

Creativity in Language Teaching

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to highlight the importance of creativity in language teaching. This is an era of technology. Modern techniques are replacing ancient ones. Changes are taking place all around us, whether they are gradual or drastic. In this scenario, teachers should adopt the latest trends and techniques, in order to cope with the modern world. The necessity to learn a foreign language has become intense due to the increase in globalization and expansion in international relations, trade, technology, and media. Textbooks are said to be a major source of Language Teaching in Pakistan. Unfortunately, the current curriculum is not well-equipped for the challenges of 21st century. Primarily all the teachers and particularly language teachers need to enhance their expertise in teaching. If they use a diversity of teaching methods and strategies, learning will be more active. Students should be given chance to reproduce in the new language as it would help them to 'switch' from their native language to the language they are going to learn. This research throws light on the importance of creativity in the acquisition of a new language and the practical ways through which it may be implemented so that language teachers can opt for them with ease.

Keywords: Syllabus, Diversity, Teaching Techniques, Implementation, Advancement

Introduction

Language is the most important element of our lives. Today's world has become a Global village and people intend to communicate in multiple languages. Use of different languages has become urge of the day as it is a way to enhance our resources. Many countries have figure out their educational policies in such a way so that foreign languages have become an integral part of it.

The word "creativity" has been derived from the Latin word "Creare": to make and the Greek word "Krelnein": to fulfill. So we can say that creativity is to "make up" something new and valuable. Creativity is an ability to generate something new, whether a solution or a new method. The creativity has two basic concepts: originality and appropriateness (John, 1985). An idea is said to be creative, if it gives new answer to a question. Creative thinking focuses on generating ideas, exploring new possibilities and looking for various correct answers rather than just a single one.



Thus the creativity can demonstrate a solution which is directly related to the daily tasks of teachers. Creativity is the natural ability to think differently for finding various solutions to a certain problem or situation.

Creativity is a balanced thought process. It involves divergent thinking, in which many ideas are generated and developed to provide best answers. “When change or transformation are addressed in creativity research, they tend to be primarily conceived as something spectacular or even legendary.” (Sannino & Ellis, 2015)

Fostering creativity is indispensable for language teachers to explain language uses for different communication skills. “Language is creative by its very nature. We can express or communicate one idea in many different ways. Furthermore, every expressed or communicated idea can provoke many different reactions. Every single sentence, phrase or word we say or write is created in a unique moment of communication and can be recreated, reformulated, paraphrased or changed according to the goals of the speaker or writer.” (Stepanek, 2015)

Creativity depends upon evaluating novel ways to respond them. It is a pivotal skill that assists a person to create something new and superior. Creative people have inborn divergent thinking capability. They are able to produce a variety of solutions and they are not scared of expressing their feelings. Creative mind generates activities and decodes them in an awesome manner. Creativity appears as a result of several occurrences of divergent thoughts, in which a variety of concepts and schemes turn up and the best option is adopted. Similarly, it’s not for a single day or for a few days rather it’s a continual thought process which is being used on daily basis as a habit.

In education, creativity can improve students’ performance. Research shows that when students acknowledge creative abilities, their hypothetical outcome expands. Creative activities can revive the concentration of students. Creative persons have curiosity and high determination. They have ability to anticipate the consequences and they do not hesitate to express their thoughts. They are also able to organize what has been messed up. Thus, the result of a thinking process has a vital role in guiding the individuals.

“Creative teachers often improvise around their teaching materials, moving back and forth between book-based input and teacher-initiated input. Hence, even though a teacher may teach the same lesson from a text book many times, each time he or she teaches it becomes a different lesson due to the improvisations the teacher initiates during teaching.” (Jones & Richards, 2015)

In language teaching, creativity is connected with “literary language”. Creative teaching increases levels of motivation and learners get prepared with the skills they need. Without developing creativity, teaching would be just like robotic or artificial. Creative teaching helps learners to advance their capacities for creative thinking.

For the teacher, it is professional regeneration and satisfaction because learners are inspired and fruitful. For the institution, it can lead to increase reputation of the school. Thus, beginners need creative teachers and teachers need to work in institutions where their efforts are cherished. “Real creativity is not merely decorative it brings about valuable and concrete outcomes that are linked to the pedagogical knowledge and plans of teachers and the goals of learners.” (Jones & Richards, 2015).

