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THE INFLUENCE OF THE TEACHER'S PERSONALITY ON LEARNERS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Procesy nauczania i uczenia się języków obcych przebiegają w klasach będących bardzo specyficznymi środowiskami społecznymi. Role uczestników interakcji konwersacyjnych są ściśle określone, a nauczyciel ponosi odpowiedzialność za wszystko, co się dzieje podczas lekcji. Jego zachowanie i cechy osobowościowe wpływają na klasową atmosferę emocjonalną oraz relacje interpersonalne. Sukcesy uczniów i ich podejście do nauki języka obcego są ściśle związane z działaniami nauczyciela.

Niniejszy artykuł próbuje pokazać związek pomiędzy osobowością nauczyciela a płynnością językową w wypowiedziach ustnych uczniów. Przeprowadzona została roczna obserwacja trzech nauczycielek języka angielskiego. Pomimo stosowania podobnych form interakcji, klimat emocjonalny w ich klasach bardzo się różnił, co wpływało na płynność językową i kreatywność uczniów.

The classroom provides a very specific setting in which the teachers' and learners' roles are strictly specified. Since the teacher plays the dominant professional role and is responsible for everything that takes place during lessons both pedagogically and organisationally, his personality is of great bearing. It influences the classroom emotional climate, teacher-student relationships and the way in which interaction patterns are used. It is also connected with students' positive and negative attitudes towards learning, their perception of the learning environment and the ultimate success.

Personality can be defined as "a person's unique pattern of thoughts, feelings and behaviours that persists over time and situation". It encompasses different ways of conduct, attitudes, motives, tendencies, outlooks

and emotions[1]. Some psychologists, called *trait theorists*, describe personality in terms of traits that are "relatively permanent and consistent dispositions to behave in characteristic ways"[2].

The premise of this study holds that the teacher's personality is one of the main factors that affect the development of L2 learners' ability to convey oral messages successfully and fluently. After providing a brief overview of some classifications of personality types based on motives and traits, the paper presents personality profiles of three female secondary school teachers and shows how these teachers influence the learning environments and learner development.

1. Personality types and motives

Personality encompasses motives that activate any behaviour. A motive "is an inner directing force – a need or want – that arouses the organism" and results in goal-oriented actions[3]. Since in the classroom the teacher is striving to achieve a specific purpose, which involves the enhancement of learner development, motives play a crucial role. The stimuli that trigger a teacher's motive are his ambitions and aspirations as well as cues from the environment such as the expectations of school authorities, students and parents. Consequently, because of certain social norms, a teacher's conduct may be different inside and outside the classroom.

The classroom emotional climate and teacher-student relationships are influenced by teachers' learned motives such as aggression and a need for affiliation, achievement and power. Morris claims that teaching is among the careers chosen by students "who score high on need for power"[4]. They want to control and influence other people. Additionally, many teachers feel a desire to excel and be well-regarded by school authorities. Thus, their behaviour is motivated by the need for achievement. All human beings possess a need for affiliation as they want to be with other people, to cooperate and to establish some bonds with them. Nonetheless, they vary in their need for associating with others[5].

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[1] Morris, Charles. G. Psychology. An Introduction. New Jersey: Prentice Hall (sixth edition). 1988. S. 458.

[2] Tamże. S. 494.

[3] Morris, C. G. Psychology. S. 414

[4] Tamże. S. 434.

[5] Tamże. S. 435.

The affiliation motive in teacher-learner relationships is present to various degrees in different classrooms. Many teachers do not feel the need to have close contacts with their students or, as Wright observes, affiliative behaviour may not be approved by parents or school administrators, which can make the teacher behave in a dominant and authoritarian way[6].

The motives of aggression and the need for power, affiliation and achievement are associated with the following personality types described by Wright[7]:

> authoritarian - likes authority and exercising power,
> affiliative - enjoys forming close relationships with others,
> conformist - wants to think and act in the same way as others do,
> aggressive - tends to behave belligerently in order to achieve aims,
> co-operative - likes working closely with others in performing tasks,
> achiever - wants to gain status, power and success.

