

The Creative Platform: Responses between Boys and Girls in a Malay Language Classroom

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Abstract: The challenge has always been to find relatively new approaches in teaching and learning. This includes the language learning. The Creative Platform by Byrge and Hansen (2010) is seldom explored in a Malay Language (ML) classroom setting. It has 4 pillars. Researcher aimed at looking on the students' test-score to study creativity patterns between male and female students as well as students' samples. Samples were taken from 14 students. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered. The findings stated that male students tend to express their creative thought through drawing (i.e., mind-mapping, comic strip, etc) before writing. While female students prefer to express their ideas through words.

Key words: creative, expressions, learning, students

1. Introduction

According to Baer (1999), differences in creativity exist. However, it is not clear as to the cause of the differences (Baer J., 1999). In addition, Baer (1999) outlines three factors that have affected the creative productivity of women. These combining factors include schooling opportunities, differences in expectations (societal and academic) of females and males throughout development, and the fact that accomplishments in a variety of fields are judged by standards that have been controlled by males. Baer & Kaufman (2008) said that gender differences in creativity are “a difficult arena in which to conduct research, but there is consistent lack of gender differences both in creativity tests scores and in the creative accomplishments of boys and girls. As a result, it is difficult to show how innate gender differences in creativity could possibly explain later differences in creative accomplishment” (Baer J. & Kaufman J. C., 2008). Hence, this article aimed at looking into the students' tasks, on their creative responses, given by the researcher in the classroom setting.

2. Perspectives on Creativity

Creativity has been defined in a multitude of ways leading to a surplus of definitions; however, there is not one ultimately accepted the definition of creativity. According to Sternberg & Lubart (1996), creativity is something that is mystic and subjective, from psychology's perspective. Creativity ought not to be used as scientific research (Sternberg R. J. & Lubart T. I., 1996). In Trautmann (2012), Csikszentmihalyi defined creativity as “any act, idea, or product that changes an existing domain, or that transforms an existing domain into

a new one... what counts is whether the novelty he or she produces is accepted for inclusion in the domain” (Troutmann M., 2012). Weisberg (2006) mentioned that an individual uses their innate normal thinking process to create and innovate. It states that being creative and innovative can come from experiences of daily life (Weisberg R. 2006). Other researchers said that creativity depends on the thinking process of an individual. It is mentioned that every child can be creative; however, the greatest is inborn. Nevertheless, there ought to be ways whereby creativity in an individual or a child be given an opportunity. Byrge and Hansen (2010) initiated and applied in classroom teaching using four pillars that have been identified in The Creative Platform. The formation of these four pillars is the result of extensive research and personal application in the classroom teaching by both researchers. In this creative platform, knowledge is dynamic (Byrge & Hansen, 2010). Knowledge is perceived as the building block to the other. It also encourages inter-disciplinary fields for creation and innovation. Students’ involvements are high. There is a huge difference between an individual’s creativity to the other. There is a difference in an individual’s personality structure, what more between boys and girls.

3. Theoretical Approach: The Creative Platform

3.1 Non-Judgement

According to Zajonc (1965), he found that the bare presence of other people increases arousal of the individual and therefore might decrease their level of creativity. In addition, being around other people is a constant test of a person’s personality, and social competencies (Zajonc R., 1965). This is where non-judgement creates confidence. As mentioned by Byrge and Hansen (2010), in order to deal with confidence, “totally judgement free” environment is implemented in the classroom. The pertinent point is not about the judgement itself, rather the *feeling of being judged*. In this pillar, the student’s ideas are never positioned, but a building block to build another, similar to De Bono’s (1970) Lateral Thinking (De Bono E., 2007).

3.2 Task-Focused

The concept of **motivation** in relation to creativity is more intrinsic (coming from an inside) rather than extrinsic (coming from outside), while the extrinsic motivation factors are damaging to creativity (Amabile, 1983). The creative person needs to find something from an inside that drives him in solving a particular task. Hence, this explains why Amabile (1983) places high focus on the intrinsic motivation factors (Amabile T. A., 1983). When a student is **task-focused**, it creates motivation. In this pillar, students are not challenged on their expertise; instead, they are made to focus on the task.

