

**An English teacher's ways of motivating students in *Dangerous Minds*
and *Dead Poets Society***

Bachelor's thesis

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1. INTRODUCTION

One could argue that without motivation humankind would perish. Motivation is human willpower, passion and desire; it can make learning new things effective and enjoyable. It should, thus, be one of the most important things teachers research and study. Motivation has been studied extensively and its role in education as well; however, there are not very many studies on how exactly a language teacher can motivate students. The purpose of this study is to explore what kind of ways of motivation films featuring English teachers use, and as a point of discussion, whether those ways of motivation can be adapted to real life, and therefore, whether films are a valuable tool for teachers looking for new ways to motivate their students. Two films, *Dangerous Minds* (1995) and *Dead Poets Society* (1989), were selected to be observed for this study. Both films feature extraordinary English teachers in opposite school environments: one teaches in a prestigious private school with wealthy, well-educated students, abundant resources and ambitious aims to continue to the best universities of the country and the other teaches in a public high school in a lower class neighbourhood where her class consists of somewhat illiterate students who have been labelled challenging and the school's resources lack even copy paper. Quite a few of her students consider graduating high school too ambitious a goal.

The theoretical framework of this study seeks to explore what motivation is, but more extensively, how an English teacher can affect student motivation. Most influential works in the theoretical background are teaching guides by Bennett (2005), Bennett (1994), Tileston (2011) and Reid (2007). This study is influenced by a previous study by Alaste (2008), which researched an English teacher's affect on student motivation from a learner's perspective; the findings of that study form a base for this study and add to the theoretical framework. The data is collected through observation and analyzed qualitatively; the discussion following the results of this study will focus specifically on qualitative analysis of the results and explore how realistic or adaptable to real life the ways of motivation are in these films.

This paper is constructed by first introducing the theoretical framework of this study: defining motivation in general and the different types and aspects of motivation, and exploring ways an English teacher can affect student motivation, either directly or through environmental or task-based factors. Following the theoretical framework the data and method of study and the results of this study are presented, after which the results of the study are discussed. A summary will conclude this thesis: both films presented the inspiring English teacher in a similar manner and featured similar ways of motivation. The theoretical framework formed the basis for student motivation in the films as well, but extravagance was added, one could suppose, to entice a larger audience and thus, adaptation to real life classrooms demands a critical selection process.

2. MOTIVATION AND LANGUAGE TEACHING

The theoretical framework of this study explores teacher-affected student motivation in general, the definition and types of motivation and most specifically practical ways a teacher can influence student motivation. As the purpose of this thesis is to study the ways of motivation English teachers use in two selected films, in order to see if they can be used as resources or tools for real-life teachers, the theoretical framework of this thesis explores similar resources in published studies and literature.

First this chapter discusses the definition and types of motivation and after that moves on to explore different ways an English teacher in particular, can affect a student's motivation: firstly ways teachers themselves affect student motivation, secondly environment-related ways of motivation and finally task-based ways of motivation.

2.1 Motivation

Motivation is the reason for human behaviours: it is the willingness or desire to do something. There are different types of motivation. Reid (2007) speaks of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic is external motivation and is achieved with rewards or other external goals, such as a good grade or graduating. The more ideal type of motivation is intrinsic, internal motivation, which is motivation for the subject itself.

McKeachie (in Bess, 1982: 7) argues that extrinsic means of motivation such as money are likely to have negative long-term effects on motivation. Even though, he discusses teacher and professor motivation, the theory applies to pupils as well: intrinsic motivation is needed if one is to continue the activity in question. McKeachie (in Bess, 1982: 7-13) claims that, in addition to extrinsic motivational factors, competition and evaluation can decrease motivation. I trust this to be true among teachers to whom worry over keeping their job might result in demotivational stress or students who are afraid of failing, but from personal experience competition and evaluation are high external motivational factors in learning. However, since using external rewards, competitions and a major focus on evaluation in teaching produces a divide in motivation, one could suggest avoiding them.

2.2 The ways to affect student motivation

This study is about the English teacher's ways of motivating his or her students. Some of the possibilities are described below, divided into three subcategories. Most educators probably

experience that student motivation is expected to be dependent on them, and in most cases, it is, but a teacher cannot force a student to work: students have to motivate themselves as well as be motivated to succeed. Tileston (2011: 19) summarizes that motivation comes from within an individual. Even though motivation is an internal force, it can be affected with external factors. In this study I discuss specifically the teacher's ways of motivating, and the different subcategories that are in the teacher's power: ways of motivating that are directly teacher-related and environmental- and task-related motivational factors that can be affected.

Ideally students will find intrinsic motivation, Reid (2007: 25) says, as it will allow them to be motivated by the subject itself instead of external rewards, such as merely passing a course or graduating. McKeachie (in Bess, 1982: 7-13) strongly agrees on the importance of intrinsic motivation. Often the teacher is the one helping students find their reasons for studying, but these means are dependent on the students themselves; the following sections will focus on ways the teacher can help students towards motivation.

