



Language Teaching Research Quarterly

2019, Vol.11, 20–30



EFL Classes for Cultivating Entrepreneurial Mind-set¹

Mustafa Zülküf Altan

Erciyes University Faculty of Education, Kayseri, Turkey

Received 02 May 2019 Accepted 10 July 2019

Abstract

Entrepreneurship is not a new idea but it has never been more important than it is today in this time of financial, societal, educational crisis and massive challenges both at local and global scale. On the one hand, innovation and entrepreneurship are possible potential instruments to provide solutions for both local and the global challenges of the 21st century and onward by building sustainable development, creating jobs, generating renewed economic growth and advancing human welfare. On the other hand, education has the potential to develop the skills to generate the entrepreneurial mind-set needed to prepare future leaders in all sectors, entrepreneurs, to solve more complex, interlinked and rapidly changing social and economic problems of the world. Therefore, education systems across the world are facing profound challenges. Although there has been a significant increase in the number of courses and programmes featuring entrepreneurship in some form, I feel that more could still be done to integrate it fully into the educational curriculum, including the curriculum of language classes. The last few decades have seen the importance of the English language continuing to increase around the world, especially as the lingua franca for economic and scientific exchange. English has become dominant in a way that no language has ever been before, and the common belief is that it may never be dethroned as the 'king of languages'. The use of English as the world's preferred medium for international communication can be credited to globalisation, just as globalisation can be credited to the spread of the English language. The two have gone hand in hand. As a result, both studying and teaching English language consist of more than just learning a foreign language or teaching a subject matter. Therefore, having a good command of the English language became a key element in the continuity of many sectors and the success of businesses all over the world. Consequently, having an entrepreneurial mind-set together with a good command of the English language is a good prognosticator for a successful career. And it is obvious that these two qualities can both be taught in schools. Therefore, I strongly believe that English language classes are the best places to kill two birds with one stone and make this educational vision come true. This Paper aims to highlight

¹The paper has been created from the keynote speech presented at ICSLS-2019, May 24, Istanbul.

the importance of designing and implementing EFL courses in such a way that learners can both learn the English language and develop an entrepreneurial mind-set since no other discipline and, as a result, no other subject area teacher has such a power.

Keywords: *EFL Classes, Entrepreneurship*

Keynote Speech

Entrepreneurship and Education

Entrepreneurship is not a new idea but it has never been more important than it is today in this time of financial, societal, educational crisis and massive challenges both at local and global scale. The thought of implanting entrepreneurship into education has impelled much excitement within the last few decades. The reason of this was the possibility of financial development, job creation and expanded societal versatility, as well as personal development. Putting this thought into practice however was not an easy task. It included both challenges along with positive impacts. Time limitations, lack of resources, educational background, teachers' fear of being commercial since entrepreneurship is usually related to commerce, blocking instructional assessment problems within traditional system, problem of definitional clarity were some of the challenges pioneer teachers have experienced when they attempted to include entrepreneurship into instruction.

On the one hand, innovation and entrepreneurship are possible potential instruments to provide solutions for both local and the global challenges of the 21st century and onward by building sustainable development, creating jobs, generating renewed economic growth and advancing human welfare. On the other hand, education has the potential to develop the skills to generate the entrepreneurial mind-set needed to prepare future leaders in all sectors, entrepreneurs, to solve more complex, interlinked and rapidly changing social and economic problems of the world. Therefore, education systems across the world are facing profound challenges.

If main enterprising determinants like risk taking, confidence, initiative taking, creativity, social responsibility that is entrepreneurial mind-set lacks, is absent and/or not enforced in general education systems at all levels, it becomes highly critical and difficult to create an ecosystem to grow enterprising individuals ready to manage economic growth and prosperity and to come with solutions for ever increasing local and global problems.

Although there is a significant increase in the number of courses and programs about entrepreneurship education, the teaching of entrepreneurship is not yet sufficiently integrated in higher education institutions' curricula, especially in teacher education programs. And the available data clearly reveal that the majority of entrepreneurship courses are offered in business and economic studies (EC, 2008).

Are business schools the most appropriate place to teach entrepreneurship? Innovative and feasible business ideas do not come directly from business sector. Instead, they are more likely to

arise from technical, scientific and creative studies. So the real challenge is to build interdisciplinary approaches, making entrepreneurship education accessible to all students, creating teams for the development and exploitation of business ideas, mixing students from economic and business studies with students from other faculties and with different backgrounds (EC, 2008; Neck & Greene, 2011).

