

The Iranian English teachers' understanding of creativity in English Language Teaching

Hossein Rezaee,
English Department, Farhangian University, Arak, Iran
hosseinrezaee19@yahoo.com

Sara Rezai,
Medical Student of Arak University, Iran
sararezaei8236@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigated The English teachers' understanding of creativity in the context of high schools in Iran. The meaning of creativity and the factors that promote or suppress it are investigated from the perspective of female English teachers. Fifteen interviews and ten observations were conducted. In order to expand the data, a survey was designed based on the results of the first phase of data collection and analysis. The participants were female TESOL teachers in high schools in the city of Arak. The results from the interviews, observations, and questionnaires were consistent in many ways regarding the importance of creativity in TESOL in the context of the study. All three methods of data collection showed that creativity was perceived as a multi-faceted concept. The creative English teacher was seen as self-confident and self-determined. However, some findings emerged from certain data collection methods but not others. For example, the importance of clarity and freedom (autonomy) was evident in the interviews but not in the observations or questionnaire. The current study is consistent with previous studies that creativity is associated with novelty and value (Hui, 2012) and the current study explains that novelty and value are relative.

Key words: Creativity, Interview, Self-confident, Multi-face concept

1. Introduction

Research on creativity in education in general is increasing as researchers have become aware of the importance of creativity as Beetlestone (2011) states, creativity is linked to improvement and meaningfulness in education and creative teaching can improve the quality of education, make learning more meaningful and open up more exciting ways of approaching the curriculum. Another reason for the importance of creativity in education is that creativity prepares individuals for the future (Craft et al., 2012). Creativity is important because there are more unfamiliar situations in the globalized world and creativity can help individuals deal with such situations (Fryer, 2010). Educators associate creativity with novelty, for example Knight (2012) explains “Creativity constructs new tools and new outcomes or new embodiments of knowledge. It constructs new relationships, rules, communities of practice and new connections – new social practices”. Educators also associate creativity with change and define creativity as “... the ability to conceive and successfully implement such changes” (Nyström, 2008). The new and the change towards a better teaching and learning experience are associated with creativity in education.

2

Creativity in TESOL (teaching English for speakers of other languages) is less researched than in education in general. However, researchers interested in creativity in TESOL are also enthusiastic about the positive effects of creativity on English language learning and teaching. For example, Sullivan (2009) mentioned that school principals look for creativity when searching for the best EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers. TESOL researchers also believe that creativity is an essential component of systematic change for educational reform (Forrester & Hui, 2007). Furthermore, Hayes (2008) links creativity in TESOL to a profound change in the philosophy of language teaching/learning and its positive impact on pedagogy and language learning. Thus, creativity researchers in pedagogy and TESOL acknowledge the constructive role of creativity in teaching/learning and show that creativity is associated with novelty and that this novelty has a positive impact on the teaching/learning process and learning outcome. The aim of the present study is to investigate creativity in TESOL. The importance of creativity and creative teaching is examined from

the perspective of primary English teachers in Iran. In addition, the factors that promote or suppress creativity from the ELT teachers' perspective are investigated.

2.Methodology

One of the main aims of the study is to investigate how participants in the current research understand the meaning of creativity in their ELT in their own context. The current study attempts to find a clear meaning of creativity in the foreign language classroom; however, this does not mean that a restrictive definition is sought. This is because creativity inherently requires a more open understanding, as suggested by Jones and Wyse (2008: 2), in order to “move away from defining creativity as a fixed quantity to one that depends on people’s judgment”. Understanding the meaning of creativity in TESOL can help to identify who the creative teacher is and what conditions help them to be more creative and thus produce more creative teaching methods or approach learners in more creative ways. We need a theoretical contribution to better agree on a practice that the teacher sees as appropriate for their beliefs and context and that policy makers (including managers and curriculum developers) see as appropriate.

3

The current research attempts to answer the following research questions:

- 1.What does creativity in TESOL mean according to high school English teachers in Iran?
- 2.What factors enhance creativity in TESOL from the perspective of high school English teachers in Iran?
- 3.What factors suppress creativity in TESOL from the perspective of high school English teachers in Iran?