A. Islamic Perspective of Creativity

1. Seeking Divine Guidance from Allah (SWT)

Islamic perspective of creativity is to seek Divine guidance in all spheres of life. Allah (s. w. t.) has bestowed human beings the ability to create. Creative Muslims, in this way will be eminent, while seeking divine guidance from Allah (s. w. t.). Al - Mazeidy (1993) has presented a new aspect of creativity as “the ability of designing new forms that are beneficial for humanity and are in accordance with the Islamic Shari’ah and principles.” (Al-Karasneh & Saleh, 2010) “Creativity in Islam, as emphasized by Muhammad Iqbal, is not deemed a creative progress unless it is directed to a specific goal and bound with the concept of Tawhid.” (Nizah, Ismail, Zarif, Sulaiman, Kandil & Atoma, 2015).

The Qur’an itself comprises of creative ideas containing a complete code of life. It was revealed as a miracle, challenging the people to produce verses like it. It is a symbol of divine vision to reveal a distinctive and unique book pertinent to all times.

“Al-Qur’an also presents its message through realistic examples, such as stories (Qissah) of the previous Prophets and scientific truths. It offers opportunities to create creative and authentic learning environments in which they would be able to reflect, think and acquire wisdom from various examples.” (Faizuddin, An-Nuaimy & Al-Anshory, 2016) Different Qur’anic verses are the evidence that Islam boosts to think creatively.

2. Seeking guidance from our Holy Prophet (P. B. U. H.)

Our Holy Prophet (P. B. U. H.) was also very creative; he created a Muslim society right from the scratch and managed political, economic, military, religious, educational and social aspects of life. The Prophet Muhammad (p. b. u. h.) was the door to a revolutionary system, which led to the completion of a great Islamic civilization, a unique and creative world order.

B. Psychological Concepts of learning a Foreign Language

1. Teachers as a Role Model:

Teachers' personality and behavior are vital in learning a foreign language. "The teacher's personality, attitude, dexterously handling teaching materials, knack in answering students' questions, and ability to teach by using techniques instill interest among students." (Anil, 2017). "If teachers have ideas, but do not act on them, they are imaginative but not creative." (Avila, 2015). Teachers should provide situations to develop self-confidence and positive approaches for the learners. Learners who are stimulated to think creatively show improved levels of enthusiasm and self-reliance.

2. Motivation:

Motivation plays a dynamic role in learning a new language. Teachers should motivate the students. The motivation is of two types: extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic motivation is a goal accomplishment. A student learns a language in order to get a job, or to get a degree, whereas intrinsic motivation is to attain self-satisfaction rather than some eminent consequences. Experience to the language would make learners motivated. "Learners should be motivated by a desire to succeed, to explore, to develop and to improve, not by a fear of failure." (Stakanova & Tolstikhina, 2014).

3. Planning

"Language planning is a body of ideas; laws, regulations, rules, beliefs and practices intended to achieve a planned change." (Mansoor, 2005). Teachers should cultivate awareness to use course books to adopt creative activities. "The best teachers are those who think carefully about what they are going to do in their classes and who plan how they are going to organize the teaching and learning." (Acklam, 2000).

Scope of Research

This research has a very vast scope, as it compacts all language teacher's pedant to either language, Arabic, French, English and so on. I have tried my level best to have a discussion comprising of general issues related to language teaching.

Rationale of Research

During my previous researches I observed that standard of language teaching in most of the institutions of Pakistan is quite low, especially in schools, colleges and universities of remote areas. Being a language teacher I felt my responsibility to guide new comers in this field.

Research Questions

1. Are we familiar with the concept of language teaching?
2. How can we modify language teaching concepts?
3. What is the essence of creativity in language teaching?

Objectives of Research

The objectives of the study were:

1. To elaborate importance of Creativity in Language Teaching.
2. To provoke language teachers to include creativity in their daily lessons.

Theoretical Framework

This study covers the theoretical aspects of creativity in the light of Islamic teachings.

Significance of Research

This research plays an eminent role in understanding what actual creativity is? And how can we implement it?

Limitation of Research

This research gives just theoretical overview.

Literature Review

Ali Mohammad (2010) defines creativity in a different manner. According to him it is an attitude or state of mind that mirrors craving, goal setting and flexibility. So those are working creatively should ensure that their work do not contradict Islamic principles. Simultaneously, they should be aware of their responsibilities to boost Islamic societies to an advanced level, so that they may face future challenges innovatively and fruitfully. They introduced our Holy Prophet (PBUH) and Al Quran as the icon of creativity as he was able to create a Muslim society from scratch. The Prophet was the door through which the first Islamic society was established providing the basics of the great Islamic civilization.

