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EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TASKED-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING AND FOSTERING CREATIVITY IN EFL EDUCATION

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Abstract

This review article examines the role of task-based language teaching (TBLT) in promoting creativity in English as a foreign language (EFL) education. To do that, we collected, contrasted, and synthesized information from several sources, such as databases, school journals, Google Scholar, and other academic magazines, to ascertain the impact of TBLT on boosting creativity in the EFL training process. The results suggested that TBLT can be an effective pedagogical method for developing creativity among EFL students. The methodology enhances autonomy, imagination, and critical thinking and gives students time to generate new ideas on how to learn the language.

Keywords: autonomy, creativity, EFL education, imagination, TBLT.

Resumen

Este artículo de revisión examina el papel de la enseñanza de idiomas basada en tareas (EBT) para promover la creatividad en la educación del inglés como lengua extranjera (ILE). Para ello, recopilamos, contrastamos y sintetizamos información de varias fuentes, como bases de datos, revistas, Google Académico para determinar el impacto de EBT en el fomento de la creatividad en el proceso de formación de ILE. Los resultados sugirieron que EBT puede ser un método pedagógico efectivo para desarrollar la creatividad entre los estudiantes de ILE. El método mejora la autonomía, la imaginación y el pensamiento crítico y les da a los estudiantes tiempo para generar nuevas ideas sobre cómo aprender el idioma.

Palabras claves: autonomía, creatividad, EBT, imaginación, ILE.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, fostering creativity has become an area of interest for EFL education scholars. Such ability empowers autonomy, imagination, and critical thinking and provides students the potential capability to find ways to learn the language in different ways. According to Morris (2006), fostering creativity creates valuable contributions to the educational process. In addition to acquiring the competence to meet different challenges, students find new opportunities to learn, interact with classmates, and augment their chances of learning the language. As Avila (2015) points out, empowering creativity makes classes much more original and goes beyond formal boundaries. Regardless, Freucnd and Holling (2008) and Al-Quahtani (2016) agreed that creativity is a significant ability that must be integrated into EFL classrooms to better language learning possibilities. In this vein, exploring Tasked-Based Language Teaching to foster creativity in EFL education would be an opportunity to expand the theory of such an approach, analyze the role of TBLT to boost this ability, and provide potential opportunities to implement this method to develop creativity in EFL classes.

In research reflection, Beghetto and Kaufman (2014) affirmed that creativity is a fundamental component of the EFL education process because it helps the learning process go beyond the classroom. Davies, Snape, Collier, Digby, Hay, and Howe (2012) agreed that developing creativity in EFL contexts is an opportunity to relate to daily life situations students experience in their settings. Peterson and Seligman (2004) affirmed that encouraging creativity impacts language acquisition, such as solving class task situations or preparing to participate in a dialogue. In this perception, promoting creativity is essential in teaching and learning in EFL. In the teaching process, creativity allows teachers to use different materials, strategies, and teaching models to challenge students with meaningful learning opportunities so they can learn the language well. In the learning process, creativity demands students to create ideas and develop their assignments with a certain level of inspiration, originality, and novelty to show they are developing the necessary competencies.

Although fostering creativity in the EFL learning context is a positive way to enhance autonomy, imagination, and critical thinking and provide ample opportunities to go beyond the classroom, Popescu (2013) acknowledged that most of the research findings and recommendations must be applied in most EFL lessons. He said students are exposed to classroom experiences and pedagogical methods based on teacher talking time and teacher center classrooms. Fleith (2000) and Kim (2008) expressed that the lack of creative activities in the classroom resulted from the lack of teacher training in creativity. Beghetto (2007), Holling (2008), and Scott (1999) shared the same concern, and they agreed that there are discrepancies between the perceived value of creativity and its absence in EFL education settings. Considering these insights, we, as members of an EFL undergraduate teaching program staff, conducted a theoretical review of teaching and learning methodologies to explore their role in promoting creativity. We were also about to implement Task-based Language teaching as a primary approach in our teaching program and, therefore, started reflecting, questioning, and formulating hypotheses to adopt this method as the leading pedagogical credo in the program.

