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DIPLOMA PAPER**

**Theme: "The use of creative activities in teaching foreign languages
in secondary school"**

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Introduction

“Our young people should have an independent, thoughtful, intellectual and spiritual potential and mobilize all the strengths and capacities of our state and society in order to grow up and become full-fledged individuals in any sphere in the world”.

Shavkat Mirziyoyev

Education is the most important tool offers inner and outer strength to a person and is the fundamental rights of everyone and capable of bringing any desired change and uplifting in the human mind and society. As the president Sh.Mirziyoyev said: *“Education is the harbinger of the modern era and is the basis for rational and logical thinking. It has brought in huge benefits for the people across every nook and corner of the globe. Some of them are visible and some of them are not but overall they have contributed immensely to the development of society”*¹

President of our country noted the need to strengthen relations between schools and colleges, in particular, reconstitution in the experimental order of the 11-year educational system in this school, establishment of a vocational training under the school. As the head of our state noted, one of the most important issues always worrying us, concern the moral image of our youth, their worldview, and education.

In the context of rapid development of science and technology, increasing competitiveness in the global world, the education of each state and society in this process depends on the intellectual development of young people and the importance of full realization of their talents and abilities.

Therefore, this issue has always been reflected in all strategies aimed at ensuring long-term development of the states. The Strategy for Action in the five priorities of the Republic of Uzbekistan for the period 2017-2021 was no

¹ Mirziyoyev Sh.M O'zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidenti Shavkat Mirziyoyevning Oliy Majlisga Murojaatnomasi [www.http://prezident.uz/uz/lists/view/137](http://prezident.uz/uz/lists/view/137)

exception. It separately focuses on improving the state's youth policy. It covers a number of priority tasks aimed at improving the effectiveness of public policy towards young people, representing 10 million citizens of Uzbekistan or about 31% of the country's population. We will continue to persistently pursue the state policy on youth. Not only will we continue this policy, but it will also lift this policy to the highest level today as it is our priority.

“The Uzbekistan’s Development Strategy for 2017-2021” which is to be implemented in 5 stages, each of which provides for approval of a separate annual State program in accordance with a declared name of the year, can be an example for the attempts to develop the society. The republic could only have sustained development and modernity if the people have the knowledge and expertise gained by having the opportunity to education at all levels right from junior school to higher education level.

It is not doubt that it may be both difficult and boring to teach foreign language without creative activities, since such tasks will enable teaching and learning process much more productive and efficient. Visual aids, when integrated into the lesson plan through media, attract students’ attention to the topic presented in the class, enhance and facilitate comprehension of grammar and language, increase students’ motivation, as well as help students to memorize the new vocabulary and structures. Apart from being an excellent tool to improve the language acquisition, the use of several creative activities in the classroom provides a more meaningful context for the students. All these factors lead students to become more participative and communicative members of the class group.

My qualification paper is dedicated to the problems of the utilization of creative activities in teaching process in EFL classes. The research’s analysis will be focusing on those benefits of creative materials that scholars have studied over the years. Creative activities such as games, drawings or video lessons are often designed to facilitate learning and have a positive effect. From the learning and instruction point of view, the efficiency of the creativity and creative games relate to cognitive thinking and learning which will considerably be helpful for

motivating the language learning process. Moreover, the performance criteria of learning through effective creative materials are mainly focused on comprehension and recall.

Actuality of the theme: The aim of this study was to see if a deliberately creative approach in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) class would have any impact on the students' EFL learning in terms of more varied vocabulary use, more original written texts, more implementation of story elements (such as a story goal, obstacle, character motive) and increased motivation leading to enhanced activity and attention.

An experimental method was adopted in connection in which two Uzbek secondary school classes of a vocational program participated. One class was exposed to a regular teaching method (Regular Teaching Method) while the other class was exposed to a creative study design (Creative Study Design).

During a four week period the students were assigned to write a short story and received instructions on different story elements (story goal, obstacle and character motivation). The Regular Teaching Method was based on how the class's ordinary teacher would have taught. The Creative Study Design was uniquely created for this study and included several techniques and recommendations from scholars in the field of creativity.

The results showed that the students exposed to the Creative Study Design implemented the story elements to a somewhat higher degree, used a slightly more varied vocabulary, wrote more creative stories, and showed more attention and activity than the students exposed to the Regular Teaching Method.

However, more extensive studies would be needed to confirm these results and allow generalizations about the possible benefits the Creative Study Design has as opposed to the Regular Teaching Method when it comes to EFL learning.

The degree of inquiry of the theme: Creativity improves self-esteem as learners can look at their own solutions to problems and their own products and see what they are able to achieve. Creative work in the language classroom can lead to genuine communication and co-operation. Learners use the language to do the

creative task, so they use it as a tool, in its original function. This prepares learners for using the language instrumentally outside the classroom.

Creative tasks enrich classroom work, and they make it more varied and more enjoyable by tapping into individual talents, ideas and thoughts - both the learners' and the teacher's. Teaching effectively requires creativity. Exchanging opinions and brainstorming for ideas with colleagues help to ignite our power of creativity.

The main aim of this paper is establish a relaxed, non-judgemental atmosphere, where pupils feel confident enough to let go and not to worry that their every move is being scrutinised for errors. This means attending to what they are trying to express rather than concentrating on the imperfect way they may express it and encourage them to discuss their work together in a frank but friendly manner by helping them establish an atmosphere where criticism is possible without causing offence and hence, it will also be easy for teacher to carry out successful teaching experiences.

The objectives of the paper are the following:

- to understand the theme with easy ways and build confidence in EFL learners;
- to explain how essential creative activities in teaching the language in EFL classrooms;
- to find the type of creative materials and games that secondary school teachers should use in their lessons;
- to provide pupils with interesting approachable authentic materials and teach them how to use from them that will benefit for acquisition of the FL in secondary school classes.

The **object** of the work is creative activities to teach English in secondary school.

The **subject** of the work: materials, results, practical suggestions and recommendations can be applied at the English lessons at secondary schools.

The methods: The material was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods, which are described below.

The novelty of the work is to learn the effectiveness of implementing creative tasks in teaching English. It also reveals the types of activities which can be used during the lessons. Furthermore, the research studies the features that should be considered while using creative games using from DVDs and visual aids. Finally, it shows the analysis of being creative in the classes at secondary schools in Uzbekistan.

The thesis of the research is to create type of creative materials and games that secondary school teachers should use in their lessons. According to Runco, the resistance to encourage creative efforts in students is due to the unpredictable nature of creativity: what the outcome might be is not foreseeable¹. In fact, the essence of creative behavior involves risk taking in which one, normally, does not know what the result is going to be².

Research questions

This paper investigates the following questions:

- Does a Creative Study Design cause the secondary school students in this study to implement plot elements (such as story goal, obstacle, and character motive) in their narrative writings to a higher degree than those who were exposed to a Regular Teaching Method in EFL?
- Does the Creative Study Design lead to a higher degree of original solutions regarding story content than the Regular Teaching Method?
- Is there any difference regarding vocabulary use between students who are exposed to the Creative Study Design and the Regular Teaching Method?
- Is there any difference regarding motivation in EFL between students who are exposed to the Creative Study Design compared to the Regular Teaching Method?

¹ Runco, M. A. (2007). "Creativity: Theories and themes: Research, development, and practice" London: Elsevier Academic Press. p.23

² Hayes, D. (2004). "Understanding creativity and its implications for schools" Improving schools, vol. 7 (3), p.279

Hypotheses:

- to explore the field of creativity, what it might involve for the EFL teacher, not only with respect to motivation and active participation in general, but also, more specifically, whether a deliberately creative teaching approach has any benefits regarding language proficiency compared with a more traditional approach.

- the results of the study would be of interest to teachers in general and EFL teachers in particular since it highlights possible benefits when working with creativity in the classroom. Hopefully, this study can contribute to a clarification of what creativity is and how a teacher can work with the concept in class. Thereby, a teacher can work towards the overall goal of creativity which is stated in the curriculum.

The theoretical and practical value of the research work is that the materials of the research can be used in further investigations and be helpful in lectures on methodology of the English language as well as to teachers and students in their practical lessons in better understanding their style of learning and designing the lessons according to them. Furthermore, the materials of the diploma work are a good source in creating the manuals and textbooks for teaching at schools considering the learning styles.

The theoretical and practical importance is in the study of the investigations of many prominent Russian, English and Uzbek scholars, linguists and methodologists devoted to the issues of teaching foreign languages and especially to the questions of creativity in teaching English. The given work continues and completes the materials of the previous works, theories and statements.

The structure of the research work: Introduction, Literature review, Research Methodology, Data Analysis, Results and Findings, Discussion, Conclusion and Bibliography.

I. Literature review

This style of work offers several advantages for both teachers and students. Teachers do not have to look for the 'best' material that would suit a particular group. Instead they obtain a database of texts from their students. Teachers can also move away from their traditional positions of providers of 'one ultimate truth' and can become facilitators of complex processes that form part of language learning. Students, on the other hand, are more actively engaged in the search for the texts; they have to create their own criteria for quality, and they practice reading and critical thinking individually and intensively outside of the class. Each student also works in their own area of interest, so they can develop both their language and non-language related skills at the same time. What is more, students are engaged in situations with unclear solutions: they do not know whether they can find a suitable text; they have to form their opinions, make decisions, present their results to classmates and be ready to respond to their reactions.'

'Creative approach to language teaching: A way to recognize, encourage and appreciate students' contributions to language classes' by Libor Stepanek in 'Creativity in the English language classroom'.