Nancy Dolores Bell (2012) defines Formulaic language as a point of recognizing between creative or playful. According to her playing is engaging in playful activities so she confines her research to the teaching of adolescence. Creativity contains pattern re-forming, manipulating prevailing strings to construct new sequences. In some cases, speakers may spread and change the way people speak more broadly.

Anita Ismail has defined creativity and innovation through Islamic perspective (2012). The worth of creativity was accredited by Islam and it was demonstrated by our Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Being his followers, now it has become our duty to use creativity and innovation in education. They explained importance of e-learning, collaborative/ Teamwork Skills, Critical Thinking, problem-based learning, Entrepreneurial Skills in Islamic studies. Hence their focus is on Islamic Studies and not the language teaching.

Moreover, they think that student centered learning at higher levels, particularly in Islamic studies, is regarded obligatory to create new ways of teaching and learning. This would be coherent with the needs of modern generation who desire to learn via new strategies.

Weiguo Pang (2015) explains how creativity may be practically implemented. He elaborates that experimental procedures associated with creativity are made up of two phases: firstly, ideas are generated by participants and then are evaluated, so creative ideas come just after the generative activities, and the remaining work is to choose appropriate way or method. Furthermore, if we want to acquire creative response, we should engage our students in various idea-generation activities in the beginning and cheer them to generate new ideas. On the other hand, if there is no idea generation, there will be no creativity.

Beena Anil (2017) emphasizes on using creative teaching methodologies like using newspapers and interpreting advertisements to develop language learning abilities. She concentrates on how teaching methods may be altered and used correctly. She has discussed different activities in detail, which may be used to teach a language with ease, like: use of newspapers, Regional Visual Advertisements, Clippings from Regional and Sand blot Pictures etc.

Research Methodology

Research methodology in this research is based on document analysis and writer's personal experiences. The data was collected from books, articles, Google websites, research and reflection on community particularly in Pakistan. The data was analyzed by using the qualitative content analysis method.

Discussion

Prevailing situation of Language Teaching in Pakistan

1- Lack of Planning

In Pakistan text books are supposed to be the one and only source of language teaching and they consist of syllabus approved by Ministry of Education, either Federal or Provincial. Teachers rely on course books but most of them do not provide creative activities or ways to teach creatively.

2- Lack of Practice

Telling the students about the language is not sufficient, teachers need to combine different learning tools keeping in mind the current teaching approaches. "Language is learnt only through practice. The more the learner is exposed to the use of language, the better chance of learning it." (Patel & Jain, 2008)

Prevailing situation in Pakistan with reference to Arabic Language Teaching

Non – Popularity of Arabic Language

In an Islamic country like Pakistan Arabic Language has not attained so much importance, as it should have, amongst the Educators and High-Level Management of different institutions. They are not investing time and energies on it. Similarly, Arabic is being taught in a rigid way that is focused on Grammar Translation Method. Students are so much suppressed to learn the basic grammar rules, instead of their practical implementation. This attitude of trainers has choked the ability of learners to use it as a tool in science, technology and other creative projects.

Similarly, it is not used in extracurricular activities, talent shows and art work. As a result, it has been confined to the class rooms only and exists between non-popular subjects among our students.

In some cases, there are reports that college or school administration discouraged students to take Arabic as an Elective subject, even though the students were willing too.

2- Lack of Teacher Training

Similarly, Arabic Faculty is not properly trained in Pakistan and in the Arab world as well. Although they have designed training courses for other subjects' teachers, yet for Arabic teachers, they do not take any initiative. "Many teachers of Arabic are found to be lacking in content knowledge." (Taha, 2019) Creativity begins with teacher education. "It is a necessity to introduce courses of creativity at teacher training programs." (Cimermanova, 2015)

How to implement Creativity

Instructional materials should be supplemented in conventional methods of teaching, to attract students. Creativity and innovation should be considered crucial skills to survive in this era of knowledge and innovation.

1. Educators should take a look at the materials they are using. The era of blackboards and chalk has gone. Now it's time of projectors. Teachers can show students PowerPoint presentations, scanned documents, pictures, video clips, Arabic calligraphy and Islamic heritage books. Software applications may be connected to the lessons. Teachers can also show something on the Internet. A well-equipped classroom might have a touch screen.
2. Instructional material does not include electronic gadgets only, but also things like maps, charts, illustrations and diagrams. For example, while teaching Islamic history, a map of the Arabian Peninsula would help students understand the location of various places where the Prophet Muhammad (p. b. u. h.) travelled, or trade routes used by Muslim traders. One thing to tell students where a conquest took place and another thing to show them the exact place where the conquest happened. This helps students to imagine events, after all, a picture is valued a thousand words.

