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Creativity in Teaching a Foreign Language

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Abstract: *One of the primary goals of a teacher is to motivate students to learn and to find pleasure and enjoyment in the learning process. A teacher who fails to find a way to touch the hearts and lives of learners is not effective. To achieve this goal, teachers must be more humanistic and creative in their teaching methods. Being a "connected" teacher means being able to convey information to students using motivational methods specific to their level, desire and needs. Thus, creativity has become one of the central issues in recent educational research. Teachers must not always be creative themselves but also find and stimulate the creativity of students; this is one of the most important directions to improve and modernize the teaching process. The development of creativity is a social demand, but also an individual need. It is more and more demanded by society to overcome the gap between creative activities and routine and to stimulate the progress of society.*

Keywords: *creativity, pedagogy, creative thinking, educational approach.*

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1. Introduction

The teaching of a foreign language has a double mission: to teach students to communicate in the to communicate in the target language and to offer them an approach to the culture of the foreign language to enable them to become more aware of their own culture. In recent years, the communicative aspect has taken on a new dimension. It is no longer only a question of transmitting concrete knowledge to the students - a grammar, vocabulary - but also to develop a certain communicative competence. Thus, following exercises in class, students must not only be able to use the forms learned, but above all they must have the space necessary to produce a real and personal message. In this sense, authors central to the new development of language teaching affirm that "[if] the objective of language learning is to communicate effectively, the priority must be placed on fluency, not accuracy" (Pluskwa et al., 2003, p. 207).

Creativity, which has been the subject of reflection for centuries, came to prominence in pedagogy in the 1970s. In the 21st century, it is still a fashionable notion, even omnipresent in extremely varied fields. Some of its defining characteristics seem to be accepted in all disciplines, such as novelty or originality, risk-taking, non-linear thinking or divergent thinking (i.e., the ability to combine different ideas, to find multiple solutions to the same problem, to reorganize thinking, etc.), surprise, inventiveness or even genius, serendipity, etc. A precise definition in the context that interests us, language didactics, is required. Didactics has been built from different fields of research concerning childhood, cognitive processes. We select here some of them which seem to us to be particularly relevant to clarify the link between creativity and language learning.

2. Creativity in Pedagogy

Creativity is most often studied in psychology, in order to be evaluated or even measured. Researchers describe it as "the ability to produce something that is both novel and appropriate to the context in which it occurs" (Lubart, 2003, p. 10), while the creative process is described as "a succession of thoughts and actions that result in creations" (Botella et al., 2016, p. 33). Creativity, in this epistemological framework, would therefore be oriented towards the finished product and would allow for innovation. It is easy to imagine its impact in particular for teachers, who are invited to design new devices in order to adapt to the challenges of the 21st

century, but also for students who have to (perform) in foreign languages, therefore new for them.

In the field of pedagogy, creative thinking is considered as a transversal skill for teaching and/or learning. Creative activity would, in turn, allow the development of strategies for motivation, especially in collaborative situations (Clarke, 2015). Creation is the expression of a process that develops the individual's potential. Although it is not reserved for the arts alone, creativity has a place in arts education, where it is characterized more by the renewal of links between elements, by the renewal of associations that (creation) generates. What seems "real" and known is questioned, reinterpreted by trial and error, modeling, etc. Creativity would be a way which would lead, by association of materials, ideas, actions etc., to the object of creation. Now, association is precisely one of the neuronal mechanisms that occurs both in the creative process, notably artistic, and in the emergence of language. For it would seem that the more the complex relations between the different cerebral areas are activated, the more the chemical reactions (such as the production of dopamine) that occur in the brain are intensified, the more creative processes can be observed (such as artistic production, or scientific eureka, etc.). Similarly, language is the result of the activation of several areas simultaneously and the associative networks between these areas and between the hemispheres. It is indeed interconnected neural networks that underlie creativity. Other studies in cognitive neuroscience (Andreasen, 2005; Bialystok et al., 2012; Dietrich & Kanso, 2010; Gallagher, 2007) also reveal the role of the associative cortex in complex information processing operations such as the association of divergent ideas, imagination, memory, language, and complex decision making (Ilyin, 2012). All these capacities are part of the creativity specific to the human species.

