

CREATIVE TEACHING - EXTRA WORK OR EXTRA FUN?
Creativity in the conceptions and customs of Finnish EFL teachers

Bachelor's thesis
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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Tutkielman tarkoituksena oli tarkastella useita luovaan opettamiseen liittyviä tekijöitä opettajien näkökulmasta. Vaikka luova opettaminen on noussut yhdeksi luovuutta ja koulumaailmaa koskevan keskustelun aiheista, ei sitä ole vielä tutkittu paljoa, eikä termille ole yleisesti hyväksyttyä määritelmää. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoitus olikin toimia pohjana muille luovaa opettamista koskeville tutkimuksille. Tutkimuksen päätavoitteina oli selvittää kuinka suomalaiset englannin opettajat itse määrittelevät luovan opettamisen, millaisia asenteita heillä on luovaa opettamista kohtaan ja ovatko he omasta mielestään luovia opettajia.</p> <p>Tutkimus toteutettiin sähköisenä kyselynä, joka sisälsi yhdeksän avointa kysymystä. Vastauksia tuli eri puolilta Suomea yhteensä 28 kappaletta. Päämetodina vastausten analysoinnissa toimi kvalitatiivinen sisällönanalyysi. Edellä mainittujen pääteemojen lisäksi vastaajilta kysyttiin miten he määrittelevät luovan opettajan, mitkä tekijät vaikuttavat opettajan luovuuteen, miten kokemus vaikuttaa luovaan opettamiseen ja voiko luovaa opettamista opettaa.</p> <p>Tutkimukseen osallistuneet opettajat kokivat luovan opettamisen tärkeimmiksi määritteleviksi piirteiksi monipuolisuuden, vaihtelevuuden ja oppilaskeskeisen opettamisen. Kyselyyn vastanneista opettajista 60 prosenttia koki olevansa luovia opettajia. 71 prosenttia vastanneista sanoi luovan opettamisen vaativan ylimääräistä työtä. Heistä osa kuitenkin ilmaisi luovalla opettamisella olevan sellaisia positiivisia vaikutuksia mitkä tekevät siitä ylimääräisen työn arvoisen. Lisäksi 18 prosenttia vastaajista koki ettei luova opettaminen vaadi lainkaan ylimääräistä työtä. Kiinnostavaa oli myös, miten moni vastaaja mainitsi työympäristön tärkeänä luovaan opettamiseen vaikuttavana tekijänä. Tämä aihe olisikin yksi hyvä lähtökohta jatkotutkimukselle.</p>	
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	3
2 CREATIVITY AND CREATIVE TEACHING.....	4
2.1 About creativity research and defining creativity	4
2.2 Creativity and personality	5
2.3 Can creativity be taught or enhanced?	6
2.4 Creativity in education	7
3 THE PRESENT STUDY	8
3.1 Research questions	8
3.2 Data	9
3.3 Methods of analysis.....	11
4 CREATIVE EFL TEACHING IN THE CONCEPTIONS OF FINNISH EFL TEACHERS ...	12
4.1 Defining creative EFL teaching	12
4.2 Defining the creative EFL teacher	14
4.3 Finnish EFL teachers as creative teachers.....	15
4.4 Other factors mentioned	16
4.5 Extra work or extra fun?.....	18
4.6 The influence of experience	19
4.7 Conceptions and experiences about teaching creative EFL teaching	20
5 CONCLUSION.....	21
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	22
APPENDIX.....	24

1 INTRODUCTION

During the past decade creative teaching has become acknowledged in the field of education. However, the term is still vaguely defined and not much research has been done on the subject. The problems in defining creative teaching strongly derive from the multidimensionality of the phenomenon of creativity itself. For long the main focus when talking about creativity in the educational context has been teaching children creativity, traditionally seen in this context as artistic creativity. As more modern definitions and aspects of creativity, such as everyday and little-c creativity, have become more widely acknowledged and a call has risen for better, more varied methods than the traditional teacher-led teaching, discussion about creative teaching and its positive effects has come to life.

The present study arose from the problems of defining creative teaching and lack of research on the field, with the main goal of finding out how Finnish EFL teachers define creative teaching, clarifying their general attitudes towards it and determining whether they consider themselves to be creative teachers. The present study is intended as a foundation for further research on the subject. For this reason the study contained eight open questions charting many different aspects of creative teaching, such as the influence of experience and whether creative teaching can be taught.

The Finnish EFL teachers that participated in the present study felt that diversity, variability and learner-centered teaching are the main characteristics of creative teaching. They defined a creative teacher as someone that is developmentally inclined, self-confident and has a student-based world of ideas. One of the positive findings of the present study was that 60 % of the participants defined themselves as creative teachers. An interesting theme that arose from the answers of the participants, and could be a topic for further research, was the great influence the working environment and work community, general pedagogical freedom and resources have on whether a teacher is creative in her profession or not.

