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ENGLISH SPEAKING ACTIVITIES AND IRAQI EFL LEARNER'S CREATIVE THINKING SKILLS: ARE THEY INTER-RELATED?

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ABSTRACT

The instruction of English as a foreign language (EFL) especially in developing oral proficiency has become increasingly dependent on the cultivation of creative thinking skills. To achieve this objective the present study focused on exploring how English-speaking proficiency development can enhance creative thinking in second-grade students in the secondary school of Iraq. Fifty EFL students aged 3-14 were randomly divided into an experimental group (n=25), and a control group (n=25). There were the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT) and a 30-item questionnaire that were completed before and after the intervention. The findings revealed that the experimental group was trained on the concept of creative speaking activities but the control group adhered to the traditional communicative methods. Results showed statistically significant changes with the experimental group more than the control group across all fourdimension dimensions of creativity-fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. The research concludes that incorporating creative thinking strategies in the EFL speaking teaching develops not only the linguistic competence of the Iraqi secondary students, but also intellectual creativity.

KEYWORDS: Creative Thinking, Speaking Activates, Learner, Teaching.

1. INTRODUCTION

English instruction in Iraqi secondary schools emphasizes exercises, memorization, and accuracy-based speaking. Thus, students' creativity and communication are limited (Khoorchani et al., 2019). These activities enhancing students unmotivated, nervous, and afraid to talk, which hinders their speech skills and creativity. Excessive mistake avoidance discouraged new ideas and lowered student confidence. 21st-century creativity involves fluidity, adaptability, originality, and elaboration (Torrance, 2008). Creative thinking in EFL classes allows students to transcend beyond memorized patterns and make communication a process of problem-solving (Saad, 2021). Iraqi EFL classes are teacher-centered and exam-oriented, limiting creativity. There was little empirical research in Iraq on how creative speaking activities affect student fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration.

We investigated how English-speaking activities develop creative thinking in Iraqi secondary EFL learners to fill this gap. It aimed to define the possibilities of enhancing creative skills among students and making the EFL teaching process more interesting and efficient by introducing innovative habits of speaking.

Literature gained a fresh source showing that language development and creative thinking are linked. The findings might help curriculum designers, policymakers, and instructors adopt creative teaching strategies to reduce anxiety, increase engagement, and foster creative thinking. These findings may support teacher initiatives that promote learner-centered, creative learning.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Despite the ongoing reforms, teaching EFL in Iraq is still characterized by teacher-centered approaches with the focus on grammatical correctness, translation, and memorization. Consequently, most learners at the secondary school level cannot articulate themselves, negotiate and construct original responses in classroom discussions (Khoorchani et al., 2019). The students who do not receive the opportunity to experiment with the language, find various solutions, and adapt their speech to new situations do not become equipped with a higher-order mental processes (divergent thinking, idea elaboration, intellectual flexibility, and expression). In Iraq, the issue is more severe, since English is instructed as a subject of examination, but not as a communicative instrument. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the possibility of the introduction of the structured, creativity-based speaking activities that would lead to improve fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration of English in students. despite evidence in the international literature suggesting that creative speaking activities enhance language performance and creative thinking, the relevant literature does not provide any empirical data to study the same in the Iraqi secondary-school environment. Filling this gap would theoretically and practically assist in reforming curriculum, teacher preparation and teaching methodology practice.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

Even though no individual theory has a direct correlation between creative thinking and EFL speaking abilities, several theoretical and empirical materials presuppose that creativity is a key contributor to enhancing oral communication. The given research was based on constructivist theory of learning (Vygotsky, 1978) that focuses on the interaction between the learner and other factors and creative thinking approach (Finke, Ward, and Smith, 1992), Together these theories examine how creative speaking tasks enhance communicative and higher - oriented learning. Empirical studies such as these by Cromwell et al. (2023), Murtaugh (2017), Khoorchani et al. (2019), Saad (2021), and Kumar et al. (2016) indicate an interactive and psychologically safe EFL classroom is organized through creative speaking activities, i. e. storytelling, role-play, dramatization, and simulations. Such activities enable learners assume linguistic risks, experiment with ideas, and engage in real communication, all of which enhance fluency, confidence, and creativity. Being exposed to a variety of expressiveness also enhances the knowledge of learners on the structure and meaning of languages and promote them to enhance their performance in communication within and outside the classroom. The current study is based on this theoretical and empirical premise and is assumed that creativity is central to communicative competence. Creative speaking activities can also fill the gap between rote learning and actual communicative use of English in the traditional, exam-based Iraqi classrooms, thus, creativity is a medium and a product of successful EFL teaching.

1.3. Objective of the Study

This study aims to examine the relationship between English speaking skills and the development of creative thinking among Iraqi second-grade secondary students. In particular, the research seeks to determine how different parameters of speaking proficiency (e.g. fluency,

coherence, and communicative confidence) may contribute to enhancing the most important areas of creative thinking, which are flexibility, originality, and elaboration.

