

Teachers' creative practices in English language teaching

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ABSTRACT

21st-century learning skills include the 4Cs: communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. Creativity is a key skill for learning and innovation in the 21st century. English is an effective subject that can use creativity in teaching and can attract students' attention to be more enthusiastic in receiving material and achieving learning objectives. Teachers as educators have an important role to carry out learning activities, therefore this research aims to find out how teachers express their creativity in English Language Teaching. This research uses qualitative research using a case study design. This research uses two instruments, and they are: the first instrument is classroom observation, and the second instrument is documentation. This study underscores the importance of creativity in English language teaching, providing insights that can help educators enhance their instructional practices. Based on the results of research through classroom observation and documentation, it can be found that there are 4 aspect of English teachers expressing creativity, namely: Fluency in Teaching, Flexibility of Instruction, Originality of Ideas and Collaborative Elaboration. These results are in accordance with the four criteria for creative teachers based on theory of (Rahmayanti & Mubarak, 2022): Fluency, Flexibility, Originality, and Elaboration.

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1. Introduction

Creativity, defined as the ability to produce new and valuable ideas (Supardan, 2010; Huriyah, 2019), is essential in 21st-century education. It encompasses fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration (Rahmayanti & Mubarak, 2022), which are crucial for developing critical thinking and problem-solving abilities in students. This study investigates how teachers express creativity in English language teaching. Creativity plays a vital role in enhancing educational quality by fostering innovative teaching methods. It allows teachers to create engaging, interactive, and effective learning experiences (Antari, 2021). In the context of English language learning, creativity is particularly important as it can capture students' attention and facilitate the achievement of learning goals (Hestika et al., 2021). Creative teaching strategies are known to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes (Massie et al., 2022; Erdogan, 2019).

In 21st-century education, skills such as communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking (the 4Cs) are essential (Erdogan, 2019). These skills prepare students to compete in the Industrial Revolution 4.0 (Ratama et al., 2021). Teachers, as key facilitators of learning, play a critical role in integrating these skills into their teaching practices. Their creativity in designing and implementing learning activities can significantly impact student motivation and engagement

(Rahmayanti & Mubarak, 2022). Motivation is a strong trigger for more independent learning for students (Muslim et al., 2020). Despite the recognized importance of creativity in education, there is limited research on how teachers specifically express creativity in English language teaching. This study aims to explore how English language teachers express creativity in their teaching practices and how this impacts student engagement and learning outcomes. Research indicates that teachers' creativity involves generating fresh ideas and activities that make learning more interesting and effective (Huriyah, 2019). Characteristics of creative teachers include fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration (Mulyana, 2010; Rahmayanti & Mubarak, 2022). These traits enable teachers to design activities that are not only educational but also engaging and suited to students' needs for appropriate strategies in acquiring material (Weda et al., 2023).

Several studies have highlighted the importance of teacher creativity. Khikmah (2019) emphasized the need for creative and interesting activity designs tailored to student interests, age, proficiency levels, school policies, and available resources. Artini and Padmadewi (2021) investigated English teachers' creativity in Bali, noting its significant role in achieving educational success through effective use of foreign languages and 21st-century skills. Meliala et al. (2021) discusses how English teachers design their teaching materials by selecting appropriate learning media in the classroom to make it easier for students to learn and understand the subject matter. Their findings reveal discrepancies between teachers' perceptions and classroom practices.

This study addresses the gap in the literature by examining how English teachers express creativity in their teaching and its impact on student learning outcomes. Understanding the role of teacher creativity can provide insights into improving teaching methods and creating engaging and effective learning environments.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative case study design to provide an in-depth exploration of teacher creativity in English language teaching. A qualitative approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of human and social phenomena in their natural settings (Fadli, 2021). The case study method enables intensive and detailed examination of specific instances, which is ideal for gaining profound insights into the current practices and phenomena (Fadli, 2021). The research was conducted in a 7th grade English class at SMP Negeri 1 Sumber. The participant was an English teacher selected based on their reputation for employing creative teaching methods, as recommended by the school administration. Approximately 40 students were involved in the study. The setting provided a rich context for observing and understanding the implementation of creative teaching strategies. The data source in this research is primary data. According to Kaharuddin (2021) Primary data is data obtained or collected by researchers directly from the field where researchers was conduct the research.

