Artur Piotr Cedzich
ORCID: 0009-0004-0133-689X
University of Opole, Opole

The Influence of Conscientiousness on Foreign Language Acquisition (FLA)

Individual differences have long been a key focus in psychological research. However, it is only in recent years that the connection between personality traits and foreign language acquisition (FLA) has gained significant attention. Although there has been a shift toward personality traits, a notable gap in research on how they may affect learning outcomes still exists (Pawlak 2022: 201–204). The purpose of this article is to answer that research call by exploring the influence of Conscientiousness, one of the Big Five personality model traits, on the FLA process. The theoretical conceptualisation of Conscientiousness is supported by empirical findings from a study conducted on a group of 78 foreign language students. The results reveal a positive correlation between Conscientiousness and students' overall performance in English. Specifically, students with higher levels of Conscientiousness tend to achieve higher grades in English compared to their peers. These students also demonstrate a strong commitment to continuing their studies, use their skills confidently, and take an active role in foreign language learning progress. Conversely, learners with low levels of Conscientiousness tend to procrastinate, achieve lower grades in English, and show a lack of motivation to actively participate in FLA classrooms. The article concludes with limitations as well as implications that may be used as research directions for future FLA studies.

Keywords: Big Five personality model, Conscientiousness, personality traits, FLA success, foreign language proficiency, FLA, language skills, self-assessment

Der Einfluss der Gewissenhaftigkeit auf den Zweitspracherwerb

Individuelle Unterschiede stellen seit vielen Jahren ein zentrales Forschungsthema der Psychologie dar. Erst in den letzten Jahren wurde jedoch die Bedeutung der Verbindung zwischen Persönlichkeitseigenschaften und dem Zweitspracherwerb erkannt. Trotz des zunehmenden Fokus auf Persönlichkeitsmerkmalen gibt es nach wie vor bedeutende Forschungslücke, wie diese Faktoren die Ergebnisse den Zweitspracherwerb beeinflussen können (Pawlak 2022: 201–204). Der vorliegende Artikel nimmt diese Lücke zum Anlass, um den Einfluss von Gewissenhaftigkeit, einem der Big-Five-Merkmale – auf den Lernprozess zu untersuchen. Die empirischen Ergebnisse (N=78) weisen auf einen positiven Zusammenhang hin: Studierende mit hoher Gewissenhaftigkeit erzielen im Schnitt höhere Englischnoten, setzen ihr Studium engagiert fort und übernehmen eine aktive Rolle im Sprachlernprozess. Studierende mit niedrigen Gewissenhaftigkeitswerten hingegen zeigen Anzeichen von Aufschub und geringerer Motivation im Unterricht. Abschließend werden die Einschränkungen dieser Untersuchung sowie die Implikationen für zukünftige Lehrmethoden und weiterführende Zweitspracherwerb-Forschung erörtert.

Schlüsselwörter: Big-Five-Persönlichkeitsmodell, Gewissenhaftigkeit, Persönlichkeitseigenschaften, Lernerfolg, Zweitsprachkompetenz, Sprachfertigkeiten, Selbsteinschätzung

Author: Artur Cedzich, University of Opole, plac Kopernika 11A, 45-040 Opole, Poland, e-mail: arturwinternecie@gmail.com

1. Introduction: The Conceptualisation of Conscientiousness

A certain amount of time had to pass before enough academic recognition was directed to personality (Costa Jr/McCrae 1998: 120). Through its evolutionary development, the Five Factor Model of personality (FFM), also known as the Big Five, has emerged as a widely accepted framework. The theoretical foundation of this model identifies five primary dimensions of personality, which exist on a continuum from low to high levels. Goldberg (1992: 26–42) operationalised Goldberg's IPIP Big Five (IPIP B5) which is a 50-item scale. Similarly, Costa and McCrae (Costa/McCrae/Dye 1991: 887–889, Costa Jr./McCrae 1998: 120) developed an empirical instrument known as the NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI). This 60-item tool (12 items per personality trait) has been recognised for yielding dependable and accurate data across a wide spectrum of research.

Consequently, the Big Five personality traits are often referred to by the acronym "OCEAN", with each letter standing for a specific personality trait: Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism (Goldberg 1992: 26–42). The second trait of the Big Five model is the focus of this article. Conscientiousness can be defined as the ability to regulate one's impulses and behaviours while focusing on achieving specific, goal-directed outcomes (Dörnyei 2005: 15). By relying on structured planning, adherence to regulations, and a dedication to obligations helps individuals prioritise their most important responsibilities (Dörnyei/Ryan 2015: 18–19). A key aspect of this trait is the ability to maintain focus on pursuing one's goals (Dewaele 2009: 629). Furthermore, the sense of achievement plays a vital role in Conscientiousness, enabling individuals to complete tasks with self-initiative and control (Khan 2021: 9–10).

