Creative Classroom Climate Assessment for the Advancement of Foreign Language Acquisition

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Abstract. The creative process contributed greatly to the development of human civilization and society. But its relevance today has tendency to develop. Europe needs to boost its capacity for creativity and innovation for both social and economic reasons. That is why the Commission has adopted a proposal to declare 2009 the European Year of Creativity and Innovation.

The research indicates that creativity is central to language learning and language teaching as well. What is more, the creative strategies significant for learning a new language or trying to communicate in a foreign language are transferable skills that benefit other areas of learners' lives and society as a whole. The ability to communicate in several languages is a great advantage for individuals, organizations and companies. It breaks cultural stereotypes, encourages thinking "outside the box", and can help to develop innovative products and services. These are qualities and activities that have real economic value. The goal of education is to provide a country with skilled and creative people, capable not simply repeat what other generations have created but - are able to create something new. As creativity is essential in an increasingly competitive world, the ability to develop climate that nurtures creativity is crucial .However, it does not occur spontaneously: teachers need to take responsibility to establish the right environment and to incorporate a creativity strategy for better language performance.

The study aims to investigate the students' studying at the Lithuanian University of Agriculture perceptions of their classroom climate with regards to creativity. It uses the self-adapted questionnaire model relying on the works of Ekvall (1971, 1987, 1999), Isaksen (1995, 1998) and Amabile (1988, 1989, 1997) in order to establish to what extent the internal climate factors are favourable for the development of creativity. Creative climate has been extensively researched mostly from organizational perspectives whereas our investigation focuses on higher education settings .The research is based on the results of the creative classroom climate assessment questionnaire and provides some implications for supporting and encouraging the creative class climate to facilitate the advancement of foreign language teaching/learning.

***Key words**: creative climate, creativity, assessment, questionnaire, foreign language.*

Introduction

Much has been written about creativity in recent years as an essential constituent of the real life that allows personal growth and the development of culture and society. In the era of globalization it has been linked to its twin innovation since creativity brings new ideas, whereas innovation deals with practical application of them. The sustainable economic development can be reached only by creating and innovating new products, processes, and services.

The research carried out in the USA has revealed that creativity was included in the top five by corporate leaders as the most essential skill that employees needed to demonstrate (HR Focus, 2007). Egan's (2005) research on individual creativity within human resource development suggests that the fostering of creativity is a necessity, not an option, for most organizations interested in responding to:(a) advancing technology; (b) changing environment; (c) changing organizational structures or strategies; (d) overcoming competitors that improve their products, processes, and services; (e) evolving customer desires; and (f) evolving societies influenced increasingly by global issues and diversity.

In the framework of the Lisbon strategy innovation and knowledge have been recognized to be essential for the future of Europe as well. The European Association for Creativity & Innovation wants the European community to be of best creative and innovative practice by removing barriers for sustainable personal and societal fulfilment through innovation, jobs and wealth creation.

2009 the European Year of Creativity and Innovation offered initiatives highlighting the links between language and creativity since creativity is central to language learning. It focuses on the ability to communicate in several languages and emphasizes its great benefit for individuals, organizations and companies.

The creative strategies needed when learning a new language or trying to communicate in a foreign language are transferable skills which are useful in other areas of learners' lives and to society as a whole. Moreover, it breaks cultural stereotypes, encourages thinking "outside the box", and can help develop innovative products and services-qualities and activities that have real economic value.

Language and creativity are mental faculties which form part of the natural skills of human beings.

In business, multicultural and multilingual teams are often created to solve problems, find innovative solutions and develop new goods and services. This approach is based on the idea that those who speak several languages have a broader perspective which can lead to fresh and innovative approaches. Multicultural teams can bring different perspectives to problems, leading to new solutions that foster creativity and innovation. Lack of creativity in an organization leads to stagnation, which leaves it vulnerable to its competitors. Robbins (2000) suggests that successful organizations must foster innovation and creativity that are vital traits for any successful organization.

The researchers investigated how creative climate dimensions manifest themselves in an organisational setting. Much research has been done on organizational climate worldwide but there is a noticeable void when it comes to creative classroom climate in Lithuania.