In next section, sampling, piloting, and methods of collecting and analyzing data will be discussed:

2.1. The sample for the interviews/observations

In this study, fifteen interviews were conducted with English teachers. I contacted schools and asked for teachers who would volunteer for the study. Interviewing those who want to participate means that they have something to say on the subject and therefore provide richer data. Interviewing people who volunteer to take part in the study is also important for the

ethical side of the study, as selecting people who do not want to take part could cause harm (Cohen et al., 2009). The first set of five interviews and observations provided the researcher with an opportunity to compare data within the same context (same school). Those interviews were special as the teachers had rich opinions with diverse ideas even though they were from the same school. The observation at this stage was also important, because the observations were done on lessons from the same level.

The first set of five interviews and observations were analyzed. Constant comparisons were made between what a teacher says and how she teaches, and also a comparison between one teacher and other teachers. For example, the element of the teaching material mentioned by a teacher guided me to ask about the role of teaching material in the subsequent interviews, to check if this was a common theme or just mentioned by one teacher. This element also brought my attention to what teaching materials they used in the observations and how they used them, and whether there were differences between them.

For the next set of five interviews it was decided to make the schools, their location and the teachers' backgrounds as varied as possible in order to check whether these variables had any effect on the responses. Thus, the next five teachers interviewed and observed differed from each other in order to verify, contrast and compare the codes and categories which came from the first five interviews, in which the teachers had all worked in the same school. This was also a good chance to see whether new codes and categories would arise. The second five teachers were from different years of experience, different educational backgrounds, and different geographic areas.

For ethical appropriateness, and because most teachers expressed their challenging relationships with their senior teachers, it was decided to choose to interview senior teachers from different schools. Therefore, the last five interviews were from five different schools, in which only the senior teacher from the English department in each school was interviewed. It was useful to interview senior teachers as they are in the middle position; some were new senior teachers so they could express their thoughts on creativity as teachers as well as decision-makers. They also have links with other decision-makers such as the school manager, the supervisor and the Ministry, and whenever a new decision is made it is the senior teachers who are involved, and they are the ones who attend the training courses.

2.1.1. Interviews

One of the most important advantages of interviews is that they enable the researcher to notice “ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, through the tone of voice, facial expression, hesitation, and so on, which can provide information that a written response would conceal” (Bell, 2010: 161). One of the disadvantages is that they are time-consuming, which means that only a small number of participants can be interviewed.

Interviews can be structured (content, order and procedures are prepared), semi structured (topics and open-ended questions are written but with no sequence or specific order), or unstructured (an open ended interview with greater flexibility) (Cohen et al., 2007). During the course of the current research, the three types were deployed. This is because the research started with unstructured interviews with questions as broad as possible to elicit codes. During the unstructured interviews, the researcher tended to follow the viewpoints which were stressed by participants and formed questions based on these viewpoints, even though the researcher held some general guidelines to ensure coverage of a range of investigated themes. Following the flow of the interviewees’ ideas and concepts gives a good direction for the subsequent interviews and for the theoretical sampling (Wimpenny & Gass, 2007).

5

2.1.2. Piloting the interviews

The purpose of a pilot study is to discover if there are any problems with the study in advance (Cohen et al., 2007). The data taken from the pilot interviews indicated that the participant teachers provided rich contributions to the insights and ideas of creativity in ELT, even though they were all teaching in the same school. It was also found out that the narrower the questions were, the fewer details were given, whereas the broader the questions the more elaboration and ideas were produced. Therefore, it was seen that it was best to keep the interviews less structured, especially at the beginning, to produce as many deep and rich ideas as possible. Then, in the later stage from the same interview, questions linking their ideas to creativity phenomena were checked and reflected upon with them. Also, in the subsequent interviews, more precise questions were chosen from the interviews interpreted earlier.

