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**Reimagining Language Education:
The Power of Storytelling and Positive Engagement**

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Abstract

This research investigated the adoption of the Case-Scenario Method (CSM) in second language learning, to show that this method boosts the motivation of the students and helps them to overcome their Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA).

Drawing from research studies related to positive emotions theories, the present study aims to investigate the role of promoting positive emotions in students' motivation. More specifically, it investigates whether encouraging positive emotions through storytelling strategies increases students' motivation to continue the study of a foreign language. The research work, based on a mixed methods research approach, presents a case study of two groups of participants with the same level of language acquisition but in different settings to get comprehensive results. The results are based on classroom observation, participants' semi-structured interviews, and students' questionnaires and feedback questions. The first group consists of students from a secondary school in Austria in the traditional classroom, and the second group consists of students studying English online.

The results of data gathered from the two case studies indicate that the unpredictable course of the activities and a supportive environment in the classrooms stimulate students' motivation to study a foreign language. Additionally, the result of the observation demonstrates that the sense of self-governance in the process of learning promoted the engagement, which in turn allowed students to be confident while presenting in English. By choosing these questions for the research work, we wanted to make a small contribution to show that education could be useful and fascinating.

Introduction

Language learning has long been predominantly a cognitive endeavor, one that presupposes mastery of vocabulary, grammar, and syntax to ensure communicative competence. However, a growing body of research in applied linguistics and positive psychology indicates that affective factors such as motivation, commitment, and anxiety are equally crucial to successful language acquisition. In particular, storytelling has become a powerful educational tool that can promote positive emotions and meaningful interactions in language teaching. By placing students in narrative contexts, storytelling activities can reduce students' affective filter, allowing for a more authentic and confident use of the target language. At the same time, the rise of online learning environment presents both new challenges and opportunities to encourage constructive involvement. While digital platforms can sometimes reinforce feelings of isolation and fear of foreign languages (FLA), they also enable creative interactions based on scenarios that push the boundaries of the traditional classroom.

Although affective factors are widely acknowledged, many EFL programs still prioritize accuracy and test preparation. Strategies that target emotional well-being and intrinsic motivation remain marginal. In such contexts, students often report high levels of FLA characterized by a fear of negative evaluation, self-awareness when speaking, and a reluctance to take interpersonal risks which in turn can inhibit speech control, reduce participation, and impede long-term language development. In addition, most existing studies on storytelling and positive engagement have focused on either face-to-face settings or online environments in isolation, a small number of studies have compared the way in which case-scenario storytelling activities take place with students with similar skills in both modalities. As a result, instructors

lack a clear guide on how to adapt interactive storytelling activities to accommodate both in-person and online students while engaging the FLA and supporting motivation.

The current study attempts to fill these gaps by examining how the CSM, a didactic approach in which students are placed in role-based and story-informed tasks, influences the motivation, commitment and language performance of EFL intermediate students in two different contexts: a traditional face-to-face class of Austrian adolescents based on the theories of positive psychology, SLA motivation and FLA reduction strategies, this study addresses the following questions: (1) Can storytelling activities using the Case-Scenario Method motivate students and foster positive engagement in language learning? (2) Can storytelling activities using the Case-Scenario Method mitigate foreign language anxiety and improve learners' speaking skills?

To answer these questions, a qualitative-dominant mixed-method research case study design was adopted, incorporating classroom observations, students' questionnaires and feedback questions and semi-structured interviews to capture both the behavioral and emotional dimensions of engagement.

Chapter 1 covers the relevant literature on the role of storytelling activities in language learning, the principles of Positive Psychology regarding student engagement, and the nature and consequences of foreign language related anxiety. It also introduces the Case Scenario Method (CSM) and summarizes its prior applications in EFL contexts. Chapter 2 describes the design and methodology of the study and describes the profiles of the participants, the specific narrative scenarios and the data collection tools. Chapter 3 presents the two case studies in detail, highlighting the emerging dynamics, the changes in students' attitudes and the comparative ideas between the environments. Finally, Chapter 4 discusses findings on

motivation, engagement, anxiety reduction and practical classroom implementation, and outlines study limitations. The Conclusion then outlines the implications of these findings and proposes avenues for future research and teacher professional development.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Language teaching goes far beyond pedagogical strategies. Teachers should keep in mind the significance of the emotional factor and the motivation of students in the learning environment, since happy students tend to learn more. In the study report of Oishi et al. (2007), the survey of 118,000 people proves that life satisfaction directly correlates with the desire to study. Additionally, Achor (2010) suggested that positive emotions 'prime' people, making them more capable of acquiring new knowledge. He explained this from a neuroscience perspective. Positive emotions flood our brains with dopamine and serotonin, chemicals that make us feel good and dial up the learning centers of our brains to higher levels. They help us organize new information, keep that information in the brain longer, and retrieve it faster later on (Achor, 2010: 44). Taking everything into consideration, learning a language requires cognitive skills, and it also involves emotions and motivation.

In the very first chapter of this work, we will focus on the theoretical background of the terms concerning this research. Specifically, we will examine the types of storytelling and the concept of positive psychology in education.

First, we will consider the role of storytelling in language learning (paragraph 1.1). The paragraph will dig into the power of storytelling and examine its application, benefits, and types. The following paragraph (paragraph 1.2) deals with Positive Psychology and its link to SLA. It will provide the main principles and analyze how to foster positive emotions. After that we will explore the phenomenon of FLA and showcase its impact (paragraph 1.3). It will discuss how anxiety manifests in the language classroom, its detrimental effects on learners' willingness to communicate. Moreover, this paragraph includes a review of established strategies to help students overcome their barriers effectively. Finally, we will sum up this

chapter with an overview of the case-scenario method in education, focusing on its definition and application within language learning contexts (paragraph 1.4). This part of the chapter will introduce the benefits of incorporating this method into the learning process, which makes communication authentic in the classroom. Similarly, the advantages of implementing the method in two settings will be explained.

1.1 The Role of Storytelling in Language Learning

From ancient times, people used to connect and share their personal experiences through stories. When we tell stories, we use our imagination and connect new information about the world with the one we have already obtained. This process has a similar effect on learners' acquisition of new information. They implement their previous knowledge about the language and absorb the new language input while communicating with others. Thus, storytelling has a significant impact on the way humans communicate and plays a key role in education. In comparison with traditional textbook methods, storytelling is more engaging, enjoyable, and memorable. It cultivates an interest in listening, speaking, writing, and reading (Lucarevschi, 2016).

Generally, teachers positively relate to storytelling activities. For children who cannot read yet, it is possible to express themselves with the use of images to reinforce their speaking skills. Understanding stories orally helps to improve cognitive skills of children and connect narratives to their real experiences, which is essential for overall language development. Additionally, storytelling is beneficial for learners of all ages, whether told by teachers or students (Wallin, 2015).

1.1.1 Definition of Storytelling

To appreciate what storytelling is, we must first define it. From prehistoric times, storytelling was a cornerstone of communication, cave paintings already chronicled real events to tell stories about them. As language developed, so did storytelling, suggesting that one of the main reasons we created language was to share stories and help people understand the world around them. Stories are not just a form of communication; they are an essential part of our survival. In our daily lives, we tell stories in many different ways: through conversations, anecdotes, or by sharing personal experiences. Whether we are passing on important information, sharing our own experiences, or just connecting with others, storytelling helps us understand who we are and how we relate to others (Davies, 2007).

Storytelling is not just a pastime. It is also a way to teach, share knowledge, and pass on cultural values. Through stories, we can communicate ideas, build relationships, and shape cultural identities, making storytelling an important tool for both individual and group expression. In his work *Acts of Meaning*, Jerome Bruner (1991) argues that stories are not just for pleasure, they help us make sense of the world and give us a framework for understanding complex ideas. Bruner explains that stories are valuable tools for memory and comprehension, which lets people connect new information with what they already know. This is one of the reasons why storytelling is so effective in educational settings.

Researchers' definition of storytelling varies widely. As an example, we can see that Hsu (2010) defines storytelling as an oral activity, involving the use of voice, facial expressions, and gestures to engage the listener. In contrast, McDrury and Alterio (2003) have a broader perspective on storytelling. They draw attention to the uniqueness of this phenomenon. People can transmit data about themselves, others, and the world they inhabit. This contrast stresses

an apparent contradiction in the definitions in Hsu's emphasis on oral storytelling which appears to limit the scope, while McDrury and Alterio suggest that storytelling can extend to different types of narrations. This inconsistency of diverse interpretations of storytelling creates an evident need for a unified description in language education that contains both form and content, as well as oral and written storytelling. Therefore, this thesis adopts a comprehensive definition of storytelling as a creative human experience involving narrative structure, vocalization, and dramatic imagery, allowing the storyteller to connect with the audience and receive feedback through verbal and non-verbal cues.