In the case of purely authoritarian teachers, the power motive takes the form of *egoistic dominance*[8]. Authority is used to control learners' attitudes and emotions. Additionally, egoistic dominance can manifest itself in being aggressive. On the other hand, teachers who seek power can represent *responsible nurturance*. They give help and support and use dominance for the sake of others[9]. Thus, they feel quite a strong need for affiliation.

The motive to associate with other people drives affiliative, conformist and co-operative personality types. Wright points out that a teacher with the affiliative personality type may try to create a warm and supportive atmosphere with close relations between members of the given group[10].

2. Personality and individual traits

Trait psychologists deal with individual descriptive qualities that constitute personality. R. Catell is one of the most influential trait theorists. He identified sixteen personality dimensions: *outgoing/reserved, more intelligent/less intelligent, stable/ emotionally changeable, assertive/humble, happy-go-lucky/sober, conscientious/expedient, venturesome/shy, tender-minded/tough-minded,*

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[6] Wright, Tony. Roles of Teachers and Learners. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1987. S. 26.

[7] Tamże. S. 26.

[8] Winter, David. G. The power motive in women and men. In: Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 54 (1988). S. 510–519.

[9] Tamże.

[10] Wright, T. Roles of Teachers and Learners. S. 26.

suspicious/trusting,   imaginative/practical,   shrewd/forthright,   apprehensive/placid,
experimenting/conservative, self-sufficient/group-tied, controlled/casual and *tense/relaxed*[11].
These are *surface traits* "because they are visible in the person's words or
deeds"[12].

Another psychologist, H. J. Eysenck claimed that people's personalities
can be described with only three dimensions: *introversion/extraversion*
(withdrawn versus outgoing), *neuroticism* (even-tempered versus moody,
anxious and obsessive) and *psychoticism* (insensitive versus empathetic)[13].

Other trait theorists, such as Costa and McCrae, Digman and Inouye,
and Zukerman, Kuhlman and Camac argue that we can describe personality
according to five factors: extroversion, neuroticism (emotionality),
agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience[14].

3. Description of the research

The present study aims to confirm the hypothesis that the teacher's
personality is one of the main factors that affects L2 learners' gains in oral
fluency. The research involved live observation of three secondary school
teachers of English over a period of one year. Various classroom be-
haviours were coded and measured quantitatively. Additionally, the lessons
were recorded and certain parts were transcribed in order to obtain more
complex qualitative analysis of classroom events. The teachers were also
asked to fill in a questionnaire concerning their beliefs about teaching and
learning processes. Subsequently, on the basis of the collected data, profiles
of the three teachers were created. Since the aim of the study is to show
how the teacher's personality influences the classroom social environment
and learners' achievement, the emphasis was put on motives that stimulate
the teachers' behaviour and on their character traits.

8-9 students from each of the groups were interviewed and recorded at
the beginning of the first and at the end of the second term. Their fluency
development was determined quantitatively on the basis of their im-
provement in the length of run, the length of pauses, the number of words
and syllables per minute, the number of repetitions and self-corrections, the
number of Polish expressions and the complexity of sentence structure.

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[11] Morris, C. G. Psychology. S. 476.
[12] Wade, Carole. and Tavris, Carol. Psychology. New York: Harper & Row Publishers
(second edition). 1990. S. 408.
[13] Morris, C. G. Psychology. S. 476–477.
[14] Wade, C. and Tavris, C. Psychology. S. 409.

The present paper does not include all the facts and figures obtained during the observation due to space limitations. The full data are contained in the book written by the author of this article[15]. It is hoped that the study will contribute to the understanding of the processes that promote the acquisition of oral fluency in foreign language instructional contexts.