1.4. The Question of the Study

In what ways do the English-speaking skills affect the growth of creative thinking—specifically in terms of fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration among the Iraqi second grade secondary students?

1.5. Significance of the Study

The proposed research aimed to improve English instruction to second-grade secondary pupils in Iraq through the integration of creative thinking into speaking exercises. Its anticipated outcomes operated across several levels:

- Language proficiency: The speaking creative-based practice is expected to stimulate creative thinking, which may promote communicative competence and overall linguistics performance.
- Student interaction: creative tasks were expected to enhance motivation, involvement, and classroom participation that is necessary to successful language learning (Cromwell et al., 2023).
- Pedagogical development: The results assisted teachers, curriculum developers, and policy makers to incorporate creativity in EFL teaching and develop innovative instructional approaches and materials (Gulnora, 2022).
- Mental rewards: focusing on idea generation rather than grammatical perfection can reduce anxiety, promote risk-taking, and foster student confidence in speaking (Murtaugh, 2017).

Overall, the study underscored creativity as both a pedagogical instrument and a learning objective and sought to enhance the quality of teaching English instruction and incorporate the development of creative skills in Iraqi EFL students.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Studies

2.1.1. Defining Creativity

Creativity is a relative, multifaceted concept, lacks of universal agreed-upon definition remains conceptually contested across cultures and context. In educational psychology, Creativity extends beyond artistic imagination, but rather it is a cognitive and social process that enables people to generate new, valuable and relevant ideas and products.

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) defines creativity as any idea, action, or product that could transform an existing field, is shaped by the interaction between the individual, knowledge and the social group that evaluates novelty. similarly, Sawyer (2012) argues that creativity cannot have only one perspective. Such an understanding is extended by Richards (as cited in Runco and Pritzker, 2020), who introduces the notion of everyday creativity, originality in solving problems and communicating, so that creativity is presented as a human, flexible, and developmental characteristic and not exclusive to the artistic genius. Within education and particularly the EFL setting, creativity involves providing the students with chances to make risky choices, experiment, and share ideas when using the language.

Iraqi traditional instruction is grammar-intensive and memorization based, making students have which leaves the students with few opportunities of thinking creatively or employing language freely. Therefore, it is necessary to explore how speaking skills and creative work could encourage students to generate ideas, think critically, and communicate effectively. Systematic combination of creativity would enhance communicative competence and mental growth during secondary level. On balance, all these theories confirm the notion that the process of creativity can assist learners to gain a communicative competence, create new meanings, adjust to new circumstances, and be able to use English more fluently and flexibly.

2.1.2. Second Language Learning Creativity

Creative second language acquisition has led to a transition from accuracy-focused models to learner-centered approaches that emphasize meaning, critical thinking, and personal expression (Khoorchani et al., 2019). Instead, creative language teaching positions students meaning-creators who develop linguistic knowledge by exploring, collaborating, and reflecting. According to Vygotsky (1978) socio-constructivist theory, creative thinking can develop as a result of social instruction and dialogic communication that constructs language competence, originality, and cognitive flexibility.

Substantial empirical evidence supports the effectiveness of creative pedagogies in the EFL classrooms. Murtaugh (2017) observes that a reduced emphasis on flawless grammar creates a psychologically safe environment for risk-taking. Richards concept of everyday creativity is that divergent way of thinking in daily communication enhances language learning (Runco and Pritzker, 2020).

overall, creativity strengths communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) and cognitive development (Finke, Ward and Smith, 1992), thus makes it a linkage between language proficiency and sophisticated thinking. It enhances real-life communication, problem solving, and identity development in speaking classrooms by engaging the use of teams and experimentation. Thus, the inclusion of creativity in the pedagogy of speaking prepares a student with communicative and cognitive abilities required in 21st century education.

2.1.3. Creativity and Speaking Skill Development

Speaking is widely recognized as one of the most cognitively challenging skills in the second language acquisition because learners have to make mental efforts in retrieving linguistic forms, organizing thoughts, and giving contextually relevant answers in real-time. When applied to EFL, creativity converts oral production that is merely a mechanical task in to a meaningful, purpose-driven and intellectually stimulating communicative act. The Creative Cognition Theory (Finke, Ward, and Smith, 1992) holds that involves generation, transformations, and evaluation of mental representations, and assessment. Students who take linguistic risks, play with expressions, and experiment with new forms use the same kind of thinking process as is involved in creative thinking. Torrance (2008), in his conceptualization of creativity, introduces four dimensions, namely fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration which were all the main speaking sub skills namely; lexical diversity, coherence, discourse organization and communicative appropriateness. Therefore, creative thinking and speaking skill were mutually reinforcing and interdependent. Khoorchani et al. (2019) demonstrated that other creative speaking activities, such as debates, storytelling, etc., were highly effective in promoting fluency and originality. Based on the socio-constructivist perspective of Vygotsky, creativity-advocated speaking fosters better cognitive abilities as it allows the learners to build meaning together, be scaffolded, and conduct a reflective dialogue. Together, the literature demonstrates that creative thinking enabled learners to express themselves openly when it comes to the articulation of ideas, speaking is one of the avenues to express and build creative cognition. With the Iraqi EFL environment, where teaching is exam-focused, teacher-centered and accuracy-focused, the creativity-based pedagogy can make a great contribution to filling the gap between the grammatical knowledge and the actual communicative proficiency. The promotion of creative speaking would lead to the development of more confident, adaptive, and cognitively engaged learners who can apply English meaningfully in academic and real-world settings.