In addition, the realm of language learning, storytelling has numerous forms, each serving distinct pedagogical objectives. These diverse constructs of storytelling establish an engaging and effective learning environment that facilitates both intellectual and emotional engagement. Several kinds of storytelling methods are recognized to be advantageous in the SLA context. These include:

a. Personal Narratives

Barkhuizen (2016) says that personal narratives are more than just recollections of past events. They are stories people tell to make sense of their experiences and shape who they are, especially within the social and cultural worlds they live in. In his work, he brings out the conclusion that stories are not merely retellings of the past, but they follow a structure in which people embody their experiences, feelings, and their social-cultural identities.

Throughout personal narratives, language learners construct meaningful and captivating context which strengthens their emotional bonding and language acquisition. They also facilitate linguistic skills such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation within real

communicative settings. Similarly, this approach improves interaction, creativity, and empathy among students. Thus, these make this technique an effective pedagogical tool in classrooms (Pérez, 2013).

b. Interactive Storytelling

Rather than having learners simply listen to stories, this teaching method invites them to take an active role in shaping and telling them. When students are involved in building the stories, they get involved more personally, which helps develop both their thinking and communication skills. In their 2012 study, Nielsen and Friesen describe how, during shared reading sessions, learners are encouraged to retell or co-create the storyline. It boosts their understanding of the material and gives them the chance to practice expressing themselves more clearly and confidently.

c. Picture Storytelling

Using visual cues is a fruitful way to captivate foreign language learners' attention. Students can easily build sentences relying on images, instead of text or explanations. When children describe what they see, they link new words to concrete images. It makes the process of remembering new words smoother. Having a picture in front of them makes it easier to speak, which is great for building fluency and confidence over time. One of the main advantages of this approach is keeping learners interested. Children are naturally drawn to images, and when they get the chance to talk about what they see, they are usually more enthusiastic about participating. Teachers can use picture books, basic role plays, or even just a "Show and Tell" activity where students describe a favorite photo or object to the class. To keep track of the process, teachers can use simple rubrics that center on how organized their ideas are, how

fluently they speak, and their vocabulary. As noted by Arguello San Martin et al. (2020), picture storytelling is a practical way to help young learners build their language skills while also keeping them interested.

d. Task-Based Storytelling

Task-based blends storytelling with hands-on activities like role plays or problem-solving tasks. Students act things out, make decisions, and work through challenges using the target language, rather than just telling or listening to stories. It gives them a chance to use English in a real and relevant way. While implementing this approach, students use the grammar in practice and get things done.

Therefore, learners start to see language as more than just a school subject. It becomes a tool for thinking, expressing ideas, and interacting with others by weaving stories into meaningful tasks. Ellis (2003) points out that this kind of task-based storytelling can really boost both fluency and accuracy because it pushes students to focus on meaning while still using correct forms. Over time, it helps them carry their language skills beyond the classroom and into more natural, everyday communication.

e. Case-based storytelling

Often with a preference towards individual experiences, this method utilizes real or fictional scenarios to build up narratives. These cases can represent challenges, situations, or contexts, allowing individuals to explore personal or collective experiences.

This method encourages critical thinking skills, allowing students to immerse themselves in a specific case, simultaneously referring to their own previous expertise in the given setting.

These manipulations make a way for them to understand complex constructions and to use them in a specific context. Besides this, by placing themselves in realistic situations, students explore the sociocultural aspects of targeted languages. These nurture empathy and awareness of how to maneuver a language in different circumstances. Moreover, by immersing themselves in diverse scenarios, students are often set in cross-cultural or multilingual contexts. As a result, learners began to notice the relation of a language to social roles, cultural expectations, and identity. They become more aware of how their backgrounds influence how they speak, listen, and interpret their meaning. As Duff (2014) emphasizes, this method sharpens linguistic awareness and encourages learners to reflect on who they are, how they connect with others, and how language functions as a bridge between different worlds.

1.1.2 Storytelling in Language Learning

Storytelling being a primary means of communication, serves as a powerful tool for knowledge transmission across cultures. "Indeed, some writers have even claimed that all knowledge comes in the form of stories" (Zacher, 2006, p. 2) corroborates the assumption that when people hear or read stories, they create their own identities and compare their ideas to those of others.

In educational contexts, storytelling as a teaching method is not a novel concept; it is one of the most straightforward tools available to educators, particularly in language instruction. Many language teachers frequently incorporate storytelling into their lessons. This technique can be reserved for special occasions or woven into everyday teaching. Suggesting a versatile nature that can be used in various educational groups for different objectives. Many scholars have examined the effectiveness of storytelling in classrooms for English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Lin, 2003; Yao, 2003).

Storytelling has a pivotal role in the incorporation of the four key language skills, as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, into a cohesive and meaningful experience. Providing context-rich input stimulates students to form genuine constructions. (Egan, 2005; Sadik, 2008; Tsou, Wang, & Tzeng, 2006).

Storytelling, when used thoughtfully in language education, opens the door to a type of learning that goes beyond textbook exercises. It invites learners into imagined or remembered experiences where language is not just practiced but lived. According to Verdugo and Belmonte (2007), as well as Bishop and Kimball (2006), this immersive quality strengthens interpretative skills, broadens lexical knowledge, and deepens comprehension. When framed within the principles of positive psychology, storytelling also contributes to a classroom climate where students feel encouraged rather than intimidated, thereby lowering affective barriers and boosting their willingness to engage.

Real-world research continues to support these claims. In a six-week investigation into adult ESL instruction, Kim (2010) found clear linguistic gains among learners who regularly participated in storytelling-based sessions. Whereas students who had limited language ability often felt overwhelmed if tasks were not sufficiently scaffolded. Even though narrative tasks can be transformative, they must align with each learner's current capacity, and the activities need careful planning.

In a similar vein, Atta-Alla (2012) found that story-reconstruction benefits reflective writing and narrative discussion. Participants developed stronger receptive and productive skills, suggesting that storytelling is a viable strategy for comprehensive language development. However, heavily relying on post-intervention assessments of the research leaves open questions about the longevity of these outcomes. Continuous observation and varied

assessment tools might offer deeper insights into how narrative engagement supports language growth over time.

Beyond linguistic competence, storytelling introduces learners to multiple viewpoints and lived realities, helping them become more attuned to cultural nuance and social dynamics. Scholars like Zacher (2006) and Daiute (2004) distinguish a crucial role of personal and communal stories in nurturing empathy, identity exploration, and critical awareness. Through listening and sharing, learners begin to see language as a means of connection and expression.

Nevertheless, this method is not without its pitfalls. When storytelling activities lack clear guidance or accessibility, they risk alienating those who are still finding their footing in the language. Thus, considering visual prompts, collaborative formats, and digital storytelling tools is crucial to ensure that every learner can participate.

In summary, being a multidimensional tool in second language acquisition, storytelling combines emotional resonance with cognitive challenge, which develops their skills. Employment of storytelling turns the language classroom into a space for genuine interaction, self-discovery, and sustained motivation if empathy and individual needs are tailored into the process.

1.2 Positive Psychology and Student Engagement in SLA

The process of learning a language requires memorizing words and learning grammar, and it also depends on the emotional state and motivation of students. Today, educators have switched from the textbook method to more creative tasks in order to bring positive emotions to the

comprehension of speech. Such a perspective comes from positive psychology; this branch of psychology focuses on the study of human strengths and virtues. Positive psychology studies the contribution of uplifting emotions, personal abilities and stimulating environments to academic success (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Positive psychology emphasizes a culture of well-being and individual fulfillment, while traditional approaches focus exclusively on correcting weaknesses. When students feel emotionally secure and encouraged, they tend to stay engaged, overcome setbacks more easily, and have more confidence in using the target language (Gabryś-Barker and Gałajda, 2016).

This section shows a brief overview of his interest in positive psychology and education. Emotions such as interest, joy and perseverance play an important role in the student's participation and development. We will study the role of these emotions to ensure that students are actively involved in the process. Understanding their meaning will make a learning experience enjoyable and lasting, and at the same time will give educators the opportunity to improve their teaching strategies.

1.2.1 Positive Psychology: An Overview

Psychology is not just a branch of medicine concerned with the illness or health; it is much larger. Is about work, education, insight, love, growth, and play. And in this quest for what is best, positive psychology does not rely on wishful thinking, faith, self-deception, fads, or hand-waving; it tries to adapt what is best in the scientific method to the unique problems that human behavior presents to those who wish to understand it in all its complexity (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 7).

At present, psychology has shifted from an exclusive focus on the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness to a more holistic approach that also emphasizes people's well-being and wealth.

This transition is driven by the rise of positive psychology and reflects the growing awareness that psychological research must address not only dysfunction, but also the factors that enable individuals and communities to thrive (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Positive psychology arose from humanistic approaches and is a fairly recent subfield of general psychology that has existed for a little more than two decades. Because humanistic psychology and Positive Psychology care about human well-being differently. The humanistic psychology created by Maslow (1954) focused on personal growth and self-actualization, but it often lacked scientific studies to support its ideas. For this reason, it is sometimes treated philosophically rather than scientifically. Positive psychology, on the other hand, must form images based on the consideration of research and data rather than the dating of personal opinions or abstract theories (Waterman, 2013).

