



INCREASING CREATIVITY WITH THE SELF-STUDIES IN BASIC ENGLISH CLASSES

Ozlem Yagciogluⁱ

Full-time instructor, Modern Languages Department,
Dokuz Eylul University, Buca-Izmir, Turkey

Abstract:

There are many materials, books and resources for the self-studies which can be useful in the ESL and in the EFL classrooms. Choosing the ones which can make learners more creative and happier will help our students to develop their language skills in speaking, reading, writing and listening. This paper deals with the methods and approaches to help our students to become creative learners and thinkers. Methods and approaches which can be used to help our students to be creative will be explained. Games on creativity will be told. Classroom activities will be shared. Useful blogs, websites and books on creativity will be suggested.

Keywords: self-studies; games; approaches; creative thinkers

1. Introduction

In recent years, the role of the self-studies in foreign language learning has always been inevitable. Students can improve or develop their language skills with the help of the useful self-studies which are suggested by their teachers or instructors.

Students who learn English as a foreign language or as a second language usually need to be motivated with some exercises and games which help them to be creative and happier learners and thinkers. In basic English classes, students often ask questions about the new words they learn. They also ask questions about the different tenses they learn every week. Teachers or instructors use different kinds of methods and approaches to make their students more creative and happier. In our contemporary world, teachers are luckier to find more materials to help their learners to be more creative, as there are more books and websites than the ones in the past. Using the right

ⁱCorrespondence: email ozlem.yoglu@deu.edu.tr or ozlemygcgl@gmail.com

methods is always crucial to create happier class hours. The same methods and approaches cannot be used in every class, although all of the learners are basic English learners in the Basic English Classes Department, because the students in each class in the Basic English Classes Department have different interests and different characteristics. This issue is same in the Modern Languages Departments.

This study will help you to understand the definitions of creative thinkers and creative behaviours and will suggest you different kinds of self-studies according to your different levels of students in different classes.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. What is creativity?

According to the free online dictionary, Thesaurus.com, creativity is defined as:

“...the ability to transcend traditional ideas, rules, patterns, relationships, or the like and to create meaningful new ideas, forms, methods, interpretations, etc.; originality, progressiveness, or imagination: the need for creativity in modern industry; creativity in the performing arts.”

As Richards (2013:3) states the following on creativity:

“Creativity is usually described as having a number of different dimensions: the ability to solve problems in original and valuable ways that are relevant to goals; seeing new meanings and relationships in things and making connections; having original and imaginative thoughts and ideas about something; using the imagination and past experience to create new learning possibilities.”

Creativity has two crucial components. First, a creative person must produce ideas or behaviours which are recognizably original. The individual is capable of generating ideas or behaviours which are novel, surprising, or unusual. Secondly, the behaviours or ideas must be original and adaptive. To be adaptive, the individual's originality must make a positive contribution to that person's life or to the lives of others. (Peterson & Seligman, 2004: 110).

2.2. What is creative thinking?

Creative thinking is defined by the Academic and Training Support System, Educational Resources as:

<http://www.edu-resource.com/training-and-development/what-is-creative-thinking.php>

“Creative thinking is actually both capacity to blend or synthesize to present suggestions, images, or experience in unique ways and the expertise of thinking, responding and dealing in a creative way characterized by a higher level of development, risk taking and divergent thinking.”

2.3. What is creative behavior?

Maher, Merrick and Saunders (2008:1) state the following on creative behaviour:

<https://www.aaai.org/Papers/Symposia/Spring/2008/SS-08-03/SS08-03-007.pdf>

“Psychologists and biologists have proposed a number of definitions for creative behaviour in natural systems. In humans, creative behaviour may be defined as behaviour that results in a product that is unique or valuable to either an individual or a society.”

Here, it is understood that creative behaviour is a unique response which is realised by everyone. Because the individual who is capable of having a creative behaviour creates valuable results.

Creative behaviour is also defined by Uribe-Larach & Cabra (2011: 325) as:

“Creative behavior has been viewed as the creative act, or a set of acts, which are made explicit through behavior. Creative behavior is not submissive; it is an action, which leads to a creative output or a solution to a challenge.”