4. Subjects of observation

The study was conducted in three secondary schools in a big city in Poland. Three female teachers were observed during their lessons with first formers. All of them have experience in teaching English as a foreign language and are well-regarded by school authorities. They are university graduates with MA degrees granted by Institutes of English Studies. Additionally, they have similar goals and follow the same textbook, *Headway Pre-Intermediate* by J. Soars and L. Soars. In this paper they will be labelled as the *Autocratic, Supporting* and *Confrontational* teachers.

All the three teachers favour traditional teacher-centred instruction. Hence, they dominate classroom interaction. Consequently, most of the classroom interaction time is taken up by teacher talk, as shown in the table below.

Table 1. Teacher talking time (TTT) in lesson oral interaction

	Average TTT	TTT – aim: grammar introduction and practice	TTT – aim: skills practice
Autocratic Teacher	56%	60%	52%
Supporting Teacher	55%	61%	49%
Confrontational Teacher	60%	67%	53%

All the teachers talk more when their goal is to introduce and practise grammar structures and less when the main aim of the lesson is skills practice.

Student-student interaction does not constitute an important part of their teaching. Only occasionally do the teachers initiate group and pair work and the introduced activities frequently involve structure practice. On

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[15] Łęska, Krystyna. Teachers' Use of Interaction Patterns in a Foreign Language Classroom and Gains in Students' Oral Fluency. Częstochowa: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Lingwistycznej. 2008.

average 3% of the interaction time is devoted to student-student free exchanges, half of which is realised in L1.

The teaching methods and techniques used in the three observed classrooms belong to Cook's[16] mainstream style. During lessons the teachers combine some techniques used by the grammar-translation method, the audio-lingual style, the information-communicative style and, sporadically, the social-communicative style. They assume that students learn by a conscious understanding of grammar rules, by practising the rules in a controlled way and finally, by using them in semi-controlled or, occasionally, free speaking activities.

The three teachers favour regular testing. The main foci are grammar and vocabulary, but such skills as reading, listening and writing are also sometimes tested. Fluency in speaking is rarely assessed.

Despite many similarities between the three teachers' manner of instruction, the emotional climate, teacher-students relationships and teaching outcomes vary greatly in the three classrooms. The teachers' personalities appear to be the main factors that determine those differences.

The students who participated in the study attended three secondary schools and were taught by the teachers described above. They had five hours of English per week and were aged 16-17. Their proficiency level was assessed as pre-intermediate, though some of them were above, and some below that level.

5. The teachers' personality profiles

Two of the motives which stimulate the teachers' actions in the classroom are similar for the three teachers, the need for achievement and power. All the teachers want to excel and be well-regarded by school authorities. Their desire to control students manifests itself in the prevalence of teacher-centred instruction.

Some of their personality features are the same, as well. Taking into consideration Catell's surface personality traits, all the teachers exhibit conservatism as they instruct in a traditional way and do not experiment with new methods during their lessons. Additionally, they are conscientious and responsible.

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[16] Cook, Vivian. Second Language Learning and Language Teaching. London: Arnold (second edition). 1996.

Nonetheless, apart from these similarities, we can observe considerable differences which are evident in the teachers' personality profiles provided below.

The Autocratic Teacher

The term 'autocrat' refers to the authoritarian personality type, whose power motive takes the form of egoistic dominance. The classroom observation results depict a formal, rigorous and autocratic teacher who has full control of her class and relies heavily on the position-centred teaching. Discipline is important for her and misbehaving students draw her immediate attention.

She focuses on the content, stands in front of the class and does not try to make personal contact with the students. Rules for classroom behaviour are strict and lateness is not tolerated.

Her communication with the students during a lesson is extremely formal and the tone of her voice is harsh and unkind most of the time. She does not 'waste' her time on establishing affective bonds with the students at the beginning of the lesson but gets to the point as directly as possible. Thus, the scope of her contacts with learners is limited. She avoids expressing or perceiving emotion. Consequently, she is unsuccessful in creating a psychologically supportive atmosphere.

