Research Article

The Motivational Force of Employing Literature in a Foreign Language Classroom

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Abstract

Abs Changing motivational patterns in a FL classroom environment have prompted teachers to utilise as many inventive ideas and tools as possible. This paper points out that importance and significance of employing literature when teaching English to university students. Literature is mainly characterised with regard to its relevance, emphasising the fact that contemporary and modern literary tests serve the methodological purpose most profoundly. However, the use of fairy-tales strongly supports the argumentation of the L2 motivational self system, thus resulting in several aspects of literary genres. This paper aims to highlight one of the most significant motivational theories underlining the validity and merits of applying literature, especially fairy-tales in order to enhance and improve students' attitudes and motivation when learning a language.tract text

Keywords: motivation, literature, language learning, fairy-tale

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Introduction

Proficiency in English has become an indispensable tool for university students pursuing studies in any field, let alone English for Special Purposes (ESP). The number of students committing themselves to attaining a more advanced level of English has been steadily increasing. A knowledge of professional English facilitates study and research in every field as well as providing a wide variety of work opportunities following graduation. In second language acquisition (SLA) research the technical terms learning autonomy and motivation have become educational catchphrases which are supported by a vast amount of, and seemingly never-ending, research results. Both terms focus on the psychological aspects of second language acquisition, the theoretical background that forms the basis of motivation and learning autonomy.

The aim of my paper is to investigate the relationship between applying literature in the foreign language (FL) classroom and its motivational force. My interest stems strictly from my practical quotidian work of teaching English as a foreign language to university students majoring in various social sciences. I have encountered the phenomena of de-motivation, flagging motivation, temporary motivational flows, directed motivational current (DMC), motivation without aims ("I would like to study English but I have no particular aim") and purposes lacking motivation. To a teacher of languages this entire web of various motivational stages can always pose perplexing problems: how to assist students in overcoming their difficulties, how to promote individual and differentiated learning styles and purposes and furthermore, how to set rational and motivating aims to help students move beyond their current or stable level of English.

My research-interest focuses on the applicability of literature: stories, fairy-tales and narratives in a FL classroom environment, mainly as a tool of motivation.

The questions that have determined the methodological and theoretical approach of this research are the following: What do stories and tales give to language learners? What is the relationship between motivation and imagination? What is tale therapy and how does it facilitate learning and education? How does the reading and interpretation of a fairy-tale bring aims and purposes closer? I aim to find and provide answers to some of these questions and to come up with connections and interdependences that function as 'intersection points' of theory and practice. As a teacher of languages one may often encounter difficult motivational stages of language acquisition, where students' motivation is flagging or disturbed by a lack of force or by other various circumstances. The conundrum of losing one's aim is not unknown to teacher or student; some researchers and professionals employ certain goal-theories or coaching techniques or simply neglect and ignore the problem. In my opinion, narratives (especially fairy-tales) can boost self-efficacy, self-confidence and are capable of re-directing and retrace students and teachers back to their original path.

De-motivation is an issue of the utmost significance and importance among teachers as well; one can easily realise that it is surprisingly difficult to help students move beyond a certain level, or that the characteristics of group-dynamics hinder valid and efficient group-work. Employing narratives, short-stories or fairy-tales can act as an impulse in a burnt-out classroom environment, can introduce new and fresh targets or even strengthen the already-existing aims and pathways. The language and discourse of fairy-tales are capable of empowering students and providing them with the tools and means to seek and find motivation

Literature – But What?