2.2.1 Directly teacher affected ways to affect student motivation

Directly teacher affected ways of motivating refer to those means that depend only on the teacher's persona, behaviour and actions. I will, however, focus on ways of motivating that a teacher is able to control and change, even though personal chemistries and permanent character traits are often influential in whether students find a teacher likable and motivational or not. Alaste (2008) conducted a study of the English language teacher as a motivator through a quantitatively analyzed questionnaire in two high schools in different Finnish cities and had 60 participants in total from the two schools. The study concluded that the teacher generally raised student motivation and claimed teacher motivation, emphasizing help-seeking and giving constant feedback as the three most important ways of motivation from a student perspective. She reported that the teacher can even have a negative effect on student motivation, which shows that not only the teaching technique is relevant: even persona can make a crucial difference.

Personal experience, previous studies (Alaste 2008) and published theories about teaching and motivation, such as Bennett (2005), have proved that perhaps the most common and effective way of motivating students is the teacher's own motivation: if a teacher is passionate and enthusiastic about his or her subject, it reflects into his or her students as well and thus, contributes to student motivation. It is hardly a motivating factor if the teacher sees no reason to study their subject: why would the students be bothered if the teacher is not? A teacher can, thus, motivate effectively by example.

Reid (2007) discusses the importance of constructive and continuous feedback. In the study

conducted by Alaste (2008) on how great the influence of the English teacher is on student motivation, continuous feedback got strongly positive results: no student found receiving feedback as something lowering their motivation, on the contrary, 78.4 per cent of students listed feedback as something raising their motivation, either slightly or significantly; and the rest were indifferent towards it.

Tileston (2011: 73) and Bennett (2005: 28-31) point out the need for consistency in general. The teacher should set or negotiate class rules and ensure that everybody follows them, including the teacher himself or herself. As stated before, a teacher effectively leads by example, and if he or she should break rules which students are required to follow, it would logically thinking decrease motivation and weaken the relationship between teacher and students. Thus, if a teacher demands punctuality from students, they should be punctual themselves and have the same requirements for every student: feeling discriminated or one student appearing unfairly favoured will most certainly decrease motivation. Students need to know the rules they are expected to follow to be able to feel safe and motivated: they also need to know other expectations. Alaste (2008) discovered that if the teacher is very clear with what is expected of a student, how a certain task is to be completed, how it will be evaluated and possibly clarify with an example, 65 per cent of students that participated in the study found this to increase their motivation.

Tileston (2011: 7-8) says that students only learn long-term things that are important to them as individuals; it is suggested that the teacher help students find personal meaning in what is taught. Some students argue that they do not see the point of studying something, since it has no effect on their life, and see it only as something done in a classroom: this may be the case with foreign languages, such as studying English in Finland; although its status is continually rising. An effective way of motivating these students could be showing them how useful the subject, in this case English, is to their life and future: for example, in professional life, traveling and free time activities. The whole world is accessible to one who knows English, if not in reality, at least in the Internet. Tileston proposes that the teacher should help students set short-term and long-term goals to make the subject personally important, and to, thus, raise their motivation to study it. In Alaste's (2008) study about the English teacher's effect on student motivation it was discovered that the teacher helping students set goals or have the class do so both lowered and raised student motivation rather equally, but the majority of the test subjects were indifferent. Having the subject be perceived as interesting and personally important, on the other hand, had a very positive effect; this will be discussed in more detail in the Task-based section of this chapter.

Tileston (2011) and Bennett (2005) also emphasize the teacher's relationship with his or her students and a positive approach to students and teaching in general. Tileston (2011: 72-73) discusses the importance of a positive relationship especially within multicultural classrooms,

claiming that students from a different cultural background to their teacher require the teacher to build a relationship before teaching the subject. Bennett (2005: 24-31) suggests a practical approach to building a positive relationship with students by for example using plenty of encouragement, trying to direct a question to each student every day and encouraging shy students by giving them quiet, supporting words as they leave the classroom. Bennett also emphasizes a positive approach especially with disruptive students, arguing that their disruptive behaviour might be the result of not receiving enough attention outside of school or having difficulties with learning or focusing. Thus, a teacher should approach their disruptions with a helpful, positive attitude, such as enquiring if they need help to get started with the project rather than telling them to be quiet or to stop being lazy. The teacher's approach is a major, crucial factor in student motivation.

2.2.2 Environment-related ways to affect student motivation

Reid (2007: 89) also points out the importance of managing learning: classroom management is key in a successful learning environment. There are several factors that affect this, all from a positive group dynamic, atmosphere and noise level to the actual classroom, learning material and facilities: lighting, windows, colours, wall displays, desks and interior design (Reid 2007: 28-29).

Where the physical layout and interior as well as all other physical aspects of being in a classroom are important, the actual atmosphere in the class is of higher priority for student motivation and their ability to learn in general. Tileston (2011: 10-12) argues that if a student feels afraid, tense or otherwise distressed, their brain goes into a survival mode, which makes it focus primarily on the source of their anxiety or fear. It is possible to learn in this mode, but it is extremely difficult, as the source of fear exceeds all other stimuli. Therefore, to make any learning, let alone motivation, possible, a teacher needs to build an environment, where students feel safe or as Bennett (1994) suggests, where the students belong. Bennett (1994: 61-66) instructs a teacher to build this environment by building a relationship with the students, by, for example, demonstrating his or her interest in their students' personal lives; by helping students build strong relationships between themselves, for example, through good group work; by ensuring that all students belong to the group and that each student feels accountable and responsible to be involved; and by creating a safe environment. This, according to Bennett, is the result of the previous three concepts and, for example, how a teacher responds to student behaviour, such as responding to a wrong answer in class: Bennett (2005) encourages to be gentle and encouraging, and to offer the student a chance to succeed later on.