In their publications Lithuanian scholars (Jucevičienė, 1996; Gečas, Jakubavičius, 2000; Janiūnaitė, Cibulskas, 2004; Jucevičius, 2007, Diržytė, Patapas, 2003) started analyzing corporate, innovative organization culture and organisational climate only in the past 10 years. However, no comprehensive research has been carried out on creative classroom climate assessment. Accordingly, we can assume that creative classroom climate is completely under-researched subject. A sense of urgency generated from our strive for perfection in developing creativity and belief that organizational descriptors and the same dimensions of creative climate can be identified, assessed and employed in educational settings as well. Therefore we undertook a study into creative classroom climate assessment for the advancement of foreign language acquisition.

The research aim: The aim of the present study is to assess the creative classroom climate and foresee all possible implications allowing teacher to facilitate the advancement of foreign language teaching/learning through advancement of creative climate.

The research object: the process of foreign language teaching and learning at the level of bachelor studies.

The research objectives to analyse scientific literature related to creative climate, to create an effective theory-based tool for the creative climate assessment, to analyse the obtained data and customize techniques for more effective foreign language acquisition.

The research methods: a review and analysis of related scientific literature , survey-questionnaire method to identify students' of Lithuanian University of Agriculture behaviours and perceptions of their classroom climate with regards to creativity, statistical and comparative analysis of the obtained findings.

Theoretical Background

Language use is a creative act. We transform thoughts into language that can be heard or seen and produce sentences and even long texts that we have never heard or seen before (Tsai and Fehér, 2003). By giving learners creative exercises, we get them to practice an important sub-skill of using a language: thinking creatively. Creative work in the language classroom can lead to genuine communication and co-operation. Learners use the language to do the creative task, so they use it as a tool in its original function. This prepares learners for using the language instrumentally outside the classroom. Creative tasks enrich classroom work, and they make it more varied and more enjoyable by employing individual talents, ideas and thoughts - both the learners' and the teacher's.

Creativity is complex; however the basic aspects of creativity can be grouped into four qualities:

Person - characteristics of creative people;
Process - preferences associated with aspects of the creative process;
Products - qualities of creative products;
Climate - factors in the environment which facilitate creative performance.

Since creative classroom climate is under-researched area and creativity is not something that can be 'turned on' at will, but rather by the result of long term exposure to an encouraging climate we focused our research on climate investigations.

The concept of organizational climate was first developed by Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939) .The objective was to identify and consider those climatic factors that influence organizational creativity. Thus, creative classroom climate, as it is considered in this paper, was not comprehensively discussed until the early 1970s, even though in the late 1940s K. Lewin introduced the idea of "social climates in the workplace".

Assessment of employee climate perceptions became increasingly interesting to organizational researchers only in the last 40 years. Various conceptualizations of climate were proposed by different authors:

Organizational climate is the set of characteristics that describe an organization and distinguish one organization from other organizations. It is relatively enduring over time and influence the behaviour of the people in the organization (Forehand & Gilmer, 1964).

Organizational culture is a relatively uniform perception held of the organization, it has common characteristics, it is descriptive, it can distinguish one organization from another and it integrates individual, group and organization system variables (Robbins, 1986).

Climate is an intervening variable that affects organizational and psychological processes which, in turn, affect the overall productivity and well-being of an organization. A number of factors affect climate (e.g., the external environment within which the organization operates, the resources available within the organization, its strategic positioning and architecture as well as its culture and leadership practices). As such, climate is an important variable in understanding organizational performance and change (Burke & Litwin, 1992; Schneider, Brief & Guzzo, 1996).

The one chosen as the basis for this research was developed by Tagiuri (1968). He claims that organizational climate is a relatively ending quality of the internal environment that is experienced by the members, influences their behaviour and can be described in terms of

values of a particular set of characteristics of the organization.

The term organizational climate refers to the psychological conditions prevailing in the organization. It involves behaviours, attitudes, and feelings that are common there. Climate acts its role by influencing organizational processes such as problem solving, decision making, planning, communication, coordination and controlling, motivation, and so on. Consequently, climate becomes a modifying force that can enlarge or reduce the effects of the organization's investments and operations and influence organizational outcomes. Situational realities influence the climate, but they also influence the organization's results of different kinds.

The organizational climate that stimulates creativity and innovation has been the object of three large research programs during the 1980s and 1990s, two in the United States and one in Europe (Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1989; Ekvall, 1971, 1987, 1999; Isaksen, 1995, 1998).

