Creativity Skills Needed by Arabic Language Students in Tertiary Institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the creativity skills needed by Arabic language undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Lagos State. Four research questions guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The study population was 151 Arabic lecturers and students. This comprised 21 Arabic language lecturers and 130 students in two tertiary institutions in Lagos State that have the Arabic Language as their academic programme. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviations. Findings revealed that creative skills are multifaceted and include problem-solving, listening, innovation, and brainstorming skills. Teachers' motivation, encouraging the use of technology in teaching as well as encouraging individual project work among students are the strategies for teaching creativity skills. Fear of criticism, lack of confidence, poor learning environment, and the like were identified as challenges militating against the acquisition of creativity skills among Arabic students. The study also revealed that the strategies for stimulating creativity among Arabic language students include normal class sizes, increasing the ICT capabilities of both teachers and students, and de-emphasizing memorization. The study recommended that lecturers and students alike should build up their creativity skills to

remain relevant and productive in the labour market, especially as technology is advancing at an unprecedented rate

KEYWORDS: *Arabic Language Students, Creativity Skills, Lagos, Needed, Tertiary institutions*

Introduction

Arabic language is prominent among Muslims and non-Muslims all over the world. The reason being that is the language used to communicate with God, the creator, an official language in United Nations. Currently, many countries are focusing on the teaching and learning of the Arabic language purposely of religious, political, and economic reasons. Organisations such as Government Communication Headquarters (GCHQ) in the United Kingdom can provide intensive training in languages such as Arabic to graduates in European languages**.** Research has also identified the vital role Arabic played in all spheres of life and in the day-to-day activities in the West Africa even before the advent of colonial masters. The language has contributed a tangible history of literacy in Nigeria. They further stated that "the high standard of Arabic and Islamic education in Nigeria before the coming of the British in the middle of 19th century" Ahmad & Al-Ghazali, (2012), Ayuba, (2013) and Kamil, (2016)

Initially, the method of teaching Arabic to non-Arabic speakers in Nigeria remained the same as was used to teach native Arabic speakers from the early age of Islam until the 19th century. Since the 1950s and 1970s, great efforts have been made by the Ministry of Education in the Arab Republic of Egypt to create more approaches to teaching Arabic to non-Arabic speakers. These efforts were initiated by various institutions from countries such as Sudan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia. Conferences, workshops, and symposia are other areas used to develop the methods of teaching and learning Arabic as a foreign language. Folorunsho, (2015) and Shittu, (2016) gathered that the outcome of these Conferences, workshops, and symposia are several textbooks for effective teaching and learning of Arabic as a language were published by native speakers and non-native speakers of the Arabic Language.

Historians has traced the emergence of Arabic education in Nigeria to the early 9th century through commerce and pilgrimage by Nigerians' traders who interacted with the Arab traders. The process continued between the 11th and 14th centuries, especially in Borno state, the northern part of the country where Arabic was generally spoken as a first language by the Shuwa Arabs. They also mentioned that the Shuwa Arabs came to Kanem-Borno from Egypt in the late 14th century. At

that time, Borno Emirate had a strong political and economic relationship with Arab Countries like Egypt, Tunis, Tarabuls, and Hijaz

It was recorded that in17th to 19th centuries, Nigeria had many Arabic/Islamic schools established in mosques *(masajid)* and produced prominent scholars. These scholars wrote on various branches of knowledge such as Islamic education, history, law, linguistics, politics, and religions.

The language is presently operating in primary and post-primary schools in Yoruba land, Nigerian an obscure status because of very low enrollment. Initially, the University of Ibadan being a premier university offered certificate diploma courses in Arabic and Islamic studies. The University of Ibadan and other tertiary institutions in western Nigeria have well-established and accredited Arabic and Islamic Studies programme in Humanities and Education. Also, quite many colleges of education graduates Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) in both Arabic and Islamic Studies

But today, there are still challenges facing the teaching and learning of the Arabic language in Nigerian schools both at the lower and higher levels; because of the methods employed and the curriculum in use. Provisions of Information Communication Technology for creative skills are essential to meet global needs for the graduate to partake in the labour market.

