

Plenary talk: Alan Maley

Creativity: What is it? Why should we bother?

How do we do it?

What is creativity?

- *‘...a clear and sufficiently detailed articulation of the creative process is not yet possible.’
Amabile 1996.*
- *A complex, interlocking set of factors. cf Wittgenstein’s ‘family resemblances’*
- *We can recognise it but cannot define it.*
- *‘Creativity is at the heart of learning – but rarely at the heart of institutional education.’ Alan Maley*

So what is Creativity?

- *Working definition:*
 - ~ *making something new*
 - ~ *which is of high quality*
 - ~ *and which is recognised as relevant and valuable.*

- *Mere Novelty does not equal Creativity*

Some common features of Creativity

- *Newness, originality, immediacy*
- *Aaah! Wonder! Wish I'd done that...*
- *Curiosity, experiment, play, problem-solving*
- *Making unusual connections, associations*
- *Re-framing the old as new*
- *Unpredictability, serendipity*
- *Loves constraints*
- *Acceptability, relevance to a field/domain*
- *Flow*
- *Inspiration (??)*

What factors seem to favour Creativity?

- *Time – the slow hunch, incubation*
- *Space for unstructured play, experimentation, guilt-free risk-taking*
- *Heuristics*
- *Cross-fertilisation via multiple interactions*
- *Serendipity – chance discoveries (but ‘fortune favours the prepared mind’ Pasteur) ‘Noticing’*
- *Constraints – conceptual spaces (Boden)*
- *Learning from mistakes*
- *Rich, varied and messy inputs*
- *Sharing, borrowing, recycling*

Why is Creativity important?

- *Humans are hard-wired for creativity. (‘...without creativity, it would be difficult to distinguish humans from apes’)*
- *Necessary for survival: physical, psychological, professional, spiritual ~ so historically, inevitable*
- *Stimulates and motivates*
- *Helps promote ‘Flow’ and its benefits for learning*
- *Helps us to deal with unpredictability*
- *Language is inherently creative.*

‘I’m not creative’

‘.....linguistic creativity is not simply a property of exceptional people but an exceptional property of all people.’ Ron Carter.

(and not just linguistic creativity!)

How can we foster Creativity in Language Learning?

- *Through multiple contacts and experiences with colleagues and others – including reading!*
- *Heuristics*
- *Re-explorations of old ideas*
- *Feeder fields*
- *Exploring new, developing areas.*

Heuristics: what if...?

- *‘Do the opposite’*
- *Reverse the order*
- *Expand / reduce*
- *Change the pace*
- *Change the mode / manner*
- *Combine randomly*
- *Repeat differently*
- *Withhold information*
- *Re-frame ... etc.*

Re-explorations: old practices re-visited

- *Dictation*
- *Repetition*
- *Drills*
- *Rote memorisation*
- *Questions*
- *Translation*
- *Stories*
- *Reading (and Reading aloud)*

Feeder fields: examples from the past

- *Functions / Notions /Speech acts etc:
Linguistic philosophy.*
- *Silent Way : Mathematics*
- *Community Language Learning:
Rogerian counselling*
- *Suggestopedia: Psychology*
- *Psychodrama: Moreno's psychological
theories*
- *CLIL: General education*

More recent feeder fields

- *Multiple Intelligences / NLP*
- *Technology / AI*
- *Art / Music*
- *Drama/ Clowning*
- *Voice/Performance*
- *Critical thinking/ Global Issues*
- *Creativity theory*

See also ...

Chris Stillman

*Language Teaching Insights from Other
Fields: Sports, Arts, Design and More*

[http://www.tesol.org/BookLanding?product
ID=073](http://www.tesol.org/BookLanding?productID=073)

*And the follow up volume : anthropology,
psychiatry, marketing, etc.*

New, developing areas

- *Corpora, websites, social media, gaming, etc.*
- *Atmosphere / Flow (Csikszentmihalyi)*
- *Creative Writing*
- *Global Issues (and critical thinking/crap detection)*
- *Advanced learners*
- *Demand-high teaching (Scrivener/Underhill)*
- *Spontaneity/Impro (Underhill/Maley)*