2.4. Techniques of Creativity

Techniques of creativity have been described and listed by Türköz (2010: 163):

***a. Brainstorming:** This technique was coined by Alex Osborn in the 1930s. Brainstorming is the technique which leads the group of people to thinking by making the effects of associations and wakening. According to Osborn, this technique has four rules. And these are: to criticize, free throw, association of as many ideas and opinions as possible, relation, development, change and bringing together.*

***b. Reverse Brainstorming:** Brainstorming is done on the basis of understanding through which ideas the one can be successful. However, the reverse brainstorming is done for the aim of understanding how to fall the ideas. By this technique, the faults and the drawbacks are searched.*

c. Idea Map: *At this technique, the change and the arousal generate the basis. The ideas that are about the issue come out are tried to be matched with the common issue.*

d. Check list: *It is the technique of asking the questions which are prepared previously for making the search of creative idea easier to the creative person or to the teams focused on. The aim is to stimulate the creation of new ideas by matching the question with the issue.*

e. Gordon technique: *It is a more systematic technique which continues from the point where the brainstorming left. As it happens in the other techniques, all the members of the team do not know the aim for which the creative idea is produced. As the aim is not obvious, the creativity is got rid of the prejudgements and the habits.*

f. Investigation of the assumptions: *By breaking the assumptions, making the reverse of it and investigating it, the creative idea can be stimulated.*

2.5. The Efficient Factors for the Development of the Creativity in Our Classes

Motivation is an essential factor which affects teachers and their students to have joyful classes. As a result of the lack of motivation students or teachers can be unsuccessful. With the help of the increasing motivation, students and teachers can achieve happiness and success.

Türköz (2010: 163) indicates:

“Motivation can be separated into two:

a. Internal Motivation: *The passion of creativity, the interest and the will for the creativity are related to the internal motivation. The challenge about the solving of the problem and the sense of satisfaction resulting from the solution increase the motivation.*

b. External Motivation: *This kind of motivation consists of the external factors. The prize or the positive result that is going to be gained with the completion of a study or a task is the factor that will influence the motivation at the first level.”*

2.6. Creativity in Higher Education

Allen (2015:17) states that;

“In higher education, creativity is frequently espoused as a graduate capability, alongside related attributes such as innovative problem solving and entrepreneurship, promoted by employers who recognise the importance of soft skills in the new millennium marketplace.”

As it has been mentioned by Hudzik (2013: 101):

“Challenges facing higher education lead some to believe that higher education as we know it will be a thing of the past—for example from bricks to Web clicks. Others are less sanguine about the short-run scope of change. Yet studies in the US, Australia, Europe and by the OECD signal fundamental change in modes of operation and the ‘business’ model.”

3. Method

3.1.1. Participants

The participants of my classroom activities consisted of 90 university students in the English Preparatory Classes Department at Dokuz Eylul University in the city of Izmir in Turkey. 51 of them were male students and 39 of them were female students. Their ages ranged from 19-22. The participants of this study were asked to reply to the following questions during the 1st and the 2nd weeks of their courses.

3.1.2 Teaching Procedure

The participants were asked to reply to the following questions during the 1st and the 2nd weeks of their courses:

A. Sample Class Activities

The participants were asked to reply to the following questions during the 2nd and the third week of their lessons:

1. Do you think using and learning quotes can make you happy or happier while learning new things?
2. How can you give positive energy with the help of quotes?
3. Where can you find useful quotes to motivate yourself?

B. Sample Class Activity

The following quotes were given the students to do pair-work and group work activities:

They were also asked to bring pictures and photos to their speaking classes. They used their pictures and photos while talking about the following topics:

1. Quote to Be Hopeful and Optimistic (Ben-Shahar: 91)

You see things; and you say, “Why?” But I dream things that never were; and I say, “Why not?”- George Bernard Shaw

2. Recognize when good enough will do (Ben-Shahar: 156)

“Settle for a choice that meets your core requirements rather than searching for the elusive best.” - Barry Schwartz

3. Bring positive energy wherever you go (Ben-Shahar: 174)

“Wherever you go, no matter what the weather, always bring your own sunshine.” – Anthony D’Angelo

4. Focus on Successes (Ben-Shahar: 265)

“Wherever your attention goes, your energy flows and life grows.”- Brian Bacon

5. Never too old: (Tishio: 15)

“You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream.”- C.S. Lewis

C. Sample Class Activity to Improve Vocabulary Knowledge (Haley, 2010: 160)

Directions:

1. Students were assigned a different vocabulary word.
2. During the class hours, students wrote down other words they heard or read that helped them describe their vocabulary word.
3. In the other box, a picture of what the word reminded them of or looked like in their mind was drawn by the students.

Vocabulary Word
<u>Words to Describe Your Word Draw a Picture</u>

D. Sample Activity for the Pre-Intermediate Level of Students

Directions: Students filled each link with jobs that were interdependent and gave reasons why they needed each other. (Haley, 2010: 155).