Languages themselves change over the centuries, through cultural hybridization, and even through the situations in which they are spoken (one does not speak in the same way to one's child, one's friend, one's superiors etc.). They are creations of human beings. They are anchored in cultures in which beliefs, representations (including of time and space) and symbols sometimes differ greatly. When we learn new ones, it is therefore necessary to carry out mental operations of change of perspective to enter into this other way of relating to the world. A creative process is therefore specific to languages, which is based on mental flexibility, which allows the subject to adapt his or her behavior according to the environment in which he or she finds himself or herself or to empathize, skills necessary for learning new languages and new cultures; Imagination, which allows the generation of

new ideas but also constitutes one of the pillars of empathy, especially when reading fiction, when putting oneself in the place of the characters, in novels, in movies, in theater, etc. and the ability to weave links between the known (family languages) and the new (foreign languages).

Neuroscience reveals that neural plasticity, thanks to which these new connections of meaning can take place, forms the neurobiological basis of learning and memorization, especially of languages. What about creativity in a language teaching situation? It is deployed at three levels: in the pedagogical action, in the act of learning and in the actions related to the competences evaluated (reception, production, mediation). It therefore seems necessary to develop it and one of the best approaches is through our emotions and our experience of languages with our whole body.

If linguistic systems sometimes seem very far from each other, non-verbal language, body language, is partly universal. The basic or background emotions have the particularity of being understood by almost all individuals independently of their culture. Gestures and mimics, while being cultural and even subjective, are also part of a directly perceptible, facilitating language. It is found at all levels of oral language because speech is always linked to gestures and facial expressions. The body language is known and plays a role of mediator to welcome, accompany and connect other language forms, verbal. These are sometimes still unknown, sometimes known to some (family languages), sometimes *a priori* known to all but always to be rediscovered with wonder (the language of schooling). Beyond the simple lexicon and grammatical structures, it is the rhythms of languages, the accentuations of words or sentences that are anchored in us and whose filters must be overcome to welcome other linguistic musicalities (to hear and produce other sounds), other breaths, other movements, and displacements. Our languages are in our entire bodies, that is to say in our brain as well as in the rest of the body. This physiological capacity to receive and produce linguistic novelty is part of creative processes.

And, more generally, cognition depends on our whole body and is directly linked to our emotions. If emotion is not very present at school, it is perhaps because of the Cartesian logic which leads us to believe that emotions are troublesome and that we learn through logical reasoning. It is true, we learn by logical reasoning. But not only. And the central nervous system would not be able to "think" without the whole body. Conversely, our body cannot function without the brain. Artists, philosophers, psychologists and even pedagogues have long known that emotions are a function of cognition. Part of learning is automatic, out of control, and provokes emotions (I hear new sounds and that makes me happy, for

example, because it's funny) which will themselves generate movements, sensations (it's funny, so I laugh, or I dance on these sounds maybe). Part of the learning process is analytical reasoning, but it is generated by emotions and sensory experiences (I want to understand what is behind these sounds, to understand the meaning of what I perceive); and this reasoning will also allow me to control emotions (in front of a person who does not speak my language, I will not laugh when he or she speaks so as not to be disrespectful). All these links constitute the complex engineering of our learning, at any age, even if emotions overwhelm us even more in early childhood. It is therefore important to develop in primary AND secondary school (and even in higher education) what Peter Salovey and John Mayer and then Goleman have called emotional intelligence. Today, affective, and social neurosciences show these links in great detail thanks to brain imaging.

