011). Interval scale is based on one questionnaire with 5 categories of Likert scale ranging from 1 (strong disagreement) to 5 (strong agreement) and 2, 3 and 4 indicating intermediate judgments. Accordingly, there is no right or wrong answer, and participants choose the number reflecting their thoughts best at one point of time; from this point of view, the current study can be accepted as a cross-sectional study as well. Then, the data are analyzed using the Statistic Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The significant correlations or differences among variables are investigated through inferential statistics (correlation). And descriptive (means and standard deviations) statistics is applied to determine the personality traits of the participants.

First, the data quality and their accordance with the objectives are ensured through checking the questionnaires for any wrong sequences and any missing pages. Then, to increase the precision and accuracy and avoid illegible, insufficient, and uncertain responses from the questionnaires, data editing is applied (Naresh, 2019). It is seen that all questionnaires are completed properly and there is no incomplete information and parts in them, and therefore, all papers of 28 participants are included in the analysis. After this, data coding is performed, and then, coded data are transferred to the computer before the data analysis.

After calculating the mean scores, the internal consistencies of the questionnaires are examined through calculation of Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) test is not applied to examine the normality because the sample number is below 100. Instead, the values of skewness and kurtosis are calculated since the sample number is below 50. According to the results, the z value is between -1.96 and +1.96; therefore, it is accepted that the data are distributed normally (Field, 2018).

Then, to find out any relationships between personality traits and translation strategies, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is computed because it is a tool to investigate the degree of associations between variables (Naresh, 2019).

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Results

Descriptive statistics is applied to the BFI so that the personality traits of the participants are determined. In the following table the minimums, maximums, means and standard deviations of personality traits of the participants can be found:

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics of Personality Traits of the Participants

	n	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Agreeableness	28	1.56	5.00	3.67	.56
Openness	28	1.90	5.00	3.65	.55
Conscientiousness	28	1.67	5.00	3.58	.59
Extraversion	28	1.10	5.00	3.49	.64
Neuroticism	28	1.00	4.88	2.48	.62
Total	28				

In the table above the mean scores of the BFI of participants can be seen. According to the analysis of their answers the BFI shows that the mean scores are Agreeableness (M = 3.67), Openness (M = 3.65), Conscientiousness (M = 3.58), Extraversion (M = 3.49) and Neuroticism (M = 2.48). this table indicates that all participants have all the five personality traits. Most of them are agreeable and the least are neurotics.

### Hypothesis Testing Results

Then, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient between the personality traits of the participants and their Vinay and Darblenet's Model translation strategy preferences is calculated. Table 2 consists of these results below:

**Table 2.** Correlations between the personality traits and translation strategy preferences

Variables	M	SD	1-B	2-C	3-L	4-T	5-M	6-E	7-A
Agreeableness <sup>a</sup>	3.67	.56	**0.02	0.57	0.68	0.62	0.30	0.84	
0.35									
Openness <sup>a</sup>	3.65	.55	0.93	0.31	0.43	0.58	** 0.03		0.97
0.77									
Conscientiousness <sup>a</sup>	3.58	.59	0.42	0.56	0.17	0.43	0.19	0.27	
**0.01									
Extraversion <sup>a</sup>	3.49	.64	0.61	0.24	0.61	0.91	0.38	0.26	0.43
Neuroticism <sup>a</sup>	2.48	.62	0.11	0.83	0.74	0.59	**0.04	0.43	0.69

Note: a = 5-point Likert scale

\*\*  $p < .05$

This table shows the preferences of the participants according to Vinay and Darblenet's translation strategies. The participants should choose one translation of the two they are offered. Their answers and personality traits, i.e. the two variables, are correlated and computed.

According to the results, most of the variables are over .05, and this means that there is no significant correlation between these variables, and it is not possible to make any prediction about most variables. However, a few significant relations exist between the variables; the most significant predictors of preference strategies for the participants are Agreeableness (Beta = .02,  $p < .05$ ) for Borrowing strategy, Openness (Beta = .04,  $p < .05$ ) for Modulation strategy, Conscientiousness (Beta = .01,  $p < .05$ ) for Adaptation strategy and Neuroticism (Beta = .04,  $p < .05$ ) for Modulation strategy. These four personality traits correlate with three strategies significantly and predict them, but Extraversion does not correlate significantly with any of the strategies. Besides, interestingly Openness and Neuroticism correlate and predict the same Modulation strategy according to the results.

## DISCUSSION

There have been some studies about the relationships between translators' personality traits and translation performances (Hubscher-Davidson, 2009; Rammstedt et al., 2016). However, the aim of the current study is to find out the relationships between translators' personality traits of the participants and their strategy use preferences. These strategies are taken from Vinay and Darblenet's model. The results show that some of the personality traits, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism have significant relations with some of the participants' strategy preferences, borrowing, modulation, adaptation, and modulation respectively. However, most personality traits do not predict the preference strategies. These significant relationships indicate that more agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism may mean more preferences of borrowing, modulation, adaptation strategies. In other words, all statistically significant correlational coefficients of the independent variables, i.e. personality traits, are positive and they are positively correlated with the dependent variables i.e. strategy preferences. This means that if there is a positive change in the independent variable, the dependent variable will change positively as well. According to the current study, when agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism increase, the translators are more inclined to use borrowing, modulation, adaptation strategies in their translating processes.