3.3 Parallel Thinking

The third pillar is Parallel Thinking (De Bono, 1994). The main role is to structure/systemize the thinking of a group of people. It focuses the thinking of the students towards a common task at any given time. It also maximizes the sensitivity of the thinking about a particular area or field (De Bono, 1968). Thereby, **parallel thinking** creates a very high **concentration** of the students on a particular task. Maslow finds that creativity appears in the self-actualization mode. He mentioned that self-actualised creativity is the spontaneous expression of the person whose basic needs have been satisfied (Maslow, 1968) in Byrge and Hansen.

3.4 Horizontal Thinking

De Bono (1968) finds that “too much experience within a field may restrict creativity. He further found that a very experienced person starts to think in a pattern. A research shown that even if the students were explicitly told

to do as different as possible from examples, they still has trouble with the system of recently activated knowledge, thus making ideas very similar to the examples given (Smith, Ward & Schmacher, 1993; Marsh, Landau & Hicks, 1996) in Byrge and Hansen. Weisberg (2006) mentioned that knowledge could provide the building blocks out of which are constructed new ideas. There seems to be a general understanding that new ideas come from existing knowledge.

4. Six Steps to the Creative Platform

Step 1: The teacher prepares lesson/course and needs to be aware of the physical environment as well as tasks involved during the running of the lesson. Step 2: The red carpet is to guide the participants away from the world of judgement, being individually responsible for the process, and signifies the “entrance” of creating new rules of thinking and new rules of interaction. Step 3: The problem should be presented without introducing further inputs of any kind that could create mental blocks for the students, only provide one problem at a time. Step 4: During the idea development different cognitive approaches are used to help stimulating horizontal thinking. Step 5: Professional input is necessary. Step 6: The blue carpet is about “bringing students back to normal condition”.

5. Research Objective

The main objective of this research is (1) To introduce the Creative Platform to students through ML classroom teaching; and (2) To study the trends of boy’s and girl’s responses from samples gathered. In addition, quantitative and qualitative research is observed to ascertain data.

6. Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study states that students unable to express their ideas beyond the social norms and will normally write based on what they have read previously. Students are not ready to explore their minds beyond their normal context and daily life experiences. Lau (2011) said that “But what do we mean by good thinking skills? Basically, it comes down to two things — critical thinking and creativity. Critical thinking is thinking clearly and rationally... As for creativity, it is a matter of coming up with new and useful ideas, generating alternative possibilities. For someone who is able to be creative and critical, Lau suggested nine levels (Lau Joe Y. F., 2011).

7. Methodology

The study was conducted in 2 parts of 1.5 hours each for 2 days. Part 1 of the study is when students were involved in two sub-tasks where scenario-based problems were presented for their idea development. Students did not share their ideas with others in the room for fear of being judged. Part 2 of the lesson was another set of sub-tasks given to students and eventually, leads up to the main task. Students explained their new ideas or perspectives through mind-map, and even an introductory paragraph of a narrative-writing topic given. Students attempted the questionnaire from the cross sectional survey. A total of 14 students in the Secondary 3 Express offering standard Malay Language were involved. Students are between 14 years old and 16 years old.

8. Quantitative Analyses

The quantitative analyses is based on student’s pre-test and post-test score of their narrative essay. The total

mark is 40. See Figure 1 for Girl's test scores. The highest pre-test score is obtained by student G5 with 34 marks. The lowest pre-test score is obtained by G2 with 23 marks. Based on the total score of 40, below the margin or at an average mark of 20, no student failed. However, for the post-test, G2 failed with a score of 19 marks. In addition, the highest is attained by the same student, G5 of 27 marks. The mean score for pre-test is 27, while the post-test mean score is 25.3. There is a dipped in the mean score for girls and the difference of about (-1.7).

Figure 2 shows a dipped (-1.4), too, by the boys between their pre-test (24.1) mean score and their post-test (22.7) mean score. The highest pre-test score is obtained by student B7 with 28 marks. The lowest pre-test score is obtained by B1 with 22 marks. No boys failed. However, for the post- test score, two boys failed, B1 and B3, with a score of 16 marks and 18 marks respectively. The highest score is attained by the same boy, B7 with 26 marks.

From Figure 3, there is a clearly indicative of distinction of marks between boys and girls. The group of girls scored higher in the two tests as compared to the group of boys. The difference of 0.3 in their mean score further claimed that the disparity is not that large. Both tests, needed students to write an essay of about 250 words long.

