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Motivation in Creative Writing

Motivation i kreativt skrivande

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Abstract

This paper aims to investigate to what extent creative writing promotes motivation for EFL learners to write. A report published by the National Assessment Project (NAFS) commissioned by The Swedish National Agency for Education evaluated the national tests in English for Swedish students during 2018/2019, documenting that the Swedish students obtained the lowest English scores on writing. This result corresponds with the national test scores in English from earlier years. According to The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket, 2019) motivation is a necessary component for L2 learning, and teachers are expected to play a fundamental role in creating student motivation. However, research within the area of motivation indicates that the understanding of motivation in L2 learning is limited. Likewise, the research indicates a need for the understanding of motivation to be both revised and subject to further research, both to understand the nature of motivation and to define tools on how to push motivation in L2 writing. One such tool could be creative writing (CW). Thus, to understand to what extent CW can motivate EFL learners to write, we explore recent studies that examine how different implementations of CW activities and CW courses can motivate students to write within a school context. In the study, we argue that CW motivates EFL learners to produce text. CW seems to facilitate relevance for the student and empower writing activities that consider the student's self-interest as well as bring new life to the student's understanding of writing. The insights of this study hold pedagogical values for L2 writing in the EFL classroom.

Key terms: *classroom activities, creative writing, EFL, L2, language proficiency, motivation, students' response, writing.*

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1. Introduction

In our experience working in the English as a second language (L2) classroom, we have often come across students who cannot see the point of writing anything at all. This might be students who normally produce verbally, it might be low performing students or even students who otherwise are active. Such cases illustrate the need for a drastically different approach to motivate students to start writing. Our observations can be confirmed by Dörnyei (2005), who argues "without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals, and neither are appropriate curricula and good teaching enough on their own to ensure student achievement" (p. 65).

The report *Nationellt prov i engelska, årskurs 9 2018/2019* published by The National Assessment Project (NAFS) commissioned by The Swedish National Agency for Education, evaluated the Swedish national test in English based on 808 results from 9th-grade students during 2018/2019. The Swedish national test in English is divided into three different subcategories. The first subcategory focus on speaking, the second on reading and listening, and the third on writing. The report showed that the students obtained the highest scores on the first subcategory and the lowest scores on the third category - writing. This was in correspondence with the results from earlier years. Further, the larger proportion of students that did not pass the test were found in the second and third subcategory (Olsson, 2019, p. 7).

One of the many fundamentals of the overall goals and guidelines in the Swedish syllabus for lower and upper secondary school is that teachers should strengthen students' will to learn, as well as aid the students gain trust in their own abilities (Skolverket, 2011, p. 14). This is also reflected in Skolverket's description of the aim for English education, where it is stated that the subject of English shall help students develop trust in their ability to use the English language in different kinds of situations and for different kinds of purposes. In addition, Skolverket mandates that students must be given opportunities to develop an all-round communicative ability. This includes the understanding of written and spoken English, to be able to express oneself, and to interact with others in both written and

spoken contexts (Skolverket, 2011, p. 30). It is thus clear in the Swedish syllabus that motivation is viewed as a necessary component for second language learning, and that teachers are expected to play a fundamental role in working to enhance student motivation in the subject of English.

Motivation in second language learning has been the subject of research in recent decades, and it is recognised as being vital to successful language learning (Dörnyei, 2005; Lamb, 2017; Maley, 2009). According to Lamb (2017), the motivational aspects of teaching L2 are important, because even if students today have extensive opportunities to interact with English online, most students still ground their willingness to learn L2 on the early encounter with L2 in the classroom (p. 301).

The understanding of what creates motivation can be connected to the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which was originally formulated by Deci and Ryan in 1985 (as cited in Lamb, 2017, p. 312), and Dörnyei's L2 motivational self system (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 9-42). The SDT elaborates on the distinction between *intrinsic motivation*, where the individual enjoyment of the learning process makes the individual learn, and *extrinsic motivation*, where people decide to do something for an alternative reason, which can be less or very externalized. Extrinsic motivation can, for example, be others' expectations of an individual's performance in an activity - as in determining how the individual is as a person and therefore inflict how the individual should behave towards an activity - or simply be to avoid punishment. According to SDT, intrinsic motivation becomes the ideal scenario in an educational setting. Students who are intrinsically motivated to learn a subject will be naturally inclined to study hard, act responsibly and be receptive to new knowledge (Lamb, 2017, p. 314-315). An important aspect of SDT is that teachers can help students achieve a more intrinsic and internalized motivation by trying to ensure that their classrooms satisfy three conditions. The first condition is to create autonomy, which in this case resembles a student's feeling of being able to choose personally meaningful activities. The second condition is to create competence where a student receives a sense of gaining mastery of a subject area or skill. The last condition is to create relatedness whereupon a student feels connected to and valued by others when engaged in the activity (Lamb, 2017, p. 315).

