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CREATIVITY IN EFL CLASSES: EXAMINING TURKISH SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' ATTITUDES AND THOUGHTS

Research article

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate Turkish in-service EFL teachers' attitudes towards creativity, to determine whether gender, age, teaching experience and undergraduate area of study influence their attitudes, and to examine their overall thoughts about creativity. The study used explanatory sequential design which is a mixed-methods research design. 200 EFL teachers participated in the quantitative whereas 20 teachers attended the qualitative part of the study. The quantitative data analysis was performed using SPSS 21 while NVivo 8 software was utilized for the qualitative data. The results revealed that most of the teachers exhibit positive attitudes towards creativity. There are, however, some points about which some teachers are not well-informed and have limited knowledge or misconceptions, as understood from their thoughts on the concept of creativity, creative teacher characteristics, and creative activities. Furthermore, several factors constrain their creativity and creative teaching practices. They agree on the need for teacher training to enhance creativity effectively in EFL. It was also determined that EFL teachers' gender, age, teaching experience and undergraduate area of study do not influence their attitudes towards creativity.

Keywords: Creativity, EFL, Teacher Attitude, Teacher Thoughts

1. Introduction

Creativity is regarded as one of the prominent 21st-century skills and fundamental quality of mankind. As reported in NACCCE (1999), it has been generally thought that creativity is only about the 'creative arts' such as music, art, dance, drama and literature; and only a few people possess this distinguishing ability. In contrast, creativity is of paramount importance to all spheres of life such as science, technology, politics, and business. Besides, it is not unique to only specific individuals but to all people, as agreed upon by many researchers (e.g., Richards, 2007b; Runco, 2007; Vygotsky, 1967/2004).

In the 21st-century, creativity is increasingly significant in the field of education aside from the other domains pre-mentioned. The focal point of education is to provide the necessary conditions and opportunities to make students be well equipped in every aspect and prepare them for the future encompassing uncertainties. In this respect, developing students'

creativity through creative teaching in all educational contexts will certainly make important contributions to their lives both for now and in the future.

The field of English as a foreign language (EFL), like any other disciplines and subjects in education, offers excellent opportunities for creativity and creative teaching (NACCCE, 1999; Newton & Newton, 2014; UCLES, 2018; Xerri & Vassallo, 2016b) because of the creative aspect of language (Fehér, 2015; Iakovos, 2011; Langlotz, 2015; Maley, 2015) and the rich topics and situations close to reality (Stepanek, 2015). Moreover, nurturing creativity in EFL is regarded as more essential compared to others since it is vital for both the cognitive and affective engagement that students need to acquire the language and to use it naturally and effectively (Tomlinson, 2015). Fostering students' creative thinking as well as the four language skills will help them to become more successful and equipped individuals in the future (Nedjah & Hamada, 2017). Thus, integrating creativity into the language learning process is of high importance.

Joubert (2001) claimed that “the onus rests on teachers, individually and collectively, to promote opportunities for creative teaching and learning in their classrooms and schools” (p.32). Likewise, in the EFL context, the biggest and most crucial role belongs to the EFL teachers to promote creativity in language classes. In this sense, EFL teachers have to be creative and have to know what creativity means in the EFL context, why it is significant and how it can be developed and encouraged in students. If a teacher is not creative and does not encourage creativity, it cannot be expected from his/her students to think creatively. To “nurture creativity systematically and not kill it unwittingly” (Robinson, in Xerri & Vassallo, 2016a, p. VI), teachers' attitudes are critical factors influencing the classroom environment, their knowledge and instructional practices about creativity (Beghetto, 2006). Therefore, exploring EFL teachers' thoughts and attitudes towards creativity in-depth is remarkably essential to make them apply creative teaching in EFL classes and foster students' creativity successfully.

There are important areas where this study makes an original contribution to creativity research in education and in EFL. First, it unravels the EFL teachers' attitudes towards creativity even though the concept of creativity in education is not highly emphasised and explained in detail both in “Turkey's Education Vision 2023” report and English language teaching curriculum of Turkey. Neither of them provides a detailed framework of creativity and explicit instruction for the development or assessment of creativity in education as well as in the EFL context. Second, as the number of creativity research carried out in the EFL context is highly scarce compared to other fields, the present study is one of the very few EFL studies conducted in Turkey. Third, it is one of the first studies conducted with in-service Turkish EFL teachers. Lastly, it is one of the few studies that used a mixed-methods research design to examine in-service EFL teachers' attitudes towards creativity. By means of the data obtained through both the quantitative and qualitative methods, more reliable results and better understanding about the topic are believed to be ensured.

2. Creativity in EFL

As human beings, our first act of creation is language. At a certain age, we start to speak and create innumerable sentences with several combinations of words, and this regular act of creation through language continues until we die. As Clarke (2005) pointed out that although a language is comprised of rules, it offers originality and potentiality to be creative. Chomsky (2008/2009) stated that it is the creative aspect of language that helps the speakers produce and understand various new words and sentences throughout their lives. They “recreate, refashion and re-contextualize languages when communicating” (Liao, Chen, Chen, &

Chang, 2018, p. 215). Xerri & Vassallo (2016b) described all language speakers as creative individuals because of the fact that “linguistic creativity is not simply a property of exceptional people but an exceptional property of all people” (Carter, 2004, p. 13). This creative aspect of language is what makes the concept of creativity relevant peculiarly to the discipline of EFL, which is agreed upon by several educators, scholars and researchers in the field (Constantinides, 2015; Fehér, 2015; Iakovos, 2011; Langlotz, 2015; Maley, 2015; Maley & Bolitho, 2015; Stepanek, 2015).