2 CREATIVITY AND CREATIVE TEACHING

Creative teaching is relatively young both as a term and as a subject of research. Therefore the terms used for referring to this phenomenon are still varied and there has not been much research on the subject. For this reason this section will first explore defining creativity as such, and other aspects of creativity research that affect creative teaching, such as what makes a person creative and whether creativity can be taught. After these, creativity will be looked at in the educational context.

2.1 About creativity research and defining creativity

Creativity is a term that is widely used in many different contexts. It can be used to describe a person, product or an action. It can be seen in anything from a minor insight to great revolutionary innovations. This richness of the topic has resulted in an abundance of definitions and a constant debate on how to define creativity. However, Plucker and Makel (2010:48) have noted that few definitions have become widely used. According to Sternberg and Kaufman (2010:467), there is a general consensus on two main aspects of a definition of creativity: novelty and quality. Creative work is something new and innovative as well as good and useful, according to its reference group. Still, according to Plucker and Makel (2010:48), some researchers avoid defining creativity at all. This results in problems in the field of creativity research, because as stated by Kozbelt et al. (2010:23) research conclusions may appear to be true by one definition, but false by another. In Scandinavia, as a result of the lack of consensus on how creativity should be understood, the main focus has been on the different conditions that influence creativity (Csikszentmihalyi 1999, as quoted by Smith and Carlsson 2006:202).

Some researchers feel that certain definitions and conceptions about creativity have caused the field of creativity studies to overlook or disregard the type of creativity that is often called everyday creativity. Runco and Pagnani (2011:64-66) have stated that the fact that everyone has creativity in their everyday life can be obscured by the inclination to focus only on the greatest creative achievements. They also draw attention to the fact that it is unfortunate that many theories include the assumption that creativity must result in a concrete product as it demotes everyday creativity. Russ and Fiorelli (2010:233-234) propose that a common way to think about

this division between the different degrees of creativity is through the concepts of “big-C” and “little-c” creativity. “Big-C” creativity makes a major impact on a field, whereas “little-c” creativity is a novel approach to a problem, something that occurs all the time in the area of everyday creativity, but does not make a major contribution in a domain.

After more than six decades of research on creativity there are still debates on how to measure, utilize and improve creativity (Sternberg and Kaufman 2010:xiii). There are many interesting branches in the field of creativity research but considering creativity in education and in teachers, one of the most intriguing questions about creativity is what makes a person creative.

2.2 Creativity and personality

Personality for one is often linked to creativity. According to Horng et al. (2005:353), the common personality traits of a creative person are self-confidence, openness to experience, fantasy orientation, imagination, emotional sensitivity, drive and ambition, norm doubting (questioning established norms), nonconformity, attraction to complexity, aesthetic orientation, flexibility of thoughts and risk taking. Kansanen and Uusikylä (2002:45-46) have come to the conclusion that creative persons are independent, original, energetic, intuitive, have high tolerance for uncertainty and are not afraid to take risks, whereas, according to Gruber and Wallace (1999:93), the creative person is unique in unexpected ways and it may never be possible to make more than few obvious generalizations about the ways in which all creative people are alike.

In the model created by Feist (2010) the variability in our personalities is caused by our genetic differences, influencing our brain structures and temperamental differences. Being high or low in certain personality traits makes creative thought, behavior and achievement more or less likely by lowering the thresholds of creative behavior. This would mean that depending on their personality traits, influenced by genetics, some teachers would be naturally more prone to being creative. However, interesting is whether creativity or creative behavior could also be taught and learned or if there are ways in which teachers could be encouraged to being creative. Subsequently I will be exploring these questions in the next section.

2.3 Can creativity be taught or enhanced?

Whether creativity can be taught is a question many creativity researchers have asked, but an indisputable answer is yet to be found. However, it seems that many researchers have formed strong opinions about this, despite the lack of research evidence. When interviewed for an article about creativity, James Kaufman, one of the most renowned creativity researchers, stated his opinion that creativity can be taught (Bronson and Merryman 2010). The assumption that creative thinking can be taught is supported by theoretical considerations (Perkins 1990, as quoted by Nickerson 1999:401). All in all, the general opinion seems to be that there is something to be done if one wants to improve creativity.

Nickerson (1999:392) argues that essentially everyone with normal intelligence has the potential to be creative to some degree. Runco and Pagnani (2011:64) have stated that we all have the potential to be creative but we might not use it. To manifest itself, creativity also needs to be supported by the environment. McWilliam (2007:2) suggests the answer to whether creativity is teachable is bipartite:

As is usual in contested definitional domains, the academic answer to this question seems to be 'yes and no'. Yes, some aspects of creativity appear to be teachable – thinking and application skills that are amenable to acquisition can be developed through appropriate pedagogies. And no, some aspects of creativity remain idiosyncratic and mysterious...

