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Developing Students' Creativity in the English
Language Teaching Process

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INTRODUCTION

In this research work I have tried to reveal the importance of creativity in the process of teaching a foreign language class following up a considerable amount of investigation work into various innovative methods of and approaches to fostering students' creative thinking and developing skills necessary for it. Creativity is a process which generates ideas that have value to the individual. It involves looking at familiar things with a fresh eye, examining problems with an open mind, making connections, learning from mistakes and using imagination to explore new possibilities.

A typical creative process involves investigating a problem or issue, exploring multiple viewpoints and options, generating and testing out ideas, developing, refining and communicating solutions and evaluating whether or not they have worked.

- Creativity skills are those skills which contribute to an individual's capacity to understand and apply a creative process.
- Creative learning describes the range of activities and approaches undertaken by an individual which supports the development of creativity and other skills.
- Creative teaching describes approaches and activities, developed and delivered by those who lead learning, which are usually exciting, innovative and often use unexpected techniques to engage learners. Though often associated with the development of creativity skills in learners, creative teaching approaches might not necessarily do this. They might for example, be used to help learners acquire knowledge and understanding effectively, rather than on the development of creative skills in learners.

Creative thinking can be defined as a way of looking at problems or situations from a different perspective that suggests unconventional solutions. It involves addressing a situation, task, problem, or challenge with innovative or divergent thinking. It goes beyond a routine and a standard approach to responsibilities. Creative thinkers devise new ways to carry out tasks, solve problems, and meet challenges. Creative thinking can be stimulated both by an unstructured process such as brainstorming and by a structured process such as lateral thinking.

Creativity can further be defined as a process; creative students work hard and continually to improve ideas and solutions, this is by making steady alterations, and modifications.

The innovative character of creative skills used in teaching

Creativity has become an essential skill for success in the teaching and learning process. Very often the teachers can instill it into their students by using innovative methods and approaches so as to help them to think out of the box and become an effective problem-solver.

What is the goal of incorporating creative thinking skills in the language learning process?

When designing learning experiences, teachers should plan the curriculum and create learning environment that gives students options, voice, and choice in order to enable them to be creative. This can be effectively applied in a language teaching process and make it more enjoyable and beneficial for both the students and teachers. Expressive, creative thinking facilitates our students' language acquisition and develop better communication skills.

What are the objectives of the research?

I have tried to explain the importance of creativity when teaching a foreign language and illustrate some very important assumptions having in mind that you can achieve it by applying some very easy techniques and specific methods, setting up learning activities that allow students to explore their creativity in relevant, interesting, and worthwhile ways, valuing creativity and rewarding it so as to be a success.

1. Developing creativity in teaching English

The world today is a fast-paced, competitive place. Creativity has become an essential skill for success in all fields of work and studies. The application of creativity skills as children and young people grow and develop skills for learning, life and work is particularly important. Creativity skills help children and young learners not just to understand their world, but be sufficiently equipped to influence its shape and to exercise control over their interactions with it. To develop creativity we, teachers should pose the following questions to ourselves:

- Is the design of tasks authentic and meaningful?
- Do the tasks provide students with challenges to be creatively overcome?
- Are students really encouraged to be creative?
- Do students work in a collaborative team that allows them to display diverse skills and expertise?

What are the implications of this for teachers who want to foster creativity in their classrooms?

The point is that teaching with and for creativity is not as different from what we might regard as general good teaching practices as some people might suppose. Teachers who transmit enthusiasm for their subject are more likely to inspire their students. Students who are more interested in the subject are more likely to respond by making an extra effort, by applying greater initiative, by sharing ideas and asking questions. The “long conversations” of the classroom become more animated, more engaging, more profound.

Creative thinking is **a skill which lets you consider things from a fresh perspective and different angles**. It's an inventive thought process which results in surprising conclusions and new ways of doing things. Creative thinking can be aided by brainstorming or lateral thinking to generate ideas.

Here are 5 ways I use to encourage my students to be more creative.

-Inspire students to take risks with their ideas. I usually encourage my students to be creative, to think differently, to bring new ideas and to be innovative. We usually do creative activities when there is a difficult situation, something mysterious or innovative.

In order to be creative, students must have the courage to try new things and experiment with different ideas. Creativity requires research, bravery, risk-taking, and perseverance. Students should not fear mistakes or criticism but see these as opportunities for growth. Encourage them to take risks in their work by giving them time to explore their thoughts and come up with innovative solutions on a wide range of projects they are working on so that they can show us what's possible when they apply themselves creatively.

