



ENGENDERING CREATIVITY SKILLS IN THE 21ST CENTURY ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: A CASE STUDY OF MINNA METROPOLIS

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Abstract

Creative ability is one of the major skills driving productivity in the 21st century. It is the highest order of thinking that involves creating something new and different from the existing entity. Thus, it is located and nurtured in the learning environment as an end goal. Creativity in language which enables an individual to use language in new and uncommon ways reflects the creative ingenuity resident in that individual. This study investigates the creative skill elements that are being engendered in the junior secondary school environment in fostering English language skills of creativity of the 21st century. Junior secondary class II students were used for the study. 14 schools from both public and private schools were purposively selected for the study in Minna metropolis. 250 students were randomly picked from the selected schools. A 16-item, researcher-structured questionnaire designed to elicit responses concerning creativity skill activities infused into the English language classroom learning activities was administered on the selected junior secondary school students in Minna metropolis. Findings show a very high level of positive response showing that creativity elements are infused into classroom learning activities. It was therefore, recommended that the integration of those creativity skill elements be strengthened and the teachers trained and encouraged to update the elements as the need arises.

Keywords: Creative skill, creativity elements, engendering, junior secondary school.

Introduction

The 21st century education is saddled with lots of transformational changes that have continued to impact the lives of people of all ages. This is education that involves deeper quest for knowledge through integration of rigorous academic content with experiences that intentionally develop the skills, mindsets, literacies and values needed by students to become lifelong learners, capable of contributing to this ever-changing world. Hallerman, Lewis & Dresbach (2019) noted that the 21st century education is the type of learning environment that provides learners with the skills and competencies they need to thrive and respond creatively to the economic, technological and social shifts happening rapidly, aimed at resolving some of the challenging problems confronting our changing world. Thus, it demands that individuals acquire certain skills and abilities that could enable them engage in certain complex operations to survive and remain relevant. The world economic forum of 2020 identified the top capability skills that employers will be looking for by 2025. Among the skills identified which students also dearly require are:

- Critical thinking
- Creativity
- Communication
- Innovation
- Complex problem solving

These sets of skills, it is believed would encompass a set of knowledge, skills, work habits and character traits, among others, believed to be critical for success in careers, work places and in institutions of learning (Erdem, 2019). Also, the UNESCO conference of 2006, in their proceedings declared that creativity skill could offer solutions to global problems (Newton & Newton, 2014). A creative mind is the one that sees information, particularly from the world around it and relates it to its experiences and previous knowledge in order to create or invent original ideas. A creative mind likes to imagine the possibilities and wonders of the world and believes in doing things differently. Gambari (2021) noted that creativity is one of the skills enlisted as one of the competencies considered by employers as critical for employment in the 21st century. In the ranking of skills required for employment in the 21st century,

creativity skills is in the top 20. Thus, creativity skill is an added advantage in the employment ladder, according to Gambari (2021).

Creativity is the unconventional use of imagination or original intuition to create something new or different. It is the invention or origination of any new thing (a product, solution, art work, joke, literary work, idea, and so on). It is intellectual inventiveness propelled by originality and imagination. Creativity has also been described as ability to transcend traditional ways of thinking, acting and responding to patterns, rules, relationships and to create new but meaningful ideas, forms, methods, interpretations, objects and norms (Kazeem, 2023). However, creativity in individuals does not just happen but depends largely on a number of factors. Creativity is one of the most difficult thinking skills to acquire and the most sought after in the work place. Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive domain ranked creativity as one of the most difficult skills to master because a creative person has to use all of the other cognitive skills in the creative process. Thus, creating is the highest order of thinking that must be located at the forefront of all learning environments and also as an end goal (Johnson, 2019).

Creativity in language suggests that language ability which enables a language user to express himself or herself in a novel way. Effective language use is a creative act through which thought can be transformed into language that can be heard or seen, causing genuine communication and co-operation. Creativity in the English language class can be most easily identified in individual inventiveness in speech or writing, though not limited to them. Good disposition to speech or writing makes English language a natural environment for creativity to thrive. Students are thus prepared to use the language instrumentally outside the classroom by exposing them to creativity-based talks, documentaries, interviews and any other activity that promotes creative use of language.

Elements of Creativity

The importance of creativity is universally recognized, though its cultivation in our classrooms seem to have been paradoxically neglected. Songer et al (2002) asserted that all the classrooms should be a modelled garden and the teacher is the gardener who needs to cultivate students' potentials to grow into creative adults. There are elements of creativity that the English language teacher can

incorporate into classroom activities to boost creativity skills in language use. The first and foremost element of creativity in language is the ability and willingness to use language in completely new and different ways. It includes application of uncommon speech and writing skills that distinguish a piece of work or performance from the common place. Encouraging unconventional display of artistic skills in young children, such as in drama, drawing or poetry will provide the creative ability to be harnessed. These activities are part of the preparations needed to enable students use language instrumentally and creatively outside the classroom.

There are situations that the language teacher should bring to the classroom to foster creativity. The teacher should first and foremost create a safe, open, free and friendly environment where ideas can flow easily and learners do not feel restricted or intimidated.

