

Creativity and Innovation: Basic Concepts and Approaches in Teaching English

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Abstract. It is generally believed that creativity enhances innovative activities. However, empirical research regarding the impact of creativity on innovation, although positive, has produced a wide range of results. It is obvious that children learn differently based on individual strengths and preferences and that social and emotional learning plays a fundamental role in academic achievement. A strong positive relationship is found between creativity and innovation, especially at the individual level. Today learning can be more accessible and more personalized than ever before. Computational modeling has been applied to a number of areas of social creativity and has the potential to contribute to our understanding of creativity. Creativity goes hand in hand with innovation. And there is no innovation without creativity. While creativity is the ability to produce new and unique ideas, innovation is the implementation of that creativity means the introduction of a new idea, solution, process, or product. Creativity is the driving force behind innovation and the incorporation of looking at things from a different perspective and freedom of restrictions by rules and written or unwritten norms.

Keywords: *creativity, problem-based learning, digital game, web-based element, blended learning approach.*

Recently, building a creative society has been a new vision of Ukraine that brings much discussion on how to foster creative talents and how to improve pedagogic models in Ukrainian schools. “Creativity”, “design”, “digitalization”, “entrepreneurship”, and “innovation” have become key words in Ukrainian political discourse. As one of key element of innovation, creativity has been a new strategic choice to combine with technology and market demand to develop high-value-added cultural and creative industries. Accordingly, to build a creative society has been one part of a new vision and development strategy in Ukraine. Among a series of key factors of supporting the new strategy, “creativity” and “new technology” have been addressed as two key enablers to build a creative society. The new strategy highlights that Ukraine sees itself building its future prosperity on innovation in which everyone’s creative potential is tapped. Its success will lie in its ability to produce more value, not more products, enabling it to move up the value chain and compete globally in the same product space as advanced countries. Given the role of young talents in technological development, attracting the creative, smart, and highly educated has been a major task for Ukrainian government in the past decade. What society really needs is a combination of creative skills and practical capabilities among students. Designers, engineers or technology developers, production crews, agents, marketing professionals, and managers should all be professionally trained. However, creative people cannot be fostered overnight. Students’ creativity is influenced by social values, pedagogical practices and educational testing systems. Although educational reform is underway, most of Ukrainian schools are still following a teaching way of “chalk and talk”, with large classes and single-discipline, lecture-based delivery of information. These are truly traditional pedagogical models and organizational systems. Thus, to build a creative education mechanism in Ukraine, focuses should be on establishing a new teaching concept and new curriculum that is required by a creative society. Schools strive to learn advanced pedagogic models from other cultures and introduce them to local contexts, and those new models include, for example, inquiry-based learning, Problem-Based Learning (PBL), service learning, active

learning, challenge-based learning, outcome-based education, etc. All of these new models are student-centered in their philosophy and approach to learning; moreover, among them, PBL has been particularly regarded as a promising strategy for fostering creative talents. As an innovative educational model, problem-based learning (PBL) has been widely used in diverse disciplines and cultures throughout the world. In PBL, students’ learning centers on complex problems that do not have a single answer or solving real-life projects. Students work in collaborative groups to identify what they need to learn in order to solve the problems. The teacher acts to facilitate the learning process rather than to provide knowledge. So “student-centered learning” is the core philosophy of PBL.

The game development world has expanded greatly during the last few decades and has covered a wide variety of areas. Entertaining is indeed one of the most important values that are provided through games. However, spending too much time playing games that reward the player nothing but entertainment leaves a negative impact on the player’s mental health. Since this attitude is noticed to be common among teenagers, adding some learning outcome to the games would help in enriching the player’s knowledge and hence, making a better use of his time. Digital games are increasingly being used for non-play purposes such as education, health care and communication. Despite the large body of research on the positive learning aspects of playing digital games, few efforts have been made to understand the processes involved in learning a new game. For commercial game designers it is important to understand how individuals in specifically targeted populations learn to play their products to provide pleasant learning experiences. Without such experiences, players may quickly move on to other games that offer faster and more pleasing results. Further, in game-based learning (GBL) and health care environments, it is important to ensure that the interests of users are quickly captured and held. Such efforts require an understanding of player learning style, with prior experience possibly influencing how players learn in other environments. If gaming does in fact exert an effect on player learning models, understanding the underlying mechanisms may

support the design of more suitable curriculums, especially for students with considerable gaming experience. While it could be applied to a broad range of fields and ages, these games are becoming especially relevant in educational contexts and for the most recent generation of students that is growing in a new technological environment, very different from the one some years ago. However, in order to become fully accepted as a teaching or a learning tool in both formal and informal contexts, this technology has still to overcome several challenges. Having evaluated the effectiveness of game-based learning it can be concluded that serious games had shown a positive effect on learning. The results of such studies are important to overcome a second difficulty related with the acceptance of these teaching tools by teachers, students and parents allowing it to be integrated in the curricula. In terms of Serious Games, Zyda (2007) define them as “a mental contest, played with a computer in accordance with specific rules, that uses entertainment to further government or corporate training, education, health, public policy, and strategic communication objectives.” In the spring of 2020, many teachers became virtual learning experts, virtually overnight. Fortunately, in many schools across the nation, technology is now an integral part of the curriculum; however, for the student who does not have access to a computer and the internet service at home, the technology gap widens the pre-existing achievement gap. The shutdown of schools emphasized just how important technology is to the education of the nation’s students, but it also highlighted the disparities in accessibility that still exist in many parts of the nation. Though many students were on board and finished successfully, some teachers reported that the majority of their students stopped participating online, and many teachers never heard from some of their students again. As the number of students with access to cell phones increases, so do opportunities to bridge the technology divide that may exist among them. With the shift towards virtual learning gaining now is the time for teachers to increase their digital footprints in the classroom and utilizing available mobile devices is one way to increase digital access for all. Today’s classroom is composed of students whose relationships, self-value and community exists largely outside of the classroom - even the school building - and is held together by their cell phones. While there is new research to prove that there are benefits to mobile learning, cell phones have a reputation for creating distractions in the classroom. Generally, the most reported forms regarding mobile phones misuse in classrooms include: calling or receiving calls, texting, examination cheating, game playing, listening to music, interacting with social media and others.