2.2. Practical Studies

Creativity is more and more regarded as an indispensable part of EFL education because speaking assignments demand the learners to create their own ideas and negotiate the meaning in the process of actual communication. Most of the recent research has been short-term and has not been applied in secondary-level classrooms in the Middle East, and recent studies indicate that digital storytelling, CLIL and discovery-based speaking activities are effective in improving fluency and creative thinking. Thus, the current study is in inquiry of whether scaffolded creativity-based speaking tasks have the potential of developing fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration in Iraqi English as a foreign language (EFL) learners at secondary school.

The literature that has been reviewed can be divided into three primary thematic directions. First, there is a vast amount of research pointing at the importance of technology and interdisciplinary combining to improve the speaking of creativity. Digital Stories and technology-enhanced instructions, i.e. TELLTM and STEAM (Chen et al., 2024; Jammie, 2019), are associated with consistent fluency, pronunciation, imagination, and motivation gains, although most interventions are often short-term. Second, there is a second type of research that focuses on pedagogical approaches that combine creativity with communicative competence. (Guntur et al., 2023; Cruz, 2021; Syafitri et al., 2022; Inggarde, 2014; Alabbasi et al., 2025) report improvements in vocabulary range, narrative richness, problem-solving, and divergent thinking. Lastly, some research focuses on the psychological and sociocultural aspects of creative speaking, and it demonstrates that emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and identity variables have a positive impact on fluency and expressive confidence (Wang et al., 2024; Gafour and Gafour, 2020; Muhammadiyeva et al., 2020; Suherman and Akovich, 2024).

One of the obvious trends in previous studies is that fluency and pronunciation, imagination, and confidence outcomes were always better when learners share their stories with the help of technology, like Digital Stories, TELLTM, or STEAM

(Yang et al., 2022; Altawalbeh and Tayyoun, 2023; Chen et al., 2024; Jammie, 2019). Equally, problem-solving and open-ended speaking were supported by pedagogical models like CLIL, Discovery Learning, and Thinking-Skills Curricula (Guntur et al., 2023; Syafitri et al., 2022; Alabbasi et al., 2025) as ways to positively affect vocabulary richness, narrative skills, and divergent thinking- that is, creative thinking and communicative competence are co-constructed (Wang et al., 2024; Muhammadiyeva et al., 2020; Suherman and Akovich, 2024) demonstrating that emotional intelligence, identity, and critical thinking are the predictors of better oral performance. Collectively, these studies suggest that speaking activities have the ability to act as cognitive instruments that create fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration.

Nevertheless, the literature contains no context-specific, standardized and protracted evidence in spite of these encouraging findings. The majority of studies were short-term, and they were carried out under technologically enhanced settings and in rare cases did they employ validated creativity measures like the TTCT. Above all, there has been no empirical research done to determine whether organized speaking tasks could build creative thinking skills in Iraqi secondary school EFL learners, with the learning process being largely teacher-led and memorization-based. Thus, the present study fills the scientific gap because it aims to test the hypothesis that scaffolded speaking activities can have any substantial effect on the four dimensions of the creative thinking (fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration) in the Iraqi EFL environment.

3. METHOD

3.1. Design

The study adopted quantitative, experimental research design, which aimed to evaluate the extent to which speaking activities could foster creative thinking among second-grade students in Iraqi secondary schools. The experimental group performed structured speaking activity like group discussion and debate, and presentations as a way of arousing creative problem solving. The results of the experimental and control groups were compared in a paired-samples t-test to compare the outcomes of the pre-test and post-test. To achieve the perception of the learners on the effect of the activities on their creative thinking, a student questionnaire was applied. The two instruments had triangulated data to enhance validity and have a more accurate picture of the effects of the intervention.

3.1.2. Participants

The study included 50 second-grade Iraqi EFL students, divided into 25 in the experimental group and 25in the control group. Participants were 13-14 years old. The experimental group consisted of 11 females and 14 males, while control group included 12 females and 13 males in the control group. Gender and other demographic balance controlled through random sampling to minimize selection bias. Experimental group received structured, interactive speaking-skill activities designed to stimulate creative thinking, while the control group instructed through the traditional methods, including lectures and written exercises emphasizing grammatical accuracy and memorization.

Using two comparable groups exposed to different instructional conditions increases internal validity and allows for precise measurement of the intervention effects.

