How Do EFL Teachers in Turkey Perceive Creativity?
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ABSTRACT

As one of the 21st-century skills, creativity should become one of the primary focuses of education. This is because developing students' creativity in all educational contexts certainly makes significant contributions to their lives both for now and for the future. Creative thinking should be stimulated diligently within the field of English as a foreign language (EFL). As the biggest and most crucial role belongs definitely to the teachers, who are expected to encourage and nurture creativity in their students through creative teaching, EFL teachers also should be well aware of their leading role for creativity in their classes. From this standpoint, understanding EFL teachers' perceptions of creativity is significant. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions of creativity and to determine whether gender, age, teaching experience and undergraduate area of study influence their perceptions. This study was designed as a quantitative descriptive method research and was conducted with 200 EFL teachers working currently at the secondary schools in Elazığ. The data analysis was performed using SPSS 21. The results revealed that Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions of creativity are high in general. Yet, it was found that the majority of EFL teachers do not always provide novel and efficient opportunities for the development of creative thinking. It was also determined that EFL teachers' gender, age, teaching experience and undergraduate area of study do not influence their perceptions on creativity.

Keywords: Creativity, Creative Teaching, EFL, Teacher Perception

Türkiye'deki İngilizce Öğretmenleri Yaratıcılığı Nasıl Algılıyor?
Öz

21. yüzyıl becerilerinden biri olarak yaratıcılık, eğitimin temel odak noktalarından birisi olmalıdır. Çünkü öğrencilerin yaratıcılıklarını tüm eğitim bağlamlarında geliştirmek, onların yaşamlarına hem şuan hem de gelecek için muhakkak ki önemli katkılarda bulunmaktadır. Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğretimi alanında da yaratıcı düşünme özenle ve sebatla teşvik edilmelidir. Kuşkusuz en büyük ve en mühim rol öğrencilerindeki yaratıcılığı yaratıcı öğretimle cesaretlendirmesi ve geliştirmesi beklenen öğretmenlere ait olduğu için, İngilizce öğretmenleri de derslerindeki yaratıcılığa yönelik kendi başlıca rollerinin tamamen farkında olmalıdır. Bu açıdan, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin algılarını anlamak önemlidir. Bu yüzden, bu çalışmanın amacı İngilizce öğretmenlerinin yaratıcılık üzerine algılarını araştırmak ve cinsiyet, yaş, deneyim ve lisans bölümünün öğretmenlerin yaratıcılık üzerine algılarına etkisi olup olmadığını belirlemektir. Bu çalışma betimsel bir araştırma olarak tasarlanmış ve Elazığ'daki ortaokullarda halen çalışmakta olan 200 İngilizce öğretmeniyle yürütülmüştür. Veri analizi SPSS 21 kullanılarak yapılmıştır. Sonuçlar, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin yaratıcılık üzerine algılarının genel olarak yüksek olduğunu ortaya çıkmıştır. Fakat çoğu İngilizce öğretmeninin yaratıcı düşünmeyi geliştirmek için yeni ve etkili fırsatları her zaman sunmadıkları görülmüştür. İngilizce öğretmenlerinin cinsiyet, yaş, deneyim ve lisans bölümlerinin, onların yaratıcılık üzerine algılarını etkilemediği de belirlenmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Yaratıcılık, Yaratıcı Öğretim, Yabancı Dil Öğretimi, Öğretmen Algısı

1 | INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century has brought uncertainty to life as a result of the rapid social, economic and global changes (Beghetto, 2010). These rapid changes, as well as the political and technological ones, are the main reasons for the increasing value of creativity around the world (Craft, 2005). Consequently, schools are expected to reorganize their education policies with a stronger emphasis on improving the students' creativity to respond all of these factors (Li, 2016a) and to prepare them for an unpredictable, rapidly changing future (Vygotsky, 1967/2004). From these standpoints, notable policy changes in education have been carried out, and thinking skills like creativity have been integrated into the curriculums in many countries around the world (Gunawardena, Sooriyampola, & Walisundara, 2017; Li, 2016b; Lin, 2011). Schools and teachers have been encouraged to develop students' creativity through government initiatives. Also curriculum reforms focusing on the development of creativity in education have been performed in many countries like America, France, Germany, Sweden, Australia, China, Hong Kong and Japan (Lin, 2011).