Thus, positive psychology emphasizes the positive qualities and traits of individuals, as well as positive emotions and feelings, considering the influence of contextual factors such as the environment and institutions. Over time, the field has developed different research methods, including experiments, surveys, and case studies, to find out what helps people to happier and more fulfilling lives (Gabryś-Barker and Gałajda 2016).

1.2.2 The Role of Positive Engagement in Language Learning

Positive engagement relating to Positive Psychology refers to the emotional, cognitive and behavioral investments that students make in the learning process. When students are in a positive mood, they are more motivated, persistent and open to new experiences, and all this is necessary for successful language learning.

According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), positive emotions such as joy, interest, and enthusiasm can significantly increase students' motivation to learn. For language learners, these emotions can make the learning process more enjoyable and effective, which directly affects their willingness to learn a language. For example, if students manage to master new vocabulary or grammatical structures, they begin to study more and set other tasks for themselves. In addition, creating a positive emotional environment when learning a language, using game training, or rewarding success can increase students' emotional engagement.

Positive personal qualities such as perseverance, optimism, and curiosity shape the experience of language learning. Learners who are open to new challenges, who interpret mistakes as valuable learning moments, and who maintain a hopeful outlook on their progress are often those who persist, even when faced with setbacks. This orientation, sometimes described as a growth mindset, supports the idea that sustained effort and resilience will eventually lead to improvement. Such students tend to remain more engaged, actively seeking out occasions to practice and apply their developing skills, whether in the classroom or beyond. If students' strengths are encouraged, they will increase their resilience and persevere through the inevitable frustrations of language acquisition.

When students feel secure, respected, and encouraged to take risks to speak in the target language, to make mistakes, and to receive constructive feedback, they are more likely to engage fully in the learning process. The main features of a positive classroom climate are collaborative tasks, peer encouragement, and strong teacher-learner relationships, all these motivate students to learn a foreign language (Gabryś-Barker & Gałajda, 2016).

While the value of positive emotions for student engagement is widely noted, it is important to mention that much of the existing research in Positive Psychology and language learning has

focused on university students. Only a limited number of studies address school-aged learners, particularly those between the ages of 11 and 15. The research by Dewaele et al. (2025) with French pupils learning English found that Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) emerged as the only positive predictor of gains in oral proficiency. In this context, a teacher's ability to cultivate enjoyment was found to play a critical role in students' progress. Findings suggest that positive emotions broaden learners' cognitive resources and help them to overcome challenges such as language anxiety or boredom. Therefore, building a classroom atmosphere that is both safe and supportive is crucial for authentic communication and serves to nurture trust and mutual respect among learners and teachers.

Passion is a moving force behind any goals. Chen et al. (2021) supported this idea and demonstrated the interdependency of positive experiences with successful outcomes. Experiencing inspirational flow, students are fully absorbed into the learning process. Similarly, a desire to master one's skills and competencies can improve both the drive to use the target language and overall achievement. A true passion for second language learning benefits communication skills and fosters wider well-being, motivating people to continue learning while contributing to a sense of balance and personal fulfillment.

Taken together, these strands of research illustrate the fundamental role of positive engagement-rooted in emotion, character and environment, in second language acquisition. Positive psychology-based work consistently demonstrates that students who experience fun, flow, and a sense of meaning in their studies are more likely to be motivated, resilient, and communicative. Although much of this research has focused on older students, emerging evidence from younger students points in the same direction, fun and a supportive school environment can have a strong impact on oral proficiency and help alleviate negative emotions

such as anxiety and boredom. By promoting emotional well-being, setting mastery-oriented goals, and nurturing inclusive educational contexts, educators can create conditions in which both language development and personal growth are mutually reinforced, regardless of the age of the students.

1.3 Foreign Language Anxiety and Speaking Performance

Understanding that emotions play a crucial role in shaping students' experiences and academic performance, many studies have been conducted on this topic in recent years. Most research papers are devoted to the role of affective factors, such as anxiety, in the field of learning a foreign language. Dulay and Burt (1977) were the first who demonstrated interest in the study connected with the role of anxiety, in language acquisition, by forming a novel concept of "affective filter." According to their hypothesis, emotional factors such as anxiety can hinder language learning by creating barriers in students' minds that prevent learners from effectively processing educational materials. Based on this, Krashen's (1982) "affective filter" theory discovered that high levels of anxiety lead to "dense filter," that prevent the absorption of language input, while low levels of anxiety allow for more effective learning.

Since then, this theory has been supported by Tobias (1986), as well as by many other researchers. Tobias showed that anxiety affects students' ability to process and retrieve information.

Although the effects which emotions have on the way students perceive material have been widely studied, most studies have focused on adults and university-level students. Only a few studies have examined how school students experience and deal with emotions such as

enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom during classes. A notable exception is a study by Dewaele (2018), who made a significant contribution to the study of emotions in second language acquisition. He and his colleagues-initiated research based on how a teacher and eleven-year-old learner variables influence the way they enjoy or feel anxiety during foreign language classes.

In more recent research, Dewaele, Guedat-Bittighoffer, and Dat (2025) expanded their 2018 study. They implemented a longitudinal design and focused on the central role of teacher-related enjoyment in promoting oral proficiency growth. 189 Participants from British high school, who studied various foreign languages participated in the research. A study suggests that teachers should focus on creating a comfortable classroom environment, since the way students feel during classes significantly affects the way they perform on activities. It is also useful to design courses that are unpredictable, surprising, and cognitively challenging. It is also beneficial to design unpredictable, surprising, and cognitively challenging lessons. In addition, the authors argue that teachers should not pay much attention to the FLA, as this is more closely related to the general language proficiency and the attitude of students than to the immediate classroom experience.

The research demonstrates the importance of balancing the focus on negative emotions with positive psychology to gain a more comprehensive perspective of emotions in foreign language learning (Dewaele, Witney, Saito, & Dewaele, 2018). In 2025 study 159 eleven-year-old students, who just began to study English language in France, participated to indicate the relationship between foreign-language anxiety and speaking performance (Dewaele, Guedat-Bittighoffer, & Dat, 2025).

The results showed that, although FLA had a negative impact on language performance by reducing students' willingness to communicate and causing inactive behavior, the main factor was Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE), especially enjoyment linked with support which teacher provides, that was established as the only significant positive indicator of progress in spoken language proficiency over the school year. Learners who felt confident and safe were encouraged and enjoyed the classroom activities and were able to successfully avoid anxiety and boredom, which led to a significant improvement in their conversation skills at the end of the year. The results emphasize the crucial role of the classroom environment and supportive attitude from a teacher in gaining useful knowledge and improving speaking performance.

FLA has a strong effect on students' academic success, especially in speaking related activities, which makes it vital to explore and understand its role. In this section, FLA impact on language learning and examination of strategies are described, in order to improve learners' speaking performances and reduce level of anxiety in classrooms.

1.3.1 How FLA Impacts Language Learning.

FLA plays a vital role in the success of students' language learning experiences. As explained in several studies, students with a high level of FLA often report emotional reactions such as apprehension, nervousness and physical reactions such as sweating or increased heart rate. These physiological responses can significantly impair their concentration, ability to recall previously learned materials, and perform well in language tasks. Anxious students often experience psychological blocks, which leads to forgetfulness or complete inability to remember the target language structure in oral practices.

In addition, some students during classroom activities may feel fear of making mistakes and being judged, which leads to avoidance behaviors, such as missing classes or refraining from participating in speaking activities. As a result, FLA may lead to the formation of a vicious cycle, where anxiety creates barriers and inhibits the development of speaking skills, ultimately negatively affecting language proficiency. Anxiety-related psychological barriers can interfere with teachers' assessment of students' abilities and often lead to misunderstandings about students' ability and motivation to successfully learn the target language.

To sum up, FLA not only affects students' performance on particular lessons but also has long-term implications for their future academic progression (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986).

1.3.2 Strategies to help learners overcome anxiety and improve speaking skills

Learners' speaking anxiety can be mitigated when teachers address affective, metacognitive, and behavioral dimensions within a consistently supportive classroom climate. On the affective side, brief but systematic relaxation routines such as slow diaphragmatic breathing, guided imagery, or thirty-second mindfulness body scans dampen the physiological arousal that typically peaks just before or during oral tasks. Spending even two minutes on a breathing cycle or visualizing a successful performance helps students regain a sense of control and lowers the emotional threshold for speaking.