Alan Maley suggests some excellent ideas for how to set up the conditions in the classroom in order to enhance creativity in this extract from the British Council publication 'Creativity in the English Language classroom'.

"I will first of all suggest some ways we can lay the foundations for a more creative climate. These are important because creativity in teaching does not simply happen in a vacuum. We need to create favorable conditions for it.

Establish a relaxed, non-judgmental atmosphere, where students feel confident enough to let go and not to worry that their every move is being scrutinized for errors. This means attending to what they are trying to express rather than concentrating on the imperfect way they may express it.

Frame activities by creating constraints. Paradoxically, the constraints also act as supportive scaffolding for students. In this way both the scope of the content

and the language required are both restricted. By limiting what they are asked to write, for example, students are relieved of the pressure to write about everything. Ensure that the students' work is 'published' in some way. This could be by simply keeping a large notice-board for displaying students' work. Other ways would include giving students a project for publishing work in a simple ring binder, or as part of a class magazine. Almost certainly, there will be students able and willing to set up a class website where work can be published. Performances, where students read or perform their work for other classes or even the whole school, are another way of making public what they have done. The effects on students' confidence of making public what they have written is of inestimable value.

Encourage students to discuss their work together in a frank but friendly manner. We get good ideas by bouncing them off other people¹. Help them establish an atmosphere where criticism is possible without causing offence. This implies creating a 'storied class'² – a co-operative learning community.

Explain regularly how important accurate observation is, and encourage 'noticing' things. Encourage them to collect data which may be used later: pictures, games, DVDs, videos, websites, books and magazines.... Students also need to be encouraged to be curious and to follow up with 'research' – looking for more information, whether in books, on the Internet or by asking other people. Do not try to do too much. Take it easy. And be kind to yourself³. Try introducing small changes over a period of time. And allow time for activities and for talking about them. Yamin among many others talks about the need for the slow burn of hunches and ideas.

Make it clear that what they do in the classroom is only the tip of the iceberg. To get real benefit from these activities, they need to do a lot of work outside class hours. Most of what we learn, we do not learn in class.

¹ István, O. (1998). "The relationship between individual differences in learner creativity and language learning success" *TESOL quarterly*, vol. 32 (4) p.9

² Yamin, T. S. (2010). "Scientific creativity and knowledge production: Theses, critique, and implications" *Gifted and talented international*, vol. 25 (1), pp.7-12

³ Shaughnessy, M. F. (1998). "An interview with E. Paul Torrance: About creativity." *Educational psychology review*, vol. 10 (4), pp. 441-452

Do the activities regularly in order to get the best effects. Maybe once a week is a sensible frequency. If you leave too long between sessions, you have to keep going back to square one. That is a waste of time and energy.

Be a role model. This means working with the students, not simply telling them to do things. This is especially true for reading and writing activities. If they see you are reading, or writing, they will be more likely to engage in these activities themselves.

Never underestimate your students. Their capacity for creativity will astound you, if you can help them unlock it.

Make sure you offer a varied diet – of inputs, of processes and of products¹. This diversity helps to promote an atmosphere of ‘expectancy’ (I wonder what will happen today?), rather than the feeling of ‘expectation’

As a teacher, apply the four golden principles: Acknowledge Listen, Challenge, and Support. Acknowledge the individuality of students who make up the class group by showing that you value what 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 prejudgments 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. It sounds easy but of course, it is not."

1.1. Creativity in teaching English

*Extract from the overview to 'Creativity in the English language classroom'.
The overview to the book is written by Alan Maley.*

Over time a learning community can come into being, where co-operation, sharing and the valuing of others' contributions become a natural part of the way things are done – what Shaughnessy ² calls a ‘storied class’. There is a consensus

¹ Malmberg, P. (2001). Språksynen i dagens kursplaner. R. Ferm & P. Malmberg (eds.), Språkboken. Stockholm: Liber Distribution. p.28

² Shaughnessy, M. F. (1998). “An interview with E. Paul Torrance: About creativity.” Educational psychology review, vol. 10 (4), pp. 441-452

too that teachers need to act as role models. It is no good preaching creativity to our students unless we also practise it ourselves. If we want our students to sing, we must sing too. If we want them to act and mime, we must act and mime too. If we want them to write poems or stories, or to draw and paint, then we must engage in the same activities as they do. If we want the bread to rise, we need to provide the yeast. In order to do this, we need to relinquish our excessively ‘teachercontrol’ persona, and become part of the group, not someone who is above it or outside it. Shaughnessy’s words are relevant here too: ‘we should judge creativity in the classroom by what the teacher makes it possible for the student to do, not just by what the teacher does’¹. Another thing to emerge from these chapters is the need for teachers to develop a creative attitude of mind which permeates everything they do – not to regard creativity as something reserved for special occasions. This also requires of teachers an unusual degree of awareness of what is happening both on and under the surface, and an ability to respond in the moment to the unpredictability as the action unfolds². This kind of reactive creativity complements the proactive creativity of the ‘activities’ the teacher offers. Clearly too, creativity is facilitated by a wide variety of inputs, processes and outputs. This implies that teachers need to be open to such variety, and willing to ‘let go’, and to ‘have a go’ by trying things they have never done before. A playful attitude and atmosphere seems to be a key ingredient for creativity. The notion of varied outputs reminds us that creativity encourages and facilitates divergent thinking, and frees us of the idea that questions always have a single, right answer.

Among the earliest modern attempts to understand creativity were Murdock’s³ ideas. He outlined a four-stage process: Preparation, Incubation, Illumination, Verification. Given a ‘problem’, ‘puzzle’ or ‘conceptual space’, the creative mind first prepares itself by soaking up all the information available.

¹ Shaughnessy, M. F. (1998). “An interview with E. Paul Torrance: About creativity.” *Educational psychology review*, vol. 10 (4), pp. 441-452

² Robinson, K. (2009). *The Element: How finding your passion changes everything*. London: Penguin Group. p.45

³ Murdock, M. C. & Keller-Mathers, S. (2008). “Teaching and learning creatively with the Torrance Incubation Model: A research and practice update.” *The international journal of creativity & problem solving*, vol. 18 (2), 11-33. Print.

Following this first preparation stage, there is a stage of incubation, in which the conscious mind stops thinking about the problem, leaving the unconscious to take over. In the third stage, illumination, a solution suddenly presents itself (if you're lucky!). In the final verification stage, the conscious mind needs to check, clarify, elaborate on and present the insights gained. Koestler, in *The Act of Creation*, suggests that the creative process operates through the bisociation of two conceptual matrices, not normally found together. He believed that putting together two (or more) things that do not normally belong together can facilitate a sudden new insight. This is another idea that we can put to use in the classroom through Overview: Creativity – the what, the why and the how Overview: Creativity – the what, the why and the how applying the random principle to create new and unexpected associations. Bisociation was also one of the key principles of the Surrealist movement in art, photography, music, film, theatre and literature which flourished mainly in Paris in the 1920s and '30s. But they also emphasised the importance of the unconscious mind, especially dreams, of playing around and experimenting, and of seeing ordinary things from unusual viewpoints. They also explored the creative potential of constraints: one novelist¹ wrote an entire novel without using the letter 'e', for example. There are lessons we can learn from the Surrealists too. By contrast, Boden takes an AI (artificial intelligence) approach to investigating creativity. She asks what a computer would need to do to replicate human thought processes. This leads to a consideration of the self-organising properties of complex, generative systems through processes such as parallel distributed processing. For her, creativity arises from the systematic exploration of a conceptual space or domain (mathematical, musical or linguistic). She draws attention to the importance of constraints in this process. 'Far from being the antithesis of creativity, constraints on thinking are what make it possible'². Chaos theory³ tends to support her ideas. Boden's approach is richly suggestive for language acquisition, materials writing and for teaching, in that all are rooted in

¹ Pink, D. (2013). "Dan Pink: The puzzle of motivation." p.3

² Giaque, G. S. (1985). "Creativity and foreign language learning." *Hispania*, vol. 68 (2), pp. 425- 427

³ Goodwin, B. & Miller, K. (2013). "Creativity requires a mix of skills." *Educational leadership*, vol. 70 (5), p.80

complex, self-organising systems. Csikszentmihalyi takes a multidimensional view of creativity as an interaction between individual talent, operating in a particular domain or discipline, and judged by experts in that field. He also has interesting observations about the role of ‘flow’ in creativity: the state of ‘effortless effort’ in which everything seems to come together in a flow of seamless creative energy¹. He further explores creativity by analysing interviews with exceptional individuals, and isolates ten characteristics of creative individuals. Amabile approaches creativity from a social and environmental viewpoint². She claims that previous theories have tended to neglect the power of such factors to shape creative effort. Her theory rests on three main factors: domain-relevant skills (i.e. familiarity with a given domain of knowledge), creativity-relevant skills (e.g. the ability to break free of ‘performance scripts’ – established routines, to see new connections, etc.) and task motivation, based on attitudes, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic constraints and rewards, etc. The social and environmental factors she discusses include peer influence, the teacher’s character and behaviour, the classroom climate, family influence, life stress, the physical environment, degree of choice offered, time, the presence of positive role models and the scope for play in the environment. These factors clearly have relevance for learning and can be blended into an approach which seeks to promote creativity. There is sometimes a confusion in the relationship between creativity on the one hand and discovery and invention on the other. Discovery is about finding something that has always been there – but was until then unnoticed. For example, the phenomenon of gravity was not created or invented by Newton: he discovered it. By contrast, invention means bringing something into being which had not until then existed. A new poem or a picture would be instances of this – but it could also be extended to creating a new recipe, or a new game, or a new way of using paper... Is discovery an instance of genuine creativity? Perhaps it is simply a different aspect of creativity from invention: the

