

## TEACHERS' CREATIVE DISPOSITION AND THE MANAGEMENT OF ENVIRONMENT IN THE ENGLISH CLASS

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this paper is to explore the problem of creativity in the language class, seen from two perspectives – that of the role of the teacher`s creative disposition, on the one hand, and that of the management of classroom environment, as a prerequisite for creativity development, on the other hand. The study had in view 46 teachers of English in a Romanian context. The instruments of research were the questionnaire and the sentence completion sentences. Results revealed that although all respondents acknowledged the importance of creativity in the language teaching-learning process, their disposition of being creative and offering opportunities for students to display creative potential is affected by various factors that sometimes can become even constraints for the generation of creativity.*

**Key words:** creative disposition, creativity, management of environment, teachers, the English class

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### 1. Creativity in the teaching-learning process

“Teaching creatively can improve the quality of education, make learning more meaningful and open up more exciting ways of approaching the curriculum”.

(Beetlestone, 1998, p. 1)

Creativity is a multi-faceted concept whose definition and interpretation encapsulate various mental and practical activities, processes and skills. It has always been associated with what is new and valuable (Sternberg & Lubart, 1995). Nowadays education considers creativity as an

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absolute must (Pugliese, 2016, p. 19). Its definition ranges on a continuum, from that of a state, to that of a product, of a set of skills and, finally, to that of a dynamic action. Thus, creativity is a “state of mind” (Xerri & Vassallo, 2016, p. 4); an act of thinking “outside the book” (Formosa & Zammit, 2016, p. 25); “a habit that adults can encourage in children or in themselves”(Sternberg, 2006, p. 20); a potential to do things differently (Xerri & Vassallo, 2016, p. 4); a product of creative thinking or personal qualities (Sternberg, 1999); a “cluster of skills” that help teachers and students organize ideas and activities in order to “create” a product (Sternberg and Lubart, 1995); “the production” of something new (thoughts, solutions, or products) that is supported by already acquired knowledge and practised activities; an activity that presupposes rearranging or regrouping already existing elements - ideas, activities, tasks - (Koestler, 1964, p. 120). The ideas were very well summed up by Fisher (2004, p. 8) in his own definition of creativity, as “a property of people (who we are), processes (what we do) or products (what we make).” Beetlestone (1998, p. 6) defines creative teaching as “a complex interplay between the child, the teacher and the context.”

On the one hand, literature in the field has operated a distinction between teaching creatively (a process that highlights teachers` creativity in the process of designing lessons, using methods, strategies, procedures, and performing activities in the classroom) and teaching for creativity (a process through which teachers and the teaching process help students to develop their own creative potential – their creative thinking and abilities). Both processes start from the three premises that underpin the approach of creativity in education: 1) all individuals have the potential to be creative; 2) creativity can be developed; 3) creativity is affected by psycho-physical environment of the learner (Rashmi, 2012, p. 191).

On the other hand, literature has brought into light several elements that need to be taken into view when analysing creativity and its development: the teacher and his activity (the qualities that creative teachers possess as well as the way they apply creativity in the teaching process – Richards, 2013, p. 19), the students and the classroom environment. Sternberg and Lubart (1995) identified six resources they consider essential for creativity: intelligence, knowledge, thinking styles, personality, motivation, and environment. Souza Fleith`s interviews with teachers on the topic of creativity (2000), highlight this idea very well; interviewed teachers linked creativity to process (including the teachers` activity in the class, thinking style, different approaches, techniques and tasks), to person (the student and his personality, knowledge, motivation and thinking style) and to classroom environment. The interdependence of these elements is undeniable; it is also necessary, as generally, creativity is linked to risk-taking (Smith, 1991).

This idea leads to the concept of supportive classroom environment, as guarantee for the development of creativity in classes, as well as to that of the role of the teacher in the classroom. According to Sternberg (2006, p. 16), role modelling creativity (showing students how to become creative) represents the most powerful way of developing creativity in students.

