# CREATIVITY IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: A BOOK REVIEW

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Key words: creativity, English language teaching, drama, storytelling, activities

Creativity in the English language classroom is an ebook published by British Council and edited by Alan Maley and Nik Peachey. The book comprises of eighteen chapters which deal with various aspects of creativity in language learning and teaching. Each chapter is written by a different author - from well-known authors such as Andrew Wright and Carol Read, to university professors and practicing teachers from around the world. Activities in the book are suitable for teaching different age groups and levels, and can be used alongside with the existing syllabus and course materials.
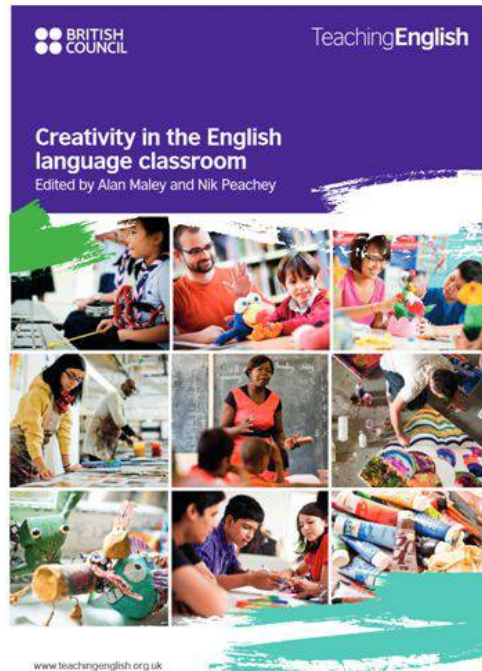
Here are the short summaries of chapters:

Overview: *Creativity – the what, the why and the how* by Alan Maley
In the introductory chapter, Maley tries to clarify what 'creativity' is, to explain why it is important in language teaching, and offers ideas for implementing creative activities within teaching practice. He also gives a list of useful resource materials which foster creativity.

Chapter 1: *Medium: companion or slave?* by Andrew Wright
In this chapter, Wright describes and discusses various examples of creative use of media and materials available to teachers, in order to make the teaching fresh, relevant and efficient. Some of the ways of creating engaging events in the classroom he suggests are drama, stories,

music, chants, poetry, dance, mime, stories, proverbs, personal and family anecdotes, shadow theatre, pair and group work.

Chapter 2: *Challenging teachers to use their coursebook creatively* by Brian Tomlinson

In order to foster students' creativity, Tomlinson suggests adapting coursebook material. He demonstrates how the use of coursebooks can become more creative by replacing or modifying closed activities with open activities which encourage personal response, authentic communication, and language discovery. Some of the activities he suggests are storytelling dramatization (acting out a text from a coursebook), and peer activities (students develop activities themselves for their peers).

Chapter 3: *Seven pillars of creativity in primary ELT* by Carol Read

The focus of Carol Read's chapter is the development of critical thinking with young learners. The author introduces seven pillars of creativity, which enable teachers to develop creativity in their classrooms: (1) build up children's positive self-esteem, (2) model creativity yourself, (3) offer children choice – in order to help children develop autonomy and have control of their of their learning, (4) use questions frequently, (5) make connections - encourage children to make connections and see relationships between different areas of their lives, general ideas and creative thinking, present and previous learning, etc. (6) explore ideas – encourage learners to experiment and play with ideas, (7) encourage critical reflection - enable children to evaluate and reflect critically on their own ideas, performance, and outcomes. In this chapter you can also find numerous useful activities and tips for working with young learners.

Chapter 4: *Making thinking visible in the English classroom: nurturing a creative mind-set* by Chrysa Papalazarou

We can encourage creative thinking in the English classroom by using artful visual stimuli and the Visible Thinking approach. Visible Thinking is a research-based approach that looks into how we can encourage learners' engagement, independence and understanding. It nurtures students' thinking by 'externalising' it when they engage with content, by making it visible (you can find more on Visible Thinking on the website: www.visiblethinkingpz.org). The author also provides examples of using Visible Thinking approach in the classroom.

Chapter 5: *Personal and creative storytelling: telling our stories* by David Heathfield

David Heathfield's chapter deals with storytelling and the importance of students' development as personal storytellers and story-listeners in English. Personal storytelling activities in class develop students' confidence, fluency, memory, pronunciation, use of vocabulary and their ability to communicate creatively. The author also presents nine storytelling ideas for different age groups and language levels.

Chapter 6: *Teaching grammar creatively* by Jill and Charlie Hadfield

Jill and Charlie Hadfield demonstrate a number of techniques for generating creativity in order to practise grammatical patterns and the application of rules. They believe such activities are more motivating to learners because they engage with the language more personally than in traditional grammar activities. In the activity called 'Overheard in a Café', for example, students look at the pictures of people in the café, and then write an 'overheard' conversation between the characters. Language that they are practicing is reported speech.

Chapter 7: *From everyday activities to creative tasks* by Judit Fehér

Fehér provides tips to teachers on how to integrate creativity into their everyday classroom practice and typical language-learning activities and exercises. She presents various language learning approaches such as learner-centredness, holistic learning, multiple intelligences, neuro-linguistic programming, humanistic teaching and task-based learning. In the activities, students need to draw upon own experience and imagination, reflect on their own life, act in roles, animate objects or use their artistic, dramatic and musical skills.