It has been argued that one of the primary reasons for success in learning is the desire to learn and the possibility of finding meaning in learning. Motivation, emotions, and motor skills come from the same Latin root: *movere* (to move, to surprise). For all three notions, internal physiological displacements (emotions) and external displacements (movements), as well as mental displacements, are therefore involved. Motivation is a motor that depends on the emotional, the sensory and the intellectual at the same time. Before learning a language, one must know how to love it and become imbued with the underlying emotions as well as their expression. The entire body is called upon in the learning process, especially when it comes to languages. Moreover, one of the brain areas related to emotions, motivation and behavior is connected to the motor area, which is not very far away, and between the two is Broca's area, the seat of speech production, which is very close to the auditory area, which is connected to Wernicke's area, the seat of language comprehension.

And all these areas are also connected to the brain functions of sensoriality, spatialization, logical thinking, etc. - Hence the correlation between the increase in school results and the so-called active approaches. Neurolinguistics studies remind us that language is a complex cognitive function in which several levels of information interact and are processed differently by the brain: a phonetic/phonological level (abstract categorization of the sounds of a language); the level of isolated words (lexical processing); the level of complete sentences (syntactic processing); the pragmatic level (contextualization of the lexicon and sentences and then inferences); and a level of written text or oral speech in which the sentences that make up the text give general meaning to the utterance. Each aspect of language processing concerns different forms of memory. Language learning

is constructed primarily from long-term memory processes, procedural memory, and declarative memory, whereas traditionally, schooling primarily involves short-term, working memory for specific tasks. Studies on second language learning also highlight the emotional valence in the ability to learn these languages later than in early childhood; in other words, the emotional experience of languages is central to the learning of foreign languages both for the creation of meaning and for memorization, which confirms all the studies in affective and social neuroscience.

On the basis of these lessons, complex approaches in the didactics of a foreign language fully integrate the role of emotions and the place they should be given at school, but also take into account all the long-term memory processes on which language learning is based. Indeed, the more the individual combines all his resources and creates links between them, the easier learning and memorization are, as in the case of bilingual individuals. Complex approaches in pedagogy are therefore creative approaches that solicit and implement different types of complementary activities (kinesthetic, emotional, sensory, as well as analytical/reflective). Complexity-based devices do not separate the acting and perceiving body from the thinking brain, they link the motor and emotional system to metacognitive reflection, and thus seem more likely to help learners. Ethics also play a major role in these approaches, in order to avoid behavioral drift, which meets the requirements of the new foundation.

Another lever for performance in modern languages lies in the ability to change perspective and to "incorporate", to take into one's body, the rhythm, and structures of languages. This approach relies on the mechanisms of kinesthetic, emotional, imaginary, and cognitive empathy and develops them, thus promoting mental plasticity. In other words, "knowing how to create" means using the fundamental capacities of our brain: connectivity, selectivity, flexibility, complementarity, and rhythms. The roots of language, storytelling, reading, and writing plunge into this soil. The primary mission of every educator: to bring to life the creative gesture without which there can be no true exchange.

All these observations invite researchers who are interested in these phenomena to weave links between creative processes and language learning processes. The action-oriented approach and the project-based pedagogy, methodologies currently advocated in the more circumscribed field of language didactics, solicit creativity in the process of the teacher as well as of the student, alone or in groups. If students can rely on their creative potential to learn languages, and teachers can rely on their creative potential

to design devices and implement them, it is necessary to define "creative potential".