Dörnyei's (2009) L2 motivational self system recognizes that some language learners' initial motivation can come from internal and external generated self-images, as well as students having a successful engagement with the actual language learning process. According to Dörnyei, the system consists of three components: The ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience. *The ideal L2 self* is the individual's imagined ideal future self as a L2 speaker. So, if the person one would like to become speaks a second language, then the ideal L2 self is a powerful motivator to learn that language on account of his/her desire to reduce the difference between the present self and the ideal self. *The ought-to L2 self* is the attributes a person believes they ought to have to meet expectations and to avoid possible negative outcomes. This self is associated with external motivational elements. *The L2 learning experience* concerns the learning environment and experience of learning. This involves the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, as well as the individual student's learning experience and experience of success (p. 29).

Additionally, it is important to recognize that motivation is multifaceted and that the forces of what creates motivation are, in its nature, not static. Ushioda and Dörnyei (2009) argue for a change in how motivation is understood in L2 learning. Different aspects of globalisation have in one way or another added to the spread of global English, the growth of World English varieties and, thus, loss of national and local languages. The changing world has also changed the L2 learner, who needs to address a local identity contra a global identity in the mix of language use, ethnicity, identity, and hybridity. But it is only recently that attention has turned to how L2 motivation is theorised in the light of the on-going globalisation, and the need to re-conceptualise the theory around L2 motivation connected to self and identity in a global context (p. 1).

Ushioda and Dörnyei's observations raise the question as to which components will allow students the opportunity to express inner feelings towards an individual identity in a local and global context, as well as offering opportunities to produce and play with language to learn the L2, thus, closing the gap between the present self and the ideal self.

In the field of L2 acquisition, a vast number of applicable teaching methods exist to aid students with L2 development. One method that has the potential to achieve this is creative writing (CW). CW is described by Maley (2009) as a "production of texts which

have an aesthetic rather than a purely informative, instrumental or pragmatic purpose” (Creative writing for language learners (and teachers) section, para. 1).

According to Maley, CW focuses more heavily on intuition, imagination, and personal memories. Thus, a distinguishing characteristic of CW involves playful engagement with language that challenges the rules of language in an atmosphere where this is accepted. For Maley, the general category of CW can include texts of different genres such as novels, poems or stories, and requires the writer to follow the rules of such a chosen genre. The creative boundaries within a genre can foster creativity and understanding of language that in return creates learning (What are the benefits of CW for learners? section, para. 1, 2).

Hyland (2009) further extends this general conceptualization of CW to include any type of writing that occurs outside the professional forms of writing, and can also include screenwriting, playwriting, personal and journalistic essays (p. 229).

Furthermore, CW seem to create motivation. According to Maley (2009), CW has the potential to aid students to discover things for themselves about the language, and as such promote personal and linguistic growth. This can be connected to positive motivation, and conditions that generate motivation. For example, CW can increase students’ expectations of success in particular tasks and in learning in general, making learning more stimulating and enjoyable by breaking the monotony of classroom events, creating a pleasant and supportive atmosphere, providing students with regular experience of success, increasing learner satisfaction, making learning stimulating and enjoyable for learners by enlisting them as active task participants, and increasing student motivation by actively promoting learner autonomy. Maley continues to argue that CW can develop an increase of self-confidence and self-esteem among learners. This provides an exponential increase in motivation, because “learners suddenly realize that they can write something in a foreign language that has never been written by anyone else before, and which others find interesting to read” (What are the benefits of CW for learners? section, para. 4, 5). As such, we can argue that CW is an important aspect concerning motivation and that CW can motivate learners to produce a written text.