3.2. Instrument

The study evaluated the impact of the speaking-skills intervention using two two primary measures; the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT) and a questionnaire given to the students. TTCT was a well-validated and empirically instrument that assesses creativity in four dimensions namely; fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration. The TTCT administered to all the participants before and after intervention stage and score comparison determined whether the intervention produces statistically significant changes in creative thinking. Moreover, qualitative data on learners' perception of creative development collected through a student questionnaire. It gauged the perceptions of the students on how the speaking activities affected their imagination and confidence as well as critical-thinking ability, and also provided reflective feedback on how the activities influenced their thinking processes. Using both instruments yielded multidimensional assessment of the intervention's impact: the TTCT provided objective quantitative evidence, while the questionnaire offered qualitative insight into students' experiences and perceptions.

3.3. Pre-Post Test

The research employed pre-posttest design to assess the impact of speaking activities on the creative thinking of the students. The experimental and control groups sat for a TTCT (Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking) pre-test to establish baseline scores in the four dimensions (fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration). A post-test with TTCT administered after the intervention to determine

whether the intervention enhanced creative thinking as a result of the intervention.

The researcher quantified changes in creativity by comparing pre- and post-test scores. To determine whether score differences were statistically significant, the analysis based on paired-samples t -tests This method provided strong empirical grounds for evaluating the effectiveness of speaking intervention in improving the creative thinking of the students in the EFL setting.

3.4. The Questionnaire

The study collected qualitative and quantitative data through student questionnaire which examines the perceived impact of speaking activities in creative thinking in EFL learners . It was a complement to objective results of the TTCT as it gathers self-reported perceptions of students. The questionnaire contained 30 items used to assess the four levels of creativity fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration(Table 3-1)all items were measured on a five-point Likert scale.. content validity was established through expert review and pilot testing to ensure which clarity, relevance, and reliability (As shown in Table 1). The analyses conducted on the basis of descriptive statistics and paired-sample t-tests to compare pre and post intervention responses to determine whether speaking activities significantly influenced students creativity.

Table 1: Distribution of Questions Across the Four Dimensions of Creative Thinking.

Dimension	Description	Question Numbers	Number of Questions
Fluency	The ability to generate a large number of ideas.	1, 3, 5, 10, 13, 15, 30,21	8
Flexibility	The ability to generate different types of ideas or solutions.	2, 7, 11, 12, 16, 23,25	7
Originality	The ability to produce new and unique ideas.	8, 14, 18, 19, 27, 28, 29	7
Elaboration	The ability to expand and develop ideas in greater detail.	4, 6, 9, 17, 20, 22, 24, 26	8

Questionnaire was designed to measure the level of creative thinking among second-year students within the context of English Language Teaching (ELT). It consisted of 30 assessed fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration as defined by the TTCT framework. each item was evaluated by a panel of experts to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the four dimensions of creativity. Items were either approved, modified based on feedback or excluded.

Table 2: Validity of the Creative Thinking Skills Questionnaire Items Based on the Opinions of 20 Experts.

No.	Sentences	Number of approvers	Number of non-approvers	Calculated Ka2	Significance level	Acceptance
1	The speaking activities in my EFI class encourage me to think critically about the topics we discuss	18	2	12.800	*0.000	Acceptable
2	I feel comfortable expressing my own ideas and opinions during speaking activities.	20	zero	20.000	*0.000	Acceptable
3	The speaking activities in my EFI class help me come up with new and creative ways to express myself in English.	18	2	12.800	*0.000	acceptable
4	I feel confident using English to solve problems or challenges presented during speaking activities.	15	5	5.000	*0.025	Acceptable
5	The speaking activities in my EFI	18	2	12.800	*0.000	Acceptable

	class are engaging and motivate me to participate actively.					
6	My EFI teacher encourages me to ask questions and explore different perspectives during speaking activities.	17	3	9.800	*0.002	Acceptable
7	My EFI teacher provides opportunities for me to work with classmates in creative ways during speaking activities.	16	4	7.200	*0.007	Acceptable
8	My EFI teacher encourages me to think outside the box and come up with original ideas during speaking activities	15	5	5.000	*0.025	Acceptable
9	My EFI teacher gives me clear instructions and guidance on how to participate effectively in speaking activities	19	1	16.200	*0.000	Acceptable
10	The speaking activities in my EFI textbook encourage me to think creatively and come up with new ideas.	20	Zero	20.000	*0.000	Acceptable
11	The topics covered in the speaking activities of my EFI class are interesting and relevant to my life.	18	2	12.800	*0.000	Acceptable
12	The speaking activities in my EFI class provide opportunities for me to learn new vocabulary and grammar in a creative way.	17	3	9.800	*0.002	Acceptable
13	The feedback I receive after speaking activities helps me improve my English speaking skills.	18	2	12.800	*0.000	Acceptable
14	I feel that the speaking activities in my EFI class are too challenging and sometimes hinder my confidence.	20	Zero	20.000	*0.000	Acceptable
15	The speaking activities in my EFI class allow me to practice real-life conversation scenarios that I	18	2	12.800	*0.000	Acceptable

