

Management

Creativity and Innovation in Business and Education

edited by Jolanta Bieńkowska



*Olga Hucko**

TERMINATION OF AUTO NARRATION AS A CREATIVE THINKING PROCESS

ABSTRACT

The article proves that the competence of creativity is connected with the narrative competences.

It explains how the awareness of auto-narration affects the creative abilities of people aged 18–35. It concludes that it is impossible to be creative without knowledge of oneself. Here, I present the concept of auto narrative training that I have developed based on Christopher Vogler's idea of the hero's journey, concepts of creative thinking processes, narrative psychology, and narratology. The training is supposed to stimulate creative and narrative thinking as well as strengthen creativity. The article focuses on small narrations, which are understood as outspoken monologues. It brings the concept of the magical power of a story as an instrument of achieving self-awareness. I intend to answer the question as to whether the improvement of our narrative skills stimulates our creativity.

Keywords: auto narration, self-awareness, scripts, psychology of creativity, creative attitude.

1. AUTO NARRATION IN A CONTEXT OF CREATIVITY

For the purpose of my research, auto narration is explained as an outspoken story of life, a means to organize experiences, an understanding of the world (Trzebiński 2001), and a small narration about oneself. What is most important is the form of constructing the autobiography, not its content. The form determines our way of thinking about ourselves. The content itself is subjected to constant changes as life goes on: raising self-awareness is a continuous process of becoming. Our life, as we perceive it, is our interpretation, which evolves and changes along with the next experiences (Bruner 1990). It is a kind of imagination structure achieved by recalling selected memories. We create reality by using language; when we name states and things; and when we specify their area of functioning, existence, and usage. Storytelling is an act of communication, a way of presenting a specific model of the world and a form of cognitive representation of reality. The act of communication requires the rule of cooperation to take place,

* Bachelor, Department of Theory of Literature, University of Lodz, olgahucko@gmail.com.

which means that the sender has to construct the utterance, including illusions, suggestions, and hints, in a way that is perfectly understood by the receiver (Grice 1991). Auto narration means perceiving life as a story. It is an act of communication, which shows who we are, what we are doing, what we think, and for what we are acting?

Michał Głowiński (1997) describes auto narration as an outspoken monologue with the obligatory presence of a narrator and a silent receiver (a person to whom the utterance is sent but who does not respond). The text is built as an oral statement, i.e. recorded and written down as an auto narration. Jan Kajfosz (2009) underscores the role of the unsaid parts of the story, i.e. those intentionally omitted by the sender. Not verbalizing these parts of a story is an element of creating the presented world. The receiver is usually unaware of this. Following this thought, creation is not an inspiration fuelled by a sudden flow of emotions. Creation is a deliberate act of communication, the same as a story. Unless we are aware of how we narrate, we are unable to be creative. The forms of spoken monologues oscillate around Aristotle's idea and its variations. The participants of my research think according to the construction – beginning, middle, and ending – but they do not notice it. They need to acknowledge the transformation of a hero after they regard their story as an interesting and genuine one. Having a richer repertoire of storytelling abilities (e.g. knowing the idea of the hero journey or magical sentence) makes the content of their conversations fuller; heroes better written; and a represented world shown as a whole, in which they can fit. It proves that the training of narrative skills has an influence on creative skills.

Creative thinking exceeds us and everything we possess intentionally (Góralski 2003). The ideas of being are concentrated around two poles. The first one reflects how we should be, in what we should believe, and how we should behave. The second tries to condense the knowledge about who we are and to analyze the backgrounds and mechanisms as well as the attributes characteristic for humanity. Individuals selectively integrate their own idea of being; they connect empirically obtained, scientific and cultural knowledge to create the basics for the autobiography. Seeing the image of themselves, they fill this construct with content, build their trajectory, and topography of fortune. They become creative as they go beyond the typical borders of acting and transcend this way in the process of telling about specific acts (Kozielecki 2002). An individual creates in order to preserve the world and himself (Góralski 2003: 11–25). He creates his own narration, which is a natural form of passing the ideas and experiences of human world.

Following Abraham Maslow (1986: 135–147), I distinguish the meaning of creation as a special gift and as a life competence reflected in casual activities constituting a so-called self-updating creativity: „a first class soup requires more artistry than second class painting and that generally cooking, maternity and housekeeping can be creative, and writing poetry does not have to be such”

(Maslow 1986: 136). It is a kind of child's creativity: unawareness arising from a sense of security and happiness, the one that is effort free and with no orders or frames. This type of creativity should be used in our professional life, maintained, and improved. It cannot be limited to making a soup.

