

**CREATIVITY AND INVENTION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING OF
ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
LANGUAGE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, AKWANGA**

Mary G. Egah

Department of General Studies,

College of Education,

Akwanga, Nasarawa State.

Abstract

Creative and inventive teachers contribute to developing learners' creativity and invention which in turn leads to positive outcome. Such teachers of English language can become role models for learners of English and help them learn the language better as there is a correlation between teachers' creativity and invention in the teaching and effective learning of English. This paper examines creativity and invention in teaching and learning of English language with reference to the department of English Language College of Education, Akwanga. The study identified the qualities of creative and inventive English language teachers, the application of creative and invention in the teaching and learning of English language, ways of enhancing creativity and inventiveness in the teachers of English language. The study adopted both primary and secondary source of collecting data. The study recommends that teachers of English language should pay more attention to reflective teaching, should willingly carry out action research and have exposure to

English language in Nigeria is a second language. It is a second language because Nigerians already had their first language or Mother Tongue (L1) before the incursion of this foreign language called 'English' into the country. In this instance a foreign language (English)

left its native environment and met with another language or languages (Nigerian indigenous languages). It is true that the culture and values of the people are embedded in the language they speak. As such it is said that 'language is culture' and none can be separated from

each other. So, when two languages meet, then two cultures have met and there is likely to be a lot of changes in that society. The changes will affect the culture and the language of the recipient society or speech community, and the effect will impact on the entire recipients' society and its citizenry.

Nigeria is a linguistically diverse region with different ethnic groupings. Different scholars put the number of indigenous languages in Nigeria at between 250 and 450. Most of these languages are not mutually intelligible. This is even worst in the South- South Nigeria where every kilometer is a different language that is why Pidgin English is more dominant in those parts of Nigeria than the other parts of Nigeria like the Yoruba, the Igbo and the Hausa language blocks. With these diverse languages the only language that is easily understood by all is the English language which is spoken in different variants like the broken English, Pidgin English and the Standard variant (Adebanjo and Ojomo, 2004). This is one of the driving forces for the wide spread and promotion of English language in Nigeria and that is why the paper seeks to understand creativity and invention in teaching and learning English language with reference to the department of English language, college of education Akwanga, Nasarawa State.

Conceptualization

Creativity is defined as the ability to produce work that is both novel (i.e.,

original, unexpected) and appropriate (i.e., useful, adaptive concerning task constraints) (Sternberg and Lubart, 1999),

Innovation can be viewed as the application of better solutions that meet new requirements, inarticulate needs, or existing market needs (Maranville, 1992). While Invention is finding something new or producing something originating from the needs and fulfilling these needs.

Linguistic creativity

The concept of linguistic creativity is conventionally applied to aesthetic and literary use of language (Crystal, 2011). In general, Maybin and Swan (2006) denotes creativity as a property of all language use in that language users do not simply "reproduce but recreate, refashion and recontextualize" linguistic and cultural resources in the act of communicating. Within the field of applied linguistics and World English, Kasanga (2004) defines linguistic creativity as the ability of speakers to innovate for a wide range of reasons and purposes and is recognized "as part of the outcome of using a language". Creative intelligence seems to be a factor that can facilitate language learning because it helps learners cope with novel and unpredictable experiences. Communicative teaching methods have a role to play here since they emphasize functional and situational language use and employ activities such as role-play and

simulations that require students to use their imaginations and think creatively.

The Qualities of Creative and Inventive Teachers

All individuals can probably recall the teachers whom they know were very creative in their approach to teaching. Of course we have all encountered teachers who make use of carefully developed lesson plans, who keep their lessons focussed on accurate performance of tasks, who are strict about getting homework in on time and returning it with detailed corrections and suggestions. Hopefully however, all can also have powerful and fond memories of a teacher who sparked imagination among us as students, who inspired us by their individual and personal teaching style, who motivated us to want to continue learning and perhaps to eventually decide to become an English teacher? What makes teachers like this different?

Creativity depends upon the ability to analyze and evaluate situations and to identify novel ways of responding to them. This in turn depends upon a number of different abilities and levels of thinking (Richard, 2014). The following includes qualities of a creative and inventive English teacher

Creative and Inventive Teachers are Knowledgeable: Creative teachers have solid knowledge base. They know their subject English, teaching English, and learning English and they draw on their subject matter knowledge in building

creative lessons. A knowledge base is important because without knowledge, imagination cannot be productive. Creativity doesn't mean making unfocussed and unprincipled actions. It doesn't mean making it up as one goes.