In recent years, creativity has received considerable attention in EFL education worldwide (Birdsell, 2013; Constantinides, 2015; Maley & Bolitho, 2015; Wang, 2019) due to the potential it offers for the development of creativity and language learning process. Even though a common definition of creativity has not been proposed in the context of EFL (Lee, 2013), some EFL researchers and educators have tried to define it by emphasizing central philosophy or approaches of creativity. According to Stepanek (2015), creative approach in language teaching focuses on the view that creativity is an innate ability that all individuals and language learners possess in different forms and levels, and creative potential of students can be developed if the language teachers meet all the requirements. C Group (2020), an organization of EFL professionals who support the stimulation of creativity in EFL classrooms, defined creativity as “thinking and activity in language education that is novel, valuable, and open-ended, and that helps to enrich learning in our students and ourselves”. Maley (2015) described creative acts to be novel, relevant and practicable. He also emphasized that it is not highly important to define creativity exactly since it can be recognized when encountered. Pugliese (2016) made a similar definition and stated that “an idea, in our field, an exercise, or a task, an activity, must be new and useful, in order to be called ‘creative’ ” (p.19). Woodward (2015) explained creativity as “the bringing into existence, causing, developing of original ideas. [...] a change in the condition of something, the use of something in a new way, or a novel combination of the known that produces interesting and useful results” (p.150).

For the foundation and cultivation of creativity in EFL, it is noteworthy to follow a range of strategies, principles or approaches. As Maley (2015) and Read (2015) noted creativity does not flourish ‘in a vacuum’, so it is essential to find appropriate ways and provide necessary conditions to stimulate students’ creative thinking. In this respect, Read (2015) proposed seven pillars of creativity with sample activities for each pillar for EFL teachers who would like to nurture their students’ creativity. They respectively include developing positive self-esteem, modelling creativity, providing children with different choices, asking effective questions, making connections, analysing ideas and supporting critical reflection. Maley (2015) suggested several factors to form a basis for creativity in EFL classrooms such as ensuring a relaxed atmosphere, doing the activities regularly, being a role model for students, encouraging them to talk about their works together frankly and respectfully, preparing activities with constraints and publishing students’ work in a way.

Lee (2013) also mentioned some principles to foster EFL students’ both creativity and language proficiency after reviewing some articles in the literature. One of them is that teachers should tolerate curious, talkative and disruptive students. Some students may sometimes ask several questions and may not accept the ideas, answers and common views. As these unconventional habits are accepted as one of the main features of creativity, teachers’ intolerant behaviour can prevent the development of creativity. Besides, teachers should pay attention to cognitive abilities of students and their type of intelligence as well as non-cognitive factors such as personality, motivational traits and environmental factors. In addition, employing creative tasks, creative texts, critical literacy and several creative teaching methods are other significant principles. Wright (2015), on the other hand, indicated that utilizing something such as a media, material, tasks or texts creatively is not sufficient.

Teachers should involve all the students in these creative situations. This can be achieved first by challenging them with difficult practices such as matching, ordering, remembering things. As second, students should be invited to think creatively, create and share. Thirdly, teachers should be more concerned with students' contributions instead of the language forms they used correctly or incorrectly and students should be aware of their teachers' expectations. As for Cremin (2009), eight features are fundamental for a creative approach to English teaching in terms of planning as well as practice. They include, for instance, fostering play and engagement, harnessing curiosity and profiling agency, and encouraging collaborations and making connections.

For creative teaching in EFL, the use of creative activities alongside the strategies and principles suggested by various researchers above will be beneficial to improve both language skills and creativity. Creative activities motivate students to participate readily in the language learning process (Avila, 2015; Hadfield & Hadfield, 2015) when they lose attention and get bored. Besides, students' knowledge on linguistic structures as well as their fluency and proficiency in each skill can be improved through creative activities (Avila, 2015; Hadfield & Hadfield, 2015; Waters, 2006).

As Lee (2013) noted that teachers should find, invent and utilize creative activities by paying attention to the students' abilities. It is fundamental to provide students with enjoyment and pleasure in language learning and expressing their thoughts freely. Therefore, Cremin (2009), Lee (2013) and Zhang & Gao (2014) mentioned that the element of *play* is a crucial point in the activities and tasks used in the classroom. Vygotsky (1967/2004, in Zhang & Gao, 2014, p. 454) stated that creativity can be observed "whenever a person imagines, combines, alters, and creates something new" and also in all children during their time of play. Thus, involving playful activities and tasks in language learning and teaching (Zhang & Gao, 2014) may foster students' creativity, imagination, divergent thinking and insight, and they take part in the activities more eagerly (Lee, 2013).

There is a wide range of activities that can be utilized for the stimulation of creativity and language skills. Drama is recommended by many educators due to its numerous benefits apart from its close relation to play (Birkmaier, 1971; Cremin, 2009; Hlenschi-Stroie, 2015; Lee, 2013; Wright, 2015; Zhang & Gao, 2014). Moreover, role plays are among the common used and offered activities for creativity (Birkmaier, 1971; Constantinides, 2015; Fehér, 2015; Hlenschi-Stroie, 2015). Nearly every teacher is familiar with the brainstorming activity and it is regarded as a convenient way of divergent production, stimulating fluency and flexibility (Constantinides, 2015) and suggested for language classes (Birkmaier, 1971; Liao, et al., 2018; Oluwadiya, 1995). Creative writing (Avila, 2015; Clarke, 2005; Maley, 2012; Dai, 2010; Cremin, 2009; Hlenschi-Stroie, 2015; Lutzker, 2015), problem-solving (Waters, 2006; Wang, 2019; Iakovos, 2011), project-based (Sciamarelli, 2015; Tanggaard, 2011; Iakovos, 2011), storytelling (Lee, 2013; Heathfield, 2015) activities are among the most common mentioned creative activities as well.

2.1. Teacher Thoughts and Attitudes

As pointed by Bereczki & Kárpáti (2018), people's goals, decisions, actions and emotions are controlled by beliefs instead of truths according to Bandura (1997). Beliefs can be described with various terms like perceptions, attitudes, conceptions, perspectives as well as views (Andiliou & Murphy, 2010). In this respect, teachers also behave and act in a manner according to their attitudes in their classes.

As the responsibility mostly belongs to the teachers in the enhancement of students' creativity in educational settings (Soh, 2017; Sternberg & Williams, 1996), teachers play a huge role in fostering or undermining the creative potential of students (Birkmaier, 1971; Li,

2016b; Sternberg & Williams, 1996). Their thoughts and attitudes may influence their knowledge and practices about creativity and its development (Beghetto, 2006). Thus, it is of primary importance to clearly acknowledge teachers' attitudes and thoughts to cultivate creative thinking efficiently at schools. In this regard, understanding EFL teachers' thoughts and attitudes towards creativity is a significant step in creativity research in EFL.