Alaste (2008) confirmed that students feel more motivated if the teacher does not embarrass them by suddenly putting them in the spotlight or demanding an answer to a question that is too

difficult for them; students should also be safe from embarrassment from their classmates. One of the most important ways of motivation Alaste found was the teacher making sure that students know it is acceptable to ask for help. The teacher could also emphasize that trying is more important than succeeding and that failures are an integral part of learning, as this will comfort the majority of the test subjects in Alaste's study. Trying to create a relaxed, accepting environment in the classroom through, for example, group work and humour raised the motivation of 70 per cent of students.

2.2.3 Task-based ways to affect student motivation

In this section I will discuss teaching technique, methods and lessons. Modern education provides future teachers with a variety of tools in giving learning colour and variety; instead of exercises tasks are recommended. These often improve social skills, oral communication and communication in general. The content of the lessons is important to how motivating students find the subject in question: if texts are relevant for students, literature interesting and tasks engaging, one could presume that student motivation increases.

Alaste (2008) found out that 71.6 per cent of students participated in the questionnaire thought that tasks that related to them and their interests raised their motivation; 23.3 per cent of them even regarded it as raising their motivation significantly. Equally, if the teacher used fun, new and creative tasks, it raised 68.3 per cent of students' motivation. This relates directly to Tileston (2011) in the previous section emphasizing how students need to feel the subject to be personally important to learn it for longer than the next test. If the subject and the material used in teaching feel relatable, useful and important to students, they learn more effectively and are significantly more motivated. This can be achieved as simply as discovering what kind of things the students are interested in and using this information in designing tasks, texts and assignments.

Reid (2007: 25) emphasizes that a task, whatever it might be, must feel achievable to a student. Motivation – and confidence – falters if they feel they are faced with an impossible task, whether it is the difficulty or mere quantity: giving students too many exercises to complete or a project too difficult or extensive for them to manage might kill their motivation altogether. This, of course, works in the opposite direction as well: if there is not enough to do, tasks given or questions asked are too easy and obvious, it might make students feel they are underestimated or make them simply bored. An external way of motivating is giving students a chance to do some of their homework during the lesson.

Alaste (2008) discovered that using demanding tasks seems to be better for student motivation than using easy ones; even though giving students opportunities to succeed and

strengthen their self-confidence was considered motivating by the majority. Challenging tasks were considered as something raising motivation by 48.4 per cent and demotivational by 13.4 per cent of students. Easy tasks, on the other hand, raised the motivation of 40 per cent of the students, but demotivated 23.3 per cent of them; this would seem to confirm that Reid's thesis of a task needing to be just above the learner's current level to be motivating is valid. If a task offers no intellectual challenge for a student, it is seen as demotivating by a considerably larger portion of the students. This is also supported by 75 per cent of students participated in Alaste's study finding it beneficial for their motivation if the teacher offered them opportunities to show their skill and enjoy their success.

3. DATA AND METHOD OF STUDY

This chapter will discuss the research question of this thesis, methods of collecting and analyzing the data used and provide background for the data presented in the results of this thesis. The question this thesis attempts to answer is: what kind of ways of motivating students do John Keating and Louanne Johnson use in films *Dead Poets Society* and *Dangerous Minds*? The quality and adaptability of those ways will be discussed in more detail in the discussion section of this thesis.

The data of this thesis was collected in February 2013. The method of collecting data is observation: I observed the two films in question approximately six times each to ensure everything relevant for this thesis was included, and transcribed all scenes set in a classroom environment and included all other scenes which involved relevant teacher student communication. The data from *Dead Poets Society* consisted of seven relevant scenes and the data from *Dangerous Minds* consisted of eleven relevant scenes. *Dangerous Minds* in its entirety can be used as data for teacher student communication, whereas *Dead Poets Society* focused more on the life of John Keating's students. The method of analyzing data is qualitative: I will observe and discuss the quality of the means of motivating in the collected data.

Dead Poets Society is a 128 minute American drama from 1989, which is set in a all boys boarding school. The fictional Welton Academy, which is placed in Vermont in the mid 20th century, is conservative and traditional, and the film follows an unconventional English teacher, John Keating, and his class of young men whom their teacher inspires to recreate the “Dead Poets Society” and recite and write poetry to each other. John Keating as a character is one of the most popular and idolized teacher characters in fiction, and this is why he was chosen for this thesis.

Dangerous Minds in 99 minute American drama from 1995, which is set in the high school of a lower class neighbourhood and follows a substitute teacher, LouAnne Johnson, who is given a

difficult class to manage. Her class consists of mainly Hispanic and Afro-American students, some of whom seem to be practically illiterate. The film is based on the autobiography of the former marine LouAnne Johnson, *My Posse Don't Do Homework* (1993). LouAnne Johnson is presented as a persistent, imaginative teacher and is the other choice of film-presented teacher to be studied for this thesis.