Correspondingly, Tompkins (1982) provides seven reasons to write stories or poetry: It is entertaining, it fosters artistic expression, it explores the functions and values of writing, it

stimulates the imagination, it clarifies thinking, it supports the student's search for identity, and finally, the student is stimulated by learning how to read and write. For Tompkins, CW makes it possible for students to work with their own subjects and methods of writing in an enjoyable way, thus promoting the development of students' cognitive and communication skills, an aspect of CW which cannot be underestimated (as cited in Essex, 1996, p. 2).

2. Aim and Research Question

This paper aims to investigate to what extent CW can promote student motivation for English as a foreign language (EFL) learners to write. To address this, we will explore recent studies that examine how different implementations of CW activities and CW courses can prompt student motivation within a school context.

CW includes many various forms such as poems, story writing, and screenwriting but this paper does not aim to pinpoint which CW activity is most beneficial for student motivation in an EFL context. Rather, we target the concept of CW as a whole and focus on the concept of CW being applied in different teaching methods or forms to prompt motivation.

Our specific research question is: To what extent can CW promote student motivation for EFL learners to write.

3. Method

To ascertain relevant data for this study, the primary focus has been to use electronic search in the two educational databases Google Scholar and Libsearch, both provided by Malmö University. Throughout the search in Google Scholar and Libsearch a number of different types of search terms were used, including but not limited to the following:

CW + motivation, CW + motivation + EFL, CW + motivation + ESL, CW + motivation + F2, CW + motivation + language proficiency, CW + motivation + language, Motivation as a concept, CW as a concept

Furthermore, and for the purpose of narrowing down the vast number of search results and finding relevant articles, the search was limited to scientific articles and peer-reviewed texts.

3.1 Inclusion Criteria

In this paper, empirical research articles that focus on the effects of CW, such as EFL-teachers' reflections of CW and EFL-learners' evaluations of CW, were targeted. In addition, since our aim is to address to what extent CW creates motivation for EFL students to write, we included studies that have been conducted worldwide. We also decided to incorporate studies that targeted students enrolled in different kinds of educational levels such as elementary school and university.

3.2 Exclusion Criteria

From the initial group of studies, we chose to exclude articles that investigate the effect of applying CW without the purpose of correlating it with student motivation. We have also excluded articles dealing with CW in relation to L1, because we will mainly teach EFL-learners.

Table 1.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Area of interest	Total number of references	Number of references used
CW effects for EFL-learners	22	6
CW and teacher attitudes	1	1
L2 motivation and CW	17	4

4. Results and Discussion

In the current section, we will present studies of EFL CW courses, and of various EFL courses and classes which have implemented different kinds of CW activities. It should be noted that a number of studies concerning CW and student motivation target more than that specific outcome. Many also investigate how some aspects of CW and student motivation affect students when combined with other aspects i.e. critical pedagogy and writing fluency. We will not address these aspects here.

Firstly, we will present three studies that investigate EFL learners' motivation towards writing according to students' responses, reflections, and content from CW activities. Secondly, we will turn to examine studies that involve both control and experimental group of students responding to CW activities, and is referred to as multi-group research. This will be followed by a study that investigates student responses on CW activities in two different social and cultural contexts. Lastly, the paper presents a study on teachers' attitudes towards CW.

4.1 CW Activities Effect on Students' Motivation Towards Writing According to Students' Responses, Reflections, and Content

Three recent studies, Arshavskaya (2015), Diaz (2016), and Dai (2010), investigated the motivational aspect of CW activities by analysing student responses, reflections, and content from students' written assignments. In the study by Arshavskaya (2015), a series of CW exercises were implemented at a southwestern American university in an advanced-level ESL course in academic writing. The study examined what effect CW exercises combined with critical pedagogy had on student confidence as L2 writers, as well as its impact on writing fluency. CW activities took the form of expressive writing with topics that required students to reflect on the lives of different people around the world. The topics were decided based upon the theory of critical pedagogy, which, according to

the author, aims to raise critical consciousness and should, therefore, grant topics that reflect on the realities of the students' own lives. The data were analysed in the manner of grounded theory, which meant that each time a creatively written assignment was submitted, the researcher wrote interpretive memos about the nature of the topics in the text to identify each student's level of critical consciousness and empathy. After the assignments were written the students completed a survey that asked them about their attitudes towards CW and critical pedagogy. Thereafter, a detailed content analysis was carried out by the researcher. Arshavskaya found that CW created engagement and was perceived by the students as beneficial which in turn also increased the level of critical consciousness among the students, which the author took to suggest that CW assignments could foster student motivation and engagement in writing.

