



Practical Approaches towards Generating Creativity and Effectiveness in the Teaching of English Language

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Abstract:

Creativity in teaching includes learning latest skills, developing innovative insights into pedagogy and reflective classroom practices, and exploring advanced understandings of content and resources that in turn provide teachers with trove of supports and make them advance magnificently in their professional techniques. In better context of this fact, this paper aims to explore how a culture of creativity can be adequately generated in the English language teaching through the stellar amalgamation of analytical perception, critical introspection and creative thinking, and the mind-shift experienced by teachers when they position themselves as effective and organized facilitators in mutual beneficial environment.

In addition, the paper aims to examine how focused practical steps towards nurturing, developing, inspiring and motivating students to learn and grasp help teachers explore the successful role of prowess, innovation and creativity in the classroom.

Keywords: Creativity; effectiveness; EFL/ESL; expectation; heterogeneous classes; interaction; language learning; learning style; linguistic background; strategies; motivation; teaching methods; teaching materials.

Introduction:

Learning an international language is the best choice in a globalized world instead of learning every single language to communicate with foreign people. Since the dependence on the English language as Lingua Franca is increased, more and more people not only demand to learn English but they also want their children to learn it (Yavuz, 2017). In today's world, the global spread of English is "unprecedented and unparalleled" (Seidhofer, 2011). In many respects, English, widely gaining the status as a "lingua franca", has now become the preferred language of choice for international communities, especially in view of international and inter-cultural communications in a variety of domains like science, medicine, telecom, e-learning, higher education, digitization, technology, etc.

Teaching English language as **ESL** or **EFL** or else to undergraduate students warrants more than giving forth knowledge to students whose viewpoints, attitudes, experiences and associations, and sometimes cultural contexts are varying. It invites the multi-dimensional capability to enable somebody else to learn and thus it is a distinct but challenging skill that, in turn, underlines the accountabilities of the teacher since he/she "is the ultimate key to educational change" (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992).

The teacher plays a very dominating role in the educational mechanism and chemistry, and his/her place remarkably remains unchallenged, unrivalled and unilateral even after technological and scientific advancements. He/she defines, redefines, reinforces refines and fortifies the curriculum/course materials and transforms and interprets it in a suitable angle and perspective that makes learning more festive, pleasant and fruitful for the

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students. Thus, it is what the teacher conjures up and executes at the classroom level that eventually determines what students do in the classroom. This propounds that sound and scholarly knowledge of English as subject is not a guarantee to teaching English well and appropriately. In addition, it must be taken as a challenge, a skill, an innovation and a challenge, as a teacher purposefully needs to dynamically perform multi-faceted roles in a classroom such as a corroborator, an activator, a situation-maker, a foreseer, a shaper, a facilitator, a motivator, a friend, a catalyst, a decision-maker, a counselor, a consultant, a disciplinarian, a manager, a mentor and a surrogate parent, a reservoir of knowledge. However, the dilemma is that incidentally, in most cases, teachers are permitted to teach at colleges without undergoing systematic practices of pedagogy as well as focused professional training, and even in-service enhancement training schemes.

ESL vs EFL:

Although English is not the official language in most countries, it is taught as a second language (i.e. in India) or a foreign language (i.e. in Saudi Arabia) almost everywhere. This reality underlines the need to understand the difference between ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language), and it can be considered with the lens of students, location, official recognition, cultural context and necessities.

ESL is English which is usually taught to students in an English-speaking country or which is mandatory to be taught with paramount importance. EFL is English which is taught to students in a foreign, non-English speaking country where English is not the primary language or not enjoying the status of official language. Beyond this, ESL and EFL teachers may teach differently in order to combat emerging challenges in classes and address ESL and EFL student needs.

Therefore, for English teachers, the teaching objectives and targets between ESL and EFL may require different lesson plans, different approaches, different techniques and different topics; even they have to deal with different cultural contexts too. Initially, the difference between ESL and EFL might seem slight to teachers, but "they do require very different teaching strategies to meet the aims and objectives of the students" (www.brighthubeducation.com).