Although creativity has received considerable attention in education and has recently been a significant area of interest within the field of EFL around the world (Maley & Bolitho, 2015), it is believed not to be addressed and emphasized in EFL as it should be in Turkey. A considerable amount of studies on creativity have been conducted about Turkish language, math, music, art, science and many others whereas the number of creativity research carried out in the EFL context is highly scarce compared to them. Therefore, this study is presumably one of the very few EFL studies conducted in Turkey. Moreover, attention has been paid to the perceptions of pre-service EFL teachers on creativity in Turkey until recently. Thus, to our knowledge, this study is one of the first studies conducted with in-service EFL teachers.

The major objectives of this study were to investigate the perceptions of Turkish EFL teachers on creativity and to determine whether gender, age, teaching experience and undergraduate area of study influence their perceptions. Regarding the aim of the study the research questions were determined as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of Turkish EFL teachers on creativity?

2. Is there any significant difference among the perceptions of EFL teachers on creativity in terms of gender, age, teaching experience, and undergraduate area of study?

CREATIVITY IN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

As pointed out by Hondzel and Hansen (2015), "schools, if they are to be the source of relevant learning for future adults, must understand not only the 'how' of a creativity-based curriculum, but also the 'why' " (p.179). Realizing the reason why creativity should be integrated into education is one of the prerequisites for creativity development.

Creativity is an essential skill in terms of both individual and social levels (NACCCE, 1999; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). At an individual level, creativity is regarded as a necessary condition for human survival (Maley, 2013; Richards, 2010; Vygotsky, 1967/2004). As beneficial for problem-solving (Runco, 2004; Smith & Smith, 2010; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999), creativity plays an incredible role to overcome the difficulties of daily life (Lin, 2011). It might help individuals to find solutions that are novel, extraordinary and more efficient (Cimermanova, 2015). It also has a positive impact on health (Richards, 2007a; Runco, 2004) and it promotes the development of 'adaptability', 'self-expression' (Runco, 2004, p. 677), 'curiosity' and 'ingenuity' (Smith & Smith, 2010, p. 251). People need to adapt to the changes swiftly to be efficient in this rapidly changing and unpredictable world. Creativity, one of the most influential capacities people have (Richards, 2007a), helps them adjust to new and challenging circumstances. As also emphasized by Richards (2007b), being creative offers substantial benefits for people's identity. Creative people become more dynamic, conscious, nondefensive, open, integrating, observing, caring, collaborative, androgynous, developing, healthier and braver according to him. As for UCLES (2018), fostering personal creative abilities is the most significant thing for students because throughout their lives they will be constructing everything by means of these

abilities. All of the individual-level benefits of creativity, in turn, have a positive impact on society. At a social level, creative people may contribute significantly to the growth of their society. Sternberg and Lubart (1999) pointed out that creativity can result in new artistic movements, scientific discoveries, innovations or new social initiatives. As new occupations flourish due to the new goods or services produced, creativity has an economic value as well, which is good for society.

In terms of educational level, creativity has numerous advantages for students besides (NACCCE, 1999). It is seen as a fundamental part of the learning process (UCLES, 2018; Rinkevich, 2011). Contrary to rote learning which does not offer meaningful learning conditions, creativity promotes effective learning, and it increases students' academic achievement and cognitive development (Schacter, Thum, & Zifkin, 2006). It offers students to develop and shape new knowledge effectively (Craft, 2005; Li, 2016a). Moreover, it is remarkably influential in affecting students' attitude towards school and motivation for learning (Maley, 2013; Fisher, 2006; Richards, 2013). Through creativity, students become more confident and responsible (UCLES, 2018) as well as "more motivated and more involved with their schoolwork, and their work becomes more interesting" (Sternberg & Williams, 1996, p. 49).

Traditional teaching may stifle creativity as a result of a barren condition in which teaching and learning are separate procedures that do not often encounter (Lin, 2011). In it, students are transferred knowledge without being encouraged to participate in the development of knowledge (Baghaei & Riasati, 2015). Teachers expect students to think reactively instead of thinking proactively. Students listen, answer the questions, do the exercises and solve the tests in accordance with the teachers' expectations. They do not think uncommonly, produce new ideas, ask novel questions and answer questions uniquely. So creative thinking is not encouraged (Iakovos, 2011). However, in the 21st century, it is excessively significant to provide proper conditions to nourish the students' creativity through education. Applying creative pedagogy in the educational context rather than conventional teaching is the best way to ensure it efficiently (Lin, 2011; NACCCE, 1999).