To transcend existing borders, we have to meet certain requirements, which are the sources of creative approaches. Awareness of subjectivity, as one of man's activities (it needs work and being focused), is very important for purposeful creativity. It includes the awareness of thinking, emotions, and body. Thanks to that, we know and understand the mechanisms of our functioning. We can recognize our constraints, overcome them, and improve ourselves. Creative acting is a continuous, spontaneous, and expressive process of getting out of the frames. It requires courage to meet the unknown and to test oneself in solving the riddle and seeing the truth. This process is a fascinating challenge. Here, I can see the analogy to the story, which is a hero's journey that crosses the first threshold and goes into the unknown, overcoming difficulties and making decisions (Vogler 2010). Noticing a hero in oneself is hard work on self-awareness, subjectivity, and auto presentation, which are the conditions of awakening a creative attitude.

2. AUTO NARRATIVE TRAINING AS A TRAINING OF CREATIVITY

Auto narrative training, in a basic form, is a series of six individual biweekly meetings. The scheduled break is a time for independent work, reflection, watching recommended movies, performances, and reading books. During the first stage, the participant is asked to tell about his last year. His spoken monologue is recorded and transcribed. I try to interfere as little as possible with the text; however, it is inevitable to use punctuation to provide spoken pauses, time taken to think, and underline new plots. I do not change the content: I write down every word, even those that are the author's own word formations and I do not eliminate swearwords or interpolations. During the recording, I do not ask any questions; I play the role of a silent receiver. I send the prepared text to the participant with the recommendation that he/she read it carefully. The spoken monologue does not have to be true; it can be a fantasy or it can have only elements of inventions. As it was stated previously, it is the form, not the content of speaking that is important (Bruner 1990: 4–6).

During the second stage, we conduct an analysis, interpretation, and thorough breakdown of the text. First, we look for the construction, which is the beginning, middle, and ending, along with two other points: the turning and climax. Then, we assign which topics and plots are in the text. We describe the hero: who is he, what is he doing, how does he behave, what values are important for him, does he have

any aim, intention, or motive. We describe the dramaturgy line, underlining the next actions looking for their agent and focalizer, we talk about time range, frames of references and space, in which the hero is acting (Bal 2012). The necessity of distancing oneself from his/her own hero is a very important assumption of the auto narrative training, which has been fully proved. While analyzing the process, the authors cannot speak about their hero in the first-person singular; they have to transform sentences into the third-person singular. For example, they must say, „This is a young mother/woman”, not, „I am a young mother/woman”. The narrator-author-hero distinction was the basic requirement for participation in the second stage. The „me to him/her” transition enables distancing oneself from the hero’s experiences. The narration gives us a chance to capture and understand our way of thinking. Storytelling gives us the possibility to look back and replay history and take various points of view.

The next stages of training are meetings focused on exercising narration skills, playing with schemes, heroes, and the creation of alternative stories. Auto narrative training is:

1. Transforming a spoken monologue into an auto narration (recording and sending in the form of a text).
2. Analysis and interpretation of the text.
3. Meeting the hero.
4. Sending the hero on a journey (Vogler 2010).
5. Topic variations.
6. Auto-presentation.

Each stage of training is focused on self-knowledge, understanding the cognitive schemes, and preparing the best improvement tools for the author. But, which tools should we choose and which of them should be worked on? The participants search for the answer by themselves. I do not give them answers, only the tools to find the answers. Rather, I try to awaken the sensitivity and curiosity about the world, which are worth having as we are forced to find our place in it. I awaken a need for self-awareness. If knowing oneself is consistent with one’s values and conscience, it gives one confidence that what one does is fine and that one’s way of acting is correct. The sense of self-esteem is hidden behind this practice. My research proves that these are the essential elements for young people nowadays.

3. RESEARCH

„I graduated in July and then I was free” – this is the beginning of one of the narratives. The 24-year-old author graduated and she started to look for a professional and societal place for herself. The first sentence determines all of

her story. Speaking about her freedom in the past tense shows that she now feels quite the opposite. Her story proved it.

From July 2014 till March 2015, I conducted narrative research. The formula of which was close to the final form of auto narrative training. Thanks to the achieved knowledge and experience, I was able to reorganize my work with the participants. The training structure is fluent as it depends on the problems that participants possess. Not everyone faces difficulties with finding a hero in himself/herself. In such a situation, we focus and work more on communication skills and the ability to perceive the surrounding. Speaking about the external world can be really complicated. In auto narrative training, there are many aspects of storytelling that we can convert. It is useless to create a constant form for personal development. Every young man is under the influence of different internal and external factors and has various abilities and skills. These findings come from my research.