A similar study was conducted by Diaz (2016) who examined the implementation of Alan Maley's proposal on creative writing as a tool for developing writing skills for tenth grade EFL-learners in Bogota, Columbia. Diaz's goal was to gain insight to how the students interpreted their experiences, and what meaning they attributed to them. Diaz conducted poem writing workshops within a framework that focused on fostering students' innate ability to develop writings that allowed students to discover their capacities to create. Therefore, an "aesthetic approach" was conducted which puts the student in the center of the learning process making the student write what he/she wants within the guidance from the CW activity. Data were collected through the students' writing outcomes to get an insight on writing development, via audio-recorded interviews to collect students' perceptions, and a journal to memorise, reflect and improve the stages of the implementation. Diaz found that teachers' and students' experience of motivation was influenced by CW and that the students' positive responses were based on the playfulness of CW. The author concluded that motivation was a crucial component for stimulating the creativity of the students and that CW could be considered a tool that motivates students' learning and writing performance.

The potential of CW as a classroom tool for enhancing motivation in the classroom identified in Arshavskaya (2015) and Diaz (2016) receives further support from Dai (2010). Dai analysed sophomore students' reflections and writings at the end of a CW course implemented in Sun Yat-sen University, China. CW activities took the form of story

writing. Every time the students were asked to write, they were given a broad topic that the student could easily relate to. For example, students could choose to write about themselves/friends/relatives - anything that made them different from others. They could even choose to write about something else if they did not like the topics. The most important aspect was that the students should gain positive learning experiences by writing about topics they deemed interesting and in a way that facilitated self-expression. Based upon students' written work/assignments and experience of participating in the CW course, Dai argued that CW can motivate students to write and even states that CW can aid students to improve their English proficiency as well as their personal development in general.

In all three studies, positive outcomes were created from CW activities in terms of student motivation. One participant from Dai (2010) expressed that her earlier reluctance towards writing changed after the course, and another participant expressed that the writing became more fun and that it “brought her to life” (p. 553).

At this point, we can identify that CW activities such as story writing, expressive writing, and poems possibly can foster EFL-learners' motivation to write. Also, we can identify that CW activities seem to facilitate relevance towards students' ability to express themselves since the activities empower writing activities that consider students' self-interest. As such, we can argue that CW activities appear to function as a game-changer that helps to bring new life to the student's understanding of writing. The CW activities can draw the focus away from writing as a fixed form and move the process of writing into a more free space of self-expression on relatable subjects of interest for the student. This could lower the expectation of failure from the student's ought-to L2 self, which is associated with external motivational elements. Instead, the nature of CW may provide the student with an option to actually write, and therefore inflict an experience of success within the L2 learning environment. CW activities combined with the experience of success could potentially help the student lower the discrepancy of the present self and the ideal L2 self. The introduction of CW activities can give the student an experience of writing something new in L2 with relevance for the student's creation of identity, thus motivating the decision of the student to actually produce text or larger bodies of text. We can connect the decision to intrinsic motivation and the enjoyment of the learning process, as well as to students being able to

find success in their L2 learning experience which could make them motivated to write (Dörnyei, 2009; Lamb, 2017). The playfulness and enjoyment of writing addressed in Diaz (2016) and Dai (2010) are in correspondence with Maley's (2009) understanding of why CW creates motivation.

Even if the studies indicate that CW can create motivation for EFL-learners to write, it is still important to acknowledge some possible drawbacks. The studies were relatively small in size and scope. For example, Arshavskaya (2015) only had nine participants in comparison to Diaz (2016), who had 30 participants, and Dai (2010), who had 39 participants. Additionally, none of these studies were conducted with students in multiple learning environments. Thus the generalizability of the results from these studies is somewhat hindered.

Another important aspect is how the assessment criteria of the assignments were stipulated. Arshavskaya (2015) stated that the students' writing was graded on content rather than grammatical, structural or spelling errors. Diaz (2016) based the assessments on evaluating the content of the students' poems in terms of originality, and if the writer presented a personal point of view. Dai (2010) did not describe the assessment conditions but stated that each story was assessed by two teachers, one native speaker of English and the other one Chinese. Therefore, one could argue that the assessment criteria - and not the CW assignments - could be the factor that raises student motivation. However, it can be argued that CW activities need assessment focused on content since one characteristic of CW involves playful engagement with language. In addition, expression from the student seems to be a very vital component, and assessing students on grammatical or spelling errors might disrupt the definition of CW, and potentially make the CW activity lose the motivational aspect.

