DOI: https://doi.org/10.17759/psyedu.2024160207

ISSN: 2587-6139 (online)

Psychological-Educational Studies 2024. Vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 116–127. DOI: https://doi.org/10.17759/psyedu.2024160207 ISSN: 2587-6139 (online)

ПСИХОЛОГИЯ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ | EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Personal Predictors of Pedagogical Assessment of Ability in Student Actors

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One of the main way for the study of acting can be considered the process of training student-actors, in which the mechanisms and techniques of creating an image and assuming a role are unfolded and highlighted. Special attention in the study of this problematic should be paid to the factors contributing to the mastery of the profession. It is assumed that personal characteristics play a key role in the issue of successful training of a student-actor, because it is the actor's personality that can be considered as the main tool that the actor has in the art of acting transformation. The aim is to identify personal predictors of pedagogical assessments of acting abilities among student actors. Psychodiagnostic study using the following techniques: "16 personality factors" by R. Kettell and "Short portrait questionnaire of the Big Five" by M.S. Egorova and O.V. Parshikova, the scale of average assessments of acting abilities. It was revealed that two personality traits are associated with the pedagogical assessment of the acting skills of an actor student: "consciousness" (B5-10) and "sensitivity" (I, 16PF). They also contribute to this average estimate. In this regard important factors for the success of mastering the acting profession are consciousness, organization, focus on maintaining relationships in the learning process, as well as the sensitivity of the student actor to internal and external changes, the richness of his emotional experience.

Keywords: acting ability; Big Five; Cattel`s 16 Personality Factors Questionnaire; student actors; conscientiousness; sensitivity; K.S. Stanislavski.

For citation: Savchenko N.L., Emelin G.D. Personal Predictors of Pedagogical Assessment of Ability in Student Actors. *Psikhologo-pedagogicheskie issledovaniya = Psychological-Educational Studies*, 2024. Vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 116–127. DOI:10.17759/psyedu.2024160207(In Russ.).

Savchenko N.L., Emelin G.D.
Personal Predictors of Pedagogical Assessment of
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Psychological-Educational Studies. 2024.
Vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 116–127.

Личностные предикторы педагогической оценки способностей у студентов-актеров

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Изучение особенностей актерской деятельности в ситуации ее освоения представляет особый интерес, поскольку в этом процессе разворачиваются и подсвечиваются механизмы и техники создания образа, принятия на себя роли. Особое внимание при исследовании данной проблематики следует уделить факторам, способствующим освоению профессии. Предполагается, что личностные особенности играют ключевую роль в вопросе успешности обучения студента-актера, поскольку именно личность актера может рассматриваться в качестве главного инструмента, которым располагает актер в искусстве перевоплощения. Целью данного исследования было выявление личностных предикторов педагогических оценок актерских способностей у студентов-актеров. Проведено психодиагностическое исследование применением следующих методик: «16 личностных факторов» Р. Кеттелла и «Короткого портретного опросника Большой пятерки» М.С. Егоровой и О.В. Паршиковой, а также шкалы усредненных оценок актерских способностей. Выявлено, что с педагогической оценкой актерских способностей студентаактера связаны две личностные черты: «сознательность-добросовестность» (Б5-10) и «чувствительность» (I, 16PF). Они также вносят вклад в данную усредненную педагогическую оценку актерских способностей, при этом больший вклад вносит первая из указанных черт. Так, важными факторами успешности освоения актерской профессии являются сознательность, организованность, ориентированность на поддержание отношений в процессе обучения, а также чуткость студента-актера к внутренним и внешним изменениям, богатство его эмоционального опыта, опыта переживаний.

Ключевые слова: актерские способности; Большая пятерка; опросник Р. Кеттелла; студенты-актеры; сознательность; чувствительность; К.С. Станиславский.