The participants are aged 18 to 35 years. They have several features in common: they are at the point in which certain changes are necessary, they have to make a decision, and they feel their activities are senseless. Their texts usually end with a positive sentence, for instance: „But, I think I will pass again and October will come and it will be a good year again” or „And, so I hope that the following days will be a step into the future. And so I believe I will be happy. And so everything will...”. In most cases, the stories end in this way.

The suffering trajectory (Schütze 1997: 11–56) is one of the most characteristic elements in the collected narrations: it is a main action line for the heroes. This biography process bears the feature of a continuous suffering experience, which has influence on or leads to:

- An inability to make a decision or react. People cannot find themselves in current affairs, normal situations overwhelm them (for example, „Oh, in August, I won a competition in August with part of my diploma; it was about the best works for the Art Department. So I gained approximately ten thousand zlotys. It gave nothing more than money, which I saw on my bank account. And that really had no results, nothing (...) And so it went, I worked, then March came, and in March, umm January, February nothing was changing, I do not remember any situations. It means, something was on – waiting. Waiting (...) And so on? March came to the end. (...) Then nothing was changing. It was May. We were on short holidays in Portugal”).
- A feeling of alienation from other people, which leads to social anomie (we can see it in a change of our communication acts, what is the role of the media in contacts with other people, how can we stay anonymous and unpunished as somebody else in a virtual world, how can we present ourselves as anyone who we want to be. For example, „Now I live with the feeling that my life is a little bit fake” or „I have started to look at my

life in another way, I realized that spending time online and those online relations are not everything, it is not the same as holding a man's hand or kissing his cheek").

- Disintegration of a sense of membership, community, and inability to build basic social units, such as a family or friendly relationship („Though I feel much more as a mongrel in every town, even in my family house I feel as a mongrel, because it is like that a little”).
- A sense of chaos and a problem with treating positive situations like a success („And nothing from that..." or „And so? Nothing has changed”).

The suffering I describe is a result of feeling instable. Young people perceive their lives as a huge confusion (Schütze 1997: 24–25). The chaos they feel is provided with information from popular culture. The role models of how we should look, live, feel, what we should eat and think are the role models for a perfect life, which is an implied image of life. We are unable to fulfill this exaggerated image; it is impossible. Freedom and happiness, as conditions of existence, collide with scripts and frames that we receive from our parents and other people within our surroundings. More often than not, we are a script's losers or not-winners, rather than its winners (Berne 2013). Those scripts are stressful and frustrating. This is the reason why the trajectory potential is opened. We lose our way when we are unaware of our skills and abilities and when we act despite ourselves in contrast to the idea of being a hero of our own story (the hero knows his aims and he is aware of his journey). The popular culture has built a model – being the Lord of One's Own Image (Tokarska 2010: 293–300) – which can be positive, if we understand it very well. Now, we have a model, which is unattainable, unreal, and remains in a dream domain. In this case, the experience of disorientation dominates. On the one hand, the individual has everything, but on the other hand, there is something wrong with him and he should change for the better. This kind of implication creates our culture (Melosik 2013). Until these people learn to read culture and the mass media, they will stay in the same moment and they will not have the possibility to develop themselves. We need to understand the image of the world, which is presented and created by media. The world that we try to adjust to is incomprehensible and our efforts have no meaning. Not feeling the sense, we are unmotivated and our acting is useless. The suffering trajectory is fed with unawareness.

The outcome of my research was the affirmation of how young people are unsure of themselves, their environment, and their abilities. While I believe my achievement is not very surprising, this kind of affirmation is still needed. It is a signal that something is broken in our education system, child-raising, and self-development. Something went wrong and the society is helpless. In my work, I focused on young people from good homes, where parents work and children study. These homes could serve as examples of modern families. And, this is even more alarming. We talk about creativity, about the need to be a winner, about

changing for the better. We need to be conquerors, but we have a problem with finding ourselves in reality. Until we face this particular challenge to understand our social world, we will not be creative.

Participants had to fill out a form with information (personal details and sign a disclosure for the publication of the findings) and write answers for open tasks, e.g. what they do, how they spend their spare time, hobbies, whether they have animals, how they perceive their relations with family, and end the sentence: „I am...”. All of the participants responded that they are looking for a purpose and happiness. They feel that everything is before them; they see some kind of lack in full sense of happiness. They believe that they will be happy. They had the main difficulty with completing the last sentence: „I am...”. The participants became lost, they did not know what they should write (they did not have any hints), and would write, „I am amazing”; „I am an artistic soul”; and „I am a jar with a jam”.

The narrative research ended with the final meeting, during which we trained only on the external form of storytelling, namely auto presentation. Non-verbal communication is a very important part of auto narration and it is integral element for the story of one's life.