In the introduction it has been clearly stated that literary texts, especially fiction, serve the purpose of enhancing motivation profoundly. However, it is still worth sharpening the focus and narrowing the lens on specific genres. As this article attempts to concentrate on methodological and motivational issues, one can answer the question above: it almost never matters which genre. In our modern, contemporary age, education should focus on relevance and validity. When teachers have a debate about the employment of literature in SLA studies and professions, most researchers agree on the fact that up-to-date, contemporary texts or fairy-tales should be selected for FL classrooms. Svetlana Dimitrova-Gyuzeleva points out that canonical classical texts should be disregarded as modern language teaching should promote and show contemporary use of language, forms and structures; furthermore, teachers should not take on the responsibility for literary studies and analyses: "In 1994 John McRae made a useful distinction between literature with a capital 'L' - i.e. the classical texts by renown British and American authors - and literature with a small 'l', such as modern popular fiction and even song lyrics. He argued that the literature used in FL classrooms today should no longer be restricted to canonical texts, but it can and must include the works of contemporary writers from a diverse range of cultures and literary schools using English as their means of expression. Nor should FL teachers feel obliged to undertake that laborious literary analysis and elitist discussion of the literary texts with their FL learners that they remember from their literature classes at school or teacher-training colleges" (Gyuzeleva, 2015).

Concerning genre, it has to be stated clearly: whatever proves and seems to be of motivational force. It is most likely to be contemporary texts, crime fiction, whodunits, adventure stories, as well as the eternally tactful and valid world of fairy-tales and children's literature.

Theoretical Background

My research has been supported by two seemingly different and independent theories, yet both fields of study assume the role of promoting psychological issues in SLA studies. The first supporting theory, the mechanism of second language acquisition, displays the motivational impact; the research corpus concerning motivation is tremendous in volume, often controversial in nature and seems to be a dynamically evolving field of

study. The seminal papers and approaches of Zoltan Dornyei have played a crucial role in supporting the hypothesis of my article: Dornyei's work is inextricably linked to the study of psycholinguistics, where second language acquisition means the comprehension of the teacher's motivational input, the various patterns of group-dynamics and an awareness of the teaching profession and its activity.

The second supporting theory is tale therapy, which is an actively and intensively employed psychological and therapeutic technique and has been developed by the Hungarian psychologist Ildiko Boldizsar. Tale therapy works basically with various international andtribal folk tales and stories, and its main mission is to make the participant face up to the parallelism between the narrative and their own life-story. Its applicability in a classroom environment has turned out to be highly efficient as fairy-tales can uproot and upend the values, roles and duties of the participants in a learning community (Boldizsar, 2010). Due to its drama-pedagogical quality and characteristics, tales and stories can rearrange and redefine the parameters of a classroom environment. The question emerges as to how a teacher can employ tale therapy without being appropriately qualified to do so: one must look upon it as a pedagogical and educational tool to be able to motivate students, to empower them with goals and sub-goals, and moreover to help them realise their place, rank and role in the world through the framework of a metaphorical discourse.

The L2 Motivational Self System

The motivational work of Zoltan Dornyei consists of highly significant academic papers, neologisms, approaches and technology. His L2 motivational system places the emphasis on the psychological selves-researches. The theory of possibly selves is utilised in the field of SLA with a motivational aspect. Dornyei's theory consists of three components:

"**Ideal L2 Self,** which is the L2-specific facet of one's 'ideal self': if the person we would like to become peaks an L2, the 'ideal L2 self' is a powerful motivator to learn the L2 because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves. Traditional integrative and internalised instrumental motives would typically belong to this component. **Ought-to L2 Self**, which concerns the attributes that one believes one ought to possess to meet expectations and to avoid possible negative outcomes. This dimension corresponds to Higgins's ought self and thus to the more extrinsic (i.e. less internalised) types of instrumental motives. **L2 Learning Experience**, which concerns situated, 'executive' motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g. the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, the experience of success). This component is conceptualised at a different level from the two self-guides and future research will hopefully elaborate on the self aspects of this bottom-up process" (Dornyei, 2001).