Her formal and autocratic approach to teaching does not invite humour or laughter. She hardly ever smiles and never jokes with the students. Because of her formal and strict attitude, the students do not express their wishes and preferences.

She asks a lot of questions, addressing them to the whole class. The students have to stand up whenever they say something aloud and the teacher always comments on their answers. Evaluation and correction of the students' performance appears to be one of her main tasks. She interrupts the students in order to correct their mistakes even when they are expressing their opinions freely, like in the following teacher-student exchange:

T: So, she isn't as happy as her husband. Why?

S: Because she has some problems. She has to work, she has to work in house …

T: in the house

S: and work in, at, in job, a job …

T: and she has a job

S: she has a job and work in house, has problems.

T: So, running a house, yes, may cause some problems, and bringing up children, too.

She is always well organised and her lessons are meticulously planned as she believes that careful preparation is important. While teaching she usually does not change anything in her plans. Many lessons are based on additional, interesting materials that supplement the course-book.

Only sporadically does she use the native language during her classes and she expects the same from her students.

According to her, popularity among students is not the most important thing. She just expects them to be obedient and follow her instructions.

If we analyse her personality according to trait dimensions distinguished by Eysenk, she seems to be even-tempered and to lack empathy. Catell would probably classify her as a tough-minded person, who is realistic, mature and hard. Additionally, she is confident and controlled.

The Supporting Teacher

The term 'supporting' has been used to refer to an affiliative and co-operative personality type. Although this teacher likes to have control and authority, she enjoys forming close relationships and cooperating with the learners. She represents the responsible nurturance power motive as she uses her dominant position to help and support her students.

Her candid and open manner makes her popular in the classroom. During the oral interview one of the students said: "I like now Mrs. X because she is really funny and friendly teacher".

She emphasises the need to have full control over her students. Thus, she uses mainly teacher-student and teacher-class interaction patterns, which allow her to curb their behaviour. The following fragment of an introduction to pair work illustrates well her fear of losing control:

T: OK, dzisiejszy temat wymaga dużej dyscypliny i proszę żebyście się zmobilizowali i trochę też pobawili, dobrze?[17]

According to her, a teacher should not be too strict. Although it is necessary to establish rules for behaviour, student misbehaviour usually

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[17] T: OK, today's topic requires a lot of discipline, so please, try to make some effort and have some good time, will you?

does not require immediate intervention. Consequently, she sometimes has some discipline problems with a few trouble makers.

Her lessons are carefully planned and she shows flexibility if it is necessary to change or adjust something to the students' needs or preferences. She treats the course-book as an aid that facilitates the teaching and learning processes. She supplements it with a variety of additional materials. The students often watch videos and read newspaper and magazine articles. She never forgets to use different holidays and festivals to talk and read about the culture. Consequently, the lessons are interesting and entertaining, which is in accordance with her opinion that enjoyment and fun are important in language teaching and learning.

She succeeds in building a pleasant and supportive atmosphere. Learners' requests and preferences are considered if she finds them reasonable. She also tries to encourage and support a group of quiet students often dominated by a noisy group who are always ready to say something.

Despite the emphasis on the importance of evaluating and correcting learners' performance, she does not always provide her students with corrective feedback. Sometimes, she immediately comments on each mistake, like in the following example:

S: Eight people has read …

T: have read

S: have read Charles Dickens' book and eight people don't.

T: haven't

However, she frequently does not correct any mistakes at all, for example, when students recount articles they have read.

She uses mostly English during her lessons. Only sometimes does she switch to L1 when, in her opinion, the explanation in the target language is too complicated for the students and can lead to misunderstanding. The use of the social language is quite rare in her classroom and when it happens both the teacher and the students mostly use the native language.