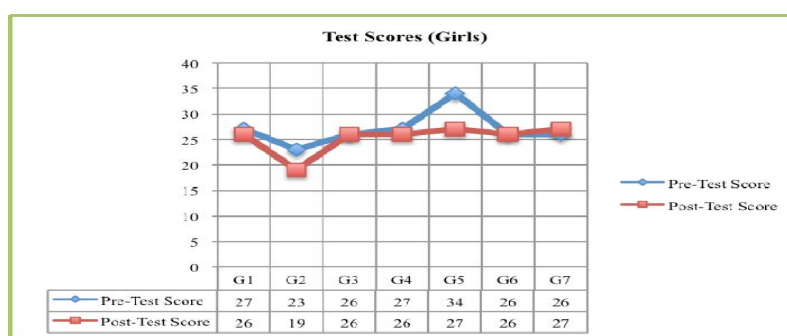


Figure 1 Pre-Test and Post Test Scores of Girls (N = 7)

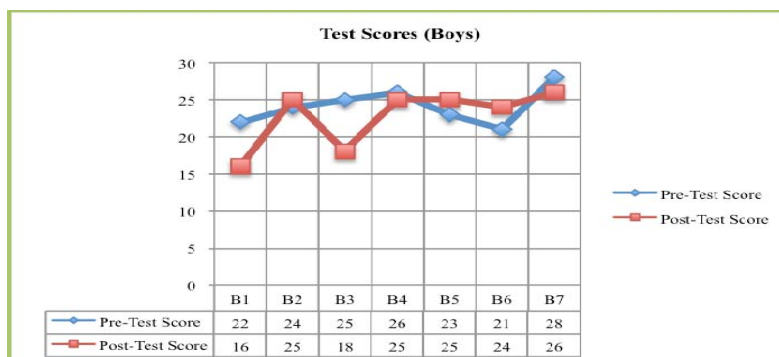


Figure 2 Pre-Test and Post Test Scores of Boys (N = 7)

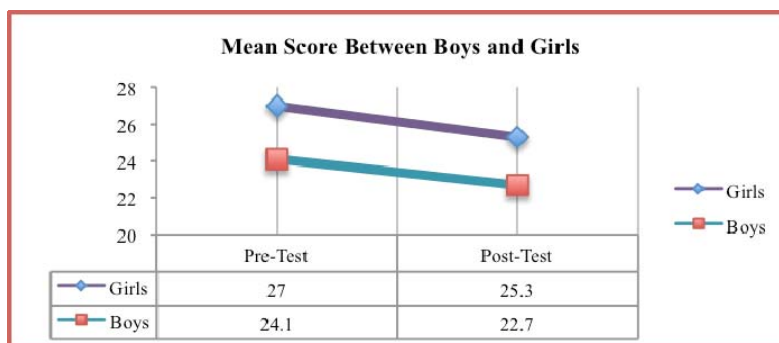


Figure 3 Mean Score between Boys and Girls

In conclusion, a didactic approach of the creative platform is evident. Boys, in general from Figure 3 scored lower marks for both pre-test and post-test scores. This is contrast to girls. The latter's both test scores are higher than the boys. The dipped for both boys and girls are constant, i.e., -2.9 marks for the pre-test and -2.6 marks for the post-test, thus, difference of about 0.3 marks. The responses from questionnaire triangulates with the student's responses, whereby boys prefer to express their ideas through drawings rather than a written essay.

9. Qualitative Analyses

Students worked in a group of maximum 2 students per group and instructions were given that they could express their thoughts in either words or pictorial forms (inclusive of mind-mapping). Students were told that there will be no presentation (no-judgement pillar) in front of their classmates for fear of being judged. In addition, students were separated from their mobile technology, including hand phones and watches to fulfil the task-focussed pillar in The Creative Platform. The lessons were carried out for about 3 hours (1.5 hours each) without any disruption especially from students who normally request for a toilet break. In the parallel-thinking pillar, a high level of concentration for a particular task was needed (Byrge & Hansen, 2010).