Independent Chains

Job
Reason

Job Reason
Job Reason
Job Reason

E. Sample Class Activities for Speaking Classes:

The following games have been suggested by the INGED (English Language Education Association):

http://www.inged.org.tr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=49&Itemid=56#content

1. Names and adjectives

This is a warm up activity which can be used to warm up our classes and it was used in 3 of my classes as a warm up activity:

"Participants think of an adjective to describe how they are feeling or how they are. The adjective must start with the same letter as their name, for instance, "I'm Henri and I'm action that describes the adjective."

2. Three truths and a lie

This is a warm up activity to warm up our classes and it was used in 3 of my classes as a warm up activity:

"Everyone writes their name, along with four pieces of information about themselves on a large sheet of paper. For example, 'Alfonse likes singing, loves football, has five wives and loves PRA'. Participants then circulate with their sheets of paper. They meet in pairs, show their paper to each other, and try to guess which of the 'facts' is a lie."

3. Connecting eyes

This is a warm up activity to warm up our classes and it was used in 3 of my classes:

“Participants stand in a circle. Each person makes eye contact with another person across the circle. The two walk across the circle and exchange positions, while maintaining eye contact. Many pairs can exchange at the same time, and the group should try to make sure that everyone in the circle is included in the exchange. Begin by trying this in silence and then exchange greetings in the middle of the circle.”

4. Who is the leader?

This is a warm up activity to warm up our classes and it was used in 3 of my classes as a warm up activity:

“Participants sit in a circle. One person volunteers to leave the room. After they leave, such as clapping, tapping a foot, etc, that are copied by the whole group. The volunteer comes back into the room, stands in the middle and tries to guess who is leading the actions. The group protects the leader by not looking at him/her. The leader must change the actions at regular intervals, without getting caught. When the volunteer spots the leader, they join the circle, and the person who was the leader leaves the room to allow the group to choose a new leader.”

F. Sample Class Activities for Writing Classes

1. Activity One

Read the paragraph. Circle all the transition words. Then underline the reasons and explanations. Put a check (✓) in front of the topic sentence and the concluding sentence. Miller and Cohen suggest the following activity to low-intermediate classes:

(2001:37-38)

GOING HOME AFTER A HURRICANE

When the storm is over, it is natural to want to go home as soon as possible. When it is safe to return, you should take the following steps:

First, be careful when you enter your house. There may be snakes or other animals that the flood washed in. Then, open all the windows and doors. You should let the fresh air dry the house. Next, check for gas leaks, electrical system damage, and water damage. Any of these problems can be very dangerous. If you find anything wrong, you should turn off the power and call the Gas Company, the electric company, or the water company for help. In addition, take pictures of the damage to the house and its contents. You will need this proof for the insurance company. Finally, start cleaning your house. This is the hardest job because you must pick up the pieces of your life and put it back

together. When you return to your house after a hurricane, be patient! It takes a long time to return to normal.

a. Starting to Write

1. Brainstorming

Before you write your list of instructions or advice, think about these questions:

How to (your topic)

- Why is it important to know how to do this?
- What are the steps in the process?
- What dangers are there if you don't do it right?
- Can anyone do this? Is it easy or difficult to do it?

Now make some notes. You don't have to write complete sentences or worry about grammar.

General ideas (for the task of your choice)

2. Activity Two

1. The following exercises are suggested to advanced level students by O'Dell and McCarthy (2011: 13):

Use your dictionary (book, CD-ROM or online version) to find three collocations for each of these words.

- cast (as verb with basic meaning of throw) -----
- application -----
- utter (as adjective) -----
- absolutely -----
- release (as verb) -----

2. Rewrite the underlined part of each sentence using the word in brackets. Use a dictionary to help you.

- His opponent made critical and damaging remarks about his honesty. (ASPERSIONS)
- The point you're making is quite unrelated to our topic. (RELEVANCE)
- The speaker praised Janice's contribution to the project. (TRIBUTE)
- As soon as she got home Kay started working. (SET)
- His rudeness made us all fall silent. (RENDERED)
- It is uncertain how many workers will be affected by the changes. (INDETERMINATE)
- The marketing campaign was better than we had expected. (EXCEEDED)
- I'm slightly unsure about these sales figures. (NIGGLING)