In other words, English language students studying ESL have more immediate and demanded requirements of English. They are required to learn basic survival skills as quickly as possible. On the other hand, students studying EFL may not be as concerned about learning English as quickly as possible because they are living in a country where they speak the primary language of the country and are properly competent to cope with the necessities of daily life.

Of course, there are all kinds of valid reasons for learners to study EFL or ESL, and the English teachers will have to take the circumstances and the needs of the students into holistic account when preparing lessons, working on teaching materials and devising strategies for English language students in totality.

Review of Literature and Objectives of Paper:

'Creativity' is not simply the exclusive preserve of the individual genius or the pathological outsider; it is a proactive phenomenon whereby something is made productive and somehow value is created. Creativity is paradoxically both common and exceptional, and in language teaching it is prominently collaborative too. Neither is creativity, it is argued, simply an act of mind; it is also a contextual act, probabilistically related to certain kinds of interaction and certain modes of communication that may be more accurately spoken of in terms of a plural 'creativities. A contextual account of creativities in English also involves the tactful employment of different suitable approaches to all texts and study materials entailing literary variables and socially-oriented aesthetics.

This paper aims to explore and analyze the implications of the taken-into-account practical approaches towards generating creativity and eliciting positivity for the studies of English, its development as a subject area that encompasses aspects of both language and literature, and as a global phenomenon of teaching and learning.

Some students seem naturally excited about marching towards learning process. But many needs or expect their teachers to give a winning start, motivate, inspire, instigate, and stimulate them. It is in this specific context, effective learning in the classroom depends on the teacher's professional expertise to uphold the sustenance of interest, maintain the level of motivation and sensitize students towards true and sure learning.

My teaching experience of thirty years – almost twenty-five years in India as ESL teacher and about five years in Saudi Arabia as EFL teacher augment the reality that students learn best when rewards for capitalizing learning in the classroom proportionately fulfill their own motives and aspirations for enrolling in the course/courses. Some of the prompting needs students may bring to the classroom are - the need to learn something in order to cover a particular task or activity, the need to ease learning complexities, the need to feel involved, the need to move to complacency, the need to converse with new engaging experiences, the need to sharpen skills, the need to overcome challenges, the need to be declared competent, the need to succeed and do well, the need to become comfortable in interacting through the synergy of written and spoken means with other people/organizations, the need to smarten communication skills in day to day situations, etc. It is also germane to mention here that rewards and incentives accord special fillip to learning more effectively than do grades.

Research Questions:

This study purports to answer the following highly warranted research questions:

- What are the appropriate strategies to be used by the teachers in English language teaching as FL or SL?
- How to get students properly engaged and interested in grasping English lessons in the ongoing class?
- How to condition students' motivation with effective learning of English Language?
- Why does the teaching of English require on the part of teacher - the traits like insight, intuition, patience, the art of understanding other people, ability to attract and control attention, and technique to make himself realized among students?
- How can an English teacher infer and decipher students' real needs?
- What should be the solutions of the emerging hindrances in English classes as SL or FL?

Methods:

The deliberations and findings in this paper are significantly based on the researcher's own teaching experiences of about thirty years – twenty-five years in India and five years in Saudi Arabia. The methods, adopted during discussion and elucidation are factual, behavioral, comparative, analytical and descriptive. The learners, sought under the purview of discussion, are college level undergraduate students who are taught English as Second Language or English as Foreign Language. What is found as positing, underlying and enforcing fact in discussion is the attribution of success in English learning to several aspects and factors. The discussion, in return, dissuades the myth of the absolute power or manipulating function of any single factor in language learning. The discussion, in this way, aims to investigate multi-dimensional accountabilities of teacher and also major implications for the teaching profession, in that the facilitation of Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) need to move hand in hand in symphony with other important tasks, such as the stimulation of learning interests, the amplification of learning fortitude, and the support of learning efforts on the part of students. In addition, the discussion tends to justify the logic that every good art in English teaching is not supposed to look good or bad. It is supposed to provoke target students, make them feel something encouraging and drive them move ahead. If it doesn't, it is just another framed picture hanging on a wall.

