Corpus Linguistics and creativity: storytelling for university students

This article reports on an experience of using corpus linguistics to aid students in writing a creative text and so enhance their motivation. The work investigates the available literature to help understand what is meant by ‘creativity’. Although used a lot in EFL, this word has complex meanings connected to it and there is a call to discuss it in a wider context. A worksheet was prepared for students using a corpus linguistic analysis of modern, English versions of the stories of the Brothers Grimm. The article describes how this worksheet was constructed with the use of a specialized corpus and the creation of a stop-list. This worksheet contained single words as well as word clusters found within the tales. Social Work students in an Italian University, involved in an English for Specific Purposes course, were then asked to use a selection of these words and phrases to help them write stories. The final stories were analysed and a follow-up questionnaire was used to elicit the students’ perceptions concerning creativity. The study is linked to Dörnyei’s work on the Motivational Self and tries to show how creativity in EFL can be seen as a motivational tool. The work concludes that creativity is essential in EFL and that it is something that can and must be fostered in students. It aims to help improve understanding of what we mean by creativity and to encourage students and teachers to adopt corpus linguistics within their own specific field of English learning and teaching.