Arigbadu, (2024) emphasized creative skills focusing on ICT for the teacher who is preparing students for labour market, and he says:

> In the contemporary world, the role of a teacher goes beyond just delivering content in the classroom. Teachers are now expected to be facilitators of learning, mentors, counselors, and even advocates for their students. They must possess **a wide range of skills, including communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, adaptability, and technology literacy** to meet the diverse needs of their students. In a professional sense, a teacher is someone who attempts to help learners to acquire skills, attitudes, ideas, and knowledge that would create or influence desirable changes in the behaviours of the learners.

One of the critical problems facing individuals and families in Nigeria presently is massive unemployment and under-utilization of human capital, with its resultant social ills. The Nigerian educational system of a necessity needs to evolve appropriate strategies for equipping individuals to cope with the situation. To be fully prepared for the world of work as well as navigate the labour

market, undergraduates need to be creative. Creativity is the cognitive ability to produce novel and valuable ideas. Creativity is not just a mastery of a skill but involves the process of devising or finding alternatives and new ways of solving problems. American Home Economics Association (2014) posited that the only true form of education is the one that teaches people to think for themselves and at the same time prepare them for both present and future life, training of intelligent thinking people, training that affects behavior, and independence training.

From the Islamic perspective, Al-Karasneh and Jubran (2016) recorded the notion of creativity from Muslim scholars. According to them, creativity can be understood as a special condition, attitude, or state of being that reflects the passion for work, independence, goal setting, originality, flexibility, a wide range of interests, average or above-average intelligence, and motivation as stated above. They, however, emphasized that creativity should aim at applying the divine principles to all aspects of life. In this case, those who are dealing with creativity should ensure that their works or inventions do not contradict Islamic principles. At the same time, there is a need to have a sense of responsibility to raise Islamic societies to a higher level, by allowing studentsof the Arabic language to face future challenges creatively and successfully. Al-Mazeidy (2013) added a new dimension to the definition of creativity. He defined it as "the ability to design new forms that are beneficial for humanity and are under the Islamic shari'ah". He emphasized that the creation of new things should follow Islamic foundations and principles. Creative Muslims in this case, will be distinguished from others by following the divine guidance from Allah SWT. They consider the approval of the Islamic Shari'ah before creating anything. In the same vein, Ahmad et al (2016) opined that Islam is creative by nature as it came with new and unique principles that rejected the prevailing practices of Arab society in terms of worshiping God. It is different from the beliefs of the people at that time. It came for change for the better. This kind of change was a shift from a system based on mere imitation of the old generation to a new and unique model based on thinking, realizing, and understanding the mission of people on earth. The Qur'an itself contains great and creative ideas including a complete system of guidance for life, enabling people to live under Islamic foundations. Referring to the variety of definitions of creativity perceived by many experts, there is one fundamental thing as the meeting point of all definitions related to creativity, which is the ability to produce something or create new ideas

Creativity is teachable and learnable through establishing an environment that accepts and reinforces new ideas. It is recognized that teachers play a significant role in developing suitable and rewarding values in learners. To assist individuals in generating original ideas, a lot of techniques have been designed, sometimes called creative thinking skills (Butcher, 2016). The idea of creativity brings a new layer of responsibility for teachers. The need for qualified teachers who can impart the necessary creative skills to students is increasing due to the rapid development in science and technology (Henningsen &Heningsen, 2013). Students are expected to demonstrate creative thinking in communicating and solving problems.