Depending on the discussion held in this section, it is obvious that the thoughts and attitudes of EFL teachers are of great importance. Thus, the major objectives of this study were to investigate the attitudes of Turkish EFL teachers towards creativity, to determine whether gender, age, teaching experience and undergraduate area of study influence their attitudes, and to examine the overall thoughts on creativity. Regarding the aim of the study the research questions were determined as follows:

- 1) What are the attitudes of Turkish EFL teachers towards creativity?
- 2) Is there any significant difference among the attitudes of EFL teachers towards creativity in terms of gender, age, teaching experience, and undergraduate area of study?
- 3) What are the overall thoughts of Turkish EFL teachers on creativity?

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

A mixed-methods research design was found to be relevant to be employed for this study. As Creswell, Plano Clark et al. (2003) claimed, using a combination of both approaches is believed to ensure more contribution for a better understanding of the research questions than the use of each approach alone. Among the types of mixed methods designs, the explanatory sequential design was chosen to be followed. Therefore, first, quantitative data were collected via a questionnaire. After that, qualitative data were collected via semi-structured interviews. The findings of the qualitative data explained, elaborated and clarified the quantitative data.

3.2. Participants

200 EFL teachers, working at secondary schools in Elazığ a city located in the East Anatolian Region of Turkey, attended the quantitative part of the study. They were teaching from 5th to 8th-grade students at state schools. 136 of 200 participants were female while 64 were male. So, females corresponded to 68% of the participants and males corresponded to 32%. Regarding their age, 60,5% of the participants were between 22 and 30 years old, 31,5% of the teachers from 31 to 39, 7% of the teachers between 40 and 48, and 1% of the teachers were 49 years old or over 49 respectively. This ratio displays that the majority of the teachers were between the ages of 22-30.

As for the years of experience in teaching, 9,5% of the participants reported that they had recently started to work and they were in their 1st year. 33% of the participants had 1 to 4 years of teaching experience, 34,5% of them had 5 to 10, and 23% of the teachers had 10 or more years of experience in EFL teaching. According to these ratios, the majority of the teachers had been working for 1-10 years. When they were asked their undergraduate area of study, 72% of the participants reported that they were graduated from English Language Teaching (ELT) while 22,5% of the participants studied English Language & Literature at university. 2% of the participants from Linguistics and 2% of the participants graduated from other departments. 1% of the participants graduated from American Culture & Literature while 0,5% of the participants from Translation & Interpreting. These ratios indicate that the majority of the teachers graduated from ELT departments of universities.

The participants of the study's qualitative part consisted of 20 EFL teachers who also attended the quantitative part and accepted to participate voluntarily.

3.3. Data Collection

To collect the quantitative data, the questionnaire prepared by Al-Nouh, Abdul-Kareem and Taqi (2014) was utilized. The researchers took the necessary permission to use the questionnaire for the study. It consisted of two parts; demographic information and attitude. Collected data were transferred to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 21.

As for the qualitative data, semi-structured interview form was designed and the interview questions were prepared after reviewing the literature. Three academics of the field were consulted to analyse the questions regarding their appropriateness and scope for this study to ensure content validity. Interviews were recorded by a voice recorder, and all recordings were stored to provide trustworthiness of this study.

3.4. Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analysed through SPSS 21. To measure the reliability of the questionnaire, its Cronbach's alpha value was calculated. 6, 7, 12 and 15 items were removed from the questionnaire since those items affected the Cronbach's alpha value negatively. After removing them, the reliability was measured .701, which indicated a high level of reliability for the questionnaire. For the first research question of the study, descriptive statistics were utilized and mean values and standard deviations were calculated for each item. For the second research question, Levene's Test was applied for the variance homogeneity. Therefore, in this research One Way ANOVA parametric tests were applied to demonstrate if the attitudes show a meaningful and significant difference in terms of gender, age, teaching experience and undergraduate area of study.

The qualitative data analysis was carried out through NVivo 8 Software Programme. Using a computer in analysing the qualitative data may ensure the users work more methodologically and attentively. So, to use a software programme for qualitative analysis may contribute to a stronger analysis (Bazeley & Jackson, 2007). In the process, first, the recorded data were transcribed. Then, as the interviews were conducted in Turkish, the researchers translated them into English. To meet the trustworthiness, two different EFL instructors also translated the interview forms of the participants from Turkish to English apart from the researchers. After the transcription, MS Word document was created for each interview question and the participants' answers were copied into the documents. Later, the documents were imported to NVivo 8 software and the data were analysed. According to the similarity and frequency of the statements, codes and categories were formed. Lastly, models were developed according to codes and categories formed through NVivo.

4. Findings and Results

4.1. Quantitative Data Findings and Results

The first research question aimed to find out the attitudes of Turkish EFL teachers towards creativity is answered through the data obtained from the questionnaire. Although the original questionnaire consisted of nineteen statements, the items 6,7,12 and 15 were not analysed since they were removed from the questionnaire according to the reliability analysis.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics of Turkish EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards Creativity*

Items	Mean	SD
1. Creativity is an essential skill to be nurtured in schools.	4,37	0,75
2. Teacher training is important to foster creativity in education.	4,47	0,65
3. Portfolios enhance pupils' creativity.	3,96	0,92
4. Creativity can be assessed.	3,64	1,15
5. Creativity can be taught.	3,31	1,10
8. Independent learning enhances creative thinking.	4,20	0,79
9. Teaching to the test doesn't leave time for creative activities.	4,20	0,88
10. Pressure of subject content doesn't leave time for creative activities.	4,22	0,86
11. Learning through play increases creativity.	4,28	0,93
13. We can develop pupils' skills to think in a creative way with the current curricula.	2,79	1,39
14. Creative pupils are successful.	3,70	1,07
16. Individual assignments based on problem solving would stimulate creativity.	4,06	0,84
17. Content knowledge is not enough; we need critical thinking & problem solving skills.	4,49	0,72
18. The classroom should be a place where pupils feel safe and develop self-confidence.	4,59	0,65
19. During exams, it is necessary to ask questions that encourage creative thinking.	3,92	1,10

As displayed in Table 1, Turkish EFL teachers have positive attitudes towards creativity in general.