	might encounter outside of class.					
16	I enjoy the variety of speaking activities, from debates to storytelling, as they keep the class interesting and dynamic.	15	5	5.000	*0.025	Acceptable
17	The group speaking activities help me build stronger relationships with my classmates.	18	2	12.800	*0.000	Acceptable
18	I sometimes feel anxious about making mistakes in front of others during speaking activities.	17	3	9.800	*0.002	Acceptable
19	The speaking activities in my EFI class help me better understand the cultural aspects of English-speaking countries.	18	2	12.800	*0.000	Acceptable
20	I wish there were more opportunities for one-on-one speaking practice with the teacher to improve my pronunciation and fluency.	20	Zero	20.000	*0.000	Acceptable
21	The use of technology (like language learning apps and online resources) in speaking activities enhances my learning experience.	18	2	12.800	*0.000	Acceptable
22	I find the pace of speaking activities either too fast or too slow for my learning speed.	15	5	5.000	*0.025	Acceptable
23	The speaking activities are well integrated with the reading and writing components of our EFI course, creating a comprehensive learning experience.	18	2	12.800	*0.000	Acceptable
24	I feel that the topics for speaking activities are often repeated and would benefit from more variety.	17	3	9.800	*0.002	Acceptable
25	The classroom environment during speaking activities is supportive and	18	2	12.800	*0.000	Acceptable

	encourages everyone to participate.					
26	I would like more feedback on how to use body language and non-verbal cues effectively during speaking activities.	20	Zero	20.000	*0.000	Acceptable
27	The speaking activities challenge me to use English in ways I had not considered before.	18	2	12.800	*0.000	Acceptable
28	I appreciate when we have the opportunity to choose topics for speaking activities, as it makes the experience more personalized and engaging.	15	5	5.000	*0.025	Acceptable
29	I find it difficult to stay engaged during speaking activities when the topics do not interest me.	18	2	12.800	*0.000	Acceptable
30	The speaking activities in my EFI class have significantly improved my ability to think and respond quickly in English.	17	3	9.800	*0.002	Acceptable

Note: Significant and acceptable when the value of (Chi2) was below the significance level (0.05).

The intervention used in the study consisted of speaking-skills program applied to the experiment group , while the control group continued receiving traditional instruction. The intervention involved a structured set of speaking activities designed to promote creative thinking, which included storytelling, debates, and role-playing, aimed at facilitating creative thinking. The intervention lasted eight weeks, with two 90-minute sessions per week. A pre-test and questionnaires administered to both groups before the intervention, and the same instruments administered again afterward. The collected data analyzed to determine the extent to which the speaking activities influenced students' creative thinking.

3.5. Data Collection Procedure

Data for this study collected through an experimental intervention and a questionnaire. Experimental group received speaking activities designed to enhance creative thinking, whereas the control group continued with traditional instruction. Both groups completed pre-tested using Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT) to determine the baseline levels of creativity. Following the intervention the same TTCT administered as a post-test with a questionnaire to measure students' perceptions how speaking activities influenced their creativity. The questionnaire assessed the four dimensions of creativity: fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration. The pre- and post-test data allowed the researcher to determine changes in students' creative thinking, while the questionnaire provided insight into students' perception of the impact of speaking activities.

3.6. Treatment

The experimental group participated in a eight weeks speaking-skills program designed to improve fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. The program consisted of two 45-minute sessions per week, included creative, interactive exercises such as group discussions, storytelling, role-plays, simulations. These activities were intended to promote free expression, improvisation, critical thinking and risk-taking in speech while the teacher acts as a facilitator. In contrast, the control group received traditional instruction focused on grammar, vocabulary, and reading without creative speaking activities. Ensuring equal instructional time strengthens internal validity, as any differences in

creative thinking can be attributed to the speaking intervention. This approach made it possible to measure the extent to which the creative speaking tasks enhance students' creative thinking among.

3.7. Data Analysis Procedure

The study adopted quantitative research design. Data collected through a pre-test and post-test quasi-experimental design, supplemented by a student questionnaire. The pre-test and post-test used to determine changes in creative thinking following the speaking intervention, and the questionnaire captured students' perception of how speaking activities contributed to their creativity.

statistical analysis conducted to determine whether these changes were significant. paired-sample t-tests used to Compare pre- and post-test scores in the experimental group, and questionnaire responses analyzed using descriptive statistics. The comparison of results between the experimental and the control group also carried out in the analysis to determine whether the speaking activities enhanced the creative thinking. overall, the findings were expected to provide evidence for the relationship between creative thinking and language development in an EFL context.

4. RESULTS

The section presented the pre- and post-test scores of second-year students in Iraqi school on a creative thinking assessment. The results were used to compare experimental and control groups and determine the differences between them were statistically significant.

4.1. Sample and Test Administration

The study sample consisted of 50 students randomly assigned to two groups (experimental and control) to insure demographic and academic equivalence between the groups. Both groups were administered to assess changes in creative thinking resulting from the intervention.