Teaching creativity can be described as teachers' use of different approaches to make learning more interesting, engaging, exciting, and effective. Teachers are charged with the responsibility of engaging students in learning sothey to develop the skills and knowledge needed to function in today's world, the effectiveness of the teacher depends on the application and transfer of professional skills, knowledge, and competencies to the learner and the management of the learning environment. Instructional materials and strategies that teachers use account for their success. Eragmreddy(2017) affirmed that teachers who use a variety of lesson presentations and instructional techniques such as set induction, reinforcement, inquiry learning and motivation as well as support their teaching with instructional materials are more likely to promote better learning and creativity among students, thereby improving creativity skills in them

Abiamuwe, et al (2016) defined creativity skills as the ability to be innovative, and the ability to develop, implement, and communicate new ideas to others effectively. It refers to basic mental abilities to think, study, and learn, for instance, literacy, numeracy, and the use of theory, concepts or tacit knowledge. Non-cognitive skills are socio-emotional personality traits, behaviours, and attitudes (also referred to as "Soft skills"), while technical skills include business, ICT, and specialized skills. Creativity skills enable an individual to think and produce results entirely different from the usual (Oviawe, 2015). It is quite logical that such skills can also be acquired by students of Arabic language. Gomez (2015) asserted that creative people have considerable cognitive flexibility, communicate easily, are intellectually curious, and tend to allow their impulses to flow freely. Sawyer (2012) affirmed that there are many traits associated with creativity, such as divergent thinking, introversion, self-esteem, tolerance for ambiguity, willingness to take risks, behavioural flexibility, emotional variability, and ability to absorb

imagery. Diyamet (2019) mentioned that Creativity skills are demonstrated through originality and inventiveness in work and the ability of people to understand the real-world limits to adopting new ideas. Creativity skills are expressed when students can learn and adapt; read, write, and competently; listen and communicate effectively; think creatively; solve problems independently; interact effectively with co-students; work in teams; handle basic technology; lead effectively as well and follow supervision.

Considering the alarming level of unemployment in the country, the fact that students do not have creative skills that would enable them to fit into the competitive labour market system cannot be over-emphasized. One of the objectives of Nigerian education is to produce skilled manpower who can play effective roles in national economic and technological growth and development. To tackle the massive siege of unemployment in Nigeria, there is a need to encourage the acquisition of creativity skills among Arabic language students of tertiary institutions to impact education opportunities.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to evolve the creativity skills needed by Arabic language students in two tertiary institutions in Lagos State. Specifically, the study identified.

1. Types of creativity skills needed by Arabic language undergraduate students.
2. Strategies needed for teaching creativity skills among Arabic language undergraduate students.
3. Challenges militating against the acquisition of creativity skills among Arabic language undergraduate students.
4. Strategies for stimulating creativity among Arabic language undergraduate students.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the types of creativity skills needed by Arabic language undergraduate students?
2. What strategies are needed for teaching creativity skills among Arabic language undergraduate students?

3. What are the challenges militating against the acquisition of creativity skills among students?

4. What are the strategies for stimulating creativity among Arabic language undergraduate students?

Methodology

Design of the Study: The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study since the opinions of Arabic language lecturers and students on creativity skills needed by undergraduates were sought, analyzed, and interpreted.

Area of the Study: The study was carried out in two tertiary institutions offering Arabic language in Lagos State. Lagos State was chosen due to its population size and high rate of unemployment among graduates.

Population and Sample for the Study: The population for the study was one hundred and fifty-eight (151) lecturers and students. This consisted of twenty-one (21) Arabic language lecturers and one hundred and thirty-seven (130) students in two tertiary institutions in Lagos State. In Lagos State University (LASU), there are thirteen (13) lecturers and ninety (90) students, in Lagos State University of Education (LASUED), there are eight (8) lecturers and forty (40) students. This data were obtained from the registry department of the institutions for 2022/2023 academic session. The entire population was used since it was a manageable size.

Instrument for Data Collection

The questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. It was divided into two sections. Section A elicited data on the demographic characteristics of the subjects while section B was based on the research questions. Section B was drawn on a four-point scale rating: Strongly Agreed (SA) =4, Agreed (A) =3, Disagreed (D)=2, Strongly Disagreed (SD)=1. The questionnaire was made up of thirty-five (35) items. Three Arabic language lecturers validated the instrument. Cronbach Alpha method was used in determining the internal consistency of the instrument and it yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.81.

