

THE ROLE OF LITERATURE IN MOTIVATING EFL LEARNERS

РОЛЬ ЛІТЕРАТУРИ У МОТИВАЦІЇ ВИВЧЕННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ
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Second and foreign language learning is an arduous process, since a learner does not just learn another language but essentially adapts to a new culture and way of thinking. For learners of a foreign language, reading plays a crucial role in language acquisition since it is considered the principal second language input source. Through reading, learners are not only able to gain information about the target culture but also learn grammar, sentence structure, and vocabulary.

Despite its many benefits, the importance of literature in language teaching was not recognised by scholars for a long period of time. However, in the 1990s, interest in literature and language as a unit was rekindled. Robert C. Gardner, Zoltán Dörnyei, and Geoff Hall are among the most widely recognised representatives whose work greatly contributed to discovering the positive aspects of motivation and literature in foreign language learning. Since then, several studies and researches have been conducted among language students, which served to discover the influence literary works have on language learning.

The main objective of this article is to explore the role motivation and literature play in the process of foreign language acquisition, especially in English; what effect literature has on the development of learners of English as a Foreign Language; how motivating they find different literary texts; and whether including literature in the curriculum makes any difference at all. The article mainly focuses on the previous studies and research conducted on the given topic; it gives an overview of what motivation is and its importance in language learning; and it presents the contradictory views of implementing literature in the language acquisition process. In light of the findings in this paper, it can be said that, if utilised correctly, literature can be motivating for foreign language learners, despite it not being the primary tool learners would use to improve their skills.

Key words: English as a foreign language, EFL learners, language acquisition, literature, motivation.

Вивчення другої або іноземної мови – це складний процес, оскільки учень не просто вивчає іншу мову, а по суті адаптується до нової культури та способу мислення. Для тих, хто вивчає іноземну мову, читання відіграє вирішальну роль у засвоєнні мови, оскільки воно вважається основним джерелом вхідної інформації для другої мови. Завдяки читанню студенти не лише отримують інформацію про цільову культуру, але й вивчають граматику, структуру речень та словниковий запас.

Незважаючи на численні переваги, важливість літератури у викладанні мови довгий час не визнавалася науковцями. Однак у 1990-х роках інтерес до літератури та мови як єдиного цілого відродився. Роберт Гарднер, Золтан Дорней та Джефф Холл є одними з найвідоміших представників, чії роботи значною мірою сприяли відкриттю позитивних аспектів мотивації та літератури у вивченні іноземних мов. З того часу було проведено кілька досліджень серед студентів, які вивчають іноземні мови, що допомогло виявити вплив літературних творів на вивчення мови.

Основна мета цієї статті – дослідити, яку роль відіграють мотивація та література у процесі вивчення іноземної мови, особливо англійської; який вплив література має на розвиток тих, хто вивчає англійську мову як іноземну; наскільки мотивуючими для них є різні літературні тексти; і чи має включення літератури до навчальної програми взагалі якийсь значення. У статті основна увага приділяється попереднім дослідженням та дослідженням, проведеним на дану тему; дається огляд того, що таке мотивація та її значення у вивченні мови; а також представлені суперечливі погляди на впровадження літератури у процес вивчення мови. У світлі висновків цієї статті можна стверджувати, що за умови правильного використання література може мотивувати тих, хто вивчає іноземні мови, незважаючи на те, що вона не є основним інструментом, який студенти використовують для покращення своїх навичок.

Ключові слова: англійська мова як іноземна, студенти, які вивчають англійську мову як іноземну, вивчення мови, література, мотивація.

Statement of the problem. Language acquisition is a process everyone went through and completed in their youth, unless a physical or mental condition made it impossible. It is mostly a mechanical pro-

cess, especially when we talk about learning one's mother tongue. Due to the influence of one's general surroundings and the innate desire to be able to connect verbally with their environment, as children,

little attention is paid to the process of language acquisition. Scholars argue whether it would be more efficient if a second or foreign language was taught in schools in a similar manner to natural language acquisitions, while others, like Stephen Krashen, think that “*learnt* language could not become *acquired* language”. Whichever might be true, there is still the fact that some students are able to learn a language more effortlessly than others [7, p. 82].

According to Dörnyei [5, p. 117] highly motivated individuals are able to overcome their shortcomings in learning conditions and language aptitude, and they are more likely to reach their goals than those academically gifted people who lack this drive. Motivation plays an important part in second or foreign language learning since it serves as a catalyst for learning a new language and then turns into an incentive to continue the learning process.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

Williams and Burden [12, p. 120] define motivation as “*a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, which leads to a conscious decision to act, and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals)*”. Thus, the authors state that motivation is composed of internal or external stimulus/stimuli and the intentional resolution to pursue and accomplish one’s goal(s).

