

## ENGLISH-MAJORS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER CREATIVITY IN TEACHING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS

**Pham Thi Kim Anh**

*Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education*

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<b>Received:</b> 07/10/2024	This quantitative research aims to examine 75 EFL students' perspectives of teacher creativity in teaching English speaking skills at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education. Using Kharkhurin's (2014) conceptual framework of creativity, the paper focuses on four dimensions of teachers' novelty, utility, aesthetics and authentic attributes in teaching English speaking skills. The data were collected through a five-point Likert scale questionnaire and analyzed by SPSS software concerning the values of mean, standard deviation, and percentage. The findings reveal that students highly valued teachers' novelty in material development, instructional activities, testing, classroom management, plus the aesthetic and authentic values and the benefits that teachers' creativity brought in the EFL speaking classroom. Nevertheless, the teachers' usage of digital information technology for classroom interaction needed to be improved. The study draws a picture of EFL teachers' creativity in English speaking teaching from learners' perspectives to gain deeper insights into English speaking teaching practices, and calls for more effective application of technology-based learning for the sake of more efficient classroom interaction in the EFL context.
<b>Revised:</b> 10/02/2025	
<b>Published:</b> 11/02/2025	

### KEYWORDS

Teacher creativity  
Teaching English speaking  
EFL students  
Perceptions  
Kharkhurin (2014)

## NHẬN THỨC CỦA SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGỮ VỀ SỰ SÁNG TẠO CỦA GIÁO VIÊN TRONG GIẢNG DẠY KỸ NĂNG NÓI TIẾNG ANH

**Phạm Thị Kim Ánh**

*Trường Đại học Sư phạm Kỹ thuật Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh*

THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT
<b>Ngày nhận bài:</b> 07/10/2024	Nghiên cứu định lượng này nhằm tìm hiểu nhận thức của 75 sinh viên tại Khoa Ngoại ngữ, trường Đại học Sư phạm Kỹ thuật Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh về sự sáng tạo của giáo viên trong giảng dạy kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh. Khung khái niệm của Kharkhurin (2014) về sự sáng tạo gồm sự đổi mới, lợi ích, giá trị thẩm mỹ và thực tiễn được sử dụng trong bài viết này. Dữ liệu được thu thập bằng bảng câu hỏi theo thang đo Likert năm mức độ và được phân tích bởi phần mềm SPSS về các giá trị trung bình, độ lệch chuẩn và tỷ lệ phần trăm. Kết quả đạt được thể hiện rằng người học đánh giá cao sự đổi mới của giáo viên trong phát triển tài liệu, hoạt động giảng dạy, quản lý lớp, kiểm tra - đánh giá, cùng các giá trị thẩm mỹ và thực tiễn từ sự sáng tạo của giáo viên. Tuy nhiên, việc áp dụng công nghệ thông tin cho sự tương tác trong lớp học cần được cải thiện. Bài viết cung cấp thông tin về sự sáng tạo của giáo viên từ quan điểm của người học nhằm hiểu rõ hơn thực tiễn giảng dạy kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh bậc đại học, và nêu lên nhu cầu của dạy và học dựa trên công nghệ thông tin nhằm tăng cường sự tương tác trong lớp học hiệu quả hơn.
<b>Ngày hoàn thiện:</b> 10/02/2025	
<b>Ngày đăng:</b> 11/02/2025	

### TỪ KHÓA

Sự sáng tạo của giáo viên  
Giảng dạy nói tiếng Anh  
Sinh viên chuyên ngữ  
Nhận thức  
Kharkhurin (2014)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34238/tnu-jst.11260>

Email: [anhptk@hcmute.edu.vn](mailto:anhptk@hcmute.edu.vn)