According to McWilliam, learning theorists argue that creativity consists of three components: domain relevant skills, creative processes, and intrinsic motivation, all of which can be promoted through learning. However, Cropley (1997:85) has found that many training methods seem to improve creativity only on activities that closely resemble the training procedures. Smith and Smith (2010:261) have also raised the question whether creativity is more a developmental phenomenon that can be enhanced and encouraged, but not learned and taught directly. This question on whether creativity can be taught and learned is especially important to researchers who are focusing on creativity in the educational context.

2.4 Creativity in education

The main motivator for the discussion on teaching creativity has been the interest on, or as seen by some people, the need for teaching creativity at schools to children and young people. Often in the studies on teaching creativity, creativity is seen mostly as artistic creativity. However, creative teaching, and therefore the creativity of teachers rather than students, has become acknowledged as one of the aspects of creativity in the field of education. According to Smith and Smith (2010:250-251), the overlap between creativity and education consists of three basic aspects of creativity: creativity as a tool for solving problems in other subject areas, creative ideas for teaching, and teaching for enhancing the creativity of children. Sefton-Green et al. (2011:1-2) only identify the latter two: teaching for creativity and teaching creatively. A consensus on what creative teaching is, and on what a creative teacher actually does, is as hard to achieve as a consensus on the nature and definition of creativity itself.

There are many reasons for why teachers' creativity should be promoted. One motivator for being more creative should come from the continuous changes in our world. According to Hargreaves (1995), demands on teachers are becoming increasingly intense and complex as developments in technologies are changing the way we communicate, work and learn, and at the same time the student population in schools is becoming increasingly diverse. A similar point is also made by Sternberg and Kaufman (2010:475):

academic skills as taught at a given secular time in history will be inadequate to meet the needs of a rapidly changing world, and .. creativity, and more generally, skill in coping with novel environments, is more important than ever.

Smith and Smith (2010:262) plainly note that it is simply better to be creative than not to be, as creativity solves problems, makes everything more interesting and is useful especially in schools. According to Davies (2011:14), teaching in fact “is – or should be – one of the ‘creative professions’”. He points out that every time a teacher is planning a lesson or trying to engage students in learning he/she has to be creative and come up with fresh solutions to unique problems.

A study conducted by Pänkäläinen (2010:28) on a group of first-year Finnish teacher trainees of the English language reveals that most of the participants felt that creative teaching is an important part of being a teacher, and that it also contributes to students' learning results. The study also showed that even though the students hoped to be creative teachers, creative teaching also caused them stress and worry, and they feared it would demand extra work. The thought these first-year students had already given to creative teaching shows the importance of the subject, but no study has been conducted to survey the conceptions of already graduated and working teachers on the matter.

In Finland the National Curriculum states that teaching should be student-based and methods should be varied both in comprehensive school and in upper secondary school education (Opetushallitus 2003:14, 2014:30). No further mention is made about creative teaching, but the curriculum leaves teachers with quite a great deal of freedom to decide how to teach and organize their lessons. However, we have poor knowledge about how Finnish teachers use this freedom and whether the same freedom is given to them by schools and society, and what teachers themselves think and how they feel about creative teaching.

3 THE PRESENT STUDY

In this section the research questions of the present study are presented and the process of data collection and the methods of analysis are discussed.

3.1 Research questions

The present study aims to survey Finnish EFL teachers' conceptions about creative teaching. The main objective was to find out how they define and feel about creative teaching and whether they feel that they are creative teachers. I also included some questions about other interesting aspects of creative teaching, for example if the respondents feel that creative teaching required extra work, what they think affects creative teaching and whether creative teaching could be taught. Also, the participants' age, gender and teaching experience was asked in order to see if any correlation could be found with the answers.

In order to find out Finnish EFL teachers' conceptions on creative teaching the following research questions were formulated:

- 1) How do teachers define creative teaching and a creative teacher?
- 2) Do teachers consider themselves creative teachers?
- 3) What other aspects of creative teaching do teachers see worth mentioning?

3.2 Data

The data was collected in March and April of 2012 using an electronic questionnaire. A document form of the questionnaire can be found in the appendix. Where needed, notes have been added to illustrate certain features of the electronic questionnaire posted online. I chose to use a questionnaire for its effectiveness because it enables the collection of more data with limited resources (Hirsjärvi et al. 2008:190). The use of an electronic questionnaire also enabled me to have more geographical variation among the participants.

