

## Book Review

# **A Review of *Creativity in Language Teaching: Perspectives from Research and Practice***

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Jones, R.H., & Richards, J.C. (Eds.). (2016). *Creativity in language teaching: Perspectives from research and practice*. New York: Routledge.

Part of a series for ESL and Applied Linguistics professionals, *Creativity in language teaching: Perspectives from research and practice* presents a unique collection of views from a variety of academics and educators on what constitutes creativity in language teaching. In the introductory chapter, Rodney H. Jones and Jack C. Richards explain that creativity in language teaching, traditionally associated with literary texts, songs, and games, has come to be recognized as embodying a more complex and central role in the “linguistic, cognitive, sociocultural, and pedagogic dimensions” of language education. Jones and Richards observe that despite the different positions of the book’s twenty contributors, all agree on the fact that creativity: 1) plays a key role in teaching and learning, 2) uses language to solve problems, form relationships, and incite action, 3) is social and collaborative, 4) is transformative.

*Creativity in language teaching* is divided into four parts: Theoretical Perspectives, Creativity in the Classroom, Creativity in the Curriculum,

and Creativity in Teacher Development. In their overview, Jones and Richards summarize the book’s fifteen subsequent chapters, highlighting important points for each. Inasmuch as the book aims to promote continued study of creativity in language teaching, each chapter concludes with questions for discussion and suggestions for further research.

In the second chapter of the Theoretical Perspectives section, which includes chapters by Rod Ellis and James Paul Gee, Rodney H. Jones seeks to discover which features of language make it a tool for creativity and in what ways effective language use involves creativity. Jones determines that language is creative in that it “allows us to *do* things in the world,” and language users are creative if they are able to “exploit language’s inherent capacity for creative action.”

“Exploring Creativity in Language Teaching” is the first article in the Creativity in the Classroom section. Jack C. Richards and Sarah Cotterall mine Cotterall’s teaching journal for examples of creativity implemented in an academic writing course taught at the

American University of Sharjah. Using Cotterall's reflections, the authors compile a list of 11 characteristics that comprise creativity in teaching. These include variety, risk-taking, and the innovative use of technology in the classroom. The chapter also offers suggestions for ways in which an institution can support teacher creativity; for example, it can encourage creative partnerships and provide resources to support creative instruction.

Kathleen Graves's "Creativity in the Curriculum" begins the book's third section. According to Graves, sound knowledge of how the different dimensions of a curriculum "function and interrelate," as well a sense of scale, are necessary in order for transformation to occur. Graves presents four case studies, two at the classroom level and two at the school system level to illustrate her point. She notes that while curricular innovations in the two classroom examples were successful, their influence was limited by their small scope. As for the other two examples, one was not appropriated by the institution and therefore did not result in lasting change. The other was adopted as part of a core curriculum. Only this last example, according to Graves, was truly transformational because "all dimensions of the system aligned."

Creativity in Teacher Development begins with the chapter "A Conversation About Creativity: Connecting the New to the Known Through Images, Objects and Games." In this chapter, authors Kathleen M. Bailey and Anita Krishnan engage in a dialogue about how Bailey,

who works as a teacher educator at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, teaches abstract concepts to her Master's students. For Bailey, creativity encompasses "combining familiar forms in novel ways." She shares several examples of how she does this in an Experimental Research Methods course. In one example, Bailey draws pictures on the board to introduce the concept of intervening variables: "a big rock (the dependent variable), a lever poised to move the rock (the independent variable), and a fulcrum (the intervening variable)."

Since the book includes chapters by researchers, instructors, curriculum developers, and teacher trainers, it stands the chance of exceeding the stakes of those within these distinct fields; however, the sections on Creativity in Teaching and Creativity in Teacher Development can easily benefit instructors and teacher trainers alike, and as the authors point out, the theoretical chapters "illustrate their points with examples from classroom practice, and all the chapters on classroom practice have strong theoretical underpinnings." The five articles touched upon here, not to mention the remaining eleven chapters, yield considerable food for thought. Theorists will find a conceptual framework for discussion, and practitioners will find an abundance of applications for their classrooms. Consequently, *Creativity in language teaching: Perspectives from research and practice* seems likely to prove a worthwhile addition to any ESL or Applied Linguistics faculty library.

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