Для цитаты: *Савченко Н.Л., Емелин Г.Д.* Личностные предикторы педагогической оценки способностей у студентов-актеров [Электронный ресурс] // Психолого-педагогические исследования. 2024. Том 16. № 2. С. 116—127. DOI:10.17759/psyedu.2024160207

Savchenko N.L., Emelin G.D.
Personal Predictors of Pedagogical Assessment of
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Introduction

The question of which psychological indicators differentiate successful student actors from unsuccessful ones has been examined from various perspectives by researchers in the field of acting. For instance, A.F. Roslyakov, using the method of pedagogical experimentation, identified and described the motivational characteristics distinctive to these groups of student actors [6]. In a study based on material collected by V.S. Sobkin in O.P. Tabakov's workshop at GITIS, the method of ranking students by teachers according to their success level was used. This resulted in an averaged ability scale, which, along with personality trait scales by R. Cattell, underwent factor analysis [14]. Similarly, personality characteristics of successful and unsuccessful students were identified using the assessment scale for the discipline "Acting Mastery" [12]. For this purpose, profiles of personality traits of students—actors who were expelled and those who continued their studies after the first year—were also compared [13].

Thus, we believe that examining the personality characteristics of student actors through the lens of their success in training can be considered one way to identify the traits necessary for successful acting activity overall.

In 2023, the Center for Sociocultural Problems of Modern Education at the Psychological Institute of RAS developed a comprehensive research program on the individual personality, cognitive, and emotional characteristics of student actors. This program was based on the extensive experience of the laboratory staff in studying the psychological aspects of acting skills [5; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12; 13; 14; 15; 16].

The program identified four main areas of study of the psychological characteristics of student actors: 1) Individual-personality characteristics; 2) Emotional sphere; 3) Cognitive sphere; 4) Behavioral style characteristics. These areas in turn defined the methodological framework, i.e., determined the choice of specific methods.

In March-April 2023, the battery of methods was tested on second-year student actors at one of Moscow's universities. Due to the volume of test material, respondents completed the questionnaires in four stages.

One of the main tasks of our research program was to identify individual-psychological factors associated with the success of student actors. The metric of success was decided to be the averaged expert assessment of acting abilities, combining the opinions of four theater teachers on the students' abilities. The article is devoted to the connections between psychological characteristics and the expert assessment of acting abilities.

Preliminarily, based on the results of correlation analysis, it was found that the averaged expert assessment was associated only with the scales of two methods, which will be considered in this work.

Methods

To measure personality characteristics, the "16 Personality Factors" questionnaire by R. Cattell (16PF) [4] and the "Short Portrait Questionnaire of the Big Five" (B5-10) [3] were used. The questionnaires were sent to respondents online using the "Anketolog.ru" service. Statistical data processing was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25 with correlation and regression analysis methods.

To assess acting abilities, the average ratings of four theater university teachers (theatrical masters) were used. They were asked to rate each student's acting abilities on a scale from 1 to 10.

Savchenko N.L., Emelin G.D.
Personal Predictors of Pedagogical Assessment of
Ability in Student Actors
Psychological-Educational Studies. 2024.
Vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 116–127.

Sample

The study involved 47 second-year students (22 women, 25 men) from one of Moscow's theater universities, aged 18 to 29 years (M = 19.6; SD = 1.7).

Research Results

The connection between the expert assessment of acting abilities was found only with two scales: factor I (toughness-sensitivity) (16PF) and "conscientiousness" (B5-10) (Table 1).

Table 1
Correlation of Expert Assessment of Acting Abilities with Factor I (16PF) and the
"Conscientiousness" Scale (Short Portrait Big Five Questionnaire) (N = 47)

| | Factor I (toughness- sensitivity) | "Conscientiousness" (B5-10) |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Expert Assessment of Acting Abilities | 0,301* | 0,530** |

Note: * – correlation is significant at the 0.05 level; ** – correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Additionally, a regression model was built to assess how well the external assessment of acting abilities is predicted by the above variables.

The results of the regression analysis showed that both independent variables (sensitivity and conscientiousness) significantly predict the external expert assessment of acting abilities (F(2, 38)=12.1, p<0.001). Moreover, the coefficient of determination R2=0.39 indicates that our model explains 39.8% of the variance in the external expert assessment.

It is also important to note the influence of each of the two factors on the dependent variable (external expert assessment). It was found that out of the two variables, only the conscientiousness variable was a significant positive predictor (B=0.45, t=4.29, p<0.001), while Factor I showed only a tendency towards significant influence (B=0.27, t=1.741, p=0.09). Thus, the conscientiousness variable alone appears to be a more powerful predictor of the external expert assessment of acting abilities.

Furthermore, for additional verification, a single-factor model was constructed, including only the conscientiousness variable as a predictor of the external expert assessment of acting abilities. The single-factor model also predicted the value of the external expert assessment of acting abilities fairly well (F(1, 41)=15.971, p<0.001), but it explains 28% of the variance in expert assessment (R2=0.28), which is almost 12% less than the two-factor model.

