

Researching creativity in second language acquisition

Ashleigh Pipes

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LEIMING CHEN

YONGLIANG WANG

*School of Foreign Languages and Cultures, Nanjing Normal University, China*DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30827/portalin.vi42.27679>

In the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), studies on individual differences, such as anxiety, motivation, and aptitude, have come to the core of saturation. However, research on creativity, a fundamental dimension of effective language teaching (Derakhshan et al., 2022), is relatively deficient and deserves more attention as a result of the increasing demand for communicative and task-based approaches in modern language teaching (p.63). Considering such a lacuna, *Researching Creativity in Second Language Acquisition* is an especially timely monograph to fill the gap.

Starting with a considerate preface, this book can be divided into 3 parts. Part One, including one chapter, is an overview of this book. Entitled “*Proposals for Any Deadlines*”, Part I begins to address the target audience and explain the elements of a proposal. Then, in the “Sample Project” section, Ashleigh, the author of the book, lists eight sample research projects depending on researchers’ time and resources, from the least (Dimensions of Intellect: Creativity and Aptitude) to the most (Replication). This chapter concludes with suggestions for one’s own proposal.

Part II, the most extensive section, is comprised of six chapters. It is the detailed portrayal of elements listed in Chapter One. The first chapter of Part II, “*Studying Creativity*”, starts by distinguishing definitions, theories, and frameworks that are most pertinent for a study of creativity in relation to second language learning. Then, in the “*Bilingualism and Creativity*” section, Ashleigh first presents the most relevant connection between creativity and SLA in the context of bilingualism, and after that several key figures and their research are introduced to demonstrate the research history of creativity as an individual difference. This chapter ends with a summary of the definitions, theories, and bilingualism mentioned above.

The second chapter of Part II, “*Assessing Creativity for Linguistic Research*”, comes first with eight creativity tests and three good assessments for SLA. Then, administration and scoring are exhibited at great length for implementation while cons and pros are listed as references according to the dates and resources researchers have.

The third chapter of Part II, “*Preparing Linguistic Instruments*”, aims to provide instruments for the assessment of linguistic variables. It starts with instructions on selecting,



developing, and testing tasks. After that, in the “*Participant Recruitment*” section, Ashleigh discusses precautions and methods of recruiting participants from the perspective of ethics and incentives. Finally, three sample linguistic instruments are provided based on the number of participants.

The fourth chapter of Part II, “*Working with Other Individual Differences*”, intends to group other variables with creativity to maximize research efforts. It first introduces the relations between differential psychology and individual differences in SLA. Then, three types of variables, including demographic, affective, and cognitive ones are presented as examples to show how to maximize efforts by grouping them with creativity. Instruments, by the same token, are provided for data collection.

The fifth chapter of Part II, “*Managing and Analyzing Data*”, strives to guide researchers through what to do after data collection. In “*Data Management*”, Ashleigh illustrates how to organize materials and what to do about missing data. In “*Data Preparation*”, she recommends useful transcribing tools and different coding methods in elucidating scoring considerations. In “*Analysis*”, statistical software, such as SPSS and SAA are preferred for quantitative studies, while case studies and grounded theory are recommended concerning qualitative research.

The final chapter of Part II, “*Sharing Results*”, works to teach the potential readers three ways of conveying findings: presentations, posters, and papers. As for “*Presentations*”, Ashleigh introduces the “principles” and outlines “applied to presentations”, “Q&A management”, and “time distribution”. Regarding “*Posters*”, a marketing mindset is suggested in design to attract fellow linguists. In “*Papers*”, Ashleigh first addresses the length and then shares the ways to make the final write-up easier.

Of the chapters in this part, “*Managing and Analyzing Data*” stands out for recognizing the importance of qualitative research on creativity in relation to SLA. Currently, existing research in creativity leans heavily towards quantitative approaches but has a solid base of qualitative studies. (p.118) There are no published qualitative studies of creativity in this respect, Ashleigh captures this void and encourages researchers to innovate from this perspective, to fill this gap and guide following researchers toward greater development of creativity in SLA.