The entrepreneurial world has clearly showed us that there is no one type of entrepreneur. Therefore, Neck and Greene (2011) point out that “diversity in the ways people can be entrepreneurs should be recognized” (p.59). They also propose teaching entrepreneurship as a method which requires using, applying, and acting rather than emphasizing understanding, knowing, and talking. However, teaching entrepreneurship as a method concept lacks a very important part and seems unable to explain of how this method could help students to know more about themselves so that we could be away from the monolithic personality of entrepreneur as discussed by Neck and Greene (2011).

Although there is a significant increase in the number of courses and programs where entrepreneurship education is embedded along the curriculum in many educational levels, the teaching of entrepreneurship is not yet sufficiently integrated in curricula.

It is clear that educational systems can help individuals develop qualities that are regarded essential for entrepreneurship. However, current educational models, assumptions and approaches about learning and teaching seem unable to equip individuals for new and unexpected challenges and the dramatic changes brought about by globalization. Therefore, we desperately need for an educational paradigm shift. To build an entrepreneurial society, it is important to reform traditional strategies and teaching methods so that learning gains new meaning both for learners and eventually for the society.

Education is not only about the present, it is also about building and shaping the future. And the engineers of this building and shaping are teachers. Teachers play a significant role to the success of any educational system for a positive societal change. Qualified and well-equipped teachers can lead the education and with the same token the nation to the highest quality.

Current education practices generally focus on academic success and are usually evaluated by centralized and standardizing high-stake standardized tests or school-based tests. Both types of the tests are based on verbal/linguistic and mathematical/logical intelligences which mainly focus on the functions of the left brain and left brain focused skills and forces all individuals to put on the same size. Therefore, such tests never help individuals to question, think, take risks, think critically, ethically, morally, be creative, patient, conscientious and merciful which are necessary and vital of having an entrepreneurial mind-set and as a result become an entrepreneur (Altan, McMurtry & McMurtry 2014).

Education systems need to prepare our children to become both locally and globally aware in order to become better citizens and better humans and live in a better society and better world. So called standardized or standardizing local and international assessments cause abandonment of local identities and traditions, disregarding of local needs and disrespect individual differences. Such local and international assessments do not help our children to be aware of the

global nature of ever increasing societal issues. Since tests measure only what test-makers put on them, current education practices kill individuals' entrepreneurial potentials. As a result, most test-driven curricula and local/international assessments do not include creativity, diversity of talents, critical thinking skills, entrepreneurship, global competences, morality, ethics, compassion, humanity, etc. that is all right brain focused skills.

Current educational models, assumptions and approaches about learning and teaching seem unable to equip individuals for new and unexpected challenges and the dramatic changes brought about by globalization. Therefore, we desperately need for an educational paradigm shift.

Entrepreneurship and education are two very important opportunities that need to be interconnected and paid attention if we want to develop the quality human capital required for coming up with solutions for today and building the affluent societies of the future.

Approaching entrepreneurship as a teaching philosophy means teaching a way of thinking and acting on a set of assumptions which take individual differences into consideration and use alternative assessment techniques to encourage creativity, risk taking, critical thinking, etc. that is all necessary qualities to have an entrepreneurial mind-set. Entrepreneurial education, implemented teachers has a potential power to help the world to create economic growth, jobs, innovation and to raise happy and socially responsible citizens capable of finding solutions for many long lasting and ever growing local and global issues and bring both prosperity and peace. Therefore, we desperately need entrepreneurial education, teacher educators and teachers who are trained and are entrepreneurial themselves.

European Council document of European Reference Framework (2006) asserts that since globalization continues to confront the individuals worldwide with new challenges, each citizen will need a wide range of key competences to adapt flexibly to a rapidly changing and highly interconnected world. And education in its dual role, both social and economic, has a key role to play in ensuring that each citizen acquires the key competences needed to enable them to adapt flexibly to such changes.

Key competences are those which all individuals needed for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment.

The Reference Framework sets out eight key competences:

- 1) Communication in the mother tongue;
- 2) Communication in foreign languages;
- 3) Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;
- 4) Digital competence;
- 5) Learning to learn;
- 6) Social and civic competences;
- 7) Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and
- 8) Cultural awareness and expression

The key competences are all considered equally important, because each of them can contribute to a successful life in a knowledge society. However, two skills in the list have great

importance for EFL(English as a Foreign language) teachers; communication in foreign languages and developing sense of initiative and entrepreneurship.

