Researching Creativity in Second Language Acquisition:
Book Review

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In the realm of psychology and language acquisition, the exploration of "individual differences"—encompassing attributes such as personality traits, motivation, and language aptitude—has long been a focal point of scholarly investigation. Within this sphere, the book "Researching Creativity in Second Language Acquisition" by Ashleigh Pipes offers a fresh perspective on the role of creativity as a significant individual difference in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Positioned against the backdrop of extensive empirical research on individual differences, this book stands out by focusing on the often overlooked aspect of creativity, which Pipes argues, holds paramount importance in SLA.

Keywords: Second Language Acquisition (SLA), creativity

Introduction

The field of creativity research has been a vibrant area of study since the mid-20th century, with seminal works by Guilford (1950) and Rhodes (1961) laying the foundation for understanding this elusive concept. Guilford's address to the American Psychological Association sparked a paradigm shift in the academic discourse surrounding creativity. Rhodes further extended this work by introducing the "4Ps" model, which has since become a cornerstone in creativity studies. However, the explicit connection of creativity with SLA has been relatively less explored, despite the significant implications it holds for language pedagogy.

Ashleigh Pipes' book, "**Researching Creativity in Second Language Acquisition**", published by Routledge, serves to bridge this gap. The book scrutinizes creativity within the context of diverse domains, including demographic, affective, and cognitive factors. Pipes draws attention to the role of creativity in widely employed teaching methodologies like Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Language Teaching. The book also addresses the challenges of investigating creativity as an individual difference in its impact on SLA, such as the difficulty of isolating creativity as a dependent variable. However, Pipes not only highlights these challenges but also provides guidance for future research and teaching endeavors. This book not only

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contributes significantly to academic literature on SLA but also serves as a roadmap for educators and researchers aiming to incorporate creativity into their pedagogical practices and research.

Layout of Chapters

Chapter 1 of the book by Ashleigh Pipes is structured into two parts. The initial section offers readers a comprehensive overview of the proposal's fundamental components, such as the background, research questions, methodology, timeline, budget, and references, all of which are discussed with a focus on creativity. Additionally, the author provides a brief introduction to the following chapters. The second section includes eight template proposals that have been intentionally designed to cater to the diverse constraints of researchers' projects, such as time, cost, and resources. They serve as an excellent resource for researchers and practitioners seeking to create compelling proposals of creativity in SLA.

Chapter 2 delves into the understanding of creativity from various angles, such as theories, frameworks, and empirical evidence. The concept of convergent and divergent thinking was introduced by Guilford, who laid the foundation for divergent thinking with the four dimensions—fluency, originality, flexibility, and elaboration. Clapham (2011) proposed two fundamental principles, "Novelty" and "Utility". These principles, along with Rhodes's "4Ps" framework, provide an integrative perspective on the multifaceted nature of creativity. The author proceeds to talk about bilingualism and creativity, compares the existing research in this field, and identifies a positive correlation between the two research domains (creativity in SLA). However, a research gap exists due to inconsistency in the measurement of creativity, as different authors use distinct methods to measure creativity's output.

Within Chapter 3, creativity assessment in linguistics research is thoroughly introduced following its identification and research development in the previous section. Eight techniques are explored for evaluating creativity with different focuses: one is prepared for the participants themselves, and the other is for someone else, like teachers of the participants, to complete. Followed a particular focus on three commonly utilized approaches in SLA: alternative uses tasks, third-party evaluations, and Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCTs). Each assessment method is thoughtfully considered with regard to its primary advantages, limitations, and recommended scoring strategies. In light of these insights, the author recommends that the application of multiple assessment methods tailored to the specific research question can enhance the credibility and dependability of the overall evaluation.

After assessing creativity in research, Chapter 4 focuses on linguistic instruments. Good research design is necessary to determine how creativity influences L2 learning. Consequently, linguistic instruments are indispensable. The author kindly points out two pitfalls to avoid. Firstly, it is essential to ascertain the position of creativity within research; it cannot exist in both the dependent and independent variables. More importantly, creativity could not be an intervening variable. Next, the author lists three sample linguistic instruments in which the eliciting data can be widely used in creativity research because they will not stimulate participants' creativity. Besides, the pilot study is essential; it is necessary to make good use of it, which can boost the research more smoothly.

Chapter 5 introduces the significance of individual differences in SLA research and their data collection methods. This chapter emphasizes three categories of individual differences: demographic, affective, and

cognitive, which include seven specific individual differences. In Addition, the author proposes a potential correlation between creativity and these individual differences, for example, age. While studies on creativity tend to center around young children, SLA studies prioritize adult participants. Thus, it would be beneficial to encompass both age and creativity in SLA research to expand and enrich the exploration of creativity. By extension, the combination of the above individual variances and creativity fosters and propels advancement within this domain of study.

Chapters 6 and 7 analyse what happens after data collection. First, it emphasizes the significance of the data analysis and management process, which is just as important as data collection, if not more so in academic discourse. In the assessment of creativity, it is crucial to acknowledge the presence of confounding factors that may impact the scoring process. Specifically, norms have been found to have a significant influence on the perception of "originality," while the degree of "elaboration" may affect the evaluation of "fluency," as previously stated by Ottó (1998). Furthermore, it demonstrates some standard methods of sharing research findings, including presentations, posters, and papers. While posters may seem appealing to research beginners, the thorough explanation of the preparation of posters underscores their crucial role in exhibition and communication when attending academic conferences.