-Encourage them to come up with solutions they haven't considered before. Creativity is vast and ever-changing. Creativity needs to be fostered in a way that allows students the freedom to explore their ideas without fear of being judged or ridiculed. Encourage them to take risks with new projects, because by doing so, they will show us what's possible when applied creatively. Creative solutions are not always conventional; sometimes it takes pushing boundaries and thinking outside the box for an innovative solution to present itself. Challenge my students each day by giving them questions that may have been never asked before or ask them how we can change things up in our own classrooms today? What might happen if...? By challenging creativity daily, these exercises provide opportunities for fresh perspectives which help foster creative problem-solving skills critical for success in all fields of work.

-Give feedback on each idea and help them improve it. Students need feedback to grow and improve their creative processes. The quality of one's creativity is often characterized by the ability for that person to learn from mistakes or criticism and use it as a way to develop stronger ideas in the future. Providing direct feedback on each idea presented will help students identify which parts of their work are working well so they can focus more attention there while also providing them with constructive critiques where necessary to give them room to make improvements within those areas if needed. As educators, we should be willing to provide this type of feedback regardless of how challenging our comments may seem because these lessons will not only encourage students' creativity but throughout time teach them how to be more critical thinkers and problem-solvers so they

can develop stronger ideas in the future. I usually give feedback to my students so for the next time they know how they should work to have better results.

- **Showcase creativity as often as possible.** Creativity should be showcased any time it is possible. Creativity is a skill that can have many benefits for students, educators, and society as a whole. Creative displays will motivate other students to try new things in their work while also providing educators the opportunity to share creative ideas with one another. Students will enjoy sharing their creative ideas and creations with others because it gives them an opportunity to share their knowledge, skills, and interests while showing off what's possible when creativity is embraced.

- **Allow time each day or week for independent projects.** Giving time at the end of each day or week to do independent projects will help give your students the opportunity to explore their thoughts and come up with innovative solutions so they can show you what's possible when applied creatively. This way, you'll encourage them to take risks with new ideas while also providing them with a safe venue where they can express themselves without fear of being judged or ridiculed, and it's vital to allow students the freedom to explore their ideas in an environment that feels free from judgment.

Creative thinking is a key skill for the future. So why not encourage it as often and in as many places as possible? Consider these strategies to help your students tap into their creative potential, and showcase creativity throughout your school environment. What ways have you found that work best for cultivating student creativity at your school or organization? Share them with me!

Creativity requires a safe environment in which to play, exercise autonomy, and take risks. As teachers, it's up to us to establish this kind of supportive classroom. Here are some suggestions from psychologists and educators for how to develop and nurture our students' creativity:

- **Create a compassionate, accepting environment.** Since being creative requires going out on a limb, students need to trust that they can make a mistake in front of us.
- **Be present with students' ideas.** Have more off-the-cuff conversations with students. Find out what their passion areas are, and build those into your approach.
- **Encourage autonomy.** Don't let yourself be the arbiter of what "good" work is. Instead, give feedback that encourages self-assessment and independence.

- Re-word assignments to promote creative thinking.** Try adding words like “create,” “design,” “invent,” “imagine,” “suppose,” to your assignments. Adding instructions such as “Come up with as many solutions as possible” or “Be creative!” can increase creative performance.
- Give students direct feedback on their creativity.** Lots of students don’t realize how creative they are, or get feedback to help them incorporate “creative” into their self-concept. Explore the idea of “creative competence” alongside the traditional academic competencies in literacy and mathematics. When we evaluate something, we value it! Creating a self-concept that includes creativity.
- Help students know when it’s appropriate to be creative.** For example, help them see the contexts when creativity is more or less helpful—in a low-stakes group project versus a standardized state assessment.
- Use creative instructional strategies, models, and methods** as much as possible in a variety of domains. Model creativity for students in the way we speak and the way we act. For example, I could say “I thought about 3 ways to introduce this lesson. I’m going to show you 2, then you come up with a third,” or show them a personal project you’ve been working on.
- Several studies have shown that relying on rewards and incentives in the classroom can undermine intrinsic motivation to complete a task—an effect called “overjustification.” To avoid this, Beth Hennessey, a professor of Psychology at Wellesley College, suggests that educators try to limit competitions and comparison with others, focusing instead on self-improvement. Experiment with monitoring students less as they work, and provide opportunities for them to pursue their passion when you can.
- Experiment with activities where students can practice creative thinking.** Many teachers have suggestions for creative activities they’ve tried as warm-ups or quick breaks. “Doodles,” or visual riddles, are simple line drawings that can have a wide range of different interpretations, and can stimulate divergent thinking. “Quickwrites” and “freewrites” can help students to let go of their internal censor. As part of reviewing material, you could have kids use concept cartooning, or draw/design/paint visual metaphors to capture the essence of complex academic information.