English Language Teaching and Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurial education is usually categorized into three approaches, (O'Connor, 2013). Teaching “about” entrepreneurship; a theoretical approach which aims to give a general understanding of the topic. This is a very common approach especially in higher education institutions (Mwasalwiba, 2010). Opening some courses to teach the theoretical background and facts about entrepreneurship along with hit and run type seminars. Teaching “for” entrepreneurship means an occupationally oriented approach aiming at teaching beginning entrepreneur candidates the necessary knowledge and skills. And finally, teaching “through” means a process based and often experiential approach where students go through an actual entrepreneurial learning process (Kyrö, 2005). This approach often covers the wider definition of entrepreneurship, and usually is integrated into other subjects in general education, connecting entrepreneurial characteristics, processes and experiences to the core subject. While the “about” and “for” approaches are relevant primarily to students on secondary and higher levels of education, the embedded approach of teaching “through” entrepreneurship can be relevant to all students and on all levels of education and courses as it is the case in EFL courses. (See for example, Handscombe et al., 2008 for embedding enterprise in science and engineering departments).

The last few decades have seen a rapid growth in the role of the English language around the world, especially as the lingua franca for economic and scientific exchange. English language became dominant in a way that no language has ever been before and the common belief is that it may never be dethroned as the king of languages.

The consolidation in the use of the English language as the world’s medium for international communication can be credited to globalization. English language and globalization have been spreading hand in hand all over the world. Therefore, studying the English language does not mean just learning a foreign language anymore. It became a major educational factor for the survival in many sectors including business. In fact, having a good command of the English language became a key element in the continuity of many sectors and the success of businesses all over the world.

As a result, having an entrepreneurial mind-set together with a good command of English can probably lead for a successful career and it is obvious that these two qualities can be thought in schools and I strongly believe that EFL classes are the best places to make this vision to come true by killing two birds with one stone. Carefully designed topic and theme based entrepreneurial activities embedded in EFL curricula could result both in stimulating entrepreneurial spirit and developing entrepreneurial mind-set and at the same time improve learners’ command of English. Therefore, EFL courses should be designed in such a way that learners can both learn the English language and develop entrepreneurial mind-set. No other discipline and as a result no other subject area teacher has such a power.

The creation of an entrepreneurial community and cultivating entrepreneurial mind-set cannot be succeeded merely by introducing entrepreneurship education by opening a few courses or hit and run type seminars. The formula for successful cultural adaptation or paradigm shift to entrepreneurship lies in participation, inclusion, sharing and support across all community stakeholder groups and most importantly including the notion into each course.

In fact, many activities in most EFL classes are naturally ready to help learners to survive in new situations, to think both individually and cooperatively, to be self-confident, take risks, being tolerant to ambiguity and be a good negotiator, which are essential characteristics to be a successful entrepreneur.

EFL classes offer so many useful type of activities to practice and develop these characteristics, such as information-gap, jigsaw, task-based, line dialogue, conversation grid, problem solving activities, picture prompts, role plays, interviews, small-group or team-based oral works, impromptu speeches and presentations, class surveys, games and various writing tasks and inspiring readings.

Carefully designed and implemented activities will help learners to build better English language skills along with entrepreneurial skills which will help to establish a better career pathway. These activities will help them to polish their speaking skills. To be an entrepreneur, one needs to be a confident and fluent speaker. Whether they will give a presentation or try to attract a potential shareholder and or a venture capitalist, one will need to communicate efficiently and clearly in English.

Such activities will also help learners to improve and polish their writing skills. It is obvious that they will have to do a quite amount of paperwork and writing out cover letters and business proposals, etc. Therefore, they have to be articulate in writing and be able to express themselves clearly and effectively.

Such activities will definitely help learners to develop the right personality necessary for cultivating entrepreneurial mind-set. As an entrepreneur, one cannot be passive and wait for others to lead or give orders. One has to be active, adventurous, curious, open-minded and willing to take risks. Such activities will help learners to become more extroverted and develop the English skills for confident speaking and leadership, and at the same time to remain both positive and ready for opportunities.