2.1.3. Observations

“Observation can be useful in discovering whether people do what they say they do” (Bell, 2010: 191). Based on the idea that all teachers can be creative in some way, and from the idea that the teacher is a vital part of the educational process, observations of teachers can show examples of how teachers are creative in their own ways. Data arising from the same participant and other participants regarding applications of creativity in the classroom were subsequently used to guide the following observations.

Ten teachers were observed. They were the same participants as in the interviews. Just like the interviews, the observations moved from being unstructured in nature, to semi-structured, then to a structured nature. At first, the researcher observed lessons to compare what teachers said in interviews to what they actually do in their classes (e.g. the teaching material, the personality of the teacher). The more ideas I collected from the interviewees, the more points I had to consider when observing the lessons.

Observations can be ‘saved’ through the use of videos, photography, or tape recorders. In this study, field notes were used due to ethical issues concerning the identities of the children and teachers. What guides the researcher is generally the research topic. Mostly, the physical setting, participants’ behavior and communications were the areas to be observed and recorded. Field notes included both descriptive and reflective information of what was being observed. Descriptive notes were mostly for setting, and reflective field notes were made for the actions. Direct quotes were written most of the time. Information of the time, place and participants was kept. Numbered individual sets of field notes were kept in case of follow-up observations at that site.

6

2.1.4. Questionnaire

As the second phase of the investigation, to broaden and test the findings of the interviews and observations, the questionnaire was designed after the interviews were completed. Since the teachers in this study are seen as experts, a random sample was taken for the questionnaires. The survey had two main purposes. The first was to broaden the understanding by adding more choices related to creativity, to cover all the possibilities that

the interviewees might not cover. The second was to compare and test the findings from the first phase (mainly interviews and observations) to see the level of their strength and how general they were. The survey sample size was seventy-five respondents.

The first and second questions on the questionnaire are relevant to research question one. The third question is about the traits of a creative person. The fourth is about the factors that are related to creativity based on the findings of the current study. The fifth checks supporting factors while the sixth concerns suppressing factors of creativity in ELT (second and third research questions). Then, opinions were requested on which side of TESOL needs creativity the most. In most parts, a list was used: “A list of items is offered, any of which may be selected” (Bell, 2010: 142). This was done to make sure that the words of the participants from the interview were used and to give as many options as possible. After offering many options from which the respondent could choose the most suitable answer, an open question was also included to check if they had different opinions.

For data analysis of the questionnaire, the website “Survey Monkey” provided instant results including charts. To check the significance of some differences in the demographic questions, a website which automatically shows results was used by entering the numbers which were calculated electronically (Experience Excellence website). Also the “Survey Monkey” website provided statistical analysis which helped in rigour and gave the required comparisons needed for analysis of any variables needed.

7

2.1.5. Piloting the questionnaire

Piloting the questionnaire can help estimate the time needed by respondents, as well as allowing them to give feedback on the appearance of the questionnaire and their understanding of the questionnaire items (Cohen et al., 2010). First a Likert scale was attempted, but there were too many choices and thus the questionnaire became very long. Then multiple choice items (lists) were designed, which formulated the last version, as discussed in the previous section. A pilot questionnaire completed by a few respondents (four university students) revealed that they needed only approximately ten minutes to complete the questionnaire. In their feedback, they commented that some terms such as ‘obstacle’,

‘exploiting’, ‘teacher-fronted’, ‘holistic’, ‘boldness’, ‘assertive’, ‘submissive’, or ‘traits’ were not clear, so they were all replaced or explained by simpler wording. Also, in a question about the extent to which they said creativity is needed in TESOL, the pilot questionnaire’s respondents commented that this question needed guidance on whether to choose one or more options, as in most questions they were allowed to choose more than one option. Thus, for this question there was a need to clarify that only one choice was to be ticked.

2.1.6. Credibility, plausibility and trustworthiness

Reliability and validity are important to any research. Reliability can be understood as “consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents” (Cohen et al., 2007: 146). On the other hand, validity can be defined as “a demonstration that a particular instrument in fact measures what it purports to measure” (ibid: 133). Plausibility means “trying to make good sense of data” (ibid: 368). And trustworthiness is concerned with “credibility, confirmability, transferability and dependability” (ibid: 158).