2. Teaching and learning method “635” as an effective tool for developing creativity in an English Language classroom

Method 635 was developed by Prof. Bernd Rohrbach in 1968. It is a creativity technique that extends the principles of brainstorming. It is also known as brain-writing and consists of people in a group producing ideas about a specific problem using a specific process.

The process requires 6 people to complete 3 each in 5 minutes Write down solutions. After the time has elapsed, the proposed solutions are handed over to the respective neighbor, who then either develops the 3 ideas further or adds 3 new ideas. The passing on of the potential solutions to the neighbors continues until each group member has seen each of the three original proposed solutions at least once and has contributed to the document themselves.

I used this method while I was teaching “The mystery of Thor Bridge” in the 7th grade. I somehow made alterations to the method but in general kept to the essential technique.

The lesson topic related to a mystery presenting the death of Mr Gibson’s wife who was a millionaire. The story was incomplete and open-ended, so I asked my students to complete it using their imagination and creative thinking skills. I split the classroom into three groups. I have 18 students in the class, so there were six pupils in each group. Each group suggested three ideas and they had 5 minutes for discussion. The children responded well to the challenge. Almost immediately they posed well-formulated questions about the nature of the task and what would work best and on how to put ideas forward, using phrases such as ‘why should we do that?’ and ‘what should we avoid?’ Both the pupils and I enjoyed the challenge and had fun trying out our ideas together. The atmosphere was relaxed, and it was made clear to the pupils that there were no ‘right’ answers. There were several examples of particularly effective group work throughout the task, with the pupils sharing ideas with each other constructively. When they introduced us their ideas we had pros and cons.

What was surprising, after long discussions, when everybody agreed with Elen’s idea, one of the students explored all the guesses for the ending of the story and found out that the third group’s idea was the best and the right one. When I tried to find out how she could think so, Elen said that she had read a lot of books and this skill helped her to guess the right ending.

I came to the conclusion that most students enjoyed working in groups and sharing ideas. Many valued greatly opportunities to exercise competition. However, not all enjoyed

working in this way and a few found it difficult to communicate in group activities. Some of them preferred to work independently to develop their own ideas and a few children would have liked to choose whether or not to work in groups. A small number of learners did not enjoy the process due to the fact that they found it challenging to generate ideas in English.

Conclusion

When implementing my plan on achieving my goals and defining the outcomes of the lesson taught I have made some observations and assumptions:

- creativity generates ideas toward accomplishing a goal or solving a problem with the use of logic and fosters a high level of curiosity and imagination among students. Creative skills help them work together productively on the proposed project, thus involving teamwork and collaboration.

- creative thinking is a skill which lets students consider things from a fresh perspective and different angles. It's an inventive thought process which results in surprising conclusions and new ways of doing things. Creative thinking can be aided by brainstorming or lateral thinking to generate ideas.

- to think creatively, you should set aside any assumptions or biases you may have, and look at things in a completely new way. By coming to a problem with an open mind, you allow yourself the chance to think creatively.

It should be noted, that many learning activities across the school curriculum do not focus successfully on the development of aspects of creativity. Although many teachers are beginning to explore ways to their capacity to plan for the introduction of ways and methods for developing creative skills among the learners, in general, it is still challenging for them to highlight specific creativity skills. Besides, for most pupils, creative thinking requires more effort and they prefer to save their creative thinking for when it is really necessary. As educators we need to show different approaches in a multi-faceted classroom.

There is strong evidence that a focus on creativity makes learning more interesting and enjoyable. Yet, there is insufficient evidence about the impact of creativity skills on achievement. To foster the development of creativity skills, a teacher should actively explore ways of giving learners more responsibility for planning and managing a creative project, making learning activities more open ended and providing effective coaching support to learners as they develop their ideas. They should ensure that all pupils are supported to develop creativity skills in ways which build on their personal strengths, whether as individuals or team members.

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