Goran Ekvall, professor emeritus of organisational psychology at the University of Lund, Sweden spent many years looking at the organisational climatic factors (or dimensions) which affect organisational creativity.

Based on the pioneering work of Goran Ekvall in Sweden it is now possible to quantify the climate for innovation. Ekvall's work has been further refined and validated by Scott Isaksen and his colleagues (Creative Climate Questionnaire; Isaksen, Lauer, Murdock, Dorval & Puccio, 1995) at the Center for Creative Studies, who have defined nine dimensions of the climate for innovation. These nine dimensions that our questionnaire is based on are:

1. *Challenge* (How challenged, how emotionally involved, and how committed am I to the work?)
2. *Freedom* (How free am I to decide how to do my job?)
3. *Idea Time* (Do we have time to think things through before having to act?)
4. *Idea Support* (Do we have a few resources to give new ideas a try?)
5. *Trust & Openness* (Do people feel safe in speaking their minds and openly offering different points of view?)
6. *Playfulness and Humour* (How relaxed is our workplace - is it OK to have fun?)
7. *Conflicts* (To what degree do people engage in interpersonal conflict or "warfare?")
8. *Debates* (To what degree do people engage in lively debates about the issues?)
9. *Risk-Taking* (Is it OK to fail when trying new things?)

Another instrument used to assess creative climate is KEYS: Assessing the Climate for Creativity. KEYS is an organizational survey that assesses the climate for creativity and innovation that exists within a work group, division or organization. Designed by the Centre for Creative Leadership and Teresa Amabile (1988), a Harvard Business School professor, KEYS measures the management practices that impact the workplace and encourage innovation. It is a 78-item paper-and-pencil survey each describing a characteristic of the work environment and scored on a numerical scale to rate the degree to which that characteristic describes the current work environment.

Currently the organizational climate measures are extensively used in public and private sector to determine the prevailing climate, often being called employee attitude surveys or employee opinion surveys. The identification of organizational climate is usually grounded by an aspiration to improve an organization.

A pioneer in the field of creativity is the International Centre for Studies in Creativity - a unique academic unit within Buffalo State, State University of New York. Since 1967, the ICSC analyses creativity utilizing diverse programs that cultivate skills in creative thinking, innovative leadership practices and problem solving techniques. ICSC enhances an individual's ability to imagine new ideas by learning to envision those that cannot immediately be seen.

Another institution -The Centre for Creative Leadership offers an exclusive focus on leadership education and research and unparalleled expertise in solving the leadership challenges of individuals and organizations everywhere. They equip clients around the world with the skills and insight to achieve more than they thought possible through creative leadership.

In Lithuania the roots of creativity and creative climate research lay approximately 10 years back. Creativity Development Centre started its work in 2003. They specialise in public and private training seminars, workshops, courses and seminars, educational publishing, scientific research, public projects, improving the business and living environment.

Centre for Creative Expression is active in Šiauliai region in Lithuania. It is a non-formal education organisation which educates active, tolerant, critical and learning youngsters. Organisation pays a lot of attention to the activities that contribute to the development of local community

Methods. Participants. The research carried out in the autumn of 2009 involved 90 first year students from the faculties of Economics and Management and Forestry and Ecology who had English as a compulsory subject. The students had English classes 3 hours a week.

Procedure. The participants of the present study were explained of the nature of their participation. All the participants were asked to complete the questionnaires independently focusing their responses on the perception of their immediate learning environment.

The self-adapted questionnaire model relying on the works of Ekvall (1971, 1987, 1999), Isaksen (1995, 1998) and Amabile (1988, 1989, 1997) was administered to identify to what extent the internal climate factors are favourable for the development of creativity. This foreign language classroom adapted questionnaire was similar to Ekvall's CCQ (Creative Climate Questionnaire) in that it contained 9 theoretical dimensions, however, our inventory is an 18-item self-report measure. Respondents were asked to express their agreement or disagreement with 18 statements. Rating system was on a 4-point scale:

1 = NOT AT ALL;
2 = LITTLE;
3 = SOMETIMES;
4 = OFTEN.

Every dimension that influences a creative climate has been investigated from both student and teacher based behaviour. Statistical analysis of the data has been performed to evaluate the factors and areas that can be improved and need more attention.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of the data has revealed some tendencies in the assessment of the creative classroom climate. The results presented in Figure 1 illustrate the differences in the creative climate assessment.

