Creative Stimulating Environment for Studying and Development

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Abstract

Many adults have been 'educated out' of being imaginative and can quite often forget what it is like to let their imagination take flight. So it is important for children to be encouraged, and not put off, in the early stages of their development, when their imaginations function spontaneously. It is also important for those working with children to try to revisit their own imaginations. Teachers can give life to their aspirations for children by providing, in the curriculum, both the "food" and the "exercise" that are vital for children's developing powers. Using this metaphor, children are given both nourishing intellectual and emotional food and the space in which to exercise and strengthen their intellectual and emotional muscle. Intellectual (thinking) skills generate ideas, concepts, proposals, solutions or arguments independently in response to set briefs and/or as self-initiated activity. Critical

self-evaluation, reasoning, logical argument, analysis and synthesis are certainly essential motivations to stimulate students' learning. The ability to draft and improve through redrafting creative work appropriately in a chosen genre gives the successful result in such a process. Inventiveness and creativity is another really important stimulator for better result in the teaching-learning process. Employ materials, media, techniques, methods, technologies and tools associated with the discipline(s) studied with skill and imagination whilst observing good working practices, gives the equal satisfaction to both teacher and student.

Keywords: Stimulator, Motivation, Development, Exercises, Creativity, Methodology, Inventeness, Education

1. Introduction

There have been several curricula,educational and psychological plans that can be applied to the study and development of creative abilities. For a long period of time creativity has received considerable attention from the various educational, psychological and social trends and schools in order to identify the main influences and aspects of creativity. During the student's years in school, they are asked to read and learn a tremendous amount of information. Sometimes it may seem to them, no matter how much they like school in general or any subject in particular,   that they are almost overwhelmed by the many facts that they need to know. In all the cases students should be stimulated and even encouraged so as getting the essential points of all the procedure during their academic years.   There are a number of stimulating activities and motivations that can be encouraged[1]. All the activities and the methods of teaching should be designed to stimulate student's curiosity, to encourage them to think about issues, to question, to do research to find answers and then to write up their findings, or the reports of their preparation.   Yet, some aspects of this long studied issue are still vague and controversial   such as the relationship between creativity and intelligence. That is, there is still room for research to be conducted on creativity. The question that imposes itself is which type of programs is the most effective for enhancing creative abilities. Torrance and his students reached this conclusion after surveying hundreds of studies conducted on creativity from 1972 to 1985.

This article deals with the most appropriate and practical environment for studying and development, and especially when learning English as a second language.

Many ESL/EFL classes today use an integrated approach to language teaching, making close connections between teaching reading, writing, speaking and listening. There is a huge variety on teaching textbooks nowadays, but these should be considered as the base tool of a study without being dependent on it as a subject. The aim here is to stimulate the creativity of the learner himself.

2. Theories and methods

The textbooks in general have   a lot of activities that provide opportunities for reading, writing and speaking about English language as an international language or the lingua franca between countries. Because the individual's cognitive development is the outcome of the interaction between heredity and the environment and because the limits of this development are determined by heredity-related factors, then what can be achieved within these limits is determined by environmental factors. Naturally, cognitive development reaches its maximum in case the environmental factors are supportive. On the other hand, if the environment is poor and frustrating, development will be kept within the narrow limits of heredity. Since it is not possible, so far at least, to modify the genetic structure of the child, the only choice left is the modification of the environmental determiners. It is universally accepted that the development of intelligence is a social process that depends on the type and structure of the environment where the child lives. Today, interest in developing courses that provide

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[1] Deci & Ryan, 2000

interdisciplinary perspectives is increasing. Offering these courses often requires two or more faculty members to plan and carry out instruction as a team, thus breaking a traditional norm: one professor presenting, for the duration of the course, one perspective, or his specialization. The definition and rationale for interdisciplinary courses and the dynamics of team teaching are still in progress.

These are the best of times and the worst of times in the profession of teaching and especially in the profession of foreign language teaching. The last two decades have seen a tension of our knowledge about second learning and teaching. Almost anywhere we turn, we can find textbooks, articles, lectures, workshops, and courses on the art of teaching and learning. At the same time we are a long, long way from finding ultimate answers to the many difficult questions we have been asking.