The questionnaire began with a selection of background information questions to enable better interpretation and classification of the other answers in the analysis stage of the study. These initial questions were followed by nine open questions related to creative teaching. I chose to use open questions because of the nature of the present study. As no research has been done before on the subject, it was best to start with a survey that would give a general idea of all the different aspects that have an influence on creative EFL teaching. According to Hirsjärvi et al. (2008:196), open questions are a necessary stage in developing multiple choice questions. Therefore, the present study should function as a base for further, more specific study on the subject. As open questions do not narrow down the participants' possible answers, they guaranteed a more accurate picture of the participants' thoughts on creative teaching. The questionnaire was in Finnish to make sure the questions were understood correctly by all the participants, to ease the answering and to ensure that the answers were not limited by any language problems. It was also possible that an English questionnaire could have been found in some way intimidating by the receivers and it, therefore, could have reduced the amount of data. The online questionnaire was created by using a program called Survey Monkey. This enabled me to divide the questionnaire into three pages and ensure that answers were required to each question before the respondent

could move on to the next page. This ensured that the participants' own definitions about creative teaching were not influenced by the later on provided definition and that none of the participants could skip a question by mistake. However, this does not mean all the questions were answered by all the participants, as a simple hyphen was enough to enable proceeding to the next page. The first page of the questionnaire contained the background information questions and the first two questions that surveyed the participants' own definitions for creative teaching and a creative teacher. The second page began with a definition of creative teaching used in the present study to make sure that the next questions would mean the same to all of the participants. This definition was followed by the rest of the nine questions. The third page of the questionnaire was merely for thanking the participants for taking part in the study.

Using the Survey Monkey, three separate links to the questionnaire were created. The first link was used for piloting the questionnaire, after which the questionnaire was revised. The remaining two links were then each attached to an e-mail, sent to the participants via an e-mail list. This enabled me to divide the participants into two groups according to the participants' geographical location and provide both groups with a link of their own in order to keep the two groups' answers separate. The e-mails were sent to seven different regional language teachers' associations' e-mail lists. The regional associations were all member associations of SUKOL (Suomen kieltenopettajien liitto), the association of Finland's language teachers. In the e-mail it was mentioned that my study was meant for English teachers only. The regions chosen were Oulu, Northern Karelia, Mikkeli, Central Finland, Vantaa, Eastern Uusimaa and Central Uusimaa. One link was sent to the first four regions and another one to the latter three. In a way this division can be seen as one between the metropolitan area and the rest of Finland. The e-mail also contained a cover letter describing the nature and purpose of the present study, providing contact information and emphasizing that all the answers would be treated with the strictest confidentiality. Another positive aspect of using the Survey Monkey and an online questionnaire was the possibility to conduct the survey with complete anonymity. The participants' identity was not at any point visible to the researcher. According to Kearney et al. (1984, as cited in Dörnyei 2010:17) respondents whose anonymity has been assured are likely to be less self-protective and presumably more accurate in their answers than respondents who believe they can be identified.

In total 31 online questionnaires were collected, three of which were excluded from the study because of their significant incompleteness, leaving 28 acceptably answered questionnaires. The geographical division was the following: fifteen of the participants were from the metropolitan area and eleven from the rest of Finland. Most of the participants teach English in lower or upper secondary school. All but one of the participants are women, which is not surprising considering the fact that over 70 percent of Finland's teachers are women. The average age of the participants was relatively high, 48 years.

3.3 Methods of analysis

In this section I will describe the methods of analysis used in the present study as well as the process of analyzing the data. The main method of analysis is qualitative content analysis. The main phases in the process of analysis were coding, classifying, theming and typing (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009:92-94). For the analysis, all answers were collected from the Survey Monkey and printed out so that all the answers of each participant were grouped together.

The actual process of analyzing the data began by reading all the received questionnaires and discarding the significantly incomplete ones. The contents of the collected data were then considered in relation to the research questions and in consequence some topics that were covered in the questionnaire were ruled out of the study. The remaining questionnaires were all identified by creating each an individual identification code. The data was then coded and structured using color-codes. Multiple classes were then created based on the research questions and the data was divided into these classes by using the coding. At this point, a separate summary was made of each questionnaire, including each participant's coded, classified, and condensed answers. Depending on each class's or research question's nature, the answers were then either themed or typed inside each class. At this point the result of theming and typing were recorded by collecting together all the themes or types of each class. After the previous phase it became possible to begin a further analysis of the preliminary results. This meant that all the answers or mentions with the same meaning were grouped together and the group was then given a common name which represented one theme. When all the answers or mentions were analyzed, the frequency of mentions of one theme in the data, or how many participants had mentioned one

theme, was counted. The results of the further analysis of each class were then recorded as statistics and written up as a complete analysis. It is to be noted that in every phase the mentions were traceable back to their original form and origin so that any time needed, the mention could be checked in its original context. This ensured that the meanings of the mentions were in all phases interpreted as correctly as possible.

4 CREATIVE EFL TEACHING IN THE CONCEPTIONS OF FINNISH EFL TEACHERS

In this section I am going to show the results of the present study. The section consists of seven parts, each of which presents one of the main themes. The topics discussed below are the participants' definitions of creative EFL teaching and the creative EFL teacher, whether they consider themselves as creative teachers, other factors that influence creative teaching mentioned by the participants, the participants' conceptions on the nature of creative EFL teaching from the practical point of view and on the influence of experience and the Finnish EFL teachers' conceptions and experiences about teaching creative EFL teaching. Throughout the section, the results are also looked at in relation to previous studies. Whenever a direct quote is given as an example, a translation can be found below the original quote. A further discussion of the present study and the overall results can be found in the conclusion section of the paper.

