Creativity and its Relationship with Teacher Success

Criatividade e sua relação com o sucesso de Professores

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Resumo: Este artigo procurou explorar a relação entre a criatividade dos professores e seu sucesso em sala de aula. Para isso, 289 alunos de EFL, estudando em diferentes escolas de Inglês foram convidados a preencher uma Escala de Criatividade do Professor de Língua Inglesa (ELT-CS), juntamente com o Questionário das características de um professore de inglês bem sucedido para classificar seus professores de inglês como língua estrangeira. Os resultados da análise de correlação indicam uma relação significativa entre as duas variáveis em questão. Os resultados do T-teste também foram significativos com relação à criatividade e suas sub-dimensões. Os resultados obtidos a partir de equações de regressão sugerem que um par de dimensões de criatividade pode significativamente predizer o sucesso do professor. Finalmente, resultados empíricos foram discutidos e implicações foram fornecidas no contexto do ensino de Inglês.

Palavras-chave: Criatividade; o sucesso do professor; professor; Meio Ambiente; Brainstorming.

Abstract: The current paper sought to explore the relationship between teachers' creativity and their success in classroom. To this end, 289 EFL learners, studying at different English language institutes were asked to fill out English Language Teacher Creativity Scale (ELT-CS) along with Characteristics of Successful EFL Teachers Questionnaire to rate their EFL teachers. The results of the correlational analysis indicated a significant relationship between the two variables in question. T-test results were also significant concerning certain creativity sub-dimensions. The results obtained from regression equations similarly suggested that a couple of creativity dimensions can significantly predict teacher success. Finally, empirical findings were discussed and implications were provided in the context of English language teaching.

Keywords: Creativity; Teacher success; Teacher; Environment; Brainstorming.

1. Introduction

Many endeavors have been made in the past to enrich teacher effectiveness and achieve excellence in language learning. Improving methods, materials, environments and teacher training courses were instances of this kind. Meanwhile, encouraging cultivation of pupils' creativity skill as a key competency for the 21st century is worth being probed in this realm since it might lead to success in other areas as well.

In today's modern world, barely anyone interrogates the role of creativity. To a society that constantly needs to prosper and survive, creativity is an inevitable utensil. Tomorrow's professionals are required to be flexible, critical and creative thinkers rather than patterned ones. Manifestly, in this perspective, the concept of teaching is pivotal to the development of creativity. Nowadays, many students learn to solve particular sorts of problems; yet, are not adaptable enough to break out from patterns and confront unexpected situations which turn up momently in the present fast-changing world (Runco, 2004).

To enable individuals how to treat multiple life ambiguities, teachers need to think beyond the traditional boundaries of launching subject-knowledge. Indeed, this transition necessitates the shift from a traditional subject-teacher to a supportive facilitator of learning (Forrester & Hui, 2007).

Contemporary language teaching methodologies tend to be student-centered and interaction-based employing open-ended elements (Dornyei, 2005). During the recent decades, in the field of second and foreign language teaching, some teaching methods such as communicative approach and task-based language teaching have gained popularity. In truth, these methods call for the imagination of both language teachers and learners; thus, have accentuated the need of being creative. This contradicts the old rote-learning teaching strategies which led to the lack of creativity in students (Cheng, 2010).

On the whole, based on a review of the literature, it seems that due to the nature of creativity which is an immense help to general education and educational psychology (Plucker, Beghetto, & Dow 2004), this skill can also help language teachers to be more successful in the classroom. Additionally, scarcity of research in terms of creativity in the field of language learning, made us explore it deeper and figure out its relationship with teacher success. To this end, the current paper intends to evaluate creativity fostering behaviors of a group of non-native English language teachers and examine its role in their teaching success and students' achievement in classroom.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Creativity

Creativity is a conceit that is absolutely familiar to both lay people and professionals (Dornyei, 2005). Behind its relative simplicity which makes it applicable to daily conversations, there is a complex history of thinking about it (Glaveanu, 2011). Unlike abundant concepts in science, there is no unified, unambiguous definition in terms of this mysterious notion. Nonetheless, Almeida, Prieto, Ferrando, Oliveira and Ferrandiz (2008) provided a general explanation of creativity as the skills required for generating ideas and products that are (a) rather novel and unconventional; (b) high in quality; and (c) suitable to the task at hand. In general sense, creativity is associated with originality, discovery, divergent thinking, and flexible problem solving (Dornyei, 2005).