Metacognitive skill-building complements this emotional regulation. Techniques like spaced repetition, structured self-assessment, and the deliberate segmentation of complex speaking tasks into smaller, "bite-sized" stages allow learners to encode material more deeply while monitoring their own progress. Because each step feels digestible, confidence rises, and anxiety

recedes. Behavioral contracting then gives these gains a clear trajectory. When teacher and learner agree on explicit, attainable goals, for example, “use three new discourse markers in tomorrow’s discussion”, and pair them with consistent positive reinforcement, motivation is sustained, and stress levels remain low.

Reflective journal-keeping offers an additional, empirically supported avenue for anxiety management. Regular written reflection allows learners to articulate obstacles, monitor emotional responses, and chart their progress over time, transforming diffuse concerns into concrete targets for improvement. A supportive classroom climate is equally critical: feedback practices that emphasize reformulation or recasting, rather than overt error marking, encourage experimentation and sustained participation. When anxiety remains debilitating, referral to counsellors or learning specialists trained in behavioral interventions, most notably systematic desensitization, in which learners are incrementally exposed to speaking situations under controlled conditions has proven effective (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986).

Research by Horwitz et al. (1986) demonstrates that FLA can lead to the development of mental blocks even among motivated and active students, the main reasons for that are: communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation. Researchers speculate that high levels of anxiety hinder speaking and listening performance, which causes a couple of problems for students, for example, they try to avoid challenging topics or freeze during communicative activities. Horwitz et al. (1986) summarizes the essence of teachers acknowledging the presence of anxiety among students and accepting it as a key factor affecting student academic progress, rather than attributing challenges only as a lack of ability. In addition to relaxation techniques and strategy training, the authors highly recommend maintaining overall supportive and friendly classroom environments, using gentle error correction methods, and challenging

beliefs related to language learning, such as the idea that nothing should be practiced until it is perfect, especially in speaking.

1.4 The Case-Scenario Method in Education

Case-scenario learning lets students experience the same situations they will one day encounter and transform abstract principles into lived experiences and narratives. Faced with the multifaceted dilemma, be it deciphering an elusive clinical picture, untangling a fragile logistics network, or breaking an intercultural compromise, learners parse incomplete evidence, weigh competing imperatives, and articulate a defensible course of action. Because the cases are deliberately open-textured, no tidy solution exists. Instead, participants learn to dwell in uncertainty and reason through gradations of risk and reward, much as professionals do outside the classroom. This disciplined engagement with ambiguity not only hones analytic and problem-solving capacities but also embeds theoretical constructs more deeply than a conventional lecture ever could. Ultimately, a well-crafted case reveals far more than the facts students can recall; it showcases how they marshal knowledge, exercise judgment, and adapt under pressure, capacities that define competent practice in today's complex, and often unpredictable, work environments.

The main advantage of the case-scenario approach is that it can increase student willingness to participate. Unlike traditional lecture methods, this method requires active participation because students analyze the situation, evaluate alternatives, and make informed decisions. In addition, case study collaboration gives students the opportunity to share different perspectives, challenge assumptions and develop consensus, skills that are important in a professional environment.

Rather than acting as a mere motivational tool, the case-scenario method offers a structured pathway from theoretical insight to analytical competence, an evolution that is vital in disciplines such as clinical practice. By requiring learners to integrate discrete facts into a coherent narrative, it deepens conceptual understanding, secures knowledge in long-term memory, and rehearses its application to authentic professional problems. Consequently, this dynamic, student-centered framework enriches academic study while equipping graduates to navigate the intricate, interconnected demands of today's professional landscape (Mehall, 2022).

1.4.1 Definition and applications of the Case-Scenario Method in language education

Originally, the Case-Scenario Method was used to connect theoretical material and practical implementation in medicine and business, by closing the gap between these concepts. These days, scenarios applying this method offer their student-centered framework to language classrooms. Because each task is woven into a single storyline, students encounter the target language as a living tool, negotiating meaning, adjusting strategies, and pushing the plot forward both inside and beyond scheduled lessons. Familiar techniques such as group work and project work certainly appear, yet their combined, narrative-driven deployment amplifies their impact, together they create an immersive environment where linguistic form, communicative purpose, and critical thinking reinforce one another in ways a single activity rarely can.

Envision each case scenario as a semester-long drama: the plot is drafted in advance, rich with characters, conflicts, and turning points, yet deliberately left open so learners can steer the story's outcome. Because the narrative stretches over weeks, or even the full academic year,

students inhabit a stable linguistic “world” in which they assume professional roles, tackle setbacks, and collaborate on solutions. Every utterance carries real weight: to move the story forward, they must probe for missing details, resolve misunderstandings, and persuade partners. The instructor recedes from center stage to become a facilitator by offering linguistic insight, posing timely questions, or adding fresh complications only when momentum lags. Various proficiency levels demand multiple pathways into the task, because difference in levels affect the way students respond to the tasks and form their answers significantly. Thus, this design excels in vocational and multilingual settings, to ensure efficiency. After vigilant consideration, the method obliges learners to use language for authentic purposes, a condition widely recognized as crucial for durable acquisition (Pratt, 2011).

The Case Scenario Method focuses on two major challenges faced by language teachers during classroom activities. First, how to engage students into a learning program where students are primary users of the target language, rather than the teacher. Second, how to ensure that students use their language skills for authentic communicative goals.

One of the hallmarks of our approach is the deliberate use of small-group interaction, where learners undertake the task to solve genuine problems embedded in a larger scenario. By carefully designing each task so that no one has all the information, we spark a true exchange of ideas, even though everyone is operating within a controlled simulation. That authentic “need to know” drives communication: students must negotiate meaning, pool their perspectives, and co-construct solutions. And because the spotlight is not solely on vocabulary or grammar drills, but also on collaboration, critical thinking, and interpersonal savvy, this method becomes a richly woven, holistic pathway to confident, real-world language use.

Rather than unfolding in a single lesson, the Case Scenario Method stretches across weeks, and sometimes the entire academic year, so students keep circling back to the same evolving storyline. Each return visit lets them revisit earlier decisions, polish the language they used, and see concrete evidence of their growth. Much of the action spills naturally into group chats, shared documents, or community micro-projects, meaning practice continues while learners ride the bus home or meet teammates after class. The proposed method truly shines when the unexpected happens, whether a surprise snow day blankets the campus, an instructor calls in sick, or a labor strike sidelines the staff, the narrative simply pivots online, letting learning carry on smoothly and without missing a beat. Finally, because scenarios can be scaled up or down, mixed-proficiency, multicultural groups find multiple on-ramps for participation, allowing each student to contribute comfortably while still nudging their competence forward.

The Case Scenario Method puts learners into lifelike situations where they must use the language as they really would, by asking questions, clarifying misunderstandings, weighing options, and persuading others. Because each scenario hinges on teamwork and problem-solving, students practice grammar and vocabulary alongside the soft skills that make conversations flow in the real world. The beauty of the method is its elasticity: you can run a single quick scenario in a small seminar or stage a multi-step case in a lecture hall, and students stay invested because the task feels genuine. By tackling scenarios such as mediating a customer complaint or pitching a fresh idea to a partner, learners gain fluency and confidence that follow them well beyond the classroom walls.

1.4.2 Advantages in traditional and online settings

Over the past few years, language learning classes have adapted case scenarios to immerse students in realistic situations applying contextual activities such as role-playing games, case studies, or video simulations that reflect real-world communication environments to develop their language skills. These activities compared to traditional exercises captivate students more deeply. Research shows that such contextualization helps bridge the gap between theory and practice and allows students to experience challenges without facing real consequences (Taneri, 2018).

Taslibeyaz (2020) reports that, by integrating language practice into meaningful contexts, these methods increase students' enthusiasm and effort. In their study, seventh graders in scenario-video lessons outscored a control group on grammar achievement and showed more autonomous study habits.

Roell's study (2019) shows that case studies offer many benefits, traditional and online EFL classrooms. They facilitate the implementation of activity-based learning that uses language to communicate rather than as a simple grammar or vocabulary exercise. This method promotes the integration of different language skills and allows the inclusion of different media, such as video or audio recordings, thus improving the learning experience.

A key benefit of the Case-Scenario Method is that it bridges the gap between classroom learning and real-world applications. It requires students to apply language skills and analytical, interpersonal and problem-solving skills. This is achieved through collaborative discussion and task-oriented work that promotes the skills necessary for formal discussions, such as prospective evaluation and persuasive arguments. Besides, the Case-Scenario Method is adaptable to different language levels and teaching situations, including ESP and content-based learning. Consequently, which makes it a flexible tool for teachers, allowing their

students to actively participate in the material by creating their own stories based on personal experiences, improving their understanding of the topic. When students should come up with the solution of a certain case-scenario, they practice effective speaking skills, because case study often requires suggestions or deciding the best course of action. Overall, the use of case studies promotes active learning, critical thinking, and the development of skills required in academic and professional settings (Roell, 2019).