As this theory stems from social psychology and centres around identity and identification, it can be a powerful basis for the theoretical background of the applicability

of fairy-tales as well as other narratives. Dornyei's motivational theory utilises the selves as stages for a motivational process and progress: the Ideal L2 Self plays a crucially important role in formulating the goals of sub-goals, since this Self symbolises and embodies the wishes and the desires the L2 learner strives to become. The second component is called the Ought-to Self and it involves all the external and expected characteristics, which are not necessarily in harmony with the Ideal Self. To be able to harmonise these two selves one needs to work intensively with the third component - the tension often lies in the learning environment, which can be facilitated and transformed into one supporting an L2 learner.

At this point of intersection the psychology of the SLA field rubs shoulders with the psychology of the tale therapy. The Motivational Self System can be clearly depicted in the world of fairy-tales and folk tales. One only needs to think of the well-known, stereotypical image of the little prince who sets out to rescue his brothers or eventually win the princess. Let us analyse this recurring element from a motivational point of view: the Ought-to Self is the expectation towards the young prince, he is expected to bring home brothers believed to be dead, to bring brides for everyone and possibly eliminate the pending dangers threatening the kingdom. It is rarely stated in a classical fairy-tale whether the little prince wishes to perpetrate all these heroic deeds at all and eventually this is not even an issue. This does display the characteristics of extrinsic motivational force as it is well articulated and pronounced what the hero must do. This recurring pattern may also help to formulate the motivational system of an L2 learner. The story and identification with certain characters enables the learners to synthesize their Ideal Self with the Ought-to Self, to help recognise inner resources of one's own as well as to learn from the examples of literary characters and their fates. This process of learning can be effectively supported by fairy-tales, as the protagonists have to overcome extremely challenging situations, extreme dangers and hopelessly cruel opponents in order to achieve their goals. Fairy-tales and literary texts enable the L2 learner and reader to formulate their targets and to apply means and tools acquired in their reading experiences. This point is a significant intersection for realising one's own motivation, for engaging in L2 reading and for developing language competences. The third component of Dornyei's L2 Motivational Self System focuses on the language learning environment and the experience itself (Dornyei, 2011): it is crucially important that it should be supportive, helpful, innovative and innovating, engaging and absorbing. The learning environment includes the effect and work of the teacher, classmates, the curriculum and basically everything where the L2 learner is placed. This resembles the micro-world surrounding the protagonists and the heroes of a fairy-tale or a story, the environment where one has to find the path and solution.

At this point it may be of invaluable help to linger a while on the terms intrinsic and extrinsic motivational forces. According to Dornyei, intrinsic motivation "deals with behaviour performed for its own sake in order to experience pleasure and satisfaction, such as the joy of doing a particular activity or satisfying one's curiosity" (Dornyei, 1997).

In the case of intrinsic motivation engagement becomes the core of the motivational force, where the pleasant satisfaction, the joy in itself and the happiness of the activity and the accomplishment form the basis of the underlying drive. Intrinsic motivation matches both the term and definition of the Ideal L2 Self, where the L2 learner finds enjoyment in learning due to their own sake and reasons. Dornyei has since moved on to Directed Motivational Currents (DMC) (Dornyei, 2016) a theory within which he has been examining and describing these forces and drives of highly intense and intensive periods of time and frame.

Extrinsic motivation is by definition: "performing behaviour as a means to an end, that is, to receive some extrinsic reward (e.g. good grades) or to avoid punishment" (Dornyei, 1997). Research has often characterised this type of motivation as the dichotomised pair of intrinsic motivation, as something that can "undermine" (Dornyei, 1997) the former one. It is most likely that extrinsic motivation does play a crucial role in the L2 learning processes, but this alone will probably not drive people to master languages for enjoyment's sake. In the L2 Motivational System, extrinsic motivation can be matched with the Ought-to Self; in the relevant fairy-tales and stories it is symbolised by the task, the duty one has to fulfil since these have been "allocated" to them. It is eventually a role that has to be assumed in order to perform the deed. These kinds of roles can be well applied and utilised in the FL classroom environment; moreover, it does help again to identify oneself with goals, aims and desires.

