

CREATIVE PEDAGOGY AS AN INTERVENTION TOOL TO ENHANCE READING COMPREHENSION OF HYPERACTIVE LEARNERS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

Hyperactivity has become an increasingly prominent challenge in contemporary educational contexts. Among neurodivergent learners, students exhibiting hyperactive learning patterns represent a significant subgroup. Within the context of foreign language education in Slovakia, teachers often lack well-established teaching or mentoring strategies that would accommodate the educational needs of these learners, particularly in foreign language pedagogy. Creative pedagogical approaches incorporating multimodal instructional materials, such as metacognitive strategies, techniques of educational drama, experiential learning, and art may therefore provide a promising way for inclusive language learning and teaching. In this study, books with limited words are examined as a potential pedagogical support tool for lower-secondary learners of foreign language. The study examines how narrative-based materials may support engagement, and language enhancement in learners demonstrating hyperactive behaviours. A qualitative case study methodology was employed, focusing on the learning process of two male students aged, 12, 13 over a four-month period. The intervention consisted of a series of guided 45-minute language-learning sessions utilizing selected picture books as the primary instructional resource. Data were collected through classroom observations using selected observation codes. The findings indicate that picture books, if used as suggested in the research, may function as an effective tool that supported sustained attention for longer time periods, and facilitated reading comprehension and foreign language performance of the selected students. At the same time, analysis revealed several areas of difficulties the observed students had in their linguistic competence, specifically, in grammatical accuracy, sentence construction, and narrative fluency. The results suggest that the effects of creative pedagogy intervention may serve as emotional and pedagogical support that foster a more accessible learning environment for hyperactive learners. The study highlights the pedagogical value of multimodal materials in language pedagogy and highlights the importance of individualized strategies when addressing the needs of learners with attention-related challenges and hyperactivity.

Keywords: *Creative pedagogy, hyperactivity, foreign language teaching, reading comprehension, intervention.*

1. Introduction

To provide a theoretical foundation for the research, the article characterizes three key theoretical frameworks: the theory of creative pedagogy as a form of preventive intervention in pedagogical setting, the theory of reading comprehension in the context of foreign language acquisition with the specific attention paid to vocabulary gain, and hyperactivity as a disorder frequently associated with learners diagnosed with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder).

The study highlights the significant role of creativity and creative language pedagogy within educational contexts. Furthermore, it draws attention to hyperactive learners, who are often perceived as misbehaving or disruptive in classroom settings. The research is grounded in the assumption that an appropriate instructional approach represents one of the key factors contributing to successful learning outcomes. However, the conclusions are based solely on the case studies conducted during the research period and therefore cannot be generalized to all educational contexts or to all individuals.

Creative pedagogy is an educational approach that shifts the focus from simply transferring facts to actively teaching students *how* to learn creatively. It empowers learners to think independently, ask interesting questions, and transform traditional study material into a means of achieving a creative goal. Rather than relying purely on rote memorization, creative pedagogy targets four instrumental skills identified by modern educational frameworks: Inquiring: Sparking curiosity and encouraging students to

ask questions, Imagining: Playing with ideas and generating unconventional, alternative concepts, Doing: Producing tangible creations (projects, art, performances) to test those ideas, Reflecting: Providing space for students to evaluate their own processes and what they have learned. It disrupts traditional power hierarchies in the classroom giving the teachers the roles of the facilitators.

Reading comprehension is a complex process. It encompasses a wide spectrum of variables. Mainly it is general linguistic abilities, general education, knowledge about the theme of the text, strategies of comprehension, working memory they have a great impact on comprehension. As reading comprehension is one of the variables selected for the purpose of this research we pay attention to the several aspects of the skill. Alderson (2001) suggests that reading comprehension is commonly considered to require the following skills and knowledge resources: ability to decode graphic forms for efficient word recognition (phonological, orthographic, morphological and semantic processing), ability to access the meaning of a large number of words automatically (vocabulary knowledge), ability to draw meaning from the phrase-and clause-level grammatical information (efficient grammatical parsing), ability to combine clause-level meanings to build a larger network of meaning relations (discourse-level structuring and genre recognition), ability to use a range of reading strategies with more challenging texts (including goal setting, inferencing and monitoring), ability to draw on private background knowledge, as appropriate, abilities to evaluate, integrate, and synthesize information from a text to form a situation model of comprehension (what the reader learns from the text), ability to maintain these processes fluently for an extended period of time, ability to persist in reading and to use the text information appropriately in line with reader goals. As Nuttall (2005), McNamara & Allen (2017), Adams, Bell, & Perfetti (1995), O'Reilly & McNamara (2007) share there are generally three main levels of reading, firstly it is decoding of the symbols, understanding the meaning and connecting the meaning with the personal knowledge and life experience. We emphasise that lexical and grammatical knowledge and understanding the text are the essential elements of reading. Understanding the meanings of words does not necessarily develop understanding of the text as a whole. Several levels of understanding are defined by the scientists: understanding the words individually, it relates to explicit information that learners acquire, secondly, interpretation of the words and phrases it relates to the implicit understanding of the text, and metacognitive understanding of the text which relates to the semantic aspect and refers to higher order thinking.