¹ Birkmaier, E. M. (1971). “The meaning of creativity in foreign language teaching.” *Modern language journal*, vol.55 (6), p. 345-353

² Amabile, T. M. & Fisher, C. M. (2009). “Stimulate creativity by fueling passion”. E. Locke, (ed). *Handbook of principles of organizational behavior* (2nd ed.). West Sussex, U.K.: John Wiley & Sons, pp. 481-497

outcome is not a new ‘product’ but a creative solution to a problem never solved before. This is related to the tendency to regard problemsolving and critical thinking as integral to creativity. There is a good deal of overlap but before we treat them as equivalent, we should be aware of the differences. Problem-solving may indeed involve students in experimenting with multiple possible solutions, in making unusual connections, acting on a hunch, engaging with the Wallas model above, and so on. But it may also be conducted in a purely logical, rational way which has little in common with creative processes. In problem-solving, we are given someone else’s problem to solve. In problem-finding, we need to make an imaginative leap to perceive that a problem might be there to solve. One issue frequently raised is whether creativity can be taught. There are many, such as de Birkmaier¹ and Seelig, who believe that it can. And there are shelves full of self-help books claiming to teach us how to be creative in our lives and in our work. What is certain is that creativity can be tacitly learned even if it cannot be explicitly taught. But unless we as teachers demonstrate our own commitment to creativity, and unless we offer our students a richly varied diet of creative practices, they are unlikely to learn it.

According to Robinson almost every education system in the world is in the midst of reformation due to a decrease of school results in the form of low grades, school drop-outs and ultimately a growing unemployment rate among young people². Creative employees are urgently sought for in practically all organizations today and hence, to not be creative can lead to unemployment. Uzbek is no exception; the unemployment rate, especially among young people is very high in comparison to other groups in society³, and at the same time, the National Agency for Education concludes that the condition of the Uzbek school system is, indeed, troublesome with dropping results. Because creativity contains important components such as the ability to think critically, be flexible, to synthesize, be

¹ Birkmaier, E. M. (1971). “The meaning of creativity in foreign language teaching” *Modern language journal*, vol.55 (6), pp. 345-353

² Robinson, K. (2011). *Out of our minds*. West Sussex: Capstone Publishing. p. 33

³ Arnell Gustavsson, U. (2003). ”Ungdomars inträde i arbetslivet – följer för individen och Arbetsmarknaden.” *Ute och inne i svenskt arbetsliv: Forskare analyserar och spekulerar om trender i framtidens arbete*. C. von Otter, (ed.).p.34

imaginative, and produce novel solutions that are appropriate¹, it is crucial to be creative in order to live and cope in a highly unpredictable and ever-changing world². Indeed, it is widely understood among different scholars in different fields that creativity is the skill inhabitants of the 21st century will crucially need – now more than ever³. As Mumford et al. put it: “Few scholars...would dispute the fact that creativity...is critical to organizational performance in the economy in the 21st century”⁴. The school’s overall task is to prepare children for living as active participants in society, and when unemployment rates are up among young people as suggested by Arnell Gustafsson⁵, one could conclude that the school system has not fulfilled this goal.

According to Robinson and Garner high unemployment rates might be correlated to schools’ inability to develop the students’ creative capacities, such as the ability to be flexible, find possible solutions, be critical etc. In fact, instead of being enthused, students undergo the process of being “turned off”⁶ or what Dispenza⁷ would describe as being disconnected from the frontal lobe - the crucial part of the brain where higher thinking skills are located physically, such as those involved in creativity. Actually, Goodwin and Miller suggest that many schools do not encourage creative activities: “teachers might turn a problem that could be creatively challenging...into a procedural chore”⁸. The current education system not only stifles creativity, it “drains the creativity out of our children”⁹. In other words, in schools’ pursuit of creating active members of society they seem to do

¹ Torrance, P. E. (1972). “Can we teach children to think creatively?” *The journal of creative behavior*, vol. 6 (2), pp. 114-143

² Runco, M. A. (2007). “Creativity: Theories and themes: Research, development, and practice” London: Elsevier Academic Press. p.56

³ Garner, B. K. (2013). “The power of noticing” *Educational leadership*, vol. 70 (5), pp.48-52

⁴ Mumford, M., Hester, K. & Robledo, I. (2010). “Scientific creativity: Idealism versus pragmatism.” *Gifted and talented international*, vol. 25 (1), p. 59

⁵ Arnell Gustavsson, U. (2003). ”Ungdomars inträde i arbetslivet – följer för individen och Arbetsmarknaden.” *Ute och inne i svenskt arbetsliv: Forskare analyserar och spekulerar om trender i framtidens arbete*. C. von Otter, (ed.)p56

⁶ Robinson, K. (2009). *The Element: How finding your passion changes everything*. London: Penguin Group. p.45

⁷ Dispenza, J. (2007). *Evolve your brain: The science of changing your brain*. Deerfield Beach, Florida: Health Communications, Inc. p.32

⁸ Goodwin, B. & Miller, K. (2013). “Creativity requires a mix of skills.” *Educational leadership*, vol. 70 (5), p.88

⁹ Robinson, K. (2011). *Out of our minds*. West Sussex: Capstone Publishing. p.43

the opposite, making them passive and disengaged. Therefore, they become ill-equipped for a life in society.

According to Robinson there is a need to change the very foundations upon which education is built, that is *transforming* the education system. However, policymakers try to solve the problem by emphasizing “the need to get back to basics and focus on the core business, to face up to overseas competition and to raise standards, improve efficiency, return on investment and cost-effectiveness”¹. In other words, *reforming* the education system. Teachers and principals adopt traditional practices, pressured to deliver a certain result, which “is not contingent on being creative” - all in order to avoid penalties in the form of economic suspension², even though studies confirm that teachers want to offer more creative activities³.

According to Runco, the resistance to encourage creative efforts in students is due to the unpredictable nature of creativity: what the outcome might be, is not foreseeable. In fact, the essence of creative behavior involves risk taking in which one, normally, does not know what the result is going to be. As Runco puts it: “the curriculum must have a clear payoff. Creativity does not”⁴. However, there are several examples in both the USA and the UK which confirm that when schools decide to tackle the issue of negative school results by adopting a deliberate and large-scale creative approach, it does not only lead to higher achievement scores on standardized tests among the students⁵, but also provides them with meaning and satisfaction. These changes produced positive school results and, possibly because of this, led to more active, engaged children⁶. These schools incorporated creativity from top to bottom in the school system in a deliberate way and, the teachers

¹ Robinson, K. (2011). *Out of our minds*. West Sussex: Capstone Publishing. p.54

² Noddings, N. (2013). “Standardized curriculum and loss of creativity.” *Theory into practice*, vol. 52 (3), p.210

³ Turner, S. (2013). “Teachers’ and pupils’ perceptions of creativity across different key stages.” *Research in education*, vol. 89 (1), p. 23

⁴ Runco, M. A. (2007). “Creativity: Theories and themes: Research, development, and practice”. London: Elsevier Academic Press. p.179

⁵ Birkmaier, E. M. (1971). “The meaning of creativity in foreign language teaching.” *Modern language journal*, vol.55 (6), pp. 345-353

⁶ Robinson, K. (2011). *Out of our minds*. West Sussex: Capstone Publishing. p.55

started to provide numerous opportunities for their students to develop creatively – every day in every subject.

Even though, according to Robinson, creativity has similar features in every subject, creativity also seems to be discipline-specific¹. In other words, being creative in EFL learning is different from being creative in mathematics or music, as “the balance between novelty, plausibility or appropriateness, elegance, ethical considerations, and wisdom varies from field to field”². However, language teachers do not seem to consider their subject as essentially characterized by creativity³. The latter is congruent with studies that confirm that teachers, and people in general, associate creativity with the arts, not “theoretical” subjects like languages. Yet a study by István suggests that creativity and success in language learning are highly interconnected; the better grade a student had in the discipline, the higher scores he/she showed on a creativity test⁴.

In the communicative approach, which refers to an emphasis on meaning and fluency rather than correctness and accuracy⁵, is adopted in today’s EFL teaching. In the communicative approach, interactivity is an important component which includes for example the ability to be flexible which is considered to be one crucial element of creativity. To use language strategies, that is, to overcome language problems in order to make the message intelligible and to adjust one’s language to different situations and purposes is included as one of the five overall goals in EFL for secondary school. Being flexible can thus be said to be implicitly mentioned within EFL studies, for instance the goal that says that the student should have “[t]he ability to use language strategies in different contexts”, and “[t]he ability to adjust the language to different purposes, addressees, and

¹ Yamin, T. S. (2010). ”Scientific creativity and knowledge production: Theses, critique, and implications.” *Gifted and talented international*, vol. 25 (1), 7-12

² Newton, L. & Newton, D. (2010). “Creative thinking and teaching for creativity in elementary school science.” *Gifted and talented international*, vol. 25 (2), pp.111-124

³ Giauque, G. S. (1985). “Creativity and foreign language learning.” *Hispania*, vol. 68 (2), pp. 425- 427

⁴ István, O. (1998). “The relationship between individual differences in learner creativity and language learning success.” *TESOL quarterly*, vol. 32 (4) p.76

⁵ Lightbown, P. M. & Spada, N. (2013). *How languages are learned* (4th edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.34

situations”¹. Better communicative flexibility might lead to better strategic competence and ultimately higher language proficiency, as suggested by István.