The teacher should also introduce a variety of instructional approaches to boost learner participation in class. Approaches like storytelling, dramatization, spelling review, script writing, debates, finding new words and speech delivery could embolden them to engage in uncommon creative communication activities that could showcase their potentials. Other creativity skill-fostering elements that the language teacher could engage in class are fun team building that could arouse interest in learning and engender reflective thinking as they share and learn from other students' viewpoints and ideas. This approach could make them more open to the learning environment and more responsive to the surrounding. Activities like working on open-ended questions, brainstorming sessions, puzzles, encouraging learners to do creative tasks where language is used as a tool would excite a creative mind. A creative approach to learning exposes learners to a sense of happiness and satisfaction especially when they are given the opportunity to express themselves in activities like debate and classroom discussions, thereby, becoming more imaginative and more innovative.

The English language teacher can foster creativity by also encouraging multiple viewpoints in class, helping students see their own abilities, recognizing and rewarding excellence, encouraging creative problem solving, highlighting diversity, creating models, communicating in fresh new ways, practicing generating more ideas, providing a question friendly environment, applying visual simulations, encouraging risk taking, engaging in spelling contests, all

within curriculum limits. Learners then begin to learn to do the creative tasks using creative language as a tool. The 21st century education is technology driven and technological tools are not left out of the creative classroom which marries educational content to the creative skills that learners can take with them for the rest of their lives. The internet is filled with all manner of gadgets and materials that can effectively satisfy the zeal for creativity. Different technologies that can satisfy the curiosity of any creative mind and give a boost to the creative zeal by directing creative actions can be accessed online.

Factors affecting creativity

Apart from innate tendency for creativity, there are other internal and external factors that could play a role in building or hindering creative ability of an individual. Since creativity is not taught or forced, individuals come up with diverse innate abilities which can also be enhanced by additional elements. Parents and teachers have roles to play to enhance and foster creative traits.

Home environment is a great determiner of creativity skills development. Positive and negative moods of family members and family living habits affect the creative development of children (Dingledine, 2003; George, 2007). However, research shows that relationships between creative children and their parents tend to be neither overly close emotionally nor hostile and detached, but marked by respect, independence and freedom.

Dung et al (2022) argue that more or less intelligence does not determine how creative a person is and the level of intelligence required for creativity is sometimes relatively low in a surprising way. Urban (2004) asserts that people with low academic achievement do not necessarily have low creative potential, and people with high achievement do not necessarily exhibit high levels of creativity. In an educational environment, classmates, learning pressure, or the personality and behavior of teachers impact the creativity skill of students (Nwazuo et al, 2002). Creativity skills development will go a long way to align young children to the global standard of creativity skills demands. In view of the importance of creativity skills development in children, this study examines the fostering of creativity elements in the junior secondary school class lesson in Minna metropolis, Niger State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

This study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To determine whether creativity elements are being fostered in the junior secondary school class in Minna metropolis
2. To determine the extent of integration of creativity-fostering elements in the junior secondary school English class in Minna metropolis
3. To determine which elements are emphasized more than others
4. To determine whether the creativity elements are equally or differently fostered in the public and private school classes in Minna metropolis.

Statement of the Problem

Many children who are genetically endowed in certain areas of creativity may have ended up untapped because of lack of exposure to environments and experiences where they could be fostered to grow and think out of the box. Some of them grow up in environments that could disable their talents from being nurtured, either at home or in the school. Experts have stated that there are elements that could engender creativity in children and enable their creative skills to develop if they grow up immersed in such experiences. The 21st century education is skill based and creativity is one of such skills as needed both in the school and in work places for success. Apart from the home support environment, teachers also have a role to play in engendering creativity within the ambits of school curriculum in providing experiences that could foster creative ingenuity in children. Not much studies have been carried out in the area of focus of this study especially in this local environment though there could have been outside. This study, therefore examines the reflection of these creativity elements in the English language class activities aimed at promoting creativity in students' English language use.

Research Questions

1. Are the elements of creativity skill reflected in the English language class in junior secondary schools in Minna metropolis?
2. How often are elements of creativity reflected in the English language class in the junior secondary schools in Minna metropolis?
3. Are creativity skill elements reflected equally or differently in English language class in public and private junior secondary schools in Minna metropolis?

HO: There is no significant difference in the extent of reflection of creativity skill elements in the English language class in public and private junior secondary schools in Minna metropolis.

Population and Sampling Technique

Participants were selected from a population comprising all junior secondary school students in both public and private schools in Minna metropolis. The target population was junior secondary school class of 2024/2025 academic session. Only schools that were established not less than ten years ago and which have presented examination candidates for West African Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) were purposively targeted in this study to ensure that the schools were old enough and better positioned to run the 21st century education curriculum. The schools were stratified into public and private.