A member of the research team conducted three previous studies about the role of TBLT in promoting language learning and the potential implications of such an approach on fostering autonomy and suggested conducting a review to explore TBLT as an alternative to fostering creativity in EFL education. Then, the research team decided to evaluate the potential implications of such a methodology to develop creativity and become a possible leading pedagogical method for the program. On TBLT, Córdoba Zúñiga (2016) and Córdoba Zúñiga & Rangel Gutiérrez believed this method is a fundamental way to develop autonomy, promote meaningful learning, and match students' daily life with the classroom world. In addition, Gutiérrez, Rodríguez, Ortiz, and García (2012) established that this approach might lead students to explore their capabilities to do their assignments, interact with others, and learn the language well. Nonetheless, these outcomes appeared not to be incorporated into the context nor seem in other articles related to the same theme. Subsequently, we opted to do documental research to explore Tasked-Based Language Teaching to foster creativity in EFL education. Accordingly, this research challenges responding to the following question: To what extent does Tasked-Based Language Teaching foster creativity in EFL education?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This theoretical construct explores two constructs: creativity in EFL education and task-based language teaching to foster creativity.

Creativity in EFL Education process.

Creativity is essential for students to do appropriate, original, and innovative work inside and outside assignments. However, there has yet to be a consensus about the definition of creativity. Mullet, Willerson, Lamb, & Kettler (2016) defined it as a skill that helps humans handle everyday situations with autonomy, novelty, new ideas, and connections to appropriately do their assignments or duties. Nedjah & Hamada (2017) affirmed that creativity is an ability that allows human beings to create, generate, and deliver their responsibility with high-quality and doable solutions to problems. Similarly, Richards (2013) described creativity as solving problems in original and valuable ways, seeing new meanings and relationships in things, making connections, and using imagination and experience to create new learning opportunities.

On the other hand, when we talk about creativity in EFL education, we examine two main areas: the way the classes are delivered by the teachers and the way the students do their assignments, participate in class, and come out with the product of the classes. These two main components may vary from the original discussion of creativity as an entity of the human being that is analyzed based on the product and personality (for this analysis, please see Sternberg, 2006 and Feinstein, 2006). We want to highlight how the four main components of

creativity proposed by Torrance (1970), fluency, flexibility, imagination, and elaboration, integrated into the teaching and learning process of English as a foreign language. See Table 1 for the four components of creativity discussed in this article.

Table 1. Components of creativity

Components of creativity Torrance (1970)	Definition
Fluency	Production of ideas or alternatives to solve a problem.
Flexibility	Several ideas or possible solutions to solve a problem.
Originality	Production of new forms to solve a problem.
Elaboration	Production of detailed and clear /doable solutions.

Based on Torrance (1970).

As shown in Table 1, creativity is an integrated process that demands students to develop ideas or explanations for questions, assignments, duties, or any responsibility assigned to an individual. Richards (2013) describes creativity as solving problems in original and valuable ways, seeing new meanings and relationships in things, making connections, and using imagination to create new learning opportunities. Indeed, creativity in EFL education helps teachers and students explore their capacities to do or teach, and learning challenges innovated and workable processes by generating new ideas for teaching and learning. EFL teachers must create different teaching experiences that lead students to develop their competencies in the language. They also require developing flexibility to provide students with several assignments, activities, and exercises to promote better language acquisition opportunities. On the same talking, teachers require originality and elaboration to support and deliver lessons that match students' daily lives, learning styles, levels, and context. In this regard, Oreck (2006) stated that creative EFL teachers seek ways to leave traditional schemes day after day, to transcend traditional teaching styles to offer innovative language experiences. Further, Anderson (2002) established that creative teachers expand learners' autonomy, imagination, flexibility, and elaboration. These abilities allow students to find solutions to do their assignments, participate in class, and discover new learning possibilities to make progress in EFL.

Creativity in the EFL learning process allows students to develop autonomy, imagination, elaboration, flexibility, fluency, and originality. Autonomy helps students learn to set their own goals, rules, independence, and self-confidence while they do their assignments and group work and exchange ideas in discussion and free conversation. Imagination, elaboration, flexibility, and fluency create opportunities for the students to generate innovative ideas to turn in their assignments. Težak (2015) states that creativity is related to and benefits the EFL learning process. It helps students increase their reasoning, decision-making, and communication of their ideas to provide more elaborate and exciting output.

