Creativity and other Learner Characteristics in Acquiring Language

Gulrukh Yusupova
“Silk Road” International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage, Samarkand, Uzbekistan
gulrukh.yusupova@univ-silkroad.uz

Abstract: The study describes one of the more complicated steps in a language learner's phycology while learning a second language. As second language acquisition is influenced by a variety of elements and traits (Zafar & Meenakshi, 2012), this research will focus on the practical consequences of the broad physiological concept of creativity. The research's relevance is in identifying the gap between scientific knowledge and practical application in learning a second language from a physiological standpoint. The study's goal is to put the construct of learners' phycology-creativity to the test in order to see how it can aid in the acquisition of a second language. The research takes into account prior efforts in this subject such as Sternberg (2006), Chamorro-Premuzic (2011), Simonton (2008), and others.

Keywords: Language acquisition, learner’s phycology, acquire, creative approach, learning process, construct, originality, instrument.

Introduction

Uzbekistan is striving great changes in different fields as a young developing country, particularly in the field of education. Teaching foreign language remains one of the crucial tasks in the educational sphere. The field of applied linguistics is being explored more deeply, learning from foreign experiences and applying it into practice, and by this way enriching it with recent innovations. One of the most trending and at the same time complex process in obtaining the language remains Second language acquisition process. It is considered as complex one due to the reason that it is tightly connected with learner’s physiological attitudes and characteristics.

As it was mentioned by Plucker, Beghetto, and Dow (2004) in a paper aptly entitled “Why isn’t creativity more important to educational psychologists?,” the study of creativity in education has not been nearly productive as one would expect. One reason for this state of affairs is a lack of agreement as to the appropriate focus of the study of creativity. Thus it is desirable to investigate this field more deeply and learn from previous investigations, making some investments in effective second language learning procedures.

It is widely known from the earlier investigations in the field of applied linguistics that language acquisition may depend on many factors like linguistic factors, age factors, some learner characteristics and many more.

The objective of this paper is to investigate practical application of the theoretical knowledge about one of the main constructs effecting language acquisition- creativity. In this small-scale research some implementations from the previous works on the field of tightly interconnected understandings in language learning were used. Particularly theoretical background of connection of creativity and learning, measuring creativity and creativity in SLA including empirical studies conducted by Albert and Kormos’s (2004) study on a task based approach served as a main tool.

Main part

Linguists have been interested in factors or characteristics which may probably help or vice versa serve as a barrier in acquiring the second language for a long time. Since this period of time much was discovered in the field of second language acquisition and much still remains undiscovered. It was defined that there are some features of learner phycology that could be
called other learner characteristics as creativity, anxiety, willingness to communicate, self-esteem and learner beliefs that could in effect on L2 acquisition.

So what is creativity? Referring to one of those grand psychological constructs that can be defined differently by different people, creativity may be considered something extraordinary beyond framed understandings. It has long been associated with intelligence, particularly, according to Sternberg’s (2002) theory of successful intelligence, creative intelligence served as one of three core factors. However, it may be defined that it extends beyond the intellectual domain; as Sternberg explains, “Sources of individual and developmental differences in creative performance include not only process aspects, but aspects of knowledge, thinking styles, personality, motivation, and the environmental context in which the individual operates” (p. 29).

Indeed, many personality theories include a prominent creativity component (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2006).

In literature review, Simonton (2008) suggests two key factors: originality and adaptiveness. Feldhausen and Westby (2003) define it as the production of ideas, problem solutions, plans, works of art, musical compositions, sculptures, dance routines, poems, novels, essays, designs, theories, or devices at the highest and lowest levels, interpreting it as something valuing to the creator at the lowest and something recognized and valued by the society at the highest level. (p. 95)

Chamorro-Premuzic (2011) defines the notion as a skill of adaptation to the constantly changing world that is crucial. He interprets creativity to contribute to the required flexibility. It is therefore can be considered as prerequisite to lifelong learning, combined with the concept that is related to the ability to find original solutions to problems and to come up with new ways to achieve goals. From this perspective it may seem that creativity may be considered as key concern of educational psychology.

Another linguist Simonton (2008) identifies three core approaches in defining creativity as a mental process, as a product, and a notion linked with a person. It is understood from the points that there is some sort of overlap between these areas, it may seem that creative products result from the creative mental processes of a creative person, but researchers tend to have their own interest in one of these three areas in explorations of the role of creativity in learning.

One more sufficient issue connected with creativity- is a question of measuring it. So, from this point of the perspective a number of works were done. Several tests have been developed to operationalize creativity in specific measurable terms. Reflecting the variability in the understanding of the subject mentioned above, some of these instruments focus on the cognitive processes associated with creative thinking like Remote Associations Test; or another variable as looking at the person behind the creativity- Creative Persons Scale (Gough, 1979); examination the products of creativity like Consensual Assessment Technique (Baer, Kaufman, & Gentile, 2004). Nevertheless, the best-known and most widely used measure of creativity have been the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (Plucker & Makel, 2010), that contains a series of tasks scored for originality of the responses (how unique and unusual they are), flexibility (how varied they are), and fluency (how many unusual responses are). Runco (2003) emphasized that none of the three indicators are all-important but should be used in concert to describe the individual’s ideational profile.