4.1 Defining creative EFL teaching

At the beginning of the questionnaire the participants were asked what they thought creative teaching is and how it is shown in practice. This was done before the participants could see the given definition for creative EFL teaching that was used in the study. The five themes that arose from the answers were **diversity and variability, not relying solely on premade materials** such as the textbook, but finding, making and using also other materials, **learner-centered teaching**, for example taking the students' individual needs into consideration, adapting materials and teaching to meet their needs and getting ideas from them, **improvising** or changing the lesson plan during the lesson and **utilizing one's own experiences and tying the issue being taught to the "real" and everyday life**. Figure 1 below displays the frequency of each theme:

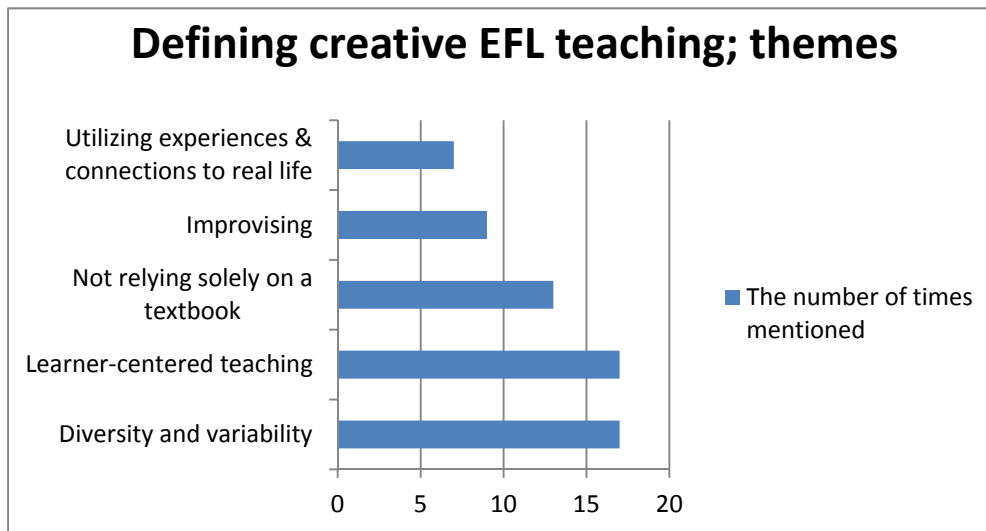


Figure 1. Defining creative EFL teaching; themes

In the answers the theme of **diversity and variability** was mentioned seventeen times and the theme of **not relying solely on a textbook** was mentioned thirteen times. These results correlate with the conceptions of Finnish teacher trainees as shown by Pänkäläinen (2010; 15), where one major theme that emerged was using varying teaching methods and materials.

The theme of **learner-centered teaching** was one of the strongest themes, also mentioned seventeen times, whereas the theme of **improvising** or changing the lesson plan during the lesson was mentioned nine times and **utilizing one's own experiences and connecting the subject to everyday life** was mentioned seven times. The influence of experience on creative teaching is discussed later on in chapter 4.6. Learner-centered teaching and building connections between the teaching contents and real life are both mentioned by Horng et al. (2005:356-357) as strategies used by creative teachers. Pänkäläinen (2010:16) showed similar answers in relation to the theme of improvising or changing the lesson plan during the lesson. She observed a clear reoccurring pattern in all the answers: a creative teacher is not baffled by a surprising situation, is able to react quickly and can modify the teaching plans when needed. In the present study the

theme of improvising or changing the lesson plan during the lesson often occurred in connection with the theme of learner-centered teaching, as shown in example (1):

- (1) *Luova opettaja kuulostelee koko ajan opiskelijoiden valmiutta prosessoida kulloinkin menossa olevaa asiaa ja osaa tarpeen vaatiessa muuttaa suuntaa: helpottaa tai vaikeuttaa opetettavaa asiaa tai suunnata toiminta täysin toiseen suuntaan (jopa joskus päästää tunnilta aikaisemmin, jos näkee, että opiskelijat ovat väsyneitä eivätkä jaksa esim. viimeisillä tunneilla enää keskittyä kunnolla...)*

A creative teacher is all the time observing the students' readiness to process the matter that is being dealt with at each moment and is capable of changing direction when needed: to ease or complicate the subject being taught or direct the action in a completely different direction (sometimes even end the lesson earlier if she/he sees that the students are tired and can't concentrate properly, for example in the last lesson of the day...)

(Participant XN114)

This indicates that the decision or need to improvise or change the lesson plan originates from the students. The results show that the participants' conceptions about creative teaching were quite similar. All of the main themes had occurred also in previous research.