Part Three, composed of one chapter, is dedicated to providing a framework for a unified approach to creativity research as the field continues to grow and expand (p.136). Entitled “*Moving Forward*”, it comes first with a summary of each chapter in this book. Then, cautions and limitations are addressed from three perspectives: “*Advanced Language Learning*”, “*Instructed SLA*”, and “*Creativity and Bilingualism*”. Finally, registered reports and open science badges are advised to foster collaboration in this field.

This book is insightful and inspiring in its description of how to integrate creativity into SLA, which lends four major reasons to recommend it. Firstly, this book successfully reintroduces creativity as an individual difference into the realm of SLA with its abundant contents, detailed references, and understandable examples, which serve as important guidelines for future studies in this respect. Second, some chapters in this book shed light on the fore underappreciate topics, such as qualitative studies of creativity in SLA (Chapter 6), which deserve further study. Third, this book offers a panoramic view of the entire research process, provides a variety of instruments and methods that can be used by researchers based on their

time and resources in a reader-friendly manner, and internalizes academic standards for a student or scholar's burgeoning study. Fourth, this book embraces informative discussions at the end of each chapter, naming "*Thinking Inside the Box*" and "*Thinking Outside the Box*", the former grasps the gist of each chapter, while the latter guide research directions for researchers who know little about but are interested in this field.

Nonetheless, there are still some shortcomings worth mentioning. First, "*Alternative Uses Tasks*", one of the most frequently suggested tasks for creativity in this book, are dubious in reliability as they are rarely used in SLA. Second, the "*Group Speaking Task*" or "*lifeboat task*", one of the useful tools suggested for accessing linguistic variables, involves creativity as an intervention variable, which means creativity serves as both the independent and dependent variable. For example, if one of the participants is pregnant and she says that two people will survive if she is saved, which will involve one aspect of creativity-originality. Third, Ashleigh provides three linguistic instruments: "*Independent Narrative Tests*", "*Dyadic Speaking Tests*", and "*Group Speaking Tests*" in Chapter 4, but does not illustrate how to analyze the data from them. In particular, the research methods to date should be innovative and multi-dimensional methods for data collection and analysis should deserve our due consideration in the realm of SLA studies (Derakhshan et al., 2023). Even in Chapter 6 "*Managing and Analyzing Data*", solutions are basically provided for quantitative analysis, but the three linguistic instruments mentioned above are qualitative. No proper ways of analysis are provided throughout this book. Fourth, when mentioning "*Affective Variables*" in Chapter 5, the author fails to introduce Positive Psychology PP, an emerging research field that is a trendy topic in SLA in the past decade (Wang et al., 2021), which focuses on analyzing happiness into three different elements: positive emotions (comfort, pleasure, etc.), engagement (or flow), and meaning (purpose in life) (Seligman, 2011). However, there is only one variable (enjoyment) related to PP in this section, while some other variables, like resilience, well-being (Wang, Derakhshan, & Azari Noughabi, 2022), loving pedagogy (Wang, Derakhshan, & Pan, 2022), engagement (Wang et al., 2021) and among others, have not been touched upon. Fifth, there are some grammatical and spelling mistakes that may hinder understanding, e.g., "form" (p.2), "instructor" (p.14), "study" (p.141), and "there is a tremendous opportunity" (p.146).

Overlooking those shortcomings, we hope this book can be a signpost to attract more studies on creativity in relation to SLA. This will make us more cognizant of the effects of creativity in second language learning. According to the research, individual differences, such as aptitude, motivation, anxiety, and working memory only account for 58 % of language learning achievement (p.81). There is a chance for creativity to fill the void of the remaining 42%. Moreover, we hope that this book can serve as an applicable and useful reference for a large number of stakeholders, including graduate students, young linguists, and emerging scholars. Finally, we hope that this book can enable second and foreign language instructors to realize the importance of creativity to make adjustments by providing curriculum support and differentiated instructions for students to thrive in communicative and task-based teaching.

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