- “The teaching of the various Islamic disciplines such as the Holy Quran, Hadith, Sirah (the story of the life of the Prophet), the fundamentals of religion, including the method of praying in Islam, the five pillars of Islam and the six pillars of Islamic faith, along with Islamic doctrines, rituals, jurisprudence and history will be made more attractive to students when they learn in an environment which is rich with instructional materials and aids.” (Mohamad & Atoma & Ismail & Azmir & Kandi & Nizah & Mustaqim, 2012).
3. Instead of forcing them to learn unwanted texts or information, let them choose their areas of interest. Language can be learned through specially designed grammar and vocabulary exercises. Simple examples may be used to explain hard topics related to grammar.
 4. Exercises may be done with the help of pictures or flash-cards. “The method of supplementing the spoken word by diagram, model or similar means has been used since time immemorial.” (Atkinson, 1967). “The exercises should be created to let students write/speak with focus and direction, to develop their ideas and descriptions, to discover their voices, and to apply grammar rules in a fun way.” (Avila, 2015).
 5. Lessons should be planned with different activities during the class on weekly basis. Activities may provoke students to think, analyze and evaluate like quizzes, competitions and educative games. These activities should be designed in such a way that give students chance to reproduce or progress the ideas, and develop their abilities.
 6. Using newspapers, magazines, advertisements, and innovative tasks such as group discussions can be used to grow the learning aptitude of the learners.
 7. Dialogues or stories may be recreated with the help of stickers.
 8. Time periods may be increased for creative activities. Instead of home works, group activities may be given. These group activities are better than homework. Students should be informed beforehand so that they may be well-prepared.
 9. Similarly, classrooms may be redecorated.
 10. Teachers should share interesting facts to provoke students’ interests in the concerned topic. “It is important to use relevant and required teaching methods by evaluating students’ level of understanding in learning.” (Anil, 2017). Using audio or video clips may be used to listen to native speakers. In this way pronunciations, accent, vocabulary and listening may be skilled.

11. If teacher observe that it is difficult to inspire creative thinking directly, then he / she should pick innovation as the teaching strategy to encourage students' creativity. Students must go beyond just listening, they should write, discuss, analyze and evaluate. They should be involved in high-order thinking so that learning may be called "active learning." Many strategies may be applied for active learning like group discussions, case studies, role plays and journal writing etc.
12. "The method of project work is worth mentioning too: it gives every student a good chance to show their creative individuality and develops their team spirit at the same time." (Stakanova & Tolstikhina, 2014).
13. In the same way, pair work provides chance for rigorous listening and speaking practices. Pair work is healthier than group work in many cases. In this way learners become motivated. They want to explore and develop without having a fear of failure.
14. In order to make learning enjoyable, outside activities may be planned. It can positively change mood of learners. "In the case of a foreign language, learning is not confined to the classroom process, but significantly enhanced by environmental input and interaction." (Dakowska, 2005). So, the lessons may be arranged at different places like schoolyard, library and canteen or sometimes outside the school / institution. In this way "see and tell" strategy may be applied. Students may be taken to a restaurant so that they may communicate to the waiters in different language.
15. Community visitors may be called to take part in different projects.
16. Creative teachers adopt 'principled eclecticism' approach in which, they choose methods according to the needs of their students. They use a diversity of teaching resources and activities. Thus, creativity becomes a blend and combination of styles.
17. The creative teacher is keen to experiment and innovate. Risk-taking reflects their mindset and self-confidence. They are willing to try divergently. The teacher rethinks or revise and if necessary, surrender her or his actual plan. But it is essential in learning process and do not indicates failure. They try to use different formats like reading, conversation, listening and the lessons are organized in different ways according to their content.

18. Creative teachers develop customized lessons that tie the needs of students and their interests. So, he or she personalizes the text, making it a healthier teaching source, and modifies it for a group of students. “Teaching materials and methods must be relevant to the needs of the students.” (Riyazul Haque, 1984)
19. Flexibility is another aspect we observe in creative teaching which means to shift different patterns and modes of teaching accordingly, for example, to change the speed of the lesson, to handle lessons effectively through observing the learners’ response. This is a skilled creativeness.
20. Creative teachers are reflective too. They review their own practices, try to magnify their information and to find new ways that are applicable. Use of technology can support the imagination, problem solving, and contradictory thinking.
21. A productive way of involving students in creative writing may be adopted e.g., diaries, memories, autobiographies, obituaries and journalism. Particularly when students share their infancies and write significant occasions of their lives, they become much more elaborative in their creative writing.
22. Creative teachers motivate students, challenge them, and engage them. They try to cultivate an atmosphere that motivates students to learn. In this regard he or she may ask students to collect examples of exciting texts and bring to class. They may be used as the base for teaching different text types. The texts they carry to class are often more fascinating than the ones in the book.