Creative and Inventive Teaching Requires Confidence: Since knowledge of subject matter can provide a sense of confidence that enables the teacher to be original and creative. One feature of confidence is that it gives teachers a sense that they are in control of their classroom and that is the teacher not the book or the curriculum that can make a difference. Creative and inventive teachers see their input to the lesson as being decisive and so they have a sense of personal responsibility for how well learners learn.

Creative and Inventive Teachers are Committed to Helping their Learners Succeed: Conversations with creative teachers confirm that they are very committed to their learner's success. The fact that they are creative and inventive means they are constantly adjusting their teaching in order to better facilitate learning. They want their learners to succeed and they try to find out as much as they can about their learners to enable them to best cater to their needs. They also seek to develop their learners' self-confidence.

Creative and Inventive Teachers are Non-conformists: Conformity is the enemy of creativity. It reduces the

likelihood of creating fresh points of view and new insights. Bruner (1962) defined creativity as 'an act that produces *effective surprise*'. Fisher (2004: 9) comments:

It is originality that provides effective surprise. To do the same things in the same way is not to be creative, to do things differently adds variation to mere habit, but when we do or think things we have not done before, and they are effective, we are being original and fully creative.

The creative teacher does not simply present lessons from the book. He or she looks for original ways of creating lessons and using the textbook and teaching materials and seeks to create lessons that reflect his or her individual teaching style. This is another way of saying that being creative means seeking to adapt and modify lessons to better match the learners' needs. For this reason creative and inventive teachers are generally very different from each other.

Creative and Inventive Teachers are Familiar with a Wide Range of Strategies and Techniques: Creativity in teaching means having a wide repertoire of routines and strategies which teachers can call upon, as well as being ready to depart from established procedures and to use one's own solutions. In general, novice teachers are much less likely to be creative than experienced teachers simply because they are familiar with fewer strategies and techniques. The danger is that once

a teacher becomes comfortable in using a core set of techniques and strategies these become fixed.

Creative and Inventive Teachers are Risk-takers: The creative teacher is willing to experiment, to invent, and to take risks. Risk-taking reflects the flexible mindset of creative teachers as well as their self-confidence. They are willing to try things out, even if at times they may not work quite the way they are intended.

Creative and Inventive Teachers seek to achieve Learner-centered Lessons: A trait that is reflected in several of the comments above is that of learner-centeredness. This is seen in teachers who listen to their learners and who seek opportunities for learners to take responsibility and control of their learning. An important feature of learner-centered lessons is the extent to which the lesson connects with the learners' life experiences.

Creative and Inventive Teachers are Reflective: A quality that creative teachers seem to possess is what can be called critical reflectivity. They review and reflect on their own practice, seek to expand their knowledge and try to find new ideas and practices that they can apply in their own classrooms, they ask questions like these:

- i. Do I vary the way I teach my lessons?
- ii. Do I try out new activities and assess their role in my classes?
- iii. Do I compare my teaching with the teaching of other teachers to find out creative solutions that they may have developed?
- iv. Can I find ways of making my tasks more creative and hence more engaging for learners? (For example by presenting a reading text as a jigsaw reading),
- v. Can I adapt the activities I use so that they increase the personal value of my lesson to my learners? (For example by adapting an activity so that it centers on the students lives rather than on characters in a textbook?).

Ways by which Teachers Apply Creativity and Invention in the Classrooms

How does having some of the traits described influence the way a creative and inventive teacher teaches his/her class? Creative and inventive disposition can be reflected in several different dimensions of creative teachers lessons (Richard, 2014),

Creative and Inventive Teachers make use of an Eclectic Choice of Methods: Typically rather than being bound to a particular method, creative teachers often adopt an approach that might be called principled eclecticism.

In other words they don't choose methods and procedures at random but according to the needs of their class. They use a wide variety of teaching approaches and a wide range of resources and activities. Instead of depending on a single method, creativity is promoted by a mixture and combination of styles.