The instruments that used in this research are classroom observation and documentation. Classroom observations were conducted to capture how the teacher expressed creativity during the teaching and learning process. A structured observation protocol was used to ensure systematic data collection. This method allowed for real-time documentation of teaching practices, student interactions, and classroom dynamics, providing a detailed account of the creative processes in action. Documentation involved collecting various written materials related to the research phenomenon, such as lesson plans, teaching modules, and other instructional materials used by the teacher. Additionally, the researcher recorded classroom interactions and activities to supplement observational data. This approach ensured a comprehensive collection of evidence reflecting the teacher's creativity. The researcher acted as a participatory observer, engaging with the class while maintaining an objective stance to minimize potential biases. This dual role allowed the researcher to gain an insider's perspective while carefully documenting the teaching practices and interactions without interfering with the natural classroom environment. Documentation involves collecting data from documents and other written materials related to the research phenomenon (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). Researchers used documentation to investigate by looking at teaching plans through the design of teaching modules, teaching materials used by teachers for learning process. Documentation also use to record during the learning process. Recording directly an ongoing thing in the form of a description of the circumstances that can be described when the event occurs that looks real and natural at that time. Data analysis followed Rijali's (2018) framework, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions:

1. **Data Reduction:** This involved classifying, discarding unnecessary information, and organizing the data systematically. The process ensured that the essential information from field notes and documentation was highlighted for further analysis.
2. **Data Presentation:** Organized sets of information were structured in a narrative form, making it possible to draw meaningful conclusions. This step involved creating coherent and comprehensive descriptions of the observed phenomena.
3. **Drawing Conclusions:** The researcher continuously reflected on the data, reviewing findings and documents to formulate final conclusions. This iterative process ensured that the conclusions were well-supported by the data.

The methodological choices are supported by existing literature. According to Fadli (2021), case studies allow for an in-depth exploration of current phenomena, making it an appropriate choice for investigating teacher creativity in the classroom. The structured observation protocol and comprehensive documentation ensured thorough and reliable data collection.

3. Findings and Discussion

Based on the result of research through Classroom Observation and Documentation, from the research question it was found that the creativity expressed by teachers in learning English is divided into 4 aspects, namely: Fluency in Teaching, Flexibility of Instruction, Originality of Ideas and Collaborative Elaboration.

3.1. Fluency in Teaching

Fluency in teaching involves the teacher's ability to create an efficient and productive learning environment, organize learning well, and facilitate subject matter for students. This includes the ability to generate a continuous flow of ideas and maintain a dynamic classroom atmosphere.



Fig. 1. Learning Environment

From the results of observations on the learning of descriptive text material with the theme 'Do you have any favorite food?' the teacher expresses her creativity with fluency in teaching, this means that the teacher can create an efficient and productive learning environment, as well as organize and facilitate learning well. In the picture showed, first the teacher creates an efficient and productive learning environment by giving sparking questions to students so that students can be active in learning, some of these sparking questions include such as:

1. *Do you have any favorite meal?*
2. *Why do you like your favorite meal?*
3. *How does your favorite meal taste?*
4. *How does your favorite meal texture?*

These questions encouraged student participation and made the class more interactive. The teacher also effectively managed classroom activities, seamlessly transitioning between different parts of the lesson while maintaining students' interest and engagement. For example, she started with an icebreaker related to the theme, followed by a group discussion, and concluded with individual presentations. This structured yet fluid approach ensured that all students were involved and actively participating throughout the lesson.

Additionally, the teacher's ability to organize the learning process was evident as she followed a well-prepared lesson plan, ensuring that the class ran smoothly and the learning objectives were met. Her preparedness and adaptability in responding to students' questions and comments further exemplified her fluency in teaching.

This finding supports the idea that fluency in teaching is crucial for maintaining student engagement and achieving learning outcomes. The teacher's preparedness and ability to ask stimulating questions created a dynamic and productive classroom environment. This aligns with Rahmayanti and Mubarak's (2022) theory that effective teaching involves fluency in generating and implementing ideas to solve educational challenges. By continuously engaging students with thought-provoking questions and interactive activities, the teacher not only facilitated learning but also encouraged students to think critically and creatively.

3.2. Flexibility of Instruction

Flexibility of instruction refers to the teacher's ability to adapt teaching approaches to meet the diverse needs of students and create responsive and innovative learning experiences. This includes being open to changing lesson plans, incorporating new teaching methods, and utilizing various instructional materials and technologies.



Fig. 2. Teacher Instruction

The teacher demonstrated flexibility by integrating digital technology into her lessons. For example, she sent a Wordwall link to students via a WhatsApp group, allowing them to use their cellphones to access interactive content about food textures and flavors. This approach not only made learning more engaging but also catered to the students' familiarity with digital tools. During the lesson, the teacher noticed that some students were struggling with understanding certain descriptive terms. She quickly adapted by providing additional visual aids and examples, ensuring that all students could grasp the concepts being taught.

Moreover, the teacher varied her instructional strategies to maintain student interest and cater to different learning styles. She used a combination of direct instruction, group work, multimedia presentations, and hands-on activities. For instance, in addition to the Wordwall activity, she also used real food items brought by students to provide a tactile and sensory learning experience.