In the current research, the following steps were taken to ensure the credibility, plausibility and trustworthiness of the current research: the use of theoretical sampling, memo-writing and constant comparison analysis. Triangulation was also employed in the current research. Triangulation can be defined as “...the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behavior” (Cohen et. al., 2007: 141). There was a variety of triangulation methods such as in-depth interviews, observation, studying of teachers’ preparation notes, and survey. There was also triangulation in data analysis methods including GT techniques, the use of metaphor analysis and some statistical results from the survey (using Survey Monkey website as well as a website which tests the statistical significance of a given difference). Additionally, comparisons with the literature review findings were made to check for similarities. Also the fact that the research was done in two separate chronological stages (interviews and observations first, and then a questionnaire) would add to the rigour of the results if they told the same story at both stages. Also randomization of samples was used in the questionnaire, which is a way to ensure validity in quantitative research (Cohen et al. 2007). Moreover, with the link of the questionnaire given in e-mails, the aim of the questionnaire was clarified by the researcher as well as by an email

which could be referred to by respondents in case of unclear questions, which helped with the reliability of the data (ibid.).

3. Findings

It is noticeable to the researcher that each participant expressed her understanding of the term ‘creativity’ in ELT in a different way. Some participants talked about creativity in terms of its features or how they described creativity (characteristics e.g. integrated, different, all teachers are creative in some way), others discussed its elements (components of creativity e.g. personal character, language, resources, and environment) and who the creative ELT teacher is, and some others related it to the factors which can encourage or suppress their creativity. The same participant sometimes referred to more than one side of the meaning of creativity from her perception. However, from the constant comparisons, the general view of what creativity means to participants is that it is about bringing something new which will bring successful outcomes. The researcher noticed that this is the overall frame of what it means to participants, as all of them mentioned these aspects in the interviews.

9

Some examples of newness and success/usefulness from the interview participants are the following: ‘new and productive curriculum built by teachers themselves’, ‘using new and useful teaching material’, ‘new worksheets’, ‘new and fruitful experience gained from the use of real objects and field trips’, ‘teachers’ need for new skills to deal with learners in the primary stage’, ‘better results from learners encourage generating new ideas’. This view of creativity as bringing new and useful outcomes is similar to views expressed in the literature.

4. Discussion

4.1 Introduction

Overall, the findings suggest that the teachers’ perception of creativity in TESOL in the context of the current study is the skill of bringing new and successful elements to the teaching process. Newness and success are relative and are dependent on the teachers’ views. Newness and success can have many elements, including the human side, such as the relationships with learners, and the more concrete side of teaching, for example, teaching materials. Thus creativity in TESOL, is multi-faceted, with some teachers focusing on all

elements of creativity, while others focus on just one element. This can be linked with the idea that creativity is a complex, multi-component phenomenon, while other researchers in the literature might disagree with the complexity of creativity and approach one component at a time: "On the one hand we have research that recognizes the multicomponent nature of creativity, but focuses on one of these components at the exclusion of others..., and on the other hand we have research that...seemingly ignores its complex nature." (Rietzschel et al., 2009: 5). The creative TESOL teacher should to be free to contribute new and valuable ways of teaching in order to achieve better results in her/his context. Furthermore, she/he needs to be clear about the purpose, method and aims of their teaching in order for her/him to be able to analyze what is new and valuable in their teaching context.

The three main sets of findings from the interviews, observations and survey data are summarized in Table 1 along with the main findings in the literature in relation to the research questions in the current study. This table will be the basis for the discussion in this chapter, for several reasons. First, the table brings all the data together, and helps to make comparisons between results from the three forms of data collection methods, as well as linking them to the findings from the literature review. Also, a section is dedicated to a discussion of the implications of the demographic results from the survey. Table 1 comparisons will also help show the gap between the results of the current research and the results of the previous studies. This will help to demonstrate how the current study helps to broaden the theoretical understanding in the field and show how the study contributes to knowledge. In addition, the discussion will show how original the study is, as well as helping to relate the current study to the existing body of knowledge.