4. THE WAYS OF MOTIVATION USED BY THE TEACHER IN *DEAD POETS SOCIETY* AND *DANGEROUS MINDS*

In this chapter I will present the results of this thesis. What are the ways of motivation used in *Dangerous Minds* and *Dead Poets Society*? First I will show the ways of motivating that are teacher-related, then move on to task and activity-based means of motivating.

John Keating from *Dead Poets Society* and Louanne Johnson from *Dangerous Minds* have very different environments and students. Keating is teaching in a prestigious boarding school in the 1950s where the school values tradition, honor, discipline and excellence. Keating's students come from wealthy, educated backgrounds and have intense pressure from their parents and the surrounding society to take their education seriously and to find a profession, preferably a highly-educated one, such as a doctor, lawyer or banker. The general atmosphere in the school and among the students is excellent for studying, since all students are in a similar situation and can support each other, even push each other to excel; the boarding school keeps the students in the school mentality. However, stress and fear of failure can hinder learning and cause demotivation, as was discussed in section 2.1.

Johnson on the other hand is a teacher in the 1990s in a city school where her class consists of poor students from lower class backgrounds, who have grown up with drugs, violence and crime. They come from families that are indifferent towards education, even hostile: Johnson loses two of her students because their guardian pulls them out of school, saying they need to get a job to pay to the bills, not to learn about poetry. The atmosphere among her students is similar to their upbringing: they have no motivation and no example in their life that would support wanting an academic education. There is also immense peer pressure to keep up their indifferent, tough attitudes; every day after school they return home and to their social circles that might make a teacher's effort into nothing, bring them right back where they were when they started. Even the surrounding society seems to suggest that Johnson's students ought not to change their ways: in the Dylan-Dylan -contest scene her class is searching the library for poetry books and the library personnel are shocked by their presence; they could be seen as protesting, not wanting the students there. Her class needs a lot of strength to break out of the role society and their school has placed

them in. Despite their different environments and different time period, Keating's and Johnson's ways of motivating are very similar.

4.1 Teacher-related ways of motivating

Keating begins his first lesson by walking out of the classroom and whistling. When his pupils do not realize to immediately follow him, he comes back to door, urges them to follow in a friendly manner and takes them to the school hall to look at old photographs of the school's previous pupils. Johnson has a more traditional approach that she has to adjust after the first lesson because her class shows her no respect and gives her no attention. On the second lesson she is wearing a leather jacket, tells her class she is a former U.S. Marine and teaches them karate. Both teachers separate themselves from the other teachers their students have or have had, and use methods that could be classified as unique to capture their class' attention.

Both teachers also make themselves relatable to their pupils: Johnson uses language that is closer to her pupils' vernacular and Keating, as demonstrated in the example below, uses irony and humour with his class and is not afraid of making fun of himself. He reveals even embarrassing details about himself to make himself familiar and approachable to his class, reminding them he used to be just like them.

Dead Poets Society, classroom scene 1: Keating introduces himself to the class after taking them out of the classroom.

KEATING: "Now let me dispel a few rumours, so they don't fester into facts. Yes, I, too, attended Hell-ton and have survived. And no, at that time I was not the mental giant you see before you. I was the intellectual equivalent of a 98-pound weakling. I would go to the beach and people would kick copies of Byron in my face." *Student smile and laugh at this.*

Whereas Johnson uses common language, Keating uses very colourful, educated and poetic language: "*dispel*", "*fester*", "*intellectual equivalent*". He also refers to their school, Welton Academy as "*Hell-ton*" in an attempt to relate himself with his pupils rather than the rest of the staff, and demonstrates his ironic sense of humour by suggesting that his pupils call him "*O Captain, my Captain*". When he needs to reprimand his class, he speaks with gentle, good-humoured sarcasm and rarely has a need for that, as the majority of the class is on his side and uses peer pressure to convince every member of the class to work.

Johnson as well is against the school's staff and sides with her pupils: she fights the school board for her pupils and disregards their curriculum and rules, for example by taking the pupils to an amusement park despite the fact she was forbidden from doing so. The difference in the two teachers' language can be explained by their setting: Johnson's

class and area is of a lower class background in the 1990s whereas Keating's Welton Academy is a prestigious, aristocratic private school for boys from wealthy, educated, upper class backgrounds.

An important motivational factor in theory, personal experience and these films is the teacher's passion for their subject and profession, which is emphasized also in the theoretical framework of this thesis; it was, for example, one of the most important factors in student motivation, according to Alaste's study (2008). Keating is deeply passionate about literature and poetry and he discusses it from a new, unconventional perspective, urging his pupils to do the same. When asked why he tolerates the school and stays, he replies: "I love teaching. I don't want to be anywhere else." In the scene below, he argues for the importance of his subject to his class:

Dead Poets Society, classroom scene 2: Keating speaks passionately of poetry.