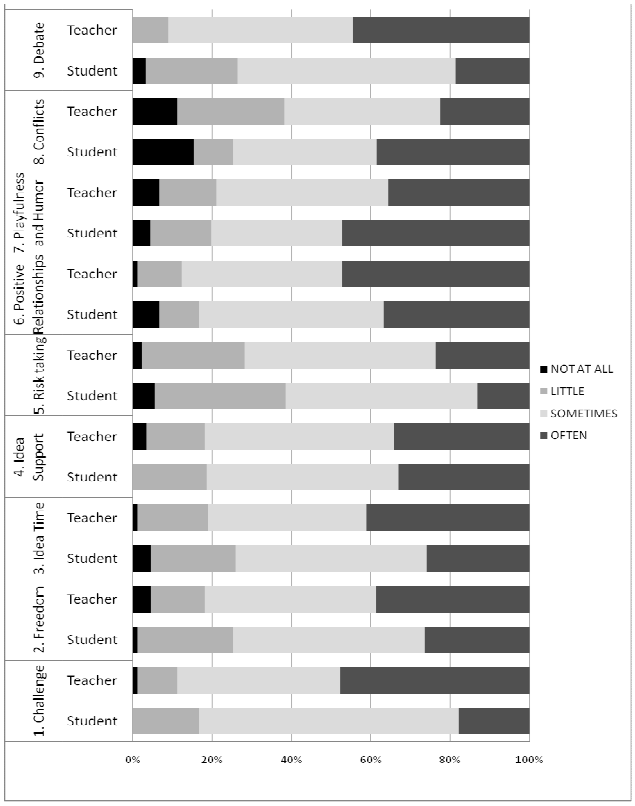

Figure 1. Results of the student/teacher behaviour based on creative classroom climate assessment questionnaire

As evidenced by Figure 1, the creative classroom dimensions have been rated positively- 03 and 4 (from 70% to 90%). However, the research data reveals a substantial difference in evaluating student and teacher behaviours that enhance the creative classroom climate. What is more, findings indicate that the role of the teacher in developing the creative classroom climate is rated higher in such dimensions as Challenge, Freedom, Idea Time, Risk Taking, Positive Relationship and Debate. It suggests that both teachers and students used behaviours are positively related to the creative climate in classroom settings. Students think that teachers contribute more in fostering debate and discussions, impose more challenge, encourage improvement and tend to set more long-term goals, encourage students to try new techniques and reward it. Teachers were scored slightly lower on the dimensions like Playfulness and Conflict. Moreover, we are pleased to find out that our students understand the role of the teacher and appreciate the efforts to develop a creative climate.

Bloom, Sosniak (1985) in a study of 120 immensely talented individuals found that no one reached the limits of learning in a talent field on his or her own. Families and teachers were crucial at every point along the way to excellence.

Consequently, it caused some questions: What can be done to shift student based behaviour to improve the creative climate in a class? How to involve students in their learning by requiring them to become active participants in affecting creative climate?

In order to shed light on what dimensions of the creative climate are not employed effectively findings on all 9 dimensions have been examined and compared separately.

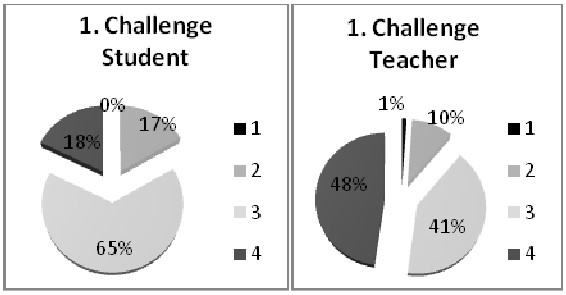

Figure 2. Challenge

Challenge is at the heart of a creative classroom at all levels of education .It provides open-ended problems that encourage creativity and motivate students to do their best. A challenge brings out the best in people and stimulates an individual's motivation to succeed. A strong sense of passion and individual commitment is necessary to achieve a creative solution. Task motivation has been identified as an essential element in creative performance. It makes the difference between what a person can do and what a person will do (Amabile, 1988). Students need to be involved in setting learning goals and perspectives, challenging problems that motivate to be creative.

Findings demonstrate that teachers often (48%) impose challenging tasks and focus on long-term goals, whereas students are sometimes (65%) involved in challenging tasks and are little (17%) motivated.