Simple random sampling was used to select 25 students from each school.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire was designed and used to elicit information on the elements of creativity incorporated into their class lessons and how often. Sixteen statements which covered elements of creativity were presented from where participants picked their response options on a fourpoint Likert scale of 'Very Often', 'Not Often', 'Often' and 'Never'. Each of the sixteen statements in the questionnaire highlighted a different creative skill element and respondents were to tick the frequency of the reflection of the elements in the classroom activities. Decision of 2.50 was adopted.

Method of Data Collection

The participants were well groomed on the objectives of the study before the commencement of study. Validated, researcher-designed questionnaire that captured the demographic data of respondents and the study objectives enquiries. Participants were expected to provide information on each of the statements relating to creative activities engaged in during class lessons both by them and by the teachers by ticking applicable options. The researcher personally administered the instrument on respondents with the assistance of

previously trained teachers during the three weeks of study and collected back completed copies on the spot.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected from respondents were analysed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. Hypothesis was tested using inferential statistics of T test of significance.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 distribution of respondents by school type

School type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Private school	100	40
Public school	150	60
Total	250	100

Table 1 shows the distribution of the sample size by school type. 100 of the respondents, representing 40% were from private schools, while 150 of the respondents representing 60% were from public schools. This shows that there were more respondents in public schools than in private schools in the sample of the study.

Research Questions one

Table 2: Mean and Standard deviation of elements of creativity reflected in English language class lesson

Variable	N	Mean SD
Elements of creativity	250	
	2.7430	.50513

Decision Mean = 2.50

Table 4.2 shows the opinions of students on whether the elements of creativity are infused into English language lesson in Niger State. It was observed that the mean score of the respondents are in Agreement with the reflection of elements of creativity in English language class lessons.

This is because the cumulative mean 2.74 is greater than the decision mean 2.50.

Research questions two

Table 4.3: Mean and Standard Deviation on Respondents on elements of creativity in lessons

S/No	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Your English teacher celebrates you when you do well in class	2.9600	1.56723	Very Often
2	Your English teacher encourages you to develop ideas of your own	2.7240	1.00592	Very Often
3	Your teacher encourages you to create new things you love to show others	2.8320	.98369	Very Often
4	Your English teacher uses drama to teach you in class	2.8520	1.18478	Very Often
5	You do oral reading competition in class	3.0000	.80160	Very Often
6	Your English teacher tells you to identify your talent	2.5440	1.61073	Very Often
7	Your teacher tells you how to develop your talent	2.6600	1.19588	Very Often
8	Your English teacher tells you to write stories	2.4160	1.12070	Not Often
9	Your English teacher encourages new ideas in class with reward	3.0320	1.07872	Very Often
10	You depend on your mates to show you how to do things	2.9400	1.08680	Very Often
11	Your English teacher tells you stories in class that teach you lessons	3.0080	1.11215	Very Often
12	Your English teacher leads you to do debates in class	2.5480	1.23198	Very Often
13	Your teacher tells you to find new words from class reading	2.4920	1.10582	Not Often
14	Your teacher tells you to use new words in making sentences	2.8400	1.07098	Very Often
15	You do write spelling dictation contest in class	2.5520	1.14742	Very Often
16	You like to do things different from what other people do	2.4880	1.21976	Not Often

Decision Mean = 2.50

Table 3 shows how often the elements of creativity were promoted during classes. It indicated that all the respondents were in agreement with the research

question, 'how often are the elements of creativity promoted during class lessons'? Since the cumulative mean 3.03 is greater than the decision mean of 2.50, it suggests that the creativity skill elements stated in the instrument are well infused into English language lesson. The implication would be that English language creative skill environment that could enable language creativity skill development is available in junior secondary schools in Minna metropolis.

HO: Table 4: t-test result of significant difference in the engendering of creativity elements in private and public schools

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	P-value	Remark
Private school	100	2.9594	.39070	248	5.893	0.000	Significant
Public school	150	2.5988	.52212				

The results in Table 4 show that t-value is 5.893 and the P-value = 0.00 at degree of freedom (df) = 248. Since P-value is ≤ 0.05 , it means that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of the private and public schools in the engendering of creativity elements among junior secondary schools in Minna metropolis. The significant difference is in favour of the private schools as indicated by the mean scores. HO is therefore rejected.

Findings in this investigation show that creativity skill elements are being engendered in the

English language class lessons both in public and private schools in Minna metropolis. However, significant difference exists in the response mean scores of the school types in favour of private schools. Based on findings in this investigation, it is recommended that:

1. More of creativity skill elements be infused into the English language classroom for more creative skills.
2. Equipment for engendering creativity skills be provided in public schools to reflect the skill areas not properly covered.
3. Regular workshops should be organized for teachers to update their knowledge of creativity skill-fostering strategies to improve their class activities.
4. Parents should encourage rather than discourage innate tendencies in their children by providing enabling environment for the development of potentials in their children.

5. Learners should be allowed and encouraged to participate fully in creative language skill acquisition activities provided both at home and in the school.

Conclusion

Creativity is a natural endowment on man because from time to time, new things need to be created to enable newness and variety in life. Creativity skill is part of the needs of this 21st century in every area of life which needs to be identified and nurtured in a world that is ever changing, and reshaping the way that people think and live.

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