## 2. Review of literature

Narrating his experience with language learning and language teaching, Thornbury (2016, p. XIII), mentioned:

*...there is an inherent tension in language teaching between conformity and creativity. My initial training erred on the side of the former, where language learning was all about conforming to existing patterns and models and where creativity, if it was encouraged at all, seemed seriously constrained.*

Thornbury`s words might be a good departure point for the analysis we are going to conduct, as they highlight at least four important ideas: a) the teaching process has to conform to normative rules; b) creativity has its place in teaching; c) creativity needs to be encouraged; d) there exist certain constraints that act upon creativity. The idea of the tension between conformity (the idiom principle – Sinclair, 1991) and creativity (the open choice principle – Sinclair, 1991) was also present in Bakhtin`s writings (Xerri & Vassallo, 2016, p. XIV) and it is still present in the mind of nowadays teachers who often wonder how they could cope with the necessity of fulfilling the obligations brought by the curriculum and, yet, allow time for creativity in the class. Analysing the relation between conformity and creativity, Bakhtin reached the conclusions that they are not antithetical and that conformity represents a precondition for creativity.

According to AlKhars (2013, p. 115), teachers can be creative in many ways. He considers that:

*It is possible for a teacher to have an integration of many sides of creativity because a teacher can be creative language-wise, method-wise, and/or learners` treatment-wise ...*

Studies on the topic have revealed that teachers need to have a desire/disposition to come up with something new, to do things differently and develop in students both creative thinking and creative skills. Teacher`s disposition also means (Sternberg, 2006) offering help to students so that they can make connections between subjects and disciplines, allowing students time to think creatively, assessing for creativity, rewarding creativity, allowing for mistakes and encouraging creative collaboration. In Sternberg & Lubart`s conception (1996), the teacher`s disposition also

includes willingness to overcome obstacles, to be open to new challenges and offer an attitude of support, understanding and appreciative evaluation. Putman and Burke (1992) identified four types of dispositions: instructional leadership (motivating students to work), a developmental perspective (finding and supporting potentialities in students), cooperative disposition (teaching students to cooperate with each other) and reflective orientation (reflection upon human cognition processes and upon disruptions of student behaviour).

Teachers also need a set of qualities characterized by aspects of abilities and cognition (Richards, 2013, pp. 4-10). Some authors consider that the teacher's work on creativity should start with the stage of planning the lesson and establishing clear and well-defined goals, as planning the activity and creating the proper conditions for its development are very important. In the classroom, creativity represents any activity, task, or exercise that is planned by the teacher with a "legitimate" (Richards, 2013, p. 5) goal in mind, according to the students' age, level of study, interests and preferences. Their proper selection (Shapiro, 1993) is a necessary element, as they can create a positive classroom climate. Some other authors (Robinson, 2001) consider that too much concern with objectives instead of attention given to broader educational aims would rather suppress creativity than develop it. Choosing appropriate teaching methods and strategies is equally important. Many of the methods that teachers can use nowadays release creativity in students. Among the most successful, from this perspective, Richards (2013, p. 19) mentions the ones that involve student-centredness, the interaction between them, as well as those which are based on open-ended elements. The tasks teachers offer to students should promote creative responses (Dörnyei, 2001). Thus, they should be challenging (allowing students to discover something, finding new information, making connections between information) and interesting (able to motivate students for further study of the topic). They should include elements connected to the students' own experience, concerns, likes and dislikes; they should bring elements of surprise and encourage risk-taking from the part of the students (in thinking and acting differently, or in learning how to cope with newness and avoid failure). Tasks should also encourage originality and travelling to fantasy worlds.

Creative activities are meant to develop students' creative thinking. This involves "a focus on exploring ideas, generating possibilities, looking for many right answers ... and sharing of results" (Papalazarou, 2015, p. 37). According to Greenfield (2014), creative thinking can be fostered with the right classroom environment. AlKhars (2013, p. 115) considers that creativity is integrated; this means that it involves at least three components at work: "language, material and

dealing with children.” This would not be possible, according to Richards (2013, p. 4), without teachers` having such qualities (Table 1).