NACCCE (1999) proposed two separate but interrelated concepts for creative teaching; teaching creatively and teaching for creativity. Teaching creatively was defined as "using imaginative approaches to make learning more interesting, exciting and effective" (p. 102). According to Copley (2001, cited in Baghaei & Riasati, 2015), teaching creatively requires a long time for teachers to gain this skill and consists of three steps. The first step requires teachers to grasp what creativity is; the second step is to make use of their own creative thinking skill; and the last step is to apply techniques and methods that can foster students' creativity. In this process, teachers by using their creativity develop and use diverse approaches, methods, and materials which may arouse students' attention and increase their motivation for learning (NACCCE, 1999). For Smith and Smith (2010), teaching creatively means for teachers to search novel and distinctive ways for teaching, to encourage creativity in the classroom and to attach great importance to creativity both in their and students' works.

Teaching for creativity, on the other hand, is the "forms of teaching that are intended to develop young people's own creative thinking or behaviour" (NACCCE, 1999, p.103). As for Kaufman and Sternberg (2007), teaching creativity cannot be accomplished directly but a teacher can teach for creativity which "require the recognition that creativity is, in large part, an attitude toward life" (p.58). Three tasks were proposed for teachers who will teach for creativity; encouraging, identifying, and fostering. It is suggested that having strong self-belief and positive self-image contributes to the development of creativity. Thus, encouraging students to believe in their creative capacity and to be confident, enterprising, independent, strong in the presence of failures, highly motivated, willing to take risks is a crucial step for the improvement of creative performance. The second task is identifying students' creative abilities and strengths. The third task is fostering creativity by developing typical capacities and skills such as curiosity, memory, and awareness; by having a clear understanding of the creative processes (NACCCE, 1999). As understood, teaching creatively highlights a teacher-oriented perspective, whereas teaching for creativity focuses on a learner-oriented perspective (Craft, 2005; Cremin, 2009). Both of the concepts are reasonably significant, and thus teachers should teach creatively and teach for creativity (Cimermanova, 2015).

It is reasonable to assume that teachers are the most essential and indispensable part of creative teaching. They, therefore, have a big role in fostering or undermining the creative potential of students (Birkmaier, 1971; Li, 2016b; Sternberg & Williams, 1996). They may have some misconceptions and lack of knowledge about creativity, which can influence the creative teaching performance of the teachers negatively (Aljughaiman & Reynolds, 2005; Huang, Lee, & Yang, 2019). In contrast, they may hold views that can help them stimulate creativity in the classrooms. Meanwhile, even though they have positive views or perceptions about creativity, teachers sometimes may not display and apply them in their instructional practices (Bereczki & Kárpáti, 2018). Thus, understanding how they perceive creativity is an essential step in creativity in educational contexts. Similarly, EFL teachers' perceptions of creativity should be identified well to encourage and cultivate creativity in EFL classes efficiently.

Even though the number of academic research and books on creativity is high, creativity research particularly in the EFL context is less than the other fields. However, due to the increasing popularity of thinking skills and their development in EFL, the literature on creative thinking has shown gradual growth in recent years. Maley & Peachey (2015) and Xerri & Vassallo (2016a) with their books, Birkmaier (1971), Iakovos (2011), Maley & Bolitho (2015) and Richards (2013) with their articles provided profound information about the central philosophy of creativity in EFL, put forward various suggestions and proposed many creative activities to foster creativity in EFL classrooms. Although they do not focus on the EFL context by name, Cremin's (2009) and Jones & Richards' (2015) books offer both theoretical and practical information for creative language teaching. Avila (2015) and Tin (2013) also suggested creative activities that can promote creativity alongside language skills. The studies of Al-Qahtani (2016), Al-Nouh et al., (2014), Fitriah (2017), Wang & Kokotsaki (2018), Nedjah & Hamada (2017) and Popescu (2013) are in parallel with the focus of this current study as they tend to investigate EFL teachers' knowledge, perception, belief or attitude on creativity.