For the second research question, the researchers applied Levene's' Test to check the equality of variance to find out if there is any significant difference among the attitudes of EFL teachers towards creativity in terms of gender, age, teaching experience, and undergraduate area of study, As a result, homogeneity of variance was found in terms of gender $F=.061$, age $F=.291$, teaching experience $F=.680$ and undergraduate area of study $F=.863$ ($p>.05$). Therefore, a One Way ANOVA parametric test was conducted to all variables.

Table 2. *One Way ANOVA Test for Turkish EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards Creativity in terms of Gender, Age, Teaching Experience and Undergraduate Area of Study*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	sig
Gender	Between groups	.000	1	.000		
	Within groups	34.304	198	.173	.002	.968
	Total	34.304	199			
Age	Between groups	.565	3	.188		
	Within groups	33.739	196	.172	1.094	.353
	Total	34.304	199			
Experience	Between groups	.155	3	.052		
	Within groups	34.149	196	.174	.297	.828
	Total	34.304	199			
Undergraduate Area	Between groups	.926	5	.185		
	Within groups	33.378	194	.172	1.076	.375
	Total	34.304	199			

According to the results in Table 2, it was found that there was no significant difference among the attitudes of EFL teachers in terms of gender $p=.968$, age $p=.353$, teaching experience $p=.828$, undergraduate area of study $p=.375$ ($p>.05$). Therefore, it can be concluded that gender, age, teaching experience or undergraduate area of study do not affect teachers' attitudes towards creativity.

4.2. Qualitative Data Findings and Results

The third research question aimed to find out the overall thoughts of Turkish EFL teachers on creativity is answered through the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews. The findings of the interview questions were provided below, respectively.

IQ1. What does creativity mean to you?

The first category was identified as 'thought-based' and the second category as 'product-based' definitions. As seen in Figure 1, the participants of the first category ($f=13$) conceptualized creativity in terms of having original ideas whereas the participants of the second category ($f=7$) had product-focused conceptualisation of creativity.

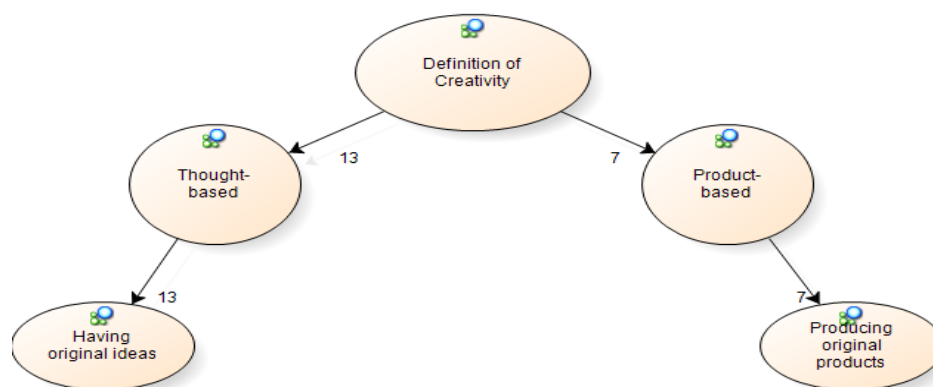


Figure 1. Turkish EFL Teachers' Creativity Definitions

Majority of the teachers defined creativity by emphasising the thought. Therefore, creativity in this context was thought to be related to having original ideas, thinking uniquely. Within the second category, the participants defined creativity by focusing on the product.

Thus, creativity in this context was not only about thinking and finding an original idea but turning this idea into a tangible form.

IQ2. What are the characteristics of creative EFL teachers?

In Figure 2, findings concerning the second interview question were given. 2 main categories were formed as ‘performance’ (f=31) and ‘personality’ (f=29), and 6 codes were identified within both of the categories.

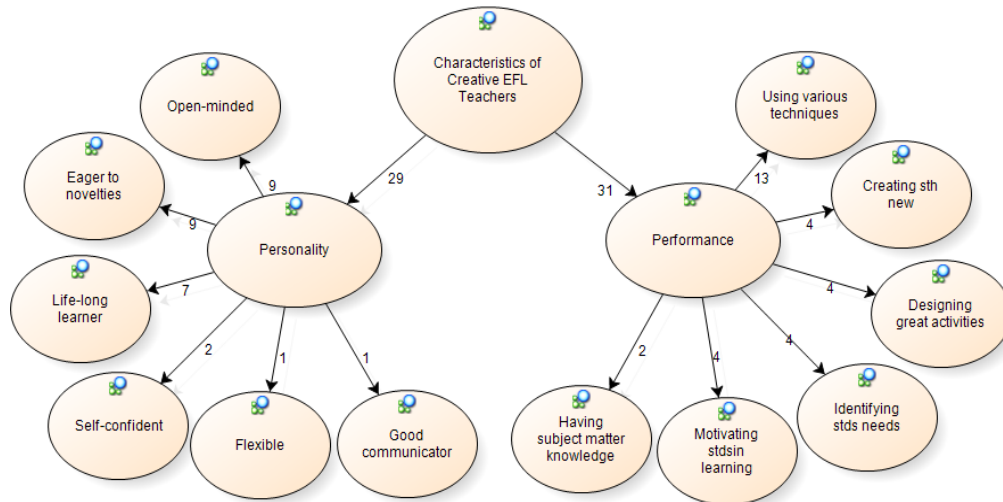


Figure 2. Turkish EFL Teachers' Views on the Characteristics of Creative EFL Teachers

As for the first category ‘performance’, creative EFL teachers’ characteristics were linked to their practices at school. In the category, 6 codes were formed. The first code, ‘using various techniques’ (f=13), was indicated by most of the participants. The following codes, ‘creating something new’, ‘designing great activities’, ‘identifying students needs’ and ‘motivating students in learning’ were emphasised as the qualities of creative teachers by 4 teachers. The last code is ‘having subject matter knowledge’ were reported by only 2 teachers.

The participants in the second category indicated that being a creative EFL teacher is closely connected to specific ‘personality’ traits (f=29). 6 codes were identified similar to the first category. 9 participants indicated the codes being ‘open-minded’ and ‘eager to novelties’. Being a ‘life-long learner’ (f=7) was another characteristic that teachers declared. A small number of teachers stated that creative EFL teachers are ‘self-confident’ (f=2). The last codes were being ‘flexible’ (f=1) and being ‘good communicator’ (f=1).