4.2 What is creativity in TESOL?

This section will answer the first research question which states:

1. What does creativity in TESOL mean according to English language teachers in the primary stage in Iran?

One of the general meanings of creativity which was found in the interview data is that the TESOL teacher should present something new and successful. Additionally, in the survey data, new technology was chosen by respondents as an example of implementing creativity

in ELT. The newness and value can be in a product or a result a teacher achieves that is tangible, or in a process, such as a new teaching approach or method, in the appropriate environment which supports creativity. In the current research, data suggests that in each of these aspects creativity is possible as newness and value can be presented. The researcher is of the view that this is a useful broad framework; however, for the creativity in TESOL research to develop deeper understanding, the requirements of creativity in the TESOL domain should be understood. Therefore, one of the contributions to knowledge in this research is to expand on this meaning according to the understanding of the current TESOL participants in Iran.

Thus, in the next sections of this chapter the concept of creativity will be elaborated from the point of view of the participant TESOL teachers in Iran.

4.3. Language

The language was one of the aspects associated with creative ELT in both interview and survey data. Mainly, being as close as possible to the ‘native’, or Standard English language was considered creative by the participants. This particular finding, the present study contradicts the conclusions and is contrary to what the previous studies in creativity in ELT suggest. This outcome can have many explanations and interpretations. Firstly, culture can have a role as what is old in one place is new in another place. In another cultural context creativity is more valued than language competence by school principals (Sullivan, 2009). However, in the cultural context of the current study, for a teacher to make mistakes and violate language expectations are common occurrences because they are foreign language speakers (Al-Mutawa, 2008). Thus, for them newness is in mastering the language rules and aiming for ‘native’ English as a goal in their teaching (i.e. British English and American English according to the interview data).

Another explanation for why participants see following the rules of language creative is that they also consider the value instead of their creative language teaching.

Participants view that their learners will benefit more from formal ‘native’ English than from breaking the language rules and finding local English. Additionally, in the interviews

participants mentioned that creativity can vary across different stages, and that in the primary stage learners need more creativity in the teaching methods or material use, rather than creativity in the language (native-like), as language creativity is more needed in the secondary stage when learners are closer to graduation where they need 'native-like' English in their college studies, where English will be the main medium of teaching and learning. This can be related to wisdom (Claxton, 2008), where a teacher seeks to be creative for the sake of preparing the learner for the world beyond the classroom. This indicates that the ELT teachers in the study give more value to the language itself.

4.4. Teaching Material

Another of the multi-sided aspects of creative ELT is the creative teaching material mentioned in the survey and in the interviews. Teaching material was emphasized by participants as a way to explain their understanding of creative ELT and as an example of either a supporting factor, when the teaching material is suitable, or a suppressing factor, if the teaching material or curriculum is not suitable. There seem to be two levels at which teaching material/resources can be a creative product. One is the teaching material the teachers actually use which is either provided by the Ministry of Education or is downloaded from a native speaker website. Some interview participants revealed that downloading resources from native speakers' websites and adjusting some parts is a form of creativity. Creativity comes in how they make changes which suit them and their learners. In this case, their creativity is a sort of re-production instead of making a brand new teaching material (Pope, 2011). The second creative teaching material is the one which participants mention that they do not have and wish was 'provided'. In the survey they even chose 'new technologies' as an example of creative ELT. Thus, the material which already exists is creative in that it is re-produced and presented in the ways to suit their learners, and the material that they seek to have is brand new. The participants expect a third party to provide them with brand new material and 'new technology'.

4.5. The focus on the learners

In all of the main data from the three data collection methods (interviews, observations and questionnaire), dealing with the learners was suggested as an important part of the

creative ELT (Table 1). I think that the newness can be expressed in the change of pedagogy to which teachers aspire in order to make their teaching more learner-centred instead of traditionally teacher-centred. This is what creative ELT tries to achieve, although in some cases the teacher might find it hard not to instruct, for example because the curriculum is filled with many new vocabulary items. The data in the current study indicates that the relationship and communication with learners are very important aspects, and that they distinguish creative ELT teacher. There are studies which support the idea that it is creative for teachers to have close relationships with the student inside and outside the classroom (Fischman et al., 2006).