Based on Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory of creativity and Csiksentmihalyi's processes that back up creative 'flow', it is supposed that creativity is essentially collaborative and social. Simply put, creativity does not take place inside people's head but from the interaction of a person's thought and their socio-cultural context (Csiksentmihalyi, 1996). This concept is entirely opposed to the early belief that would regard creativity as a personality trait owned by highly gifted individuals (Whitelock, Faulkner, & Miell, 2008). In compatible with the previous argument, Amabile (1983) asserted that creativity should not be looked at as a personality trait or general ability but an attitude that results from the interaction of personal characteristics, cognitive ability, and environmental factors. Thus, it could be taught through the application of some simple techniques and strategies.

There is a perceived distinction between *teaching creatively* and *teaching for creativity*. The former concept refers to utilization of imaginative approaches to make learning more interesting; whilst, the latter indicates the recognition and nourishment of learners' creative abilities. Deeper still, teaching for creativity is learner-focused; on the other hand, teaching creatively is more teacher-focused. Although holding dissimilar focuses, the two notions are observed as interconnected and inseparable. Teaching creatively often inspires and paves the way for teaching for creativity (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004).

The first thing in teaching for creativity is to provoke individuals believe in their creative potential to offer them confidence to struggle. Simultaneously, plenty of attributes must be stimulated such as risk taking, independent judgment, intrinsic motivation, and curiosity. As Craft and Jeffrey (2004) set forth, based on a learner inclusive pedagogical shift, the control has to be passed back to the learners.

Meanwhile, teachers' perspective is significantly substantial in the immediate classroom environment. It affects teaching methodologies and educational philosophies. In a comparative study, Easona, Giannangelo and Franceschini (2009) investigated teachers' perspectives of students' creativity in public and private schools between kindergarten and grade three. 15 teachers from public schools and 24 from private schools were chosen to fill out an Early Childhood Creativity Scale (ECCRS) on four of their pupils. Results manifested that private

school teachers evaluated their learners higher overall on creativity. Additionally, teachers who rated themselves highly creative marked their students notably creative as well. Based on this prominent standpoint, the teachers who find themselves more creative are more likely to provide an environment which fosters creativity.

In another study, Davidovitch and Milgram (2006) attempted to check out creative thinking as a predictor of teacher effectiveness in 58 college instructors. Analyzing the data, they investigated the correlation between the two variables quite noticeable (r=0.64). In this case, "it is not teachers as influence, but creativity as influence on teaching" (Runco, 2004. p. 671).

Limited empirical L2 data available on the effect of creativity on language learning proves that creativity plays an important role in this realm (Dornyei, 2005). Sternberg (2002) proposed that creative intelligence is a substantial determiner of language acquisition. It means that the more proficient learner, has access to more words and structures; therefore, seems to be more creative. Otto (1998) and Albert and Kormos (2004) discovered a significant positive correlation between creativity and L2 performance. Runco (2004) evidenced that student creativity is discouraged by some specific classroom activities like testing yet, is improved by employing game-like tasks. Eventually, based on a study by Pishghadam and Javdan Mehr (2011) learners who perform better on narrative tasks outdo on creativity test equally.

2.2. Teacher Success

Teachers are intended to make remarkable changes in learners. Due to the significance of the issue, teacher success has been the focus of numerous scholars ever since those early days. To be a successful teacher does not depend only on the quality of teacher education courses, but also on the attributes of the teachers themselves. Many elements have reported to influence teacher's success such as teachers' personality and behaviors (Bhardwaj, 2009; Medley & Mitzel, 1955), teachers' ability and skill (Porter & Brophy, 1988) and also environment and working conditions (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Korthagen, 2004).