Discussion & Analysis:

Strategies towards generating creativity and positivity in English classrooms:

Effective teaching involves the abilities to impart instruction that helps students develop the knowledge, skills, and understandings intended by curriculum objectives; create an instructional climate that aims to trigger positive attitudes towards institution and self; screw instructional materials so that all students take proper advantage, irrespective of their ability, ethnicity, or other characteristics; manage the classroom so that students are engaged in learning all or most of the time; make sound decisions and plans that maximize students' opportunity to learn, and respond to initiatives for curriculum change so that the new curriculum's intents are fully realized (Acheson and Gall, 2003).

These striking and practical aspects underline the importance of our deliberations towards formulating strategies and their practices in English language classrooms:

A. Continuous experimentation and self-evaluation by the teacher:

Self-assessment is a pervasive concept in education so far teaching for success (an approach to the professional development of language teachers) is concerned (contact.teslontario.org).

It is an established fact that in general situations wherein English is taught as SL or FL or any else that on the part of teacher, teaching English requires ingenuity, intuition, impulse, insight, patience, the talent of understanding other people, capacity to arouse interest and grip attention, and to make himself comprehended. It requires the ability in teacher to put himself/herself in the students' place. It is certainly a rewarding experience. It means that if teaching is to be converted to a genuinely professional venture, which it ought to be, it necessitates a never-ending experimentation and estimation by the teacher himself. He needs to develop the credible aptitude to evaluate with close discernment his own modes, practices and experience, and deal with his shortcomings, weaknesses, failures as well as triumphs adequately.

B. Making students live participants in the entire process of learning:

In English classes, students usually learn by thinking, making, doing, acting, writing, planning, creating, solving. Passivity usually tends to dampen students' spirit, motivation and curiosity. Teacher can pose learner-centered questions and promote students to look for approaches to a problem or to speculate the results-based outputs of an experiment. He/she can ask students to analyze what makes their classes more or less "motivating". He may ask students to make a list of selective aspects of the two classes that fluctuated their stage of motivation and reach consensus on aspects that lay up high and low motivation.

C. Incorporating instructional behaviors:

Researches have revealed that a teacher's expectations tend to exert a robust effect on a student's overall performance in English class. If a teacher acts as though he expects his students to be enthused, sincere, and enthusiastic in the course, they are more likely to be so. He should chalk out realistic expectations for students while accomplishing assignments, encountering discussions, giving presentations, and grading tests. "Realistic", to these ends, employs the vital point that his standards are high enough to encourage students to do their best work but not so high that students will inevitably feel exhausted and depressed getting themselves acquainted with those expectations.

D. Helping students devise achievable objectives for themselves:

Failure to meet unrealistic goals can demoralize students. The teacher, in this respect, should propel students to concentrate on their constant improvements, without worrying about their grade on any one assignment or test. He/she should supervise students to determine their progress by fostering them to critique their own work, evaluate their strengths, and sort out their weaknesses.

E. Averting undue competition among students:

'Competition', in English (EFL/ESL) classes produces anxiety and complexity, which can interfere with learning. It is better to relegate students' inclinations to compare themselves to one another or put themselves in confrontation in course of learning. Instead, students are to be made more responsible, more immersive and more attentive, displaying better comprehension, producing more work, and getting more favorable to the teaching methods when they work collaboratively in groups rather than compete as individuals. In addition, the teacher should abstain from passing public criticisms over student's performance and comments over activities that distinguish students against each other.