Scenario-based teaching can be implemented in traditional or online classrooms with similar benefits. Mehall (2022) compared college students who completed a module based on in-class cases or via a separate online learning scenario. The results show that no significant differences were observed in students' perception of learning or enjoyment between the two formats. Therefore, well-designed online scenarios are as effective as in-person case studies. Both Taslibeyaz (2020) and Mehall (2022) point to similar findings on the effectiveness of scenario-based learning in online and traditional classrooms. In both cases, students engage in real-life activities in the target language, with teachers providing guidance if necessary. While online delivery offers benefits such as greater flexibility, such as allowing students to work at their own pace or introduce game elements, classroom learning offers peer-to-peer interaction and a more direct learning experience. Despite these differences, both studies emphasize that scenario-based learning continues to be effective in improving language skills, regardless of how they are applied.

The previous sections highlighted the role of storytelling in language learning, emphasizing its emotional, motivational, and pedagogical impact, especially in both traditional and online learning environments. These insights reflect practical observations and initial research supporting the integration of narrative-based tasks in language education. To further ground

this approach in academic inquiry, the following chapter delves into the study that underpins the Case Scenario Method, Positive Psychology in Second Language Acquisition, and related pedagogical frameworks.

Chapter 2: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter outlines the study's methodological framework, centering on the use of case-scenario tasks to raise lesson efficiency and alleviate student stress in an intermediate-level English class. It is organized into four main paragraphs. First, research questions are introduced (paragraph 2.1), then the research context and participants are described (paragraph 2.2). Next, data collection methods are explained (paragraph 2.3) and, finally, the data analysis approach is illustrated (paragraph 2.4). The chapter establishes the foundation for understanding the subsequent findings and discussion.

2.1 Research questions

The goal of this study is to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Can storytelling activities using the Case-Scenario Method motivate students and foster positive engagement in language learning?

RQ2: Can storytelling activities using the Case-Scenario Method mitigate foreign-language anxiety and improve learners' speaking skills?

2.2 Research Context and Participants

We selected students from two learning contexts: one traditional classroom and one online classroom. As Table 1 shows, we had 24 middle-school students and 3 students in the online setting, with an intermediate English level. Thanks to the Erasmus exchange program, we had the opportunity to conduct research in the traditional classroom at the Praxismittelschule der

Pädagogischen Hochschule Kärnten¹, with the fourth graders of the middle-school. Nevertheless, we encountered difficulty finding a class to deliver the research online. Finally, it was decided to take students from the private school, students who take English language extra classes. The age and location of the students' homes varied, but the only requirement was to work with students with an intermediate level of language proficiency. Lessons in the online setting were held via the Zoom platform. Students from different settings were intentionally selected based on their English proficiency to ensure they were suitable for evaluating the CSM methodology.

Setting	Total students	Age Range	Boys	Girls
Traditional Classroom	24	13-15	15	9
Online Group	3	12-18	2	1

Table 1. Case-study groups

2.3 Data Collection Methods

The triangulation approach was used to understand the effect of the Case Scenario Method on students' behavior and motivation during lessons. Data collection included the researcher's

¹ The Praxismittelschule der Pädagogischen Hochschule Kärnten is a model and research school located in Klagenfurt, Austria. It is certified as a UNESCO school, actively promotes the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and participates in environmental initiatives through the ÖKOLOG program. The school collaborates with the University College of Teacher Education and the University of Klagenfurt to engage in academic research and provides opportunities for future educators to have practical training.

observations during classes, student questionnaires and feedback questions after classes, and semi-structured interviews with students.

2.3.1 Researcher's Observations

The researcher systematically took notes and documented learners' behavior, emotions and interactions during the storytelling activities, acting as a non-participant in both traditional and online learning settings. In both settings, all students were present. The interaction between the teacher and the student was characterized by a Creative and Inquiry-Based approach. There were no right or wrong answers, and students did not have to follow a particular framework. The use of open-ended questions promoted a discussion-based lesson.

To support systematic data collection during each session, structured observation sheets were used to record specific behaviors related to student engagement, creativity, anxiety reduction, and interaction with peers or teachers (see Appendix A). This approach provided the opportunity for consistent observation of key indicators across participants and sessions.

All the observational notes from two settings were added to the table immediately after the lesson.

In order to maintain confidentiality and adhere to ethical research principles, no personal information or photos of the participants were included at any stage during the research.

2.3.2 Student questionnaire and feedback questions

Reflection data was collected through a combination of questionnaires, feedback questions and semi-structured interviews to gain learners' emotional responses and analyze overall classroom dynamics.

Ten minutes before the end of the lesson, students in the traditional setting were asked to complete a 10-minute questionnaire. The questionnaire (see Appendix B) consisted of both Likert-scale items and an open-ended question. Student motivation to speak and present their ideas, creativity during tasks and emotional states such as confidence and anxiety were measured using the Likert-scale questions. The open-ended questions allowed students to share their preferences, for what they enjoyed the most about the given task.

After collecting questionnaires, students were briefly asked some feedback questions about what they found complicated and easy to complete during classes, and if they enjoyed the activity. Responses were recorded as notes after the lessons to capture additional context and their reactions.

2.3.3 Semi-structured interviews

For richer insights into their views on the activities, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Three students of the traditional classroom volunteered to answer questions through face-to-face interviews, which lasted for approximately five minutes. As regards the online classroom, all three students agreed to participate. They were interviewed via the Zoom platform. The sessions with the online setting group also lasted around five minutes each.

Semi-structured interviews were developed based on the material of the research study, using open-ended guiding questions (see Appendix C). Through these interviews, we try to find out

how the Case Scenario Method increases students' motivation, reduces reaction anxiety and strengthens their confidence, which leads to a more creative and expressive use of language. The conversations were flexible, so that the interviewer could freely probe deeper into unexpected responses, leading to natural and reflective sessions.

2.4 Data Analysis Approach

Since the research aims to capture students' experiences, an approach was required that could carefully map emotional, motivational, and cognitive dimensions. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) provided an appropriate method for this research. Its flexible six-phase framework allowed us to identify key patterns across student interview transcripts, classroom observations, and student questionnaires. This approach avoids forcing data into rigid, predefined categories.

All the data collected by class observations, students' questionnaires and feedback questions, and semi-structured interviews were examined iteratively. Each response or note was given a descriptive tag by the researcher and then organized in a spreadsheet for subsequent interpretation. Semi-structured interviews with traditional classroom students were recorded using audio devices, whereas interviews with online classroom students were saved through the Zoom platform. All recordings were transcribed using auto-transcription software and manually checked for accuracy. The verified content was then transferred into Google Sheets, which allowed us to encrypt the data manually and systematically.

Chapter 3. Case Studies: Application of the Case Scenario Method

Chapter 3 describes how the case scenario method was applied in a traditional classroom during the Erasmus exchange and in an online environment via Zoom classes. Classroom moments gave the researcher a better understanding of students' behavior, how telling their own stories engages them emotionally, and how support is important during the first lessons.

3.1 Scenario 1: Traditional Classroom

In the traditional classroom, prior to the lesson in which we conducted our activity, students were asked to fill in the table with their dream job next to their names (see Figure 1)

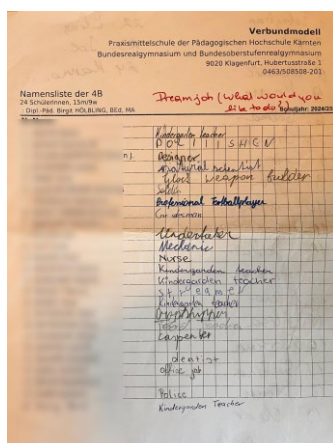


Figure 1. Students listed their preferred future occupations before the activity.

After collecting the information, we used an AI photo-generating tool, “Artbreeder” (see Figure 2) to generate images of their older versions and what they might look like in their chosen realm.



Figure 2. *AI-generated photos of students reflect specific details of their chosen future work area.*

Each image was generated multiple times to choose the most precise one, carefully paying attention to their appearance, posture, and overall image, because it was important that they resemble their real selves and look realistic. Due to school rules, it was forbidden to take new photos of students, so we relied on headshots from the school's annual class album.

We carried out the activity during a regular 45-minute English lesson. The first five minutes were used for instructions, the next 30 minutes for the main case-scenario task, and the final ten minutes for a questionnaire. At the start of the lesson, the printed portraits were laid face-down on students' desks. When students were asked to flip them, they discovered their images. To support the students to start presenting their thoughts in English, we handed out cards (see Figure 3) with guiding questions.

What do you want to do when you leave school...?

I'd like to be a ...

Why are you interested in this job?

(... it's an outdoor job./ ... the money is good./... work with other people.../... it's not boring./... my mom thinks it's a good job./... work long hours./ I would.../ I could...)

What qualifications do you need for this job?

(You have to .../ You need...)

Describe the day of the person who does your dream job.

Figure 3. A prompt question card to guide students during the presentation.