A glance through the past century or so of teaching and more precisely of language teaching, gives us an interesting picture of how varied the interpretations have been of the best way to stimulate students to study. As schools of thought have come and gone, so have even the motivation of learner become more ambitious and more oriented. Teaching methods are the application of theoretical findings and positions. They may be thought as «theories in practise». It is no surprise that in a field as young and dynamic as second language teaching for example, there have been a variety of such applications, some in total philosophical opposition to others.

However, appealing a particular method might be to everyone who first encounters it, however sensible and practical it might seem, the best method is one which has been derived through one's very own careful process of formulation, try-out, revision, and refinement. You can not teach effectively without understanding varied theoretical positions. This understanding forms a principled basis upon which you can choose methods for teaching different subjects of your profile.

3. Development   strategy of creativity

Since genetic influences play an important role in the child's cognitive development, especially the early educational experiences gained inside and outside the family, many researchers have stressed the importance of addressing creativity in early childhood. The early experiences of creative thinking pave the way for further creativity in older ages and help the child to know how to use his/her potentials in divergent thinking and creative solution of problems.

There is no one who has not as some time witnessed the remarkable ability of children to communicate. As small babies, children babble and coo and cry and vocally send an extraordinary number of messages. These instincts follow them and continue to be developed up to an endless perfection even into school age as children internalize increasingly complex structures, expand their knowledge and vocabulary, and sharpen their abilities of communicative skills.

The nature and the role of the educational process in creativity is determined by a set of personal, affective and motivational features of the individual. These features allow potential

creativity to turn into tangible creative performance. The features that characterize the personality of the creative individual can, in most cases, be acquired from the social environment that surrounds the individual. Accordingly, the educational situations the individual experiences whether in the process of socialization inside the family or in formal and informal educational situations in the society and its institutions are also important for the development of creativity.

This refers to the significant role education plays in regard to these features. Education can either facilitate or impede creative thinking. That is, education can create the atmosphere that is supportive to the growth of these features in the individuals who have creative potentials. However, the role of education exceeds the mere creation of that kind of supportive atmosphere. It can adopt the educational procedures and methods that can secure the transfer of these features into behavioral actions that characterize the individuals' with creative potentials.

Strategies are specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information. They are contextualized «battle plans» that might vary from moment or day to day or year to year. Strategies vary individually; each of us has a whole host of possible ways to solve a particular problem and we choose one- or several of those in sequence- for a given problem. Another term to be explained is the word style. Style is a term that refers to consistent and rather enduring tendencies or preferences within an individual. Styles are those general characteristics of intellectual functioning (and personality type as well) that especially pertain to you as an individual, that differentiate you from someone else.

For example, you might be more visually oriented, more tolerant of ambiguity, or more reflective than someone else- these would be style that characterizes a general pattern in your thinking or feeling. As we turn to a study of styles and strategies in teaching and in second language learning, we can benefit by understanding these 'layers of an onion', or points on a continuum ranging from universal properties of learning to specific intra individual variations in learning.

The first general category within processes of learning comes from the work of educational psychologist Robert Gagne (1965), who ably demonstrated the importance of identifying a number of types of learning which all human beings use. Types of learning vary according to the context and subject matter to be learned, but a complex task such as language learning involves every one of Gagne's types of learning- from simple signal learning to problem solving. Gagne identified eight types of learning: signal learning, stimulus-response learning, chaining, verbal association, multiple discrimination, concept learning, and principle learning.

It is not difficult, upon some reflection, to discern the importance of varied types of learning in the development of the environment for studying. Teachers and researchers have all too often dismissed certain theories of learning as irrelevant or useless because of the misperception that the process of learning consists of only one type of learning. Methods of teaching, in recognizing different levels of learning, need to be consonant with whichever

aspect of language is being taught at a particular time while also recognizing the interrelatedness of all levels of language learning.

4. Motivation

Motivation is probably the most often used catch-all term for explaining the success or failure of virtually any complex task. It is easy to figure out that success in a task is due simply to the fact that someone is motivated. It is easy in second language learning to claim that a learner will be successful with the proper motivation. Such claims are of course not erroneous, for countless studies and experiments in human learning have shown that motivation is a key to learning. But these claims gloss over a detailed understanding of exactly what motivation is and what the subcomponents of motivation are. What does it mean to say that someone is motivated? How do you create, foster, and maintain motivation?