4.2 Defining the creative EFL teacher

The participants were asked to define and describe a creative teacher. Three themes could be identified in the answers: **being developmentally inclined**, **being self-confident** and **having a student-based world of ideas**. The remaining mentions that did not fit any of these were all some kinds of personality traits. Table 1 below contains a few examples of the answers that formed each of the themes.

Table 1. The themes identified in the answers to the question: “What is a creative teacher like?” and examples of the answers grouped under each theme

The themes	Being developmentally inclined	Being self-confident	Having a student-based world of ideas	Various personality traits.
Number of mentions counted to each theme	33	20	11	18
Examples	follows progress in the field	brave	encouraging	active and energetic
	interested in the world	not afraid of performing	easy to approach	has a vivid imagination
	excited	self-confident	cares about the students	articulate
	open to new ideas	persistent	listens	relaxed
	wants to develop	mastery of the subject	speaks on the students’ level	inventive

The theme of being developmentally inclined was mentioned altogether 33 times and the theme of being self-confident was mentioned 20 times. The theme of having a student-based world of ideas had eleven mentions. The rest of the mentions being various personality traits was to be expected when asking the participants to describe a creative teacher.

4.3 Finnish EFL teachers as creative teachers

One of the main goals of the present study was to find out whether Finnish EFL teachers consider themselves creative teachers. In order to answer this question, the participants were asked directly: “Are you a creative EFL teacher?”. The question was situated in the questionnaire after the provided definition for creative teaching used in the present study, in order to have all the participants answer the same question. If the question had been placed before the provided definition, all the participants would have been evaluating themselves according to their own

definitions of a creative teacher. Figure 2 below demonstrates the percentages of the answers to the question “Are you a creative EFL teacher?”.

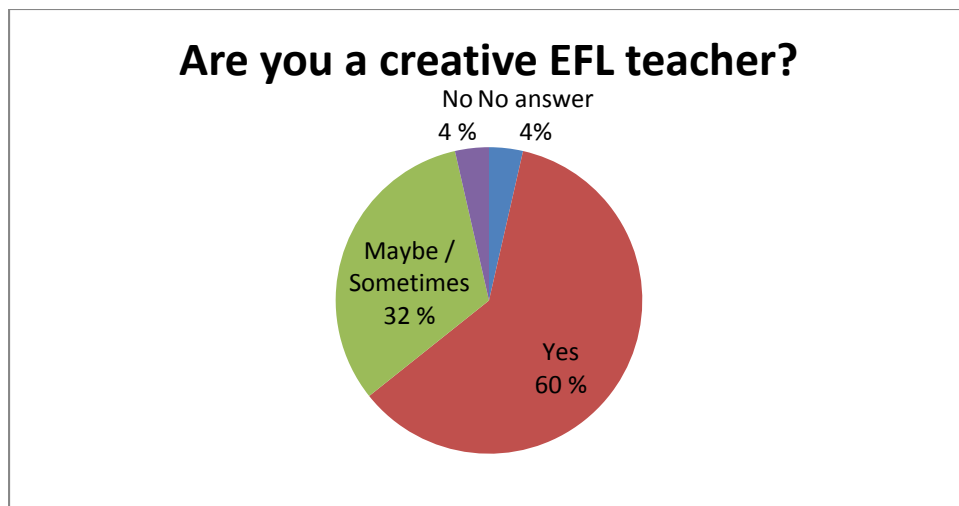


Figure 2. Are you a creative EFL teacher?

The results were very positive: seventeen participants gave a clear yes answer to the question and, according to the answers, the other nine participants felt that they are creative teachers possibly or some of the time. Only one of the participants clearly stated not being a creative teacher. As the questionnaire was sent to mailing lists via e-mail and it was up to the receivers to decide whether to answer the questionnaire or not, it is possible that the teachers that are interested in creative teaching and consider themselves as such were more likely to answer the questionnaire than the ones that do not care about creative teaching.

4.4 Other factors mentioned

The participants were also asked to list other factors that they think to have influence on teachers' creativity. When analyzing this topic, the mentions that were listed and arranged into groups in order to find the main themes of the topic were collected not only from the answers of the particular question but also from other parts of the questionnaire. The two main themes that emerged were **the persona of the teacher** and **the working environment and work community**. The theme of persona occurred seventeen times and the theme of working environment and work community ten times in the 28 questionnaires analyzed. Other themes that

occurred when analyzing this topic were **the teacher's situation in life, attitude and humor**, all of which occurred five times. General pedagogical freedom and resources, such as equipment, premises and teaching materials, were also mentioned.

The fact that **persona** or personality was mentioned so many times when it was asked what has influence on a teacher being creative or not manifests the nature of the term *creativity*. Creativity is often understood as something a person either does or does not possess naturally, very much like certain personality traits. What the participants thought about whether creative teaching can be taught or learnt is discussed later on under the topic Conceptions and experiences about teaching creative EFL teaching. Even though the simplistic perception of creativity as a personality trait may partly explain the large number of occurrences of the theme of persona, it has, however, also been shown that certain personal qualities tend to be characteristic of creative people (Feldman 1999:174), as discussed in chapter two.