IQ3. What are your motives to be creative and to encourage creativity in the classroom?

For the third interview question, the first category was identified as ‘professional’ motives (f=29) and the second category was identified as ‘personal’ motives (f=12). As seen in Figure 3, three codes were formed for both of the categories.

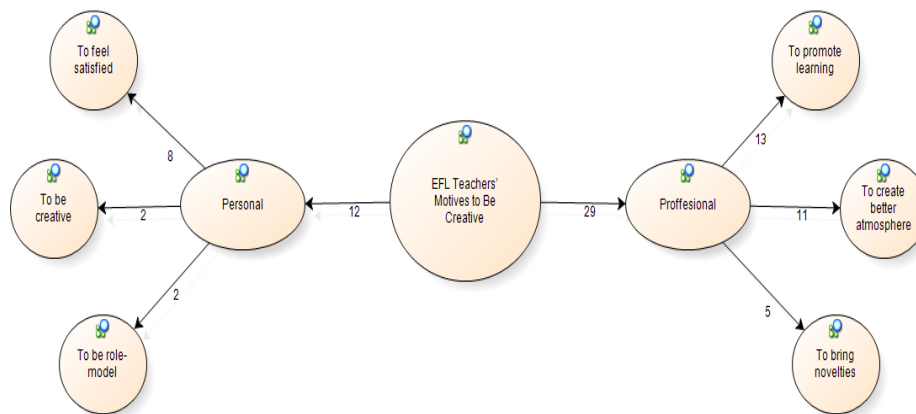


Figure 3. Turkish EFL Teachers' Motives to Be a Creative Teacher

The 'professional' motives were the most highlighted factors compared to the 'personal' factors. The first code was 'to promote learning' ($f=13$) and the second code was 'to create a better atmosphere' ($f=11$) for language learning in the classroom. Lastly, teachers indicated that their motives to be a creative teacher is 'to bring novelties' ($f=5$) to their classrooms and their teaching process. Regarding the personal factors, the first reason was 'to feel satisfied' ($f=8$), which was the most commented code among others. The second code was formed as 'to be creative' ($f=2$) in their daily lives as well. The last code is 'to be role-model' ($f=2$) in different aspects as well as creativity.

IQ4. Which creative teaching activities do you utilize in your classes?

Findings concerning the fourth interview question resulted in only codes represented in Figure 4. For this question, categories could not be identified because of some reasons. The participants' answers were so dispersed and limited. Although they were told several times to give details and to focus on creative activities in particular during the interviews, most of the teachers only reported the activity names but did not clearly explain how, in which phase of the lesson and for what purpose they implemented these activities. Thus, the activity names could not be collected under categories but only in 15 codes.

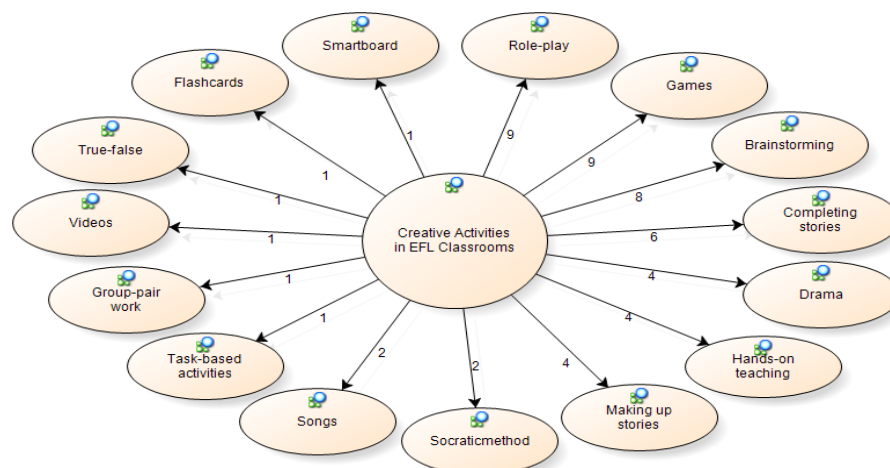


Figure 4. Turkish EFL Teachers' Creative Teaching Activities

The most repeated codes were 'role-play' ($f=9$) and 'games' ($f=9$). 'Brainstorming' was commented by 8 teachers while 'completing stories' was expressed by 6 teachers. There was also one code related to the stories; 'making up stories' ($f=4$). Moreover, 4 teachers declared 'drama' and 'hands-on teaching' or hands-on activities. 'Socratic method' ($f=2$) and 'songs' ($f=2$) were utilized in EFL classes to improve students' creativity, as well. There were six

different codes, all of which were commented only 1 participant. They were ‘task-based activities’, ‘group-pair work’ activities which were believed to have an impact on creativity. ‘Videos’ and ‘flashcards’ are indicated to be used by the same person. Traditional ‘true-false’ activities and using ‘smartboard’ for doing exercises are the last codes.

IQ5. What are the factors constraining your creativity and creative teaching practices?

Regarding the fifth interview question, four main categories were revealed (see Figure 5). The first category was identified as ‘context-level’ (f=112), the second category as ‘teacher-level’ (f=35), the third category as ‘parents-level’ (f=27) and the last category as ‘student-level’ (f=26).

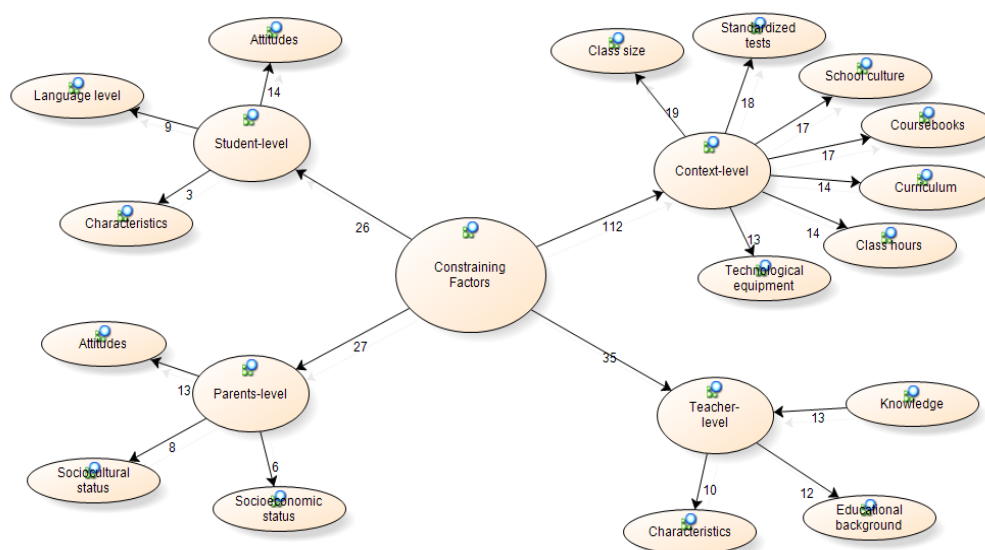


Figure 5. Turkish EFL Teachers' Views on the Constraining Factors for Creativity and Creative Teaching Practices