Table 1. Qualities of teachers (Richards, 2013)

<b>Conceptual category</b>	<b>Descriptor</b>
being knowledgeable	having knowledge about the language and the subject
being non-conformists	offering lessons that reflect their individual style
being familiar to a variety of teaching strategies and techniques	breaking with routine and choosing an eclectic method that fits to students` needs and encourage their generation of ideas
being risk-takers	trying out new strategies, new ways of solving problems, “rethinking and revising”, providing innovative practices, engaging students in interesting projects
being willing to offer learner-centred lessons	allowing students to express their thoughts, to act freely and take responsibility for what they are doing; offering them opportunities to explore and to develop high-level thinking
being reflective	asking themselves questions about their way of teaching, trying to find better solutions, strategies and techniques for the following classes, so as to contribute to the development of multiple intelligences

Creative teachers are open to new experiences, confident and flexible. They are good observers and evaluators (of individual students, of their students` needs, interests and hobbies - Alkhars, 2013, p. 126), they manifest creative thinking, make new connections “often between apparently unrelated data” (Maley, 2015, p. 10) and also use technology, while trying to motivate students and encourage “deep learning rather than surface learning” (Richards, 2013, p. 16), as well as effective generation of ideas. Other researchers mentioned that creative teacher`s attitude and behaviour also include offering convergent and divergent tasks and a higher rate of positive evaluation (Furman, 1998 in Czarniecki, 2009, p. 44). Their activity in the classroom needs to be analysed in close connection with the classroom environment. Studies in the classroom have proved that “students` creative abilities and teachers` professional abilities are interrelated” (Lapėnienė & Dumėcienė, 2012, p. 356).

Literature shows that students will give creative answers, will generate creative ideas and valuable products if they feel motivated to accept what is new or different, if they are ready to take risks despite their possible failure, to work accordingly and find satisfaction in their final creative products. Creative students are those who enjoy activities that stir their imagination, their

free flexible thinking, making associations between things; they also love having fun while learning; in fact,

*This playful attitude seems to be one of the essential characteristics of creativity, and is especially important when applying creativity to teaching and learning (Cook, 2000).*

Students have the possibility of becoming more creative if they are given the opportunity to work on tasks that bring to life their own thoughts and experiences “while experimenting and expanding on the language they need to do this” (Rosenberg, 2015, p. 123). They also need to feel encouraged, appreciated, to work in an atmosphere of trust and encouraged self-esteem (Boonchan, Pupat, Seesan, 2015, p. 2243). This atmosphere is created by teacher-student relationship, which ensures what Torrance and Mayers (1970) called the “responsive” classroom environment. Such type of environment can stimulate, in its turn, the students` intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation plays a crucial role in creative classes; it finds support in teachers` encouragement and praises of students` efforts and products. At the same time, it can find support in the students` abilities of collaborating and supporting each other, sharing ideas and experience, accepting differences and diversity in thinking, culture and behaviour.

According to Sternberg (2006), the ideal environment is the one in which students may think, act and learn; it also presupposes “intra- and inter-group interactions, leadership, organisational structure, competition and cohesion” (Daniel Xerri & Odette Vassallo, 2016, p. 6). Analysing classroom environment, Thompson and Wheeler (2008) identify a) intellectual environment (standards, expectations, objectives, learning strategies, assessment); b) physical environment (space, noise, furniture arrangement, personal space, area for student`s work, etc.); c) emotional environment (feelings of safety, trust, support, mutual understanding and respect). The classroom environment that increases creativity is supportive and motivational.

Fleith`s analysis of teachers interviews on the problem of classroom environment revealed that teacher` attitudes, strategies and activities constitute important elements in creating a classroom activity in which creativity develops. He insists on the necessity of an open attitude from the part of the teacher, an attitude that offers students the possibility to think, to make choices, to develop their self-confidence and to become aware of their creativity (Czarniecki, 2009, p. 36). A creative environment is the one in which students feel safe when expressing thoughts and when acting; it is the environment that ensures “constructive support” from the part of the teacher (Thompson and Wheeler, 2008). The environment must also provide adequate resources to help students foster their own creativity (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009, in Eshunet & al. 2013, p. 145). In Sternberg & Lubart`s opinion (1995), the environmental context stimulates creativity in three

specific ways (*levels*): a) “sparking” creative ideas; b) encouraging follow-up of creative ideas; c) evaluating and rewarding creative ideas. Changing classroom setting is useful, as it offers students an increased sense of something done in a different way.

Among the factors that suppress creativity in the classroom, literature mentions lack of teachers` flexibility (over-reliance on strategies, methods and techniques that proved successful over years), lack of willingness to accept new experiences, to make something differently while exploring the unknown (Xerri & Vassallo, 2016, p. 4) and to overcome possible obstacles (Sternberg, 1999). Other constraints are linked to working in unsupportive environments (Pugliese, 2016, p. 22), curricular constraints and students` fear of acting freely or their lacking motivation.