Lastly, none of the studies have presented a pre-test of students' motivation prior to any implementation of CW activities, nor a post test. In the study by Dai (2010), the level of motivation among students is defined by addressing a general problem of demotivation amongst students attending writing courses in China, since the teaching notably has become textbook driven with a focus on academic and business genres.

To further investigate to what extent CW promotes EFL students' motivation to write, this paper will continue to examine studies that conduct multiple-group research on CW in different cultural and social learning environments, as well as teachers' attitudes towards CW.

4.2 Multi-group Research

In two recent studies, Taki and Fardafshari (2012) and Águila-Pinto (2016) investigated the effects of applying CW activities into a class of EFL-learners. Taki and Fardafshari (2012) investigated the effects of EFL learners' writing skills and motivation after participating in a weblog-based collaborative learning activity. In the study, 80 students participated, all of them female Iranian English language learners between 18-25 years of age with 40 students both in a control group and an experimental group. The experimental group received an introduction to the general skills needed to use a computer and to understand the weblog. They also received introductory training that provided guidelines on collaborative work, blog interaction and formal writing as well as the concept of peer assessment and interaction. Further, the experimental group had to interact through the weblog. All students were then given specific topics to write about. One topic was that the students should write about things that they have not done before and would like to do. The results showed that 95% "strongly agree" and "agree" that a blog can be used as a platform to practice writing in English. Furthermore, 90% of the students felt that they were able to express their feelings freely, and even 90% agreed that they were more motivated and interested in writing. The results also showed positive effects on students' writing such as improved sentence length, sentence structure, and creativity in writing. From this, Taki and Fardafshari concluded that blogging increased learners' interest in writing and that it made students more motivated. In addition, blogging promoted learner interaction which in turn encouraged students to read and write for communicative purposes.

Intuitively, one could argue that the teaching method of using a blog might be the motivating factor for the students. However, blogging could be regarded as an obvious CW activity. This is supported by Hyland (2009) who refers to CW being any type of writing that occurs outside the professional forms of writing, and by Maley (2009) who argues that the general category of CW can include texts of different genres that requires the writer to

follow the rules of such a chosen genre. Additionally, at least one of the topics that the students wrote about in the blog seems to reflect on the students' self-expression in a relatable context. This creates a CW activity that has the potential to aid students to discover things for themselves about the language and therefore promote personal and linguistic growth which can result in positive motivation. Additionally, blogging as a genre follows certain rules, and therefore we could argue for Maleys' theory that the structure or boundaries within a CW concept such as blogging can push creativity and understanding of language and possibly motivate students in their writing activity.

In a similar study, Águila-Pinto (2016) investigated the implementation of CW activities as a tool for developing writing skills in an EFL classroom. The participants of the study were all high school students between the ages of 14 to 17 at Instituto Cultural Peruano Norteamericano. The total population of this study consisted of one hundred students. The researchers divided them into two main groups, placing fifty students in both a control group and an experimental group. The experimental group was subject to the implementation of the CW activities. The study design began with a diagnostic survey before creative activities were implemented. The purpose of the diagnostic survey was to measure students' attitudes towards writing activities in class based on their previous learning experiences as well as identifying potential challenges. The implemented CW tasks included comics, dialogs, video prediction, and scripts. Thereafter, the survey was conducted again to measure any changes in the students' attitudes towards the writing activities. Additionally, the six strongest and the six weakest students of both the control and experimental group were to write an assessment essay that later was evaluated.

In the experimental group, a total of 40 students initially had low motivation to participate in writing activities in class. However, after being presented by various and intensive CW activities the participants experienced a significant change of attitude towards the writing activities in class, as they acquired more motivation and positive attitude. This made them take risks with the language and increased their expression at length. Águila-Pinto concluded that CW activities had a positive outcome of multiple language skills and that the activities allowed students the chance to enjoy their writing tasks. Despite the study being limited by a small research population, it still displays positively that CW can foster

motivation for EFL learners to write. The fact that Águila-Pinto conducts both a pre- and post-test could further strengthen the conclusion.