The data indicate that creative English language teachers are those who wish to make a positive change in her learners' lives beyond achieving good marks in exams (interview data) and beyond the curriculum (survey data). The teachers need to add value and awareness along with the language taught and provide their learners with strategies to continue to explore outside the classroom. The data from the interviews and survey suggested that it is a mark of creative ELT to use the English language in areas which are both interesting to the learners and also meet the language needs for their context. This requires understanding the context and educational culture of the learners, as well as understanding the personal interests of each individual. This again shows that if the teachers had more time, freedom, and clarity, they would be better able to put the learners' needs and interests as their priority when designing the curriculum and methods. Regretfully, in reality they design neither (Al-Nwaiem, 2011).

Importantly, encouraging learners to talk, building their self-confidence and supporting learner-learner interaction was noticed in all the main data forms (interviews, observations, survey). Encouraging peer interactions is also considered creative in the TESOL literature because "it resulted in an innovative and thoughtful response to specific educational constraints and challenges" (Hammond, 2006:168). These features are linked to the creative learner and agree with the positive effect of the teacher on the learners' creativity (e.g. Fryer, 1996). This indicates that the data in the current study suggests that teaching creatively can lead to teaching for creativity, contrary to some previous studies which separate between them and discourage teaching creatively because of the negative effect it might have on the creativity of the learners (Craft, 2010b). This is a point that the current study contributes to

knowledge. Empathy is a related creative factor highlighted by the interview and observation data. This is related particularly to the relationship with young learners and how teacher-learner communication should be characterized by empathy (Hammond, 2006).

4.6. Personal traits

Teachers' personality and personal traits were highlighted in the three forms of data (interview, observation, survey). The main personal traits which were mentioned are confidence, determination and self-direction, being open-minded and sociable. Personal traits are also emphasized in the humanistic and social personal approach to creativity (Runco, 2010).

Creative ELT teachers are confident, according to current data, and "self-confidence recurs in the literature on creativity as a key personality trait advancing creative endeavours" (Martin, 2008). This could be because new decisions and changes need confidence, and in the literature personal traits are emphasized because the creative person "...has to be willing to stand up to conventions if one wants to think and act in creative ways" (Sternberg, 1012). Also, the management of the classroom and the young learners needs confidence, which has been shown in the interview data. In the observation, confidence distinguished some teachers from others. The teachers who were too restricted by their teacher preparation notes and the steps written there were less confident, maybe because they taught with less 'flow' of spontaneous ideas and less connection with learners (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008). Interestingly, the more detailed their teacher preparation notes were, the less confident they appeared. It is as if there are prescribed ways of teaching which affected their genuine teaching according to what learners need and how they react. The study can contribute to knowledge in this detail, as the more detailed are the teachers' notes, the less confident the teacher looks. One possible reason is that teachers' written preparations notes are not what the teachers invent but are mostly copied from a teachers' guide which is provided by the Ministry of Education. This is because the teacher will be under the pressure of being observed by senior teachers and questioned for any missing step if the senior teacher decides to visit the teacher's classroom and evaluate her/his teaching.

1
4

Another personal trait which interview participants associated with creative ELT is being open-minded. Being open-minded implies that the creative teacher is open to any change, is ready to welcome new ideas and can learn from any new opportunity. This can also mean that the teacher can be learning from the context and from the learners, their own mistakes and interactions, to base their decisions on future learning methods for the learners. Craft (2003a) mentions that the creative teacher should be able to receive as well as produce, so it makes them more open to new choices.

Another personal trait linked to creative ELT is being sociable. There has been an example in the data suggesting that the person teaching English should be sociable, like to meet new people and is friendly with everyone. Being sociable can reflect that there are some teachers who link creativity to the willingness to work with others which can be related to the idea of collaboration and its importance in the start of any creative act (Craft et al., 2008). This is also related to the open-mindedness which reflects that teaching English in particular accompanies teaching other cultures. Then there is the sense of belonging, as teachers can be more creative if they feel a sense of belonging both to the community of the ELT and belonging to the smaller community of their school. This links to the idea of collaboration and also to the creative environment, which will be discussed next.