For instance, Al-Nouh, Abdul-Kareem, & Taqi (2014) explored primary school EFL teachers' attitudes on creativity and their perceptions of classroom practice using a survey, making a focus group interview and analysing exam papers. While the participants of the survey were four hundred thirty-four EFL teachers working at primary schools in Kuwait, the focus group interviews were held with nineteen principals and one hundred forty-nine teachers. The findings showed that although teachers indicated some significant constraints like time and curriculum, their attitudes and perceptions were, in general, high. Teachers' age, major, school zone, experience and training had also a great impact on perceptions and attitudes of teachers. According to principals, teachers were the main factor that discouraged the development of creativity in students. Both teachers and principals believed that providing in-service teacher training, resource and parents' assistance was essential for effective implementation of creative activities. The study carried out by Nedjah & Hamada (2017) examined EFL teachers' knowledge and perceptions about creative thinking and its implementation in EFL classrooms. Twenty-seven EFL teachers working at a university in Algeria participated in the study. With the questionnaire applied, it was revealed that teachers mostly had positive perceptions to foster creativity in EFL classrooms, and they were aware of the benefits of creativity on students in various aspects. However, they had limited knowledge about the concept of creativity, its characteristics and its effective integration into the teaching process. Therefore, it was offered to take training on creativity and creative pedagogy as well as to highlight its position in the EFL curriculum

In Turkey, creativity research in EFL is limited in contrast with the other domains and school subjects. Furthermore, the creativity studies in EFL context are not mostly about EFL teachers or their perceptions of creativity (e.g. Akçay, 2019; Cubukcu, 2010; Özbek, 2006; Özcan, 2010). Akçay (2019) and Özbek (2006) contributed to the literature with their thesis studies on creativity. Akçay (2019) examined ELT coursebooks whether they contain 21st-century skills including creativity. Özbek (2006) investigated if a creative thinking programme had profound effects on students' attitudes on creativity in writing. Şenel (2018) carried out a study to investigate the efficiency of creative writing on students' academic writing skills. Özcan (2010) examined the relationship between the teachers' behaviours and students' creative thinking skill while Yagcioglu (2017) conducted a study to find out whether creativity and humour had an impact on students in

EFL classes as well as she suggested sample classroom activities, books and websites. Cubukcu (2010) provided important information and suggestions about how creativity could be fostered through poetry while teaching language.

Bedir's (2019), and Kurt and Önalan's (2018) studies were akin to the focus of the present study. However, they examined pre-service EFL teachers' beliefs and perceptions of creativity. The study conducted by Bedir (2019) examined pre-service EFL teachers' beliefs and perceptions on 21st-century skills called as 4Cs, namely critical, creative thinking, collaboration and communication skills. The researcher intended to find out, first, teachers' general perceptions on 21st-century skills; second, their specific perceptions on 4Cs separately; third, their specific beliefs on 4Cs' integration in terms of curriculum and instruction, assessment, and professional development. One hundred twenty-four pre-service EFL teachers from a state university attended the study's quantitative phase and filled a questionnaire consisting of both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Twelve teachers participated in the qualitative phase of the study, and semi-structured interviews were conducted through a focus group. The findings showed that they had positive perceptions of 4Cs, but they were not able to identify and implement 21st-century skills clearly, which was linked by the researcher to the curriculum and test system in Turkey. Most of the teachers perceived integration of the technology into classroom activities as the requirements of these skills. Moreover, it was found out that their perceptions of creative thinking were limited in that they had some misconceptions about creativity and its integration into teaching. Although they indicated that creativity was essential and beneficial in education, they had difficulty in defining creativity.

Kurt & Önalan (2018) also conducted a similar study and aimed to find out pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of creativity. The data was collected only through qualitative way with semi-structured focus-group interview. Eight pre-service teachers from a state university in Turkey participated in the study. The results revealed that their conceptualization of creativity was limited according to their creativity definitions. However, they were aware of the fact that every individual had the creative ability and it could be developed or undermined due to some significant factors such as family, culture and school. They also offered teachers to use specific tasks in order to stimulate the creative thinking of students. In addition, it was reported that they were not ready to teach creativity even though they thought themselves almost creative. They asserted that teacher education played an absolutely great role in pre-service teachers' creative teaching practices.

On the other hand, Tümen Akyıldız and Çelik's (2020) study emphasized the in-service EFL teachers' perceptions of creativity. Yet, it was qualitative research conducted with only 15 teachers. Interviews were held with these teachers currently working at state secondary schools in a Turkish city. The results of the study showed that the central philosophy of creativity was not comprehended and creative teaching was not applied thoroughly by most of the teachers. Some creative activities were utilized in EFL classrooms to foster students' creativity such as brainstorming, storytelling and games. However, some of the activities mentioned by the teachers were not suitable for the creative approach, which showed the teachers' limited perceptions as well. In the study, factors inhibiting and facilitating creativity in the Turkish context were found out. Constraining factors were reported as curriculum, time, exams, administrators and class size while facilitating ones as teacher motivation. Student and technology factors were regarded as both constraining and facilitating factors for creativity development in EFL classrooms. As seen, the current study is different from the previous studies in terms of its focus and research design.