With the definition on creativity, meaningful, authentic communication in any language could technically be considered a creative act since one is producing a valuable original utterance. Therefore, discussing or writing something which matters to those involved could be considered a creative act. However, even though the students’ product could be appropriate and original, the level of creativity might not be especially high, and if a teacher wishes to develop their creative abilities in the subject, it is not sufficient to have them do activities which could be considered *conducive* to creativity. “Simply asking people to be creative is not enough”. To provide feedback, not only on their language proficiency but also their level of creativity, is crucial if a creative use of the language is to be achieved. If the teacher only gives credit for imitative but “correct” replicas on assignments, the students might fail to see the subject’s or the language’s creative possibilities and thereby be “turned off”². As Pollard puts it: “[...]what’s missing in many classrooms is deliberately noticing and naming opportunities for creativity when they occur, giving feedback on the creative process, and teaching students that creativity is a valued quality”³. Thus, feedback is necessary to give them the message that their creative abilities are cherished in the classroom. This, however, requires knowledge of what the concept generally, and specifically, means within the EFL class, for instance.

After more than two decades spent in the education system, mostly as a student but also as a teacher, I have noticed how often people solve problems in conventional and predictable ways, and how tedious their learning experience seems to be. Lately, I have been startled by how many students of my own seem to have difficulties thinking outside the box.

¹ István, O. (1998). “The relationship between individual differences in learner creativity and language learning success.” TESOL quarterly, vol. 32 (4) p.76 (my translation)

² Brookhart, S. M. (2013). “Assessing creativity.” Educational leadership, vol. 70 (5), pp.28-34

³ Pollard, V. (2012). “Creativity and education: Teaching the unfamiliar”. Australian association for research in education, 8. p.30

I remember having a group of 8th-grade students that were so uninterested in my teaching that I decided to have them lie on mattresses in my attempt to do as I thought they were doing anyway – sleep through class. Indeed, their inactivity and their highly imitative ways of tackling problems were a huge concern of mine. I have, unfortunately, experienced this passivity in a majority of my and other teachers' classes.

The problem with inactive and imitative students is that the learning potential is lost. For instance, brain researcher Dispenza says that passiveness arises when the frontal lobe is disconnected. This is unfortunate, since the frontal lobe is where the students' ability to perform higher thinking skills such as thinking critically and to create a new understanding are located. Since learning is about building and connecting new circuits in the brain, the potential for learning decreases substantially if the student is not active.

“Merely to learn intellectual information is not enough; we must apply what we learn to create a different experience”¹.

Specifically, many scholars emphasize that the act of creativity demands an *active* production of something and therefore creativity and passivity are incompatible. Since creativity also involves original valuable solutions this is incongruent with imitative or random behavior. So, when we do not let the students develop their creative capacities, they might lose learning opportunities.

The ability to be creative is said to be the most crucial skill today's children will need in order to cope in a highly unpredictable world. The problem is that, according to Robinson, creativity is the one skill education not only stifles but systematically drains out of the students².

Even so, the curriculum for secondary school states, as an overall goal for education, that “[t]he school should stimulate students' creativity”, but there is no definition of the concept, nor is it exemplified what this might mean to a practitioner in the classroom. According to Turner, this reinforces the different

¹ Dispenza, J. (2007). *Evolve your brain: The science of changing your brain*. Deerfield Beach, Florida: Health Communications, Inc. p.34

² Robinson, K. (2009). *The Element: How finding your passion changes everything*. London: Penguin Group. p.52

myths related to the term since many teachers seem to have an inadequate notion of what being creative within their specific discipline might involve¹. For instance, the myth that creativity should have to do more with disciplines like the arts than EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learning is a common perception. It is reflected in the way creativity is explicitly mentioned within the curriculum of the arts, but only implicitly in that of languages. Also, the idea that creativity is something a person either has or has not is, according to Robinson, a myth. On the contrary, he argues that we can teach children to be creative, just as we can teach them how to read and write.

As a future EFL teacher, I saw the opportunity to learn what creativity within EFL studies might involve and what the consequences of a deliberate creative approach might be. Does it contribute to solving the problem of inactivity and imitative behavior in my students? Could I thereby increase their learning in the subject of EFL?

Background

This section will provide previous research in the area of creativity and education.

1.2. The education system and creativity

According to Robinson almost every education system in the world is in the midst of reformation due to a decrease of school results in the form of low grades, school drop-outs and ultimately a growing unemployment rate among young people. Creative employees are urgently sought for in practically all organizations today and hence, to not be creative can lead to unemployment². Uzbek is no exception; the unemployment rate, especially among young people is very high in comparison to other groups in society, and at the same time, the National Agency for Education concludes that the condition of the Uzbek school system is, indeed, troublesome with dropping results. Because creativity contains important components such as the ability to think critically, be flexible, to synthesize, be

¹Turner, S. (2013). "Teachers' and pupils' perceptions of creativity across different key stages." Research in education, vol. 89 (1), pp. 23-40

² Robinson, K. (2011). Out of our minds. West Sussex: Capstone Publishing, p.33

imaginative, and produce novel solutions that are appropriate, it is crucial to be creative in order to live and cope in a highly unpredictable and ever-changing world. Indeed, it is widely understood among different scholars in different fields that creativity is the skill inhabitants of the 21st century will crucially need – now more than ever. As Mumford et al. put it: “Few scholars...would dispute the fact that creativity...is critical to organizational performance in the economy in the 21st century”¹.

The school’s overall task is to prepare children for living as active participants in society, and when unemployment rates are up among young people as suggested by Arnell Gustafsson, one could conclude that the school system has not fulfilled this goal².

According to Robinson and Garner high unemployment rates might be correlated to schools’ inability to develop the students’ creative capacities, such as the ability to be flexible, find possible solutions, be critical etc. In fact, instead of being enthused, students undergo the process of being “turned off”³ or what Dispenza would describe as being disconnected from the frontal lobe - the crucial part of the brain where higher thinking skills are located physically, such as those involved in creativity⁴. Actually, Goodwin and Miller suggest that many schools do not encourage creative activities: “teachers might turn a problem that could be creatively challenging...into a procedural chore”⁵. The current education system not only stifles creativity, it “drains the creativity out of our children”⁶. In other words, in schools’ pursuit of creating active members of society they seem to do the opposite, making them passive and disengaged. Therefore, they become ill-equipped for a life in society.

¹ Mumford, M., Hester, K. & Robledo, I. (2010). “Scientific creativity: Idealism versus pragmatism.” *Gifted and talented international*, vol. 25 (1), p. 59

² Arnell Gustavsson, U. (2003). ”Ungdomars inträde i arbetslivet – följer för individen och Arbetsmarknaden.” *Ute och inne i svenskt arbetsliv: Forskare analyserar och spekulerar om trender i framtidens arbete*. C. von Otter, (ed.),p.45

³ Robinson, K. (2011). *Out of our minds*. West Sussex: Capstone Publishing. p.76

⁴ Dispenza, J. (2007). *Evolve your brain: The science of changing your brain*. Deerfield Beach, Florida: Health Communications, Inc. p.14

⁵ Goodwin, B. & Miller, K. (2013). “Creativity requires a mix of skills.” *Educational leadership*, vol. 70 (5), p.80

⁶ Robinson, K. (2011). *Out of our minds*. West Sussex: Capstone Publishing. p.78

1.3. Types of creative activities and suitability for learners of secondary schools

According to Robinson there is a need to change the very foundations upon which education is built, that is *transforming* the education system? However, policymakers try to solve the problem by emphasizing “the need to get back to basics and focus on the core business, to face up to overseas competition and to raise standards, improve efficiency, return on investment and cost-effectiveness”¹. In other words, *reforming* the education system.

Teachers and principals adopt traditional practices, pressured to deliver a certain result, which “is not contingent on being creative”– all in order to avoid penalties in the form of economic suspension, even though studies confirm that teachers want to offer more creative activities².

According to Runco, the resistance to encourage creative efforts in students is due to the unpredictable nature of creativity: what the outcome might be, is not foreseeable. In fact, the essence of creative behavior involves risk taking in which one, normally, does not know what the result is going to be. As Runco puts it: “the curriculum must have a clear payoff. Creativity does not”³.

However, there are several examples in both the USA and the UK which confirm that when schools decide to tackle the issue of negative school results by adopting a deliberate and large-scale creative approach, it does not only lead to higher achievement scores on standardized tests among the students, but also provides them with meaning and satisfaction. These changes produced positive school results and, possibly because of this, led to more active, engaged children. These schools incorporated creativity from top to bottom in the school system in a deliberate way and, the teachers started to provide numerous opportunities for their students to develop creatively – every day in every subject.

¹ Robinson, K. (2011). *Out of our minds*. West Sussex: Capstone Publishing. p.88

² Turner, S. (2013). “Teachers’ and pupils’ perceptions of creativity across different key stages.” *Research in education*, vol. 89 (1), p.40

³ Runco, M. A. (2007). “Creativity: Theories and themes: Research, development, and practice”. London: Elsevier Academic Press. p.146

Creativity

Many scholars in various fields define creativity in terms of *production*, *originality* and *appropriateness/value*.

That being creative involves the component of *production* – the making of something (a story, a dance, a thought and so on), which is not surprising since “[t]he root of the word [*creativity*] means ‘to bring into being’”.

Second, creativity involves *originality*, that is, what is produced must be new. Of course this criterion is complicating matters since what is original to one person, is not original to another. However, in the context of education, the *originality*-criterion should be measured by the students’ own standards and not by those of experts. For example, to a student a certain expression can actually be original and therefore should be seen as fulfilling the criterion of originality even if the product is considered imitative by an expert in the field.