G. Sample Online Activities Which Are Suggested to Develop Their English Skills:

- Cambridge English Online
www.cambridgeenglishonline.com
- Medical English online exercises and games
<http://www.englishmed.com>
- Hangman Games Online Interactive English Vocabulary
<http://www.vocabulary.cl/Hangman.htm>
- Interactive English Grammar Exercises Online, Quizzes, Games
<http://www.englishmedialab.com/grammar.html>
- English word games - crosswords, word search, hangman, trivia
<http://www.learnenglish.de/gamespage.htm>
- Lumosity: Brain Games & Brain Training
www.lumosity.com

H. Sample Self Study Homework for the Intermediate Level Students

Directions:

- Students were asked to choose a city from Turkey and from a developed country.
- Students were asked to write short paragraphs about the cities they chose and to bring some photos about the cities they chose.
- Students were asked to choose the special delights which were eaten in the cities they chose.
- After 3 weeks, they read the paragraphs and compositions about the cities and the special delights in their class hours.

I. Sample Self Study Homework for the Pre-Intermediate and Intermediate , Level Students

Directions:

1. Students were asked to listen to the following pop songs:
 - “*That’s the Way It*” is by Celine Dion:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6wbugWrfLU>
 - “*I’m Alive*” by Celine Dion:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJsa6-y4sDs>
 - “*Sway*” by Michael Buble:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-tmTTPYi0>
 - “*Save the Last Dance for Me*” by Michael Buble:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAjfB0XfjKA

- “When I dream at Night” by Marc Anthony:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=DATKMNuOe-k
2. They were also asked to write the new words after listening to these songs.
 3. They were asked to write compositions or paragraphs with the new words they learnt after these songs.

3. 2. Findings

3.2.1 Data Analysis

According to the answers of the questions which were asked during the 1st and the 2nd weeks of the courses students had attended, the following results were found:

80 students indicated that they liked drawing pictures.

Students’ Reactions: They showed the pictures they drew and they laughed with their partners at the end of the activity.

80 students indicated that they liked taking photos.

Students’ Reactions: They brought the photos they took and they showed them to their classmates. They told they enjoyed sharing their photos with their classmates.

85 students indicated that they liked acting and dancing.

Students’ Reactions: They prepared dialogues with their partners in the class and they acted and smiled altogether.

90 students indicated that they liked using the internet.

Students’ Reactions: Students in my classes wrote short compositions about one of the cities in Turkey and in the world. They brought some photos about them from the internet and they told that they liked sharing them with their classmates.

80 students indicated that they liked using their mobile phones for learning English.

Students’ Reactions: Students in my classes downloaded the online dictionaries they preferred and they also listened to some English songs according to their music tastes. They told that they enjoyed these kinds of break-time activities to improve their learning skills.

70 students indicated that they liked learning quotes while learning and speaking English in their class hours.

Students’ Reactions: They told that they liked this classroom activity as the quotes gave them positive energy during the class hours and they started to do the text book exercises full-heartedly.

80 students indicated that they liked listening to music while studying English

Students' Reactions: They wanted to do more exercises and classroom activities after listening to music during the class hours. They often smiled.

3.2.2 Students' Attitudes

Classroom applications in this study were conducted in 3 different classes in the English Preparatory Classes Department at Dokuz Eylul University in the city of Izmir in Turkey during the 2014-2015 academic year. In each of these classes, there were 30 Turkish university students from different faculties at Dokuz Eylul University. 80 of these students in these classes participated all of their English classes regularly. They all accepted increasing creativity in language classes would be useful for their professional developments. They enjoyed learning quotes, listening to English songs from the different links from the internet and from different books. They liked drawing pictures while learning English. They also liked using the internet and Google for their studies.

3.2.3 Students' Perceptions

86 students in my classes found the teaching tasks very useful and they realised that they developed their creativity and thinking skills in their class hours and while they were studying their lessons at home. They also consistently improved their speaking and communication skills. They participated at the class activities full heartedly during the class hours and informed me that their interests and motivation increased on a daily basis. Accordingly, the students' creativity, accuracy and fluency in English also improved rapidly.

4. Conclusion

In English language teaching classes or in teaching English as a foreign language classes, different kinds of methods should be used to improve or to develop our students' language skills in reading, speaking, writing and listening. To have joyful classes, motivation is an essential factor in education and in our daily lives. To increase motivation, creativity and thinking skills must also be increased.

In this paper, creativity in English language teaching has been examined. Classroom activities on reading, speaking, writing and listening which can develop or improve our students' creativity and thinking skills have been suggested for each. It is hoped that this study will help my colleagues to do more enjoyable courses and to increase their students' creativity with the self-studies. It is also hoped that students in the ESL or ELT classes will get more benefits with this study.