2 | METHOD

RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study explored Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions on creativity, and whether there was any significant difference among their perceptions on creativity in terms of gender, age, teaching experience and undergraduate area of study. Therefore, descriptive quantitative research was preferred. To collect the data, a questionnaire by Al-Nouh, Abdul-Kareem and Taqi (2014) was used.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants of the study consisted of 200 EFL teachers, who were teaching from 5th to 8th-grade students at state schools. They were currently working at secondary schools in Elazığ, a city located in the East Anatolian Region of Turkey. In Table 1, the descriptive statistics of the participants' background information were given.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Participants' Background Information

		N	%
Gender	Female	136	68
	Male	64	32
Age	22-30	121	60,5
	31-39	63	31,5
	40-48	14	7
	49-above	2	1
Experience	1st year	19	9,5
	1-4	66	33
	5-10	69	34,5
	11-above	46	23
Undergraduate area of study	English Language Teaching	144	72
	English Language & Literature	45	22,5
	Linguistics	4	2
	Others	4	2
	American Culture & Literature	2	1
	Translation & Interpreting	1	.5

Table 1 demonstrates that the majority of the teachers were female and between the ages of 22-30. As for the years of experience in teaching, the majority of the teachers had been working for 1-10 years. Lastly, in terms of the undergraduate area of study, the ratios indicate that most of the participants graduated from ELT departments of universities.

Data collection

For the study, the questionnaire prepared by Al-Nouh, Abdul-Kareem and Taqi (2014) was used after the necessary permission was obtained to administer it. Cronbach Alpha coefficient of this questionnaire was calculated by these researchers and it was found as 0.86, which demonstrated high reliability.

The original questionnaire consisted of three parts; demographic information, attitude and perception. However, only the demographic information part and perception part of it was utilized for the current study. Moreover, the first part of the original questionnaire involved demographic information in terms of age, nationality, major, degree, in-service training, teaching experience, and educational zone. The researchers of the present study changed the demographic questions to gender, age, teaching experience, and undergraduate area of study to make this part more suitable for the current study. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of 20 items which aimed to discover the perceptions of teachers on creativity and their creative practices. A five-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaire; "1: never, 2: rarely, 3: sometimes, 4: usually, 5: always".

Data analysis

The researchers analysed the collected data via Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 21. First of all, the questionnaire's Cronbach's alpha value was calculated to measure its reliability and it was calculated as .903, which indicated a high level of reliability for the questionnaire. For each item in the questionnaire, descriptive statistics were used, and mean values, standard deviations and percentages were calculated. For the second research question, Levene's Test was applied for the variance homogeneity. As Buyukozturk (2016) stated that the Levene's Test may be used to provide the equality of variance. When the variance is

equal parametric analysis; otherwise, the non-parametric analysis is more appropriate. Therefore, in this research One Way ANOVA parametric tests and Kruskal Wallis non-parametric tests were applied to demonstrate if teachers' perceptions show a meaningful and significant difference in terms of gender, age, teaching experience and undergraduate area of study.

RESEARCH ETHICS

This research was evaluated at the meeting (no: 23/2019) by the Ethics Committee of Social Sciences and Humanities of Fırat University in 11.04.2019 and found ethically acceptable.

3 | FINDINGS

In this section, the first research question aimed to find out the perceptions of Turkish EFL teachers on creativity is answered through the data obtained from the questionnaire which consists of twenty items.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Turkish EFL Teachers' Perceptions on Creativity