Some macro-level examples of creativity in FLT

- *The Communicative Approach. (Wilkins et al)*
- *Task-based learning/procedural syllabus. (Prabhu)*
- *Comprehensible input/ extensive reading. (Krashen)*
- *Computer corpora and the lexical revolution. (Sinclair, Carter and McCarthy)*

Designer methods

- *The Silent Way. (Gattegno)*
- *Community Language Learning (Curran)*
- *Suggestopedia (Lozanov)*
- *Total Physical Response (Asher)*

Some recent examples

- *Dogme (Scott Thornbury, Meddings)*

- *The flipped classroom:*

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/community/teacher-talk/challenges-in-elt/challenges-in-elt-the-flipped-classroom/556121.article>

- **CLIL**

- *Sugata Mitra*

www.ted.com/talks/sugata_mitra_the_child_driven_education?language=en

Some individual contributions

- *Jazz Chants (Carolyn Graham)*
- *Clowning (Vivian Gladwell, Peter Lutzker)*
- *Voice / Drama (Alan Maley)*
- *Story-telling (Andrew Wright)*
- *Small changes, big results. (John Fanselow)*

Some generic principles for developing creativity

- *Use constraints principle*
- *Use association principle*
- *Use random principle*
- *Use heuristics*
- *Use withhold information principle*
- *Use divergent thinking principle*
- *Use feeder fields*
- *Use full range of available resources*

About creativity and change

- *Change is unavoidable and should be welcomed*
- *Change can be gradual / incremental*
- *Change can be partial*
- *Change can co-exist with the status quo*
- *Small changes can have disproportionate results.*
- *Revolutions can be personal or on a small-scale.*

The improvisational imperative: creativity on the hoof

- *As the unpredictable starts to occur – we depart from the plan to attend to what needs doing.*
- *And the class becomes a living interaction rather than the enactment of a script*
- *To do this we need spontaneous creativity.
(The sandwich:Teacher Man)*
- *Final question: How can we prepare teachers to be spontaneously creative? For preparedness not just preparation?*

As a teacher, don't forget to ...

- *Play around, experiment. Leave space for chaos/randomness*
- *Incorporate variety*
- *Allow time and silence to work*
- *Look out for unusual combinations*
- *Draw on other domains for inspiration*
- *Make sure it's relevant*
- *Don't forget effort!*
- *Don't forget pleasure and delight!*
- *Be a role model*

Something to think about

- *Not everything that counts can be measured. Not everything that can be measured counts. Albert Einstein.*
- *Every exit is an entry somewhere else. Tom Stoppard*
- *We can't leave the haphazard to chance. N.F. Simpson*
- *The imagination is the best way through troubled times. Malcolm Bradbury*
- *If you want to walk on water, you've got to get out of the boat. John Ortberg.*

And more

- *The point of playing is that play has no point. John Gray.*
- *Reason can answer questions but imagination has to ask them. Ralph W Gerard.*
- *You cannot run everything by improvising, but you cannot do anything without it. Robert Poynton.*
- *You cannot train people for the unexpected, but you can introduce the unexpected into their training. Sue Black.*

Thank you for your kind attention.

Alan Maley

yelamoo@yahoo.co.uk

<http://thecreativitygroup.weebly.com>



TeachingEnglish

Creativity in the English language classroom

Edited by Alan Maley and Nik Peachey



www.teachingenglish.org.uk



Free download of British Council publication

Creativity in the English Language Classroom

Alan Maley & Nik Peachey (eds)



<http://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/continuing-professional-development/cpd-teacher-trainers/creativity-english-language-classroom>

Integrating global issues in the creative English language classroom: With reference to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Alan Maley and Nik Peachey



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Integrating Global Issues in the Creative English Language Classroom

Alan Maley & Nik Peachey (eds)



<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/integrating-global-issues-creative-english-language-classroom>

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https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/K033_Developing_Expertise_Experience_Web_0.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3EDLV1PTVTc5dtNcKBWFVQt7bE8Wjo9KIZtjcXhMCo_WKAC_hhV7MwKUQ

The C Group

Creativity for change in Language Education



The C Group is an independent and informal grouping of EFL professionals. It aims collaboratively to share information, promote reflection and inquiry, and encourage action through more creative and open teaching practices.

More information and membership:

<http://thecreativitygroup.weebly.com>

creativity_group@yahoo.co.uk