F. Getting enthusiastic about subject:

Fervent zeal or tireless devotion on the part of an English teacher is a crucial factor in students' success. If he/she becomes exhausted or apathetic, students will too. Typically, a teacher's zeal stems from confidence, ardor about the content and true pleasure in teaching. If he finds himself indifferent in the material, he should think back to correct himself to the field and bring those aspects of the subject matter to vigor for his students, and also design the exciting way to deliver the material.

G. Planning lecture to encourage students:

One of the indispensable components for language learning (FL/SL) is that students should have a fascinating passion for the learning of language which can be obtained through creative and critical use of teaching methods and where they can witness language in full use and where "the language experience needs to be contextualized and comprehensive" (Krashen 1985, 1993, 1999) and "the learning needs to be transformed motivated, relaxed, positive and engaged" (Krashen).

In course of teaching, the concerned English teacher must be aware of student's strengths, weaknesses and especially interests. Why students have registered their enrolment in his/her course, how they feel about the content and subject, what their aspirations are and what they are. Then the teacher should try to present examples, case or assignments that remarkably relate the course content to student's great attention and share of feelings.

H. Variation in teaching methods:

In harness with empirical observation it is apt to aver that every student of English fairly entails his/her own knowledge parameter, learning mode, cultural context, linguistic background, or individual stride of learning and progressing. He/she is always in possession of different likes and dislikes, differing styles of learning and even own agenda of learning. This means that the majority of English language classes involve students of varying skills and abilities. This particular situation provokes to create a sort of chaos for the teacher to cope with, either to concentrate on the more advanced students ignoring the remaining or "address to the less able learners at the risk of boring the more able ones as it seems difficult to deal effectively with this situation" (Ansari, 2013).

The usual divergences which set off problem after problem in heterogeneous classes are in language learning style, disposition towards language, interference of mother tongue, degree of intelligence, world knowledge, learning experience, knowledge of other languages, age, gender, personality, confidence, motivation, interests and educational level (Ur, 1996, p.304).

Mingling variety with teaching, in fact, reawakens students' involvement in the course and their energetic interaction. It is, therefore, meaningful to segment the routine by incorporating an array of learners-centered teaching activities and techniques in their course: such as debates, discussion, brainstorming, case studies, demonstration, role playing, audiovisual presentations, guest speakers, small group work, etc. An English language teacher, in the words of Rivers (1981), "cannot afford the luxury of complete dedication to each new method or approach that comes in vogue. He needs techniques that work in his particular situation with the specific objectives that are meaningful for the kinds of students he has in his classes." Also, it is here adequate to quote Akhuli (2006, p. 11), "the teacher should be psychologically and professionally prepared to vary or at least modify his methods to suit different educational situations."

I. Use of technology:

It is an agreed fact that lots of possibilities that new technologies offer have together contributed to a paradigm shift in the realm of English language teaching. Under this pervading shift, it is imperative that teachers of English take sincere initiatives to capitalize on ingredients of technology towards purposeful and

communicative teaching. Researches and practices have mooted the point that “the use of computer-mediated communication tools to facilitate useful learning and support reflective practice is increasingly being acknowledged today” (Salaberry, 2001). Hence in my functional observation, technology has the potential to make the learning of English language a faster, more effective, more energizing and more collaborative process. And my exhortation to every English teacher is that he should inculcate the propensity to use technology-aided strategies for the enrichment of English teaching/learning dynamics.

According to Dawes (2001), ICT has the potential to support education across the curriculum and provide opportunities for effective rapport and communication between teachers and students in ways that have not been realized before. Through the application of ICT, hopefully students will be able to understand and learn English language easily. “ICT also can be used to promote collaborative learning, including role playing, group problem-solving activities and articulated projects” (Forcheri & Mol, 2000). Students, in my practical view, commonly feel encouraged to have more interaction with each other especially where the usage of ICT will suitably take place during the lesson.

