Motivating students and Improving Language and Interpersonal skills through Forensics

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Abstract
The aim of this paper is to propose a highly motivational framework of integrating Forensics into the State School Systems based on the Greek Anavryta Experimental High School's experience. In many countries, where English is taught as Foreign Language, State School teachers struggle with a plethora of constraints; for instance, overcrowded, mixed-ability classes, in tandem with an outdated, rigid, exam-oriented curriculum, which is accompanied by poor quality, unattractive textbooks. Further hurdles may be the lack of Information Technology resources or adequate teaching time. Nevertheless, extracurricular activities, such as a Forensics after school club, can compensate for the insufficient time allocated, provide an interesting learning environment which does not demand sophisticated digital tools, promote social interaction and could reverse the lack of interest demonstrated by the students. The focus will be cast on the utmost motivation of the participants in the particular Forensics' club through a prism of contextual factors such as the instructional context and the social milieu. The analysis will be based on theories of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, as well as cognitive theories (expectancy of success, self-determination and goal setting and achievement). Through literature, field research (both needs analysis and a posteriori feedback) as well as observation, it will be illustrated that via Forensics, language development is accomplished while the participants' communication, social and interpersonal skills are enhanced. Moreover, teacher development can be achieved simultaneously, since teachers abandon their traditional role and become co-coordinators, coaches and advisors.

Keywords: Motivation, Forensics, Oratory, Integration, Skill Building

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to propose a highly motivational framework of integrating Forensics into the State School Systems based on the Greek Anavryta Experimental High School's experience. Firstly it is imperative to define the term Forensics. Secondly we need to highlight that in many countries, where English is taught as Foreign Language, State School teachers struggle with a plethora of constraints; hence Forensics will be proposed as an innovative way to circumvent these problems. We will go on showing how Forensics can enhance participants' English language skills while improving their teamwork, social, interpersonal and communication skills. The most important part of the presentation is to highlight the students' motivation and level of dedication which are immense, as illustrated through both their Needs Analysis and a posteriori feedback.

Definition of "Forensics"
Firstly, Forensics which is derived from the Latin word forum, turned into forensic and later on forensics is mostly known as a criminology term; nonetheless, English language practitioners know that it also refers to the art of argumentation discourse and it is used as an umbrella term for the following six events: Debate, Group Discussion, Impromptu Speaking, Original Oratory, Duet Acting (comic and dramatic) and Oral Interpretation of Literature (comic and dramatic as well). Briefly, in group discussion there is a predetermined topic and the students discuss trying not only to build their argumentation, but also alliances. The rationale behind original oratory is for a student to think of an original topic or to present an original and convincing point of view about an ordinary topic. The impromptu speaking is for born communicators. The student has 30 seconds to choose a topic out of the three given, 1 minute to gather her/his thoughts and then speak eloquently for 3 minutes.

This is a combination of rhetoric and logic building accompanied by a memorable delivery. Oral interpretation of literature involves the communication of the intellectual and emotional content of a piece of literature through the effective use of voice and body. Duet acting consists of a 9-minute acting segment by a pair. Both the former and the latter require a combination of artistic and language skills. The crowning event, for which distinct societies exist, is the debate. The two most common debating forms are quite different as regards their rules. The world schools' one consists of two 3-member competing teams, the Government and the Opposition. The British parliamentary style includes four 2-member teams, pro and con introducing and concluding respectively.

State School Constraints

The first merit of Forensics is that it has the potential to help EFL teachers overcome possible state school constraints. A common problem is teaching overcrowded, mixed-ability classes (Gaies & Bowers, 1990 cited in Beaumont at al, 2005). This fact in tandem with an outdated, rigid, exam-oriented curriculum, which is accompanied by poor quality, unattractive textbooks present, one could argue, insurmountable challenges. Further hurdles may be the lack of IT resources or adequate teaching time. A particular to Greece problem is a prevailing vicious circle regarding the mentality of all the stakeholders (Ministry of Education – School teachers – Parents – Students) that English is mainly learned outside the school premises.