Conscientiousness personality trait is closely associated with discipline, moral values and ethical principles, and conscientious people can cope with problems easily, fulfill their duties and think a lot carrying out (Neuman & Wright, 1999). In the current study, conscientiousness is positively correlated with adaptation strategy. Sometimes one phenomenon in source

language (SL) cannot be found in target language (TL) because of the cultural differences between two societies. In such cases adaptation can be applied to cultural changes because the adaptation is target oriented strategy. This positive relation between the conscientiousness and adaptation can be explained by the fact that conscientious people are eager to ponder a lot before translating, and faithful to ethical values. Therefore, when they feel that they cannot render the meaning in SL properly to TL, that there can be ambiguity in translation, they can apply adaptation strategy to carry the message in SL to TL in a familiar cultural context.

Vulnerability, self-consciousness, depression, impulsiveness, angry hostility, and anxiety are typical features of neuroticism (Barrick & Mount, 1991). According to Bruck and Allen (2003) being angry, tense, full of anxiety, depression, and worry, suffering from stress and negative emotions are among the behavior pathologies of neurotic individuals (Bruck and Allen, 2003). Since the neuroticism causes unfavorable feelings under negative and tense conditions, the performances of sign language interpreters are affected negatively during their interpretation processes by neuroticism (Bontempo et al., 2014). In the current study, neuroticism trait is positively correlated with modulation strategy. This means higher neuroticism predicts more modulation strategy in translation process. The meaning and accuracy of the source language can be saved and so, the translator can be more natural in modulation. Vinay and Darblenet (1995) suggest that modulation is “a touchstone of a good translator” (p. 246) where the viewpoint, perspective, and category of thought can diversify.

Modulation is another target-oriented strategy of Vinay and Darblenet and it requires a translation to be coherent and accepted in target language and its culture. Translators with high neuroticism may feel anxiety about not to be able to produce an acceptable and common translation in TL, and this reason may cause their applying the modulation strategy in translation process. Besides, nervousness and emotional consistency are common characteristics of neuroticism (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975). While translating something, high neuroticism can trigger the emotions of the translator, and can urge her/him to be more fluent and natural in her/his translation in order to be read easily and naturally by the target language readers. This can be another reason for a translator to apply modulation strategy as well.

The personality trait openness is closely related with open-mindedness, curiosity for knowledge, values, aesthetics, fantasy, and learning new things (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Individuals with high level of openness have big originality, humor, and imagination (Friedman & Schustack, 1999). In the current study, openness trait is positively correlated with modulation strategy together with neuroticism. This significant correlation between the openness and the translation strategy of modulation also means higher openness predicts higher modulation strategy in translation process. Since modulation is another target-oriented strategy, and in modulation it is important for a translation to be coherent and accepted in target language and its culture, and translators with this personality trait are open to new experiences, they often do not prefer the primary version of a translation and look for alternative translation versions. In other words, it can be suggested that translators with higher openness diversify viewpoint,

perspective, and cognitive category of the source language while translating into target language. As mentioned above other features of this personality trait are open-mindedness, curiosity for knowledge and values. Therefore, translators with high openness may tend to find out new target equivalents from different viewpoint, perspectives, and cognitive categories. Besides, people with openness trait are tolerant, initiative, independent and biased to diversity to monotype (McCrae & Costa, 1997). Therefore, it can also be suggested that translators with higher openness may tend to find more unfamiliar equivalents of the expressions in SL in order to achieve variety and different perspectives for target readers. And also, in previous investigations the personality trait openness has a positive relationship with interpretation competence (Bontempo et al., 2014; Rammstedt et al., 2016).

However, according to the results, no significant relationship between extraversion and translation strategies of Vinay and Darblenet is determined. Generally, extraversion is associated with being energetic and productive in activities of foreign language learning (Ehrman, 2008). However, this factor cannot be applied to translation strategy preferences, and most probably, there are other factors than personality traits for them to affect their strategies in translation.

### **CONCLUSION**

Outcomes such as job performance, and academic success are closely related to personality traits and some of these outcomes can be predicted by personality traits (John & Srivastava, 1999). According to the findings of the current study, there are significant relationships between agreeableness and participants' borrowing strategy preferences, openness for participants' modulation strategy preferences, conscientiousness for participants' adaptation strategy preferences, and neuroticism for participants' modulation strategy preferences. However, there is no significant relationship between extraversion and any of the translation strategies of Vinay and Darblenet. In other words, extraversion does not predict any translation strategies.

The thinking, acting, and feeling of an individual in an enduring style are characterized as personality; the results of the current study may prove this, because different individuals with different personality traits prefer different translation strategies. This study is in accordance with the previous studies where professional performances of people are influenced by their personalities.

The results of the current study also indicate that each translator has different and personal ways and styles of translating. These results are also aligned with the results of Reiss (2000) who indicates that personality traits of translators are important during translation training. The current study also shows that translator's feelings and mood are directly related to his performance and the quality of the translated text, and this is in accordance with Wuilmart's (2007) findings that translator's personality traits can be among the other factors that influence translator's preferences in target language.

The findings of the current study agree with Hubscher-Davidson' (2007) finding that there are significant relations between translators' personality traits and their behaviors and decision making in translation process. And according to the results of the current study it can be suggested that preferences, behaviors and success or failure of the translator in translation process are closely related with their personality traits. This finding is also in accordance with the Coba's (2007) finding that the translation process and the final products in target language may be affected by individual differences of the translators.

As for pedagogical implications the results show that there are strong personality elements affecting the translation and strategy preferences. Administrators, curriculum developers, material designers, and trainers of translation should take the personality traits of their students into consideration during translation education. These individual peculiarities and characteristics can be paid special attention during teaching and training period. Besides, the current study is limited to a group of translation students. Future investigations can be performed with different prospective translator groups with larger sample sizes.

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