<http://jst.tnu.edu.vn>

## 1. Introduction

In the booming era of information and technology, artificial intelligence has extensively invaded multiple aspects of human lives and has become a potential competitor to human labour forces, making creativity of paramount importance. Creativity is part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills for learners to partake in the globally competitive labor markets; and promoting learner creativity is one of the ultimate goals in many educational institutions. For the promotion of learner creativity, teachers must be creative. A creative instructor using innovative teaching strategies, frequent update of teaching contents brings real-life situations into lessons to boost learners' awareness of the social issues [1], prepares students to enter a world full of uncertainty [2], establishes a supportive learning environment [3], boosts critical thinking and problem-solving skills [4], and develops academic self-confidence and more interest in partaking in the learning process [5]. Teachers' creativity is closely associated with both the linguistic and non-linguistic development of learners. Hence, teachers' creativity is worthy of further attention. Understanding learners' opinions contributes to evaluating learning benefits related to teachers' creativity in the classrooms. Prior studies have concentrated on the impacts of teachers' creativity on students' interests [5], model development [6], [7], the promotion of students' creativity [1], teachers' experience in creative teaching practice [8]-[12], and teachers' perceptions of creativity [13]-[15]. The aspect of teachers' creativity in the English speaking classroom from learners' perspectives has not been fully explored in Vietnam. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how EFL students perceive teachers' creativity in teaching English-speaking skills. By gaining deeper insights into students' viewpoints, teachers are able to adjust their teaching practices to meet students' needs. Particularly, the four attributes of novelty, utility, aesthetic values and authenticity will be examined. Hopefully, the study will contribute to the understanding of teacher creativity in EFL classrooms from learners' perspective, helping teachers better comprehend the benefits of their creativity in relation to students' learning achievement as well as any areas for improvement. Ultimately, teaching effectiveness will be enhanced.

The study attempts to find out the answers to the following research question: "*What are students' perceptions of teachers' creativity in the EFL speaking classroom?*". This overarching question is divided into four sub-questions:

1. *What are students' perceptions of teachers' novelty in the EFL speaking classroom?*
2. *What are students' perceptions of utility in the EFL speaking classroom?*
3. *What are students' perceptions of aesthetic values in the EFL speaking classroom?*
4. *What are students' perceptions of authenticity in the EFL speaking classroom?*

Creativity is a multidimensional construct, differently understood between Western and Eastern cultures but commonly believed as the ability to develop ideas that are novel or origin and come up with valuable ideas [16]. The paper adopts Kharkhurin's creativity conceptualization [17], which reflects the combination of the Western and Eastern perspectives on creativity. It includes (1) the novelty attribute – something new into being or modified the existing one, (2) the utility attribute – value and usefulness to a collective in spiritual, cultural, social, and/or political environment, (3) the aesthetics attribute – the fundamental truth of nature, a perfect order, and effectively presented, (4) and the authenticity attribute – one's inner self and associate one's own values and viewpoints to the world.

## 2. Research methodology

### 2.1. Research site and participants

The study was conducted at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education. Creativity is part of the institution's development goals. Scholarly conferences have been frequently organized for professional development. At the Faculty of Foreign Languages, innovative teaching methods and educational digital tools have been implemented; the syllabus

has been annually updated; and students' satisfaction is collected every semester. The participants in this study consist of 75 EFL students, including sophomores (34.2%), juniors (19.7%) and seniors (46.1%). They already attended approximately two to four English speaking courses from intermediate to advanced levels.

## 2.2. Data instrument

A questionnaire was used for data collection. The five-point Likert scale questionnaire was designed based on Kharkhurin's four-criteria construct of creativity (novelty, utility, aesthetics and authentic attributes) [17], including 28 question items. The first part asks questions about personal information (gender, age, and years of study). The second part examines EFL students' perceptions of teachers' creativity in the EFL classroom, with 13 items on teachers' novelty, 5 items on utility, 6 items on aesthetics, and 4 items on authentic values.

The value of Cronbach's Alpha is calculated to check the reliability of the questionnaire. The alpha value of each dimension was in the interval between 0.8 and nearly 1.0, indicating that the questionnaire was reliable for data collection, as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Reliability of main themes in the questionnaire

Main themes	Cronbach's Alpha
Teacher's novelty	0.94
Teacher's utility	0.93
Teacher's aesthetic value creation	0.92
Teacher's authenticity value creation	0.92

## 2.3. Data collection and analysis

To collect data, the questionnaire was created in Google Forms and delivered individually to 100 EFL students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages - Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education. The participants received emails consisting of the invitation to participate in the data collection, the research topic, purpose, and key terms to facilitate their understanding and completion of the questionnaire. After two weeks, the valid responses from 75 students were obtained.