Creative potential is of particular interest to researchers in cognitive and/or social psychology, especially through the multivariate approach. In this light, an individual's creativity unfolds from a particular combination of factors that are specific to them, such as intellectual abilities and personality traits, and factors that depend on the environmental context. The stronger the interactions between these different factors, the higher the creative potential. In other words, for the language class, the more the environment of the school will be favorable to the deployment of creativity (spaces, organization, team posture, etc.) and the more the teacher and the student will become aware of their potential, the more they will be able to deploy it. The creative potential of the teacher will enable him/her to develop a pedagogical presence capable of welcoming the diversity of student profiles. He can oscillate between habits (rituals) which reassure and lead to repetition - favorable to memorization - and renewal (of approaches, media, framework, etc.). This creative aptitude will also be a driving force for innovation in teaching, both in the design of projects, the choice of tools and in the methodology used. The creative potential also concerns the action of students "in learning", i.e. in the process of learning: creativity, which makes it possible to rely on the known, to integrate what is already there (what the students are and already know) in order to welcome the new, makes it possible to develop learning strategies specific to each learner on the one hand, and in the context of modern languages, to anchor strangeness in the familiar. The very act of speaking is an emergent, creative act and is directly linked to affect. Students' creative potential is thus directly related to the ability to move from one language register to another. In this light, it is worth mentioning metaphors as a useful tool in changing registers: "metaphor is at the same time viewed as a tool of cognition, comprehension, categorization, representation, and interpretation of reality. Metaphor as a semantic and cognitive phenomenon allows to structure and compare segments of national conceptual worldviews represented by metaphorically redefined vocabulary" (Sadykova & Kayumova, 2014).

Several empirical studies, including a longitudinal study conducted over four years and a study conducted over one school year, reveal this close correlation. Developing learners' creative potential could therefore have an impact on their ability to relate to modern languages (to find meaning in their learning, to act with and in languages) and conversely, switching from one language register to another seems to develop students' creativity.

Creativity seems to be gaining ground in many educational systems around the world. Often mentioned in connection with innovation this tool does not include a skills scale, as such a mode of evaluation would risk leveling the development of each creator by stages, whereas the idea is to rely on the diversity of each individual as a fundamental resource. This proposal in art didactics questions the logic of juxtaposition and compartmentalization in the use of scales, whereas a pedagogy of creativity in languages could take more account of the skills of each individual in a variable temporality. Indeed, a pedagogy of creativity would be a pedagogy of emergence in languages, which would leave, in the planning, spaces not programmed in advance. Of course, this does not mean that teachers no longer prepare their lessons. The sequences/sequences are finely planned around objectives, but there is co-construction of the lessons (between students, between teachers, between teachers and students) based on devices encouraging the creativity of the students, and transversal skills such as emotional skills, empathy or creativity are taken into account in the same way as language skills. This implies an element of the unknown in certain stages of planning in order to leave room for students' proposals, and an ability to welcome change as a didactic resource.

To learn languages, students would rely on trial and error as a creative process (for example, with code alternation, which is what bi- or plurilingual speakers most often do; or by creating neologisms; or by inventing stories in the languages even if one does not have all the lexical baggage to tell them: one tells by showing, playing, tracing, speaking, etc.). The teacher then fills in the gaps). This process of trial and error, of trying things out, is specific to art didactics. The teachers would not then formulate all the expected answers in advance, because the imagination is not predictable.

It is a pedagogy that responds to the deep appeal of a student to his teacher: 'Ask us questions for which you do not know the answers'. Moreover, a pedagogy of creativity would involve the action of the whole body. Emotion, sensoriality, and motor skills, despite the increasing number of symposiums on this theme and the growing number of studies in psychology, psychiatry, and affective and social neuroscience, still rarely find their place in the language classroom. The above-mentioned teachings concerning the corporeality of languages and their creative nature suggest that the more learners are reconciled with their language biography and its emotional valence, the easier it will be to learn new languages. Neurolinguistics, cross-cultural psychiatry, and psychology also support this

view, arguing that creative deployment occurs through the joint experience of multiple cultures.