The expansion of online environments into language classrooms is now welcomed, in order to provide a potentially better teaching and learning experience. As the face-to-face and online learning environments have been combined, the inherent strengths and weaknesses associated with both have been recognised. This combination of online environments with face-to-face learning is called blended learning. The aim in blended learning is to combine the benefits of these two environments in a harmonious way. The combination of a face-to-face instruction environment with an online environment within the same

course allows not only capitalising on the advantages of each but also catering for diverse learning styles and the needs of different students. Blending face-to-face teaching with an online programmer as supplementary can be used to improve the achievement of students studying English as a Foreign Language. Teachers can assign complementary resources to students to improve their learning and engage them with English outside the class. Incorporating online tools such as an online LMS and authentic materials like articles and postcards in class can foster student learning. However, the interview results indicated that students valued print materials over purely online resources in their learning, which suggested that students might prefer to have paper materials over purely online ones when studying. Therefore, when we are designing a blended course, we should fine-tune the balance between the online materials and paper-based materials. General English learners typically do not get enough exposure to the language in use and they do not get enough opportunities to communicate nor to make discoveries about the language for themselves. As a result, only those learners with the motivation and opportunities to seek language experience outside the classroom manage to actually acquire communicative competence in the target language. Blended learning courses, as pointed out, are one solution to this problem, especially if they follow up work done face-to-face in order to provide online opportunities for exposure, discovery and use. Another benefit is that online components can not only provide each learner with the possibility of recycling at their own speed and in their own time what they have already experienced, but can also offer extra opportunities for further learning both from course-specific materials and from materials from other web sources. In addition, such experiences can help the General English student to become less dependent on teachers and more self-reliant both during the course and in subsequent language learning experiences. Such independent experience can be enhanced by face-to-face preparation and follow up in class guided by a teacher. The blended design of the course integrating thoughtfully face-to-face and online experiences learners can benefit from more active and meaningful learning experiences. Independence and increased control may also lead to development of critical thinking. The way learners and tutor shared responsibility for wiki content, error noticing, correction, editing and modifying text and the way they collaborated on activities was new to some students but encouraged deeper thinking, as well as language and skill development. The use of wiki is supported by the social pedagogy where understanding is achieved through dialogue and collaboration with others as the social environment scaffolds learning. This blended approach allows valuable flexibility and interactivity which reinforce classroom learning and empower learners, for example with the “News page”. Wiki allows to multiple asynchronous views of class-produced videos. It allows learners to reflect on and offers methods to improve their classmates’ written work. However, the success of the online aspect depended on the personalities in the class, the friendly atmosphere, supporting and task design. Teachers should create relevant tasks with clear links to the face-to-face content and integrate suitable parts of those tasks in the class. Writing is particularly suited to the wiki space as

the blend allows the completion of more exam-style writing tasks than class time allows, plus students can learn from the contributions of others and get immediate feedback from multiple users. The written result can include the combined efforts of multiple students so when texts are discussed in class one individual is not responsible for the quality of a text or any mistakes. In general, the students remark that they value the blend, with 72 per cent regarding it as “good” or “very good”. Although they all regard that face-to-face work as an essential part of their learning; there are various written comments about the online component providing greater flexibility. For example, two of them assert that it is “useful” having access to materials, especially if they have missed classes. Some of them admit that they appreciate the discussion facility because this provides question and communication opportunities emphasizing that it helps to make the content ‘more interesting’ and ‘easy to remember’. Moreover, there are favorable comments in relation to independent learning; for example, one student says that he values the supplementary Lecture Listening material because it gives him ‘practice and confidence’. Nevertheless, he admits that links to real academic lectures will have matched the purpose of the course more. The main feedback points are concerned:

- difficulty of learners to accept working with material online if they have previously dealt with it in the classroom. The situation is completely different when a group is introduced to the blended course from the very beginning;
- difficult aspects are even more difficult when working online;
- working online requires much more concentration than the same work in the classroom;
- learners’ complaints about the technology do not really depend on the quality of the technological solutions

offered to them;

- technical problems lead to a high level of frustration (in comparison to the classroom);
- online modules are a good way to have everything well-organized and kept in one place;
- developing and testing their own models leads to deeper understanding of how it works;
- various aspects of learning material are remembered much better when developed by learners.

As the result blended learning presents many benefits such as flexibility, provision for different learning styles, increases collaborative opportunities and grates independent study potential. Nevertheless, the face-to-face part of blend is crucial in motivating students to participate in any web-based element. Without taking into account their educational background many of them likely to feel isolated and unenthusiastic. Therefore, a definite topic should be and skills link between class-based and online work which learners need to be aware of. The online modules are never perfect and can be improved all the time. It is reasonable to evaluate their help in reaching the learning objectives. Further adaptation of the online modules makes it possible for learners to start working with the system from various parts (some learners already know structures and have draft models). It reduces the time necessary for performing a task, thus decreasing the required level of concentration and makes it possible for learners to benefit from their teamwork discussing things, doing tasks related to their work. It is sure to increase the system effect of the site by improving connection between various systems, for example it should be possible for learners to use parts of the models developed for one system when working on the other. Thus, to introduce additional tasks that help learners to understand that they are improving (testing itself is not enough).

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