		N	R	S	U	A	Mean	STD
P1. I remind and encourage pupils to be creative.	F	2	6	41	93	58	3,99	0,84
	%	1,0	3,0	20,5	46,5	29,0		
P2. I develop pupils' creative thinking skills.	F	2	6	63	90	39	3,79	0,82
	%	1,0	3,0	31,5	45,0	19,5		
P3. I encourage pupils to question and think independently.	F	1	4	36	85	74	4,13	0,81
	%	0,5	2,0	18,0	42,5	37,0		
P4. I listen to pupils when they ask questions.	F	1	2	9	49	139	4,61	0,67
	%	0,5	1,0	4,5	24,5	69,5		
P5. During discussion, I ask pupils questions to encourage them to think deeply about the topic.	F	1	5	28	78	88	4,23	0,82
	%	0,5	2,5	14,0	39,0	44,0		
P6. I urge pupils to tell me about what they have learned by themselves.	F	5	20	38	93	44	3,75	0,98
	%	2,5	10,0	19,0	46,5	22,0		
P7. I push pupils to experiment with what they have learned in varied situations.	F	2	17	69	81	31	3,61	0,88
	%	1,0	8,5	34,5	40,5	15,5		
P8. I inspire my pupils to find more than one solution to a problem.	F	2	9	52	88	49	3,86	0,87
	%	1,0	4,5	26,0	44,0	24,5		
P9. I prepare questions for my pupils to answer by themselves.	F	1	12	57	80	50	3,83	0,89
	%	0,5	6,0	28,5	40,0	25,0		
P10. I allow pupils to learn in groups.	F	-	18	58	70	54	3,80	0,94
	%	-	9,0	29,0	35,0	27,0		
P11. I allow pupils to exchange ideas and opinions.	F	-	7	50	84	59	3,97	0,82
	%	-	3,5	25,0	42,0	29,5		
P12. I allow pupils to ask about things of interest to them.	F	-	7	42	91	60	4,02	0,80
	%	-	3,5	21,0	45,5	30,0		
P13. I praise pupils who provide unexpected answers.	F	2	3	44	66	85	4,14	0,88
	%	1,0	1,5	22,0	33,0	42,5		
P14. I take a boring exercise and turn it into a game.	F	2	23	76	63	36	3,54	0,95
	%	1,0	11,5	38,0	31,5	18,0		
P15. I use a discovery or problem solving approach in teaching pupils.	F	5	18	73	78	26	3,51	0,91
	%	2,5	9,0	36,5	39,0	13,0		
P16. I use a range of communication technologies in my class.	F	2	16	65	78	39	3,68	0,91
	%	1,0	8,0	32,5	39,0	19,5		
P17. I use authentic situations to encourage language use.	F	4	27	61	72	36	3,54	1,00
	%	2,0	13,5	30,5	36,0	18,0		

P18. I reward originality and creativity.	F	2	17	46	62	73	3,93	1,01
	%	1,0	8,5	23,0	31,0	36,5		
P19. I allow pupils to choose their own projects to demonstrate their knowledge.	F	6	14	48	77	55	3,80	1,01
	%	3,0	7,0	24,0	38,5	27,5		
P20. I do not criticize pupils' ideas.	F	6	6	37	76	75	4,04	0,97
	%	3,0	3,0	18,5	38,0	37,5		

"N: never, R: rarely, S: sometimes, U: usually, A: always"

As it is seen in Table 2, the perception level of Turkish EFL teachers is quite high varying between X= 3.51 and X= 4.61.

To reveal whether there is any significant difference among the perceptions of EFL teachers on creativity in terms of gender, age, teaching experience, and undergraduate area of study, Levene's Test was used to check the equality of variance. It was revealed that the homogeneity values was calculated in terms of gender F=.047, age F=.919, teaching experience F=.029 and undergraduate area of study F=.321 (p>.05). Therefore, a One Way ANOVA parametric test was conducted for the variables of age and undergraduate area of study; a Kruskal Wallis nonparametric test was applied to the gender and teaching experience.

Table 3. A One Way ANOVA Test for Turkish EFL Teachers' Perceptions on Creativity in terms of Age and Undergraduate Area of Study

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	sig
Age	Between groups	.378	3	.126		
					.441	.724
	Within groups	55.984	196	.286		
	Total	56.362	199			
Undergraduate area of study	Between groups	.913	5	.183		
					.639	.670
	Within groups	55.450	194	.286		
	Total	56.362	199			

As illustrated in Table 3, a One Way ANOVA test revealed no significant difference in the perceptions of EFL teachers on creativity regarding both age p=.724 and undergraduate area of study p=.670 (p>.05). Thus, regarding the results it seems likely that age and undergraduate area of study do not affect teachers' perceptions of creativity.