The great centers of creativity are usually located at the intersection of different cultures, where the mix of beliefs, lifestyles and knowledge makes it easier for individuals to engage in new combinations of ideas. In uniform and rigid cultures, it takes much more attention to imagine new ways of thinking. If plurilingualism is widely present in foreign language teaching, practices in the didactics of a foreign language are still on the fringe of this posture. Yet, practicing several modern languages together, far from causing a cognitive overload, seems to reinforce neural plasticity and activate areas of the associative cortex, which plays a central role in the creative process. The results of recent qualitative studies conducted in France confirm that taking into account all language repertoires in classes, including the students' first languages, facilitates the learning of new languages, including for the very young. The students' confidence, their creative capacity and their capacity for empathy increase in conjunction with their ability to "trans-language", i.e., to draw on all their registers (non-verbal language, school languages, family languages) to understand, express themselves and interact. Creativity is indeed a phenomenon that concerns the individual, but also his or her relationship with others and with the environment. All relationships between individuals are made up of language (non-verbal and verbal). Spoken or written languages are only the most sophisticated part of human language. They are creations, associations of signs, sounds, rhythms, meanings etc. Thus, deploying one's creativity in a project-based pedagogy could promote language learning. What levers seem to be conducive?

Recent qualitative studies highlight more particularly the contribution of pedagogical practices via artistic practices and giving a place to all the languages of the speakers to welcome the languages of the school, be it French or foreign languages. Performative practices, among these approaches, have recently proved their worth, because they are defined not only by the experience of language in practice, but above all by the interaction between the creator or the creative group, the work, and the public. The emotions are all the stronger because the emergence is inherent in this sharing. It is no longer a question of learning languages for the sake of learning languages, but of broadening one's potential for sharing thoughts and values with all one's languages through artistic language, as a mediator. In fact, artistic practices - often extracurricular activities and mostly reserved for the privileged social classes - allow creativity to be deployed and have mediatic functions that facilitate cognitive processes. Numerous studies

crossing artistic practices and languages confirm this (music, theater, visual arts, slam, plastic arts, dance etc.). But it is not a question of learning a text and its vocabulary in order to play it in theater or sing it afterwards: it is a question of creating situations in which a story will emerge, and then bringing in texts, then mixing it again with the experience etc.

It seems to us, for example, that the "college" or "high school at the movies" program could systematically offer films in foreign languages (and not only in English). The artistic pathways should also be strengthened (instead of losing resources) and should directly concern modern language teaching. The transdisciplinary approach facilitate this type of arrangement and could be generalized to all school levels and be systematically multilingual: it would be desirable for schools to encourage the organization of cross-curricular projects, through the organization of timetables, the distribution of students in classes, the permanence of teaching teams (thus motivating teachers), etc., to systematically include at least one, or even two, modern foreign languages The "project weeks" instituted in other countries could also encourage the setting up of creative, trans-languages devices, increase the motivational degree and the sensitive perception of the students, thus the quality of their learning and their memorization in the long term.

3. Conclusion

The discovery of the field of creativity in differential psychology has clarified the process in which the foreign language teacher is engaged and highlighted the creative resources at work in the creative potential that the teacher mobilizes, often unconsciously. Divergent thinking, the ability to associate, and convergent thinking particularly stand out in the preparation stage. Whether the teacher is building on a starter textbook or inventing the entire course, these three dominant resources are always going to need to be stimulated if they are going to strive for "novel and contextually appropriate production". On the other hand, risk-taking, open-mindedness, and tolerance for ambiguity are also necessary resources for the ELF teacher. In fact, they allow the teacher to integrate and know how to react to the unpredictability that is part of any activity carried out in front of an audience. This represents the first external view of the activity to which the teacher will have to react in order to adapt the activity if necessary. It is therefore a major part of the teaching context that the teacher must take into account when composing and running their course. However, additional external parameters must be considered, such as the initial institution and the principles that drive it or are imposed on it. However, it seems that the

above-mentioned constraints are often necessary elements for the mobilization of the teacher's creative potential. The fact of knowing or getting to know one's audience, of having to work within a structure with clear directives, or even of following a creative framework given in training, all of this seems to be a basis for creativity, because it is the only way to make it happen. This seems to be a basis for creativity because it acts in context. In other words, creativity does not come from nowhere.

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