Hence, the working definition of Conscientiousness which will serve throughout this article is: Conscientiousness is a personality trait characterised by a strong sense of responsibility, attention to detail, diligence, and a goal-oriented mindset. This trait reflects not only the ability to manage tasks effectively but also the motivation to uphold high standards across various areas of life.

Each personality dimension can be divided into two binary opposites (low and high), and additionally, these dimensions can be further classified into six distinct subfacets (Costa/McCrae 1998: 120). Consequently, in the case of Conscientiousness these are as follows: Competence, Order, Dutifulness, Achievement striving, Self-discipline, and finally Deliberation. The first facet is Competence which refers to the pursuit of mastery to a professional cause, leading to self-fulfillment. It reflects a natural tendency to rely on logic when making decisions and follow established rules, ensuring that one's actions remain within their control. The second facet, Order, also known as Meticulousness or Orderliness, is characterised by a methodical approach to daily tasks. Individuals with this trait prefer to keep their surroundings neat and organised, minimising distractions in order to maintain focus and efficiency (Roberts/Bogg/Walton/Chernyshenko/Stark 2004).

Dutifulness, also known as Responsibility or Reliability, is the third facet and reflects a strong commitment to fulfilling obligations and adherence to a clear moral framework. At the core of Dutifulness is the awareness of keeping one's word and valuing social roles (Jackson/Roberts 2017: 133–147). Achievement striving, also known as Industriousness, involves working diligently towards a goal while avoiding rivalry-induced competition or exhibiting uncompromising behaviour. This quality is rooted in the understanding that achieving success requires not only patience but also the ability to face numerous sacrifices and challenges along the way (Costa/McCrae/Dye 1991: 887–889, Dörnyei/Ryan 2015: 18–19). The second to last facet of Conscientiousness, namely Self-discipline, refers to resilience in remaining concentrated on a task without becoming distracted by monotony or boredom (Jackson/Roberts 2017: 133–147). Finally, Deliberation is the ability to control one's desires and impulses in making decisions. As a result, immediate gratification can be delayed to achieve long-term goals and ambitions (Anglim/Grant 2014: 148–157, Soto/John 2019: 444–459).

As a result, Conscientiousness can be seen as a spectrum with two extremes. On the one hand, high Conscientiousness is linked to fulfilling both social and professional responsibilities (Block 2010: 2–25, Pathak 2020: 851–855). On the other hand, low Conscientiousness is related to lacking the willpower to complete tasks, disregarding one's obligations. Rabin, Fogel and Nutter-Upham (2011: 344–357) argue that there is evidence to suggest that procrastination is closely correlated with low Conscientiousness. Individuals scoring low in Conscientiousness are more likely to procrastinate, leading to dissatisfaction in their professional and educational lives. They may doubt their ability to complete tasks or struggle with delayed rewards, making it hard for them to find motivation in future outcomes. Thus, individuals with low levels of Conscientiousness tend to avoid fulfilling their obligations and often struggle to meet deadlines. Moreover, procrastination is much more strongly linked to low Conscientiousness than to any other trait in the Big Five (Steel 2007: 65–94). As a result, scoring low in Conscientiousness often results in struggling to meet responsibilities as well as maintaining daily routines (Dörnyei/Ryan 2015: 18–19) which is in contrast to high Conscientiousness (Cervone/Pervin 2022: 193–194).

2. Literature Review

There are many factors that can affect how students perform in Foreign Language Acquisition, either improving or hindering their academic performance (Vorobyeva 2018: 136–146). One key factor is Conscientiousness, which plays a major role in shaping how learners perceive their abilities and progress when faced with the challenges of long-term language learning (Novikova/Berisha/Novikov/Shlyakhta 2020: 35). While it may not be possible to include every study on Conscientiousness, a selection of relevant research will be presented below. For the sake of transparency, the findings were compiled into a table.

A study by Obralic and Mulalic (2007: 76–84) explored the relationship between Conscientiousness and the language learning strategies used by university students. Their study aimed to demonstrate that certain learning strategies contribute to foreign language proficiency. The research involved 70 first-year university students and used two key instruments: the Strategies Inventory for Language Learning (Oxford 1990: 293–300) and the Five-Factor Model questionnaire (Costa/McCrae 1992: 169–204). Obralic and Mulalic (2007: 76–84) found that Conscientiousness was the third most common trait among students. Additionally, the study confirmed a strong link between high levels of Conscientiousness and specific language learning strategies, namely, effective, compensation, cognitive, and memory-based learning strategies. Overall, the study concludes that students with high levels of Conscientiousness tend to use these strategies more effectively, which, in turn, enhances their foreign language achievement and proficiency.

Another study carried out by Biedroń explored how personality traits, particularly Conscientiousness, affect foreign language achievement (Biedroń 2011: 467–89). The research sample consisted of 90 university students who were proficient in English. The instruments included: The Modern Language Aptitude Test (Carroll/Sapon 2002), the Language Ability (Wojtowicz 2006), and the Polish 60-item adaptation of the revised NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-PI-R) (Costa/McCrea 1992: 169–204, Zawadzki/Strelau/Szczepaniak/Śliwińska 1998). Conscientiousness was found not only to strongly predict success in exam performance but was also more commonly observed among a gifted sample of foreign language students. To conclude, Biedroń's findings highlight the significant role of Conscientiousness in foreign language learning success.