Dörnyei collected the elements of foreign language learning motivation and classified them in three major categories, namely the Language Level, the Learner Level, and the Learning Situation Level. This contained such factors as need for achievement, self-confidence, attributes of the language course, the teacher’s person and the group dynamics. He based this on the research conducted by Clément et al. [3] among Hungarian EFL learners who had little to no contact with England and its population, thus provided an excellent opportunity to study motivation with less significant social influence. However, Dörnyei criticises this framework, since he finds it lacking the interrelations between the items and mentions the difficulty to conduct empirical research with its help [5, p. 1].

Foreign language learning is distinguished from any other school subject due to the fact that one’s language defines the individual most thoroughly. “*Learning a second language is ultimately learning to be another social person*” [4, p. 136]. Therefore, foreign language learning is influenced by social and cultural factors. This realisation led to the development of an independent discipline called the Social Psychology of Language. Robert C. Gardner, as a representative of this school, created the *socioedu-*

cational model of language learning, which included the following factors: the learner’s cultural beliefs, their learning attitude, their integrativeness, and their motivation. Gardner highlights motivation and believes it to be the most essential of all factors [12, p. 115–116].

The motivation that contributes to foreign language learning is especially intricate. Its complexity stems from the language’s versatile character and function. It functions as a teachable code for information exchange, acts as a foundation for individual identity, shapes our thoughts, and serves as the primary channel for social organisation. Thus, it is not possible to directly draw parallels between the so-called L2 motivation (the motivation to learn a foreign language) and adaptability in multiple disciplines. The knowledge that foreign language acquisition also entails the fostering of a kind of “L2 identity” and the integration of part of the target culture further corroborates the previous statement [5, p. 118].

Gardner also distinguishes between *integrative* and *instrumental orientations* in motivation. Just like motivation, though the two are slightly different, orientation symbolises the cause because of which an individual aspires to learn a language. We can talk about integrative orientation when it is the learner’s desire to assimilate into the target culture, whereas instrumental orientation consists of external factors, for instance, financial reward, career goals, or passing exams. Gardner’s model has been broadly accepted, although during the 1990s several scholars challenged his view. New studies and research were made to extend the theoretical framework [12, p. 116–118].

Despite the articles published on motivation and studies discerning the incentives of language learning, until the mid-1990s, there was scarcely any inquiry about how motivation could be implemented in a classroom setting. Teachers are more interested in what motivates their learners (whereas a number of scholars disregard the root of motivation) and what can be done to enhance the success of foreign language learning. The limited research on this topic left educators to depend on non-professional methods. On the other hand, scholars like Burden, Good and Brophy, and Raffini, among others, contributed greatly to this field of theoretical research.

Gardner and Tremblay argued that these prospective approaches to enhancing motivation should only be regarded as hypotheses. They base this view on the fact that the work of the aforementioned scholars is not supported by research-based evidence. Addressing this argument, Dörnyei and Csizér surveyed the practical value of motivational strategies in classrooms. They conducted their research among

200 actively working teachers from various institutions. The researchers used Dörnyei's earlier attempt to create the "Ten Commandments for Motivating Language Learners" and the findings of this survey to construct a new version of the commandments under the same title. Their list constituted of the following ten points:

“1. Set a personal example with your own behaviour.

2. Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.

3. Present the tasks properly.

4. Develop a good relationship with the learners.

5. Increase the learner's linguistic self-confidence.

6. Make the language classes interesting.

7. Promote learner autonomy.

8. Personalise the learning process.

9. Increase the learners' goal-orientedness.

10. Familiarise learners with the target language culture” [5, p. 130–131].

Despite the lack of evidence-based studies regarding motivating language learners, several language motivation studies have been conducted in recent years. For instance, Tuan [11, p. 432–436] conducted an empirical research among 290 university students and 7 English teachers. This paper sought to discover those elements that promote EFL learning and to assess approaches that can optimise these components. The students were asked about what and who has an impact on their English learning, what characteristics a good teacher should have and the difficulty of the textbooks they are learning from. The majority of the participants answered that the learning strategies, the methods used by the teacher and their previous experience affects their learning the most. It is interesting to note that, compared to the ways of learning, teachers have a lesser impact on the students' motivation, yet their teachers influence them considerably more than their peers or parents. These findings underscore Tuan's theoretical framework based on the work of various researchers, which proposed that the quality of the learning circumstances and a highly qualified teacher who implements diverse teaching methods in the classroom are able to motivate students in EFL learning. Tuan also proposes that to enhance the effectiveness of these motivating factors, teachers should assist their students in finding different learning techniques, vary their teaching methods and provide the students with tasks more appropriate for their competence level.