Taki and Fardafshari (2012) and Águila-Pinto (2016) concluded that the students extended their use of language, were interested in writing, and took risks with the language. We connect these findings to Tompkins (1982) who states that writing stories fosters entertainment and stimulates students to write. This in turn relates to Maley's (2009) understanding of why CW creates motivation. Additionally, the students' production of text in both studies can be connected to the effect of relevance for the students when engaging in the CW activities. The relevance could possibly be manifested in creative output in the form of L2 writing formulating the student's thoughts or new insights. We argue that this could be a creative circle where relevance for the student seemingly creates an output which again creates insight, and so on until a given subject is exhausted. We connect this to Dörnyei's (2009) L2 motivational self system and the powerful motivator in the desire to reduce the difference between the present L2 self and the ideal L2 self. Moreover, the learning environment created by the CW assignments seemed to provide a positive learning experience for the learners, which according to Dörnyei (2009) could be one component that creates motivation.

However, in both studies it can be questioned as to whether the students' displays of motivation were caused by the fact that they regarded prior teaching in writing as de-motivational. In that respect, any new assignment or task could possibly be regarded as more motivational. Águila-Pinto (2016) possibly deals with this confound by teaching both the control and the experimental group, thus, bringing an equal effect of "something new" into both environments. Taki and Fardafshari (2012) did not address this issue in their study.

Furthermore, in the study by Águila-Pinto (2016) the students had to actively acknowledge their prior writing experiences when answering the exit survey. This could add a risk of prompting answers to become more positive since the majority of the students in the study already had a strong negative attitude towards writing.

So far, our studies presented have included different kinds of creative writing implementations in solitary learning environments. It is in our interest to examine if the same kind of CW implementation will share or have different outcomes concerning writing from learners in different kinds of social and cultural EFL learning environments.

4.3 CW in Different Cultural and Social Learning Environments

Dougherty (2015) conducted research on the motivational aspects of CW to EFL students at the Dhaka University in Bangladesh as well as to EFL students at Abu Dhabi University in the United Arab Emirates. The two different learning environments in universities from different cultural and social settings provide an interesting contrast to the research above.

Dougherty (2015) investigated three research questions: (1) Do EFL students perceive CW in English as motivational in their English studies, (2) does CW in English encourage EFL students to write in English outside of the classroom, and (3) does CW in English motivate EFL students to be better users of English? Dougherty referred to three psychological needs that activate motivation. Firstly, a sense of competence by achieving a goal. Secondly, the ability to direct oneself toward a goal, and thirdly a sense of relatedness (p. 54). The author connected these three psychological needs as components to redevelop L2 writing classes to increase motivation and argued that L2 writing classes should be redesigned to ensure activities relevant to students' lives and opportunities for social interaction and self-expression.

In the Abu Dhabi study there were 15 participants, all male, taking 15 hours of English class time per week where the researcher taught the writing component. CW was introduced through special assignments and additions to regular course offerings. All students were then subjected to the same CW instructions and assignments. Data were collected via a voluntary online survey in English. In the Dhaka University, 18 students participated in the study, 5 men and 13 women, meeting 13 times for three hours per class meeting in a CW writing course. The students were all aware of both research objectives, pedagogical purpose, and goals for the course. Data were collected through a voluntary paper-based survey. Of primary interest to our study, 71% of the Abu Dhabi students and

100% of the Dhaka students confirmed that the use of CW in English was motivational for their English studies. The other two questions also received positive responses, thus confirming the motivational aspect of CW across multiple dimensions. The author concluded that CW in EFL programs could serve as a powerful motivational force.

The Dougherty (2015) study is limited, because the research population is small, and therefore it is hard to generalise from the results. Also, it could be argued that the students at Dhaka University already were positive and motivated toward CW, since they were enrolled on a specific CW course offered by the University. However, the study still displays clear and significant results of CW being a motivational force in both EFL study environments. It is also of importance to note that the 2015 study is a follow-up study of an earlier study conducted by Dougherty in 2008. Having two studies in two different parts of the world allowed the author to not only re-evaluate the 2008 results in a new light but also to gain a far greater mass of data in order to answer the research questions. As such, the study extends to further understand the impact of CW in terms of motivation for EFL students in their English studies.

We argue that CW can be seen to afford students the opportunity to journey into their own cultural and social context, allowing the student to discover relevance in the student's own life within a given CW concept. We claim that there seems to be an opportunity for the EFL student to discover and further clarify their own ideal L2 self, thus defining actions needed to close the gap between the actual L2 self and the ideal L2 self. Tompkins (1982) points to that effect by claiming that writing stories or poetry supports the student's search for identity, clarifies thinking and stimulate writing.