If we rate her behaviour by using Eysenck's neuroticism and psychoticism dimensions, she appears to be even-tempered and empathetic. Additionally, according to surface traits identified by Catell, she can be described as trusting (understanding and composed but not gullible), placid (self-assured, confident, serene, cheerful and resilient), controlled and

relaxed. Moreover, she is tender-minded and at the same time mature and realistic.

The Confrontational Teacher

According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, the term 'confrontational' describes a person who is likely to cause arguments and make people angry. This teacher's power motive takes the form of egoistic dominance that frequently manifests itself in being aggressive. Hence, she represents a mixture of Wright's (1987) aggressive and authoritarian personality types. She is a dynamic and energetic young woman who favours position-centred teaching with the prevalence of the teacher-class interaction pattern, often gets involved in angry exchanges with the students and does not show a strong need for affiliation.

According to her, it is necessary to establish rules for student conduct and any student misbehaviour requires immediate intervention. Nevertheless, the teacher should not be too rigorous. In reality, she usually does not react to students' misbehaviour. Consequently, she encounters discipline problems.

All her classes are carefully planned. Her lessons are mostly based on the course-book, but she also introduces some additional materials and activities to break the routine and make her lessons more attractive. She believes in flexibility and, if necessary, is ready to change her lesson plan.

The classroom observation results portray her as an emotionally changeable teacher. She sometimes appears to be friendly and supportive, ready to prompt students but, because of her aggressive personality, she can be sarcastic and unpleasant, especially towards the group of trouble-makers. The following excerpt illustrates such a situation:

T: And what did you learn about Mike? Robert.

R: He is a vegetarian.

T (in an unpleasant aggressive tone of voice): Yes, that was the last thing on the tape and that's why Robert remembered.

R: He don't … can't rinses them.

T (sarcastically): Yes, Robert, yes!

She does not object to students' laughter. Unfortunately, sometimes such laughter is provoked by a student's impolite behaviour, which is demonstrated in the extract below:

T (after explaining the Passive Voice structure): Teraz rozumiecie?[18]

S (rudely): No właśnie, co to znaczy?[19] (other students laugh, the teacher does not react)

This kind of students' behaviour seems to be aggravated by the teachers' frequent unpleasant and sarcastic comments.

Popularity is not the most important thing for this teacher. She does not feel that she must have close contacts with learners and be aware of their emotions. It is enough for her to have a closer contact with a few students who desire it. Generally, she accepts the necessity to consider students' requests and preferences.

According to her, a teacher's main task is to organise work in the way that will enable the students to profit from her teaching. The second obligation is to evaluate and correct their performance. Most of the classroom interaction time is teacher-dominated with the tendency to comment on nearly each of the learners' statements, even when they express their ideas freely.

She uses mostly English when she instructs and directs the students' behaviour. However, she usually employs Polish to explain grammar and vocabulary.

As her lessons are usually well-planned and involving, she manages to hold the learners' attention most of the time even if she has problems with rapport. Students who are interested in learning the language can profit greatly from her instruction.

She represents the moody side of Eysenck's neuroticism dimension. If we consider the psychoticism dimension, she lacks empathy, though, at the same time, she is not totally insensitive. According to Catell's trait dimensions, she can be described as emotionally changeable (impatient and impulsive), assertive (aggressive and confident) and tough-minded.

6. Learners' development of spoken fluency

The term 'fluency' has been defined in various ways by different researchers. For the purposes of the present study, spoken fluency will be understood as the ability to speak with relatively few pauses and hesitations for a certain period of time. Additionally, a fluent learner is able "to talk in

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[18] Do you understand, now?

[19] Just a second, what does it mean?

coherent, reasoned and 'semantically dense' sentences", has "appropriate things to say in a wide range of contexts" and is creative[20]. Hence, apart from quantitative measures connected with speed, pauses, hesitations and fillers, some qualitative considerations will be included as well.