Our research questions were:

1. What is the Romanian teachers` opinion about creativity in the English class?
2. To what extent do they use the intellectual environment in the English class in order to foster creativity?
3. To what extent do they use the physical environment in the English class in order to foster creativity?
4. To what extent do they use the emotional environment in the English class in order to foster creativity?
5. What are, in their opinion, the constraints upon creativity in language teaching?

### **3. Research methodology**

#### ***3.1. Participants***

The study was conducted in one phase. Forty-six Romanian teachers of English were sent the questionnaires via e-mail. Respondents were former BA students or MA students of “Vasile Alecsandri” University of Bacău, Romania. 43 participants (all female) to the study have been teaching English for more than five years, and only three of them have an experience of less than five years. They teach different grades, ranging from 0 (the first grade in primary school) to 12 (the last grade in high-school). Their class/ grade distribution is seen in the following chart 1.

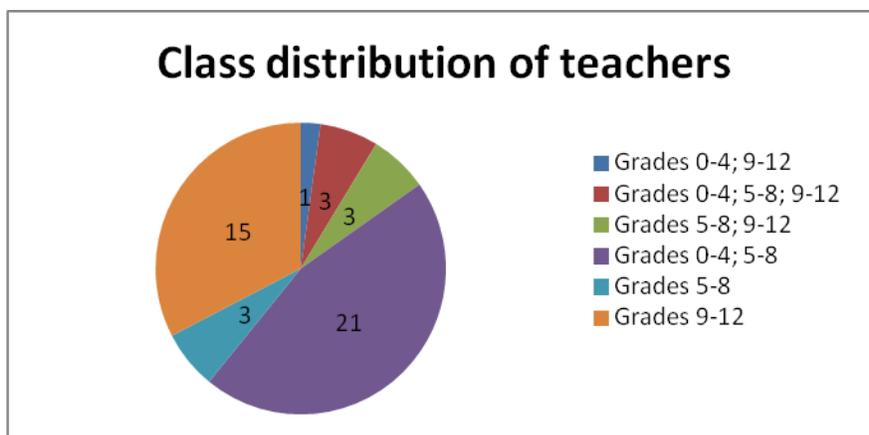


Chart 1. The distribution of the group of participants

### **3.2. Procedures and data collection**

In order to find the answers to our research questions, the teachers were asked to complete two classroom environment questionnaires. The first questionnaire consisted in four statements regarding creativity in the English class, the possible answers ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The second questionnaire was divided into three subsections that detailed upon the manner in which the teachers use creativity in the classroom, developing on the frequency with which they manage different environments (intellectual, physical or emotional) meant to generate creativity. Two sentence completion tasks were the second requirement for the teachers. They had to state their perceptions of creativity and of the possible constraints upon creativity.

### **3.3. Instruments**

For the questionnaires, we applied the five-point Likert scale, calculating the median (Mdn) and Inter-Quartile Range (IQR) of each item. The sentence completion tasks were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively, by means of conceptual categories. The discussion was based on casual and functional relationships established between categories.

### **3.4. Data analysis**

The analysis of the first questionnaire revealed the fact that most respondents indicated agreement (Mdn = 5, IQR = 1) with the following four items suggested:

1. Teaching and learning a foreign language are two processes that involve creativity.
2. A creative classroom environment is necessary.
3. Creativity should be integrated in every aspect (grammar, vocabulary, skills) of the language practice.

4. Creativity should be integrated at every level of students` experience.

The second questionnaire was based on an extended, answer-diversified version of Thompson`s and Wheeler`s sub-divisions of the classroom environment (Thompson`s and Wheeler, 2008, in Eshun et & al. 2013, p. 145): intellectual environment, physical environment and emotional environment.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. *The relationship between creativity and the intellectual environment*

As far as *the intellectual environment* is concerned, creativity seems to be most often fostered by the appeal to student`s imagination. The great majority of teachers (71,73%) very often *encourage students to express their ideas freely* (Mdn = 5, IQR = 1) and they very often *appreciate students` flexible thinking* (63,04%) (Mdn = 5, IQR = 1). Despite that, the great majority (56,52%) only often *creates opportunities for students to put their ideas into practice*, while 26,08% very often does so and 17,39% sometimes (Mdn = 5, IQR = 1). Almost the same distribution concerns the frequency with which teachers *give students freedom in the way of working/performing different tasks*: 56,52% often, 23,91% very often (Mdn = 5, IQR = 1).