KEATING: "Mr Hopkins, you may agree with him, thinking 'Yes, we should simply study our Mr Pritchard and learn our rhyme and metre and go quietly about the business of achieving other ambitions.' I've a little secret for you. Huddle up. Huddle up!" *Students lean towards Keating who crouches down in the middle of them.*

"We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race and the human race is filled with passion. And medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for."

"To quote from Whitman: 'O me, O life of the questions of these recurring of the endless trains of the faithless of cities filled with the foolish. What good amid these O me, O life?' Answer: that you are here. That life exists, an identity. That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse. That the powerful play goes on and you may contribute a verse." *Perry is in awe.*

"What will your verse be?"

Keating acknowledges the importance of his class' future professions and interests, but speaks passionately for his subject, particularly poetry. His manner and vocabulary are dramatic and theatrical, and his students are impressed and especially some students, such as Perry who aspires to become an actor, are thoroughly inspired. He uses very powerful rhetoric, such as asking his class "*What will your verse be?*" after a moment of intense silence. Johnson also uses passion to motivate her pupils, but in a rather different manner: she uses logic to convince her pupils it is useful for them to be in school, but speaks passionately of the benefits of education. Motivation and teaching theory confirms that demonstrating the usefulness of the subject and the work required is a strong motivational factor; as is the teacher's passion and interest in their own subject, as discussed in section 2.2.1. Johnson's main motivating factor, however, is how she cares for her class. Keating is involved in his pupils' personal interests and lives as well.

DM 8: The class is reading poetry. Some students are missing. Johnson walks among the students.

J: "Does anybody know where, um, Durrell and Lionel are today?"
S: "No. They around. What's the prize for learning this poem?"
J: "Learning. Knowing how to read something and understand it is the prize. Okay? Knowing how to think is the prize."
S: "I know how to think right now."
J: "Okay. Well, yeah, well, you know how to run too. But not the way you could run if you trained. You know, the mind is like a muscle. Okay? And if you want it to be really powerful, you got to work it out. Okay? Each new fact gives you another choice. Each new idea builds another muscle, okay? And it's those muscles that are gonna make you really strong. Those are your weapons, and in this unsafe world I want to arm you."
S: "And that's what these poems are supposed to do?"
J: "Yeah. Hey, try it. You're just sittin' here anyway. Look. Okay. If at the end of the term you're not faster, stronger and smarter, you will have lost nothing. But if you are, you'll be that much tougher to knock down."

Johnson explains to her class how reading and knowing how to learn will improve their life. She tries to inspire intrinsic motivation in her pupils, to have them better themselves of their own will. She tells her class she cares for them: "*Those are your weapons and in this unsafe world I want to arm you.*" Johnson does not only tell them she cares, but she proves it with her actions: she lends Raoul, a Mexican boy of a poor family, 200 dollars to pay for a leather jacket he "bought" to impress her, she is determined in going to her pupils' homes to check on their well-being and to tell their parents how proud they should be of their children, and she takes Emilio, her most difficult student, in her home when there is an armed man with homicidal intent after him. In the end, it is specifically her devotion and sincere worry for her pupils that make them fight to keep her as their teacher. It is interesting that Alaste (2008) found that a significant percentage of the participants in her study felt a decrease in motivation if the teacher kept in contact with their parents and informed them of their school success. One could suppose the level of praise and sincerity is the relevant factor in Johnson's case.

4.2 Task, activity and environment related ways of motivating

Keating and Johnson use unconventional, unique teaching methods. Keating repeatedly takes his class out of the classroom and either has them walk around the school or has his lessons outside; he also had his pupils read a chapter of their theory book, and then tear out the entire section on analyzing poetry. He began his lessons by walking out of the class without talking to his pupils and taking them to see the photographs of previous pupils, telling them "*carpe diem*", seize the day, which is the continuing theme in his teaching. He begins another lesson by standing on his desk and suggesting the boys follow him: climb on the desk and see things from a new perspective. He also uses humour in his teaching, which appears unusual in the aristocratic, conservative Welton

Academy: he paints a very different picture of poetry with comedic impressions of it. He quotes poets and authors several times on every lesson. His methods prove he is considerate of his pupils: he chooses lesson plans he believes adolescent boys will enjoy, such as reading poetry while kicking a football outside, which could be based in the theory explored in 2.2.3; student motivation is raised when they find a task or subject personally important, achievable and relevant to them. Enjoying oneself is also a rather significant motivating factor. In the extract below, Keating has taken his class out on the courtyard to demonstrate once again the point of originality, unconventionality and looking at the world from a new perspective: he orders three boys to walk around the yard, and the rest of the class start clapping with the march.

DPS 6: Keating and class are outside on the courtyard. Keating has asked three boys to walk around the yard. They find a rhythm and the rest of class claps rhythmically for the march.

KEATING: "Now, I didn't bring them up here to ridicule them. I brought them up here to illustrate the point of conformity: the difficulty in maintaining your own beliefs in the face of others. Now those of you – I see the look in your eyes like 'I would have walked differently.' Well, ask yourselves why you were clapping. Now, we all have a great need for acceptance. But you must trust that your beliefs are unique, your own, even though others may think them odd or unpopular. Even though the herd may go 'that's bad.' Robert Frost said 'two roads diverged in a yellow wood and I, I took the one less travelled by, and that has made all the difference.' Now, I want you to find your own walk right now. Your own way of striding, pacing. Any direction. Anything you want. Whether it's proud, whether it's silly, anything. Gentlemen, the courtyard is yours." *Students start walking around, some not taking it seriously, rolling their heads, arms folded. Dalton stands alone, leaning on the wall.*
"You don't have to perform. Just make it for yourself. Mr Dalton? You be joining us?"
DALTON: "Exercising the right not to walk."
KEATING: "Thank you Mr Dalton, you just illustrated the point. Swim against the stream."