With the aim of analysing spoken fluency, oral interviews with 8-9 learners from each of the three classrooms were recorded twice, at the beginning and at the end of the school year. On both occasions the students were asked to talk on the same topics: 'My best friend' and 'My previous school'. In order to compare the results, the mean has been calculated for each of the examined areas (the length of run, the length of pauses, the number of words and syllables per minute, the number of repetitions and self-corrections, the number of Polish expressions and the complexity of sentence structure). Additionally, the content of the learners' talk has been assessed.

Table 2 presents the quantitative results: the average improvement in oral fluency of the three groups of students.

Table 2. Proficiency gains in learners' oral fluency

	Autocratic Teacher's students	Supporting Teacher's students	Confrontational Teacher's students
average length of run	+1.6 sec	+10.1 sec	+6.48 sec
the longest run	-1 sec	+24.65 sec	+6.98 sec
words per minute	-6.61	+17.3	+5.48
syllables per minute	-7.38	+26.9	+9.78
length of pauses	+0.1 sec	-0.5 sec	+0.03 sec
percentage of pauses	+3.68%	-9.7%	-4.59%
repetitions	+0.29	-1.4	+0.5
self-corrections	+1.25	+4.1	+1.56
Polish words and expressions	+0.44	-0.3	+1.1
two clause sentences	+1	+2.9	+1.83
three-clause sentences	+0.25	+0.8	+0.2

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[20] Fillmore, Charles. J. On fluency. In: Fillmore, C.J., Kempler, D. and Wang, W.S.Y. (eds.). Individual Differences in Language Ability and Language Behaviour. New York: Academic Press.1979. S. 93.

The best results belong to the Supporting Teacher's students. They have increased considerably their length of run, say more words and syllables in one minute, use fewer repetitions and Polish words and expressions, though more self-corrections. Additionally, there is an evident improvement in the complexity of their sentence structure. Except for one of the students, the content of their talk has become more interesting. They provide more details and use richer vocabulary.

The worst results have been achieved by students from the classroom of the Autocratic Teacher. We can observe the reduction in the number of words and syllables per minute and the rise in the number of pauses. The analysis of the length of run shows a slight improvement of the average length of run, but the longest run has decreased a little. The number of self-corrections and Polish words and expressions has increased in the students' speech. The improvement in the complexity of sentence structure is lesser than in the case of the two other teachers. Although the content of learner talk is usually slightly more interesting during the second interview, the students seem to be concerned with grammatical correctness much more.

In the case of the group taught by the Confrontational Teacher some gains are apparent. There is an increase of the length of run. The length of pauses has not changed much, but the number of pauses is reduced. Moreover, the students use a greater number of complex sentences. On the other hand, the number of repetitions, self-corrections and Polish words and expressions has increased. The content of learner talk is more interesting in most of the cases. Only two of the students say less during the second interview.

Thus, on average, the greatest gains in oral fluency have been observed in the Supporting Teacher's classroom, the Confrontational Teacher's students have improved a little in most of the areas, while in the Autocratic Teacher's classroom no development can be perceived. On the contrary, the students' results have worsened.

Additionally, the comparison of individual learners' oral fluency improvement displays interesting correlations. Each teacher's students have been sorted into three or four subgroups according to the degree of their fluency development. Next, the mean has been calculated for every subgroup.

The Supporting Teacher's students have been subdivided into three groups. Figure 1 shows their fluency gains. Five of them (the black line) have significantly improved their results. They have increased their length of