In 2007, Elizabeth, May and Chee attempted to construct a model of teacher success in Hong Kong. The results showed that effective teachers were mainly skillful, effective and fair in testing and grading. Moreover, they would entertain learners, enhance their critical thinking, and provide them with proper feedback. In the same vein, Tamblyn (2000) claimed that successful teachers are creative, flexible, skillful, warm, and humorous. Furthermore, Beck (1967) found effective teachers warm, friendly, and supportive. Besides, in an investigation of student description of their ideal teacher, Gage (1963) concluded that if teachers learn how the students wanted them to behave they would become more like the student ideal. In a different study,

Pishghadam, Shayesteh and Shapoori (2011) reported that the teachers who make use of more NLP techniques in their classes are more flexible toward their work and individual learners and thus are more successful. Along with teachers' psychological and behavioral aspects, ability and skill in applying materials, questioning, assessing, and evaluating can be also considerable (Porter & Brophy, 1988).

Besides teachers themselves, teaching environment and working conditions may affect their success as well. Korthagen (2004) and Johnson and Birkeland (2003) emphasized some environmental factors including school facilities, unsupportive administrators, and heavy teaching materials pretty influential on a good teaching. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) indicated that in the past teachers' success or failure could not be apparent for administrators but nowadays performance of the students on standardized tests is a considerable measure of that. However, as Haynes (2008) declares, this is a sort of limitation on how teacher effectiveness is defined.

In spite of the fact that there are numerous ways to be a successful teacher in the classroom; yet, as Johnson and Birkeland (2003) believed, however well prepared and committed teachers may be, they have no certainty that they will succeed in the classroom just because nature of teaching is unpredictable. In all, it seems that none of the research projects carried out in the realm of language education has touched the role of creativity in teacher success.

3. Purpose of the Study

Due to the importance of creativity in the industrial societies and more specifically in language teaching, this study aims to shed some light on the relationship between creativity and teacher success. To be more exact, the present research sets out to answer the following questions:

1. Is there any significant relationship between teacher's creativity and their success in classroom?

2. Is there any significant difference between the means of less successful and more successful teachers, regarding each single creativity dimension?

3. Do any of the creativity dimensions predict teacher success significantly?

4. Methodology

4.1. Participants

Our sample consisted of 289 English language learners who rated their 19 English teachers. The learners were both male (N= 86) and female (N=203) with a range of between 16 to 30 years old (Mean= 18) in five proficiency levels: elementary, lower intermediate, intermediate, higher intermediate, and advanced. The participants were studying at different private language institutes of Mashhad, Iran. The reason behind choosing our participants from private institutes and not public schools are mentioned below:

1. The educational system in public schools is centralized and decisions are made by the government and not teachers. On the contrary, the educational system of language institutes are decentralized i.e. teachers have more freedom and option to choose their own materials and strategies.

2. Education in public schools is free of charge; so, there is no competition between schools to attract more students; however, there is a severe competition between language institutes to get more students.

3. In public schools teachers are permanently employed and do not have the fear of being dismissed. Therefore, there is no competition or interest to have a more effective class. Conversely, institute teachers are temporary employed. On the condition they do not absorb more students to their class and institute, they will be replaced immediately.

The 19 teachers whom our subjects rated were 7 male and 12 female EFL teachers of the aforementioned institutes aged between 22 and 35 (M= 26) with a range of between 2 to 10 (M= 5.8) years of teaching experience. The teachers had all majored in the various branches of English like English teaching, English literature, and English translation at B.A. (N= 6) or M.A. (N=13) level. It is needed to point out that in the educational context of Iran, people educated in diverse branches of English, with an acceptable level of knowledge and proficiency in English language, are allowed to teach English.

4.2. Instrument

Two instruments were administered to collect the data in hand: English Language Teacher Creativity Scale (ELT-CS) (Pishghadam, Baghaei, & Shayesteh, 2012) and Characteristics of Successful EFL Teachers Questionnaire (Moafian & Pishghadam, 2009).