As Simonton (2012) pointed out, the assessment of creativity tended to be very specific and the field lacked a measurement that cuts across all directions in the same way IQ is said to work for intelligence. One more move in this direction was the Creative Achievement Questionnaire (CAQ; Carson, Peterson, & Higgins, 2005), which assessed creativity in a number of directions like creative writing, humor, music, and culinary arts. Although the instrument was essentially product-oriented, scores on this questionnaire positively correlate both with various cognitive and person measures of creativity. Thus, the CAQ represented an instrument based on the belief that it is possible to identify and isolate some core aspect of creativity. However, Sternberg (2012) described a very different approach to the study of creativity, an investment-based theory,
which suggested that no such core aspect of creativity existed.

Also there were two empirical studies of creativity in L2 learning (Ottó, 1998) and (Albert & Kormos, 2004). Which suggested positive relationship between creativity and L2 learner performance. Ottó’s (1998) study was concerned with how students’ creative abilities affected learning outcomes; he adapted five subtasks from the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking:

(a) Consequences— presenting students with improbable situations and asking them to provide as many consequences as they could think of.

(b) Unusual uses— asking students to list possible unusual uses for common objects such as a book or a pencil.

(c) Common problems— asking students to list a number of problems that might occur in one of the following two everyday situations: going to school in the morning or making a sandwich.

(d) Categories— asking students to list as many things as they could think of that belonged to a given category such as ‘things that are red or more often red than not.’

(e) Associations— presenting participants with two words, for example, ‘mirror’ and ‘rain,’ and asking them to supply a third one that could be semantically associated with these.

Albert and Kormos’s (2004) study followed a task-based approach. Their participants carried out an oral narrative task and then filled in a standardized creativity test developed for use in Hungary, examining how three standard aspects of creativity— originality, flexibility, and fluency— influenced a variety of measures of task performance. The findings of Albert and Kormos (2004) showed that two components of creativity, originality and creative fluency, were associated with some measures of task performance, but no significant correlations were found between task-related variables and flexibility or the total creativity score.

Materials.

Considering the point of Sternberg (2012) about creativity required an association of six distinct, but interconnected, resources: intellectual abilities, knowledge, styles of thinking, personality, motivation, and environment the small scale research was conducted. The idea was to check whether these resources were considered as sources of individual differences, often the decision to use the resources was more important source of individual differences or not. Ultimately considering whether creativity was about one thing, or about a system of things.

Another idea to identify was whether a shift toward more student-centered, interaction-based, and open-ended language teaching methodologies suggested a greater role for creative learner thinking and behavior. Runco (2004) was reporting on studies that found significant differences between classrooms within schools in terms of the level of creative thinking characterizing the students, paying attention to the link between the immediate classroom environments and appearing creative thinking.

Taking into consideration the previous researches in the field of creativity like Creative Achievement Questionnaire (Carson, Pettersen, & Higgins, 2005), or Torrence Tests of Creative Thinking (Pluker & Makel, 2010) the research was conducted in the form of observation and test (at the ending of the procedure to check desired outcomes).

Participants

The participants of this study-25 students (12 male and 13 female) from one of academic lyceums in Samarkand. The age of the teenagers varied between 16-18. All the participants were 2nd year students, studying English as a major subject. Participants’ language level varied, ranging from intermediate to upper intermediate.

Procedures and methods

The lessons of English of the same group with the same teacher were observed during several days. The idea was to conduct the lessons during these days initially at primitive teacher centered mode, and then shifting it to more student-centered, interaction based and open ended teaching
atmosphere. To make the desired results more objective the same topic was chosen for different lessons. On the first day of observation students were provided with active vocabulary, reading the text on the topic and doing some comprehension tasks. On the next day of observation the teacher provided the lesson with the creative approach: applying colorful pictures to the reading task, working with the active vocabulary in the form of interaction based game, introducing some on-topic puzzles and at the end giving an opportunity to students to paint a picture of the thing that they associated the lesson with.

As this research based on observation the data was collected in the form of records and notes. Also progress check tests containing 10 questions to identify how the lesson process was effective were used. Than the difference between those days’ lessons was compared according to collected records and testing results.

### Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of questions</th>
<th>The number of correct answers (considering the number of students) after 1st day of the lesson</th>
<th>The number of correct answers (considering the number of students) after 2nd day of the lesson</th>
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<td>1.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>90%</td>
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(Questionnaire results of 15 out of 25 participants)

### Discussions

Results of this study showed that the participants absorbed the material better on the second day when creative approach was used at the lesson rather than first day. It was released that student creativity may inhibit by certain common classroom conditions and tasks (e.g., test-like activities), whereas activities that are presented in a “permissive and gamelike fashion” appear to release creativity, especially communicative L2 learning activities helped students to release creativity and thus serve as a good tool in absorbing language materials effectively.

### Conclusion

The pedagogical implication of this study is – it is important to “activate” students with more student centered, interaction based and open ended approaches while conducting language lessons, as it may positively effect on second language acquisition. Finally, It is also desirable to conduct further researches in this field of knowledge, emphasizing to a large number of participants and different language levels, in order to improve language learning and teaching processes.

### References