In terms of the ‘context-level’ constraining factors, which was by far the most mentioned one, seven codes were formed. Nearly all of the participants (f=19) complained about the ‘class size’ as a significant factor that inhibits their creative thinking and creative teaching practices in EFL classes. The other factor highly emphasized by the participants was ‘standardized tests’ (f=18), which are organized nationally and locally. The majority of teachers complained about the exams in the Turkish education system such as the High School Entrance Exam (LGS in Turkish) held at the end of the 8th grade and the common exams held each semester as one of the mid-term exams. The third code was about ‘school-culture’ (f=17), which is related to administrators and all teachers at a school. The beliefs, attitudes and values of the other school members were stated to affect the development of creativity and creative teaching practices negatively. English ‘coursebooks’ (f=17) and ‘curriculum’ (f=14) were other barriers inhibiting creativity. ‘Class hours’ were reported by teachers (f=14) since 5th and 6th graders have three hours for English while 7th and 8th graders have four hours in a week, and each class hour is forty minutes in total. The last constraining factor is the lack of ‘technological equipment’ (f=13) in the classrooms like smartboards.

As for the second category, the participants focused on the ‘teacher-level’ factors that restrain creativity, and three codes were identified. The first code ‘knowledge’ (f=13) was the most commented one among others and it was stated that lack of knowledge about creativity and creative teaching is a constraining factor. The following codes were determined as

‘educational background’ (f=12) and ‘characteristics’ (f=10) of teachers. The next category was related to ‘parents-level’ factors for which three codes were labelled. Majority of the participants (f=13) reported that the parents’ negative ‘attitudes’ towards language learning and novelties in the class are one of the constraining factors. The other codes concerned this category is ‘socio-cultural status’ (f=8) and ‘socio-economic status’ (f=6). The last category was about ‘student-level’ factors. Three codes were formed and the most highlighted one (f=14) was the ‘attitudes’ of the students towards English, teaching methods or activities. The other constraining factors were the inadequate ‘language level’ (f=6) and ‘characteristics’ of students.

5. Discussion

For the first research question, the analysis of the data revealed notable findings about Turkish EFL teachers’ attitudes towards creativity. They exhibit positive attitudes towards creativity in general. The majority of them acknowledged the value of creativity in education as they recognised the need for creative thinking skill apart from the content or theoretical knowledge. Moreover, almost all the participants pointed out that creativity is a significant skill to be developed at schools. This finding is consistent with the findings of other researchers (e.g., Al-Nouh, et al., 2014; Aljughaiman & Reynolds, 2005; Nedjah & Hamada, 2017; Wang & Kokotsaki, 2018).

The results also indicated that most of the teachers seemed to have a notion about how to stimulate students’ creativity. They could identify that portfolios, independent learning, learning through play and problem-solving assignments aid to enhance creative thinking. As for portfolios, this finding does not concur the finding of Al-Nouh et al.’s (2014) study in which many EFL teachers indicated their disagreement with the effectiveness of portfolios in creativity education. In terms of independent learning, this finding has corroborated the findings of Fitriah (2017) as the EFL teachers in his study also identified the significance of independent learning for creativity. Cremin (2009), Lee (2013) and Zhang & Gao (2014) attached great importance to the element of play in EFL classes and most of the EFL teachers in the study realised its positive impact.

It is significant to note that almost all teachers agreed on the necessity of teacher training to foster creativity in EFL classes. This finding is in parallel with the results or suggestions of several researchers (Al-Nouh, et al., 2014; Baghaei & Riasati, 2015; Cimermanova, 2015; Constantinides, 2015; Pishghadam, 2012; Xerri & Vassallo, 2016b). Cimermanova (2015), Lee (2013), Pugliese (2016), Rinkevich (2011) and Bedir (2015) in the Turkish context are among the researchers who distinctively highlighted the training programmes for creativity at teacher preparation level. Moreover, a large number of EFL teachers in the current study, in line with the study of Al-Nouh et al. (2014), declared that curriculum, test-oriented teaching and lack of time are some of the inhibiting factors affecting the participants’ creative teaching performance and attitudes towards creativity.

However, teachers’ responses to some of the items in the questionnaire revealed that some teachers might have held contradictory beliefs and had misconceptions or lack of knowledge about creativity. As in the study of Aljughaiman & Reynolds (2005), although a large number of teachers indicated that creativity is an essential skill to be developed in classrooms, the number of teachers stating creativity can be taught was lesser. As mentioned by Pugliese (2016), there are some common views or ‘myths’ inaccurate among the teachers such as nobody can teach or learn creativity, which is related to the finding of this study. Some EFL teachers in the study seem to be unaware of the fact that creativity is teachable, and it can be stimulated through creative education (Birkmaier, 1971; NACCCE, 1999; Sternberg & Lubart, 1991; Torrance & Torrance, 1973).

Another contradictory finding is that most of the teachers associated creativity with success as they agreed on the idea that creative students are successful, which is in line with Al-Nouh et al.'s (2014) finding. Al-Nouh et al. (2014) pointed out the reason behind it as creativity is being confused with intelligence and intelligent people are generally successful. Likewise, EFL teachers in the current study may have thought similarly. The present finding seems to be consistent with other research conducted by Morais & Azevedo (2011), in which teachers linked creative students to being successful.