1
5

4.7. Environment

What is meant by a creative environment, according to the current study, is a suitable atmosphere in which ELT teachers can be creative. A creative environment can be divided into the physical environment which is the actual place of the teacher in the school and in the classroom, and the relational environment which is about the roles of those around the teacher in her/his creativity. Both physical and relational environments play a role as supporting or suppressing factors,

The place/environment, which is the classroom in the case of the current participants, is a creative place when it is well organized. Interview and observation participants clarified that they could be more creative in a tidy and organized classroom. Conversely, some opponents of creativity fear that creativity may cause or require chaos (Lucas 2008). Nonetheless, there is a question over whether the learners would prefer the same well organized setting for their

creativity. This is one of the ideas that could be investigated in future studies. Relational environment includes the interactions and relationships of creative teachers with other teachers, with the senior teacher, the school manager and the supervisor; the latter three being the ones who evaluate the teacher. It also includes the relationship with parents and with learners.

4.8. Conclusion

In the conclusion of this discussion chapter, it is useful to shed light on some of the main differences between the current study and the previous literature. In the current study both internal and external supporting factors have been identified as improving ELT creativity, while in most of the literature intrinsic motivation is associated with creativity and sometimes extrinsic factors are linked to suppressing creativity (Sternberg, 2006b). In the current study, creative ELT is linked to standard use of the English language while, in the literature, creative ELT is linked to welcoming errors in language and violating its language rules (Tin et al., 2010; Brown, 2009). The elements of clarity and belonging are not directly mentioned in the literature, although the current researcher attempted to find a link to similar matters in the literature, such as the importance of knowledge (Craft et al., 2008). Additionally, there are elements like imagination which have been strongly linked to creativity in the literature (e.g. Craft, 2009) but which had little or no mention in the current research findings.

The main meaning of creativity in TESOL involves clarity and freedom, enabling the meeting of learners' needs and employing English in the learners' interests, as well as encouraging peer-interaction (all of these elements are mentioned in the three main sources of data). Data from the current research also suggests that creativity in TESOL is a 'skill which can be learned' and involves 'teaching beyond curriculum'. In other words, the study found that the creative ELT teacher is clear on her/his aims and broad strategies and outcomes, and is free to teach how and what is suitable within that broad framework. The creative teacher is also perceived as a teacher who seeks to meet various learners' needs and also encourages their confidence and participation. The creative TESOL teacher is also close to the students, understands their general interests and employs the use of the English language in those areas of interest.

Creativity in TESOL can be supported through the availability of suitable tools and materials, a suitable curriculum, freedom to choose a teaching method, a positive relationship with others, including learners, and communicating with them in a well-organized place. On an internal level, fulfilment, belonging, self-development and self-motivation can be supporting factors. On the other hand, creativity in TESOL can be suppressed mostly by external factors, such as the lack of teaching materials and tools, unsuitable curriculum, extra tasks outside the classroom, and a negative environment which includes the place and the relationships with others.

Bibliography

Allen, J., & Iggulden, M. (2013). *Fun with English*. Cairo: Egyptian International Publishing Company-Longman.

Beghetto, R. (2007). "Does creativity have a place in classroom discussions? Prospective teachers' response preferences". *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 1-9.

Bell, D. (2007). "Do teachers think that methods are dead?". *ELT Journal*, Vol. 62, No. 2, pp. 135-143.

BERA (2011). "BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research 2011". London: The British Educational Research Association.

Bryant, A. & Charmaz, K. (eds.) (2007). *The Sage handbook for grounded theory*. London: Sage.

Burnard, P., Craft, A., Cremin, T., Duffy, B., Hanson, R., Keene, J., et.al. (2006). "Documenting 'possibility thinking': a journey of collaborative enquiry". *International Journal of Early Year Education*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 243-262.