An almost equal percentage of teachers often (50%) and very often (43,47%) *try to introduce elements of novelty in their activities* (Mdn = 4, IQR = 1). However, the frequency with which *they offer their students motivating tasks* differs (Mdn = 5, IQR = 1): 54,34% often, 30,43% very often and 10,86% only sometimes. The greatest difference between the respondents (Mdn = 4, IQR = 2) resides in the frequency with which the teachers *create opportunities for students to initiate activities*. Although the majority (58,69%) stated that they often do so, a significant percentage (26,08%) answered that they only sometimes create these opportunities.

### 4.2. *Creativity and the physical environment*

The lively atmosphere created by the teachers is the most frequently used instrument of creativity (Mdn = 5, IQR = 1). The lively atmosphere is very often created by 60,86% of the teachers, and often by 39,14%. Another element that helps triggering a creative atmosphere in the English class is *the use of jokes and games*. The frequency with which the teachers make use of jokes and humour, on the one hand, and of games during activities, on the other hand, varies significantly (Mdn = 4, IQR = 2). Thus, jokes and humour are very often used by 36,95%, often by the same percentage, sometimes by 21,73% and rarely by 4,34%. Games are very often used by 47,82%, often by 23,91%, sometimes by the same percentage and rarely by 4,34%.

The least frequent means of *creating a proper interactional context* (Mdn = 3, IQR = 2) is *through furniture arrangement*, 50% of the teachers only sometimes arranging furniture differently for the English class.

#### **4.3. Creativity and the emotional environment**

The great majority of respondents (76,08%) very often do the following to ensure a creative classroom atmosphere:

- offer support and positive feedback to students;
- establish a positive relationship with students in the classroom;
- encourage students' strengths and interests;
- help students build self-confidence and self-esteem.

There is no significant difference in the frequency of all these actions (Mdn = 5, IQR = 1). As far as the first sentence completion task (*In my opinion, creativity in language teaching is.....*) is concerned, the following ideas were underlined by respondents.

##### *a) Creativity in language teaching*

School is very often seen as a burden; therefore, teachers have to find newer and newer ways of catching the students' attention. Thus, out of the total of 46 teachers, 26,08% admitted that creativity is *something important and necessary when teaching a foreign language*, as creativity in language-teaching *leads to an increased level of interest and involvement during classes*.

b) The teacher's disposition of working differently (out of routine, rethinking material, tasks, strategies and activities) is a necessary ingredient in the classroom.

Respondents considered that teachers need to be open to variety and willing to try things they have never done before.

##### *c) Creativity as an ability*

28,20% of the respondents answered that, in their opinion, creativity is the ability to detach from the curriculum boundaries and make the English classes interesting, rendering the learning process meaningful and appealing at the same time, through interesting and challenging activities that:

- exploit students' creativity (a thing that proves the dynamic process that takes place in the classroom: from teaching creatively to teaching for creativity);
- increase students' intrinsic motivation;

- provide students with flexible skills they need for the future (risk-taking, discovering patterns, problem-solving);
- encourage students to take part in the activities performed in the class;
- help students to cope with novel and unpredictable experiences;
- help students to reflect on their own life experiences or imagine situations in order to solve tasks;
- get students fully engaged in the activity they are doing;
- allow students the freedom to find their own way of learning the language;
- enhance students` self-confidence and self-esteem;
- motivate students and establish good relationships between the teacher and the students, as well as among students themselves.

An equal percentage (19,56%) sees creativity as either a process or an instrument.

*d) Creativity as a process*

As a process, creativity means making use of a wide range of resources and skills meant to stir and develop students` creative personality, such as:

- new and interesting materials, in order to stimulate their interest, to encourage students to express their thoughts, to stir their curiosity and make them express freely about a subject;
- diverse methods, techniques, sources, resources used in an innovative way (as almost every student can be creative if he is engaged in creative situations by means of creative teaching strategies and methods);
- innovative tasks that boost students` creativity;
- games that motivate students and stir their interest;
- activities that allow students think on their own and make them share their opinions and beliefs;
- activities that involve drawing, singing, acting, activities that allow students have fun;
- support for new ideas;
- praise for original, creative products;
- an atmosphere that offers trust and support;
- the teacher`s sensitivity to students` interests.

