

APPLYING PSYCHOLOGICAL TYPE THEORY TO WRITING*

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Abstract

This article culminates in the work of Villanova's Karyn Hollis by showing how psychological temperament and profile impact one's writing—strengths and weaknesses

On Applying Psychological Type Theory to Writing, by J.D. Meyer

Sequence of activities is very important when presenting the application of Psychological Type Theory to Writing for students. Otherwise, we could appear to be using forced imagination and merit alarm from our critics to paraphrase Wang Yang-Ming (1472-1529), a leading Neo-Confucian scholar/government official of China.

Stage One starts with **justification**. In “Emphasis on Teaching: Five Techniques Make Material More Understandable,” <http://www.bygpub.com/eot/eot7.htm>¹ Marshall Brain asserts such points as, “Why is the material important? How will it be used?... Justification is important because it gives students a reason to listen to you.” Students need to know why they are doing any assignment that obviously looks different from typical course material. Therefore, I justified our study of Psychological Type for three reasons: (1) Knowledge of one's psychological type, temperament, preference and preference clarity can help your writing. (2) Psychological Type has been the leading vocational theory for the last 25 years. (3) The wealth of information is easy to understand and fun reading at the introductory level; this contains analysis of famous people's temperaments and profiles, including presidents of the U.S.

Stage Two was assigning the **Jung Typology Test** www.humanmetrics.com² a free online Psychological Type instrument. The students printed the results of the Jung Typology Test, which gave them their profile and strength of preferences. Then I copied down the results of the printouts and returned them to the students. I told the students to pay attention to their preference strengths. Watch out if a preference is only slight because one's profile would reflect an “X.” instead of either preference. Single digit preferences definitely merit an “X” label. For example, if your profile of ENFJ includes a fourth preference—How You Deal with the Outer World—in the single digits, then read the descriptions for both J (judging) and P (perceiving).

Let's return to Brain and his second technique: **review**. Brain observes, “Any new concept will rest on a foundation of previously learned ideas and terminology...Review also helps to link new material to old.” My presentation of Psychology Type Theory to Writing isn't exactly review as described in Brain's article. Nevertheless, Brain's statements apply here because to the need to go from general Psychological Type theory to its specific applications for writing. Stage Three began with an explanation of the

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¹<http://www.bygpub.com/eot/eot7.htm>

²<http://www.humanmetrics.com/>

four preferences, a set of four pairs in a continuum of clarity. <http://www.cpp.com/Pdfs/smp261146.pdf>³ In other words, we'd look at each component of the four-point profile one-at-a-time, starting with Extraversion (E) versus Introversion (I)—Where you Focus your Attention—people and things or ideas and impressions? Then, I introduced the **four temperaments**—another set of four pairs but analyzed as units http://www.keirsey.com/synergyleaders/overview_all.aspx⁴. For example, an NF (Intuitive/Feeling) is called an Idealist and Abstract Cooperator. The temperaments show patterns behind communication and action, or what we say and what we do.

Finally, I finish giving students the background information for profiles. Stage Four reaches the **entire four-point code**. Now we're ready for the most important and conclusion to this unit: the application of Psychological Type to Writing. Karyn Hollis of Villanova University assembled this research into an easy to use package http://www19.homepage.villanova.edu/karyn.hollis/prof_academic/Courses/common_files/personality_types/ Students received a brief, general description of the 16 scales in a 4x4 matrix, #1 in Dr. Hollis's website. The key article is "Handouts on Personality and Writing." (#3). All eight preferences have the following format: process, strengths, weaknesses, and blocks.

Since I had my students' four-point codes with the preference clarity, I compiled a class profile: EXFJ. I read over the descriptions of the three strong preferences: Extraversion (E), Feeling (F), and Judging (J). I provided comments when preference combination amplified each other. The Extraversion (E) + Feeling (F) combination can lead to being "overly sentimental." Someone who is extraverted (E), intuitive (N), and perceiving (P) may generate "shallow ideas or too many ideas." The extravert could write an outline after the rough draft (the opposite of an introvert) or allow for ideas to pop into his or head while doing routines like washing dishes or feeding and watering the red cats. Upon completion of this stage, I assured the class that I've given them enough data on Psychological Type and writing, another side of justification.

Assignment

Now the students are ready to write a rough draft. I read some Mountain View Community College (Dallas/Oak Cliff) Exit Exam prompts and persuasive topics from my textbook. I also told them to look through our textbook, *Wordsmith*, by Pamela Arlov, together with any book related to passing the THEA (Texas Higher Education Assessment).

The students now have essay prompt and Psychological Type theory information, so now it's time for tips on writing a rough draft. Write every other line or two out of three lines. That way they can use an arrow to insert extra details. Maybe they'd decide to carve a new paragraph and write the typist paragraph symbol. Also I like writing a little number in a pair of parentheses before each sentence, starting over with another paragraph. This information comes from a chapter section of my copyrighted textbook that I published at Associated Content http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/935023/prewriting_tips_for_the_fiveparagraph.html?cat=4

⁶ One of our computer assignments was for the class to go find this essay.