Creative and Inventive Teachers use activities which have Creative Dimensions: Teaching creatively means assessing activities and materials for their potential to support creative teaching. Researchers have identified a number of dimensions of creative tasks: they are said to involve open-ended problem solving, to be adapted to the abilities of the participants, and to be carried out under constraints (Burton 2010). Some of the features that Dörnyei (2001) identifies as productive language learning tasks can also be seen to promote creative responses:

- i. **Challenge:** tasks in which learners solve problems, discover something, overcome obstacles, or find information.
- ii. **Interesting Content:** topics that students already find interesting and that they would want to read about outside of class, such as stories we find about sports and entertainment personalities we find on YouTube and the internet.

iii. The personal element: activities that make connections to the learners' lives and concerns.

iv. The novelty element: aspects of an activity that is new or different or totally unexpected.

v. The intriguing element: tasks that concern ambiguous, problematic, paradoxical, controversial, contradictory or incongruous material stimulate curiosity.

vi. Individual choice: they look for tasks which give students a personal choice. For example students can choose their own topics to write about in an essay or choose their own topics and group members in a discussion activity.

vii. Tasks that encourage risk taking: they don't want their students to be so worried about making mistakes that they feel reluctant to take part in activities. Reward them for effort and not only for success.

viii. Tasks that encourage original thought: activities that require an original response. So instead of comprehension questions after a reading passage that test recall, they seek to use tasks that encourage a personal and individual response to what the student has read.

ix. The fantasy element: activities that engage the learners' fantasy and that invite the learners to use their

imagination for creating make-believe stories, identifying with fictional characters or acting out imaginary situations

Creative and Inventive Teachers Teach in a Flexible way and often Adjust and Modify their Teaching during Lessons:

Flexibility is another feature often observed in the lessons of creative and invention teachers. Flexibility in teaching means being able to switch between different styles and modes of teaching during the lesson, for example, if necessary changing the pace of the lesson and, giving more space and time to learners. The teacher may not need to refer to a lesson plan because he or she is able to create effective lessons through monitoring the learners' response to teaching activities and creating learning opportunities around important teaching moments. This kind of teaching can be viewed as a kind of skilled improvisation. Here a teacher describes how he makes use of "teachable moments."

Creative and Inventive Teachers look for new ways of doing things:

Learning to teach means mastering the formats of different kinds of lessons, reading lessons, conversation lessons, listening lessons etc. Lessons are structured in different ways depending on their content but typically consist of openings, tasks, and closings. Delivering lessons over time, teachers develop routines and procedures that enable

these dimensions of lessons to be carried out efficiently and effortlessly.

Creative and Inventive Teachers customize their Lessons: Creative teachers develop custom-made lessons that match their students' needs and interests or adapt and customize the book to match their students' interests. While in many cases a book may work perfectly well without the need for much adaptation, in some cases different levels of adaptation may be needed. Through the process of adaptation the creative teacher personalizes the text, making it a better teaching resource, and individualizes it for a particular group of learners.

Creative and Inventive Teachers seek Creative ways to Motivate Students: Creative teachers express a desire to motivate students, to challenge them, to engage their curiosity, to encourage deep learning rather than surface learning. They try to develop a classroom atmosphere that encourages and motivates students in their learning.

Creativity and Invention in the Teaching and Learning of English Language
The term 'creativity' has been used more in the twenty-first century than ever before. There are numerous studies that prove the importance of creativity in all fields. The impact creative and inventive teachers have on learners and learning in education cannot be over emphasized. Creativity is a vital skill

which English language learners of twenty-first century need to possess in order to be part of the knowledge society (Rayan, 2013). Creative and inventive teachers contribute to developing learners' creativity and invention which in turn leads to positive outcome. In a classroom if students are being creative they are likely to play with new ideas, look at things from different viewpoints, explore ideas and options, try alternatives and fresh approaches, reflect critically on ideas, actions and outcomes (Morris, 2006). Stenberg and Williams (1996) emphasizing the importance of creativity for teachers state that if teachers want to develop creativity in their students they should be creative and role models for their students.

Only creative and inventive teachers who value their own creativity can promote creativity in learners. Such English language teachers can become role models for learners of English help them learn the language better. There is correlation between teachers' creativity and effective learning of English. Studies have proved that in schools where the standards in English are high teachers' passions about teaching English and creativity are very much valued (Frater, 2001 and cited in Cremin, 2009). Creativity is not something desirable but it is important for an English language teacher, especially for a teacher in higher institutions of learning such as colleges of education where teachers are created and sent to the wider society. Language learning is not a mechanical process but

a creative process and therefore creativity and invention should not be seen as optional but a goal of the English curriculum and it should be given increased attention (Cremin, 2009).