Fazeli (2012: 2938–2944) investigated whether there was a relationship between Conscientiousness and the use of language learning strategies among Iranian students. The study involved 213 participants who were pursuing an English degree. The study used the following instruments: the Persian-adapted Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL, Oxford 1990: 293–300), a Background Questionnaire (Fazeli 2012: 2938–2944), the NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI, Costa/McCrae 1992: 169–204), and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The findings showed that Conscientiousness played a significant role in the consistent and effective use of memory language learning strategies. They improved students' foreign language skills as they were motivated to practice regularly. In short, a high level of Conscientiousness is a strong predictor of success in FLA.

Asmali (2014: 1–18) conducted a study to explore how Conscientiousness affects language learning strategies and foreign language success. The study involved 149 Turkish university students. In terms of instruments, the study used the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (Oxford 1990: 293–300) and the International Personality Item Pool (Goldberg 1992: 26–42). The results revealed that learners with a high level of Conscientiousness tended to prefer metacognitive strategies, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning processes. These individuals were more likely to

set goals, organise their study materials, and assess their progress, which contributed to their foreign language achievement. Overall, the study concluded that a high level of Conscientiousness has a positive impact on the language learning strategies used by foreign language learners.

Another study by Tabrizi and Hassanzadeh (2016: 22–41) explored the link between Conscientiousness and motivation in foreign language learners among university students. Their study involved 120 participants, aged 18 to 22, all of whom had intermediate English proficiency. The instruments were the Nelson English Proficiency Test (Fowler/Coe 1976) and the NEO Five-Factor Inventory (Costa/McCrae 1992: 169–204). The findings showed that learners with a higher level of Conscientiousness were also more motivated, which made them more likely to succeed in foreign language. Additionally, Conscientiousness was positively linked to ambiguity tolerance, meaning that more Conscientious learners were better at handling uncertainty in the learning process. In conclusion, a high level of Conscientiousness not only helps learners stay disciplined and committed to language learning but also encourages a greater interest in understanding individual differences among students.

The review of recent empirical research on the construct of Conscientiousness in Foreign Language Acquisition allowed thoroughly to investigate this personality trait in regard to its influence on compensation, cognitive and memory learning strategies leading to foreign language achievement and proficiency (Obralic/Mulalic 2007: 76–84). Moreover, a high level of Conscientiousness (Tabrizi/Hassanzadeh 2016: 22–41) is shown to be positively linked to both motivation and ambiguity tolerance which makes such students disciplined and committed to language learning. Another study suggests that Conscientiousness plays a key role in engaging learners in regular foreign language exchanges (Fazeli 2012: 2938–2944). Research also shows that Conscientiousness (Asmali 2014: 1–18) is positively linked to metacognitive strategies, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating among students contributing to their foreign language achievement. Ultimately, Conscientiousness (Biedroń 2011: 467–89) is a strong predictor of success in foreign language exams and is found among gifted individuals. A summary of these findings is gathered in Table 1.

Author	Aim	Results
Obralic and Mulalic (2007)	To explore the relationship between Conscientiousness and language learning strategies used by university students	Conscientiousness is strongly linked to the use of effective, compensation, cognitive, and memory-based learning strategies, which enhance foreign language achievement and proficiency
Biedroń (2011)	To evaluate how Conscientiousness affects foreign language achievement	Conscientiousness is a strong predictor of success in exam performance and is more common among gifted foreign language students, highlighting its significant role in language learning success

Author	Aim	Results
Fazeli (2012)	To investigate the relationship between Conscientiousness and the use of language learning strategies	Conscientiousness is positively correlated with consistent and effective use of memory strategies leading to improved foreign language skills due to regular practice and motivation
Asmali (2014)	To determine the influence of Conscientiousness on language learning strategies fostering language achievement	Conscientiousness is positively linked to the compensation strategies which are the most popularly employed learning strategies Conscientiousness comes third in terms of occurrence among students
Tabrizi and Hassanzadeh (2016)	To examine the link between foreign language learners' motivation and their levels of Conscientiousness	Significant positive relationship between learners' level of motivation and Conscientiousness leading to positive outcomes for foreign language students. The trait was found to be linked to a ambiguity tolerance

Tab. 1. Summary of selected empirical research on Conscientiousness
in Foreign Language Acquisition

After presenting the conceptualisation of Conscientiousness and the literature review, it can be posited that Conscientiousness plays a significant role in Foreign Language Acquisition. Hence, it is possible to formulate the following hypothesis: Students who score high in Conscientiousness achieve better academic and self-assessment results compared to those with lower levels of this trait. Aside from this, this study is also focused on positing the following research question: What is the profile of a student with low, medium, and high levels of Conscientiousness?