3.1.1 Data from researchers' observation

Table 2 summarizes the researcher's in-class observation for the traditional-classroom session on 7 January 2025. Ratings follow the 1-to-5 scale specified in Appendix A.

Category	Rating ²	Key evidence
Student Engagement	4 - Frequent	Eight of the twenty-four students laughed when they flipped their portraits. Ten students were showing each other their images. Three students volunteered to speak without prompting. When the activity started, no side-conversations, all eyes on speakers for the full 30 min.

² Rating Scale: 1 = Not Observed, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Occasionally, 4 = Frequently, 5 = Consistently

		Students answered teacher prompts within 3-5 s on six occasions.
Anxiety Indicators	3 - Occasional	Seven students showed initial hesitation, avoiding eye contact when they heard that they needed to present in front of others. Hesitation disappeared once they saw several students speak. No refusals to speak. Two volunteers out of five showed anxiety while presenting, gradually gaining confidence.
Creativity	5 - Consistent	One of the students said that he wanted to be the CEO of a car retailing company and brought a self-made business card. He offered his services and told his classmates that he would find the best car for them. One student explained his concerns about global warming and expressed his desire to build floating eco-houses on the water. He described his ideas to the class. Another said that he would be an undertaker. He explained that the last farewell is important, and he is willing to contribute to making this moment perfect.

Peer Interaction	4 - Frequent	Students with a similar occupation decided to make a group presentation of 6, since they all wanted to become kindergarten teachers. As well as three other smaller groups of students having similar professions (police people, doctors and nurses, designers and architects). Classmates clapped after each presenter's story. If the student could not remember a specific word, classmates assisted them. Some students suggested to their classmates how to achieve their goals and get into the dream school.
Teacher Interaction	3 - Occasional	During the students' presentation, the teacher recast if there was a mistake. The teacher smiled and asked some additional questions about specific details of the information the students shared. Additionally, the teacher praised students and told them that they would achieve their goals. Two students asked for suggestions on word choice, so they could explain a specific term from German to English.

Table 2. Data from the researcher's observation

3.1.2 Data from students' questionnaires and feedback questions

All 24 learners returned the paper questionnaire (see Appendix B), and every item was completed.

We present the Likert-scale results for each closed item (*Motivation, Confidence, Anxiety, Creativity*) in the bar charts below.

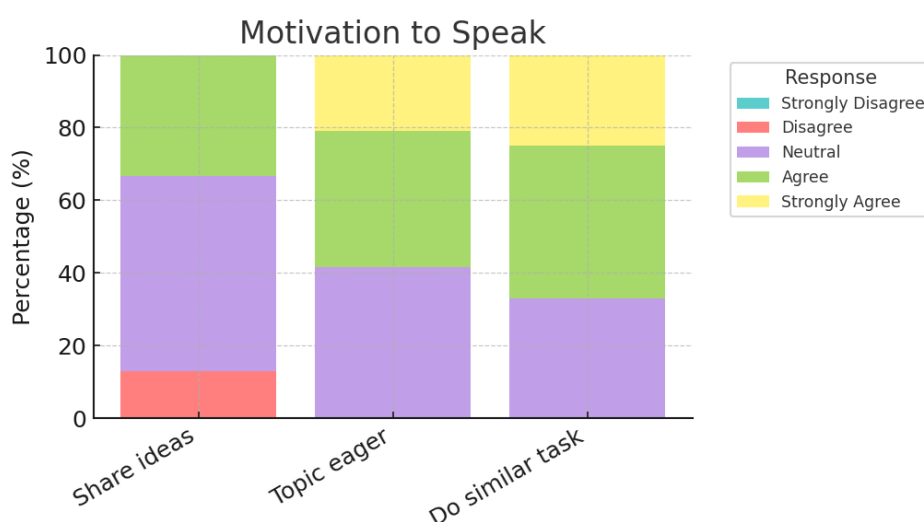


Figure 3. Students' Reflections on the Motivation to Speak section of the questionnaire

In the part of the statements about motivation, one-third of students agreed that they wanted to share ideas in English, while just over half remained neutral, and 13 % disagreed. When asked

whether the topic motivated participation, 58 % selected *Agree or Strongly Agree*. Two-thirds of the class indicated they would choose a similar task again.

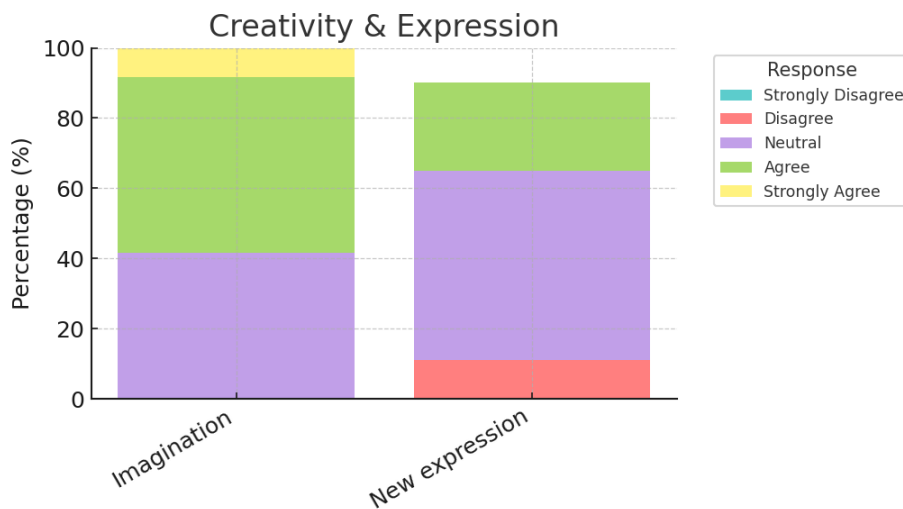


Figure 4. Students' reflections on the Creativity and Expression section of the questionnaire

In the following part of the questionnaire regarding creativity, nearly 60 % felt the task let them use their imagination, about 42 % were neutral. A quarter agreed they found new ways to express themselves, whereas 11 % disagreed and more than half stayed neutral.

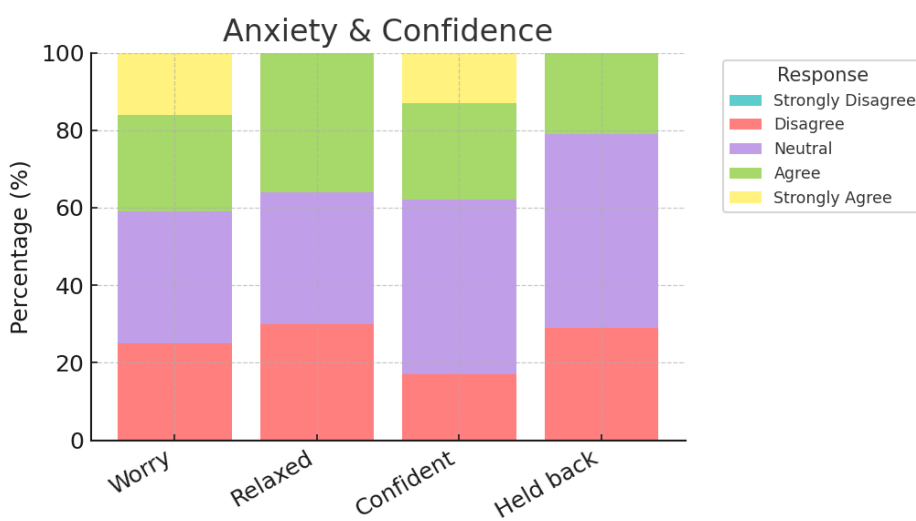


Figure 5. Students' reflections on the Anxiety and Confidence section of the questionnaire

In the third part, concerning the anxiety during the activity, roughly 42 % worried about making mistakes, yet a comparable share (38 %) felt more relaxed than usual. A small majority (57 %) reported at least moderate confidence using English, though 17 % still disagreed. One-fifth admitted holding back due to fear of classmates' judgement.