As for the second research question, it was found that EFL teachers' gender, age, teaching experience and undergraduate area of study had no impact on teachers' attitudes towards creativity. In terms of gender, the finding is in line with the study of Özcan (2010), who investigated the contributions of EFL teachers' behaviours and characteristics on students' creativity in terms of five variables. His study showed that EFL teachers' gender does not contribute to the teachers' behaviours on students' creativity. However, in Al-Nouh et al.'s (2014) study, significant differences were detected in teachers' attitudes according to age and experience. Older and middle-aged teachers and teachers having more than six years of experience in teaching showed negative attitudes towards creativity. Besides, Özcan (2010) found a significant difference in terms of teaching experience. He stated that teachers in their first years of teaching are in favour of developing students' creativity.

For the third research question, results displayed the thoughts of Turkish EFL teachers on the concept of creativity, creative teacher characteristics, creative activities and factors constraining creativity and teachers reasons to be creative. Asking them to define creativity, most of the EFL teachers defined it by focusing on the *thought* while others emphasized on a *product* or an outcome. Both views' main focus is in line with the prominent thinkers' creativity definitions and the findings of Aljughaiman & Reynolds (2005), Fitriah (2017), Kurt & Önalán (2018) and Wang & Kokotsaki (2018). Nevertheless, it is believed that teachers in this study may have narrow views of creativity as they did not approach to creativity concept from different perspectives, and they did not extend their definitions by naming other skills related to creativity. Since some teachers were unable to concentrate on the usefulness and relevance of the ideas or products in their definitions as in the study of Kurt & Önalán (2018). Moreover, unlike Aljughaiman & Reynolds's (2005) study, their definitions did not involve divergent thinking, self-expression, imagination and problem-solving apart from original ideas and product.

Apart from the other studies conducted in EFL (Al-Nouh et al., 2014; Kurt & Önalán, 2018; Nedjah & Hamada, 2017; Tümen Akyıldız & Çelik; Wang & Kokotsaki 2018), this study revealed EFL teachers' views about the characteristics of creative EFL teachers. Their ideas were based on personality traits and performance of teachers, which is consistent with the literature on creative people. For instance, being highly productive and original as well as flexible (Constantinides, 2015) and open-minded (Wright, 2015) are mentioned in the literature. Richards (2013) also pointed out nearly all of the performance and personality-based qualities in his article. These findings, however, suggest that even though Turkish EFL teachers' associations find an echo in the literature, the number of teachers who could name most of the significant characteristics is barely low, which shows their lack of knowledge about or unfamiliarity to the concept of the creative teacher.

The teachers indicated that they have *professional* and *personal* reasons for being creative. In terms of professional reasons, the findings are consistent with Nedjah & Hamada (2017) and Wang & Kokotsaki's (2018) studies which found that EFL teachers utilize creative approaches to enhance learning and to ensure more enjoyable lessons. Nedjah & Hamada (2017) also found out that many teachers encourage creativity because it influences students' personal development, and helps them be open-minded and think from different

perspectives. The present study is, unfortunately, unable to demonstrate such a significant reason to be creative and to encourage creativity in the classroom.

Concerning the findings of creative activities, it was found that the teachers have limited knowledge about creative activities since they could not name a variety of activities and some activities cannot be regarded as creative. This shows that there is incongruence with respect to their thoughts on creativity and teaching practices because teachers pointed out that their professional motives to be creative are to promote learning, bring novelties and create a better atmosphere. Furthermore, they stated that creative teachers utilize different techniques and create new activities or games. By contrast, their responses to the activities suggest that they do not precisely promote learning and bring novelties to EFL classes, and they do not apply unusual and novel activities.

Role-plays and games were the most mentioned ones. The former activity example is in line with the study of Wang & Kokotsaki (2018) and the latter is in parallel with the study of Al-Nouh et al. (2014), Tümen Akyıldız & Çelik (2020) and Wang & Kokotsaki (2018). As in the studies of Al-Nouh et al. (2014), Nadjah & Hamada (2017) and Tümen Akyıldız & Çelik (2020), EFL teachers in this study also reported to include brainstorming activities to their lesson plans. As found in Liao et al.'s (2018) experimental study that it has a positive impact on creative thinking and language skills of EFL students.

Even though many educators suggest drama due to its numerous advantages in EFL classes (Birkmaier, 1971; Cremin, 2009; Lee, 2013; Wright, 2015; Zhang & Gao, 2014), only a few participants in this study indicated to apply drama in their classrooms. Likewise, hands-on teaching activities and story-based activities including completing and making up stories were only mentioned by a few teachers. In fact, through a hands-on approach at schools, ownership is encouraged and learning is made more relevant (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004). And ownership and relevance are among the features of creative teaching for Woods (1990). Task-based activities and group-pair works were reported to be utilized by only one teacher in this study although these two types of activities can lead to the creativity and language development and suggested by many researchers in the field (e.g., Birkmaier, 1971; Lee, 2013; Sternberg & Williams, 1996; Wright, 2015).

Furthermore, the participants remarked some activities that cannot be regarded as creative ones since their content and means of the application were traditional, similar to the findings of Al-Nouh et al. (2014), Tümen Akyıldız & Çelik (2020) and Wang & Kokotsaki (2018). Song, true-false, video, flashcard and smartboard activities, as well as some teachers' game examples were found to be not related to creativity and creative teaching. For instance, making true-false activities and using videos or flashcards only to show the meaning of a word does not lead to creativity. Utilizing songs to fill in the blank activities does not promote creative thinking. Moreover, only the integration of playful games requiring questioning, creative thinking or imagination can achieve creative teaching's aim, emphasised by also Tümen Akyıldız & Çelik's (2020) study. If these activities or exercises were used in a novel way, then they would be regarded as creative according to Pugliese (2016) and Woodward's (2015) creativity definitions in the EFL context.

In the current study, participants expressed a wide range of barriers inhibiting their creativity and creative teaching practices. Among the context-level factors, standardized tests, curriculum and class hours echo the findings in the quantitative part. For participants, English language teaching curriculum in Turkey is long and content-heavy, conversely, the class hours are short. Standardized tests like LGS do not allow teachers to focus on creative teaching, mainly in the eighth grades. A similar result was also reported by Al-Nouh et al. (2014), Tümen Akyıldız & Çelik (2020) and Wang & Kokotsaki (2018). As stated by Nadjah & Hamada (2017), creative teaching is not teachers' priority because they are confined by the curriculums to be followed strictly and the exams to be taught for.