In this regard, we believe that the two-factor predictive model is more adequate in our case.

Discussion of Results

Savchenko N.L., Emelin G.D.
Personal Predictors of Pedagogical Assessment of
Ability in Student Actors
Psychological-Educational Studies. 2024.
Vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 116–127.

It is more reliable to predict the assessment of acting abilities based on the "conscientiousness" scale, also known as "diligence." A person with a high expression of this personality trait can be characterized as meticulous, organized, dedicated to the task at hand, and reliable. In other words, in the studied group, higher external evaluations from leaders (masters) were given to students who tend to attend classes systematically and are fully committed to the learning process of acting. Interestingly, previous studies have found a link between conscientiousness and academic achievement [23]. In the case of actor training, the ability to perform also plays the role of "academic achievement."

Let us turn to the results of previous works that studied the academic success of student actors in relation to their personality characteristics.

In A.F. Roslyakov's work, motivational differences were established between successful and unsuccessful student actors: the former predominantly have developmental motives and are actively interested in creativity, while the latter lean towards comfort and life-supporting motivation, characterized by inadequate self-assessment and a tendency to asthenic reactions. It is noted that successful students are driven by motives of "active activity, social utility, or creatively developing personal orientation" [6, p. 11]. In contrast, the opposite category of students demonstrated weak willpower, fear of difficulties, and "inability to cope with stressful situations, excessive worries, a tendency towards 'stage fright,' panic, irritability, and sometimes aggressive or 'refusal' reactions during training or creative work" [6, p. 12].

In the study by V.S. Sobkin and T.A. Feofanova, based on the personality profiles of student actors from the 1976 intake according to R. Cattell's model, the following correlates of teacher assessment of their "success" were identified through ranking from more capable to less capable. Among them were high scores on factors G ("high normative behavior") and Q3 ("self-control"), as well as a low score on scale F ("restraint"). This complex corresponds to the secondary scale F8, which in turn indicates a strong superego and the ability to suppress spontaneous self-manifestations. Thus, successful students, according to teachers, can control their emotionality, behavior, and act according to generally accepted notions of normativity [14, p. 222].

Based on the study by the same authors of male student actors from the 2010-2017 intakes, it was concluded that, unlike "successful" students, those "screened out" after the first year of study were characterized by a tendency towards "leadership, radicalism, non-recognition of authorities, individualism, and at the same time an orientation towards their inner world (absorbed in their ideas, passion for inner illusions)," as well as low self-control of behavior and emotions [13, p. 68].

As a result of the data analysis of all first- and second-year students obtained during 2010-2015 [12], it was found that the N scale ("diplomacy") is included in one factor with the assessment of acting mastery in both the first and second years. It indicates perceptiveness towards oneself and others, rational behavior, caution, restraint, and the ability to behave in society. At the same time, in the first year, the negative pole of the general factor is occupied by the M indicator ("dreaminess"), while in the second year, it is occupied by the B indicator ("intelligence"), showing a preference for concrete thinking over abstract thinking. It is noted that in the second year of the O.P. Tabakov Theater College, teachers, due to the specifics of working with students at this stage of training, "focus on the success of their professional interaction and mutual understanding with students" [12, p. 7]. In this sense, factor N, which captures a set of socially significant qualities, turns out to be key, as it facilitates mutual understanding and interaction between the student and the teacher and with stage partners.

Savchenko N.L., Emelin G.D.
Personal Predictors of Pedagogical Assessment of
Ability in Student Actors
Psychological-Educational Studies. 2024.
Vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 116–127.

We will summarize the features of student actors with varying degrees of ability to master the profession, as assessed by teachers (Table 2).

Table 2
General Characteristics of Successful and Unsuccessful Student Actors

| Successful students | Unsuccessful students | |
|---|---|--|
| 1) possess motivation for active engagement | 1) possess weak willpower, avoid difficulties; | |
| and creative development; | 2) have a low ability to cope with their | |
| 2) can manage their emotions and experiences, | emotions and experiences; | |
| have high self-control; | 3) tend to ignore and violate commonly | |
| 3) adhere to commonly accepted norms; | accepted norms; | |
| 4) strive to build harmonious interactions | 4) are prone to individualism and confrontation | |
| within the group and with the leader. | with the group and the leader. | |

It should be noted that in the present study, the trait "conscientiousness" is significant in terms of successfully mastering the actor's profession. It implies reliability, demandingness, interest, and organization, which in turn contribute to maintaining stable relationships with the teacher, respecting them, and ensuring some stability and predictability in the learning process.