Method of Data Collection: One hundred and fifty-eight (158) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the subjects. The questionnaires were administered to the Arabic language lecturers and students in the two institutions selected for the study.

Data Analysis: Data was analyzed using mean and standard deviations. Mean ratings from 2.5 and above were considered as agreed upon while mean ratings of 2.49 and below were considered as disagreed upon.

Findings

Table 1: Mean responses on Types of Creativity Skills Needed Arabic Undergraduate Skills

S/N	Types of creativity skills needed by students	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Problem solving skills	3.14	0.60	Needed
2.	Decision making skills	3.17	0.73	Needed
3.	Brainstorming skills	3.01	0.59	Needed
4.	Communication skills	2.86	0.66	Needed
5.	Critical thinking skills	2.99	0.68	Needed
6.	Initiative skills	3.10	0.68	Needed
7.	Media and technological skills	2.83	0.65	Needed
8.	Listening skills	2.90	0.69	Needed
9.	Innovative skills	3.12	0.69	Needed
Grand Mean		**3.O1**		

Data presented in Table 1 revealed the types of creativity skills needed by undergraduate students of Arabic. All the highlighted skills were viewed as needed. The mean ratings of the listed items ranged from 2.90 to 3.17 while the standard deviation responses ranged from 0.59 to 0.73 which showed that the subjects' responses were close. Among the identified creativity skills are problem-solving skills, media and technological skills, and initiative skills among more. This showed that creativity skills are multifaceted. This corroborated Prospects (2016) who asserted that creative thinking, inventiveness, and innovation are aspects of creative skills thatenable an individual to see things differently and turn something deficient into something valuable. The creativity of

Arabic students should be encouraged especially in areas of high demand by employers and society. This corroborated Al-Karasneh and Jubran (2016) who posited that creativity should reflecta passion for work, independence, goal setting, originality, and flexibility.

Table 2: Mean responses on strategies needed for teaching creativity skills among Arabic undergraduate Students

SN	Strategies needed for teaching creativity skills	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Adopting inquiry method of teaching	3.76	0.59	Needed
2.	Teachers adequately motivating students	3.28	0.74	Needed
3.	Teachers being flexible and allowing students to share their ideas in the classroom	2.84	0.98	Needed
4.	Use of technology tools and equipment in teaching	3.25	0.85	Needed
5.	Encouraging individual project work among students	3.42	0.75	Needed
6.	Adopting inquiry method of teaching	3.18	0.80	Needed
7.	Use of frequent questioning while teaching	3.44	0.69	Needed
8.	Encouraging students to be independent	3.18	0.76	Needed
9.	Teachers should give feedback to students	3.19	0.77	Needed
Grand Mean		**3.28**		

The data presented in Table 2 shows the strategies needed for teaching creativity skills among Arabic students. The grand mean of the listed items is 3.28 which is above the cut-off mark of 2.50. Also, the standard deviation values ranged from 0.59 to 0.98 which indicated that the subjects' responses were close. Teaching creativity is crucial for sustainable development. Lemchi (2015) posited that creativity is very important due to technological advancement in our society at an unprecedented level. Creative problem-solving is needed to cope with these challenges as they arise, to ensure sustainable development. Creativity is a veritable tool for success in any undertaking, be it by an individual, the family, the community, or society. This is so because creativity involves the application of divergent thinking, critical thinking, and other problem-solving skills to produce solutions to problems.