Creative Writing – A Major tool of Creativity:

Creative writing encourages the students to write by imagination. It is obtained when there are ample opportunities to involve students in expressive use of that language in a relaxed atmosphere. “Creative writing goal is not just assisting and enabling learning; it can also provide alternative ways of expressing and demonstrating teaching.” (Mohammed, 2019).

At the university level, students are required to write assignments creatively but creative writing is not introduced as a separate course in curriculum. “It is a common complaint that students do not know how to go through a thinking process systematically, especially in preparation for a class paper.” (Dagher, 1976).

An actual writing teacher should have familiarity how to help learners to be strategic writers. “Teacher should let the students go through different writing process; planning, drafting, editing, revising and publishing.” (Atikah, 2018). Similarly, modern techniques of teaching creative writing can be adopted within the existing system. (Riyazul Haque, 1984)

Teachers should offer samples of writing texts, so that students should know about different writing patterns. In order to learn creative writing, learners should reproduce the great writers' writing techniques and for this purpose, teachers should offer students a substantial reading list as a source for writing as creative writing in a foreign language is a very thought-provoking task.

How to enhance Creative Writing in students

- Students should practice regularly.
- Teachers must provide samples of outstanding essays. Students' analytical skills can be refined by showing current affairs and inspirational speeches by great people. Teachers should encourage students to present their work.
- Teachers should keep track of the writing process. The major concern of language teachers is to get the students, write with a minimum of tentativeness and errors and a maximum of assurance. 'Sensible' talking and discussions should be encouraged in the classroom.
- Teacher should guide the students to assess their writings and proofreading. Learners should judge their learning by communicating with each other hence their blunders may be rectified.
- Teacher should give sufficient feedback to enhance their capabilities. (Mohammed, 2019).

As a teacher, apply the four golden principles: acknowledge, listen, challenge, support. Acknowledge the individuality of students who make up the class group by showing that you value what they bring to the group. Learn to listen carefully and without pre-judgments to what they say or try to say. Make sure that you provide the right level of challenge in what you ask them to do. And offer support to them while they struggle to meet that challenge. (Maley & Peachey 2015).

Conclusion

Teachers need to plan their daily lessons creatively to be efficient and professional. Through planning teachers can find possible ways that leads student to learn the language with ease.

Weekly lesson plan abounded with activities should be accessible by the students.

Teachers should think about innovative, practical and creative activities to allow students to face challenges in their practical life. Such activities enable confidence and innovation.

These activities should be on regular basis. May be once a week is a feasible frequency.

If a wide gap occurs between sessions, it will not be workable rather it would be wastage of time and energy.

There should be a well-connected set of guidelines, research based instructional material.

Language teachers cannot develop creative teaching skills in isolation, they depend on the support of institutional leaders, colleagues, and experts.

For language teachers it is necessary to go beyond the constraints of standardized curricula and course books. For students it should be clear that what they learn in the classroom it is only the beginning, where as to get advantage from these activities, they need to do a lot of effort.

Student learning depends basically on what the students do by their own selves. Because most of the things we learn, we do not learn during class.

Most of the mistakes which second language learners make are due to intervention of their mother tongue. We can attain fluency in second language at any stage if we are interested.

Teachers play a key role in developing and encouraging interest among students to have healthy discussions.

Language is learnt only through exercise. The more the learner is exposed to the language, the better chance of learning it.

Recommendations

A language teacher should not use a single method but a blend of methods so that students do not get bored and learning time becomes enjoyable.

Another perception of language teaching is that teachers should teach language instead of giving information about it. In this way practice becomes indispensable. "If the language is learnt as a living system, learning of language may be too effective." (Patel & Jain, 2008).

Different activities may be used so that students can use that language in different ways and in different scenarios. This urge may be defining as teacher should act as a practitioner, not the teacher.

Teachers should prepare appropriate syllabus and make it interesting and attractive for students as interest provokes students to learn the new language and this syllabus becomes influential on learning capacities.

Teachers should make an impressive educational plain which highlight the suggestions to make it interesting and effective. It may include creative activities through which learning may be active and efficient.

Latest technologies and resources should be used in language labs.

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