In education creativity and invention are important because they can improve academic attainment. Fisher (2004) reports:

Research...shows that when students are assessed in ways that recognize and value their creative abilities, their academic performance improves. Creative activity can rekindle the interest of students who have been turned off by school, and teachers who may be turned off by teaching in a culture of control and compliance.

In language teaching, Maley's (1997) work has emphasized a focus on creativity through the use of texts drawn from a variety of different literary and non-literary sources that can be used to elicit creative thinking and foster the ability to make creative and invention connections. Creativity and invention have also been linked to levels of attainment in second language learning. Many of the language tasks favoured by contemporary language teaching methods are believed to release creativity in learners particularly those involving student-centered, interaction-based, and open-ended elements, and are therefore in principle ideally suited to fostering creative thinking and behaviour on the part of learners. This creative aspect of language rests on the fact that what students have learned and

know are not the actual sentences of language, but rather the system of rules for making sentences. Clearly when we speak we do not draw from a memorized list of all possible sentences in English. The major portion of language usage consists of sentences that have never been uttered before. We make them up as we go along. We invent according to rules for sentence formation that we hold in common with other speakers of the language.

Statement of the Problems

One of the consequences of the spread of English as an international language is a growing demand at all levels in both the public and private education sectors for good teachers of English language. Schools want teachers who are dedicated, well-qualified, have a good command of English, who work well with their colleagues, who can engage and motivate their student and who are committed to helping their learners succeed. But above all they want individuals who are good teachers. The notion of what it means to be a good teacher is a complex one, since good teaching draws on many different qualities that teacher bring to their classes reflecting the knowledge, skills and understanding they have built up from their professional education and from their experiences of teaching and the level of their creativity and inventiveness while in the classroom teaching.

Research Questions

- i. What are the qualities of a creative and inventive English language teacher?
- ii. To what extent can English language teacher apply creativity and inventiveness in his/her teaching of the subject?
- iii. How can the English language teachers, enhance his/her creativeness and inventiveness while teaching the subject?

Population of the Study

The population of this study includes the students and teachers of the department of English Language College of education Akwanga, Nasarawa State

Enhancing English Language Teachers' Creativity and Inventiveness for Effective Teaching and Learning

Creativity is taught in many educational institutions across the globe and several studies have also proved that creativity can be acquired (Rayan, 2013). Most respondents agreed that creativity can be taught but individuals should have the desire to enhance their creativity. Some argued that creativity cannot be taught but teachers who want to develop their creativity can be stimulated and guided.

Respondents believed that if teachers have access to a tool that can be used to assess their creativity in teaching, they can think of ways to enhance their creativity. If proper

reflection follows the assessment of one's creative ability, the teacher can take steps to enhance their creativeness and inventiveness. Creativity is not equated with effectiveness but in order to be effective, the teacher should be creative and inventive. Practicing teachers have given the following recommendations for the teachers to improve their creativeness and inventiveness the teaching and learning of English language. They, based on their experience as teachers, have given the following recommendations to help teachers enhance their creativity and inventiveness in the teaching of English language.

- i. The teacher should give importance to reflective teaching.
- ii. The teacher should be willing to try out new ideas and break free from conventional teaching.
- iii. The teacher should update his/her knowledge constantly by attending conferences and engaging his/herself in research papers.
- iv. The teacher should discuss problems and challenges faced by them in the classroom with fellow teachers.
- v. The teacher should willingly carry out action research.
- vi. The teacher should understand the context and background of students and carry out learner need analysis.
- vii. The teacher should have exposure to different

- approaches, methods and teaching and the teacher should prepare new lesson plans regularly. The lesson plan should have new activities.
- viii. The teacher should constantly assess the effectiveness of his/her teaching by getting feedback from learners and observers.
- ix. The teacher should introduce problem-based learning in the class.

Conclusion

The world is today changing at an unprecedented rate as a result of globalization, technological advancement and an ageing population. Some countries in Europe and in Asia are also becoming increasingly mobile as their creative works are seen virtually in all parts of the world. There is more interaction among counterparts from different countries and a growing number of people living and working outside their home country. The change is so fast that our educational systems are moving away from tested rote learning strategies towards advocating creative thinking skills. As such, in keeping with the demands of globalization, there is deliberate effort to depart from an examination oriented system to one of creative and inventive learning (Ling, 2013). To achieve this, there is the need to encourage students to concentrate and participate in every class activity, teachers need to be creative and inventive as student's

guide. A wide variety of materials and methods of teaching should be explored as students come in different packages with different learning styles and capabilities.

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