Many factors affect student motivation: interest in the subject matter, its usefulness, general desire to achieve, self-confidence and self-esteem, patience and persistence. Actually, not all students are motivated by the same values, needs or wants. Some of the students can be motivated by the approval of others, some by overcoming challenges.

Accordingly, teachers have to be flexible on thinking how to engage students in setting their own learning goals. Learning contracts or personal goal-setting can help some students recognize that they have a stake in their own learning as some students need challenge not easy success, whereas others need to feel a success. Researchers identify several aspects of the teaching situation that enhance student self-motivation (Lowman, 1984; Lucas, 1990; Weinert and Kluwe, 1987; Bligh, 1971).Relying on their recommendations we have decided to include more frequent, early, positive feedback that supports students'

beliefs that they can do well, to ensure opportunities for students' success by assigning tasks that are neither too easy nor too difficult and help students find personal meaning and value in the material.

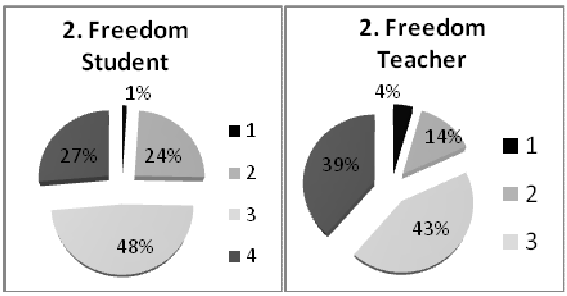

Figure 3. Freedom

Responsibility and freedom are concepts we must embrace if we are to teach young people to participate in our democracy. Therefore one of the focal issues of democratic education is freedom in the classroom. It includes freedom for the student to express himself, freedom to develop his unique abilities, freedom from autocratic imposition of subject-matter, autonomy to reach learning goals, sufficient opportunity to make his decision, finding information and showing initiative.

It's easy for teachers to be so organized and structured that students lose freedom, which in turn lowers the level of student responsibility and increases the teacher's responsibility. Is this the way we want it to happen?

A good teaching practice has to evoke a sense of achievement and progress in their students by facilitating learning through autonomy. Current research suggests that teachers often (39%) allow freedom, give students autonomy on finding information, choosing project goals and encourage initiative. On the other hand, only 27% of the students presume that they often use the autonomy, what is more, 24 % of the students answered that they have little freedom (Figure 3). Findings suggest that we have to provide more project-based, case-study and cooperative methods to facilitate freedom in a classroom understanding that autonomy is a cornerstone of academic freedom. These methods place the responsibility for learning on the student by encouraging him/her to find the answer to a problem rather than memorizing a teacher-given solution.

The results in Figure 4 show that both teachers (41%) and especially students (26%) are often impatient. Of course, most are driven by the need to have obvious results and fast improvement .In fact, growth cannot be put on such a strict timescale. Growth takes time. Growth is like the seed. It requires patience, water, food and more patience. Creativity takes time and risk - not magical inspiration.

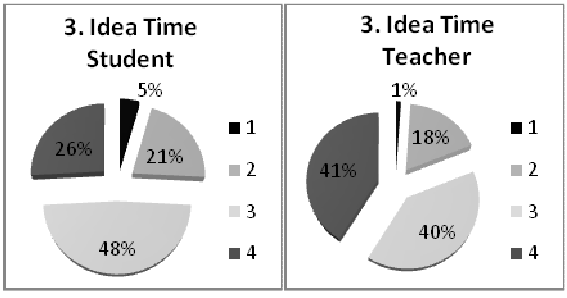

Figure 4. Idea Time

The research confirms that we have to give students more time. There is no need to rush if we want our students to exhibit the highest creative performance. The results could be better if a certain amount of extra time was allotted.

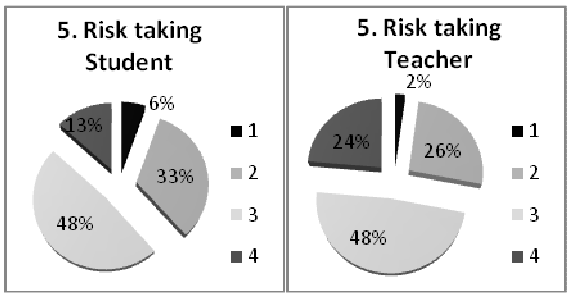

Figure 5. Risk Taking

The research clearly underlines the importance of encouraging students to take more risk since only 13% of the respondents often use new techniques and put forward new ideas with confidence, others are reluctant to use risky methods (Figure 5). Although the majority of the students are more comfortable with familiar tasks, the study suggests that including assessment that rewards students' efforts not just the result, if we are inclined to nurture creative climate and involve the students in risk taking activity, would be beneficial.