4. SUMMARY

Do narrative skills really influence creativity competences? Noticing a hero in one's self, getting the knowledge about one's self and being the Lord of Life for oneself, have only positive effects on the people with whom I have worked. They felt much more confident, motivated, and inspired to act. They were able to establish the goal of their journey in a natural way. They saw the difficulties they were facing and enemies they were fighting against as a fascinating adventure. They dreamed and fantasized. Discovering their own scripts, orders and prohibitions, curses, as well as creating topography of their places from the past year, helped the participants recognize themselves. By playing with their mind and, at the same time, thinking abstractly, and verbalizing possible states and experiences, they came to understand the relations they built with other people and their roles. The training is constructed according to the idea of creativity trainings (Nęcka 1995; 2001; 2013). Exercising the ability to narrate has positively influenced the participants' communication skills. Sharing an experience is no longer a problem for them. The source of one's creative attitude is feeling the purpose of existence, the ability to find one's self in reality and the willingness to shape it, as well as having the faith that it is us who have influence over our environment and that our actions are important for others.

This is why I believe that unless the creativity is complemented with the narrative thinking, it has no chance to fully develop. The story helps us find the purpose in and give meaning to events that have occurred and these are the main determinants of creativity.

REFERENCES

- Bal M. (2012), *Narratologia. Wprowadzenie do teorii narracji*, Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Kraków.
- Berne E. (2013), *Dzień dobry... i co dalej?*, Rebis, Poznań.
- Bruner J. S. (1990), *Życie jako narracja*, „Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny”, no. 4, pp. 3–20.
- Głowiński M. (1997), *Narracja jako monolog wypowiedziany*, [in:] *Narracje literackie i nieliterackie*, (ed.), Universitas, Kraków.
- Góralski A. (2003), *Teoria twórczości*, Wydawnictwo APS, Warszawa.
- Grice H. P. (1991), *Studies in the way of words*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- Kajfosz J. (2009), *Magia w potocznej narracji*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice.
- Kozielecki J. (2002), *Transgresja i kultura*, Żak Wydawnictwo Akademickie, Warszawa.
- Maslow A. (1986), *W stronę psychologii istnienia*, Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, Warszawa.
- Melosik Z. (2013), *Kultura popularna i tożsamość młodzieży. W niewoli władzy i wolności*, Impuls, Kraków.
- Nęcka E. (1995), *Proces twórczy i jego ograniczenia*, Oficyna Wydawnicza, Kraków.
- Nęcka E. (2001), *Psychologia twórczości*, GWP, Gdańsk.
- Nęcka E. (ed.) (2013), *Trening Twórczości*, GWP, Sopot.
- Schütze F. (1997), *Trajektorie cierpienia jako przedmiot badań socjologii interpretatywnej*, „Studia Socjologiczne”, no. 1, pp. 11–56.
- Tokarska U. (2010), *Stawać się Panem Własnego Oblicza. O możliwościach intencjonalnych oddziaływań narracyjnych w biegu życia ludzkiego*, [in:] Straś-Romanowska M., Bartosz B., Żurko M. (ed.), *Psychologia małych i wielkich narracji*, Eneteia, Warszawa.
- Trzebiński J. (ed.) (2002), *Narracja jako sposób rozumienia świata*, GWP, Gdańsk.
- Vogler Ch. (2010), *Podróż autora. Struktury mityczne dla scenarzystów i pisarzy*, Wojciech Marzec, Warszawa.

AUTHOR NOTE

Olga Hucko – MA in Film Making (WSSiP in Łódź), 2nd degree student of the Department of the Theory of Literature in the University of Łódź; a head of ComeOn Institute, member of Polish Society of Creative Strategies. Currently working on her master degree essay „Causes and effects of a story. Auto-narrative training” tutored by Prof. J. Ślósarska; her fields of professional interest are micro narration, auto narration, creative thinking processes.

Creativity is now an exposed trait. This is due to the high need for innovation, original and useful solutions that serve the development of the organization, their effective market entry and long-term survival. This publication is a collection of papers prepared under The First National Conference „CREATIVE VIBES. Kreatywnością napędzamy gospodarkę”, whose aim was to stir issues concerning the significance of creativity from the point of view of the development of innovative economy, as well as to draw attention to the role of creativity in the education process of students and its impact on the development of professional competence.



WYDAWNICTWO
UNIwersYTETU
ŁÓDZKIEGO

www.wydawnictwo.uni.lodz.pl
e-mail: ksiegarnia@uni.lodz.pl
tel. (42) 665 58 63, faks (42) 665 58 62

ISBN 978-83-8088-073-3



9 788380 880733