Dougherty (2015) claims that L2 learning is dissimilar to any other learning, because the individual student must accept elements of an alien culture into the context of his or her life (p. 1). In our view, this is part of the dynamics in the free writing within the framework of CW, where the EFL learner through his or her life observations adapts part of the culture in the L2 into his or her own identity.

Further, Dougherty (2015) also points to both Keller (1983) and Dörnyei (2001) claiming that motivation should be at the center of education. We argue that this is in coherence

with the Swedish syllabus stating motivation as a component of L2 (Skolverket, 2011, p. 30).

4.4 Teachers Attitudes of CW

To further understand CW in an EFL context, we look into the question of teachers' attitudes towards the motivational aspects of CW. Pelcová (2015) used a questionnaire to investigate the possible contribution of CW as a tool for teaching and learning English, and teachers' attitudes towards implementing CW in classroom exercises. Additionally, the author examined how frequent the teachers used CW in their teaching practice. 39 teachers of English with an average of 5.22 years teaching in Czech schools took part in the study. The results from the questionnaire demonstrated that the teachers regarded CW as a beneficial tool for teaching English and that the majority of the teachers specifically believed that CW can develop writing skills in English. In addition, 51% of the teachers believed that CW can enhance motivation, and 77% of the teachers considered CW to improve students' self-confidence, which we link to motivation. Additionally, the form of CW preferred by the teachers heavily favors storytelling followed by poetry, songwriting, playwriting, and lastly screenwriting. Surprisingly, the teachers did not use CW on a frequent basis.

Keeping in mind that this is a stand-alone study on a very small population, we really do not know if these results bear any significance, but we can regard the study to target the status of CW among teachers in a specific geographical location at a specific time. In that respect, most of the teachers think CW can develop writing. As such, we can argue that teachers in the study were observant of CW being a useful tool for language development and that the teachers could identify the motivational aspect of CW regarding EFL learning.

Moreover, we can argue for the importance of CW being a continued and frequent part of EFL-learners L2 acquisition. All of the above studies recognize that the nature of CW can foster an experience that increases the motivation for an EFL-learner, and the explanation can be that CW becomes a very effective tool in aiding students to achieve intrinsic motivation. Lamb (2017) argues that autonomy, competence, and relatedness can help students achieve intrinsic motivation, and according to us CW can possibly promote this.

Even if CW implies certain rules or limitations in an activity, it still focuses on students' self-expression, and as such, it can create an autonomy where the students personally feel that they can choose the content of their texts, and in turn become a meaningful activity. The second condition is to create competence by giving the students a sense of gaining mastery of a subject area or skill. This can be achieved from the characteristics of CW activities creating flexibility that seems to push students' production of text. This can give opportunities for the students to interact with the teacher or peers over a text of relevance for the individual student, and this can possibly create a sense of relatedness. As such, CW can be optimized as a tool for teachers to create a motivational positive attitude for EFL-learners when acquiring and developing writing skills, and help EFL-learners to write.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, EFL learners acquire motivation to write when engaged in CW activities. This is achieved from the CW activity, because it creates a learning environment where EFL learners' self-expression becomes the focus of the writing activity. Additionally, writing becomes more relevant, enjoyable and interesting. Also, an increase in participation, personal growth and self-confidence can be obtained for the EFL learner that potentially increases the experience of success. Furthermore, and in a Swedish EFL context, CW activities could be used to motivate learners, and in return aid writing and linguistic skill development. An achieved motivation that stimulates writing and linguistic skill development could become the first step to change or solve the number of Swedish EFL learners failing the writing assignments from the Swedish National test in English.

The limitations of this study are of course expected, as the motivational effects of CW have not been researched enough in terms of quantitative and qualitative data. In order to ascertain a more accurate conclusion, both quantitative and qualitative data that describes or identifies EFL learners' prior motivation towards English writing needs to be addressed.

Understanding that CW activities promote certain conditions that create motivation for EFL learners to write, it would be interesting to further investigate, in detail, what conditions of motivation actually correspond to CW. Long-term research that pays attention to a particular group of EFL students and their motivation development after being engaged in different CW activities over time might be an interesting idea, as well as research on a larger scale that identifies students' prior motivation in English writing compared with the motivational effect after being engaged in CW activities.

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