3. Method

The aim of this section is to present the research participants, instruments, analytical procedures, results, and discussion in relation to Conscientiousness within the context of Foreign Language Acquisition.

3.1 Participants

The study sample consisted of 80 foreign language students (N=80) attending a secondary school in Opole, Poland. However, two participants were excluded due to unreliable sociodemographic responses, resulting in a final sample of 78 students (N=78). The participants' ages ranged from 15 to 19 years (mean age: 16.4, SD=1.13). The gender distribution was as follows: 55 girls (70.5%), 21 boys (26.9%), and 2 students (2.6%) who selected the "other" gender option. Regarding their place of residence, 38 students (48.7%) lived in urban areas, 32 (41%) in nearby villages, and 8 (10%) in mid-sized towns. The vast majority (94.9%, or 74 students) enjoyed their English classes, with only

4 students (5.1%) reporting that they did not. All participants were learning English as a foreign language, with proficiency levels ranging from intermediate to upper-intermediate (Council of Europe, 2001). The students attended compulsory English classes for 3 to 6 hours per week. Additionally, 6.4% of the students (5 learners) reported that they were not studying a third language.

3.2 Instruments

The basic instrument adopted was a questionnaire with sociodemographic variables: age, gender (1 – male, 2 – female, 3 – other gender), place of residence (1 – village: up to 2,500 inhabitants, 2 – town: from 2,500 to 50,000 inhabitants, 3 – city: over 50,000 inhabitants). Apart from this, this section included are open questions focusing on students' personal feelings and attitudes towards learning the foreign language. Additionally, learners were also asked to provide their English grades for the previous semester, the last academic year, and their final primary school grades, all measured on a 1 to 6 scale, where 1 represented the lowest score and 6 the highest. In a similar manner, they self-rated their speaking, writing, reading, and listening skills, using the same 1 to 6 scale.

The participants' Conscientiousness was measured with the International Personality Item Pool NEO-Five Factor Inventory-50 (Goldberg 2006: 26–42), a 50-item questionnaire in which ten specifically measured learners' Conscientiousness. Responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree. The scale's reliability in this study was measured in terms of Cronbach's alpha, ranging the level of α=.83 (see Appendix 1).

3.2.3 Procedure

The study procedure began with prior approval from the headmaster. Participants were informed of the research goals and assured of complete confidentiality. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point without any repercussions. After providing consent, participants were given access to the questionnaire via a Google Forms link. Completing the questionnaire took between 15 and 45 minutes, and participants were encouraged to respond quickly to ensure honest answers. The independent variable was Conscientiousness, while the dependent variables were self-rated English grades and self-rated language skills. Descriptive statistics, including minimums, maximums, means, medians, and standard deviations, were analysed for both variables (Table 2). Participants' Conscientiousness levels were divided into low, medium, and high categories based on tertiles (Table 3).

Furthermore, descriptive analysis was performed to determine the means of self-rated English grades and self-rated language skills within each Conscientiousness tertile (Table 4). Pearson's correlation analysis (Table 5) was used to identify the direction, strength, and significance of the relationships between Conscientiousness and the dependent variables. Two two-way ANOVAs were conducted to examine the relationships

between Conscientiousness and self-rated English grades (Table 6) and self-rated language skills (Table 7). All statistical analyses were performed using JAMOVI 2.3.21 software.

3.3 Findings

The following section presents the results of the relationship between Conscientiousness, self-rated English grades, and self-rated language skills. The findings begin with descriptive statistics followed by Pearson's correlation analysis which presents the strength and direction of relationships among the variables. Finally, multiple two-way ANOVAs and linear regression analyses are performed to determine the influence of Conscientiousness on self-rated English grades and self-rated language skills. In addition to quantitative analyses, qualitative data from open-ended questions are analysed to provide further insight into students' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences related to foreign language learning. The results are reported in the following subsections.

The minimum number of points for Conscientiousness was 24, while maximum was 42 (SD=4.36). The mean score was 33.40, indicating that most participants had medium to high levels of Conscientiousness, with only a few showing low scores. Additionally, the self-rated language skills had a mean of 4.28, with a minimum value of 1 and a maximum value of 6. Consequently, the mean scores of the variables highlight the learners' general competence. For instance, the self-rated English grades had a mean of 4.60, with scores ranging from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 6, indicating that while most students rated their proficiency positively, learners still perceive FLA as a particularly demanding and challenging school subject. This may have an impact on their performance and self-assessment. The analysis of the gathered data is presented in the following table (Table 2), supplemented with a table dividing participants into low, medium and high levels of Conscientiousness (Table 3).

	N	M	Mdn	SD	Min	Max
Conscientiousness level	78	33.40	33.00	4.361	24.0	42.0
Self-rated language skills	78	4.28	4.00	1.172	1	6
Self-rated English grades	78	4.60	5.00	0.972	1	6

Tab. 2. Descriptive statistics of Conscientiousness, self-rated language skills, self-rated English grades

Levels of Conscientiousness	N	%	Range of points
low	30	38%	0–16
medium	28	36%	17–34
high	20	26%	35–50

Tab. 3. The low, medium and high levels of Conscientiousness by tertiles

Additionally, a descriptive analysis was conducted to examine the means of self-rated English grades and self-rated language skills across the tertiles of Conscientiousness

levels (Table 4). The data clearly show that as a learner's level of Conscientiousness increases, so do their mean grades.