These activities will also help entrepreneurial learners to become both makers and thinkers, that is better critical thinking which is one of the most important educational skills in the 21st century and onward. Entrepreneurial skills embedded in EFL activities will help learners to become strong critical thinkers. Although critical thinking is important, it should help learners to bring knowledge and practice together. This fusion of knowing and making should not be undervalued and EFL courses have such power to develop this notion successfully.

Approaching entrepreneurship as an EFL teaching philosophy means teaching a way of thinking and acting built on a set of assumptions which take individual differences into consideration and use alternative assessment techniques to encourage creativity, risk taking, critical thinking, etc. that is all necessary qualities to have an entrepreneurial mind-set.

Individual Differences and Alternative Assessment for Cultivating Entrepreneurial Mind-set

Entrepreneurial education taking individual differences into account and based on alternative assessment systems has the power to be the ultimate solution to overcome the present obstacles and to achieve improvements for the future of the nations.

Individual differences can influence how an individual behaves in various situations. Therefore, understanding and respecting these differences can help us know how to best support and respond to what an individual needs. Individuals bring a huge variety of skills, needs, and interests to learning. Therefore, curricula, that is educational goals, methods, materials, and assessment should be designed to enable all individuals to gain knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for learning where everybody is nourished and honoured equally.

Individual differences such as motivation, intelligence profiles, gender, attitude, self-esteem, learning strategies, brain dominance, learning styles, personality, field dependence/field independence, tolerance of ambiguity, anxiety level and beliefs about learning should be taken into account during all these activities and nurtured equally and definitely performance based/alternative assessment techniques should be implemented to prepare enterprising individuals who are creative, risk takers, critical thinkers and practice the language freely with one another and with the people in the community in order to reach an effective level of proficiency.

Assessment policies exert considerable influence over the education in general since assessments influence the identification, classification, placement, and ongoing monitoring of students (Lachat & Spruce, 1998).

Present assessment practices, mainly so called standardized (standardizing), left brain dominant, mathematical and linguistics intelligences-focused, are not designed for/with the diversity of today's population and to meet the needs of 21st century skills. It is obvious that present assessment practices kill all entrepreneurial skills!

Alternatives to standardized assessment have been referred to in the literature in many ways: alternative assessment, authentic assessment, or performance-based assessment. According to Hamayan (1995) "Alternative assessment refers to procedures and techniques which can be used within the context of instruction and can be easily incorporated into daily activities of both the school and the classroom" (p.213). Since alternative assessment techniques focus on the students' strengths rather than weaknesses, they usually enable the teacher to get a more accurate view of students' achievement, of what they can do, and of what they are trying to do. To meet the present differences in individuals, alternative assessment techniques offer a broad spectrum of assessment possibilities to nurture these differences in learning.

Alternative assessment procedures and techniques which can be used within the context of instruction can be easily incorporated into daily activities in the classrooms. Education systems need to shift from traditional assessment to alternative Assessment. My philosophy is supporting the movement which calls for a shift from traditional assessment to alternative assessment

practices (McLaughlin and Vogt, 1996; Perrone, 1991). Such a shift involves a reconceptualization of how learning occurs and what learners are supposed to do with the things they have learned. This is vital for EFL classes planning to prepare learners with the skills necessary for the 21st century. Specifically, this type of reconceptualization targets; firstly, the overuse of lecture as a primary teaching method and paper-pencil exams and so called objective and/or standardizing tests as the primary way of assessment, secondly, the increasingly diverse student population in classrooms at all levels, and thirdly, constructivist learning theory (Piaget, 1970; Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978 and Bandura, 2000). For example, Brooks and Brooks (1993) offer define constructivism as “Drawing on a synthesis of current work in cognitive psychology, philosophy, and anthropology, it defines knowledge as temporary, developmental, socially and culturally mediated, and thus, non-objective. Learning from this perspective is understood as a self-regulated process of resolving inner cognitive conflicts that often become apparent through concrete experience, collaborative discourse, and reflection” (p. vii). These are vital for entrepreneurial EFL teaching too.

Some of the alternative assessment techniques can be listed as; portfolios, process folios, diaries, journals, and writing folders, audio and video recordings, conferences, performances, individual or group projects, student logs, selected responses, oral reports, exhibitions and demonstrations, interviews, essays, anecdote logs, audio and visual, take home exams, minute papers, fact maps, graphic organizers, dramatic readings, dramatic performances, debates, contracts, observations, reports, impromptu speeches and, simulations. All of these techniques could easily be used successfully in EFL classes.