J. Praising dexterous achievements:

Both positive and negative comments influence the core forte of motivation, but an analysis of researches, carried out so far indicates that students in English classes get more manipulated by positive feedback and appreciation. Encouragement is a great tonic for students at all levels. Praise puts together students’ self-confidence, self-dependence, self-esteem and condition their skills. Hence the teacher is supposed to identify, appreciate and assert sincere efforts on the part of students. In case, a student’s performance is not up to mark, let him/her clearly know that the teacher believes he or she can surely improve and overcome with the passage of time.

K. Setting goals:

In perspective study it is observed that sometimes the students are themselves part of the problem because of poor preparation, lack of motivation, or a lack of accountability in their class performance. They therefore need to be encouraged to set their own learning goals, develop specific study objectives, and keep weekly study dairies that enable them track how they use their study time. Reinforcement and review of topics as well as prompt feedback from the teacher helps students focus on their individual performance and to trace what they do or do not know. Test- taking tips can be reviewed in class by making use of old question papers and students could be urged to seek help. Similarly, regular reminders that peers have achieved success on similar assignments will hopefully encourage most students to do their best.

Against this backdrop, it is in the fitness of things to share the purpose of each lesson with all students. This could be remarkably attained through need-based classroom plans of action, intended to accomplish and the teacher has vital role to play in letting students know the significance of language, their governing targets, their aspirations behind enrolment in the institution and, above all, what they are working towards. It is also a good idea to bring to their notice the prime goal or set of goals during the lesson, being imparted so that they can deliberate on their progress. At the finish of the lesson, students should be asked to assess their performance and achievement in the light of goal/goals. Students could test each other, then the teacher could ask for thumbs up from all of them who gladly feel they have advanced with some gains or envisaged gains in the lesson.

In my firm view, talks about the relevance and importance of English in day to day life embolden the morale of students. And this sort of narrative must be carried out in classrooms to enhance effectiveness of teaching.

L. Being explicit when shifting to denying feedback:

Denying feedback is usually risky and can lead to the creation of a negative atmosphere in class. Whenever a teacher identifies a student’s weakness/fault, he must clarify that his comments/remarks pertain to a specific task, particular performance or interaction, not to the student, concerned as an individual. It is again a balancing approach to try to cushion negative comments with an appreciation about ingredients of the task/involvement in which the student fared well.

M. Avoiding undesirable comments:

Many students in class may be perturbed and flustered about their response, performance and capabilities. Faced with this adverse situation, it is wise to be sensitive on the side of teacher to how he tactfully phrases his comments/remarks and avoids off-hand remarks that might provoke their channels of inadequacy/fault resulting in their deviation from tracks of learning

When a teacher simply gives struggling students the immediate solution, he robs them of the opportunity to think critically and analytically for themselves. Therefore, it is prudence to gently dismiss student’s anxiety about not getting the answer-key by concentrating on the problem at hand, ask the students to frame the answer or suggest the solution on the basis of what they actually know about the problem, withstand to answer the question “is this right?”, suggest to the students an appropriate path to counter and verify the answer for themselves, and ultimately commend the students for independent steps, and even minor strides.

N. Seeking regular feedback:

Regular feedback from students is also an important factor in English classes. Students are always at the central stage of the language learning procedures and are supposed to be the best judges of every teacher. Hence it is in the fitness of things that the teacher can seek proper feedback from students at least once a week, so that this becomes a tool for him/her to look into, introspect and rectify as well. Also, he/she can benefit in desired proportion from the reactions/responses coming from the students. In truth, “the students’ body language in the

class is also a figurative feedback for the teacher and every teacher must observe and assess it minutely (Eble, 1988). A great language teacher is he, in this researcher's eyes, who is sheer able to read the face and psychology of his students.