Successful reading comprehension depends on sufficient lexical knowledge that enables learners to process and interpret textual meaning effectively. *Vocabulary* knowledge significantly influences learners' ability to comprehend written texts, while reading activities simultaneously contribute to the expansion of lexical knowledge. Through exposure to contextualized language, learners encounter new vocabulary items. Recent research has further emphasized the strong correlation between vocabulary knowledge and second-language reading comprehension. As Zhang and Zhang state, "the overall correlation between vocabulary knowledge and foreign language reading comprehension was .57" (Zhang & Zhang, 2020), demonstrating a substantial relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension in second-language learning contexts.

Hyperactivity a common childhood psychological disorder. The core symptoms are inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity, and these are often accompanied by learning difficulties, conduct disorders, maladjustment, and other behavioural problems. In the context of Foreign Language Acquisition (FLA) and psycholinguistics, hyperactive learners (predominantly individuals with ADHD) navigate a highly complex cognitive architecture when reading a foreign language. While reading relies largely on automated processes, reading demands significantly higher executive control, exacerbating the learner's underlying neurobiological vulnerabilities (Salehi et al, 2024). When reading a foreign language, hyperactive individuals experience cognitive friction across several core domains: Firstly, working memory overload: reading requires keeping newly decoded syntax, novel vocabulary, and grammar rules active in the mind simultaneously. Because hyperactive learners exhibit structural deficits in verbal working memory, their ability to synthesize sequential sentences into a coherent mental model is severely bottlenecked. Secondly, deficient inhibitory control: reading a foreign language requires the reader to actively inhibit the phonological and grammatical rules of their native language. Hyperactive learners struggle with this cross-linguistic suppression, leading to frequent interlingual interference which distorts text comprehension.

2. Objectives and methods

The principal aim of the research was to identify the main obstacles and inhibitors affecting the success of learners of English as a foreign language who are commonly associated with hyperactivity, and to examine how these learners respond to a selected method of creative pedagogy, specifically creative storytelling. Furthermore, the study focused on vocabulary acquisition in relation to reading comprehension in a foreign language. The following research questions were formulated:

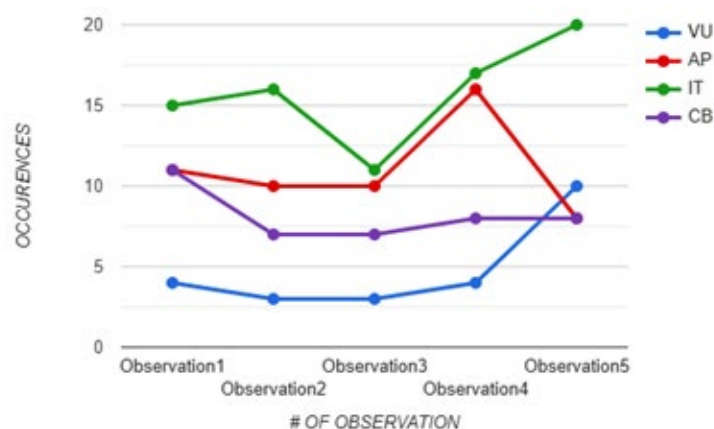
RQ1: What inhibitors affecting successful vocabulary acquisition can be observed in the selected hyperactive learner?

RQ2: How do the specific teaching strategies implemented by the teacher contribute to the learner's vocabulary acquisition?

The research was designed as a qualitative multiple-case study focusing on two selected learners diagnosed with ADHD in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. The case study approach was selected in order to provide an in-depth understanding of the learners' behaviours, responses to instruction, and vocabulary acquisition processes within a natural classroom environment. The participants were purposively selected on the basis of an official ADHD diagnosis confirmed by a school psychologist. Both learners attended regular English language classes and participated in a six-month intervention programme based on principles of creative pedagogy, with a particular emphasis on creative storytelling and the use of picture books. For ethical reasons, the participants were anonymized and referred to as Student A and Student B. Data collection was conducted through systematic classroom observations over a period of six months. The observations focused on learners' behavioural manifestations, engagement in classroom activities, interaction with peers and the teacher, and responses related to vocabulary learning and reading comprehension tasks. Each lesson was observed by an independent observer using a structured observation sheet specifically designed for the purpose of the study. Although the observation instrument contained a broader range of categories, only selected observation codes relevant to the research questions were analysed in this study. The selected codes focused primarily on: Attention and concentration during learning activities; Participation in storytelling and reading comprehension activities; Verbal interaction and responses related to vocabulary acquisition; Emotional engagement and social interaction; Manifestations of hyperactive behaviour affecting learning processes. The collected data were analysed qualitatively through cross-case comparison and thematic interpretation in order to identify recurring patterns, and instructional inhibitors. Given the qualitative and context-specific nature of the research, the findings cannot be generalized to all learners with ADHD or to all educational settings. However, the study may provide valuable insights into the implementation of creative pedagogical approaches in foreign language teaching for neurodiverse learners.