In the final chapter of the book, the author presents a comprehensive conclusion that effectively synthesizes the key findings and themes from the preceding chapters. Moreover, the author astutely acknowledges the limitations of the study while simultaneously emphasizing the essential pedagogical and research implications that emerge from the book.

Contributions of the Book

The present volume boasts numerous significant attributes, among which three are particularly salient. The author astutely underscores the paramount significance of creativity in the context of research on Second Language Acquisition (SLA), thereby bringing to the fore a key dimension that has been neglected. The author provides an elaborate exposition of the essential elements and considerations that are integral to the successful conduct of SLA research, thus contributing to a richer understanding of this complex domain.

First and foremost, the book exhibits a clear structure with well-defined internal organization within chapters and completeness in the structure between chapters. The outset of each chapter elucidates the main content, providing readers with a clear roadmap for comprehension. Likewise, the conclusions of chapters succinctly summarize vital points, reinforcing readers' understanding while posing thoughtful questions for reflection (the second point will address specific details). The logical progression between chapters is meticulous, aligning with the typical research process, from proposal formulation to the determination of independent and dependent variables, selection of testing formats, data decoding, analysis, and eventual presentation of results, ensuring a cohesive narrative throughout. Of particular note, in the final chapters, the author revisits earlier chapters, primarily highlighting the critical emphases of each, a reader-friendly feature especially beneficial for those with limited time for comprehensive reading. Moreover, what is particularly researcher-friendly is the author's comprehensive listing of relevant literature and URLs to potential online resources, facilitating future reference for scholars. Consequently, this text transcends its role merely as a research-oriented publication and emerges as a highly utilitarian compendium, which holds significant value for academic pursuit.

It is noteworthy that each chapter concludes with two sections: "Thinking Inside the Box" and "Thinking Outside the Box." In the "Inside the Box" segment, the inquiries are predicated upon the thematic discussions, references, or discrepancies articulated by the author within the chapter, aiming to facilitate readers and their peers in engaging in more profound, cultivating their divergent thinking that is mentioned in the text, their practical application, and synthesis (as evidenced in Chapter 3, which prompts the undertaking of pair research and subsequent evaluation of Otto's creativity tests in his 1998 research). This approach transcends mere comprehension of the cited literature and also serves to stimulate insights and support for teachers in instructional settings. Moreover, the "Outside the Box" segment targets readers or researchers inclined towards creativity, urging them to reflect on specific aspects to be recognized in both everyday life and research endeavors within the context of the study (As noted in Chapter 2, the author prompts readers to observe the frequency of mentions of "creativity" within their communities and on the internet, subsequently documenting and discussing their findings.). Furthermore, it encourages them to undertake literature reviews on creativity and SLA (as observed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6). Such practices also effectively foster researchers' iterative exploration of their own creativity.

Last but not least, this book provides a clear direction for future research. The importance of creativity has been underscored in numerous scholarly works. Runco (2004) posited that students' creativity was influenced by specific teaching environments and methods, noting that test-based teaching approaches could stifle creativity. This holds significant implications for pedagogical approaches, particularly given the current trend towards student-centered, interaction-based methodologies (Dörnyei, 2005). Consequently, investigating the impact of creativity on second language acquisition (SLA) holds crucial significance for educational advancement. Despite the limited literature in this domain, the author has curated several pivotal studies. For instance, Ottó (1998) established a notable correlation between creativity scores and English proficiency through a series of creativity tasks and subsequent English class performance. Similarly, McDonough et al. (2015) demonstrated a positive association between creativity, assessed via Life-boat and TTCT measures, and oral production. The author provides an objective analysis of the aforementioned studies, comparing and elucidating the existing shortcomings in incorporating creativity as an individual difference in SLA research, thereby offering clear directions for future investigation. Additionally, the author anticipates and addresses potential challenges and proposes viable solutions, akin to a guiding beacon illuminating the path forward in research endeavors. Lastly, the author underscores the fundamental nature of creativity as an individual difference and advocates for its integration with other individual differences, such as age and gender, to foster comprehensive investigation and enhance pedagogical practices.

Closing Remarks

Like the other literature, this book unavoidably has some restrictions. Although this book presents a wide range of knowledge, it may be more appropriate for novice researchers. While the book covers factual information comprehensively, some sections lack in-depth exploration and further discussion. These sections mainly list information without delving into future research directions. For instance, Chapter 1 covers the basic elements of a proposal, which are fundamental for research but may not be necessary for experienced researchers. In Chapter 5, the book introduces three major categories and seven types of individual difference variables that

can be combined in the creativity study. However, the author primarily focuses on their potential relevance without clearly indicating key research directions. For instance, without substantial empirical evidence, the author forcibly correlates motivation and creativity. While this indeed presents an idealistic vision, the integration of these two factors into SLA research necessitates significant research resources and time. This complexity contrasts with the simplistic research descriptions provided in Chapter 1 and Chapter 7, potentially leading readers to feel more confused than enlightened.

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