9.1 Expression of Ideas

From researcher's point of view, there were 6 male students that automatically adopted a comic style approach to express their ideas, inclusive of 1 female student (see Table 1). When given the first problem (Part 1) to solve, "What will be the things that you do if you are being chased out of the house?" (Sekiranya kamu baharu sahaja dihalau keluar dari rumah, apakah yang bakal kamu lakukan?)

When presented with the second problem (i.e., Part 2), students were already working on their own. The problem that was posed, quite similar to that from Part 1, with a different sort of challenge. Students were required to respond to the question, "What if you were given a car as a gift? What will you do? (Sekiranya kamu baharu sahaja diberi hadiah, iaitu sebuah kereta, apakah yang akan kamu lakukan?) Student's responses varied. Commonly, they will sell the car to get the money to buy a bungalow house. Two new ideas were that (1) Going for a Road-Trip in Europe; and (2) Join F1 racing. Only 2 girls insisted that they will not take that present and will return it for fear of being indebted.

The deduction from Table 2 is that all boys still prefer to express their ideas in pictorial form as compared to the girls. On the contrary, all girls wrote sentences to express their ideas. When asked, the four boys said they find it useful for the other reader to understand when the comic has words. Where else, the girl who did comic strips with words in Part 1, said that "I would rather spend time thinking of vocabulary and phrases to form my sentences than to have spent more time in drawing the comic." Hence, this explained the move made by the girl from Part 1 to Part 2 response.

Table 1 Student's Samples (Part 1)

No.	Forms	Q'ty/Gender	
		Boys	Girls
1.	Comic Strips (w/o words)	6 Boys	-
2.	Comic Strips (w words)	-	1 Girl
3.	Mind-Mapping (w words)	1 Boy	-
4.	Sentences		6 Girls
Total		7 Boys	7 Girls

Table 2 Student's Samples (Part 2)

No.	Forms	Q'ty/Gender	
1.	Comic Strips (w/o words)	2 Boys	-
2.	Comic Strips (w words)	4 Boys	-
3.	Mind-Mapping (w words)	1 Boy	-
4.	Sentences		7 Girls
Total		7 Boys	7 Girls

For their final assignment, the students went on to choose one of the topics earlier to construct their most creative introduction in their narrative essay. In this task, all students were required to write. There was no guidance given to any students. However, 1 group of student asks if they could write things pertaining to same-sex relationship (they fear that their writing will not be accepted by their teacher). Researcher imposes professional input by further extending their question with a question, "If given a chance, would you want to write on that topic? What will be your creative way to write on that topic?" The students did some reflection and began to think hard before writing on that topic. Nevertheless, they felt shy writing on that topic and changed their introduction paragraph.

Another observation was made when two students distinguished their writing by beginning their introduction with an Islamic context, which states, "Bismillahirrahmannirahim, dengan nama Allah yang Maha Pengasih dan Maha Penyayang...". Upon interviewed, they mentioned that they wanted to present a new approach in their writing and thought that by having that introduction, it will attract the reader. Another group expressed their ideas based on reality-fantasy experience, "Inilah hari yang kami nantikan di Stadium Kallang. Saya dan rakan pasukan saya, Fandi Ahmad bergegas ke bilik loker untuk berdepan dengan Uncle Choo..." Another student prefers to stress on words to emote their expressions, "Tidak pernah aku berasa keseorangan sebegini. Tidak pernah aku berasa... Tidak pernah aku bayangkan... Tidak pernah aku sangkakan..."

10. Conclusion

The sessions were conducted close to examination period, thus, those topics were chosen. Topic on reducing traffic accidents, reducing the student late-coming to school, increase students' self-esteem in school etc, might encourage more practical solutions. Another challenge is the time factor. The Creative Platform (Byrge & Hansen, 2010) is a model in providing students an experience of how to be simply creative. Students were given freedom to construct an idea, than their usual mundane daily classroom setting. Basically, according to the general findings of Byrge and Hansen (2010) the empirical data signifies that students were able to produce radical new ideas through The Creative Platform. Moreover, students were motivated, which gives them a positive experience on how many different problems they are capable of solving. Students were creative in injecting new ideas and different perspectives in their writing. To conclude, this study of the application of the Creative Platform by Byre and Hansen (2010) in an ML classroom context has made students to be exposed to a whole new dimension of learning to be creatively engaged. This method took *time off* from their normal conventional classroom learning. This study, too, has seen the trends of boys and girls responses from samples gathered.

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