Further, Mohammadifar & Tabatabaee-Yazdi (2021) suggested that creativity has the potential leading role in offering students the freedom to make choices, be flexible and original, and reflect upon what is expected from them in the EFL educational process. Ghonsooly & Showqi (2012) expressed that creativity helps learners adapt to several educational experiences by developing fluency, elaboration, originality, and flexibility. This skill allows EFL to generate ideas, seek solutions to different assignments, and prepare students to learn the language for daily life situations beyond the classrooms.

Tasked-Based Language Teaching to foster creativity in EFL education.

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is a methodology of EFL education that has gained much reputation from teacher-researchers for its potential to support the acquisition of English as a foreign or second language. Skehan (1996) and Willis (1996) agreed that TBLT is an approach whose purpose is exposing students to activities that lead them to become autonomous while they learn the language naturally. Richards & Rodgers (2001), Ellis (2003), and Nunan (2005) supported that TBLT is a student-centered methodology that encourages students to assume responsibility for their learning process by participating in tasks that demand them to present, practice and perform active roles in their EFL or L2 education process. From these perspectives, this methodology reshapes the teaching and the learning process to empower learners' autonomy which may help learners explore, discover, and learn through developing assignments that allow them to gain new experiences in their learning process.

In addition, Hatip (2005) and Cordoba (2016) expressed that TBLT challenges students to be creative while they work on their assignments to provide unexpected outcomes to the tasks they need to do. They employ high-

thinking techniques such as deciding, generating ideas, analyzing those ideas, sorting possible solutions, and comparing them, to finally come out with a final product to comply with what the teachers demand from them. Such a method leads students to think about expected results, how they complete the assignment, and what exposures are necessary. In this respect, Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu (2011) stressed that TBLT contributes to enhancing a task-oriented learning environment that lets learners select, sequence, prepare, and do their assignments by negotiating, making guesses, testing possible responding to the requirements of the projects are. In other words, the methodology uses tasks to deliver meaningful lessons in which students are the center of their learning process. Then, they need to learn how to become flexible, fluent, and original to elaborate different responses to cope with the expectations.

Furthermore, Song (2020) says that TBLT is an innovative methodology that provides flexibility and productivity in EFL classrooms. To this respect, Bhandari (2020) expressed that TBLT encourages students to generate ideas to provide multiple responses to assignments and find solutions to several classroom problems. Similarly, Lambert (2019) asserted that TBLT exposes learners to an authentic environment where teachers boost creativity through open-ended assignments. See Table 2 below for the relationship between TBLT and creativity.

Table 2. Relationship between TBLT and creativity.

Authors	Relationship
Richards (2013)	TBLT helps students develop their flexible skills.
Cordoba (2016)	TBLT contributes to enhancing problem-solving abilities.
Song (2020)	TBLT enhances flexibility among students.
Bhandari (2020)	TBLT fosters classroom innovations.
Lambert (2019)	TBLT enables students to come out with original products.

Own production.

As can be seen in the previous table, TBLT allows teachers to design and implement creative tasks to encourage language manipulation and production of language by exposing students to valuable opportunities to learn how to make decisions, solve real-world problems, and create ideas by being autonomous, self-direct, and confronting challenges in the best way possible.

METHODOLOGY

This project was carried out under a qualitative documental research design. To do that, we selected a descriptive and analytical methodology that included a documental compilation process, analysis of bibliographical documents, and discussion of the most critical insights of the references we utilized for the study. In total, we followed four phases: 1) information seeking in various academic engines, journals within Colombia and worldwide and magazines; 2) classifying the information from different sources: magazines, articles, books, thesis, and conferences; 3) selecting the sources based on the dates, important and relationship with the theme we studied (Creativity and TBLT), and finally we compared, contrasted, and examine the data gathered thought process to write this report. Arias (2015) and García (1977) agreed that this research methodology facilitates analysis, recording, retrieval, and selection of knowledge, points of view, and visions exposed by other authors. Indeed, documentary research is a fundamental method to review, examine, and discover what needs to be analyzed to understand a theme better. We decided to use other databases such as Scielo, Google Academic, Dialnet, Academica.edu, and Eric to provide validity and contrast the data with other insights.