4.2. Presentation and Discussion of the Results of the Experimental Group

A paired-samples t-test was used to determine whether the intervention produced a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group. The mean score pre-test obtained during was 93.476 (SD = 2.379), while the mean post-test score increased to 119.191 (SD = 2.804). A t-value of 7.712, which was greater than the critical value of 2.06 at 24 degrees of freedom. Indicated a statistically significantly differences. Accordingly, speaking activities significantly facilitated creative thinking.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics methods.

Statistical significance at the level of (0.05)	T-value		degree of freedom	Contrast	standard deviation	arithmetic mean	Measurement
	Tabular	The calculated					
0.000	2.06	7.712	24	5.662	2.379	93.476	Pre-measurement
				7.862	2.804	119.191	Dimensional measurement

Note: Degree of freedom (n-1) (25-1=24) and significance level (0.05), table (T) value (2.06)

4.2.1. Presentation of the Result with Practical Significance

To assess whether the observed relationship between the variables was attributable to random variation or to the intervention itself, the researcher measured the magnitude of the effect of the independent variable (English speaking activities) on the dependent variable (creative thinking skills). The effect size was computed to indicate the practical significance of the intervention, and the results were presented in Table 2.

Table 4: The Effect Size of the Independent Variable on the Dependent Variable (creative thinking skills).

Impact level	d value effect size	dependent variable	independent variable
big	0.866	Creative thinking skills	English speaking activities

The effect size (d = 0.866) was considered very strong, demonstrating the practical value of the independent variable (English speaking activities) on developing creative thinking skills among the second-year middle-school level students . This value shows a large effect per according to Cohen (1988). This classification was shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Effect Size and Effect Magnitude Levels.

Impact level	d value effect size
small	0.50 – 0.20
average	0.80 – 0.50
big	and above 0.80

4.2.2. Presentation of the Results of the Control Group

There was a significant improvement as the scores increased from the pre-test to the post-test in creative thinking scoring of the control group of both the pre and post-test. The mean score in the pre-test was 93.714 (SD = 2.591; variance = 6.713), and mean score in the post-test was specifically 108.429 (SD = 2.333; variance = 5.445). To determine whether the increase was statistically significant, a paired-sample t-test was used to derive a t -value of 3.550, which was greater than the critical t -value of 2.06 in the 0.05 level of significance and with a 24-degree. These findings indicate there was a statistically significant increase in the post-test which proves that the students taught using the traditional methods displayed quantifiable development in thinking creativity. The detailed results were presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics methods.

Statistical significance at the level of (0.05)	T-value		degree of freedom	Contrast	standard deviation	arithmetic mean	Measurement
	Tabular	The calculated					
0.032	2.06	3.550	24	6.713	2.591	93.714	Pre-measurement
				5.445	2.333	108.429	Dimensional measurement

Note: Degree of freedom (n-1) (25-1=24) and significance level (0.05), table (T) value = (2.06)

4.2.3. Presentation of the Result with Practical Significance

The researcher used the applied the effect size equation in order to calculate the practical significance of the traditional method on creative thinking skills to examine whether the relationship between variables was attributable to chance or the traditional teaching method. The results were summarized in Table 7.

Table 7: The effect size of the independent variable on the first dependent variable (creative thinking skills).

effect size	d value effect size	dependent variable	variable
average	0.556	Creative thinking skills	The traditional way

In the research, the effect size (d = 0.556) was estimated as a moderate practical significance, suggesting that the traditional teaching method had a moderate effect on the enhancement of creative thinking skills among the second-year middle school learners. This results reflects a measurable, moderate impact on the students' creative thinking.

4.2.4. Presenting and Analyzing the Results of the Post-tests for the Experimental and Control Research Groups in the (Creative Thinking Skills) Test

The results of the post-test revealed that substantial differences were between the two groups. In detail, the experimental group, who received English speaking activities instruction, had an arithmetic mean of 119.191 (SD = 2.804; variance = 7.862). In the control group, the mean was 108.429 (SD = 2.333; variance = 5.445). An independent-samples t-test was conducted , yielded a t-value of 4.225 and this was greater than the critical value of 2.01 at 0.05 level of significance with 48 degrees of freedom. These results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the favor of the experimental group. Therefore, students exposed t0 speaking activities achieved higher creative scores than those tough through traditional methods as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Descriptive statistics methods.

Statistical significance at the level (0.05)	T-value		degree of freedom	Contrast	standard deviation	arithmetic mean	number	The group
	Tabular	The calculated						
0.000	2.01	4.225	48	7.862	2.804	119.191	25	experimental group
				5.445	2.333	108.429	25	control group

Note: Degree of freedom (n1 + n2 - 2) (25 + 25 - 2 = 48) and significance level (0.05), table (T) value = (2.01)

4.2.5. Presentation of the Result with Practical Significance

The researcher measured the strength of the relationship between the study variables to determine whether the relationship was attributable to chance or to the independent variable (English speaking activities). The practical significance of this effect on creative thinking was assessed using the effect size equation as presented in Table 9.