Third, it is not enough to produce original utterances, poems or stories. These original productions also need to be *of value* or *appropriate*. This is stressed by Mumford et al. who say that “knowledge must be turned into something useful if creativity is to be observed”¹. Likewise, Amabile and Fisher emphasize the fact that “ideas cannot be merely new to be considered creative; they must be somehow appropriate to the problem or task at hand”². So, even though being original (for instance, making unusual connections by bringing together two unrelated things) is part of being creative, it is not sufficient; the result must have a value. Pollard says that agreement on a product’s value is related to the cultural context, so what constitutes a fulfillment of the *value*-criterion, as with the originality-criterion, should be seen in relation to whether the students themselves find the product appropriate or not.

Motivation Highly creative performances seem to be accomplished by intrinsically motivated persons. To be motivated is to find an activity “interesting,

¹ Mumford, M., Hester, K. & Robledo, I. (2010). “Scientific creativity: Idealism versus pragmatism.” *Gifted and talented international*, vol. 25 (1), p. 59

² Amabile, T. M. & Fisher, C. M. (2009). “Stimulate creativity by fueling passion”. E. Locke, (ed). *Handbook of principles of organizational behavior* (2nd ed.). West Sussex, U.K.: John Wiley & Sons, pp. 481-497

enjoyable, satisfying, or positively challenging”. In fact, the quality of creative production is dependent on a person’s motivation for solving the problem or task at hand. Intrinsic motivation seems, specifically, to affect the idea-generating stages and the problem definition as well as the “depth of involvement in the task”. Torrance in Shaughnessy even claim that “[i]f you don’t have motivation, you don’t have creativity”.

According to Brookhart (2013), Garner (2013), Runco (2007), Torrance (1993) e.g., one way to spur the students’ motivation for using their creative abilities is to give them encouragement. Another way, suggested by Noddings (2013), is to let the students “create their own learning objectives” (pp. 212). That is, a teacher offers varied topics and materials for the students to work with, making it possible for them to choose whatever interests them, hence, what intrinsically motivates them. In fact, even though there are clear learning objectives stated in the curriculum, they are nevertheless often formulated in general terms, which gives the teacher and the students a generous margin for interpretation (Eek-Karlsson, 2012). Moreover, letting the students work creatively and develop their creative capacities can in itself spur intrinsic motivation (NACCCE, 1999). Thus, the concepts of *motivation* and *creativity* go hand in hand.

A recommended tool for teachers in their aim to develop students’ creativity is *Torrance’s Incubation Model of Creative Teaching and Learning* (henceforth abbreviated as TIM), developed during the late 70’s by Torrance - a “giant in the field [of creativity]” (Amabile & Pillemer, 2012, pp. 3). The first stage of the model involves motivating the students: obtaining their attention, arousing their curiosity, creating their desire to know, stimulating their imagination and giving purpose (Torrance, 1993). The second stage is about “searching questions, looking at taboo topics, confronting the unimaginable or unthinkable [...] becoming absorbed in things around you” (Torrance, 1993, pp. 12). Finally, the third stage is about extending the learning process – continuing wanting to learn. This particular model of teaching has been used successfully according to Murdock and Keller-Mathers (2008) and Shaughnessy (1998). Teachers who have tried it testify that

both their students and they themselves find the creative approach exciting and enjoyable (Birkmaier, 1971; Torrance, 1993; Turner, 2013). Thus, the lessons motivate not only the students, but also their teachers.

However, even though studies suggest that students and their teachers enjoy creative exercises and approaches, some students might find creative work difficult, especially “if they are used to simply memorizing or following instructions” (Fautley & Savage in Turner, 2013, pp. 26).

Also, teachers who are not used to working in this way might find it problematic (Turner, 2013).

Teaching

Some make a distinction between *teaching creatively* and *teaching for creativity*, whereas others argue that the two concepts are highly intertwined (Hayes, 2004). Nonetheless, if a distinction should be made, *teaching creatively* is about the teachers themselves using their own creative capacities in their approach “to make learning more interesting, exciting and effective” (NACCCE, 1999, pp. 102-103). *Teaching for creativity*, on the other hand, means “forms of teaching that are intended to develop young people’s own creative thinking or behavior” (NACCCE, 1999 pp. 103), for example, by giving them knowledge about what creativity is and encouraging originality in their work. With regard to the latter, it is important to encourage students to experiment, explore and take risks (Amabile & Fisher 2009; Birkmaier 1971; Brookhart 2013; Garner 2013).

The importance of being creative oneself as a teacher is stressed by several scholars (e.g. Amabile & Pillemer, 2012; Goodwin & Miller, 2013; Runco, 2007). “The teacher is, after all, a model for students” (Runco, 2007, pp. 189). Noddings (2013) suggests that creativity first must be encouraged in the teachers if they can be able to enhance the creative potentials of their students. Hence, the importance of support from school leaders is crucial “for any substantial impact to be achieved” (Turner, 2013, pp. 35).

There are some fundamental competences which can help students to become more creative and which can be taught the same way as reading or writing

(Robinson in Azzam, 2009). For instance, divergent thinking (being flexible and coming up with less than obvious ideas/connections), the use of metaphors, analogies, and mental visualization (e.g. Goodwin & Miller, 2013; Runco, 2007; Kozhevnikov et al., 2013).

One effective way to foster divergent thinking is to provide *open-ended questions* (Amabile & Pillemer, 2012), that is, questions for which there are several possible answers (Tornberg, 2009). Open-ended questions activate students' capacity for thinking creatively around a topic, especially "what if"-questions (Dispenza, 2007; NACCCE, 1999; Goodwin & Miller, 2013). Rather than asking a student, "In what year did Columbus discover America?" a teacher could ask, "What if Columbus had landed in California, how would our lives be different?" The latter question requires students to draw on creative thinking skills such as "imagining, experimenting, discovering, elaborating, testing solutions, and communicating discoveries" (Goodwin & Miller, 2013, pp. 81).

Mental visualization, has been emphasized not only by authors like Stephen King, who recommend using this technique "to bring your story to life" (*n.p.*) but also by numerous scholars. For example, Shaw and Belmore in Kozhevnikov et al. (2013) present studies suggesting that the more creative a student is, the more successfully he/she uses mental visualization, and Barbot et al. (2012) refer to several studies confirming that students producing written texts also become more creative when working with this technique. To actually promote mental visualization, Garner (2013) recommends letting the students close their eyes, asking them to picture e.g. a setting or a character come alive, and then ask them to tell what they saw or experienced.

Foreign language learning

Even though, according to Robinson (2011), creativity has similar features in every subject, creativity also seems to be discipline-specific (Baer & Kaufman in Turner, 2013; Newton & Newton, 2010; Yamin, 2010). In other words, being creative in EFL learning is different from being creative in mathematics or music, as "the balance between novelty, plausibility or appropriateness, elegance, ethical

considerations, and wisdom varies from field to field” (Newton & Newton, 2010, pp. 119). However, language teachers do not seem to consider their subject as essentially characterized by creativity (Giauque, 1985). The latter is congruent with studies that confirm that teachers, and people in general, associate creativity with the arts, not “theoretical” subjects like languages (Newton & Newton, 2010). Yet a study by István (1998) suggests that creativity and success in language learning are highly interconnected; the better grade a student had in the discipline, the higher scores he/she showed on a creativity test.

In the communicative approach, which refers to an emphasis on meaning and fluency rather than correctness and accuracy (Lightbown & Spada, 2013), is adopted in today’s EFL teaching. In the communicative approach, interactivity is an important component which includes for example the ability to be flexible (Tornberg, 2009) which is considered to be one crucial element of creativity (Torrance in Tin et al. 2010). To use language strategies, that is, to overcome language problems in order to make the message intelligible (van Ek in Malmberg, 2001) and to adjust one’s language to different situations and purposes is included as one of the five overall goals in EFL for secondary school. Being flexible can thus be said to be implicitly mentioned within EFL studies, for instance the goal that says that the student should have “[t]he ability to use language strategies in different contexts” (pp.54, my translation), and “[t]he ability to adjust the language to different purposes, addressees, and situations” (pp. 54, my translation). Better communicative flexibility might lead to better strategic competence and ultimately higher language proficiency, as suggested by István (1998).

With the definition on creativity (cf. 3.2), meaningful, authentic communication in any language could technically be considered a creative act since one is producing a valuable original utterance. Therefore, discussing or writing something which matters to those involved could be considered a creative act.

However, even though the students’ product could be appropriate and original, the level of creativity might not be especially high (Brookhart, 2013), and

if a teacher wishes to develop their creative abilities in the subject, it is not sufficient to have them do activities which could be considered *conducive* to creativity (Brookhart, 2013; Giauque, 1985; Robinson, 2011).

“Simply asking people to be creative is not enough” (Robinson, 2011, pp. 159). To provide feedback, not only on their language proficiency but also their level of creativity, is crucial if a creative use of the language is to be achieved (Brookhart, 2013). If the teacher only gives credit for imitative but “correct” replicas on assignments, the students might fail to see the subject’s or the language’s creative possibilities (Brookhart, 2013; Robinson 2011) and thereby be “turned off” (Birkmaier, 1971, pp. 345). As Pollard (2012) puts it: “[...]what’s missing in many classrooms is deliberately noticing and naming opportunities for creativity when they occur, giving feedback on the creative process, and teaching students that creativity is a valued quality” (pp. 30). Thus, feedback is necessary to give them the message that their creative abilities are cherished in the classroom. This, however, requires knowledge of what the concept generally, and specifically, means within the EFL class, for instance (Brookhart 2013).