This strategy provided more rigor to the study. It facilitated the discovery of different points of view regarding the relationship between TBLT and fostering creativity in a foreign language context. We then used two primary descriptors to facilitate best the seeking of information: Task-based teaching, creativity in EFL, and the relationship between Tasked-Based Language Teaching and fostering creativity in EFL education. Next, we read and examined the content of the central thesis that supported the articles, books, and thesis we reviewed. In this process, we synthesized the information from the different documents, transcribed it on Word documents, read the reports thoroughly, and labeled them with fragments, ideas, thoughts, and interpretations to make meaning and draft. In the very last stage, we re-read the drafts to make inferences, determine the authenticity of the data interpretations, and draw the concluding analysis to elaborate the report.

Findings and Discussions

The findings of this paper are divided into four parts—first, perceptions toward the significance of creativity in EFL education. Second, lack of teacher training for creativity; third, the existence of curricular gaps. Furthermore, some suggestions are provided to address the low development of creativity in the EFL field.

Creativity in an EFL Context

Fostering creativity plays a fundamental role in the EFL teaching and learning process. This ability creates an educational environment where imagination, generating ideas, and problem-solving assignments encourage learners to be autonomous, flexible, innovative, and responsible for learning. Creativity is a powerful competence that learners and teachers have in common. It helps teachers deliver lively, interesting, and engaging lessons in which students participate and do assignments closely related to their lives. It also assists students in discovering different ways to do their assignments, participate in class, become autonomous, and develop high language skills. In this sense, novelty is added as a primary value to the teaching and learning process when creativity occurs in an EFL classroom.

At this point, we agree with Mullet, Willerson, Lamb, & Kettler (2016) and Nedjah & Hamada (2017), who stated that creativity is a capability that potentiates English education by training students how to become responsible and conscious about learning. Regardless of teaching, teaching switches from a stagnant philosophy to one in which teachers offer learners-centered pedagogy, whose result is to encourage innovative ways to make the EFL experiences more enjoyable, meaningful, and practical to let students become more independent and autonomous. In this case, enhancing creativity in the EFL formation is a road that allows students to experience novel learning possibilities, such as learning to assume the leading role in their learning and discovering ways to acquire the English language. In this respect, fostering creativity in EFL is appropriate to promote other skills, such as originality and creating ideas for an assignment. Such a skill also demands students to explore several ways to do a task, allowing them to use their imagination creatively. As Richards (2013) concluded, creativity offers students diverse ways of developing their assignments. Creativity is an ability that prepares students to find ways to fulfill the expectations of a task, come out with different products for their projects, encounter new connections, and think creatively.

Creativity in the EFL Education process necessitates teachers and students to assume teaching and learning responsibilities. Encouraging creativity demands teachers to inspire students to use their resourcefulness, inventiveness, and originality to come out with insights or new visions to complete a task following the requirements. As stated by Torrance (1970), teachers need to implement methodologies that encourage the creation of diverse responses to activities and assignments they design. Teachers use a student-centered method that assures different results to the same work and lets students find ways to overcome possible problems they might encounter while doing their activities. In such a manner, Oreck (2006) expressed that enhancing innovation in EFL classes forces teachers to transform their teaching philosophy into one in which innovative strategies, activities, and exercises are the center of the teaching and learning process. So, challenging experiences help learners become autonomous and active participants in their learning process.

 Empowering creativity is not only fostering active participation, autonomy, or students finding and solving problems; creative students must reflect upon their learning process, find their ways of learning, and acquire abilities such as negotiation, teamwork, and collaboration. On the contrary, fostering creativity demands learners to comply with specific responsibilities, such as looking for novelty, inspiration, and originality to use all their potential to do the assignments to fulfill the requirements and to suggest going beyond the expected result. Students must challenge themselves to find new ways to submit their assignments, perform an activity, and show the result of learning. On this matter, Težak (2015), Mohammadifar & Tabatabaee-Yazdi (2021), and Ghonsooly & Showqi (2012), the implementation of creative methods, strategies, and activities in EFL creates a class environment where learners adapt, adjust, anticipate, and fit the base to be self-determining, self-ruling, and sovereign to do of their task's innovative productions full of creativity, innovation, and imagination.

Tasked-Based Language Teaching and Creativity in EFL education.