Johnson uses rather drastic teaching methods: when conventional lesson plans fail, she decides to teach her class karate; she throws out candy and chocolate bars as rewards for correct answers on grammar lessons and promises her class a free trip to the best amusement park. Perhaps the most drastic of her teaching methods is promising that each and every one of her pupils has an A, and all they have to do to keep it, is to try. This could be based in the fear of evaluation resulting in demotivation, as discussed in section 2.1. Johnson could be seen as attempting to remove the fear and stress of evaluation, but she also gives the students used to failing something to work for and something to be proud of. She teaches them poetry through the music of Bob Dylan, and like Keating, is considerate of her class: her pupils are adolescents from poor, lower class homes and Johnson chooses to discuss poems with themes of, for example, drugs and death. She has realistic expectations of her class and she adjusts them whenever needed, such as trying a simpler question if the original is answered with silence. In the example below, she wants her class to conjugate verbs. They are not willing to co-

operate, and, therefore, Johnson changes the exercise into something more provoking: she first changes the object into “*to die*” and then changes the verb from “*want*” to “*choose*”. Her class is very vocal, though rarely staying on the subject, but during this exercise she finds one of her brightest pupils, Callie, for whom's future she fights later on.

DM 3: Johnson tries to get the class to conjugate verbs. Nobody is willing to participate.

JOHNSON: “Okay.” *Nobody budes. She wipes away her sentence “We ____ green beans for dinner” and replaces it with: ‘We want to die.’* “Is this true?”
STUDENTS: “If we wanna die? Hell no. We want you to die.”
J: “Is that true?”
S: “Well, if it was between you and us, hell yeah.”
J: “Okay.” *She changes ‘want’ into ‘choose.’* “What about that?”
S: “Hey! Hey! I don't care if I live or die. Suicide, man. You want us dead? What's all this bullshit with dying?”
J: “No, darlin', but I do want you to keep your A. So, no, I'm gonna make it real easy on you, okay? All you have to do is tell me the verb that makes this sentence true.”
S: “We choose to do some karate.”
J: “Okay, give me a verb instead of choose.”
S: “We're going to die? We must die, okay.”
J: “Okay, we must die. Is must a verb? Can you, uh--- Can you must something?”
S: “No, must ain't no verb. Yeah, I must piss right now. You'd better believe it.”
J: “Okay, what verb that we used today is the most powerful?”
S: “Die. Piss. Oh you so stupid.”
CALLIE: “Choose.”
J: “Choose. What's your name?”
C: “Callie.”
J: “Callie. Why?”
C: “Because that's the difference between owning your life and being afraid. Sayin' I choose no matter what.”
RAOUL: “You mean, like a guy's got a gun to your head and he's pulling the trigger and you say you choose to die?”
C: “No, you ain't choosing to die, but you can choose to die without screaming, right? I mean, you could always choose somethin'.”

Johnson also holds a poetry-themed competition for her class: the Dylan-Dylan contest, where her pupils must find poems by Bob Dylan and Dylan Thomas that are like each other, and she will take the winning group for fine dining in the area's best restaurant. The difference in the class at this point is drastic: they are concentrated and quiet, listening to the person reading. They still joke around, but closer to the subject and in a friendly manner. Johnson also rewards every other group with a mysterious gift box; the students get to pick an item of their choice from the box. The poems that win the contest are a running theme in the film: Bob Dylan's “*When I go to my grave my head will be high*” and Dylan Thomas' “*Do not go gentle into that good light*”. In the end Johnson's pupils convince her to stay by calling her the “*light*” from the poem and giving her candy.

DM 7: The class has been reading 'poetry' by Bob Dylan and is now reading a xerox of

a restaurant menu.

JOHNSON: "That is correct. It's from The Flowering Peach, the best restaurant in town. Ever hear of it?"

STUDENTS: "Yeah, we heard of it. It's supposed to be like some special restaurant or somethin'."

J: "Mm-hmm. So, does it sound good? Because whoever wins the, uh, the-- the Dylan-Dylan contest goes there for dinner with me."

S: "The what? Hey, what's the Dylan-Dylan contest about?"

J: "Well, there's Bob Dylan", *she writes on the board*, "who we've been reading. And then there's Dylan Thomas, who also wrote poems. If you can find the poem written by Dylan Thomas that is like a poem by Bob Dylan, you win the Dylan-Dylan contest."

What seem to be most effective ways of motivating based on these films are the teacher's passion and own, internal motivation and how much they care about their students. As demonstrated in the scene transcript in Appendix 1, it is how Johnson fights for her students that becomes a break-through: then the class leader, Emilio, accepts Johnson and the rest of the class follow. Keating stands out with his enthusiasm and love for his subject; that is how he is able to inspire his students. One could conclude based on these films that if a teacher is motivated, it is likely they will be able to motivate students as well.