Conscientiousness level	self-rated English grades	self-rated language skills
low	3.60	3.93
medium	4.31	4.36
high	4.60	4.70

Tab. 4. Descriptive statistics of self-rated English and self-rated language skills divided into three levels of Conscientiousness

The following section presents the results of Pearson's correlation analysis, conducted to show the linear relationship between Conscientiousness, self-rated English grades, and self-rated language skills. The analysis revealed a statistically significant correlation between Conscientiousness and self-rated language skills ($r=.23$, $p < .001$), suggesting that a higher level of Conscientiousness is associated with stronger self-rated language skills in foreign language acquisition. Additionally, Conscientiousness was found to positively correlate with self-rated English grades ($r=.22$, $p < .001$), indicating that individuals with higher Conscientiousness tend to rate their English grades more favourably. The full data are presented in Table 5 below.

	Conscientiousness
Conscientiousness	—
	—
Self-rated language skills	< .001
Self-rated English grades	0.22 <.001

Tab. 5. Pearson's Correlation

The following section presents the results of multiple two-way ANOVAs conducted to assess whether Conscientiousness mediates the relationship between self-rated English grades and self-rated language skills. The data suggest that Conscientiousness shows consistent distribution patterns, highlighting the significance of the results outlined in the previous section. Additionally, a statistically significant relationship was found with Conscientiousness ($p_{Conscientiousness}=0.001$). In conclusion, the results of the multiple linear regression analysis indicate that Conscientiousness plays a significant role in shaping self-rated English grades, having an impact on one's performance in foreign language learning. All relevant data are presented in the two tables below (Table 6).

	F	p
Overall model	2.94	0.003
Conscientiousness	1.16	0.001
Residuals		

Tab. 6. Two-way ANOVA – self-rated English grades

A two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the impact of Conscientiousness on self-rated language skills, providing a more detailed analysis of the variables. The results of the ANOVA model are statistically significant (F=3.51, p=.001), with Conscientiousness having a significant effect on self-rated language skills ($p_{Conscientiousness}$=0.001), underscoring the importance of the findings discussed in the previous section. The data are summarised in Table 7 below.

	F	p
Overall model	3.51	0.001
Conscientiousness	3.71	0.001
Residuals		

Tab. 7. Two-way ANOVA – self-rated self-rated language skills

In addition to the quantitative data, qualitative data were gathered through open-ended questions that explored learners' personal feelings and attitudes throughout the foreign language learning process. The first question asked students to describe their emotions while using English. The responses may be categorised into two distinct groups. The first group, comprising 60 responses (76.9%), expressed positive emotions, reflecting a sense of enjoyment and competence when communicating in English. Examples of such responses include: "I am glad because I know how to use it", "Even though I feel slightly stressed while using English, I enjoy communicating in a foreign language", "I feel fine, though I am aware of making linguistic mistakes", and "Very well, quite naturally, English words come to me faster than the Polish equivalents". One particularly noteworthy response in this category was: "I feel comfortable because I can express **more** about my emotions and problems in a foreign language" (emphasis added). In contrast, the second group, representing 18 responses (23.1%), expressed negative feelings towards using English, with many indicating a lack of confidence, insecurity, or discouragement. Their responses included: "I feel a barrier when using English because I lack certain words", "I feel embarrassed speaking English", "I feel more pressure when the material I know is easy, but I can't come up with the answer to a question", "I don't feel secure when writing", "Insecure", and "I often struggle to recall certain phrases and expressions".

The next question asked respondents whether they preferred a routine in foreign language classrooms or a more varied and dynamic approach. A significant majority, 61 participants (78.2%), expressed a preference for a diverse learning environment, emphasising the motivational benefits of engaging with various tasks and instructions. Some students highlighted that "I'm encouraged to attend classes when I know there will be a variety of activities and ways to learn English", while others noted that "working on a broad array of tasks is more engaging than a limited set of activities" and that "a diverse approach helps me retain language content and stay focused". However, 17 respondents (21.8%) favoured a more structured and predictable classroom setting, expressing reservations about variation. Some students warned that "too many different

activities during class make me disengage", while others stated, "I feel more at ease knowing what to expect", "having a stable structure reduces my anxiety", and "predictability in the classroom enhances my learning experience". One student elaborated, "It's not about monotony, but as long as the routine is well-structured, I'm comfortable", while another explained, "I easily adapt to a routine and dislike frequent changes". These responses suggest that while many students thrive in a dynamic learning environment, others benefit from stability, which helps them feel secure and focused.