Chapter 8: *Fostering and building upon oral creativity in the EFL classroom* by Jürgen Kurtz

Kurtz emphasizes the importance of improvised speaking and spontaneous communication. In order to enhance target language communication, foreign language teachers need to create inspiring environments for more adventurous, partly self-regulated classroom interaction. In this chapter Kurtz looks at typical patterns of interaction in EFL classrooms worldwide and presents good uses of improvisation.

Chapter 9: *Old wine in new bottles: solving language teaching problems creatively* by Kathleen M Bailey and Anita Krishnan

This chapter explores how existing or inexpensive material can be used in a new way, and presents a number of activities which make students more creative as learners and users of

English. The authors also present Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, which, they believe, can help teachers identify students' strengths in learning.

Chapter <u>10</u>: *A creative approach to language teaching: a way to recognise, encourage and appreciate students' contributions to language classes* by Libor Stepanek

Creative approach to language teaching is based on the idea that any student can be creative when they are engaged in creative situations. Therefore, it is teacher's task to stimulate the creative potential in students, which can be achieved by exposing students to close-to-real-life situations in a safe, flexible and dynamic environment. This approach was developed, tested and successfully implemented at Masaryk University Language Centre, Czech Republic.

Chapter <u>11</u>: *Teaching children with mascot-inspired projects* by Malu Sciamarelli

At the beginning of the chapter, Sciamarelli outlines some basic features of project-based learning, and then explores how toys and puppets can be used in projects with young learners. She presents five examples of mascot-inspired projects with the fluffy toy Brownie the Bear and its friends. In *Model Building* activity, for example, students are divided into groups, and each group has to create a part of the imaginary city for the class mascot. Based on these projects, teachers will be able to create and elaborate their own original and creative projects with a mascot of their choice.

Chapter <u>12</u>: *Creating creative teachers* by Marisa Constantinides

Constantinides points out that it is important to help teachers develop their creative thinking skills and emphasizes the role of teacher training courses in supporting the development of teacher creativity. The author also provides teacher-training ideas for fostering creativity.

Chapter <u>13</u>: *The learner as a creativity resource* by Marjorie Rosenberg

Rosenberg looks at how we can exploit our students' experiences and use them as the basis for creative language tasks. Incorporating drama, songs, music, artwork, etc. in language teaching can serve as a springboard to creativity. The ideas and activities suggested in this chapter are taken from current methodologies and approaches such as Suggestopedia, communicative language teaching and co-operative learning.

Chapter <u>14</u>: *Practising creative writing in high school foreign language classes* by Peter Lutzker

In this chapter, Peter Lutzker describes how he used a creative writing process in order to teach English language to a class consisting of 17-year-old German students. He explains in detail the writing techniques and activities he used in a three-week preparatory unit consisting of ten 45 minute lessons, which were designed to prepare pupils to write their own short stories. After this introductory unit, the students were given six more weeks to work on their stories as a long-term homework assignment. The end result were original and imaginative stories the pupils wrote themselves.

Chapter 15: *Fostering learners' voices in literature classes in an Asian context* by Phuong thi Anh Le

The author of this chapter shares her personal experience in teaching American literature course for Vietnamese college students majoring in English. She points that it is essential for teachers to create a motivational learning atmosphere where students can play an active and meaningful role in learning literature. The method of teaching that was used was based on a reader-response approach which focuses on students' exploration and response to the texts. Students were not expected to spend time figuring out exactly what was meant by the authors by their works. Rather, they were encouraged to think about what they read and how it was relevant to their own life and experience. The teacher used pictures and guided questions to help the students explore the texts, to set them thinking about what they read and to arouse their emotions. Teaching literature in this way not only more enjoyable to the students but also beneficial in enhancing their literary appreciation and developing their creativity and language skills.

Chapter 16: *A framework for learning creativity* by Tessa Woodward

Woodward discusses different ways of how we and our students can become more creative. She tries to redefine creativity as an everyday doing, making, adapting and creating and all the other activities that are part of our lives. She also points the importance of collective creativity and encouraging students to collaborate with each other.

Chapter 17: *Drama and creative writing: a blended tool* by Victoria Hlenschi-Stroie

In this chapter, Hlenschi-Stroie discusses benefits of using educational drama and creative writing in ELT classroom, and presents a number of useful activities, tips and resources. The author also gives a brief background of the development of educational drama and creative

writing in Romania, and introduces EDAR (Educational Drama Association in Romania) - a non-governmental organisation officially recognised by the Ministry of Education which represents a network of teachers interested in using drama and creative writing in schools.

Chapter 18: *A journey towards creativity: a case study of three primary classes in a Bulgarian state school* by Zarina Markova

In this chapter Markova shares with us various ELT techniques which can be used with young learners in order to foster their creative thinking and expression. *What's in a picture?* is a brainstorming activity where students have to describe an image (modern art painting for example) which is shown in such a way that the visible part is both small enough to prevent guessing and big enough to present an idea and stimulate imagination.

Creativity in the English language classroom is an inspiring and educational publication, full of practical ideas and useful tips. It encourages us, as the teachers, to integrate creative activities more in everyday English language teaching and make the language learning more enjoyable and fun.

Creativity in the English language classroom is free and it can be downloaded from this link.

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