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28. I'm Alive by Celine Dion: Retrieved 28 October 2016 from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJsa6-y4sDs>

29. Sway by Michael Buble: Retrieved 28 October 2016 from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-tmTITPYi0>

30. Save the Last Dance for Me by Michael Buble: Retrieved 28 October 2016 from: www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAjfB0XfjKA

31. When I dream at Night by Marc Anthony: Retrieved 28 October 2016 from: www.youtube.com/watch?v=DATKMNUOe-k

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Appendix 1

Discussion Questions for Teachers or Professors:

1. Do you think self-studies will help you to teach English or the other languages better?
2. Do you think self-studies will help your students to improve their language skills?
3. Do you think the self-studies you apply in your classes will help your students to develop their creativity in learning English?
4. Do you think students in your classes will enjoy studying English via online games or dictionaries?

Appendix 2

Suggested Videos about Creativity:

The following are some suggested videos about creativity thinking:

Adora Svitak (2010). What Adults Can Learn From Kids? TED Talks. Retrieved 30 September 2016 from: http://www.ted.com/talks/adora_svitak.html. A prolific short story writer and blogger since age seven, Adora Svitak speaks around the United States to adults and children as an advocate for literacy. She is explaining how adults can learn from kids.

Catarina Mota (2010). Play with smart materials. TED Talks. Retrieved 30 September 2016 from: http://www.ted.com/talks/catarina_mota_play_with_smart_materials.html. This video is about smart materials and the presenter in this video suggests playing with them.

Celia Gates Brainstorming Business Creative Thinking "Tv Show How". Retrieved 30 September 2016 from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mn-aZ9rtuo> Celia Gates is the guest speaker on a TV show and she is talking about creative thinking.

Tim Brown (2008). Tales of Creativity and Play. TED Talks. Retrieved 30 September 2016 from: http://www.ted.com/talks/tim_brown_on_creativity_and_play.html. At the 2008 Serious Play Conference, designer Tim Brown talks about the powerful relationship between the innovation and design. Tim Brown is the CEO of innovation and design firm IDEO.

Building an Innovative Creative Thinking Culture. Retrieved 30 September 2016 from: http://fora.tv/2013/04/25/Building_an_Innovative_Creative_Thinking_Culture

Sarah Backhouse (Founder, Future 360) is directing a round table discussion on building an innovative creative thinking culture. Alan Noble, engineering director at the Google

Australia and New Zealand, Andy McKeon who is working as a global customer marketing leader on Facebook, Tom Basset who is the founder of Mindswarms, Eric Fleming, founder and the president at the Fleming Job Hall are the speakers of this television programme.

Appendix 3

Useful pages for the SELF studies on Facebook and on the Internet

- IATEFL: Retrieved 30 September 2016 from: <http://www.iatefl.org>
- IATEFL Online Education: <https://www.facebook.com/iateflonline?fref=ts>
- İNGED Web Page: Retrieved 30 September 2016 from: <http://www.inged.org.tr>

- İNGED: Retrieved 30 September 2016:
<https://www.facebook.com/INGED-513546092025026>
- TESOL: Retrieved 30 September 2015 from: <http://www.tesol.org>
- SEETA - South Eastern Europe Teachers Associations: Retrieved 30 September 2016 from: <http://www.seeta.eu>
- SEETA Teachers Associations: Retrieved 30 September 2016 from:
<https://www.facebook.com/Seeta.eu?fref=ts>
- Cambridge Dictionaries Online: Retrieved 30 September 2016 from:
<http://dictionary.cambridge.org>
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<http://www.oed.com>
- Cambridge University Press ELT: Retrieved 30 September 2016 from:
<https://www.facebook.com/CambridgeUPELT?fref=ts>
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<http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/teaching-english/resources-for-teachers>
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<https://www.facebook.com/oupeltglobal?fref=ts>
- British Council Turkey. Retrieved British Council Turkey. Retrieved 30 September 2016 from:
<https://www.facebook.com/#!/BritishCouncilTurkey?fref=ts>
- British Council France. Retrieved 30 September 2016 from:
<https://www.facebook.com/#!/BritishCouncilFrance?fref=ts>
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<https://www.facebook.com/BritishCouncilGermany>
- British Council Milano Italy. Retrieved 30 September 2016 from:
<https://www.facebook.com/BritishCouncilMilano>
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<https://tr-tr.facebook.com/BritishCouncilGreece>
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