Table 3: Mean Responses on Challenges Militating against Acquisition of Creativity Skills

in the Arabic Language

SN Challenges Militating against Acquisition of Creativity Skills in Arabic Language	Mean	SD	Decision
1. Lack of confidence	2.94	0.84	Accepted
2. Fear of criticism	3.47	0.70	Accepted
3. Believe	3.28	0.80	Accepted
4. Rigid nature of the curriculum	3.07	0.79	Accepted
5. Curriculum reviews are not frequent	3.34	0.74	Accepted
6. Strong emphasis on memorization and imitation	3.05	0.78	Accepted
7. Fear of self-expression	3.10	0.79	Accepted
8. Poor learning environment that does not promote creative learning	3.35	0.72	Accepted
Grand Mean	**3.2**		

Data presented in Table 3 indicated that the subjects accepted all the listed items as challenges militating against the acquisition of creativity skills in the Arabic language. The Table has a grand mean of 3.2 which is above 2.50. Results indicated that creativity is hampered by a poor environment that does not provide quiet time for reflection and introspection. This corroborated Lemchi (2015) who affirmed that a sterile environment that does not feed the senses hinders creative thinking. Furthermore, demands for quick production of results, harsh words, and comments from others; including rigid rules and barriers are environmental factors that can contribute to limitations on creativity. The findings of this study are also in line with the assertions of Oviawe (2015) who stated that factors such as field trips should be included when planning the school curriculum as this would encourage students and increase their intuition, innovation, and social skills.

Table 4: Mean Responses on Strategies for Stimulating Creativity among Arabic Language Undergraduate Students?

SN Strategies for Stimulating Creativity among Arabic Language Undergraduate Students	Mean	SD	Decision

1.	Ensuring that class sizes are within the acceptable ratio	2.78	0.93	Accepted
2.	Teachers should serve as facilitators and allow the	2.93	0.90	Accepted
3.	Students to construct their own knowledge through Learning and application	2.94	0.84	Accepted
4.	Respecting students' ideas and questions, and not dismissing them with a wave of hand.	3.16	0.75	Accepted
5.	Increasing the ICT capabilities of both teachers and students for optimal functioning.	3.28	0.80	Accepted
6.	Stressing use of discovery and exploration methods of teaching and learning.	2.77	0.87	Accepted
7.	De-emphasizing memorization and initiation.	2.78	0.93	Accepted
8.	Encouraging critical and divergent thinking in the teaching and learning process.	2.84	0.98	Accepted
9.	Assessment should not be based only on academic achievement but also on the exhibition of creative abilities and problem-solving skills.	3.00	0.95	Accepted
Grand Mean		**2.60**		

Data presented in Table 4 revealed the strategies for stimulating creativity among Arabic undergraduate students. All the highlighted strategies were accepted with mean values above 2.50. Teaching creatively is an important method for stimulating creativity among students. Creative teaching can be understood as how a teacher attempts to make learning fun and engaging (Starbuck, 2016). It refers to the process of instruction when the teacher's mind is in a creative state. In creative teaching, teachers link the learning process to real-life experiences, introduce existing knowledge into novel forms of lessons, improvise performance, and invent spontaneous situations in the classroom (Sawyer, 2012)

Conclusion

In Conclusion of this study calls on stakeholders of Arabic language to make deliberate efforts towards inculcating creativity in the curriculum. Creativity is vital for progress and success in any undertaking, be it by an individual, the family, the community, or society. The findings of the study also showed that if creativity is included in the curriculum, Arabic Language students will involve in multifaceted skills equipping students for self-reliance and preparing them for the labour market. In general, Creative skills are crucial for poverty reduction, entrepreneurship, family sustainability, and survival and all these should be encouraged among Arabic Language undergraduates.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Lecturers and students alike need to build up their creative skills to remain relevant, especially as technology is advancing at an unprecedented rate.
2. An enabling environment should be provided for students to assist in developing their creative skills.
3. Students should be encouraged to be innovative and demonstrate multiple approaches to solving problems.
4. Teachers should set a creative daily lesson plan and engage in learning as fun a way as possible. Additionally, in this modern era, incorporating information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching the Arabic language could be a viable and effective strategy to enhance student learning.
5. Finally, engaging students in group-based cooperative learning can also make the learning process is active and creative.

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