The quantitative data was analyzed by the SPSS software. The percentage, mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) values were calculated. The mean value was categorized as *0.00-1.80 = strongly disagree; 1.81-2.60 = disagree; 2.61-3.40 = neutral; 3.41-4.20 = agree; 4.21-5.00 = strongly agree* while the percentage was calculated as *less than 25% = very low; 40-54% = low; 55-70% = fair; 71-85% = high; and 86-100% = very high* [18].

## 3. Findings and Discussion

### 3.1. Findings

#### 3.1.1. EFL students' perceptions of teachers' novelty in teaching English-speaking skills

**Table 2.** Survey items regarding EFL students' perceptions of teachers' novelty

Items	Content surveyed	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	M	SD	Category
1	Teachers utilize authentic materials to associate learning contents with real-life scenarios.	2.6	14.5	48.7	34.2	4.14	0.761	Agree (high)	
2	Teachers use multi-mode material compilation.	1.3	22.4	43.4	32.9	4.08	0.779	Agree (high)	
3	Teachers frequently explore new topics and ideas in the classroom.		25.0	39.5	35.5	4.11	0.776	Agree (high)	
4	Teachers use student-centered activities to empower students to explore multiple perspectives.	1.3		14.5	42.1	42.1	4.24	0.798	Strongly agree (high)
5	Teachers use various grouping manners to promote students' active learning.	1.3	22.4	48.7	27.6	4.03	0.748	Agree (high)	

Items	Content surveyed	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	M	SD	Category
6	Teachers use multimedia in teaching.		1.3	22.4	35.5	40.8	4.16	0.817	Agree (high)
7	Teachers create channels to communicate with students.		2.6	32.9	36.8	27.6	3.89	0.842	Agree (fair)
8	Teachers create online platforms for peer interaction.		3.9	26.3	36.8	32.9	3.99	0.872	Agree (fair)
9	Teachers use various assessment strategies.	1.3	3.9	18.4	36.8	39.5	4.09	0.926	Agree (high)
10	The assignments are easily understood.			11.8	43.4	44.7	4.33	0.681	Strongly agree (very high)
11	Teachers ask students to explain the materials given.	1.3	1.3	30.3	40.8	26.3	3.89	0.858	Agree (fair)
12	Teachers inspire students to take pedagogical risks and learn from mistakes.		1.3	18.4	35.5	44.7	4.24	0.798	Strongly agree (high)
13	Teachers encourage students to learn how to make their own decisions.			13.2	44.7	42.1	4.29	0.689	Strongly agree (very high)

Table 2 presents the results of EFL students' perceptions of teachers' novelty in the ELF speaking classes. All items had the means over the standard value of 3.4, indicating that EFL students appreciated teachers' creativity in teaching English speaking. Teachers' novelty in designing intelligible assignments received the highest scores (item 10,  $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = 0.681$ ), followed by teachers' creation in conditions for students' autonomous learning in relation to decision-making (item 13,  $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = 0.689$ ) and educational risk-taking (item 12,  $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = 0.798$ ) as well as teachers' inspiration for students' multiple viewpoints through various learner-centered activities (item 4,  $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = 0.798$ ). The participants also valued teachers' novelty in implementing multimedia-based learning to teach English speaking skills (item 6,  $M = 4.16$ ,  $SD = 0.817$ ), developing materials associated with the real world (item 1,  $M = 4.14$ ,  $SD = 0.761$ ) and combining them in multimodes (item 2,  $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = 0.779$ ), using various assessing strategies (item 9,  $M = 4.09$ ,  $SD = 0.926$ ), and managing classroom with different grouping manners to encourage learners' cooperative learning (item 5,  $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = 0.748$ ). However, the participants merely slightly agreed on teachers' novelty in classroom interaction, with the percentage at fair level, e.g., student-student interaction in online platforms (item 8,  $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = 0.872$ ), teachers' presence in teacher-student interaction in online learning (item 7,  $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 0.842$ ), and student-content interaction (item 11,  $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 0.858$ ).