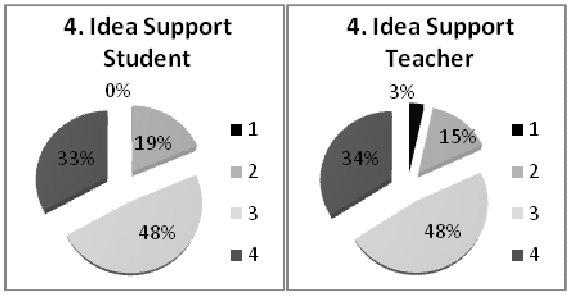

Figure 6. Idea support

Idea support also plays a very important role in developing and nurturing creativity. If you have innovative ideas, but just because other people are not supporting you, you may feel alone. If you want your students be creative some kind words of encouragement to go ahead with their ideas can improve the situation. In fact, there can be a variety of ways in which a teacher or colleague can give an idea support. A student can become highly motivated if you compliment his achievements more often, incorporate some favourable pair reviews and motivating chats in your class routine. The questionnaire showed that this dimension also has room for improvement. It manifested itself in student based behaviour the same as in teacher based behaviour. Thirty three per cent of the students report that they often get a support from colleagues; similarly 34 % of them are often and 48% are sometimes complimented, supported or encouraged by the teacher (Figure 6).

Establishing positive relationships in a classroom is an important pre-requisite to the effective classroom management and vice versa. Actually, one cannot be present without the other. When teachers demand respect without building positive relationships they run the risk of marginalising themselves within the classroom. This can

be done by: ignoring request for attention or information, allowing students to experience negative atmospheres, unnecessary interruptions, using sarcastic language to describe student's work, lack of empathy or understanding of feelings or being unfair.

Our study shows that both teachers and students are trying to maintain positive relationships even so teachers' contribution to building positive relationship got 47% of the highest rates, while students got only 37% of the highest evaluation (Figure 7).

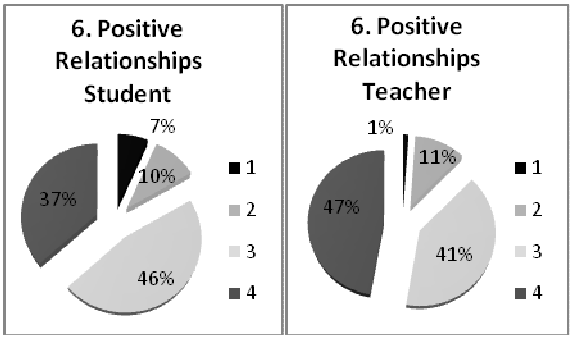

Figure 7. Positive relationships

It wasn't an effortless result, as we focused much on different aspects of building positive relationships. The first is punctuality. Teachers expect punctuality from their classes and should be punctual in return. It indicates respect and avoids being labelled as one who has double standards or hypocrisy. We try to avoid personal mannerisms and habits, to be fair and consistent, use an appropriate humour in the classroom.

Figure 8 illustrates the dimension of Playfulness and Humour and reveals that 80% of the respondents think that they study in a relaxed atmosphere and 79% of the students think that the teacher allows playfulness and humour in the classroom. Teachers who are open to laughing at their own mistakes are far more attractive than those who become defensive and cross when they err. Being comfortable and aware of limits in terms of student jokes is a useful attribute in developing the creative climate.

We demonstrate respect for students trying to avoid anger and unnecessary threats. It is fundamental that when threats or sanctions are called they are carried out. The research figures confirm that only 15 % of the students experienced student based conflicts and even less-11 % of them experienced teacher based conflict (Figure 9).