II. Research methodology

In order to explore if a creative approach had any effects on students' EFL skills in terms of variation in vocabulary and implementation of teaching material (story goal, obstacles and character motivation) I used an empirical research technique. I used two similar groups of participants – one control group and one experiment group. During four weeks, both groups were expected to write a story during their regular English lessons either by hand or on the computer. These stories were handed in by the end of the fourth week. Both groups were exposed to the same objectives in form of lesson content: story elements in narrative writing such as story goals, obstacles and conflicts, and character motivation. The obstacles/conflicts refer to the story's goal, what the protagonist wants; the obstacles refer to an antagonist who/which stands in the way of the protagonist attaining his or her goal; and, character motivation refers to the protagonist's underlying reason for wanting to achieve this goal.

The main difference between these groups was largely the teaching method I used. The control group was exposed to a method closely related to the way they were normally taught, which I call *the Regular Teaching Method* (cf. 4.5) whereas the treatment group was exposed to a *Creative Study Design* (cf. 4.6). I spoke only English during the lessons.

Participants and location

The participants were first-year secondary students on a vocational program in which English as a foreign language is a compulsory subject. The school was located in a medium sized town. I only included students which had an attendance rate of 75% or more in this study. In this way I wanted to ensure validity; to make sure that the possible conclusions to be drawn about the materials could in fact be referred to the respective method. In this study, the total sum for each group, coincidentally, resulted were 10. Therefore I could make straightforward comparisons on sums rather than averages in my analysis.

Time and access

The study was conducted during a four-week period in the students' regular time-scheduled English class, which consisted of 1.5 hours a week and a total lesson time of 6 hours per group. The school in question was chosen because of my pre-established contact with one of the English teachers at the school, who kindly helped me get access to these two classes. At the end of the four weeks I collected the stories, either electronically (by mail) or on paper.

Ethical aspects

I asked the students for permission to conduct the research by letting them sign a contract where the investigation was explained and which stated that the collected essays would be handled anonymously as suggested by Denscombe (2009) and Vetenskapsrådet (2011).

Essays were therefore given a number. The students were informed that they could withdraw from the experiment at any time. Also, I carefully considered any possible disadvantages for the control group since a creative approach might have led to a more "exciting" learning experience. However, I estimated that the consequences were both minimal and justifiable due to the short amount of time given to the study.

III. Data analysis

The data was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods, which are described below.

Quantitative analyses

I used quantitative analyses since they are useful when one wants to ensure validity and accuracy in a study (Denscombe, 2009).

Word count

At this level of English in question (“course 5” in an secondary vocational program), it is reasonable to assume that the more a student writes, the higher motivation the student has for the task. Therefore, the words were counted. Contractions such as *didn't* were counted as two words *did* and *not*.

Vocabulary

In line with the original-criterion of creativity (cf. 3.2), it is reasonable to assume that the more creative a student is, the more varied and advanced the vocabulary will be that she/he uses. Variation was measured specifically in terms of how many words outside the New General Service List (NGSL) (Bauman & Culligan, 1995) a student used. The NGSL is the latest version (2013) of the General Service List (GSL), which was compiled as a general service for English language learners. The NGSL consists of 2818 words that are most frequently used in the English language (Browne, 2013). The vocabulary used by each group of informants was compared to the list. Since the NSGL usually lists infinitives and nominatives, I only counted the stems of the words, i.e. not suffixes, prefixes, past tense etc.

A higher number of words not included in the NGSL was thus taken as a sign of a more varied language.

Qualitative analyses

Analyzing the material qualitatively, which includes subjective interpretations (Denscombe, 2009), was necessary since the students' stories,

naturally, were very different from each other. Thus, I could analyze their stories in depth, and with this, ensure validity.

Implementation of story elements

In my analyses of the implementation of the elements of *story goal*, *obstacle* and *character motivation*, I assessed whether or not these elements could be found in the students' stories.

If a story contained a story goal but not an obstacle nor a motive, the student's story was included in the chart diagram of *story goal*, but not for the other two parameters etc.

Also, in a separate diagram, I counted every obstacle for the protagonist achieving his or her goal, e.g. the police arresting the protagonist, the protagonist's family dying, or the protagonist being poor.

Originality

It was important to see whether or not the Creative Study Design had any impact on the students' level of originality, that is, if they offered more original solutions. To do that, I noted unusual, that is, less stereotypical, connections between the story elements used. I put each student's different story elements next to each other and wrote down every unusual connection, e.g. an obstacle to a bank robbery such as a being arrested was seen as stereotypical, whereas an obstacle such as falling in love was seen as creative. This aspect of the analysis was by necessity quite subjective.

Class reactions

In order to answer the research question regarding motivation, it was appropriate to observe the classes' reactions to the different methods. Specifically, I noticed reactions regarding the students' attention, active participation and language use. After every lesson, I sat down and wrote down what I had noticed and my notes are the basis for this part of the analysis.

Regular Teaching Method

The Regular Teaching Method was based on an interview with the class's English teacher where I asked her how *she* would have taught the elements I was

going to cover. Her answers became the essence of the Regular Teaching Method. The purpose was to provide a known teaching method in order to have as reliable material as possible to compare the experiment group with. I am also aware of the fact that my way of teaching could never completely imitate their ordinary teacher's way of teaching.

However, it was a conscious decision to teach the class myself since this was a way to have control over the study. In fact, I wanted to ensure validity by eliminating the problem of the groups being taught by different teachers.

The teacher's answers corresponded well to what studies (Brookhart, 2013; Newton & Newton, 2010) conclude about how unsystematically and unconsciously creativity is addressed in many teachers' teaching practice. Hence, the Regular Teaching Method was not *deliberately* creative even though some elements could be considered creative according to the definition I adopted in this study. For example, the task to write a story was in itself conducive to creativity but I did not explain to the students or help them understand what the creative writing process might involve. Specifically, the Regular Teaching Method included: instructions, collaboration and feedback.

Instructions

The instructions were teacher-centered, that is, I gave the students minimal room to make comments or ask questions. For example, I explained the terms and the conclusions myself and if I invited them to talk it was in the form of *closed question* (cf. 3.4). Thus, I asked them to fill in whatever specific answer I was looking for in my conversations or the written questions. The oral instructions were also complemented with certain handouts where the content of what I was talking about could be read.

During the instructions, no deliberate creative approach was adopted. Topics and assignments were traditional, text based and orally told.

I handed out papers with suggestions on what the story goal, obstacles and the character's motivations were (only using texts) and with detailed questions such as "What hair color does your character have?" For example, the students

were asked to fill in the blank spaces in a sheet for which to develop a character. A student who did not know how to begin his/her story was asked to work with this sheet and to have a closer look at the specific questions there. I also specified the questions even more by asking for example “Does he have black hair?” etc.

Collaboration and feedback

I did not deliberately encourage group work, but if the students collaborated voluntarily, I did not stop it. I let the students hand in texts to me for feedback, which were then returned the following lesson. The feedback consisted of questions regarding content and language problems. They were not given specific feedback on creative solutions regarding the content.

The Creative Study Design I created a creative teaching model which I called the Creative Study Design and in which I incorporated several important factors that characterize *creative teaching* and *teaching for creativity* – all in accordance with different influential scholars in the field such as Amabile and Fisher (2009), Runco (2007) and Torrance (1993). I deliberately implemented a creative approach as suggested by Hayes (2004), Mumford et al. (2010), Pollard (2012) and Torrance (1972). In doing this, I adopted Amabile’s (2012) definition of creativity: “the process by which novel, appropriate ideas are produced” (p. 10), and based the teaching on TIM (cf. 3.3). So, even if the activity of writing short stories in itself was conducive to creativity (creative writing), students were made aware of both their own level of creativity –by getting feedback for creative solutions. They were also made aware of how, and what, a creative writing process might involve – all in order to improve their creative capacity, as suggested by Brookhart (2013) and NACCCE (1999). The Creative Study Design included: instructions, modeling, making unusual connections, mental visualization, collaboration and feedback.

Instructions

In my instructions, I typically asked open-ended questions, in which every answer could be considered “correct” (Dysthe 1996; Tornberg 2009). I could, for example, ask individual students in their idea-generation-stage: “What if your

character actually was innocent?”, “What if he/she happened to kill someone who he/she should not have killed?” Thereby I tried to encourage the students to come up with more original solutions as suggested by Dispenza (2007), NACCCE (1999) and Torrance in Goodwin and Miller (2013). Moreover, in more formal instructions I could ask them, while teaching the dramatic curve (a theory that most stories follow a certain sequence of tension in order to capture a reader’s interest), how much tension or conflict they thought different scenarios in a certain video-clip contained. They were encouraged to come up with suggestions regarding their own curve and draw the conclusions about what kind of pattern they could see. Thus, the majority of the instructions took the form of an ongoing dialog with the students.

In my instructions, I also tried to use familiar references and taboo topics when I went through a concept – all in accordance with the second stage of TIM. For instance, as I explained the importance of the character having a goal or the importance of a story having obstacles, I talked about *kebab*, *sex* and *Call of Duty* (a computer game) in order to raise their motivation and curiosity in the activity. From experience, I knew these topics could interest students of this age.

In raising the students’ awareness of the creative writing process, as suggested by Brookhart (2013) and Tin et al. (2010), I showed them my own personal notes on my various more or less successful drafts in a personal writing process of mine. The notes contained several cancellations and imperfect hand written attempts. With this approach, I emphasized the fact that most creative activity, is a *process* that elaboration and dead ends are part of.