Cheng, Y. & Yeh, H. (2006). A collaborative action research approach to improving vocabulary teaching in Taiwan. In McKay, P. *Planning and Teaching Creatively within a Required Curriculum for School-Age Learners* (pp. 31-57). London: TESOL.

Claxton, G., Craft, A., & Gardner, H. (2008). Concluding thoughts: Good thinking-- Education for wise creativity. In A. Craft, H. Gardner, & G. Claxton, *Creativity, wisdom and trusteeship* (pp. 168-176). London: Corwin.

- Claxton, G., Edwards, E., & Scale-Constantinou, V. (2006). "Cultivating creative mentalities: A framework for education". *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 57-61.
- Craft, A. (2008). Tensions in creativity and education: Enter wisdom and trusteeship? In A. Craft, H. Garder, & G. Glaxton, *Creativity, wisdom and trusteeship* (pp.16-25). London: Corwin.
- Craft, A., Cremin, T., Burnard, P., & Chappell, K. (2007). "Teacher stance in creative learning: A study of progression". *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 136-147.
- Craft, A., Gardner, H., & Claxton, G. (2008). *Creativity, wisdom, and trusteeship*. London: Corwin, a Sage Company.
- Creative-Partnerships. (2007). "This much we know, Creative Partnerships: approach and impact". London: Arts Council England.
- Creative-Partnerships. (2006). *"Initiative and impact"*. London: Arts Council England.
- Feldman, D. (2008). Creativity and wisdom: Are they incompatible? In A. Craft, H. Gardner, & G. Claxton, *Creativity, wisdom and trusteeship* (pp. 77-83). London: Corwin Press: A Sage company. 1
- Forrester, V. & Hui, A. (2007). "Creativity in the Hong Kong Classroom: What is the contextual practice?" *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 30-38. 2
- Griffiths, C., & Parr, J. (2007). "Language learning strategies: students' and teachers' perceptions". *ELT Journal*, Vol. 61, No. 2, pp. 91-99.
- Hiep, P. H. (2007). "Communicative language teaching: unity within diversity". *ELT Journal*, Vol. 61, No. 3, pp. 193-201.
- Hinkel, E. (2006). "Current perspectives on teaching the four skills". *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 1, pp. 109–131.
- Jankowska, M., & Atay, M. (2008). "Use of creative space in enhancing students' engagement". *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, Vol. 45, No. 3, pp. 271-279.
- Lin, G. H. (2007). "A Case study of seven Taiwanese English as a Foreign Language Freshman Non-English majors' perceptions about learning five communicative strategies". Texas: PhD in curriculum & Instruction for the Texas A&M University in College Station.

Mannix, E., Neale, M., & Concalo, J. (Eds)(2009). *Creativity in groups*. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Martin, M. (2008). *Creativity ethics and excellence in science*. Plymouth: Lexington books.

Mills, J., Bonner, A., & Francis, K. (2006). " Adopting a constructivist approach to grounded theory: Implications for research design". *International Journal of Nursing Practice*, Vol. 12, No.1, pp. 8–13.

Owens, D. (2011). *Creative people must be stopped: 6 ways we kill innovation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Rietzschel, E., De Dreu, C., & Nijstad, B. (2009). What are we talking about, when we talk about creativity? Group creativity as multifaceted, multistage phenomenon. In E. Mannix, M. Neale, & J. Concalo. *Creativity in groups* (pp. 1-28). Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Runco, M. (2007). *Creativity: Theories and themes: Research, development, and practice*. London: Elsevier Academic Press.

SACGC (2013). Sabah Al-Ahmed Center for Giftedness and Creativity. <http://www.sacgc.org/index.php/en/>. retrieved: 11.8.2013.

Sawyer, K. (2012). *Explaining creativity: The science of human innovation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Seaward, B. (2011). *Managing stress: A creative journal*. London: Jones & Bartlett Learning.

Taki, S. (2008). International and local curricula: The question of Ideology. *Language Teaching Research*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 127-142.

Tin, T., Manara, C. & Ragawanti, D. (2010) "Views on creativity from an Indonesian perspective". *ELT Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 1, pp. 75-84.