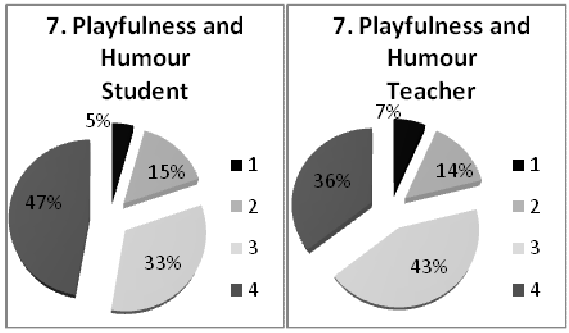

Figure 8. Playfulness and humour

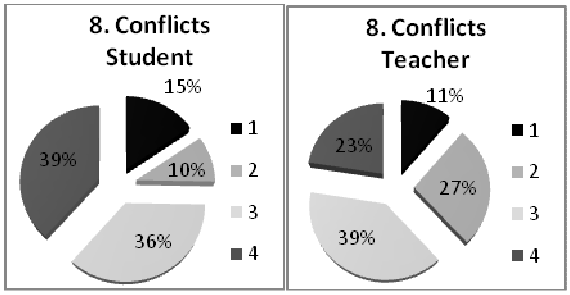

Figure 9. Conflicts

In order to avoid conflicts in future students must be aware of the connection between tasks and grades. Most inappropriate behaviour in the classroom that is not seriously disruptive can be managed by relatively simple procedures such as monitoring students carefully and frequently so that misbehaviour is detected early .Teachers should identify expectations for student behaviour and communicate those expectations to students periodically.

The questionnaire showed that we are on the right track.

In his book "Classroom Discipline Problem Solver" George Watson (1998) writes that in order to avoid conflict, a teacher himself has to now what he wants and what he doesn't want and show or tell the students what he wants. Secondly, when he gets what he wants, it is important to acknowledge (not praise) it but when he gets something else, he has to act quickly and appropriately. Moreover, good discipline is easier to maintain in the classroom setting where activities are structured or arranged to enhance cooperative behaviour. The results show that some students feel tension in the classroom so it is significant to pay more attention to the conflict management.

In spite of the fact that class discussions and debate offer opportunities for students to test their ideas and opinions against the ideas and opinions of their peers, students are reluctant to express their ideas in the classroom. Not surprisingly students rated teachers' efforts to disscuss and debate much higher (Figure 10).

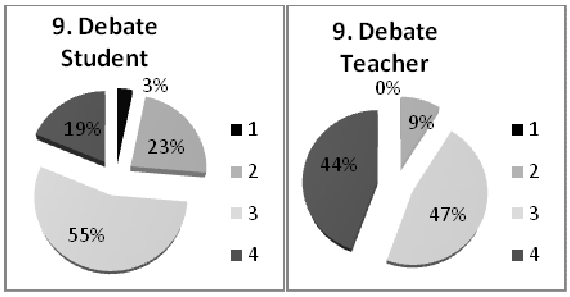

Figure 10. Debate

On the basis of the result analysis we can state that we need to create some strategies to foster more effective classroom discussions and debate. We think that in future it would be reasonable to let students know on the first day of the class that a significant portion of their final grade for the course will be based on how effectively they participate in class discussions, both in terms of the number of times they comment and in the quality of those comments. We even suggest that a teacher might even establish a class

rule not allowing student to say 'I don't know' in the class. Students are not required to know, but they are expected to think. So if a student is asked a question and he doesn't know the answer, he is responsible to think, to guess, to speculate, and to wonder aloud.

Conclusions

The present study has been successful in identifying the creative classroom climate and foreseeing possible implications allowing teacher to facilitate the advancement of foreign language teaching/learning through the advancement of creative climate.

The study reveals the Creative Climate Assessment Questionnaire is a good predictor of higher and lower creative climate in a foreign language classroom. Furthermore, findings show that classroom climate is favourable for the creative process and identifies the areas that must be taken into consideration to foster a more creative atmosphere in the classroom. The results suggest steps for developing a truly creative climate; however, questionnaire on its own is unable to indicate the extent of strengths/weaknesses without additional study and analysis.

From the research appears that in order to be creative, it needs to continuously implement many types of changes and technologies in response to the classroom needs.