Individual differences can influence how an individual behaves in various situations. Therefore, understanding and respecting these differences can help us know how to best support and respond to what an individual needs. Individuals bring a huge variety of skills, needs, and interests to learning. As a result, curricula, that is educational goals, methods, materials, and assessment should be designed to enable all individuals to gain knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for learning where everybody is nourished and honoured equally.

Conclusions

Inexorable parade of new technological advances disrupts the norm, change the way individuals live and work and modify the qualities in all social societies. On the other hand, financial crisis, combined with rising inflation and its inevitable consequence, stagnation and recession in global economy, environmental changes, terrorism, demographic changes, political instability, changing power equation across nations and regions, human right violations, massive immigration and refugee problems are causing the world to go through one of the most remarkable periods in history.

These unprecedented social, economic, technological, political and environmental problems desperately put human beings in a need of change and improvement in many different areas both on a local and global scale. Therefore, we frantically require individuals in each part of life and at all levels and ages who would think without box to recognize and seek after opportunities to

tackle issues, to come up with solutions and help to make a better world to live in and the competitive advantages gained through entrepreneurship cannot be achieved without effective communication skills, in particular, through the use of a language such as English. As a result, enterprises around the world have noted the importance of having a work pool that is able to communicate in the English language if they are to take advantage of the opportunities in the global market.

If we can take entrepreneurship as a teaching/education philosophy, we can help individuals to understand, develop, and practice the skills, techniques needed for productive entrepreneurship at all levels and areas.

EFL classes are the best places to develop both entrepreneurial mind-set and gain the necessary language skills to survive in today's extremely competitive world. EFL classes already offer precious opportunities to bring this vision to come true. Entrepreneurially designed & well-executed activities supported by alternative assessment techniques can turn EFL classrooms into active, safe and enjoyable places where learners can learn both entrepreneurial skills and the language they will need to use these skills in real world situations.

Teachers are in a central role in implementing entrepreneurial EFL classes and more importantly in finding the best practices. Therefore, it becomes clear that we need effective English language teachers who teach entrepreneurially by taking individual differences into account and focusing on performance based assessment instead of standardized curriculum and testing in order to prepare locally-thinking, globally-acting, creative, risk taking, critically thinking and socially responsible entrepreneurial individuals with a good command of English language. Therefore teacher education programs will be able to graduate effective entrepreneurial English language teachers who can produce proficient entrepreneurial English language speakers.

At first it may be challenging for EFL teachers to accept the notion of entrepreneurship and implement the new ideas of cultivating an entrepreneurial mind-set in the EFL classrooms. However, as pointed out, EFL teachers already implement the right activities necessary for cultivating entrepreneurial mind-set but they are not aware of this fact. Therefore, awareness is a necessity. The concept of an entrepreneurial mind-set is highly novel to the field of EFL since EFL teachers have primarily been focused on learners' language development. EFL learners' entrepreneurial mind-set, such as creativity, risk taking and problem-solving skills, has often been neglected due to the predisposed attention to their language development. Another challenge of developing an entrepreneurial mind-set is a lack of ELT (English Language Teaching) programs. In particular, teacher education programs in TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) usually tend to rely heavily on teaching methods of language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar) and not necessarily focus on developing skills in entrepreneurship. Therefore, it is time for TEFL teacher education programs to focus on cultivating entrepreneurial mind-set in preservice teacher education in order to train teachers already have this important mind-set and ready to practice entrepreneurial skills while teaching the English language.

Another important point is the transformation and redesign of EFL textbooks. EFL textbook writers should definitely need a paradigm shift to create activities to practice both the language and the entrepreneurial skills needed for an entrepreneurial mind-set.

To prepare global, creative, risk taking, critically thinking, and entrepreneurial individuals for our futures, EFL education systems in general and specifically EFL classes should not harm learners' curiosity, imagination, desire to be different by imposing out dated practices and assess them with standardized tests designed for one size fits all philosophy.

Education should be able to enhance human curiosity and creativity, encourage risk taking, and cultivate the entrepreneurial spirit. EFL classes and teachers are blessed to nurture these required vital skills. So let's be aware of the power of EFL, use and enjoy it for today and for the future of our nations.

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