Thus, there are intersections in the meanings that teachers ascribe to the assessment of students' acting abilities: at different times in theater schools, it has been significant for teachers to establish contact with the student, to lead the learning process, and for the student to control their expressions and to be oriented towards the norms shared by the group, which is important in the context of collaborative learning.

It is worth noting that K.S. Stanislavsky, when discussing theatrical ethics and discipline, emphasized the importance of the creative collective's organization, the ability to reach mutual understanding, and adherence to norms and rules accepted in the professional community. He speaks of the primacy of "artistic discipline" in the theater, which begins within each individual and cannot be established by external directives [18, p. 289]. Essentially, it is built on conscientiousness and a diligent attitude toward one's work.

"Artistic discipline," along with artistic ethics and a sense of collectivity, helps create the actor's stage presence and readiness for joint action.

Let's also consider the contribution of Scale I—sensitivity, the richness of emotional experiences, and the ability to live through them—to the overall assessment of a student's acting abilities by master teachers. This can be explained by the fact that a key aspect of an actor's professional activity is the ability to "enter the character," reproduce the character's experiences on stage, and this is inextricably linked to the ability to live through various emotional states of different content and depth.

Speaking of the art of experiencing, K.S. Stanislavsky notes that it is impossible without "living feelings" [19, p. 75]. An actor must notice the smallest details of both external circumstances and their own experiences. After all, creating images requires a rich experience and sensitivity to what is happening (both externally and internally).

Savchenko N.L., Emelin G.D.
Personal Predictors of Pedagogical Assessment of
Ability in Student Actors
Psychological-Educational Studies. 2024.
Vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 116–127.

In this regard, sensitivity as a trait can be considered an important prerequisite for developing the ability to transform since it combines qualities such as receptiveness to feelings (including those of the character and stage partner), their understanding and expression, a developed imagination, and an artistic perception of the world. Therefore, despite the fact that, according to regression analysis results, this trait contributes less, it cannot be ignored because sensitivity is associated with the key acting ability to transform [14].

It should also be noted that in foreign studies, professional actors differed from students in acting and non-actors in terms of emotional instability and vulnerability (volatility, neuroticism) [21; 22; 24; 25]. Furthermore, professionals, compared to students, demonstrated more pronounced abilities to generate original ideas, indicating a richness of their perceptual experience and imagination [22]. In addition, due to the necessity to finely feel and immerse in the character, the topic of actors' ability to set boundaries between their personalities and the characters arises, as their absence can lead to negative changes in the emotional sphere [20]. However, it is worth noting that not all theatrical systems require "immersion in the character," as evidenced by the "Diderot's Paradox" [1; 2; 17]. Therefore, on the one hand, not all masters may rely on sensitivity as a trait in evaluating acting abilities, but on the other hand, for success in acting, it may be more important not just to have high sensitivity but to be able to work with one's own experiences, transform them, reproduce them on stage, etc. These assumptions require separate verification.

Conclusions

Based on the results obtained in this study, the following conclusions can be made:

- 1) In assessing acting abilities, teachers focus on the expression of at least two personality traits: sensitivity (according to R. Cattell's model) and conscientiousness (according to the five-factor personality model).
- 2) If a student does not demonstrate a responsible approach to learning, diligence, and conscientiousness, even with a high level of emotional sensitivity, they are more likely not to be evaluated as successful in terms of acting abilities.
- 3) The personality trait "conscientiousness" (B5) is one of the main factors contributing to a master's perception of a student actor's ability to act.

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Savchenko N.L., Emelin G.D.
Personal Predictors of Pedagogical Assessment of
Ability in Student Actors
Psychological-Educational Studies. 2024.
Vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 116–127.

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Savchenko N.L., Emelin G.D.
Personal Predictors of Pedagogical Assessment of
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Psychological-Educational Studies. 2024.
Vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 116–127.

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Получена 02.05.2024 Принята в печать 21.06.2024 Received 02.05.2024 Accepted 21.06.2024