This fact along with the misconception that by acquiring a certificate in English one is done with the language, as if the certificate alone and not the knowledge is the target, undermine the legitimacy of English as a school subject. Moreover the "norm of mediocrity" which is quite prevalent results in learners suffering social consequences for academic success, which is reflected in labeling hard working students "teacher's pet", "nerd," or "brain" (Daniels, 1994, p.1011 cited in Dornyei, 1997).

Nevertheless, extracurricular activities, such as a Forensics after school club, can compensate for the insufficient time allocated, provide an interesting learning environment which does not demand the use of a computer lab, promote social interaction and could reverse the common lack of interest demonstrated by the students. Someone might argue that extra-curricular activities are not as important as integrating Forensics and especially debate in classroom. Well, condensed and simplified versions of debate, group discussion and impromptu speaking could also be incorporated in the mainstream curriculum as Communicative Language Teaching Games (CLTG), whenever the teacher feels it is appropriate.

As Palmer notes, it has been shown that if used in conjunction with other instructional activities, can "maximize the learning and attendant affect for a wide variety of student types" (Palmer, 1983, p. 15). Actually, Timothy Stewart found in his research that 3 out of 4 of his reserved students found debate motivating and ranked it as their most favorite classroom activity (Stewart, 2003). Furthermore, Papaefthymiou-Lytra supports that "pair and group work provides greater intensity of involvement" (Papaefthymiou-Lytra, 1990, p.178). Apparently, learning becomes personal, exploratory, and thus motivational. Long and Porter, argue that group work contributes to a positive learning culture by means of an intimate climate (Long and Porter, 1985). It also enhances the quality of student talk and helps differentiate instruction as it may adjust to individual characteristics and needs.

Linguistic Merits

The linguistic merits of Forensics are undeniable. For instance, the members of the debate teams have to utilize all four basic language skills, while practicing for forthcoming contests and during the events themselves. Team members have to listen attentively to and note down in detail the arguments of the opposing team(s) so as to rebut their contentions. Furthermore, writing is an integral part of the brainstorming, in the preparation phase, so as to compile debate scripts.

Extensive reading is required, not only in case the debate motion is set in advance, but also to build a good background knowledge regarding contemporary issues so as to put forward arguments buttressed by solid facts. Moreover, each speaker has to deliver a 6-7 minutes speech with a clear structure so as to fulfill the task of his/her assigned position and convince the judges. As highlighted by Krieger "debate is an excellent activity for language learning because it engages students in a variety of cognitive and linguistic ways. In addition to providing meaningful listening, speaking and writing practice, debate is also highly effective for developing argumentation skills for persuasive speech and writing" (Krieger, 2005, p.25).

Concerning the rest of the events, different skills may be more in the foreground but once again the linguistic benefits are enormous. For instance, the speaker in original

oratory would have to draft and re-draft his text numerous times, until she/he is satisfied with the final version. Similarly, both duet acting and oral interpretation of literature not only require extensive research so as to choose the right piece, but also months of rehearsals. All the aforementioned activities are socially realistic and credible 'language generating' activities, not only for purposeful language use but also for encouragement of 'acquisition' as opposed to learning (Crookall, 1984). Despite the focus being on what the students are doing and the language is used as a tool for reaching a goal rather than a goal itself, the linguistic confidence the participants acquire is tremendous.

21st Century skills

What is even more important, other skills are simultaneously acquired or improved. Analytical thinking and speech structure are a *sine qva non*. No matter how fluent a speaker may be, if his/her speech lacks structure (no signposting, no recapping) and if he/she does not fulfill the task of their assigned position (for instance the prime minister, has to define the motion and suggest method(s) of implementation if applicable), the adjudicators will definitely penalize them for it. Furthermore, arguments have to be validated and the cause - effect correlation to be illustrated. Evidently, communication skills are required for a good debater or in general a participant in Forensics' events. As Nisbett points out, "debate is an important educational tool for learning analytic thinking skills and for forcing self-conscious reflection on the validity of one's ideas" (Nisbett, 2003, cited in Alasmari & Ahmed, 2013, p.147). Furthermore, Fukuda in a study conducted with Japanese students found that before introducing his students to debate only 30.8 per cent of them were not afraid of expressing their opinions (Fukuda, 2003). After debating, the figure rose to 56.7 per cent. Team spirit and teamwork are an integral component of debating and duet acting, but the preparation phase for those participating in impromptu speaking, original oratory or group discussion requires teamwork as well.