run, they say more words and syllables in a minute, construct more complex sentences and have decreased the number and length of pauses. The next two students (the dashed line) have also improved their results, though to a slightly smaller degree. Only in the case of one of the students (the grey line) is there a slight decrease in the number of words and syllables said in a minute. Nonetheless, there is an increase of the length of run and some reduction of the length and number of pauses.
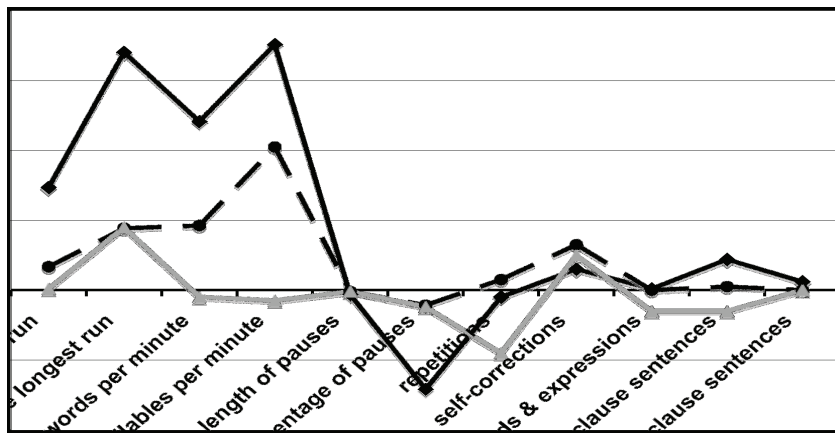

Figure 1. Supporting Teacher – proficiency gains in learners' oral fluency

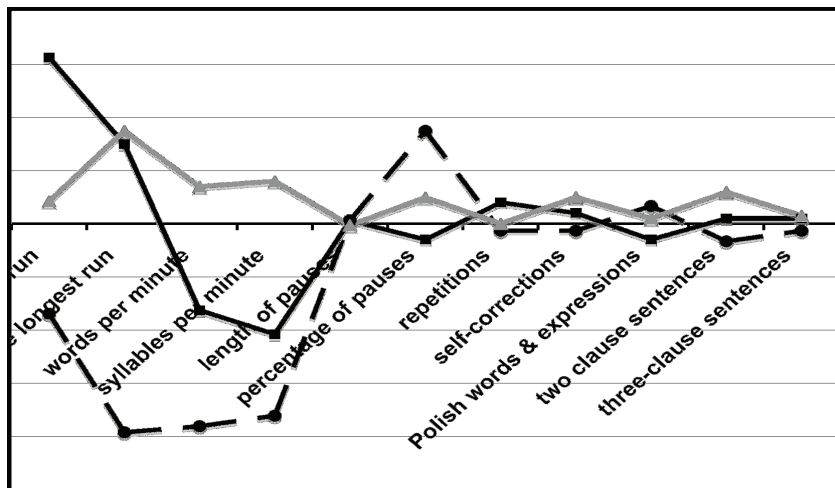The results of the Autocratic Teacher's students, displayed in Figure 2, are less consistent.

Figure 2. Autocratic Teacher – proficiency gains in learners' oral fluency

Nine students have been interviewed. After eight months of language instruction, three of them (the dashed line) have considerably decreased the length of run. They speak slower, utilising fewer words and syllables per minute, lengthening the pauses, building less complex sentences and using more Polish words and expressions. Two other students (the black line) have lengthened the run and pause a bit less frequently. However, the number of words and syllables per minute has decreased in their speech. The remaining four students (the grey line) have slightly improved their length of run and increased the number of words and syllables said in a minute. Moreover, they build more complex sentences. Nonetheless, they pause more and monitor their speech carefully utilising more self-corrections.