When a research report examines TBLT and its potential implications for fostering EFL learning opportunities, we acknowledge and agree with supporters of such an approach like Skehan (1996) and Willis (1996), who have been reinforcing the insights about this method as a meaningful pedagogical strategy to foster the development of communicative competences among the students. TBLT is a practical method that boosts English learning in a student-centered environment whose primary goal is to let learners assume their responsibility for learning by participating in diverse language learning experiences that include oral presentations, dramas, innovative outputs, and problem-solving, among other school projects. This perspective is shared by Richards & Rodgers (2001), Ellis (2003), and Nunan (2005), who considered that TBLT renovates

EFL classrooms by endorsing innovative learning experiences that allow students to become the doers of their learning by exploring, discovering, participating, and involving themselves in the class. Such experiences lead students to become independent and self-contained. In this regard, there is a close relationship between TBLT and creativity because this method (TBLT) empowers students to develop their ability by working independently on their tasks which automatically trains them to be autonomous and make their own decisions and judgments.

In addition, TBLT offers a framework that helps students become flexible, fluent, and original to elaborate different responses to coping with the assignment's expectations. On this matter, Hatip (2005) and Cordoba (2016) argue that this method is adjustable, formative, and unpredictable in developing tasks. While doing each of their exercises, the students generate different ideas and ways to discuss, negotiate, and make decisions about the best proposals to meet the requirements imposed by the teachers to complete the assignments. Such interaction fosters mental flexibility, creative thinking, and audacity on the part of the students to increase their reasoning, decision-making, and communication of their ideas to provide more elaborated and exciting output. TBLT then allows students to make original choices and reflect upon each assignment on exploiting their creativity, inventiveness, and resolution to produce possible results for the tasks. Based on this, Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu (2011) pointed out that this method is an alternative to exploring learners' creativity because students learn how to give answers and opinions by making choices, discriminating an assignment into details, analyzing the appropriate ways to fulfill the requirements and show their creativity.

As mentioned earlier, TBLT is an approach that may be considered a mechanism that allows teachers to boost students' creativity for various reasons. Learners think to respond to the assignments by generating, developing, and communicating their points of view to their classmates. By doing that, they learn how to define, analyze, develop, and solve problems individually and with their classmates. Song (2020), Bhandari (2020), and Lambert (2019) admitted that TBLT fosters the creative production of learners by accepting several responses to the assignments. There is a close relationship between TBLT and creativity in the EFL education process because such an approach acknowledges flexibility, develops problem-solving skills, and empowers students' production. In other words, TBLT facilitates opportunities for learners to be creative in their assignments by generating new ideas, learning how to resolve the assignments' challenges, and developing innovative outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This article explores the relationship between Tasked-Based Language Teaching and fostering creativity in EFL education. The findings showed that creativity is a competence that enables students to come out with ideas, proposals, and insights to solve problems and do assignments with a certain level of novelty. This skill in EFL encourages teaching and learning to be innovative, challenging, and natural. TBLT helps students increase their reasoning, decision-making, and communication of their ideas to provide more elaborate and exciting output. It allows them to make choices, be original, and reflect upon what is expected in each assignment. Under this method, the EFL education process encourages students to be open-minded, flexible, original, and resourceful to come out with different outputs to complete assignments without the help of teachers. From this perspective, EFL education should consider the need to develop creativity in the classroom because students learn how to make comparisons categorize, sequence explores, and acquire problem-solving abilities.

On the other hand, data suggested that implementing TBLT offers conditions to empower creativity in EFL classrooms. TBLT offers practical teaching and learning opportunities for the students to work independently to generate several solutions to the assignments or problems they need to solve in a task. This methodology provides students with varied experiences, lively classroom engagement, and autonomy-based lessons that transform EFL education from routinary into learner-centered, where the students take active roles to complete their assignments. Based on this, TBLT may be considered an effective method for promoting creativity. Learners recognize the need to become autonomous by probing ways to respond to the assignments with originality, creating opportunities to brainstorm to design and ascertain the best forms to produce outputs. Similarly, TBLT introduces adjustability and versatility to EFL education by letting students discover alternative forms to reshape the result of the assignments. Learners are encouraged to plan the course of actions they think they will need to do the tasks, organize their ideas, make decisions, have the initiative to improvise and discover how they want to do their assignments.

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