At this point it is worth mentioning that the principles of cooperative learning (CL) which is a highly effective instructional approach regarding small groups in order to achieve common learning goals via cooperation are utilized. Theoretically, CL has proven "superior to most traditional forms of instruction in terms of producing learning gains and student achievement, higher–order thinking, positive attitudes toward learning, increased motivation, better teacher-student and student-student relationships accompanied by more developed interpersonal skills and higher self esteem on the part of the student" (Dornyei, 1997, p.482). Students are divided into small groups and learning takes place through peer teaching, joint problem solving, brainstorming, varied interpersonal communication and individual study monitored by peers. All members, including the teacher, cooperate by exchanging ideas, information and providing constructive feedback. (Johnson et al., 1995 & Sharan, 1995, cited in Dornyei, 1997)

A major objective is to put students in a situation that they are first and foremost involved as individuals and the emphasis is on the social and human aspects of that situation. Therefore, students realize that communication is also about empathy, about convincing, about connecting. As it is obvious, in all events, the participants enhance their social and interpersonal skills. On the other hand, the Forensics' club members need to do a lot of research, so their information technology skills are also improved.

However, Forensics through role-play mainly motivates without the impersonal use of technology, which is very common in younger generations. Students are reminded that "the story should be in the foreground and the technology in the background" (Bull & Kajder, 2004, p.47). Therefore, Forensics' action, interaction and competitiveness are greatly appreciated by the participants and are generally perceived as enjoyable leading to higher level intrinsic motivation as will later be further analyzed (Venkatesh, 1999 cited in Williams & Williams, 2011).

Especially regarding debate, which is the crowning Forensics' event, we should also mention that Colbert and Biggers, in a review of thirteen studies, concluded that there are three pedagogically sound reasons why debate ought to be an integral part of academic curricula (Colbert & Biggers, 1985 cited in Wood & Rowland-Morin, 1989). Firstly, it improves communication skills and alleviates communication apprehension; secondly, it provides a unique educational experience as it requires depth of study, complex analysis and focused critical thinking; thirdly, it offers excellent training for future academic and professional endeavours.

Concluding, as regards skill-building we should point out that Forensics help the participant enhance all their 21st century skills, the famous "6Cs" (Fullan, 2013, p.9): "Firstly, Character education— honesty, self-regulation and responsibility, perseverance, empathy for contributing to the safety and benefit of others, self-confidence, personal health and well-being, career and life skills. Secondly, Citizenship — global knowledge, sensitivity to and respect for other cultures, active involvement in addressing issues of human and environmental sustainability. Thirdly, Communication — communicate effectively orally, in writing and with a variety of digital tools; listening skills. Fourthly, Critical thinking and problem solving — think critically to design and manage projects, solve problems, make effective decisions using a variety of digital tools and resources. Fifthly, Collaboration — work in teams, learn from and contribute to the learning of others, social networking skills, empathy in working with diverse others. Finally, Creativity and imagination — economic and social entrepreneurialism, considering and pursuing novel ideas, and leadership for action".

Motivational theories: theoretical background

In order to examine if and why the Forensics activities are motivational, we need to understand the meaning of motivation, which is the willingness of action especially in behavior. People have the natural tendency to stay in their comfort zone and try hard only if there is a good reason for it. The etymology of the word motivation comes from the latin verb movere, which means to set in motion and is originally derived from the Proto-Indo-European root meue- which means to push away, to defend. What motivates you is what makes you either defend or move, in both situations act, by putting some effort. Motives are the starting points that launch decision processes (Crompton & McKay, 1997) and the driving forces of all human behavior (Fodness, 1994).