Table 4. A One Way ANOVA Test for Turkish EFL Teachers' Perceptions on Creativity in terms of Gender and Teaching Experience

Gender	n	Mean Rank	χ^2	df	p
Male	64	98.66	.096	1	.757
Female	136	101.37			

Teaching Experience	n	Mean Rank	χ^2	df	p
1st year	19	121.53	3.284	3	.350
1-4	66	95.08			
5-10	69	102.05			
10-above	46	97.26			
Total	200				

A Kruskal-Wallis nonparametric test was applied to investigate whether there was a meaningful difference between the perceptions of teachers and their gender and teaching experience. As seen from Table 4, no significant difference was detected between the perceptions of EFL teachers on creativity and

their gender p=.757 and teaching experience p=.350 (p>.05). Thus, according to these results, gender and teaching experience appears to have no effect on teachers' perceptions of creativity as well.

4 | DISCUSSION

The objective of the first research question of this study was to identify the perceptions of Turkish EFL teachers on creativity. When the data were analysed, remarkable findings emerged about the Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions on creativity.

As emphasized by the several researchers in the literature (Beghetto, 2007; Read, 2015; Sternberg & Lubart, 1991; Torrance, 1977), encouraging students for questioning or allowing them to ask questions is an essential factor for creative thinking. Beghetto (2007) underlined the importance of raising new questions by placing it in his creativity definition. Read (2015), as an EFL researcher, also mentioned it among the seven pillars for creativity development. As pointed out by Sternberg and Williams (1996), integrating questioning into the teaching process by teaching students what kind of questions to ask and how to ask as well as how to answer is a step for creativity development. Hence, students toned to decrease their dependency on rote learning and learn asking questions of high quality, intriguing and challenging. In the current study, it was found that most of the EFL teachers also emphasize encouraging students to ask questions and listening carefully to their questions. For example, more than half of the teachers stated they always listen to students when they ask questions, which is in line with the finding of Al-Nouh et al. (2014) who explored primary school EFL teachers' attitudes on creativity and their perceptions of classroom practice using a survey, making a focus group interview and analysing exam papers. Most of them also stated that they usually encourage students to question and think independently, allow students to ask about things of interest, and prepare questions for students to answer on their own.

As highlighted by Yagcioglu (2017), motivation has a pivotal role in the enhancement of creativity. Therefore, to increase students' enthusiasm and make them more creative, teachers should somehow motivate their students. This can be achieved through praising or rewarding. Fasko (2001), Sternberg and Lubart (1991), and Torrance (1977) are among the researchers who supported the idea of rewarding for a creative achievement or idea. Torrance's (1977) ideas for appropriate rewarding are, particularly, significant in that they stress and show the means of rewarding without giving students a physical or tangible object. In this respect, the results of the current study indicated that nearly half of the participants always praise pupils who provide unexpected answers. Similarly, many of them reported that they always reward originality and creativity in their classrooms. This finding is again in line with the findings of Al-Nouh et al. (2014).

The current study found that less than half of the EFL teachers indicated that they always develop students' creative thinking skills. The rest of them stated that they develop it either usually or sometimes. This echoes the previous finding of Al-Nouh et al.'s (2014) study in which many teachers said that they sometimes develop creativity in the classroom. Moreover, nearly thirty percent of the teachers reported that they always remind and encourage students to be creative. Teachers' responses to some of the other items in the questionnaire had similar results confirming that a small number of them always encourage and develop students' creativity at school. For instance, only thirteenth percent of the EFL teachers reported that they always use a discovery or problem-solving approach in teaching. What is more, the number of teachers who always use authentic situations to encourage language use in the classroom is less than twenty percent. Using authentic materials in EFL classrooms are recommended by Clarke (2005), Cremin (2009), Formosa and Zammit (2016), Tin (2013), Xerri and Vassallo (2016a) to enhance students' creative thinking and language skills better.

It was also found that the majority of the participants do not always use a range of communication technologies. So, they do not benefit from technology to encourage creative thinking. On the contrary, the teachers in Al-Nouh et al.'s (2014) and Fitriah's (2017) studies reported that they utilize technology to foster creativity. Besides, Sternberg and Williams (1996) suggested that providing students opportunities to define and redefine problems can promote creativity by making them choose their assignments' topics. They also

offer teachers to encourage creative collaboration by making students work together in the classroom. The findings of the present study, however, differ from the strategies suggested. Since the EFL teachers who always allow students to choose their own projects and to learn in groups were nearly thirty percent. These data should be interpreted with caution because it may reflect the common paradox about creativity in education. On the one hand, teachers value creativity and support the idea that it should be developed. On the other hand, they do not always try to encourage or develop it at schools in actual practice. This is what Makel (2009, cited in Rinkevich 2011, p. 220) calls "creativity gap". Since the number of teachers who always try to improve and encourage creativity in EFL classrooms is less than expected.