5. DISCUSSION

In this section I will discuss the results of my thesis and research question and reflect on the similarities and differences between the theoretical framework and the results. I will particularly focus on discussing how realistic and adaptable the ways of motivation used in these two films are in reality: could I use them as an English teacher myself? Films, literature and school myths of legendary teachers provide inspiration and often an exemplary role model and an idol to aspire to to all future teachers. Most of Keating's and Johnson's actions can be adapted in some extent to Finnish classrooms as well: teachers should be motivated, passionate and involved in their subject and care about students, which is something the theoretical framework of this study agrees with. They should also not be afraid to use different and unconventional teaching methods.

What is not apparent in theory, is how important it can be for a student's motivation that their teacher actually cares about them. Knowing one's students is quite essential in motivating them: Keating can motivate his group of boys by playing football or by humorous, physical activities, and meanwhile Johnson motivates her class by external rewards, such as learning karate, candy bars, taking the whole class to an amusement park or promising each student an A they only have to keep. Her students come from poor backgrounds and have been thoroughly demotivated by their previous experience in school; some of them seem almost illiterate. They respond to external

rewards, which is why Louanne tries to inspire intrinsic motivation in them through establishing external motivation first.

Motivation studies and teaching guides both demonstrate that using external rewards as a way motivation will not be successful in long-term teaching. Bennett (2005: 25) warns not to use external rewards that are too expensive or large as they will not be possible to maintain, let alone increase, and will result in a decrease of motivation. Thus, such a way of motivating as Johnson's decision to give out candy bars for right answers in grammar lessons, will not be a sensible choice as a real-life adaptation. Whereas candy can be a delightful treat at end of term or on a special occasion, choosing it as a regular reward for doing the required work will take away a student's desire to work for learning's sake or do the work without the candy. The same principle applies for all external rewards: they might make the subject and learning it of less importance, as discussed in section 2.1. There are also practical problems in using candy bars as a way of motivating: school policies, parents, students' dietary restrictions and allergies can make even an occasional treat difficult.

If school policies can make offering candy or similar external rewards difficult, taking a class for a trip outside of school is definitely difficult: one needs to organize permission slips for all students, arrange safe transportation to and from the destination and negotiate for funding. Similar issues apply for the reward of the Dylan-Dylan contest in *Dangerous Minds*: taking a selected group of students out to a restaurant at night. There are several different opinions on using competition in a classroom; those opposing often argue that having some students win and others lose decreases motivation. In this case, having three students win a desired prize over the others could certainly decrease motivation and weaken the class atmosphere. In addition, there could be concern from parents due to cases of inappropriate teacher-student relationships and the safety of students in general.

In both *Dangerous Minds* and the *Dead Poets Society* the teachers have set themselves against the other staff and even the whole school system, and side with their students. The schools, their policies and even the other teachers are portrayed as old-fashioned, uninspiring and unyielding. If some of the ways of motivating students presented in these two films are unrealistic, setting oneself against the rest of the school's staff or the general school system, is definitely not something one should apply into reality. Teaching guides and studies confirm other teachers as a valuable asset for a teacher: peer support is a significant teaching tool and a way to increase student motivation, and it functions similarly for teachers as well. Whereas building a strong, good relationship with one's student is essential for effective teaching and motivation, one should do the same with colleagues.

One can most definitely adapt Keating's and Johnson's actual English teaching methods into

reality. The Dylan-Dylan contest, for example, could be very successful in teaching poetry. Keating is constantly quoting poetry and authors, fitting pieces of information fluently in his everyday speech: he is, thus, showing his class that there is a place for their subject in reality, not only in their textbooks. The importance of making the subject relevant for students was discussed in section 2.2.1. Keating is also teaching them constantly without them really perceiving it as learning poetry, literature and language, which is something all English and other language teachers could easily apply into real life. Johnson also teaches grammar, a discriminated subject in today's schools as well, in quite a unique manner. She chooses topics that are on her class' level and area of interest and provokes discussion if need be. One could say that if film-glamour is cut off and looked through with a heavy dose of reality, there are several functional, adaptable ways of making English lessons more motivating with the means presented in these two films. The lesson to be learnt from these teachers could be to use imagination and to be unafraid to try unconventional, new and odd ways of teaching in order to keep students motivated and interested.

6. CONCLUSION

This thesis sought to determine what kind of ways of motivation English teachers used in two selected films, *Dangerous Minds* and *Dead Poets Society*, and discussed whether or not they were adaptable to everyday teaching and whether they presented similar tools in teaching and motivating students as the theoretical framework. The study was based on teaching guides, such as Bennett (2005) and Reid (2007), and previous research on motivation, particularly on the English teacher's affect on student motivation and what students perceived to be the most motivating teaching methods (Alaste, 2008). It was conducted by meticulous observation of the two teacher's conduct, classroom management and relationships with the students.