*e) Creativity as a tool*

As an instrument, creativity means helping students:

- to learn in a joyful atmosphere;
- to increase their motivation, self-awareness and self-esteem;
- to express themselves in their unique and particular way
- to think on their own and express themselves freely;
- to think divergently;
- to provide original products.

Similar to this idea of creativity as an instrument is what 6,52% of the respondents believe that creativity is: the art of stirring the students' interest.

f) Creativity as a challenge - it means trying to do new things in the classroom, besides the activities included in the textbook, even though through this, teachers have to face many risks

g) Creativity is a matter of choice - as one of the respondents mentioned, when talking about teaching vocabulary and grammar creatively:

*In my opinion, creativity in language teaching is the manner in which a teacher chooses to teach language: by structures; by context or by bringing reality to the classroom.*

The second sentence completion task dealt with the factors that may constrain teachers' creativity in language teaching (*In my opinion, creativity in language teaching is constrained by...*).

**4.4. Factors of constraint**

The analysis of the respondents' answers revealed five main factors of constraint: students, time, the educational system, availability of resources, physical setting.

*a) Students*

73,91% of the respondents identified students as the first constraint. Their detailed comments mentioned:

- the large number of students in the classrooms (Romanian classes are very large and it is very difficult to work with more than 30 students in the classroom);
- students' behaviour (disruptive behaviour – triggered, sometimes, by the large number of students who cannot be kept fully attentive);

- students` lack of confidence and students` fears (fear of using the foreign language, of making mistakes while using it; fear of expressing ideas freely; fear of being mocked at when trying to be original);
- students` proficiency in English (homogeneous classes and the students` level of knowledge do not always allow for different types of creative activities);
- students' lack of motivation;
- students` lack of previous experience with doing things in a different way.

*b) Time*

For 32,60% of the respondents, time was considered an important constraint; respondents mentioned:

- teachers` lack of time to prepare for new, original activities (as the teaching load includes many hours per week and, at the same time, the fact that besides teaching, teachers are involved in many other time-consuming activities at school level);
- the little amount of time spent with the students (generally, two hours per week for English classes, during which, teachers need to cope with over-loaded curricular requirements)

*c) The educational system*

28,26% of the respondents considered the educational system as a limitation to creativity because of:

- the curriculum (that does not allow for flexibility from the part of the teachers);
- the textbooks;
- their own workload;
- the numerous extra tasks to perform.

*d) Availability of resources - especially of multi-media resources*

28,26% of the respondents linked the creative aspect of their lessons to the existence of available modern, appropriate material to be used in the classroom.

*d) Physical setting*

10,86% of the respondents – especially those who linked creative activities to the use of games in the classroom, mentioned the physical setting among constraints of creativity. They referred, especially, to their *little possibility to change classroom furniture arrangement* in order to allow students to create effective interactions and to move around while performing different tasks or playing different games.

## 5. Discussion

As mentioned above, the greatest percentage of the teachers believe that creativity is an ability to make the English class appealing, a fact which becomes compulsory in the context in which the biggest constraint upon creativity is considered to be the students. This is consistent with what the respondents answered in connection to the intellectual environment, they (very) often giving students freedom of expressing their ideas while performing different tasks. It is also consistent with the idea of teachers` trying to take advantage of and to create opportunities for students to assume risks in giving answers, working on their own and relating their life experiences in front of the others, when connecting them to textbook topics (as a feature of learner-centred lessons - Richards, 2013, p. 10).

According to respondents, creativity also means choosing the appropriate strategies, methods and techniques that stimulate convergent and divergent thinking. One of the most appropriate techniques is that of offering students various opportunities of expressing their feelings, of reporting life events, of proving their creative abilities. However, there can be noticed that a significant number of respondents only *sometimes* create opportunities for students to initiate activities, and this can be explained by the fact that one of the main factors constraining creativity, in the respondents` opinion, is students` behaviour. On the one hand, they consider that allowing disruptive students to initiate activities may be counterproductive. On the other hand, in the same context of students being depicted as a constraining factor, creativity in the emotional environment totally focuses on students, on offering support to them, on encouraging their strengths and interests, on helping them build self-esteem. All teachers considered that creativity in language teaching is a must. The answers underline the teachers` belief that teaching a language needs creative teachers, fresh environments, creative tasks and materials. Creative teaching is considered as being based on flexibility, diversity and learner-centredness.