### 3.1.2. EFL students' perceptions of the utility of teachers' creativity in the EFL speaking classes

**Table 3.** Survey items on EFL students' perceptions of the utility of teachers' creativity

Items	Content surveyed	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	M	SD	Category
1	Teachers spark students' interest and passion for the exploration of further ideas.	1.3	1.3	17.1	44.7	35.5	4.12	0.832	Agree (high)
2	Teachers increase critical and creative thinking skills among students.	1.3	1.3	14.5	32.8	44.7	4.24	0.846	Strongly agree (high)
3	Teachers help students develop both target language improvement and social-emotional skills.		1.3	10.5	47.4	40.8	4.28	0.704	Strongly agree (very high)
4	Teachers increase students' academic self-confidence.		1.3	13.2	43.4	42.1	4.26	0.737	Strongly agree (high)
5	Teachers help students take more control over my own learning.		2.6	17.1	38.2	42.1	4.20	0.817	Strongly agree (high)

Table 3 reveals the results of EFL students' perceptions of the utility of teachers' creativity in the EFL speaking classrooms. It can be seen that students highly valued teachers' utility. The participants strongly agreed that teachers assisted them to develop the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills, such as English language speaking and social-emotional skills (item 3, M = 4.28, SD = 0.704), critical-creative thinking skills (item 2, M = 4.24, SD = 0.846), and their autonomous learning (item 5, M = 4.20, SD = 0.817). Teachers were also successful in boosting students' academic self-confidence (item 4, M = 4.26, SD = 0.737). Moreover, students confessed they were more motivated to further explore new ideas for their lessons (item 1, M = 4.12, SD = 0.832).

### 3.1.3. EFL students' perceptions of the aesthetic value created in teaching English-speaking skills

**Table 4.** Survey items on EFL students' perceptions of the aesthetic value creation

Items	Content surveyed	SD	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	M	SD	Category
1	Teachers are enthusiastic when explaining lessons and answering students' questions.	1.30	17.10	44.70	36.80	4.17	0.755	Agree (high)	
2	Teachers provide timely and constructive feedback.	1.30	11.80	38.2	48.70	4.34	0.740	Strongly agree (very high)	
3	Teachers are fair in assessing students.	1.30	15.80	32.90	50.00	4.32	0.787	Strongly agree (high)	
4	Teachers contact students with problems in their learning.		17.10	42.10	40.80	4.24	0.728	Strongly agree (high)	
5	Teachers help solve students' learning problems.		23.70	39.50	36.80	4.13	0.772	Agree (high)	
6	Teachers provide a joyful and supportive classroom environment.	2.60	13.20	43.4	40.80	4.22	0.776	Strongly agree (high)	

The creation of aesthetic values in teaching English language speaking is shown in Table 4. Teachers' assessment received the highest scores, with teachers' fairness (item 3, M = 4.32, SD = 0.787) and teachers' constructive feedback (item 2, M = 4.34, SD = 0.740), followed by teachers' creation of an enjoyable and supportive learning environment (item 6, M = 4.22, SD = 0.776). Although teachers did not build strong relationships with students in the online learning environment as shown in Table 2, the participants agreed on the importance of teachers' support in face-to-face learning when teachers dealt with students' problems and suggested solutions if necessary (item 4, M = 4.24, SD = 0.728; item 5, M = 4.13, SD = 0.772).

### 3.1.4. EFL students' perceptions of the authentic value created in teaching English-speaking skills

**Table 5.** Survey items on EFL students' perceptions of the authenticity

Items	Content surveyed	SD	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	M	SD	Category
1	Students have chances to express their opinions, needs, and feelings.	1.30	11.80	38.20	48.70	4.34	0.740	Strongly agree (very high)	
2	Students have opportunities for self-expression and divergent thinking.		17.0	38.20	44.70	4.28	0.741	Strongly agree (high)	
3	Teachers inspire students to embrace their unique talents and strengths, even imperfections.		14.0	35.50	50.00	4.36	0.725	Strongly agree (very high)	
4	Teachers celebrate diversity and valuing individual contributions	2.60	14.5	34.20	48.70	4.29	0.813	Strongly agree (high)	

Table 5 discloses the findings of EFL students' perceptions of the authenticity in the English speaking classrooms. The participants really appreciated the authentic values when teachers provided students with opportunities to speak up and to be listened to. Teachers inspired students to explore their own strengths and accept their imperfections (item 3, M = 4.36, SD = 0.725), as well as to express their own perspectives and feelings (item 1, M = 4.34, SD = 0.740). The

participants also concurred that their teachers frequently encouraged them to self-express and respected their own opinions to promote their divergent thinking (item 4,  $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = 0.813$ ; item 2,  $M = 4.28$ ,  $SD = 0.741$ ).