The greatest differences in the development of individual students' oral fluency are observed in the Confrontational Teacher's classroom (Figure 3). At one pole there is a remarkable improvement of the group of three students (the black line) and at the other – worsening results of two of the learners (the dashed line). In the case of the remaining four students, some improvement, though only in certain areas, is noticeable. Two of these students (the dark grey line) speak slower, but with fewer pauses and more complex sentences. The remaining two (the light grey line) pause more and monitor their speech using more repetitions and self-corrections. Nonetheless, they have improved the length of run and considerably increased the number of words and syllables said in a minute.
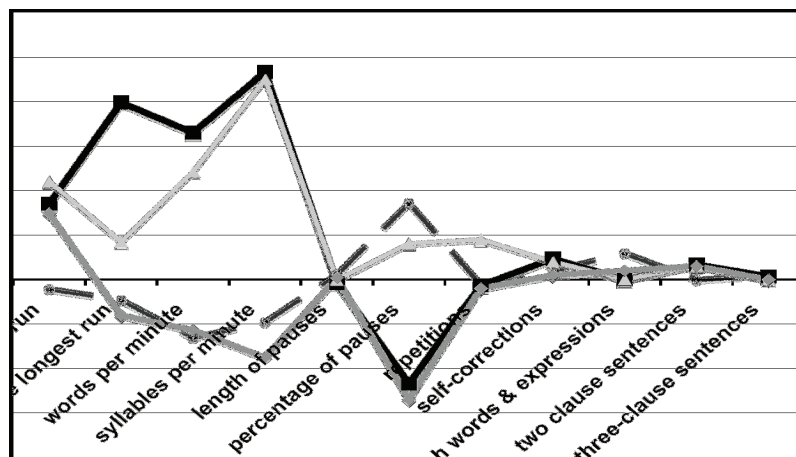

Figure 3. Confrontational Teacher – proficiency gains in learners' oral fluency

Greater gains in oral fluency appear to be connected with the warmer and more supportive atmosphere created by the Supporting Teacher. She forms closer relationships with her students and the distribution of power in her classrooms is more balanced. Thus, her friendly and encouraging attitude has enhanced the students' fluency development most.

The authoritarian personality of the Autocratic Teacher influences negatively the classroom atmosphere and creates a clear distance between her and the students. The learners are hindered by inhibitions, lose self-confidence and become more self-conscious and insecure. Consequently, many of them speak slower as they try to monitor their talk, which negatively affects their fluency and creativity. They have become less confident and more grammatically aware.

The case of the Confrontational Teacher with aggressive personality is different. Her teaching outcomes are worse than those of the Supporting Teacher and better than those of the Autocratic Teacher. On average, some gains are apparent. Nonetheless, it is interesting to observe that her students differ considerably from each other in the degree of improvement. Some groups who seem to perceive the learning environment created by the teacher in different ways can be distinguished. At one pole we can observe the group that appears to accept the teacher's way of conduct and profits from her instruction, while at the other, there is the group that gets involved in frequent arguments and does not seem to be motivated to participate in the lessons. Consequently, fluency gains of the first group are comparable to the gains of the Supporting Teacher's students, while in the case of the other group the outcomes have worsened. In the case of the remaining students some gains, but only in certain areas, are evident.

7. Conclusions

Although all the observed classrooms are teacher-centred, the teachers utilise similar interaction patterns and have the same aims, the learning environments created by them support the learners' development to various degrees. The instructional content, materials, methods and forms of assessment do not seem to influence the teaching outcomes as much as teacher-students relationships and the emotional climate. This climate appears to be related to the teachers' classroom behaviour. The three teachers behave in characteristic idiosyncratic ways as they are guided by different motives, emotions, tendencies, views and attitudes. All these

constitute their varied personalities which affect their relationships with students and the classroom atmosphere.

Thus, we can observe that greater gains in oral fluency are ensured in the friendly and supportive environment created by the even-tempered and empathetic Supporting Teacher who has an affiliative personality type. Conversely, the authoritarian personality and lack of empathy accompanied by tough-mindedness, self-confidence and a high level of self-control seem to limit the learners' role to reproducing knowledge and influence negatively the emotional climate and learning outcomes. Other personality traits that affect some learners in a negative way are emotional instability, impatience, impulsiveness and aggressiveness.

Summing up, the degree of learners' success in the classroom appears to be connected with social relations established by the teacher in the classroom. Consecutively, these social relations are influenced by teachers' personalities – their surface character traits and motives which stimulate their behaviour.

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