4.2.1. English Language Teacher Creativity Scale (ELT-CS)

In order to measure how much EFL teachers cultivate their students' sense of creativity ELT-CS, constructed and validated by Pishghadam, Baghaei and Shayesteh (2012), was conducted. The scale comprises 60 multiple choice items ranging from "always" to "never",

requiring 20 minutes to complete. ELT-CS is multidimensional and includes 7 dimensions namely Originality and Elaboration, Fluency and Flexibility, Person (Teacher), Press (Environment) and Materials, Motivation, Independent Learning (Autonomy) and Brainstorming. Rasch rating scale model (RSM) (Andrich, 1987) was utilized to substantiate the construct validity of the scale. Adopting consecutive approach, each dimension was ratified separately. The reliability estimates obtained for each of the seven underlying factors were as follows: Originality and Elaboration = .74, Fluency and Flexibility = .81, Person (Teacher) = .77, Press (Environment) and Materials = .76, Motivation = .70, Independent Learning (Autonomy) = .74 and Brainstorming = .77. Further, the overall reliability gained by Cronbach Alpha for the data in this study is 0.84.

4.2.2. Characteristics of Successful EFL Teachers Questionnaire

The second questionnaire employed to investigate teachers' success in the classroom was 'Characteristics of Successful EFL Teachers' (Moafian & Pishghadam, 2009). This questionnaire consists of 47 multiple choice items varying from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The overall reliability of the questionnaire is 0.94 and the results of factor analysis has yielded 12 constructs: teaching accountability, interpersonal relationships, attention to all, examination, commitment, learning boosters, creating a sense of competence, teaching boosters, physical and emotional acceptance, empathy, class attendance, and dynamism. To boot, the overall reliability estimated by Cronbach Alpha obtained for the data in hand is 0.95.

4.3. Procedure

The study was carried out in several language institutes in Mashhad, Iran. Near the end of the term, students were asked to fill out the two mentioned questionnaires and rate their teachers with regard to their creativity fostering behavior and success.

The gathered data was entered into and processed with SPSS 16 software. In the first place, Pearson product-moment formula was used to calculate the correlation between teacher success and the extent to which teachers can enhance their learners' creativity skill. Thereafter, scores of teacher success were ranked and two groups of low (N=144) (less successful) and high (N=144) (more successful) were formed and t-test was conducted to investigate if the difference between the means is significant. Multiple regression analysis was also employed to explore which sub-dimensions of creativity are strong predictors of teacher success.

5. Results

The first question of the study was whether there is any significant correlation between teachers' creativity and their success. Table 1 demonstrates the results of the correlational analysis.

Table 1: The results of correlational analysis between teachers' creativity and success

	Overall creativity	Originality & Elaboration	Fluency & Flexibility	Person	Press & Materials	Motivation	Autonomy	Brainstorming
Teacher Success	.54*	.14*	.13*	.20*	.16*	.19*	.14*	.13*

* p < .05

As Table 1 shows there is relatively a high correlation between teachers' overall creativity fostering behavior and their success (r = 0.54, p < 0.05). It means that the teachers who better cultivate creativity in their learners are more successful in their teaching career. In addition, all the seven dimensions of creativity namely Originality and Elaboration, Fluency and Flexibility, Person (Teacher), Press (Environment) and Materials, Motivation, Independent Learning (Autonomy) and Brainstorming correlate with teacher success. Out of the seven dimensions, Person (Teacher) is correlated higher than others with teacher success (r = 0.20, p < 0.01).

In response to the second question, t-test was performed to verify if there is any significant difference between groups of less and more successful teachers. Table 2 indicates the outcome.

Table 2: Comparisons of less and more successful teachers in terms of creativity dimensions

Variables	Less successful teacher (N=144) Mean	More successful teacher (N=144) Mean	t
Originality & Elaboration	16.47	16.78	-1.16
Fluency & Flexibility	27.40	27.71	-.83
Person	20.60	21.06	-2.03*
Press & Materials	12.97	13.18	-1.00

Motivation	21.14	21.40	-.74
Autonomy	16.33	16.40	-.28
Brainstorming	15.65	16.07	-2.07*

* p < .05

Based on Table 2, the difference between the means of less successful and more successful teachers is not significant with regards to Originality and Elaboration, Fluency and Flexibility, Press and Materials, Motivation and Autonomy (p > 0.05). Yet, the difference between the means is significant concerning Person (Teacher) (t = -2.03, p < 0.05) and Brainstorming (t = 2.07, p < 0.05).