Tuan's research among teachers showed that they all find L2 motivation essential and useful for the students' development; however, they think that the learners' lack of adequate motivation and learning

strategies hinders their learning progress. The results also attest to the teachers' use of a variety of motivational methods, such as bonus marks, praise, more challenging exercises, and further help to encourage student autonomy. The participants of the study proposed after-school activities (e.g., English competitions or English-speaking clubs) to motivate students. The results of this survey show positive results from both the students' and the teachers' perspectives on motivation [11, p. 436–439].

Previously unresolved parts of the general problem. In recent years, the role of literature in language learning and teaching has been the subject of various theses and academic articles. For much too long, there has been a drift between literature and language, though some experiments emerged at the start of the century – first and foremost in EFL – to merge language and literature. Researchers are in great disagreement on this topic. While some, for example D. Belcher, A. Hirvela and S. Vandrick, say that literature should be incorporated into second or foreign language teaching in order for students to acquire a vast variety of linguistic and rhetorical tools, others, like W. Edmondson, argue that it offers no additional cultural reference whatsoever and might even be demotivating for the learners. Vandrick highlights numerous challenges that could occur in the classroom while using literature in language learning. These include the difficulty some literary works propose, the relative insignificance of preparing learners for academic writing genres, and the possibility that students might find literature banal [9].

In support of including literature in language learning, Boria [2] discusses the cultural importance of literature. She argues that many idioms and phrases we use every day originate from different literary texts, and one has to know the original work to truly embrace these quotes and references. Boria emphasises that contemporary literature is the best tool to teach modern language and represent the current situation of a society. She suggests using folk literature, poetry and narrative fiction in a classroom to do gap-fill exercises or tasks dealing with language registers.

The article's objectives. The main goal of this article is to investigate the impact of literary works on the language learning process and the learners' development. This study seeks to understand whether literature can be an effective motivating tool in foreign language learning.

Presentation of the main material. The interest in literature as a means of language teaching brought not only new theoretical studies but several empirical ones. In one such study, intermediate undergraduate foreign language students were asked about their

stance on literature in their foreign language classes. The participants' main focus was to enhance their everyday speaking skills, but they also considered the refinement of their writing skills and vocabulary important. The results of the survey suggest that while the learners see literature as a possible tool to improve their abilities, it is not deemed to be the most appropriate one for this purpose [6, p. 198–199].

Results of a different survey conducted by Qiping and Shubo among EFL learners show that the classes of 34% of English literature teachers are considered boring by the participants. The main reason behind this is the teacher's choice to use a one-way teaching method over discussion during the lessons. Another study revealed that English teacher trainees in Hungary do not read a lot of fiction; nevertheless, outside of the curriculum, most of them use English for reading [8].

An ethnographic research conducted in a Pakistani classroom observes the way English literature and language influence the students' behaviour and self-identity. The researcher, Shirin Zubair, introduced a feminist critical educational method into the classroom, which prompted her students to think of the high canonical English classics in the context of such topics as women's loyalty and obedience to their family and fathers and consent to arranged marriages, which are important questions in Pakistan. During the course learners showed genuine interest and actively took part in discussions, since they felt the literary texts relevant to their situation. It also proves that literature can be a useful tool to enhance learners' motivation if used appropriately [6, p. 208–210].

A hundred and one Indonesian EFL learners were asked to participate in a study which aimed to discover how motivated are students to read in English and what factors influence this drive. The collected data suggests that students are not comfortable with reading in English and will choose to read in Indonesian most of the time, but their favourite topics (e.g. romance, mystic, history etc.) will moti-

vate 45.2% of them to read in English. The learners also admitted to being deterred by difficult texts and challenging reads. However, they are motivated to improve their reading because of competition and recognition from both their peers and their teachers. Literature cannot be considered a driving force in the case of these students but being the best at reading English can [10].

The findings of Arboleda Arboleda and Castro Garcés [1] support the belief of literature being an important component of second and foreign language learning. They conducted a study at Universidad del Valle with 26 participants who were doing an intermediate English course to improve their reading and writing skills. In the case of most of these students, the love of literature is a given factor. The learners agreed on the significance of literature in foreign language learning and recognised its value as a source of cultural knowledge. Their responses also indicate that they are more motivated if their tasks are engaging and the authors believe that literature offers a multitude of possibilities for EFL students to enhance their language proficiency in an interesting way.

In conclusion, foreign language learning is rather challenging for some learners, whereas others are able to acquire a language easily. Language aptitude is important and makes the procedure easier, but motivation plays a more crucial role. A number of scholars argue that motivation overrides the learners' shortcomings, and thus, a less gifted student who is adamant about learning a new language will be more successful than an apt one. A number of academics suggest that literature is beneficial for the learning process. Several studies conducted among foreign language learners whose learning process involved literary texts show positive results. However, there is also evidence that literature is not essential for an individual's progress. There are a number of opportunities for further research regarding L2 motivation and learners' perspectives on literature in language learning.

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