The reasoning for the validity of employing literature in FL classroom has reached the point where it is now inevitable to reflect upon the question of *how*. Vision and imagination are the core elements of the actual cognitive process. Promoting motivation places a responsibility upon the teacher: how is it to be achieved? Employing literature, for example fairy-tales in a FL classroom does empower students within the framework of motivation and language competences. One tool for empowering students is to teach the mechanism of acquiring vision, which can facilitate the process of setting an aim as well as visualise and formulate targets in a FL classroom. The focus of this paper is not to elaborate upon and detail the various techniques and methodological approaches of providing vision, Dornyei and Kubanyiova (Dornyei & Kubanyiova, 2014) have written about this topic extensively. The relevance of vision can be depicted in sport-psychology, where one needs to visualise a would-be competition or event in order to prepare for any unexpected difficulties. This resembles a parallelism to L2 learners, where imagery training (Gould) develops the elaboration of mental images. Admittedly, imagery helps motivation, goals and the evolving determination but it will not put grammatical rules into the heads of a L2 learner. For educational purposes, the work of Berkovits (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2009) needs to be mentioned. His theoretical writing has exerted an influence on the profession of teaching and developing learning autonomy. Berkovits points out that students can improve their learning strategies and styles through the utilisation of mental imagery, as this kind of visual aid correlates with the verbal competences. Thus in the L2 Self Motivation System it can also contribute to synchronising the Ideal Self with the

Ought-to Self, that is, to help establish harmony between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Dornyei and Kubanyiova even define the difference between the terms vision and goal, as the former supports the latter (Dornyei and Kubanyiova, 2014).

Work and motivation can be supported by psycholinguistic or sport-psychological means and methods. However, the validity of employing literature in a FL classroom stands on its own merits, since literary texts, tales and stories assist the improvement of language skills and promote engagement. As seen earlier, engagement is key to any kind of motivation and can actually bridge the gap between the intrinsic and extrinsic kinds.

How do literature, literary texts and tales act as inducers? Fairy-tales and stories play an important role in children's lives; however, they were originally written for and told to adults. Tale therapy heavily relies on this heritage-centred approach of fairy-tales; Ildiko Boldizsar (Boldizsar 2011) established the basic principles of tale therapy in Hungarian, and this methodology seems to be entirely adaptable within a FL classroom environment. While Boldizsar utilises tales, narrative and stories for purely therapeutic purposes, enabling her patients to immerse themselves in a fairy world to find answers to questions in the real world, language teaching pedagogy can employ tales as a means of re-definition, re-formulation and re-structuring. Tales and stories help one to reflect upon one's own life story, problematic issues by identification with heroes, or by formulating difficult situations adapted from the original stories and texts. Boldizsar sums up the mechanism of fairy-tales thus: "Fairy-tales know only one answer regarding challenging situations, and that is the act, the deed itself, or the attempt to try to act. In therapy this can really mean to step and move beyond boundaries, to rise to a different level, to be re-born....The struggles in a tale almost always are beyond one's skills and power, thus the victory or the loss is also beyond the usual" (Boldizsar 2011). This summary resembles today's FL classroom environments; both teachers and students need to step beyond their own limits and boundaries when teaching or learning. It is merely up to the teacher what methodology they employ to facilitate development and improvement; some find resource in using literature, some drama-pedagogy, some visual aids, while some believe in the motivational force of the digital culture. Practice has proven the validity of utilising literature, literary texts and fairy-tales in FL teaching.

Theory and Practice

It is extremely important to emphasize that a teacher does not act as a therapist; their duty covers motivation and the provision of a fairly different approach and aspect. Literary texts, tales and stories can lead to improving lexis, deepening grammatical structures and enhancing intrinsic motivation simply by demonstrating a pattern, a resemblance from the tales. The most important aims of a teacher should be to assist the students, harmonise the Ideal L2 self (what I want to achieve) with the Ought-to L2 self (what is expected of me), as well as to influence that efficiency of the students' learning process.