Recommendations:

It is now clear that teaching English as SL or FL implies more than giving forth knowledge to students whose viewpoints, attitudes, experiences, associations and level of motivation are very different from the teacher. Hence on the part of an English teacher, it is essential to carry forward in language learning battle field effective, flexible and utilitarian strategic plan of actions that promotes student's capacity to determine what works for them as a whole, to prevail over or stop old strategies and be pliable in introducing new and unfamiliar strategies. It is also contributory for teachers to be heartedly open to other strategies in a rewarding environment that have been discovered to work or developed by students themselves with the heading of time. These may enclose the application of technology and the employment of personal interests that promote the eagerness and motivation to learn and spread the benefits of language acquisition beyond the classrooms. Armed with continuous updating of subject and sharpening of teaching techniques, the teaching of English language can be moved beyond learning language and related strategies, to motivating students to learn the warranted skills and to gear up students to develop critical thinking and positive learning styles that can be also used beyond classrooms in daily life situations and enhance language development as a lifelong process.

It is also a fundamental reality that the class atmosphere should be kept throughout alive to and agog with the ambience of "warmth, trust, cooperation, mutual support and respect" (Xu, 2007). In this case, the holistic rapport and mutual trust will be established if the teacher "creates an unthreatening learning environment by communicating well, obtaining and giving regular feedback" (Pu, 2008).

In addition, it is envisioned through this study that the English teachers, especially newly-appointed teachers will be qualified for categorizing and implementing the authentic tips and right practices to boost students' inclination, interest as well curiosity in learning English successfully with the strong message that - "if you have wings, we have the sky." Further, it is also recommended that English teachers must be always open and receptive to enhancement opportunities such as attending trainings, workshops, seminars on subject or teaching/research methodology; being aware of the renaissance of innovative researches in the realm of pedagogy, and keeping themselves networked with skilled and renowned professionals to give ignition and mileage to their accomplishments as well as performances.

Teacher Development: A Key Factor:

The researcher, on the basis of deliberations in this study, wishes to concede that what works with one class of students in a given context may not work with another class in the same or different contexts. Therefore, the English teachers have to be on their toes almost all the time amidst all opportunities. They have to strive to push their boundaries and actively create challenges for themselves, "learning from their experiences and adding to their skills and their self-knowledge" (www.teachingenglish.org.uk). In other words, they need to nurture a strongly-focused opinion that technical competence, ethical knowledge and language proficiency are major components for their professional development. It means they are bound to "shoulder the responsibility of their own development" (Aslam, 2003, p.22) so that, through their quality-oriented measures, they would be suitable to transform the classroom into a wonderful place to learn. It is in this perspective it is here fit to quote the inspiring words of Good and Brophy that "a perfect teacher does not exist. All of us can refine skills, discard ineffective tactics and develop new ones. None of us will ever be a perfect teacher, but all of us can become better teachers than what we presently are.... This, the continual process of improving our teaching skills, is the essence of professional teaching" (Good & Brophy, 1987, p. 524).

Conclusion:

On the basis of the findings in discussion, it is safe to conclude that the 21st century educational scenario requires the English teacher to be facilitator; inspirer and promoter of students' learning which may help them construct edifice of knowledge in their own way. They are highly demanded to sagaciously come up and live with the expectations of the changed educational ethos in order to grow, sophisticate and refine the various parameters of their professional life. As Wallac (1991) states, English teachers should "become reflective practitioners by reflecting on their professional experiences."

As a matter of fact, English language learners are always prone to variations not only in terms of learning objectives, but also in terms of individual divergences in learning because of their grasping, cognition, educational, ethnic, and cultural diversities. Hence to make teaching successful and creative, the teacher must respect and recognize students' diverse learning styles/receptions and make calculated efforts to build optimal and favorable learning environments for students.

In all, if the teacher follows the steps, discussed above, his students will be able to develop efficiencies to showcase greater patience and to act by dint of at their own pace of competence. And by working through the

problem, students will experience a strong feel of achievement and self-assurance that will shoot up their motivation level to learn. All this will prove genuine creativity in the classrooms. Despite all this, it is fit to imbibe the fact that “all existing learning style instruments and learning strategies are in their infancy, and need further testing through classroom applications” (Oxford, 1990).

Biography:

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