Motivation is commonly thought as an inner drive, impulse, emotion, or desire that moves one to a particular action. It is seen as the fulfilment of needs, closely connected to behaviouristic reinforcement theory. In as much as certain needs are being satisfactorily met in a person, reinforcement occurs. If learning to speak a foreign language for example, enhances one's ego, the ego enhancement it is in itself an internal reinforcement of the desired behaviour.

Most teachers have been prepared to pass their subject matter along to pupils.

But too often their young 'enthusiasts' are receiving this wisdom and knowledge with apathy instead of enthusiasm.

The foreign language class has been depicted by many as having interaction that is too rote and automatic, too controlled and with too much parroting, with the teacher being viewed as a drill sergeant. But foreign language teachers are also known for expanding the horizons of students, increasing their awareness of other cultures, other worlds- promoting cultural pluralism. Now is the time, however, for foreign language teachers to foster also the study and growth of one race- the human race.

Foreign language teachers have been reaching out, searching for more exciting ways of getting through to their students. Affective education holds promise for changing the stereotypes of the foreign language class and for humanizing it instead.

The purpose of this article was to provide some specific ways foreign language teachers can weave humanistic strategies into their already existing curricular materials. Since most teachers are given textbooks to 'cover', the most realistic approach to including humanistic concepts is not total abandonment of what teachers are expected to teach, but supplementing these materials where appropriate.

These methods aim to provide us with all the strategies or techniques known as humanistic, affective or awareness exercises. They are intended to enhance our foreign language program by bringing out the best in our students-the positive side. The exercises of all these methods attempt to blend what students feel, think, and know with what they are learning in the target language. Rather than self-denial being the acceptable way of life, self-actualization and

self-esteem are the ideals the exercises pursue.

The intent then is not simply to include humanistic activities in the foreign language class as a teaching device. It is to help build rapport. Cohesiveness and caring that far transcend what is already there. Primary aims of such methods are to help students to be themselves, to accept themselves, and to be proud of them.

What can you look forward to from using such awareness exercises? Such activities are motivating, fun and interesting to participate in, and encourage the students' desire to express themselves in the target language. They add variety to the class and hold appeal for all age levels. A cooperative spirit develops in the class as communication that is not superficial is exchanged and the materials help satisfy the demands students make for relevance and more personalized contact in their learning. Thus that is one example of how can teachers or in general all the educators create stimulating environment for studying and development.

However none of us should not expect instant miracles, but we should expect pleasant, rewarding results as our students feel an added warmth towards themselves, towards one author and toward the class environment of the certain subject. They develop a sense of personal worth by teaching such things as «I am important and so are you». Communication opens up, allowing the students to see the human side of one another as well as the teacher. When learning a foreign language, feelings of uncertainty, insecurity and even fear often develop in the learner. Use of awareness exercises will help foster instead a climate of caring and sharing in the foreign language class especially.

5. The reform of Education

There have been many critics who have written strong condemnations of the system of education in general. Accusations have been made that schools are oppressive places governed by authoritarian rules, which suppress spontaneity and creativity and foster dependency and dehumanization. In fact in the past years much effort was put into curriculum innovation. Change took the form of updating materials and 'retreating' teachers to use them properly.

Emphasis was on the content- the cognitive. But such curriculum reform did not reform the existing situation. The results we got were no different from what we were getting right along. Indeed, education is in deeper trouble. A major reason for this is that our focus is often out-of-focus. Such curricular innovations do not concentrate on or introduce change in the most critical area of all: the quality of human interaction in the classroom, that is, the way we relate to one another.

As a conclusion, the reason to our failures does not arise from lack of information, but from our inability to help students discover their personal meaning of the information we provide them. Teaching still tends to consist of boring hours of listening and being expected to learn insignificant minutiae. And schools have long been a place where many come to have a low regard for themselves as learners and subsequently as human beings.

True curriculum reform calls for more than considering the academic side of education and

giving lip service to the personal aspect. We must consider that many of the problems in school are caused by the problems with schools.

Our educational institutions must put into practice what they purport to do on paper; Foster the positive psychological growth of students. Otherwise, the past and present growing dilemmas in education and society will only intensify with time.

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