

Planning for the Variability of Introverts and Extroverts

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Abstract

The social-emotional needs of students are a crucial component when designing an accessible and flexible, barrier-free environment. Within that realm of social-emotional needs are the experiences of introverts and extroverts. Understanding the recognized traits along with myths and facts can better prepare educators as they design their lessons and environments.

Keywords

Introverts, extroverts, ambiverts, UDL, environment, variability, Meyers-Briggs.

INTRODUCTION

With the publication of books like, Quiet: The Power of Introverts In A World That Can't Stop Talking (Cain, 2013), The Genius of Opposites: How Introverts and Extroverts Achieve Extraordinary Results Together (Kahnweiler, 2016), and Networking for People Who Hate Networking (Zack, 2012), conversations about introversion and extroversion have reentered popular culture. The defining characteristics have remained just as Carl Jung defined them in the 1920s (Jung, 1946). Extroverts draw energy from their surroundings and relationships while introverts draw energy from being alone. Jung himself recognized a third category called ambiverts (Beaton, 2016). It was not clear to Jung how ambiverts gained their energy; rather, these individuals demonstrated traits balanced between extroverts and introverts. In fact, Jung felt that introverts and extroverts were in the minority and that most people were ambiverts. Why have the traits associated with introverts and extroverts become so popularized? Enter the Meyer-Briggs test.

INTROVERTS, EXTROVERTS, & AMBIVERTS

The Meyers-Briggs test was created by a mother-daughter team who were deeply fascinated with the work of Jung. According to the Meyers-Briggs Foundation website, they wanted to make his work more accessible to the masses (www.meyersbriggs.org, n.d.). Neither Meyers nor Briggs were schooled in psychology, nor were they researchers (Fernando, 2016); instead, they were keen observers of hu-

man behavior and took what they believed to be the key points of Jung's work and built them into their test (MBTI, n.d.).

As reported on the MBTI website, “[

Interestingly, news reporter Gary Fernando cited Jung as saying, “However simple and clear the fundamental principle of (separate personality types) may be, in actual reality they are complicated and hard to make out, because every individual is an exception to the rule.” (2016). According to Fernando, Jung did not believe individuals should, or even could, be classified. Though Jung did not use the word, it is clear Jung saw every human as variable.

The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework is predicated on the premise that all learners are variable, and that variability is because of context (Rose, Meyer, & Gordon, 2014). Our behavior, including our behavior of learning, is impacted most by the context in which we are operating, and context includes anything that impacts our senses and our affective networks. Context can include the temperature of the room, the relationship you have with others in the space, and how safe you feel in expressing your understanding of the topic. It is this variability that can either confound educators or be the impetus for them to design flexible learning environments that provide options so learners can successfully approach, acquire, and demonstrate knowledge and skills. Variability also forces us see the range of introverted, extroverted, and ambiverted traits in our learners.

Table 1 provides environment or lesson design suggestions to support the continuum of introverts, ambiverts, and extroverts.

TEXT & HEADINGS

Table 1. Guidelines and associated supports

Engagement	
Recruiting interest	Learners can choose to work alone or in groups, but should be provided time and space to reflect on and understand their choice.
Sustaining effort and persistence	When fostering collaboration and community, provide options for how learners can contribute and participate, allowing for both introverted and extroverted traits.
Self-regulation	Keep in mind that self-regulation skills will vary based on the continuum of traits learners express. For example, extroverts might appreciate overt and praise-based check-ins while introverts might appreciate quiet, off-to-the-side check-ins.
Representation	
Perception	Emphasize that the options for taking in information (auditory, visual, digital) are for all learners, and depending on the content and context, learners may choose differently based on their own needs for solitude or lively interaction.
Language & symbols	Create shared understandings of different spaces, practices, and routines throughout the learning environment. Identify signals for quiet areas and allow space for social learning.
Comprehension	Provide alternatives to verbal/shared information processing and visualization such as private journaling.
Action and Expression	
Physical action	Learners confronted with barriers due to motor demands or utilize assistive technologies for navigation, interaction and/or composition will also demonstrate traits along the continuum of introvert, ambivert, and extrovert. Acknowledge this spectrum to support learner self-determination (link to self-regulation)
Expression and communication	Consider participation, as it manifests in discussions and interactive activities, in its many forms. For example, Socratic circles with backchannel conversations or reflective summaries can provide all learners with the support they need to actively participate in a learning experience. Not all learners need to speak to participate.

Executive functions	Guide learners in understanding their context and content-dependent preferences for social and solitude, and support them in developing skills to try a modality out of their typical comfort zone.
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CONCLUSION

Look to the UDL framework when designing lessons and learning environments that align with the UDL guidelines, actions and strategies that support learner variability, including the characteristics of introverts, extroverts, and ambiverts.

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