Moreover, I talked about the criterion of originality in creative processes: that providing elements which are unexpected (making unusual connections etc.) is more original than picking the conventional ideas. I made them practice this by letting them come up with as many unconventional ideas as possible on how to develop their stories. I urged them to think of solutions they did not think any other classmate had considered.

Modeling and being original

I used my own creative capacities in my attempts to function as a model to the students, since that is important when teaching creativity (Amabile & Pillemer, 2012; Groenendijk et al. 2013; Goodwin & Miller, 2013; Runco, 2007). For example, I created my own metaphors and analogies to make my points; I tried to deliberately break conventional rules that their normal teaching followed and my own habitual ways of teaching; I constantly tried out different ways to work with texts and pictures to find, novel solutions – all in accordance with the definition of creativity (see below). Since the essence of a creative process cannot be predicted in advance (Robinson 2011; Runco, 2007), I did not know what the outcome of my own creative teachings would be. In retrospect, I conclude that my teaching had been creative because it contained mental visualization (described below), the use of pictures, the provision of teen literature with book covers featuring pictures (e.g. of motorcycles, cemeteries, or a man in a coma), dialogues and written statements, which I made myself, reading “Don’t do it!” and “He had a split personality” etc., and covering the walls of the classroom.

Also, in accordance with Barbot et al. (2012), Garner (2013), Pollard (2012), Tin et al. (2010) and others, I made unusual connections in my own teaching. For instance, in order to encourage creativity, I provided an analogy between the craft of storytelling and the craft of carpentry. In preparation, I planned this instruction very carefully and initiated collaboration with the construction teachers. In the environment where the students usually have their construction lessons, both the construction teacher and I built a stool in which we, consciously, aimed at providing different results. The stool he built was solid enough for a student to actually sit on it whereas my stool was intended to fall apart if they sat on it.

Encouraging the students to sit on these stools, our different results were confirmed; his stool stood solid whereas mine instantly fell apart. The students were asked to discuss these results with each other and were encouraged to come up with ideas on how this activity was related to storytelling. They concluded that in order for a story to fulfill its purpose to entertain a reader, one needs to consider

the main components in storytelling such as characterization, including a character's motive, story goal(s) and obstacle(s) – the activity was an analogy to carpentry. Also, the technique required to do this (writing a story or building a stool) might be important for the sustainability of the product, the *value*-criterion of creativity (does a reader enjoy the story, can a person sit on the stool?). In sum, building a stool during the EFL class was certainly an unusual connection on my behalf; it was novel (I had never done it before) and the activity was of value if one considers the way the students' addressed the problem and came up with appropriate solutions, even being anxious to hear what I had in mind with this task.

Furthermore, I let the students make unusual connections in their own writing processes.

For example, after letting them choose one picture of a character they wanted to use in their story, I wanted them to connect two unconventional ideas: this character committed a murder, not with the conventional pistol or knife, but with the help of a plastic coffee cup, a computer chord, a pair of scissors, a stapler or a hammer. I forced them to *think outside the box*, thereby working with the original-criterion of creativity. In accordance with TIM, I let each group pick one murder weapon from a box without looking, in order to raise their expectation and curiosity - the start of the writing process.

Mental visualization

I used mental visualization (cf. 4.6.3) and especially adopted Garner's (2013) suggestion in the matter, but instead of urging the students to close their eyes, I asked them to wear blindfolds since that would reinforce the fact that I wanted them to go into their own worlds and not be distracted by their peers. Hence, I carefully checked that everyone was unable to see.

Thereafter, I wanted them to picture their character (which they had been given a picture of before) coming through the classroom door. I asked them how he/she behaved, he/she would say, what opinions he/she had, etc. They were then asked to write down what they had pictured and/or experienced.

Collaboration and feedback

Since creative work often thrives on collaborative processes (Pollard, 2012; Robinson, 2011, 2009), from the start, I divided the students into groups in which they were urged to give each other feedback on their writing throughout the experiment period.

I also deliberately provided feedback on original solutions. For example, I gave extra credit for unconventional ideas about how the murderer executed his crime.

IV. Discussion

Results and discussions

The results and the discussions are presented together.

Word count

Overall, the Creative Study Design group provided a higher number of words (3824) compared to the Regular Teaching Method group (3145) (Table 1).

Regular Teaching Method students	145	199	217	241	261	263	369	403	435	612
Creative Study Design students	116	178	213	274	274	333	365	532	657	891

Table 1: Number of words for each student in the Regular Teaching Method group and the Creative Study Design group

Creating longer texts could be an indication of finding the activity “interesting, enjoyable” or “positively challenging” as suggested by Amabile and Fisher (2009, pp. 7). The Creative Study Design group, which produced longer texts, can therefore be assumed to have been more involved in the activity and more motivated to complete the task than the Regular Teaching Method group.

Vocabulary

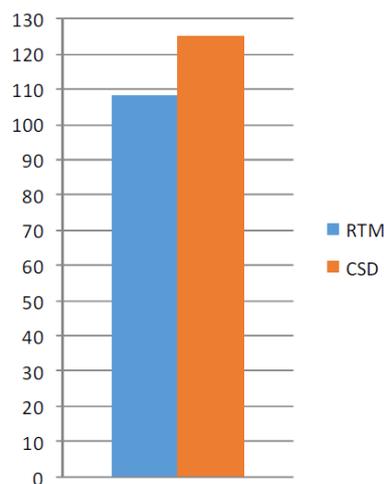


Figure 1: Number of words which were not included in the NGSL.

Stories produced by the Creative Study Design group had a higher count of words (125 words) not included in the New General Service List (NGSL) than the Regular Teaching Method group (108 words; cf. Fig. 1).

The fact that the Creative Study Design group used more words outside the NSGL than the Regular Teaching Method group might indicate that the Creative Study Design made the students use more non-frequent words and thereby use a more varied and larger vocabulary. However, the difference between the Creative Study Design and the Regular Teaching Method was relatively small and it corresponds more or less to the difference in the number of words written by the two groups.

Implementation of story elements

The results in Figure 2 show that the implementation of story goals was high. Almost every student, regardless of group, provided a relatively clear story goal, for example a protagonist saving his family.

In the Regular Teaching Method group, seven out of ten students implemented obstacles and conflicts in their stories whereas every student in the Creative Study Design group implemented this element in their stories.

There was no difference between the Regular Teaching Method and the Creative Study Design regarding the implementation of a character's motivation.

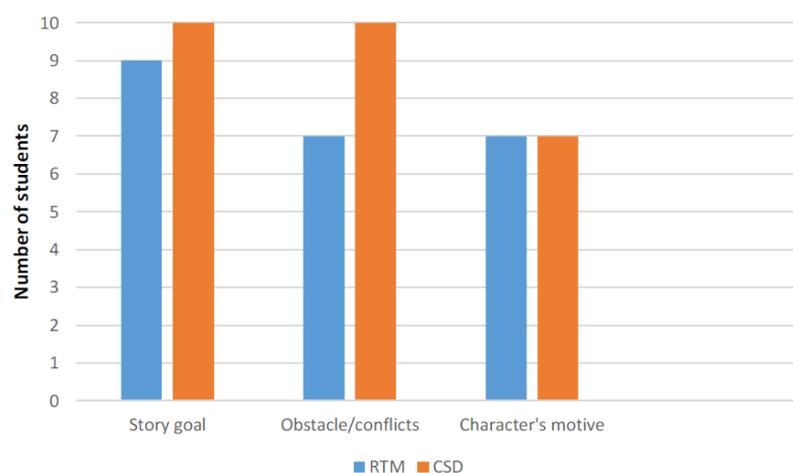


Figure 2. Students implementing different story elements in their stories

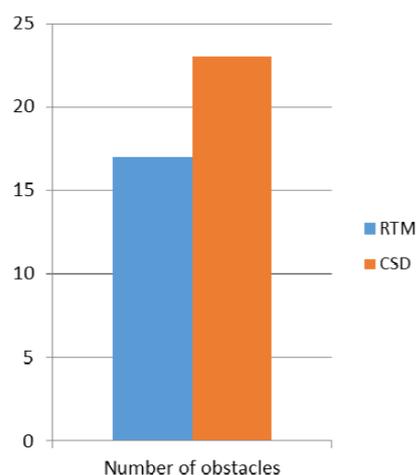


Figure 3: The number of obstacles used by the stories in the Regular Teaching Method group and the Creative Study Design group

Letting the reader know a character’s motivation for attaining his/her goal seemed to be hard regardless of teaching method whereas providing a story goal was easy. It is interesting to see how every participant in the Creative Study Design group provided at least one clear obstacle in their stories which was not the case in the Regular Teaching Method group. A possible explanation is that the instructions in the Creative Study Design group, in which students were more actively involved, led to a higher understanding of what an obstacle might be and what it means to a story. Hence, a creative approach can make it more probable that the students implement obstacles in their own stories. Since the instructions involved “taboo topics” such as *Call of duty* and *sex*, in line with TIM, this might have motivated the students to listen to the instructions more carefully and therefore become more motivated, as suggested by Amabile & Pillemer (2012). It is also possibly related to a heightened brain activity in the frontal lobe, as proposed by Dispenza (2007). The latter would make the students more active in their learning process. The experiment group included more obstacles in their stories than the control group (Fig. 3). Again, this might indicate that the creative approach provided a better understanding of the importance of including obstacles in the stories, and possibly because of this, the Creative Study Design students did not only provide one obstacle but several. This could be a sign that the experiment

group showed a “depth of involvement in the task” as Amabile and Fisher (2009, pp. 7) put it, and thereby attained a higher motivation towards the activity than the control group.