The third question examined how students responded to disruptions while taking notes. The most common reaction was directly addressing the distraction, with 46 students (59%) stating they would ask the person to stop. Ignoring the distraction was the second most frequent response, chosen by 15 students (19.2%), while only 3 students (3.8%) reported being unbothered by such interruptions. These findings indicate that students generally view themselves as proactive learners who seek to minimise disruptions to their academic tasks. Furthermore, participants from the second school demonstrated a strong willingness to assert their need for an undisturbed learning environment.

The final question explored students' perspectives on group work. A majority of 54 respondents (69.2%) expressed a positive view, highlighting the benefits of motivation through interpersonal interaction and the enjoyment derived from collaboration. Comments such as "it is helpful to get motivated by exchanging ideas with peers" and "working in groups is enjoyable" illustrate this perspective. Conversely, 24 students (30.8%) held a more negative view of group work, with some expressing a preference for individual tasks. One student remarked, "If I have to participate, I will, but I would rather work alone", while another stated, "I prefer working individually, though I can tolerate groups of up to two additional students—no more than that". Others were sceptical of group work's efficiency, noting that "the outcome depends on whether group members are hard-working; otherwise, nothing gets done". One respondent was particularly critical, asserting that "group work often turns into socialising rather than structured learning, so I prefer working independently". These responses highlight a divide in students' attitudes, with some valuing collaboration and others perceiving it as inefficient or distracting.

3.4 Discussion

This study aimed to examine the relationship between Conscientiousness and self-assessment of foreign language acquisition skills and English grades among higher secondary students. The findings confirm the hypothesis: students with higher levels of Conscientiousness tend to achieve better English grades and report higher self-assessments compared to those with lower levels of Conscientiousness. Empirical evidence from this study confirms that a higher level of Conscientiousness is associated with significantly higher self-rated English grades and language skills. Furthermore, students with high Conscientiousness not only perceive their abilities more positively but also

attain superior academic outcomes. In contrast, students with lower levels of Conscientiousness and self-assessment tend to perform less well academically. This suggests that highly Conscientious students approach challenges in FLA settings with a structured, consistent, and confident mindset, viewing linguistic tasks as goals to be achieved.

Similarly, Hartman and Betz (2007: 145–161) revealed that the higher one's level of Conscientiousness, the higher the success rate of students' chances of adjustment in the educational setting; students with high scores of that trait are convinced that their efforts are sufficient to complete an academic task. The empirical findings emphasise the importance and impact of a high level of Conscientiousness in the FLA classroom supporting the study's hypothesis. Furthermore, two-way ANOVA analyses showed a consistent relationship between Conscientiousness and self-assessment of foreign language acquisition skills and English grades, in particular the differences in mean grades between high and low Conscientiousness levels. To illustrate this point, (Novikova/Berisha/Novikov/Shlyakhta 2020: 35) found that individuals with high Conscientiousness exhibited better academic performance and more accurate self-assessments of their language acquisition abilities compared to those with lower Conscientiousness scores. Finally, it may be concluded that Conscientiousness is key in predicting an individual's progress in foreign language learning. The findings show a pattern of success, reflected in consistently high grades in the FLA area. Thus, the hypothesis is confirmed.

Following this, the findings verify the empirical research hypothesis: There are positive correlations between a high level of Conscientiousness and self-rated English grades, with an additional positive correlation between a high level of that trait and self-rated language skills. Such results indicate that scoring a high level of Conscientiousness enables students to achieve noticeably better educational results, particularly leading these individuals to perceive their performance and abilities as competent individuals in charge of their educational pathway.

Regarding the research question: What is the profile of a student with low, medium, and high levels of Conscientiousness? This study offers valuable insights into the role of Conscientiousness in foreign language learning. The data, both quantitative and qualitative, consistently show that students with higher levels of Conscientiousness tend to experience greater enjoyment and a stronger sense of competence when communicating in English. These factors are crucial for long-term foreign language acquisition, as they support the effective learning of new linguistic material. Students who enjoy the process and feel capable are more likely to sustain their progress over time. As a result, learners with higher Conscientiousness typically perform better academically, as evidenced by their higher grades. The findings reveal a clear pattern: the more Conscientious a student is, the higher their grade point average. This suggests that Conscientious students are not only more engaged in language learning but also more resilient in overcoming the challenges posed by various forms of assessment.

Additionally, students with high Conscientiousness displayed a strong preference for a diverse classroom environment. Rather than showing reservations, they expressed

a positive outlook on diversity, which, in turn, had a beneficial impact on their overall learning experience. This can be attributed to the fact that highly Conscientious individuals are generally more confident and competent in dealing with novelty, including the unexpected and the unfamiliar. Their ability to embrace new learning stimuli increases their attention and engagement in the classroom. Furthermore, the empirical findings indicate that students with high Conscientiousness tend to take an active role in their educational journey. They are less likely to be distracted by external factors, such as peers attempting to divert their focus. This can be explained by their tendency to view language acquisition as an aspect of self-management, a core feature of Conscientiousness. In fact, these students actively communicate their need for uninterrupted focus on their academic tasks. The qualitative data also suggests that highly Conscientious students do not perceive foreign language demands as overwhelming challenges. Instead, they approach these demands with a sense of mastery and determination. More importantly, they plan their study schedules meticulously, ensuring that they allocate time for language learning in a structured, deliberate manner. As a result, students with high Conscientiousness tend to spread their language learning efforts over extended periods, leading to sustained improvement in their linguistic competence.