Flexibility in instruction is essential for modern teaching, especially in a digital age where students are adept at using technology. The teacher's use of digital platforms to deliver content and interact

with students highlights the importance of adapting teaching methods to enhance learning experiences. This approach is consistent with the notion that flexible instruction can lead to higher student engagement and better learning outcomes. The teacher's ability to adjust her teaching methods based on student needs and classroom dynamics demonstrates a high level of adaptability, which is key to effective teaching in diverse and ever-changing educational environments.

3.3. Originality of Ideas

The originality of ideas in teaching involves creating new, interesting, and different approaches to learning that have not been used before. This can include innovative lesson plans, creative use of materials, and unique instructional strategies that capture students' attention and imagination.



Fig. 3. Teacher Idea

The teacher displayed originality by asking students to bring their favorite foods to class. In groups, students explored these foods, discussed their textures and flavors, and shared their findings. Additionally, the teacher provided a Wordwall link for students to record their observations, making the learning process interactive and enjoyable. This activity was not only novel but also highly relevant to the students' lives, making the learning experience more meaningful and memorable.

The teacher also incorporated storytelling into the lesson, asking students to create and share stories about their favorite foods. This exercise encouraged creativity and helped students practice their descriptive writing skills in a fun and engaging way. Furthermore, the teacher introduced a role-playing activity where students pretended to be food critics, evaluating and describing different dishes. This imaginative approach fostered a deeper understanding of descriptive language and encouraged students to think outside the box.

Originality in teaching encourages students to engage deeply with the material by making learning relatable and fun. By involving students' favorite foods in the lesson, the teacher made the content more personal and memorable. This method supports the idea that originality can enhance student motivation and participation, contributing to a more effective learning environment. The teacher's innovative activities not only captured students' interest but also provided diverse opportunities for them to express their creativity and apply their knowledge in new and exciting ways.

3.4. Collaborative Elaboration

Collaborative elaboration refers to the teacher's ability to foster detailed group discussions and collaborative problem-solving among students. This involves creating opportunities for students to work together, share ideas, and build on each other's contributions to achieve common learning goals.



Fig. 4. Students in Groups

The teacher organized students into groups to discuss the theme "my favorite food." Each group worked together to analyze the topic, share ideas, and present their findings to the class. The teacher facilitated these discussions and guided the question-and-answer sessions, ensuring that all students contributed and learned from each other. This collaborative approach not only helped students develop their communication and teamwork skills but also deepened their understanding of the lesson content.

During the group activities, the teacher encouraged students to take on different roles, such as group leader, recorder, and presenter, to ensure active participation from all members. She also provided prompts and questions to guide the discussions and keep the groups focused. The collaborative environment fostered a sense of community and mutual support, making the learning experience more enjoyable and effective.

Collaborative elaboration enhances critical thinking and teamwork skills among students. The teacher's approach of using group activities to explore and present ideas demonstrates the effectiveness of collaborative learning. This method aligns with the theory that collaborative elaboration helps students develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter through collective effort and detailed discussion. By working together, students were able to share their knowledge, learn from their groups, and build on each other's ideas, leading to a richer and more comprehensive learning experience.

From all the explanations, the quality of learning is influenced by the actions of teachers who are creative in choosing and implementing learning models and activities. The process of teaching and learning is important because teacher can transfer knowledge and control their students to develop their competences (Efrini, 2016). Creativity is also one of the competencies that teachers have. Competence is a person's ability to perform a job or task based on skills, knowledge, and work attitude (Suharyatia et al., 2019). A person can be said to have creativity if they are able to create something new and can be useful and used to overcome something faced. Creativity has the freedom to create something new such as ideas or things that are different from before. This ability can be seen in the way a person thinks creatively and the ability to be creative in expressing things. Creativity which is one of the learning skills in the 21st century provides innovation and explores for teachers to creatively apply their creativity in learning and teaching process which can contribute to the understanding of innovative and creative educational practices. In this research, teachers' in their creativity apply four characteristics of creative teachers, namely: Fluency in Teaching, Flexibility of Instruction, Originality of Ideas and Collaborative Elaboration. In their creativity teacher also seen using digital-based media, the current technological development affects almost all the aspects of human life, and one of them is in English Learning (Mulya & Refnaldi, 2016).

4. Conclusion

Teachers' creativity competencies can provide a number of skills that enable them to create and deliver innovative and motivating learning experiences. Creative teachers are one of the factors that influence the quality of learning. Based on the results of all findings, it can be concluded that English teachers express their creativity in English learning divided into 4 aspects there are Fluency in Teaching, Teaching Flexibility of Instruction, Originality of Ideas, and Collaborative Elaboration. On the application of creativity, teachers apply four aspects of creative teachers based on the theory from Rahmayanti and Mubarak (2022) namely: Fluency, Flexibility, Originality and Elaboration. Creativity does not limit movement and has its own freedom of expression and uniqueness in it.

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