There are literally dozens of motivational theories, but the most influential and widely accepted ones are those about intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is defined as "the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for

some separable consequence" (Ryan & Deci, 2000. p. 56). In that sense, it is mainly psychological as it is driven by an interest or personal enjoyment in the activity, and is not connected to any tangible reward or punishment; hence it has to do with the individual's inner desires. In a relatively recent research, Steven Reiss proposed 16 basic desires which shape the human behavior (Reiss, 2002), some of which are of particular interest regarding Forensics. For instance, the need for "Social Acceptance", which is the desire of inclusion of not being marginalized, "Curiosity" which is the need to gain knowledge, to learn and understand, "Independence" which is the desire for privacy, individuality and self-reliance, "Idealism" which is the need for just social treatment, the need for "Social Contact" (mainly friendship) and the "Status", which is the desire for social standing.

One would think that the exact opposite of intrinsic motivation is extrinsic motivation, which is the result of exogenous factors. However, there is a complex relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as described in the self-determination theory. The latter not only encompasses both but also addresses the aforementioned relationship and the reciprocal interaction between the two kinds of motivation. It abides by the notion that an individual's behavior emanates from within one's self thus it is self-determined (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011). Actually according to the self determination theory extrinsic motivation can be internalized by the individual if the task correlates with his/her values and beliefs and therefore helps to fulfill their basic psychological needs (Deci et al, 1991).

In order to explain this complex relationship we can use the Ryan & Deci taxonomy as regards the types of extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Thus, external regulation refers to behaviours performed "to satisfy an external demand or obtain an externally imposed reward contingency" and it is the least self-determined form of extrinsic motivation. A second category of extrinsic motivation is introjected regulation, which refers to "a type of internal regulation that is still quite controlling because people perform such actions with the feeling of pressure in order to avoid guilt or anxiety or to attain ego-enhancements or pride". The third category called "regulation through identification" implies that "the person has identified with the personal importance of a behavior and has thus accepted its regulation as her/his own". Finally, the fourth form of extrinsic motivation, "integrated regulation", is the most developmentally advanced one. The extrinsically motivated person "internalizes the reasons for an action and assimilates them to the self" (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Moreover, the achievement motivation theory or competence motivation theory which was formulated within an expectancy-value framework, in the sense that students' drive for achievement is determined by expectancies of success and incentive values. Two further components are the need for achievement and the fear of failure. Understandably, to determine expectancy of success students process their own past experiences (attribution theory) judge their own abilities and competence (self-efficacy theory) and attempt to maintain one's self-esteem (self-worth theory) (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011). Last but note least, we should mention the famous Abraham Maslow's Pyramid, one of the first and very famous attempts to describe the human behavior as a result of needs. The main principle is that all humans have needs, fulfilled or not. The unsatisfied needs dictate our behavior. According to Maslow, there are five categories of needs, which can be classified hierarchically. The basic needs are physiological/ biological like hunger, thirst or sleep followed by the ones

related to the safety, security and health. Any shortfall on the aforementioned makes the individual turn to the particular need and try to satisfy it. Generally, the satisfaction of the rudimentary needs is a prerequisite for proceeding to the social ones, which start with love and friendship, evolve to self-esteem and achievement and finally reach the self – realization region. Forensics is about the tip of Maslow's Pyramid.

Research Presentation

The research proved that students, who otherwise have no control over the lesson and as a result get little satisfaction from schoolwork, feel that Forensics events is about them. They have the control, they speak their mind, and they grapple with issues that do matter to them. As Clark points out, the students are learning by "doing rather than by being taught" (Clark, 1987, p. 50). This is firstly revealed when analyzing the Needs Analysis feedback. The research conducted illustrated that students acknowledge that "English is useful" (73% considered it "absolutely necessary" and 27% "very useful") but the majority "does not really" like their classes (66%) They attribute their dislike to the "classroom atmosphere", "homework" and "exams". Among their most preferred techniques in order to learn were "games" (18%), "songs" (11%), "movies" (19%), "internet search" (23%) and "acting out a role play" (17%). Other techniques like "seeing something written", "repeating", "listening to information" had practically no appeal (less than 5% each). Hence, we can observe what theoretically stimulates the students of this generation. Forensics can motivate as it combines three of their most preferred activities: internet research, games and role-play.