Conscientiousness has been shown to play a transformative role, not only in how students perceive their self-rated language skills, but also in their tendency to make mistakes. This psychological trait enables learners, regardless of their current proficiency in a foreign language, to consistently practice language acquisition through the trial-and-error process, ultimately leading to mastery. Hirschi (2008: 716–721) reaches similar conclusions, arguing that individuals with high levels of conscientiousness can establish a strong connection between their educational journey and personal lives, motivating them to engage actively in foreign language classes. Furthermore, these learners are more likely to complete assignments on time, which enhances their sense of control over their lives and contributes to greater life satisfaction (Sutin/Luchetti/Stephan/Robins/Terracciano 2017: 144–166).

When it comes to a student with a moderate level of Conscientiousness, their academic outcomes are lower than those of students with high levels of this trait, but significantly higher than those with low levels. The moderate level is often considered optimal for FLA, as students with higher scores may face challenges associated with the extremes of the trait, which could hinder academic performance (Roberts/Lejuez/Krueger/Richards/Hill 2014: 1315–30, Stajkovic/Bandura/Locke/Lee/Sergent 2018: 238–245). Moderately Conscientious learners tend to view their academic performance in a more positive light, earn better grades, and rate their language skills significantly higher than their less Conscientious peers. This moderate level of Conscientiousness appears to play a key role in shaping their self-assessments, being influenced by the students' confidence in their linguistic abilities, a responsible approach to handling tasks, and an ability to resist distractions. They view their academic pursuits as worth the resources, leading to generally positive or neutral attitudes toward their obligations.

On the other hand, students with lower levels of Conscientiousness tend to have a more negative outlook on using English, often feeling insecure, discouraged, or lacking in self-confidence. This highlights the importance of psycho-affective factors in foreign language acquisition. These students also express a preference for routine-based environments and show reluctance towards the diversity often found in classroom settings, perceiving it as disruptive. Additionally, they are likely to view collaborative tasks with scepticism, considering them an obligation rather than an opportunity for enjoyment, preferring instead to work independently. In conclusion, the findings suggest that students with lower Conscientiousness are less engaged in their academic tasks. Such students often become distracted by external factors, such as peers who divert their attention from the tasks at hand. Furthermore, these students are less inclined to communicate with others, which further disrupts their ability to focus on their academic responsibilities.

3.5 Limitations and implications for future research

Despite the evidence that Conscientiousness plays a significant role in Foreign Language Acquisition (FLA), influencing both general academic achievement and language learning success, there are several limitations that must be addressed. It is important to emphasise that no single personality trait guarantees success in FLA. Instead, a broad range of variables must be considered, including the number of research participants or their social background. Ultimately, this may have an impact when interpreting the findings. While the data collection process underwent without significant disruptions among participants, most of the learners who completed the questionnaire shared a similar social background, primarily coming from small rural towns or neighbourhoods. Additionally, all participants were enrolled in general academic higher secondary schools. A key limitation of the study, however, is the homogeneity of the student sample compared to the more diverse populations typically found in larger urban areas.

Several recommendations can be made for future research. One important issue that requires a closer attention in foreign language classrooms is the role of gender. Research suggests that, on average, women tend to score higher in Conscientiousness than men, which contributes to their success in structured learning environments where attention to detail is beneficial (Verbree et al. 2023). Consequently, these gender differences in Conscientiousness can sometimes influence how students are perceived by teachers and peers, shaping interactions in the classroom. For instance, teachers knowing that female students are higher in Conscientiousness may unconsciously hold higher expectations for them, assuming that female students are more detail-oriented, organised, and diligent which can lead to an increased load of responsibilities. In contrast, male students, scoring lower in Conscientiousness may face assumptions about being less organised or committed which could impact their involvement in group tasks and peer collaborations. As a result, it has to be recognised that such differences

are averages and do not apply uniformly to all individuals. To support all students effectively, educators should focus on incorporating strategies that encourage the development of organisational and study skills across genders, fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Additionally, it would be valuable to explore the cognitive mechanisms behind disruptions in note-taking, which were observed in many learners in this study. Since a large number of participants showed high levels of Conscientiousness, they may find note-taking to be especially unproductive. These students approach academic tasks with great attention to detail and a strong sense of duty. That is why, future studies could examine ways to integrate note-taking and learning activities in ways that minimise distractions and enhance productivity. Additionally, psychological workshops dedicated to Conscientiousness can help students better understand how this personality trait may influence their academic performance, time management, and goal-setting strategies. By understanding the strengths and challenges Conscientiousness poses, educators can adapt their teaching to create more effective learning environments.