When immersing oneself in the world and language of a fairy-tale or any other literary texts, identification with a certain character or with a certain event or difficulty inevitably takes place. According to Boldizsar, listening to or reading a story together in a class environment strongly influences the dynamics of the group resulting in restructuring roles and hierarchy as well. She also points out that when a group or a class is exposed to a tale or a narrative then different identification progress occurs; different members of the group or class place themselves in different positions, places and events in the story. This is to be expected as the members/listeners/readers are at various stages in their own lives, thus their problems will be entirely different as well. However, this can strongly help build group work, common and mutual understanding, empathy and develop the awareness of motivating oneself and others.

The question arises: what texts, which genres act most effectively when the aim is to enhance motivation and consciousness? Boldizsar believes that as every tale and story is a pattern for behavioural and cognitive skills, never mind the fact that these also offer a scheme for acting and pro-coping, they constitute a significant pedagogical means. Whether it is a contemporary literary text, or a fairy-tale, the most important characteristics when choosing a story are that they should be relevant for the age-group of the L2 learners and should provide a rich resource for reflection.

A classroom example can depict an interesting methodological case: university students (young adults) were presented with a fairy-tale in English, where the plot commences with the protagonist being sent away from home "to find his path and profession." The students were extremely keen to work with the story, and they quickly managed to adapt and understand the story of the protagonist as it symbolised graduation, finishing studies and finding a career. Working with the text helped them reflect on their own lives and difficulties, and also to examine the patterns, the tools and the turn of events of the protagonist in the story. This experience was strongly supported by Boldizsar's reflections: "*through tales and stories one can achieve significant level of strengthening community since every member is part of the same (other) reality, yet according to his/her own life-pattern*" (Boldizsar, 2015).

Tale therapy distinguishes between 9 types of tales, which can assist different life stages and problems. The classical fairy-tales which work with symbols such as fairies, dragons, kings, witches, elves, kingdoms etc. provide the readers with coping skills, mechanisms to overcome struggles and conundrums or the ability to move beyond boundaries (Boldizsar 2010). The world of tales and literary texts can build a sensing and sensitive relationship between the educator and the learner, which can lead to changes in motivation and attitudes.

Summary and Outlook

This paper has attempted to look at the applicability and validity of literature, fairy-tales and various kinds of narrative in a FL classroom environment. One theoretical

background is provided by Dornyei's L2 Motivational Self System, its effect on the learner and on the mechanism of the process of learning. In addition, the pedagogical relevance of Boldizsar's tale therapy also plays a crucial role when utilising literature in teaching.

Theory and practice can result in changing motivation, which can promote a development in the autonomy of the learner. Dornyei focuses on analysing motivational theories and reasoning, but he also touches upon the importance of becoming an autonomous learner. Humanistic psychology also supports this pedagogical and educational aim: "the only kind of learning which significantly affects behaviour or self-discovered, self-appropriated learning" (Dornyei: Motivation 131). To achieve it, teaching must inevitably involve various strategies: *"An important source of self-efficacy is observing models (2.1.1). Therefore, drawing attention to the fact that others are coping with a certain task and providing relevant positive examples and analogies of accomplishment may be useful in suggesting that the task attainment is within the student's means"* (Dornyei, 135).

The above process also involves the awareness of the teacher, where they are active participants in the changes of the motivation, in the development of the learning; skills/knowledge should be omnipresent in their work and in the feedback as well (Dornyei, 2001). This kind of motivational approach stems from the positive psychology, which can overtly rely on the resources of fairy-tales and various narratives. Research has also shown that one of the most important sources of self-efficacy is self-reflection and learning from others. It is the teacher's task to show what coping skills exist in order to overcome difficulties and what other positive examples can be acquired. This type of learning can be clearly traced to and in the world of fairy-tales and stories.

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