Table 9: The Effect size of the Independent Variable on the Dependent Variable (Creative Thinking Skills).

effect size	d value effect size	dependent variable	independent variable

average	0.722	Creative thinking skills	English speaking activities

The effect size (d = 0.722) reflected a strong practical effect, which suggests that the practical impact of English speaking activities on student's creative thinking abilities. This value indicates that the experimental group outperformed the control group, who were taught using the traditional method, which demonstrates that speaking-based produced a positive and significant influence on students creative thinking.

4.3. Questionnaire

In addition to the pre-test and post-test scores, the student questionnaire also offered a clearer understanding of how the learners thought the speaking activities would influence their creative thinking. It included the pre- and post-measures of students' perception of creativity, fluency, originality ability and problem-solving as a result of speaking activities.

4.3.1. A Descriptive Analysis of the Questioner Results

The results of the questionnaire indicated significant improvements in students' perception on creativity and confidence with regard to the involvement in speaking activities. Approximately 70% of the experimental group reported that the activities helped them generate creative ideas and be more flexible in their thinking during discussions. Moreover, 65% reported feeling more confident in expressing their creative ideas in English.

Table 10: The calculated t-value shows the difference between the hypothetical mean and the arithmetic mean of the pre-test in creative thinking skills among the application sample.

creative thinking skills	Sample number	Number of questions	hypothetical mean	arithmetic mean	standard deviation	T value	Level of significance	moral
The questionnaire as a whole	50	30	90	93.595	2.485	1.977	0.098	immaterial

Note: D if the score (Sig) ≥ (0.05).

Table 4-8 showed that the creative thinking skills questionnaire consisted of 30 items, within a hypothetical mean of 90. The pre-test men was 93.595 (SD = 2.485). The t-value comparing the hypothetical mean and sample mean yielded at-value of 1.977 with significance level (p) of 0.098, which was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that the pre-test means did not differ from the hypothetical mean on the overall creative thinking skills test.

4.3.2. Presenting and Analyzing, the Results of the Creative Thinking Skills test for the Application Sample

A one-sample t-test was used to achieve the research objective, which aimed to establish the level of creative thinking skills among second-year intermediate English students. The test compered the post-test with and the hypothetical means to determine whether a statistically significant difference existed as shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Tvalue Between the Hypothetical Mean and the Arithmetic Mean of the Post-test in Creative Thinking Skills Among the Application Sample.

creative thinking skills	Sample number	Number of questions	hypothetical mean	arithmetic mean	standard deviation	T valu	Level of significance	moral
The questionnaire as a whole	50	30	90	113.810	2.569	8.565	*0.000	immaterial

Note: The spatial value of Dal was (Sig) ≥ (0.05).

The test of Creative Thinking Skills as presented in Table 4-9 consisted of 30 items with a hypothetic mean of 90. The post-test mean of the research sample was 113.810 (SD = 2.569).The analysis yielded a t-value of 8.565 with a significance level (p) of 0.000 which was statistically at the 0.05 level. As a result, the mean of the post-test was more than the hypothetical mean indicating that there was an improvement of students' overall creative thinking ability.

4.4. Quantitative Analysis of Questionnaire Data

The responses of the students were measured using a 5-point Likert scale in order to involve their self-reported creativity enhancement. The outcomes indicated that the mean score of creativity, fluency, originality, and problem-solving skills were 4.1, 3.9, 4.2, and 4.0 in the post-intervention phase respectively. The results were determined through the application of descriptive statistics and the differences between the responses before and after the intervention were established to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

4.5. Comparison of Pre and Post Test Results

The questionnaire results are consistent with the pre- and post-test analysis results. The students who

engaged in speaking activity showed considerable gains in their creative thinking ability in a quantitative (as tested by TTCT) and a qualitative (as reported by the questionnaire) manner. These findings are consistent and they support the usefulness of speaking activities in developing creative thinking skills.

A combination of the pre-test, post-test, and questionnaire has presented a constructed evidence, that speaking activities was a great way of improving the creative thinking of the students. The data provided in the questionnaires, specifically, can provide a better insight into the subjective experiences of students and their attitudes to the intervention.

4.6. Discussion

The study validates the fact that when one is involved in speaking activities in the target language it helps in cognitive processes especially enhanced processing of information and an increase in language awareness. These researches focus on the fact that speaking the target language in the target language is accompanied by the development of more advanced associative thinking, which is paramount to the development of creativity. The previous results of the current research are consistent with these conclusions as they prove that the oral language activities are important in developing the creative thinking skills of students.

Muhammadiyeva et al. (2020) and Ola and Walid Gafour (2020) also argue in favor of the idea that even such skill as language fluency, more than just communication, can be developed through the use of the structured oral production activities. Specifically, they focus on the contribution of motivation among learners to the achievement of fluency as well as creativity. Our experiment also confirms that speaking tasks when students have to express their position, hypothesize and tell about them personally, are followed by the increase of creative thinking. This affirms the need to incorporate motivational and interactive activities in the language learning process as a way of developing both language and thinking skills.