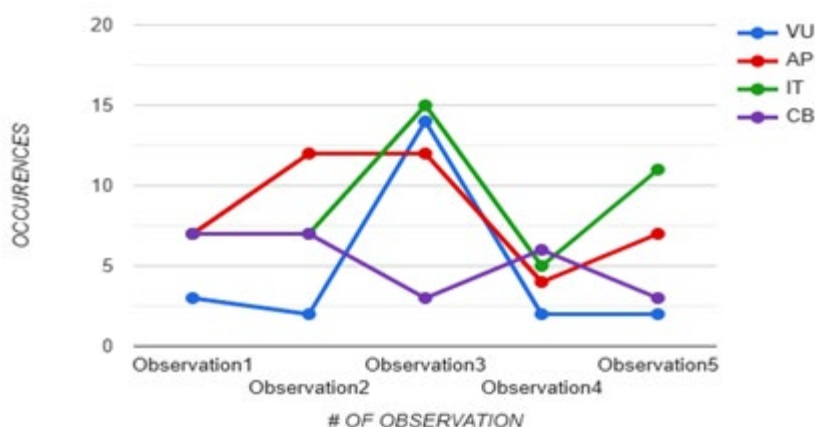
Coding: Code 1 – Vocabulary Use. The student repeated new vocabulary items, engaged in the vocabulary learning process, and gained correct vocabulary. Code 2 – Active Participation: The student actively participated in lesson activities; but also failed to participate in some of the exercises; was unable to participate in the group work; showed frustration when he could not recall a word; participated without an external disruption, participated initially, later becoming distracted by external factors. Code 3 – Interaction With the Teacher: The student answered Teacher 1's questions when directly asked, communicating when necessary; responded to a question without raising his hand; required redirection to activities from Teacher 1; received positive feedback from Teacher 1; also received negative feedback. Code 4 – Classroom Behaviour: The student chatted with his classmate, disrupting them from the assigned work; was distracted by his own environment, engaging in unnecessary activity, played with his school supplies. The representation of the student's progress in all four observed areas over time is summarised here:

Graph 1. Observations of Student A.



The representation of the student's progress in all four observed areas over time is summarised here:

Graph 2. Observations of Student B.



The findings as displayed in the section provided an insight into the selected cases of ADHD learners. All personal information was kept confidential and the Consents of both learners were obtained. They are available on request.

3. Conclusions

The findings demonstrated that ADHD is a complex neurodevelopmental condition requiring individualized pedagogical approach and emotionally supportive educational environment. During the observations, the learners frequently required redirection, additional stimulation, and support in maintaining attention and concentration. Manifestations such as distractibility, fidgeting, and engagement with surrounding stimuli were evident throughout the lessons. Nevertheless, the learners generally responded positively to teacher guidance, structured activities, and the interventions provided through the storytelling activities. They included multimodal approach. The research emphasized the importance of accommodating learners' cognitive, emotional, and social needs in foreign language lessons. Creative pedagogy, particularly the selected method of storytelling as a preventive intervention, appeared to contribute positively to learner engagement, active participation for certain short periods of the observed time. The storytelling approach incorporated visual support, movement-based activities, role-play, miming, freeze-frames, still-images, and reflective tasks. These creative pedagogy and creative drama techniques provided opportunities for meaningful interaction among the peers, vocabulary development.

Despite these positive findings, several limitations of the study must be acknowledged. The research was conducted with only two selected participants within a specific educational context in small schools in the southern region of Slovakia; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all learners with ADHD or to other educational environments. In addition, the study relied primarily on observational data, which may be influenced by subjective interpretation despite the structured observation procedures. A further limitation lies in the relatively short duration of the intervention, which did not allow for the examination of long-term effects on vocabulary gain and foreign language reading comprehension. A critical point of the study is that increased learner engagement may not have resulted exclusively from the storytelling intervention itself, but also from the presence of additional support received from the pedagogical assistants and their and the teacher's individualized attention. Nevertheless, the findings highlight the potential of creative and inclusive pedagogical approaches in supporting neurodiverse learners in foreign language education.

Acknowledgements

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