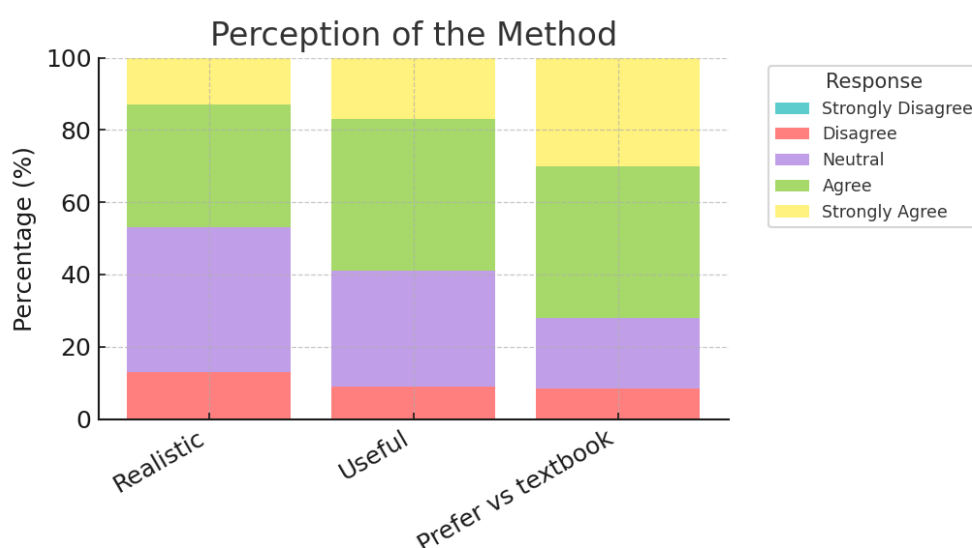


Figure 6. Students' reflections on the Perception of the Method section of the questionnaire

The last part of the questionnaire, regarding their feedback questions on the activity, almost half (47 %) agreed the scenario felt realistic and engaging, 40 % were neutral, 13 % disagreed. Fifty-nine percent believed the task practiced useful language for real life. Seventy-two percent preferred this activity to textbook exercises, with fewer than 9 % in disagreement.

3.1.3 Data from semi-structured interviews.

Immediately after the 7 January 2025 lesson, three students (S-A, S-B, S-C) were interviewed individually for about five minutes in a quiet room next to the classroom. Each interview followed the six-question guide presented in Chapter 2 (Appendix C). Conversations were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed reflexively, yielding four overarching themes.

Engagement and creativity. Students called the task “fun” because it let them “imagine any career I wanted and be creative” (S-A) and “feel like a novelist” (S-C).

Visual scaffolding. All three mentioned the AI portrait, two noting it “definitely helped me organize ideas” (S-B) or “reminded me of key vocabulary” (S-A), while one felt it was useful but not essential.

Anxiety and confidence. Each learner recalled a brief spike of nerves, “a bit nervous at the beginning” (S-A), “shy at first” (S-B), yet finished feeling more self-assured, one said she had “never talked two minutes without freezing” before.

Future willingness. All would repeat the activity, though S-B wanted “shorter presentations” and S-C asked for “different topics each time.”

3.2 Scenario 2: online classroom

On the 18th of March, three intermediate-level learners (ages 12-18) met on Zoom for a 60-minute lesson where they took part in the activity applying the Case-Scenario Method storytelling. The activity was “Voices from the Past”, where each student impersonated a

historical figure (e.g., Christopher Columbus) using narrative tenses, while classmates guessed the identity. Prior to the class students were assigned a specific historical figure and they were asked to retrieve some information about them. The students had full freedom of way of presenting the information.

On the 20th of March, same students participated in another storytelling activity, “If I Were the President” (see Appendix D) they proposed national reforms in L2, practicing second conditionals. In this context also students were asked to do some research before the class to have more ideas. During the class, a Canva slide deck, Zoom backgrounds and earlier collected data scaffolded the tasks and the students. The teacher acted mainly as a facilitator, intervening only for brief clarifications. Some students made a presentation, to visually present their ideas, whereas others used background music and even some clothes to immerse themselves in the role.

3.2.1 Data from students’ questionnaires and feedback questions

Table 3 summarizes the researcher’s observations for the online class sessions on 18 and 20 March 2025. Ratings follow the 1-to-5 scale specified in Appendix A.

Category	Rating ³	Key evidence
Student Engagement	5 - Consistently	During both sessions, students completed the tasks in the allocated time for the activities. Peer questions during the guessing task (“Have

³ Rating Scale: 1 = Not Observed, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Occasionally, 4 = Frequently, 5 = Consistently

		you ever travelled to India?"). Each learner asked 3-5 questions to the presenter. While a student was presenting the information, others sent the reaction emojis to the speech.
Anxiety Indicators	2-Rarely	No "camera-off" episodes noted. No one refused to participate or present. Students spoke loudly, and they were comfortable to react during the sessions and ask questions to the facilitator, and comment upon other students' ideas in the discussion part. Sometimes, students might doubt their statements, because of lack of prior knowledge.
Creativity	4-Frequently	One student used an ocean-wave Zoom background and captain's hat to portray Columbus. Learners proposed national reforms (e.g., moving factories to villages). Another student made a virtual poster, with his proposal for policy changes, and replaced his Zoom background with a national flag of the selected country.

Peer Interaction	4- Frequently	Students used encouragement reactions (emojis) after each mini speech. 6 vocabulary assists recorded, classmates supplied words like renewable, subsidy, coastline when a peer hesitated. During the guessing phase, students asked follow-up questions such as “Which century are you from?” and “What places did you discover ?”
Teacher Interaction	2- Rarely	1 clarification request on “subsidy”, teacher gave definition, students repeated the term correctly. One student asked, “Is it better to say green energy or renewable energy?” Teacher answered and gave both examples. Teacher 3 times recast the incorrect grammar usage, (e.g., “I will move factories” - “I would move factories”)

Table 3. Data from the researcher’s observation

3.2.2 Data from students’ reflections

All three online learners returned the post-task questionnaire. Because the number of students is small, results are reported as raw counts rather than percentages.

Motivation. Two learners agreed that the topic made them eager to participate, one was neutral.

Creativity. All three students agreed that the task encouraged imagination.

Anxiety. Two learners reported that they felt confident speaking, while one selected neutral.

Perception of the method. All three preferred the scenario to be implemented to the future classes.

The questionnaire ended with one open-ended feedback question about what they enjoyed the most about activities. There was a consistent remark on the novelty and communicative value. One student wrote that the activity was “something new, almost like a speaking club,” underlining the informal atmosphere. A second participant found it “interesting to listen to others and think about things I’d never thought before,” referring to the policy-making element. The third learner valued the session as “good practice of speaking,” highlighting its rehearsal-like function.

3.2.3 Data from semi-structured interviews.

After having two storytelling activities (18 and 20 March 2025), the three online students (S-D, S-E, S-F) were interviewed individually in Zoom break-out rooms for approximately five minutes each. Their tasks (historical role-play and policy pitch) differed from the traditional group’s future career topic task. Therefore, a revised six-question guide was used that was reproduced in Appendix E. Recordings were also transcribed verbatim and analyzed through Braun and Clarke’s (2006) reflexive thematic procedure, offering five inter-locking themes.

Engagement and creativity framed every account: one learner said, “I enjoyed being a historical character, it felt like an adventure” (S-D), while another called the president pitch “my favorite because I like designing policies” (S-F). All three highlighted scaffolding supports: bullet notes, slides, or themed backgrounds, reporting that these “jogged my memory” (S-D) or “let me speak smoothly” (S-F). An *anxiety-to-confidence* arc was universal; students were asked to rate their nervousness while presenting from 1 to 10. The ratings ranged from 4/10 to 1/10 beforehand, but afterwards students felt “more confident; I survived live Q&A without freezing” (S-D) and “spoke longer than usual and it went okay” (S-E). The interviews also revealed *motivation to learn*; debating reforms “showed me I need more political vocabulary” (S-E) and “pushed me to read more English articles” (S-F). Finally, *future willingness* with tweaks emerged: all would repeat online storytelling but asked for a presentation timer (S-D), richer visual aids (S-E), or detailed performance feedback (S-F). These five themes will be compared with questionnaire patterns in Chapter 4 to clarify how scenario-based storytelling influences engagement and speaking anxiety in the online classroom.

Chapter 4. Discussion

This present chapter brings mixed-methods study to life by showing what the Case-Scenario Method meant for learners in both traditional and online classrooms. Paragraph 4.1 presents the answer to the first research question. It is followed by paragraph 4.2 discussion of the mitigation of FLA. From these findings, paragraph 4.3 lays out five easy steps to pedagogical implementation of CSM. Finally, paragraph 4.4 notes the study limits. Together, these paragraphs demonstrate that case-scenario storytelling can be effectively adopted across two different classrooms.

4.1 RQ1: Effects of case-scenario storytelling on learner motivation and engagement

The first research question explored the influence of case-scenario method on students' motivation in both the traditional and online classroom. Three complementary data streams from classroom observations, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews, tell essentially the same story, each reinforcing the other and thus providing what mixed-methods scholars term strong convergent validity (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Classroom observations offered the clearest window onto behavior in real time. Throughout the lesson, almost every learner leaned toward and focused on the speakers who displayed their AI-generated portraits, commented as they spoke, and applause at the close of most stories are the visible evidence of students' involvement. Only a small handful appeared intermittently distracted. Energy levels in the online classroom, though expressed differently, proved comparable, cameras remained on for most of each lesson, supportive emojis and chat comments scrolled steadily, and facial expressions were consistently animated. These patterns

echo the high “affective energy” noted in earlier university-level role-play work (e.g., Bedenlier et al., 2020), suggesting that younger, secondary-school learners can match the engagement levels of adult groups when narrative ownership is foregrounded.