Crowded classrooms are another constraint that was highly emphasised by the participants. Teachers reported that it is challenging to implement creative teaching in EFL classes with more than twenty students, similar to the studies of Al-Nouh et al. (2014), Al-Qahtani (2016), Fitriah (2017) and Wang & Kokotsaki (2018). Nevertheless, Wright (2015) underlined that teachers can achieve to implement creative teaching in large classes by applying group and pair work activities. In terms of school-culture, EFL teachers indicated that their administrators or colleagues generally have negative and unsupportive attitudes towards them, their novel ideas and English in general, which is in parallel with the studies of Tümen Akyıldız & Çelik (2020), Bereczki & Kárpáti (2018) and Kurt & Önalán (2018). Some administrators were reported not to allow the teachers to carry out their plans or activities as these administrators valued more on the test scores and standard educational practices, which is in line with the ideas of Hondzel & Hansen (2015).

The other barrier was determined as English coursebooks which were believed to be inadequate for the development of creative thinking. Similarly, Al-Qahtani (2016) indicated that EFL teachers in their country found textbooks discouraging creative thinking because of their limited content in terms of creative activities. Indeed, as underlined by Formosa & Zammit (2016), creativity does not mean to leave the coursebooks aside and teach without it. It means to give priority to students' needs and to change things to make the lesson more enjoyable and to enlarge students' perspectives both for the lesson and life. Lastly, Turkish EFL teachers stated that lack of smartboards, in particular, and other technological facilities in the classrooms are thought to inhibit creative teaching practices. This finding is in parallel with the review study of Bereczki & Kárpáti (2018) and Fitriah's (2017) study on EFL teachers according to whom technology is beneficial to put their creative thinking skills into practice more meaningfully and interestingly.

The second type of constraining factors was related to teachers including teachers' knowledge of creativity, educational background and characteristics. Teachers generally are not trained or educated for creative pedagogy both during pre-service and in-service years; hence they do not know exactly how to encourage and foster creativity in their classrooms (Manzo, 1998; Sternberg & Kaufman, 2010). Teachers in this study commented on this factor stressing that they need to take training about creativity and about how to apply creative teaching in EFL classes. This finding is consistent with the findings of Al-Nouh et al. (2014), Al-Qahtani (2016), Bedir (2019), Bereczki & Kárpáti (2018) and Nedjah & Hamada (2017). In addition, it explains why almost all teachers agreed on the necessity of teacher training in the quantitative part.

Different from other studies (Al-Nouh et al., 2014; Kurt & Önalán, 2018; Nedjah & Hamada, 2017; Tümen Akyıldız & Çelik; Wang & Kokotsaki 2018), educational backgrounds and characteristics of EFL teachers were reported to be among the constraining factors. Some of the participants indicated that universities and departments teachers graduated from, and postgraduate studies can affect their creativity and creative teaching practices. Half of the participants stated that personality traits have an impact on their teaching practices in general.

Parents' attitudes, socio-cultural and socio-economic status were found to be other challenges. Participants stated that parents' negative attitudes towards English and towards the novelties that teachers want to bring to the class influence creative teaching practices of teachers as well as students' attitudes. This finding is consistent with Al-Nouh et al. (2011) and Bereczki & Kárpáti's (2018) studies which also mentioned parents' unsupportive and negative attitudes as constraining factors. A person born into a supportive culture may easily have the opportunity to improve his creative abilities; in contrast, a person born into an unsupportive culture may be discouraged and may not enhance his creativity (Sternberg &

Kaufman, 2010). In Kurt & Önalın's (2018) study, the pre-service EFL teachers also stated that creativity can be affected by family environment and cultural background.

EFL teachers in this study, lastly, emphasized that students' negative attitudes towards English in particular and new teaching practices, their English level and characteristics constrain the enhancement of creativity and creative teaching. This finding is in parallel with Tümen Akyıldız & Çelik (2020), Fitriah (2017), Nedjah & Hamada (2017) and Wang & Kokotsaki (2018) as EFL teachers in their studies also complained about students being reluctant and passive listeners in the classroom. Further, as pointed out by Lee (2013), students' cognitive and language level, alongside other factors, play a significant role in teachers choosing the type of creative teaching methods and activities.

6. Conclusion and Limitations

"Creativity now is as important in education as literacy, and we should treat it with the same status" (Robinson, 2006, 02:49). As highlighted in the study, creativity is an essential component of 21st-century skills and has become a central issue for every domain in the global world. Thus, it is a matter of utmost urgency to acknowledge the absolute necessity of creativity in education and, particularly, in the EFL context. As teachers are the key aspect of education, it has become the purpose of the current study to examine the thoughts and attitudes of in-service EFL teachers towards creativity. With this purpose, it was revealed that although most of the teachers have positive attitudes towards creativity, there are some points about which some teachers are not well-informed and have limited understanding or misconceptions. This, in fact, reflects the deficiency in English language teaching curriculum of Turkey and Turkey's Education Vision report since there is an inadequate emphasis of creativity in them as mentioned before.

In this respect, EFL teachers should be provided for training and workshops about creativity and creative pedagogy. English language teaching curriculum should deal explicitly with creativity and creative pedagogy in the EFL context. Creative approaches, activities and strategies should be evidently explained for EFL teachers. Moreover, more theoretical and empirical research on creativity in the EFL context needs to be undertaken in Turkey. Therefore, further studies on this topic are suggested in order to contribute to the creativity literature in the world and Turkey; and, most importantly, to make this prominent 21st-century skill increase its value in the Turkish EFL context.

The most important limitation lies in the fact that there was a limited sample size. 200 EFL teachers participated in the quantitative and 20 teachers attended to qualitative part of the study. This sample constituted a small size of all EFL teachers in Turkey. Furthermore, this study is limited to only secondary school EFL teachers. The findings, therefore, cannot be generalised to pre-school, primary or high school EFL teachers' context.

Disclosure Statement

Throughout the study, research and publication ethics were observed. It was evaluated at the meeting (No:23/2019) by the Ethics Committee of Social Sciences and Humanities of Firat University and found ethically acceptable. Moreover, the authors declare that there are no conflicts of interests.

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