Respondents acknowledged the necessity of teachers` disposition towards breaking with routine in the classroom. This proves their conception that teachers` creative dimension is not enough; willingness of putting the creative potential into practice is necessary, too. Creativity also means, according to the answers received, the ability to detach from the curriculum boundaries, an opinion which complies with the fact that teachers often introduce new and motivating tasks and activities in their English class. They admit this is something that is quite hard to achieve and mentioned the educational system (with concern on book learning, exam-oriented results and test scores) as one of the main factors constraining creativity. They also admit that a more flexible curriculum is needed, as a pre-condition for passing from the scenario-type of lesson to that in

which originality and creativity find their well-deserved place. At the same time, creativity is perceived by the teachers enquired as an important process in teaching a foreign language, which implies the use of varied resources, relating to what the teachers answered in relation to the physical environment. Be it a lively atmosphere created by the teachers or the actual use of jokes and games in the English class, they all contribute to stirring and developing students' creative personality.

Creativity is, in the respondents' opinion, the ability to be original, *to solve problems in original and valuable ways that are relevant to goals*. In other words, the teachers enquired believe that creativity means the ability to transform a dull lesson into an attractive one while playing with ideas, tasks (that are linked to students' needs and interests), imagination and fun (through songs or games). An atmosphere dominated by attractiveness, freedom of expression and joyfulness stimulates both teachers and students, determining full implication in the on-going lesson, as well as looking-forwardness for the next class.

What was most surprising for us, the researchers, were three things:

1. the respondents gave too much credit to the necessity of using modern/multi-media resources in the classroom, considering them as indispensable for creative practice. This is why they suggest that lack of resources can be a constraint on creativity. In our opinion, resources are important, but not indispensable. We also think that creative practice may be based on tasks and activities in which "old" things are approached in a new way, a technique being replaced by a new one, which stirs creativity.
2. the respondents linked creativity, too much, to the use of games and songs in the classroom. We consider that this is also wrong and the idea is already present in literature: "creativity does not mean just the fun element added to the lesson". (Formosa & Zammit, 2016: 28)
3. the respondents did not mention anything about creativity in terms of product (the type of the finished product, its qualities, or the way in which it is evaluated by teachers). This denotes the fact that respondents, focusing only on the other two aspects of creativity in language teaching (the people and the process), do not encourage students in their activity and do not ensure further creative activity.

Despite the fact that the physical setting is mentioned by the respondents as a constraining factor on creativity, the great majority of the respondents "only sometimes" change the physical environment in order to create a proper interactional context through furniture arrangement. This was a little bit weird, and it needs to be explained. Many classrooms in Romania are still

equipped with fix desks. This does not allow for any change in the classroom furniture arrangement during activities that require a change of interaction types or movement while students are working. Nevertheless, in big cities and new schools, this type of furniture is no longer in use. Most schools are provided with movable tables and chairs. In this context, changing furniture need not be a problem. Yet, the respondents do not seem to do it very often.

## **6. Conclusions**

The paper aimed at identifying the teachers` creative disposition and the management of environment in the English class. Participants to the study have proved disposition in the direction of unlocking creativity, by setting into motion the elements of three types of environment: intellectual, physical and emotional. Within the intellectual environment, they encourage students to express their ideas freely, appreciate students` flexible thinking, try to introduce elements of novelty in their activities and offer their students motivating tasks. Teachers also proved disposition to use new and interesting materials, to offer students innovative tasks, to use modern techniques and strategies

In the physical environment, the most frequently used instrument for developing creativity proved to be the teachers` disposition of creating a lively atmosphere, while the least frequently used instrument was creating a proper interactional context through furniture arrangement. The emotional environment is ensured by the disposition to create a positive relationship with students, a relationship that contributes to students` development of creativity, self-awareness, self- confidence and self-esteem.

Yet, research participants have identified various constraints in developing creativity (students, time, educational system, lack of materials, physical setting) which they try to overcome as much as possible, as they acknowledged that 1) both teaching and learning involve the creativity component (at every level of students` experience); 2) a creative environment is necessary; 3) intellectual, physical and emotional environments are equally important in developing creativity.

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