The theme of the **working environment and work community** occurring so many times in the study is interesting, as it is a factor that has not been strongly connected to teachers' creativity in previous studies. Below are two of the answers to the question of what other factors have influence on a teacher being creative or not:

- (2) *Rehtorin täytyy antaa opettajalle vapaus. Työkavereiden samanlainen asenne auttaa myös.*

The principal has to give the teacher freedom. It also helps if the colleagues have a similar attitude.

(Participant XN118)

- (3) *Työpaikan ilmapiiri. Meidän koulussamme kantavana teemana on alusta asti ollut luova hulluus. Meillä on ollut lupa kokeilla, erehtyä, kokeilla uudelleen ja onnistua. Tähän on esimiestasolta rohkaistu. Luovuus vaatii ympärilleen suvaitsevaisia ja "hulluja" kollegoita...*

The atmosphere in the workplace. In our school the main theme has from the beginning been creative madness. We have had the permission to experiment, fail, try again and succeed. This has been encouraged from the managerial level. Creativity needs to be surrounded with broad-minded and "crazy" colleagues.

(Participant XNy7)

These examples demonstrate the influence of the working environment and the work community. Both the headmaster and the colleagues are specifically mentioned as influences. The present study suggests that the work environment and the work community have significant influence on whether teachers are creative or not in their work.

4.5 Extra work or extra fun?

In order to get a wider picture about the conceptions of Finnish EFL teachers about creative EFL teaching, the questionnaire contained a question about whether creative teaching demands extra work. The majority of the participants, 20 of them, stated clearly that they feel that creative teaching demands extra work. Five of the participants felt that creative teaching does not demand extra work and three respondents stated that creative teaching possibly demands extra work. Of the 20 participants that felt creativity demands extra work, six also brought up positive aspects in their answers, as shown in examples 4-6 below:

- (4) *[Luova opettaminen] vaatii joskus enemmän aikaa, mutta ajan saa takaisin löytäessään hyvän metodin, jota voi soveltaa useammassa ryhmässä ja kursseilla.*

[Creative teaching] sometimes demands more time, but you get the time back when you find a good method, which you can use in many groups and courses.

(Participant YNa4)

- (5) *Tietyksi erityisjuttujen suunnittelu vaatii oman aikansa, mutta innostuminen uusiin asioihin antaa energiaa.*

Of course planning special stuff takes its own time, but getting excited about new things gives you energy.

(Participant XNa17)

- (6) *Tällainen tapa työskennellä on kuitenkin mielekkäämpää.*

This kind of working is however more meaningful.

(Participant YNly26)

These participants specifically wanted to point out that even though creative teaching demands extra work, it also has such positive effects that the extra work is worth it. The work done carries a long way and can be used over and over again, creative teaching is more exiting and energizing and it feels more meaningful.

4.6 The influence of experience

Another question for surveying deeper the conceptions about creative teaching was whether experience has influence on it. The participants were also asked to report on their own experiences if they had any. Almost all of the participants, 26 out of 28, thought that experience has some kind of influence on creative teaching. The majority, 21 participants, said that experience has positive influence on creative teaching, four stated that experience can have both positive and negative influence and one felt experience has only negative influence on creativity. Below are two examples, (7 and 8), of the positive answers:

- (7) *Mitä enemmän kokemusta sitä paremmin tiedät miten luovaksi voi heittäytyä ilman että ei eksytä liian kauaksi itse asiasta.*

The more experience you have, the better you know how creative you can get without straying too far from the actual subject.

(Participant XN118)

- (8) *Kyllä kokemus vaikuttaa. Aluksi opettajan täytyy käydä läpi perusjutut itsekkin, ennen kuin tulee taju siitä, miten niitä voi varioida. Ja aluksi ei ehkä ole uskallusta käyttää epäortodoksisia opetustapoja, vaan toistaa sitä mikä on hyväksi havaittu opetusharjoittelussa.*

Experience does have an influence. In the beginning a teacher needs to go through the basics just for him/herself, before one gets an idea on how to vary them. And in the beginning one might not have the courage to use unorthodox teaching methods, but only repeats what one knows that will work based on experiences from teacher training.

(Participant XN122)

The participants felt that experience enables one to be creative by giving one knowledge on what one can do and what will work, as well as courage to experiment and find new teaching methods.

