

# Fostering Creativity in the EFL Classroom

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## Abstract

At present, there is a growing awareness among teachers and learners of English of the cruciality of creativity. Thus, the purpose of this paper was to draw attention to the more focal role of creativity, one of the 3Cs skills of the 21st century, in addition to collaboration and critical thinking, in the EFL classroom. Creativity should be regarded as an important aspect of teaching and learning EFL. From a teaching perspective, it could depend on the teacher whether creativity finds a place in the classroom. In fact, creativity has multiple interpretations and can be looked at from different points of view. It is undeniable that both creative teachers and creative students would be excellent to have, but one does not imply the other. Creative teachers can surely design creative learning tasks or assignments, yet they do not necessarily and truly promote and develop creativity in their students. This paper is meant to explore how EFL students can be given the opportunity to become more innovative in learning English in the classroom with the support and guidance of the teacher, who bears the idea that creativity increases motivation, empowers learners, and helps create self-esteem.

**Keywords:** Creativity; EFL classroom; Motivation

## Introduction

As Einstein said, “Imagination is more important than knowledge” as well as “Creativity is intelligence having fun. As such, when looking at the pros of creativity, there are numerous reasons. First and foremost, it results in a tangible product as whatever is created becomes objectified. Second, it creates a sense of excitement. Also, it helps the group to collaborate and join hands, and it surely helps construct an L2 identity and community. Perhaps, most importantly, it leads to more engaging, dynamic classroom learning that makes EFL fun and unique.

Nevertheless, some perceived barriers to creativity include routine, closed-ended tasks, fear of making mistakes or being wrong, strict rules in the classroom and the perception that having fun or entertainment in academic settings is not conducive to learning. On the other way around if it is creativity that needs to be promoted, EFL teachers must step in and lead the way how activities and tasks are to be managed in the classroom. Generally speaking, it is important to go for open-ended tasks, create a safe and friendly environment for risk taking, promote and utilize flexible rules according to learning objectives and allow for creative learning to emerge from trial and error. These are some of the ways of creating an atmosphere where creativity can be developed more easily.

As teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is in line with the advent of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) where English is used as a contact language between its non-native speakers today, EFL teachers have an opportunity to percolate aspects of learning beyond grammar, vocabulary, and the four fundamental language skills into learners (Murata, 2020). With the aim of supplementing the language learning experience, creative skills should be taken into account. By shedding light on some aspects of creativity, it will at least encourage EFL teachers to give it more importance in their classrooms.

### **Promoting creativity in the EFL classroom**

Although EFL teachers might be teaching various groups of learners, the ideas proposed in this paper can be used with all age groups and class sizes. In teaching practice, most EFL teachers have experienced different ways of bringing the students' creativity to life. However, some of the ways of stimulating creativity appear to work better than the others and the following is some practical ideas that have worked based on the writer's experience.

**Table 1:** Summary of the Proposed Techniques

How to Promote Creativity	
Suggested Strategies	Expected Outcomes
1. Use open-ended tasks	– Allowing more freedom and options that lead to learner autonomy
2. Expose EFL learners to different language uses	– Learning alternative ways of writing, song-making or doing in-class activities in various language uses
3. Have EFL learners express who they are	– Showing talents, skills, interests to others more openly and confidently
4. Have EFL learners be someone else they aspire to	– Learning to be a character of choice, leading to surprises and wonders
5. Have EFL learners read optional literary works and choose to respond at will	– Learning to present in a variety of ways that matches learner needs
6. Use mobile devices to support EFL learning and teaching	– Learning how to develop creative minds with technology to contextualize learning and impress others

The first idea is to employ open-ended tasks in order that students can have room for options. It appears that choice is a natural companion of creativity (Tin, 2013). Therefore, if the teacher limits the student's work by giving rigid, fixed guidelines, it would be almost impossible for creativity to emerge. Wide open tasks in general and providing options within tasks given can deeply influence creativity from the very beginning.