Another important finding is that less than twenty percent of the participants reported that they always take a boring exercise and turn it into a game. As this item is related to the creativity of teachers, a possible explanation for this can be that teachers may lack creative thinking skill as stated by Constantinides (2015). They may not be flexible while thinking properly in situations that they do not predict or expect and also they may not change something appropriately to make it more suitable for their students in such an absence of creativity (Constantinides, 2015). As Xerri and Vassallo (2016b) pointed out, being creative is having the courage to do something unusually and to push the limits. Clarke (2005) also associated creativity with adaptation and noted that it is "coming up with imaginative ways of doing what might be considered otherwise mundane tasks" (p. 2).

With the second research question, it was aimed to determine whether there is any significant difference in the perceptions of EFL teachers on creativity in terms of gender, age, teaching experience and undergraduate area of study. It was found that teachers' gender, age, teaching experience and undergraduate area of study do not have an impact on their perceptions of creativity. The finding concerning the teaching experience is in line with the Al-Nouh et al.'s (2014) study in which they also could not find any significant differences in teachers' perceptions according to experience. On the other hand, in the same study, it was detected that age of the teachers has a meaningful impact on their perceptions, which is not in parallel with the present study. In addition, Fitriah's (2017) findings are not in agreement with the current study's finding regarding teachers' gender and age because Fitriah (2017) discovered significant differences in EFL teachers' perceptions based on these two variables. He found out that their perceptions about creative teaching practices were different in females and males. Additionally, younger and older teachers differ in their perceptions.

5 | CONCLUSION

Creativity should become one of the primary focuses of education since developing students' creativity in all educational contexts certainly makes significant contributions to their lives both for now and for the future. Creative thinking should be stimulated diligently within the field of EFL and EFL teachers also should be well aware of their leading role for creativity in their classes. "Change is occurring so rapidly that we cannot survive if we insist on thinking and living in static terms. We must accept the creative challenge" (Torrance, 1965, p.679). With the current study which explored the perceptions of EFL teachers on creativity, this creative challenge was accepted in a sense, and it is hoped to contribute to the literature and attract teachers' attention to that essential 21st-century skill.

Returning to the first research question, it is understood that EFL teachers in the study usually or sometimes provide novel and efficient opportunities through which students can display and improve their creative thinking skills. Most of the teachers are not able to always allocate time for the development of creativity. Indeed, they have high perceptions of creativity in general. Further, the second research question was designed to determine the effect of participants' gender, age, teaching experience and undergraduate area of study on their perceptions. This study has shown that participants' gender, age, teaching experience and undergraduate area of study do not influence their perceptions on creativity.

There are some notable issues for future research on creativity in the EFL context. First, further work is required to consist of a larger number of participants, which would help to generalize the results. Second, the

current study was conducted in Elazığ, which is a small city in the east of Turkey. What is now needed is a cross-national study involving different cities in Turkey. Third, as the current research was conducted with the secondary school EFL teachers, further research can be done with the pre-school, primary or high school EFL teachers to understand different perceptions on creativity at different levels. Lastly, classroom observations are recommended to monitor EFL teachers' perceptions of creativity and their creative teaching practices.

As regards to policy and practice, the findings of this study provide significant suggestions as well. First, creativity should be integrated into teacher education programmes in ELT departments to make teacher candidates more concerned with creative thinking and more knowledgeable about creative pedagogy before they start their teaching careers. Additionally, as many teachers graduate from other departments related to English and work as an English language teacher at schools, such programmes like English Language and Literature, Linguistics, and American Culture and Literature should also include courses about creativity. Lastly, training or workshops about creativity and creative teaching should be held for in-service teachers.

STATEMENTS OF PUBLICATION ETHICS

Throughout this study, research and publication ethics were observed. In all steps of the research, researchers followed the ethical principles. It was evaluated at the meeting (no: 23/2019) by the Ethics Committee of Social Sciences and Humanities of Fırat University in 11.04.2019 and found ethically acceptable.

RESEARCHERS' CONTRIBUTION RATE

The first author involved in every stage of the research as this article is based on her master's thesis. As the supervisor of the first author, the second author made contributions to each stage as well.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This study does not have any conflict of interest.

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