The students will turn in an outline or cluster chart with their rough draft too. We had studied prewriting in our textbook, *Wordsmith*, by Pamela Arlov earlier in the semester. Presumably, they would write the outline/cluster chart after their rough draft since everyone in my little class is an extravert. I reminded them of an observation in from our textbook. The words in the cluster chart tap the left side of the brain while the circles and lines draw information from the right side of the brain.

The Hidden Agenda

I have another reason besides improving writing ability for teaching Psychological Type Theory to students: offering psychological self-help. Recall that students receive the basics of the overall theory before applications to writing. Increased psychological disturbance among college students is on the rise and well-documented. www.acha-ncha.org?pubs_rpts.html#fa06. The ratio of counselors to students is weak:

1 to 1,527. www.collegecounseling.org/pdf/nsccd_final_v1.pdf+National+Survey+of+Counseling+Center+Directors&cd=8&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl My indirect approach could be described as trickle-down. The student may choose to read more about Psy-

³<http://www.cpp.com/Pdfs/smp261146.pdf>

⁴http://www.keirsey.com/synergyleaders/overview_all.aspx

⁵http://www19.homepage.villanova.edu/karyn.hollis/prof_academic/Courses/common_files/personality_types/personality_and_writing.htm

⁶http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/935023/prewriting_tips_for_the_fiveparagraph.html?cat=4

⁷http://www.collegecounseling.org/pdf/nsccd_final_v1.pdf+National+Survey+of+Counseling+Center+Directors&cd=8&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl

chological Type theory or overcome reservations about going to a counselor.

Summary

In conclusion, I presented Psychological Type in a careful sequence thoroughly grounded in the theory before explaining its application to writing. Next I provided an ample amount of persuasive/THEA prompts to maximize the likelihood of the students finding a topic in which they could excel. The lesson concluded with the presentation of rough draft instructions.

Psychological Type and Education, by J.D. Meyer

- 1. <http://jimbuie.blogspot.com> Write Style: 16 writing types by Ann Loomis.
- 2. http://www.absolutewrite.com/novels/psychological_self.htm “How Knowing Your Psychological Type can Help You Write Better,” by Sister Lou Ella Hickman.
- 3. http://www.personalitypathways.com/MBTI_articles4c.html Articles on MBTI Applications: Personality Type Applications in Education. Are they really problem students? Bridging Differences through Understanding, by Jane Kise and Beth Russell. This article is more about different personality types in the classroom than writing.
- 4. http://www.ranshawconsulting.com/the_write.htm This article includes email advice, better reports with eight steps. The 4 C’s are clear thinking, complete information, concisely presented, and correctly stated.
- 5. http://www.archetypewriting.com/articles/articles_ck/MBTI_PMAI.htm Pearson-Marr Archetype Indicator (PMAI) overlaps with narrative theory. “Characterization and Conflict: Using Psychological Tests to Improve your Writing,” by Carol Kaufman: (1) Seeing both sides, (2) Using Psychological Tests, (3) MBTI and Keirsey, and (4) PMAI.
- 6. <http://www2.gsu.edu/~dschjb/wwwmbti.html> Student Learning and the MBTI. Teaching tips for all the scales!
- 7. <http://www4ncsu.edu/> Writing—MBTI Preferences: Preferred writing approaches for each preference.
- 8. <http://www.edutechwiki.unige.ch/en/> Also known as writing-across-the-curriculum. Perceptual learning style preference questionnaire by Jensen and DiTiberio reduces anxiety over writing and blocks. Extroversion/Introversion is like Snyder’s scale of personality types low and high self-monitoring.
- 9. <http://www.personalitytest.net/articles/article4.htm> “The Many Benefits of the MBTI to my Business,” by Sandra Lin. This ISFJ applies her knowledge of the MBTI to resume writing, team building of resume writers/career counselors, and gaining self validity as a resume writer. She’s the president of A Better Impression in Toronto.
- 10. <http://www.personalitytest.net/articles/article1.htm> “Calendars and Personality Type,” by Janet Barclay. J-P preference has the greatest influence on space and time management. SJ’s naturally attached to schedules and deadlines.
- 11. <http://www.thembtiblog.com> This MBTI Blog is chock-full of info, including this article on how to create believable fictional characters through studying the MBTI and related instruments.
- 12. <http://www.capt.org/catalog/MBTI-Book-60109.htm> Looking at Type and Spirituality: Using Psychological Type to Discover your Unique Spiritual Experience by Sandra Krebs Hirsh and Jane A.G. Kise This book shows how one’s Psychological Type preferences influence spiritual/religious choices. Here are some examples: (1) S vs. N—How we perceive God, (2) T vs. F—How we act out our faith in God, (3) E vs. I—Gaining energy for our spiritual journey, and (4) J vs. P—How we live out our spiritual journey.