The feedback questionnaire administered to the members of the only Greek State High School's Forensics club is most revealing. First of all, the survey has a sample of 100% since all the members of the team willingly participated in it. Concerning the sample characteristics, gender-wise, the overwhelming majority were girls (almost 70%). Their ages varied from 15 to 17 years old (senior high school students) and their English language proficiency level was quite satisfactory (C1 to C2 level). Their general educational profiley was well above average, since most of the students were among the best in their Junior High Schools, before getting accepted through exams to the Anavryta Experimental School. The results showed that some motivators were really extrinsic in nature, as students participated, thinking that they could improve their grades in English and other subjects. This is a clear example of external regulation motivation; however, some saw their participation as a first step in order to become lawyers, politicians or marketing executives, or thought that they would increase their odds of getting accepted or even earning a scholarship to Ivy League Universities. In that case their extrinsic motivation was rather integrated.

Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority joined and stayed in Forensics' team in order to learn, because of their desire for personal development or because they loved the competition in tournaments; hence their motivation was intrinsic. Most considered it as fun and as a game, while pointing out that they became more popular when they joined the team. Escaping from either a hectic schedule or from boredom was also a motivating factor. There is no single doubt that amotivation and demotivation were overrun by Forensics. Almost all agreed that they liked the fact that they joined without any pressure from family; nevertheless, they were glad to see that their

families liked their participation and felt proud of them. This is a proof of self-esteem and refers to the self-worth theory. At this point it is worth pointing out the importance of contextual factors on student motivation. Peer groups may exert a significant influence on individual motivation especially regarding adolescent learners, as a plethora of research evident suggest that peers often gravitate to similar others and strengthen one another's motivation (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011). Furthermore, the school's philosophy, a supportive family climate, as well as highly motivated role models can be conducive to motivation.

The teacher – students' relation was also a factor, in the sense that they felt that their teacher as a proper coach accepted and encouraged them while she gave them choices and options, so as to promote learner autonomy. Last but not least all of them (with no single exception) would recommend Forensics to their friends and 80% would continue being part of the team (the rest, which is a significant 20%, stated that they might have to stop because it was time consuming and had other priorities, like preparation for the highly demanding university entrance exams). All the above illustrate the students' firm belief that Forensics is useful and that through their participation, they improve a wide range of qualities, a fact that touches upon the self-efficacy theory. Most curricula aim at "catering for effective development of the students as informed and responsible citizens in social and professional contexts". The result of the questionnaires proved that nothing can promote the aforementioned objective better than Forensics.

Shortcomings of the research and Forensics activities

For the skeptics who wonder if motivation can be absolutely proven we need to acknowledge the general, inherent problems in motivation research, as already described by Dornyei & Ushioda: "Motivation is abstract and not directly observable", "it is a multidimensional construct" and finally "motivation is inconsistent and dynamic" (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 197-198). Moreover, a particular shortcoming of our research is that it is cross-sectional, which means that it "samples the participants' thoughts, behaviours or emotional stances at the one particular point of time, as for example in a one-off survey" (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 208) Despite the fact that we used two questionnaires, they were both "snapshots" and as such they cannot "detect changes and patterns of development over time that are due to" (Keeves, 1994 cited in Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 207). The aforementioned indicate that there is more research to be done in order to solidify the conclusions; however the overall results and conclusions of the research cannot be overruled.

Understandably, not everything is perfect about Forensics. Regarding teachers, Forensics is exhausting, time-consuming with no material reward whatsoever. Success requires highly motivated individuals (both teachers and students), willing to sacrifice some of their invaluable free time. I could only counter-argue that both teachers and students will reach the tip of Maslow's pyramid.

Role of teacher/coach – Conclusion

The pivotal role of the teacher in the success of the entire endeavour ought to be highlighted. Firstly, all teachers willing to try Forensics, they should embrace their new role, being more facilitators than evaluators. Therefore, teachers abandon the safety of their role as "sage in the center" and address the need for a different model of instruction. However, their involvement in Forensics can contribute to their personal and professional growth, as they have to reflect, self-evaluate and self-motivate themselves. It requires an attitude change regarding learning and the role they can play in it. Concluding, the Forensics framework makes the English language very attractive for young learners, help them acquire a multiple set of skills, not only linguistics ones, and allows teachers to circumvent the numerous problems of the State School Systems. Forensics has the potential to turn the students of today into the sophisticated global citizens of tomorrow, we would like them to be.

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