### 3.2. Discussion

This paper examines teachers' creativity in teaching English-speaking skills from the perspectives of English-majored students across four main dimensions, namely teachers' novelty, teachers' creation in utility, aesthetic and authentic values. The findings reveal that most participants appreciate teachers' creativity in teaching English language speaking. Teachers use various teaching activities, alternative evaluation strategies, different ways of managing class and using digital technology in teaching. Consistent with this finding, Djalali & Kaaba [19] find out that creative teachers apply numerous learning strategies, such as discovery learning, scientific learning, discussion, demonstration, and recitation which are modified to suit students' learning needs, learning objectives and materials. They also combine multimode teaching materials and integrated learning contents with real-life scenarios. In an experimental study aimed at fostering secondary students' creativity in an EFL writing class, Dianawati [1] claims that a real-world task not only boosts practical use of English as a means of communication but also promotes students' creativity in engaging in and solving problems in social community, plus their awareness of social issues in real-life scenarios.

Teachers' creativity inspires students to explore new ideas from different perspectives, coupled with improving linguistic performance and critical-creative thinking skills, even social-emotional skills as well. This result echoes the findings by Kakar et al. [11] and Djalali & Kaaba [19] which suggest that creative teaching motivates students to participate in the learning process and improve their academic performance. Teachers' creativity also fosters a supportive learning environment in which students are encouraged to take their own responsibility and take education risks without being criticized. A teacher who is patient, enthusiastic and caring pays enough attention to inexperienced learners to understand their problems, and then provides timely support. Similarly, Pelfrey [3] claims that a free-risk learning environment is beneficial for enhancing student creativity.

However, the aspect of classroom interaction is not really efficient. The participants valued videos but supposed that teachers should create online platforms to encourage more peer interaction and teacher-student communication outside the classroom in the virtual learning environment and student-content interaction that inspires students to further explore the information in the learning materials from various viewpoints to deepen their learning knowledge and critical thinking skills. The result is in line with the one by Pham [20], which states that the students wish teachers to provide more channels and platforms to support more effective communication with teachers and peers when they would like to seek academic and emotional support. Chen [21] insists that creative teaching entails effective interaction between teacher and students; hence, promoting better communication in an online learning environment is worthy of further investigation.

### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

According to the results of the paper, EFL students appreciate teachers' creativity in teaching English speaking. The participants believe that teachers are creative in applying various teaching and testing strategies, complying materials and using educational technology. This motivates their learning interests, and enhances their academic self-confidence as well as critical-creative thinking skills. Teachers who are enthusiastic, caring, and fair, along with a supportive learning environment where students are safe to make mistakes, discover things for themselves, express themselves make significant contributions. Nevertheless, they confess that classroom interaction needs to be improved, particularly in online environments beyond the classrooms.

The findings of this study confirm the significance of teachers' creativity in English language learning. It can be said that teachers' creativity should be part of teachers' professional

development because of its pivotal roles to students' learning achievement. Teachers should be constantly innovative in their teaching practices, providing students with not only academic but also emotional support in a safe learning environment, both inside and outside the classroom to develop students' linguistic competence - along with other 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills. Furthermore, more effective communication channels should be established, particularly on virtual platforms, to stimulate teacher-student and student-student interaction beyond the classrooms. Additionally, teaching English-speaking skills should concentrate not only on developing English language competence but also on integrating content knowledge to promote students' critical thinking skills and establish their own life perspectives. Hence, questioning strategies or strategy-based learning should be integrated to inspire students to further explore the learning contents.

The study merely used the questionnaire to collect students' perceptions of teachers' creativity in teaching English language speaking. It would be more comprehensive if a mixed-method approach was used to deeper explore the information from the interviews which was not displayed in the questionnaire. Moreover, the study only concentrated on EFL students' voices in general; it would provide deeper insights if EFL students' perceptions were compared with teachers' perspectives, or the differences between students with different English language proficiency levels were considered. Therefore, future research can be conducted to further examine these issues.

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