Then, another idea to be proposed is to allow students to be exposed to different uses of language. Textbooks in general including in the ELT discipline are usually filled with informative and narrative texts (Vitta, 2021). It would be suggested that different genres and creative expressions be used. Shape poems and other forms of visual poems or even classics or stories with different endings or literal music videos --parodies of songs which replace the original lyrics with those that describe the visuals in the videos have to be utilized. EFL students can be asked to try writing their own versions of these. To elaborate, using a delightful collection of shape poems that can show students an alternative and creative way of writing poetry is strongly recommended. In addition, a wide collection of well-known tales with alternative endings can be applied to enhance student creativity in creative writing and in-class activities. Poems that are aligned with scenes in well-known movies should be included. Moreover, alternative narratives in

modern times would promote creativity and increase student exposure to these different types of writings and expressions.

The other concept deals with allowing students to express who they are or want to become in different ways. For a start, EFL teachers can find new ways of doing the getting to know you activities. Teachers can allow students to talk about or show their interests and talents in innovative ways. Using a program or an application that enables students to create a word art poster about themselves and then use it in a variety of ways would support creativity a great deal. Another related option is to use any free program available on the Internet to create interactive posters so that students can use these innovative pieces of work to present themselves.

Allowing students to become someone else appears to foster creative ideas as well. As a result, EFL teachers could provide alternatives through creative writing, drama and storytelling. For instance, students can be asked to research a time and place of their choice and then write a diary entry about a normal day in their life by pretending to be some character from that period. With limitless possibility, students could use the alternatives to choose which imaginative character they wish to be, which could surprise teachers and peers in the EFL classroom.

In addition, EFL students should be allowed to explore literary works of choice in different ways. In other words, they should get to choose how to respond to a reading. EFL teachers can promote new ways of doing reports and assignments. For example, a list of possible options including making a video, making a poster, writing a journal entry, comparing different versions, doing analysis of characters, and acting out a scene should be offered to give way for creativity to emerge.

Last but not least, using mobile devices today has been highly recommended for supplementing English teaching and learning (Şad, 2008). Thus, EFL teachers have to make use of this technology as much as possible. Activities that enhance creativity through gamification and mobile applications have to be aptly encouraged. For example, playing creative language games or completing tasks for self-learning in innovative ways can be done using online platforms including Kahoot or Quizlet. With online and offline flash cards, matching games, practice e-assessments, and live quizzes, creativity in EFL classrooms would be honed, localized, and contextualized. In addition, with a video-based project potentially assigned, students make use of technology to produce something creative and tangible that they can always keep in their learning portfolios to show and impress their parents and peers. All of these factors will join forces to give them a sense of pride and innovation (Robinson, 2002).

EFL teachers also by and large have to plan lessons creatively that acknowledge the chaotic idiosyncratic nature of learning language and EFL learners (Renandya, Nguyen & Jacobs, 2023). Perhaps, it is time that teachers may wish to modify some beliefs and, likewise, change some of their long-held practices. They should focus less on lesson planning in advance and more on undertaking the practical thought processes to be able to react and engage promptly during a lesson. This involves selecting tasks that are challenging and proper to learner needs and indicating tasks creative in nature that all learners would be able to achieve.

In a nutshell, these creativity-based strategies may be novel and challenging to attempt, but it is not always easy to make them an integral part of learning in the classroom. However, as they do become a part of lessons, it is predictable that EFL students can become more active in their learning and teachers will find that teaching EFL will have more meaning and is more rewarding.

## Conclusion

Promoting creativity in the EFL classroom is in need of an open-minded, flexible, and motivating teacher. As a result, teachers have to consider different ways of doing tasks or activities in the classroom. They also have to be open to suggestions from their students and guide them at best as to how they can achieve what students set out to do. When EFL teachers actually allow students to do creative projects or tasks and work both with peers and independently outside of class, EFL teachers, as a consequence, would be able to discover that students are a valuable source of creative power that can be unbridled under mindful and inventive guidance.

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