What can be concluded from the results is that films can be used as a source of inspiration and functional, adaptable ideas for everyday teaching, though one is recommended to view teaching methods used in films critically. The results of Alaste (2008) and ways of motivation that are generally considered most effective were present in the films: both teachers were exceptionally motivated, enthusiastic and interested in their subject; they used varying, different teaching methods and built a strong relationship with their class and individual students. This relationship made students feel safe to ask for help. They also set students tasks just above their current level to keep them interested and challenged and had students offer peer support to each other, which were emphasized ways of motivating in the theoretical framework of this thesis.

Continuous feedback, the importance of which was also emphasized in the theoretical framework, was not apparent in films, which is most likely due to the public watching films

becoming bored: due to that particular reason the films also featured a lot of extravagance that would be unrealistic in a real-life classroom, such as taking students to an amusement park or a restaurant without permission or any organization, giving out candy bars as rewards for right answers, teaching violence-prone students karate on an English lesson or have them tear out a section from their expensive text books. Both films also set the teacher characters against the rest of the school's staff and even the entire school board, which is not recommended for real teachers: one should build a strong, positive relationship with both students and colleagues. Using competitions in teaching and keeping in contact with a student's parents were considered demotivational in Alaste's study (2008), though have supportive authors as well: both were used very successfully in *Dangerous Minds*. One could suggest that the success of either is dependent on the individuals in question.

This research could be continued by analyzing other films depicting teachers and education in general to see whether the patterns in these two films continue in others and if there are more inspiring teaching ideas, such as the Dylan-Dylan contest in *Dangerous Minds*. One could also study how effective films are as education for teacher trainees compared to literature on motivation and teaching methods and interview real-life teachers to find out what kind of ways of motivation they have found most effective or what kind of inspirations they have had for their teaching.

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APPENDIX 1: TRANSCRIPT OF A SCENE IN DANGEROUS MINDS

DM 6: Johnson has interrupted a fight between the boys and the gone to each of their houses to tell the parents how well their sons are doing in school and how proud they should be of them. The class feels she has betrayed their trust by telling on their classmates, which resulted in them getting suspended.

JOHNSON: "I will not go underground, 'cause somebody tells me that death's comin' 'round. Okay, this is another Dylan poem." *The class is silent, sitting in their seats.* "Now is that a code or does it just mean what it says?" *A long silence.* "And I will not carry myself down to die. When I go to my grave, my head will be high. My head will be high. What does that mean?" *Another long silence.* "Anybody?" *A longer silence.* "Nobody. Is there something I should know?"

STUDENTS: "Yeah, I'll tell you. You ratted on Raul, Gusmaro and Emilio. Yeah. You got Emilio put into detention. It wasn't none of your business, chismosa. And you got Raul and Gusmaro suspended. Now they're gonna get their f*ckin' asses kicked. And you got Emilio--"

J: "Hey, I didn't rat on anybody."

S: "Wasn't none of your business anyway, you chismosa. Bullshit. Let this... Told you she was full of shit. Snitches get stitches, bitch."

J: "Do you wanna talk about this?"

S: "On you, shit. Whatever floats your boat, teach. We don't have no choices in this room."

J: "Well, if you all feel that strongly about it, leave the room."

S: "What?"

J: "Hey, listen. Nobody's forcing you to be here. You have a choice. You can stay, or you can leave."

S: "Lady, why are you playin' this game? We don't have a choice."

J: "You don't have a choice? You don't have a choice on whether or not you're here?"

S: "No. If we leave, we don't get to graduate. If we stay, we gotta put up with you."

J: "Well that's a choice, isn't it? You have a choice. You either don't graduate or you have to put up with me. It may not be a choice you like, but it is a choice."

S: "Man, you don't understand nothin'. I mean, you don't come from where we live. You-- You're not bussed here."

J: "Do you have a choice to get on that bus?"

S: "Man, you come and live in my neighbourhood for one week and then you tell me if you got a choice."

J: "There are a lot of people who live in your neighbourhood who choose not to get on that bus. What do they choose to do? They choose to go out and sell drugs. They choose to go out and kill people. They choose to do a lot of other things. But they choose not to get on that bus. The people who choose to get on that bus, which are you, are the people saying, 'I will not carry myself down to die, when I go to my grave, my head will be high.' That is a choice. There are no victims in this classroom!"

S: "Why do you care anyway? You just here for the money."

J: "Because I make a choice to care. And honey, the money ain't that good."

S: "Whatever."

EMILIO: "Read it again, Miss Johnson."

J: "What?"

E: "Read those lines you just read again."

J: "I will not go down underground cause somebody tells me death's comin' 'round. Does that mean just what it says?"

E: "No, it don't mean just what it says. Because... You wouldn't go under the ground if someone told you death was comin', but you would go into the ground if you were already dead."

J: "Do the rest of you agree with that?"

CALLIE: "Well, I kinda agree with it, but I think it just means that he ain't gonna help death out, you know? It's not like he's just gonna lay down and wait for it. I think he's gonna choose-- No, I think he's gonna make the choice-- to die hard."

S: "Yeah, I agree with that. Yeah, me too. That's what it sounds like to me."

J: "Okay. Well, what about, uh, the rest of it? Um-- When I go to my grave my head will be high. Head will be high. What does that mean?"

S: "You're gonna die with pride."