Furthermore, the sociocultural theory by Vygotsky is the theoretical basis of this study since it implies that language is a critical instrument in the development of cognition. Vygotsky believes that language plays a mediating role in the cognitive processes, especially in those activities of learners, which are collaborative and peer based, and involve active participation and reflections. The application of oral tasks in this research is consistent with the notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) by Vygotsky wherein the learner is challenged to undertake tasks that he or she could not independently perform with the guidance and help of scaffolds. This process of facilitated interaction is credited to the major developments in the creative thinking of the students in the experimental group as the students could develop on the ideas and perspectives of other students throughout the speaking activities.

According to Yang et al. (2022), Altawalbeh and Tayyoun (2023), and Al-Amri (2020), digital storytelling enhances fluency, imagination, and confidence in expression. In a similar manner, Chen et al. (2024) found that Technology-Enhanced Language Learning with Music helps to promote creative thinking, academic outcomes, and emotional involvement. According to Jammie (2019), design-oriented tasks implemented using STEAM promote originality, fluency, and elaboration three dimensions reflected in the present study. Similarly, Syafitri et al. (2022) established that discovery-based speaking activities enhance pronunciation, vocabulary diversity, intonation as well as flexible thinking. Inggarde (2014) also discovered that EFL creative methods enlarge the lexical wealth and narrative density.

Guntur et al. (2023) showed that CLIL-based teaching involves the combination of creative thinking and linguistic lessons, which supports the relationship between dialogue and high-order thinking. The same interdisciplinary views were similarly reported by Suherman and Akovich (2024), who discovered that creativity can be predicted by sociocultural identity and emotional factors. Wang et al. (2024) established the strong correlations of emotional intelligence, academic enthusiasm, and oral fluency too. Alabbasi et al. (2025) as well discovered that the TTCT dimensions applied in the current study are also covered in Thinking-Skills-Based curricula, which enhance the acquisition of fluency, flexibility, and originality-skills. All these outcomes in combination underscore the fact that oral language tasks are not only linguistic exercises but also cognitive tools. They develop the skills needed in the 21 st century: creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and responsiveness. Within the Iraqi EFL context, where conventional instruction remains memorization- based, the findings can be taken to shift to communicative-based and learner-focused pedagogy. Task-based speaking can thus be introduced in the Iraqi curriculum and contribute to the development of proficiency and creativity and provide the students with the skills needed in

contemporary academic and professional life.

Lastly, the current research contributes to the body of knowledge in international literature by showing that scaffold speaking activities are very effective in developing fluency, flexibility, originality, and problem-solving in students studying in Iraqi secondary schools. The overall outcomes of the pre-test, post-test and the questionnaire demonstrate the same improvement of the results which provides evidence that creativity is not a chance but can be trained in the frames of the structured oral tasks.

5. CONCLUSION

The present study aims to examine the effects of structured English-speaking activities on creative thinking among second-grade intermediate student of EFL in Iraq, and answer he study question "In what ways do the English-speaking skills affect the growth of creative thinking?". To achieve the aim and answer the study question, fifty second- grade intermediate EFL students in Iraq were randomly assigned to an experimental group and control group. Pre-tests, post-tests and a structured questionnaire were employed to assess creative thinking across four dimensions: fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration.

Results indicated that the students who participated in interactive speaking activities (debates, storytelling, and role playing) demonstrated significantly greater improvement in creative thinking compared to the students who received conventional grammar-based instruction. These findings provide empirical support for the sociocultural perspective, which posits that language mediates cognitive development trough meaningful interaction. speaking activities can be an effective way of improving creativity in EFL setting.

Moreover, these findings are in favor of the sociocultural theory, which states that language mediates cognitive development in the case of learners who interact in a meaningful way. The constructivist theory is also presented in the outcomes because students worked out ideas, solved problems, and analyzed information using social interaction during speaking assignments.

The research confirms the findings of other studies (e.g., Yang et al., 2022; Syafitri et al., 2022) that linguistic proficiency and higher-order cognition are positively influenced by communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching. Thus, the curriculum of the EFL in Iraq must be shifted to cease memorization and turn towards interactional, student-centered teaching approach, which facilitates critical thinking and creativity.

On practice, it was recommended that EFL teachers incorporate open-ended speaking activities, like role-plays, debates, group work, and problem-solving activities. These activities aid language growth and offer crucial cognitive capabilities required in the 21 st century such as innovativeness and flexibility. The social implications of the study are at a wider level. Speaking-based language learning can be used to assist students in addressing academic, professional, and social requirements in a world where creativity, and an ability to resolve issues using flexibility, are important aspects of life particularly in a fast-paced environment such as Iraq. Despite the promising findings the study was constructed by its small sample size, limiting the generalizability of results, which reduces generalization. Future studies ought to look at larger groups, long-term effects and which speaking tasks, in particular, have the most positive influence on creativity. Overall, the study provides compelling evidence that structured speaking tasks are very effective to enhance fluency, originality, flexibility and the problem solving process among the Iraqi EFL students. It demands a pedagogical change towards communicative, learner-centered teaching that builds not only language skills and competencies but also creative thinking-competencies inevitable in contemporary education and international society.

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