- In order to provide more challenge to classroom teachers have to engage students in setting their own learning goals by using learning contracts, personal goal-setting, frequent and positive feedback that supports students' beliefs that they can do well, assigning tasks that are neither too easy nor too difficult and help students find personal meaning and value in the material.
- Findings suggest that we have to provide more project-based, case-study and cooperative methods to facilitate freedom in classroom .These methods place the responsibility for learning on the student by encouraging him/her to find the answer to a problem rather than memorizing a teacher-given solution.
- The results show that both teachers and students are often impatient. The research has confirmed that we have to give students more time if we want our students to exhibit higher creative performance.
- Although the majority of the students are more comfortable with familiar tasks, the study suggests that including assessment that rewards students' efforts not just the result, if we are inclined to nurture creative climate and involve the students in risk taking activity, would be beneficial.
- Teaching practice has to involve more encouragement for the students to go ahead with their ideas. In fact, there can be a variety of ways in which a teacher or colleague can give an idea support: compliment his achievements more often, incorporate some favourable pair reviews and motivating discussions in the class routine.
- Establishing positive relationships is an important pre-requisite to the effective classroom management. This can be done by: not ignoring students' request for attention or information and not allowing students to experience negative atmospheres, avoiding interruptions when the student hasn't finished, sarcastic language to describe the student or student's work, showing some empathy or understanding of their feelings and being fair.
- It is important to be open to playfulness and humour establishing a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.
- In order to avoid conflicts students must be aware of the connection between tasks and grades. Most inappropriate behaviour in the classroom can be managed by monitoring students carefully and frequently so that misbehaviour is detected early. Teachers should identify expectations for a student behaviour and communicate those expectations to students periodically.
- On the basis of the result analysis we can state that we need to create some strategies to foster more effective classroom discussions and debate. We think that in future it would be reasonable to let students know that a significant portion of their final grade for the course will be based on how effectively they participate in class discussions focusing on student responsibility to think, to guess, to speculate, and to wonder aloud.

In conclusion we can affirm that the research of the creative climate is vital for teachers, who seek perfection in developing creativity. Furthermore, it gives us insights into how we teach and how our students see it.

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Kūrybiškos aplinkos tyrimas tobulinant užsienio kalbų mokymą (si)

Santrauka

Gebėjimas kelti naujas idėjas, mąstyti savarankiškai, nestereotipiškai, greitai orientuotis sudėtingomis situacijomis, lengvai ir netipiškai spręsti problemas – savybės, be kurių žmonijos, visuomenės raida ir tobulėjimas nebūtų įmanomas. Šios savybės neprarado aktualumo ir šiandien. Daugelis žmonių iš prigimties yra kūrybingi, tačiau dėl netinkamo auklėjimo ir mokymo savo kūrybingumo neugdo. Siekdama atkreipti dėmesį į kūrybiškumo svarbą, Europos Komisija priėmė pasiūlymą paskelbti 2009 metus kūrybiškumo ir naujovių metais. Tyrimai rodo, kad kūrybingumas turi didelę įtaką kalbų mokymosi ir mokymo sėkmei. Gebėjimas bendrauti keliomis kalbomis yra didelis tiek atskirų asmenų, tiek ir organizacijų ar verslo bendrovių privalumas. Individas, mokantis bendrauti užsienio kalbomis, geba laužyti kultūrinius stereotipus, žvelgia į pasaulį plačiau, o tai padeda kurti naujus produktus ir paslaugas – realią ekonominę vertę. Švietimo tikslas – ugdyti kvalifikuotus ir kūrybingus darbuotojus, galinčius ne tik kartoti tai, ką sukūrė kitos kartos, bet ir gebančius kurti ką nors nauja. Ypač svarbu sukurti universitete aplinką, kurioje skatinamas kūrybiškumas. Tačiau tai nevyksta savaime: dėstytojas turi prisiimti atsakomybę, kurdamas kūrybingumui palankią aplinką ir įtraukti kūrybingumo skatinimo strategijas į kalbų mokymo perspektyvas. Tyrimo tikslas – ištirti ir įvertinti kūrybiškos aplinkos buvimą ar nebuvimą aukštojo mokslo erdvėje. Tyrime dalyvavo Lietuvos žemės ūkio universiteto 1 kurso studentai, besimokantys užsienio kalbos, ir buvo panaudotas savarankiškai pritaikytas klausimyno modelis , sukurtas remiantis G. Ekvall, S. Isaksen ir T.M. Amabile darbais. Atlikus apklausą bei rezultatų analizę buvo nustatyti veiksniai, darantys teigiamą įtaką kūrybiškai aplinkai, numatytos gairės bei sukurta strategija kūrybinei aplinkai skatinti mokant/is užsienio kalbų.

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