Originality

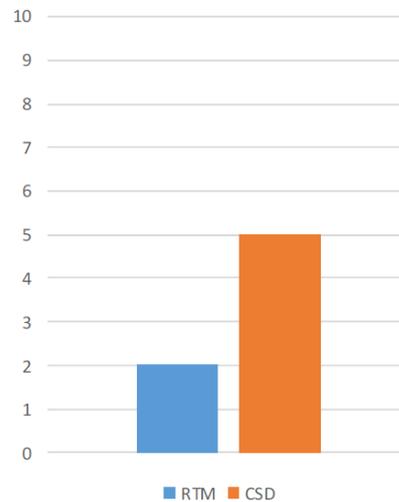


Figure 4: The number of original stories in the Regular Teaching Method and the Creative Study Design (N = 10 in each group).

The stories of the Creative Study Design group were judged to be original more often (five out of ten) than those of the Regular Teaching Method group (two out of ten) as Figure 4 shows. For instance, a student in the Regular Teaching Method group had a protagonist whose goal was to become rich by “killing and robbing people”, motivated by “a bad childhood”, and the obstacle was that he was arrested and put in jail. This was not considered original. In the Creative Study Design group, a student had a protagonist whose goal was to be left alone “drinking a cold beer”, motivated by the fact that he had “a hard drinking problem”, with the obstacle being “a naked man” who took his beer, which was considered more original.

I was not surprised that the Creative Study Design group offered more original solutions since the group had practiced it in class. Thus, the Creative Study Design made the stories’ content more creative than the Regular Teaching Method.

This can confirm Brookhart’s (2013) and Pollard’s (2012) suggestions, that one can develop students’ creativity by noticing and giving feedback on creative

solutions. Nonetheless, I would have expected a higher number in the Creative Study Design than the Regular Teaching Method since the students in the Creative Study Design group had been encouraged to make unusual connections. This can indicate Turner's (2013) claim: students might find creative work problematic, especially if they are not used to it. As e.g. Robinson in Azzam (2009) says: creativity can be developed in students the way reading and writing is – suggesting that creativity takes time to develop.

Class reactions

The results for each group will first be presented separately, but will then be analyzed and compared in section 5.6.3.

The Creative Study Design

In connection with the open-ended questions I asked in class (cf. 4.6.1), I noticed that the students in the experiment group were acting alert and attentive which was shown in the way they eagerly answered/commented my questions/statements. On two occasions, I saw how a couple of students even became physically jumpy, asking questions such as “What did you say?” and “What?”, especially when I mentioned subjects such as *sex* and *kebab* in my teaching of story elements, but also in immediate connection to my analogies (building a stool etc.). Also, students came up to me asking about the pictures and the books I provided in class. Overall, there were many students in the experiment group who wanted to talk, make comments and have my attention, particularly during the instructions. Otherwise they were relatively self-sufficient, that is, they worked in their groups discussing and writing.

In the conversations between me and the students I spoke English whereas they talked Uzbek. This meant that the Creative Study Design students were exposed to more authentic conversations even though it was in a Uzbek-English structure.

Moreover, the Creative Study Design demanded more preparatory work from me and thus, was more time consuming and required more effort, and it was sometimes hard to give the students credit for what I thought they would consider

to be original and appropriate and not compare it to what *I* thought was original and appropriate. Yet, working with the Creative Study Design made me, as a teacher, more alert and I experienced a closer contact with the students, which was highly satisfactory for me.

The Regular Teaching Method

During the instructions in the Regular Teaching Method group, some students laid their heads on the benches (one student even buried his head in his sleeve), another one yawned, a couple of students talked (while looking at something on their cell phones), two students teased each other and some students repeatedly asked when the lesson ended. Only a couple of students in the Regular Teaching Method group seemed read the hand-outs and paid attention to my instructions regarding the story elements.

It was mostly the same few students who answered my closed questions in class. Also, as in the Creative Study Design, I spoke English while they talked Uzbek.

Furthermore, the planning in the Regular Teaching Method was not especially demanding for me as a teacher.

Of course, it took some time to collect the material I was using, but once I had the material, I did not put any further effort into using it more creatively and could thereby save time. Yet, it was very frustrating to see the students focusing on something else than my instructions during the lessons.

The CDS and the Regular Teaching Method

Since I only talked in English, they needed to understand what I was saying and therefore these occasions provided, what Tornberg (2009) would call, authentic conversations in English – the appropriateness-criterion could thereby be fulfilled in their way of interacting with me. The conversations in the Creative Study Design group resulted in students being motivated to create a conversation. This could indicate that, even though the conversations consisted of a Uzbek-English structure, the Creative Study Design created more opportunities and a higher willingness to talk about the assigned material than in the Regular Teaching

Method group (see below). Consequently, I made the assessment that the students in the Creative Study Design group were exposed to more spoken English in a conscious way since the students were highly motivated to know my answers or comments.

This is in contrast to the indifferent and “turned off”-manner (Robinson 2011) the Regular Teaching Method group showed when I spoke English.

The excitement in the Creative Study Design group confirms Birkmaier’s (1971) and Turner’s (2013) conclusion that creative activities can be experienced as highly enjoyable. Being alert and attentive, as I observed in the experiment group, can also be a sign of having an inner motivation vis-à-vis the task at hand, in accordance with how Amabile and Pillemer (2012) describe intrinsically motivated persons’ active approach towards a task.

The Regular Teaching Method- instructions seemed to inactivate the students, and the disengagement from the material resulted in them activating themselves (talking, teasing, resting etc.). Based on this small example, it can be suggested that the students have a natural urge to be creative – they are being creative, for example, in the way they make valuable, in their perspective, utterances (teasing and talking to each other) instead of listening to me. Thus, even though the students in the Regular Teaching Method group could be said to be active, they were not active with respect to EFL learning, which might help explain why the Creative Study Design group had a higher rate of implementation of the story elements than the Regular Teaching Method group. In other words, being attentive, which the Creative Study Design might have contributed to, seems to be important when processing the material a teacher wants his/her students to learn.

The results were not surprising. First of all, the Creative Study Design group seemed to have a higher task related motivation than the Regular Teaching Method group. This confirmed Birkmaier’s (1971) and Jackson and Raiber’s (2010) conclusions on how working with a deliberately creative approach might lead to more active students. The results also confirm how traditional practices in EFL

teaching actually inactivate the students and thereby “turn them off”, as Birkmaier (1971) and Robinson (2011) suggest.

Also, it was not unexpected that it took more effort to actually make the teaching more creative, especially since I am not used to working in this way. This confirms Turner’s (2013) conclusions that teachers who are not accustomed to bringing out their own creative capacities might find it difficult. Yet, the effort paid off in terms of a more active and closer relationship with the students in the Creative Study Design-group than with those in the Regular Teaching Method-group.

Conclusion

Even though the curriculum for secondary school that the overall goal is developing students' creative capacities, it does not provide any explanations or guidelines on how to actually achieve this, nor how creativity should be defined. In fact, the lack of clear definitions and implications might contribute to the mythologized conceptualization of the term *creativity* (Turner, 2013), which means that the opportunities to encourage and stimulate students' creativity are lost (Brookhart 2013).

Indeed, the myth that creativity has more to do with the arts than the language subjects are confirmed in many ways, e.g. in the way creativity is explicitly mentioned in the Uzbek curriculum for music but only implicitly for EFL studies, which might keep EFL teachers unaware of the concept and what it means to their work, and accordingly stop them from helping their students to develop their creative capacities.

Even though it is not possible to draw any general conclusions from this small study, it confirms several positive results when it comes to working deliberately with creativity in the EFL teaching. This ought to be of great interest to foreign language teachers. The Creative Study Design seems to offer the students a chance to see the creative possibilities in the foreign language subject and thereby increase their level of task-involvement, as suggested by Amabile (2012) among others. In other words, the Creative Study Design, compared to the Regular Teaching Method, seemed to increase motivation, and thereby creativity was gained in the form of longer texts, more words outside the NGSL, more implementation of the teaching objectives (story goals, obstacles, character motivations), more original story plots, and more focused and active students. These results ought to be kept in mind when teaching a foreign language, especially if one considers Dispenza's (2007) claim that active participation and motivation is required for the frontal lobe to be used – the part of the brain that is crucial in learning. As the students actively create within the subject, they will become more motivated, and with an increased motivation, he/she wants to extend

the learning process. Accordingly, he/she will, possibly, become better in mastering the language, in line with István (1998) and Tornberg (2009). Moreover, motivation and focus seem to be enhanced, both among students and teacher, when working deliberately, rather than haphazardly and in an disengaged manner, which confirms Brookhart's (2013), Giaque's (1985), NACCCE's (1999) Pollard's (2012), Raiber, Duke et al.'s (2010), Robinson's (2011) and Torrance's (1972) arguments.

Also, since it was confirmed that it was only in their EFL class the students were faced with a deliberately creative approach, it might not have had such a great impact as might otherwise have been the case. If all the other teachers were to work deliberately with the concept as well, as recommended by Amabile and Pillemer (2012), Brookhart (2013), Raiber Duke et al. (2010), Robinson (2009) and others, overall creativity would increase. As the results show, if only one teacher actively works on developing the students' creativity, she or he might find the work overwhelming.

In fact, it might be fruitful to conduct interdisciplinary studies in which EFL is a part of a bigger context and see whether or not deliberate efforts towards increased overall creativity has any impact not only on students' school results, but also on their future lives in the form of e.g. job-prospects and well-being. In general, it would be interesting and relevant to conduct further studies in the field of creativity and EFL with more participants and during a longer period of time.

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