Further research could also explore how students manage their thoughts and actions in relation to their levels of Conscientiousness. This could be done by incorporating questions about social expectations and current trends, such as those found on social media. Consequently, educators can gain a deeper understanding of students' actual interests and design more effective groupings, pairing students with similar characteristics to foster collaboration and improve learning outcomes. This approach could also enhance Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE), an important factor in language acquisition, promoting group cohesion. Additionally, by exploring these psychological mechanisms, students can gain a better understanding of their own decision-making processes and learning preferences. Future research could explore how cultural perceptions of personality traits influence students' attitude to learning or a particular foreign language.

Another aspect worth investigating is the role of routine-based versus varied activity structures in the FLA classroom. This study challenges the assumption that students with high levels of Conscientiousness are focused only on completing tasks; rather, these students also try to avoid monotony in their educational experience which helps sustain their motivation. Since structure and consistency are central to Conscientiousness, further research should explore how Conscientious learners value these elements. Additionally, incorporating hybrid FLA activities, which combine reflective tasks with thematic units, may better help students consolidate their knowledge and provide space for their concerns to be voiced on a regular basis.

To conclude, simplifying the linguistic layer of research instruments can provide more accurate insights for future studies. Many participants may be unfamiliar with the concept of Conscientiousness and find the terminology in the questionnaire overly formal, potentially leading to misinterpretations or inconsistent responses. Also,

incorporating a section dedicated to everyday communicative situations could provide more practical, real-world context. This would enhance the comprehensiveness of the data and offer a clearer understanding of how participants approach FLA.

Acknowledgements

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ZITIERNACHWEIS:

Appendix A

SURVEY ON CONSCIENTIOUSNESS IN LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Dear Student,

I am a fourth-year student specialising in English Philology – Teacher Training Programme at Opole University. The following questionnaire is being conducted solely for research purposes. The questionnaire consists of three parts concerning your communication skills in English as well as various elements of both your daily and school life. Please provide honest answers – the survey is anonymous and will not affect your grades in any way. Part 1 concerns demographic data from your daily life in the context of learning English

1. Number/Pseudonym

………

2. How old are you?
○ 15
○ 16
○ 17
○ 18
○ 19

3. I am
○ female
○ male
○ other gender

4. Where do you live?
○ village (up to 2,500 inhabitants)
○ small town (from 2,500 to 50,000 inhabitants)
○ city (over 50,000 inhabitants)

5. Do you enjoy English?
○ Yes
○ No

6. What other foreign languages can you speak?

………

7. Do you like your English teacher?
○ Yes
○ No

8. Do you study English outside of school?

○ Yes

○ No

9. Describe your feelings when you use English

…………………...……………………………………………………………...………………

10. What is your attitude to group work?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

11. Are you often hard-working in English classes?

…………………………………………………………………………………...………………

12. Would you consider yourself confident in English classes?

○ Yes

○ No

13. How would you react if someone disturbed your note-taking?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

14. Do you get easily distracted in English classes?

○ Yes

○ No

15. Would you consider yourself a diligent person?

○ Yes

○ No

16. Would you consider yourself an effective person?

○ Yes

○ No

17. How would you rate your **speaking** skills in English?

    1   2   3   4   5   6

    ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

18. How would you rate your **writing** skills in English?

    1   2   3   4   5   6

    ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

19. How would you rate your **reading** skills in English?

    1   2   3   4   5   6

    ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

20. How would you rate your **listening** skills in English?

    1   2   3   4   5   6

    ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

21. What was your English grade at the end of the previous school year?

   1   2   3   4   5   6
   ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

22. What was your English grade at the end of this semester?

   1   2   3   4   5   6
   ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

23. What English grade did you receive at the end of primary school?

   1   2   3   4   5   6
   ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

24. What do you like to do most in English classes?

……………………...………………

25. What are your preferred ways to learn English?

……………………...………………

26. Do you prefer when English classes are always conducted in the same way, or do you prefer variety? Why?

……………………...………………

Part 2: Conscientiousness

This section addresses your Conscientiousness in the context of learning English. Below are 10 questions asking about your perspective. Imagine you have freedom of choice. Choose the option you think describes you most suitably (1 = the lowest, 5 = the highest). Please answer each statement quickly, without thinking too much. Try not to change your answers after you have selected them. Make sure you answer all the questions.

1. I am always prepared

    1   2   3   4   5
   ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

2. I leave my belongings around

    1   2   3   4   5
   ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

3. I pay attention to details

    1   2   3   4   5
   ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

4. I make a mess of things

    1   2   3   4   5
   ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

5. I get chores done right away

1   2   3   4   5

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

6. I often forget to put things back in their proper place

1   2   3   4   5

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

7. I like order

1   2   3   4   5

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

8. I avoid duties

1   2   3   4   5

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

9. I follow a schedule

1   2   3   4   5

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

10. I am exacting in my work

1   2   3   4   5

○ ○ ○ ○ ○