4.7 Conceptions and experiences about teaching creative EFL teaching

Another aspect of creative teaching that was surveyed was whether it could be taught. The majority of the participants, 11 of them, felt that it could be taught and four participants thought that it could not be taught but it could, however, be learnt by doing. Some of the participants, four of them, were cautious about using the verb *teach* and stated that people can be encouraged, instructed and shown an example towards creative teaching. The complete range of answers is illustrated in Figure 3 below:

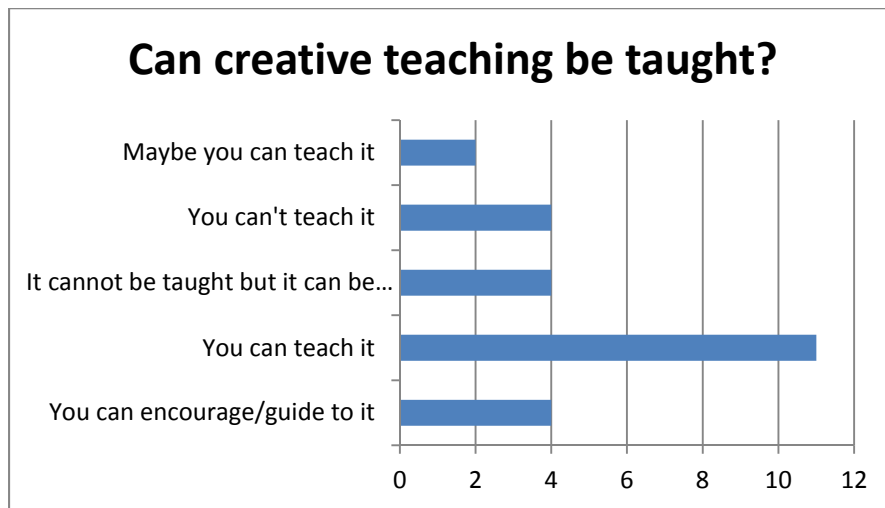


Figure 3. Can creative teaching be taught?

Even though the majority of the participants thought that creative teaching could be taught, only six of them reported that they had been prepared for creative teaching in their teacher education program. Altogether twelve of the participants reported that they had not been prepared for creative teaching in any way. As the questions about teaching creative teaching and the participants' own experiences on the matter were asked in the same open question box, some participants answered only the first question without writing about their own teacher education program or vice versa. For this reason four answers were missed for this topic.

5 CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study was to survey Finnish EFL teachers' conceptions about creative teaching: how they define it, how they feel about it and whether they see themselves as creative teachers. Most of the participants defined creative teaching through learner-centeredness, diversity and variability, and not relying solely on a textbook. All these themes have also been found in previous research (Pänkäläinen 2010, Horng et al. 2005). Findings of the present study indicate that Finnish EFL teachers have negative feelings about creative teaching. Twenty out of 28 participants stated that creative teaching demands extra work. Positive was that six of these in addition also stated that creative teaching has positive outcomes that make it worth the extra work it demands. Another five participants felt that creative teaching does not demand extra work at all. An interesting and positive finding was that 60% of the participants said that they are creative teachers. Another 32% answered that they are creative sometimes or maybe. However, this question was formed in the questionnaire in a way that the results probably tell us more about how the teachers see themselves than about their actual teaching methods. It is possible that when answering this question the participants evaluated themselves according to their own individual definitions for a creative teacher. A more detailed study would be needed to better chart the teaching methods of Finnish EFL teachers.

Another interesting theme that emerged during the survey was the effect the working environment and work community, the general pedagogical freedom and resources such as equipment, premises and teaching materials have on creative teaching. The answers indicated that these things can greatly influence the probability of a teacher being creative or not. In my opinion promoting creative teaching in schools should become one of the main objectives of developing and modernizing current teaching methods. For this reason I suggest that a good direction for further research would be to chart how the working environments and work communities are affecting creative teaching in Finnish schools and how much pedagogical freedom teachers feel that they have.

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APPENDIX

Vastaa ensin ensimmäisen sivun kysymyksiin ja siirry vasta sitten seuraavalle sivulle.

1. Taustatiedot

Ikä

Sukupuoli

Kauanko olet toiminut englanninopettajana?

Opetatko yläkoulussa vai lukiossa?

2. Mitä luova englanninopettaminen sinusta on? Miten se näkyy käytännössä?

3. Millainen on luova englanninopettaja?

Tässä kyselyssä luova englanninopettaminen määritellään opettamiseksi, joka ei tukeudu yksinomaan oppikirjoihin ja muihin valmiisiin materiaaleihin. Luova englanninopettaja käyttää vaihtelevia opetusmenetelmiä ja -materiaaleja.

4. Oletko sinä luova englanninopettaja?

5. Vaatiiko luova englanninopettaminen ylimääräistä työtä? Jos, niin missä mielessä?

6. Uskotko kokemuksen vaikuttavan luovan opettamisen määrään? Kerro omista kokemuksistasi.

7. Mitkä muut tekijät vaikuttavat siihen, onko opettaja luova?

8. Voiko luovaa opettamista opettaa? Onko sinun opettajankoulutuksessasi oppilaita valmistettu mitenkään luovaan opettajuuteen?

9. Onko hyvä opettaja luova opettaja? Onko luova opettaminen suositeltavaa?

Kiitos osallistumisestasi ja aurinkoisia kevättalven päiviä!