To answer the third question, multiple regression analysis was run using creativity dimensions as predictors of teacher success. The results are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Multiple regression analyses predicting creativity dimensions on teacher success

Model	Predictors	R	R²	Adjusted R² F	B	P
1	Person	.20	.04	.03	1.13	.001
2	Person, Press & Materials	.25	.06	.05	1.08 (Person) .92 (Press)	.001

Table 3 depicts that there are two models: model 1 Person (Teacher) and model 2 Person (Teacher), Press (Environment) & Materials. This indicates that first a model with Person (Teacher) was tested and then another predictor was added and model 2 was checked.

In the first model it can be observed that R² equals 0.04. That is Person (Teacher) accounts for about 4% of the total variance in teacher success (p < 0.05).

As it can be seen in Table 3 due to the increase in the R² value from 0.04 to 0.06, model 2 is a better predictor than model 1. The results suggest that the first variable (Person/ Teacher) together with the second variable (Press/ Environment and Materials) can account for about 6% of the variance in teacher success (P < 0.05). It can also proposed that the addition of dimension

4 (Press/ Environment and Materials) improves prediction, explaining about 2% extra variance. Consequently, having a high score in Person and Press are the best predictors of teacher success.

6. Discussion

The major aims of the present study were first to investigate the relationship between teacher success and their creativity fostering behavior; second, to see if any significant differences existed between means of less successful and more successful teachers and lastly, to find out how much sub-dimensions of creativity predicted teacher success.

As the results of the study exhibited, there is a significant relationship between teachers' creativity fostering behavior and their success in classroom. Likewise, from among all the sub-dimensions of creativity, which correlated significantly with teacher success, Person/Teacher had the highest correlation. The results are justifiable if we delve into the nature of creativity and its underlying subscales. Since creativity deals with factors like motivation, autonomy, and originality it is quite fair to claim that the teachers who better enhance creativity in their learners are more successful in reality. This is identical to Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) idea that teachers may be important gatekeepers of learners' creative potentials. Regarding Person (Teacher), it is totally meaningful to say generally features like teachers' attention to students' ideas, not being exam-oriented and trying to have a friendly class leads to teacher success. This supports Tamblyn's (2000) claim that successful teachers are creative, flexible, skillful, warm, and humorous.

The findings also demonstrated that there is a significant difference between less successful and more successful teachers in terms of Person and Brainstorming. It is quite justifiable if we say elements like using various teaching methods, taking learners' opinions and questions more seriously and trying to be less predictable in class chiefly are employed more by successful teachers rather than their less successful counterparts. Furthermore, considering brainstorming conditions, avoiding interruption or evaluation of students' productions aid more successful teachers in comparison with the less successful ones. In this perspective, Muttagi (1981) highlighted the positive impact of brainstorming as well. However, there is not any significant difference between less successful and more successful teachers regarding Originality and Elaboration, Fluency and Flexibility, Press (Environment) and Materials, Motivation, and Independent Learning (Autonomy). This means the mentioned factors influence both less and more successful teachers equally.

The results of regression indicated that Person/Teacher united with Press/ Environment and Material can significantly predict teacher success. This notion suggests that although teachers have a distinguished role in developing learners' creativity, if joined with environment

and material can best predict their success. These findings are quite similar to those of Chien and Hui (2010) who combined environmental factors with teachers' perspectives of creativity to gain a better result and also with Korthagen (2004) and Johnson and Birkeland's (2003) view that emphasized some environmental factors including school facilities, unsupportive administrators, and heavy teaching materials are highly influential on effective teaching.

The findings of the study similarly give support to the application of creativity in education. By using creativity and finding out its role in bringing change in learning and teaching context, the teachers can make progress in helping learners develop patterns and strategies for thinking creatively, a skill that will definitely serve them well as they move toward their unwritten futures. Moreover, by providing training courses in practice, creativity can simplify exploring successful teachers while encountering multiple situations. Therefore, this can be beneficial for administrators of English language institutes to recruit those teachers who will be more successful in their career by using ELT-CS.

Finally, it is recommended to objectively examine the association between creativity and other related factors such as IQ and motivation. These variables seem to be highly correlated with creativity. Finding any relationship between the mentioned variables and creativity promotes a better understanding of the role of these factors in second language learning research. In addition, replication of the same study with a bigger sample to ensure the observed results is highly encouraged.

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