Learners’ questionnaire reports mirrored the observational data. In the traditional classroom, well over half of the respondents indicated that the scenario made them eager to participate and allowed extensive use of imagination, while roughly two-thirds said they would happily choose a similar speaking task again. Responses from the online group traced an almost identical profile, most endorsed the activity as enjoyable and motivating, and everyone credited the scenario with sparking new ideas. Such alignment between outward behavior and inward attitude accords with Ushioda’s (2011) view that genuinely self-relevant tasks transfer motivational charge across learning contexts.

Semi-structured interview scripts’, conducted after the activities, enriched the quantitative picture. A large majority of interviewees recalled “feeling like a novelist” or embarking on a “thrilling adventure,” imagery that Reeve (2013) describes as “motivation in motion.” Only two learners, one from each classroom, mentioned lingering unease tied to the lesson’s tight timing, a concern revisited in the next section on anxiety. Otherwise, the emotional tone was overwhelmingly positive. Learners prized the freedom to direct their plots and valued the applause or emoji reactions that followed.

Three theoretical lenses help explain why engagement was so widely and consistently reported. First, Dörnyei’s (2009) Ideal L2 Self suggests that stepping into the shoes of a sixteenth-century explorer or future head of state enabled students to rehearse an attractive English-speaking identity, shifting attention from error monitoring to message creation. Second, Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020) clarifies that the tasks simultaneously satisfied

autonomy (through self-authored stories), competence (through props that lowered risk), and relatedness (through peer affirmation). This multi-need fulfilment resonates with Dinçer's (2019) autonomy-supportive work in Turkish EFL classes. Third, Egbert's (2003) challenge-support equilibrium explains why support tools differed by mode yet proved equally effective. Students from the traditional classroom relied on the printed portraits as gestural anchors, whereas their online peers devised slide decks and bullet notes, different forms, but each perceived as "enough" to keep the story flowing.

Motivation also carried beyond the lesson. Most online participants reported looking up specialized vocabulary or browsing English media to enrich their policy ideas, a behavior that Self-Determination theorists label identified regulation. Meanwhile, a sizable portion of the traditional classroom lobbied for new themes and more frequent storytelling rounds, fitting Hidi and Renninger's (2006) model in which initial situational interest evolves into sustained engagement when repeatedly re-ignited. These after-class pursuits act as a third corroborating strand, tying future-oriented effort to the immediate excitement observed and reported in class.

Collectively, behavioral cues, attitude measures, and learners' own stories converge on a single conclusion - narrative ownership, underpinned by context-sensitive scaffolds and buoyed by peer affirmation, can ignite and sustain high levels of engagement regardless of whether in online or traditional classroom. By harmonizing insights from the Ideal L2 Self, Self-Determination Theory, and challenge-support frameworks, this section positions case-scenario storytelling as a robust catalyst for engagement, one that appears to travel well across instructional modes and to set in motion learning behaviors that extend beyond the lesson itself.

4.2 RQ2: Storytelling and the mitigation of FLA

To answer RQ2, the three strands of evidence observations, questionnaires, and interviews were observed. The results illustrate strikingly similar emotional landscapes in both classrooms. At the start of each lesson most storytellers, whether standing in front of two dozen classmates or facing the Zoom interface, showed the classic signs of FLA, like shoulders drawn in, voices hesitant, eyes flitting toward the teacher for reassurance. Although, once the first story drew a burst of applause in the traditional classroom, or a wave of emoji hearts online, that anxiety slipped away for the vast majority of learners. Posture opened, vocal rhythm steadied, and listeners leaned in with visible curiosity, but only a small minority continued to glance nervously at their notes. This tension-then-release curve shadows the affective trajectory mapped by MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012), confirming that a warm first response can flip apprehension into forward momentum even among adolescent speakers.

The outcomes of students' questionnaires fit the behavioral picture almost point to point. In the traditional classroom, about two-fifths of respondents admitted that fear of mistakes shadowed their opening lines, yet nearly as many declared they felt calmer than during a typical grammar drill, and a further sizable cluster finished the lesson having noticeable confidence. The online group followed the same path in miniature, most of them started the activity composed and all finished emboldened, a pattern consistent with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) early claim that perceived evaluative threat shrinks in small groups. Interview scripts stitched everything together. One student said, "once I started speaking, I forgot the fear", while another noted that "surviving live Q&A without freezing proved I can do it". This aligns with Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build model, in which positive emotion dismantles fear and widens attentional bandwidth.

Two interlocking factors help account for the learners' reduced anxiety. First, narrative purpose shifts focus from grammar correction to maintaining story coherence. Speaking of a sixteenth-century explorer or future head of state demands forward motion, and that search for meaning displaces the hunt for flawless form, mirroring Dewaele, Chen and Padilla's (2018) finding that message-centered tasks blunt anxiety more effectively than accuracy drills. Second, learner-controlled props externalize cognitive load. Printed portraits in the traditional room and self-curated slides online served as tangible memory cues, most interviewees referred to them as "safety nets" that kept ideas flowing. Egbert's (2003) challenge-support equilibrium predicts precisely this outcome: when support is visible, self-chosen, and perceived as adequate, apprehension recedes and Krashen's (1982) affective filter drops. In tandem, these mechanisms fuel the upward spiral between enjoyment and engagement that Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) describe.

Even so, each setting foregrounded a distinct anxiety trigger. Performing before a large peer audience magnified anticipatory jitters in the traditional classroom, yet peer applause soon reversed the effect, underscoring Horwitz et al.'s (1986) insight that the fear of negative evaluation can be neutralized by immediate social approval. Online group enjoyed a gentler take-off but stumbled over lexical gaps during spontaneous policy debates, prompting real-time chat-box scaffolding. Both classrooms shared one Achilles heel - compressed pacing. A few speakers in each class felt obliged to rush their endings. Shabani and Safari (2016) caution that tight scheduling can rekindle anxiety even in supportive tasks, an admonition borne out here.

Considered collectively, the data shows that case-scenario storytelling reliably attenuates foreign-language anxiety by shifting focus to meaning and supplying learner-controlled scaffolds. This extends Mehall's (2022) claim that well-paced scenarios sustain engagement, adding that they also create a psychological safety net, provided timing is reasonable. Observation notes record two moments when speakers were asked to "finish faster than they wished," a friction revisited in paragraph 4.3 on pedagogical implications.

4.3 Pedagogical implementation

This section turns the single 45-minute scenario run in the traditional classroom and the two 60-minute sessions in the online classroom into practical advice. The goal was to stimulate learners to speak English, not to assign grades. Below, we listed the guidance with the main steps to conduct a case-scenario storytelling activity in the classroom:

- a. Put learners in charge of the story. When students chose a role for My Future Dream Job or Voices from the Past they spoke longer and with more gestures than in textbook lessons. The freedom to shape a story fired what Dörnyei (2005) calls the Ideal L2 Self. Because each learner had a different role, classmates had real questions during the Peer Q&A and speaking became information-seeking instead of reciting.
- b. Keep the risk visible but small. Printed AI-generated images, question prompts cards, zoom chat synonyms, and screen-shared slides all acted as safety nets. Students said these props "kept me talking smoothly," and the traditional class applauded 10–15 times

per talk while the online trio flooded the chat with thumbs up and smile emojis. Such positive signals lowered anxiety, contributing to positive reinforcement.

- c. Match timing to the group size. In the traditional classroom, one learner spoke at a time, each got about three minutes. The only exception was a six-student group, the students whose choice was to be kindergarten teachers, but everyone still had a personal turn. The teacher was responsible for allocating time for each student. In the online classroom, with three learners, cameras stayed on to keep a sense of audience. The chat box served as a quiet help line, and screen-sharing pictures or short audio clips made stories vivid without slowing the call. Engagement scores were almost identical across settings, backing Mehall's (2022) claim that a well-planned online scenario can match an in-class one.
- d. Layer light scaffolding. Lower-intermediate learners in the traditional classroom were constantly scaffolded, they stuck to the prompt card with questions, in case they struggled to remember what to say. In the online classroom, during speaking, students' notes or their slides reminded everyone of the information order and assisted them to present their information in the right sequence. After speaking, the teacher gave a quick oral recast on one key point, and peers offered a short praise line such as "great ending" or "strong example." No written grading sheet was used.
- e. Plan, teach, reflect. The researcher and classroom teachers planned each scenario together. Once the flow was agreed, they followed it exactly. After class the team spent ten minutes noting what worked and what to tweak. These debrief notes now form the start of a shared folder of scenarios sorted by CEFR level and topic.

Common challenges and easy fixes:

Time frame of 45 minutes can feel tight. Splitting a scenario over two lessons or letting half the class present while the other half listens solve the squeeze.

Occasionally, tech hiccups might occur. In this study AI images were printed ahead of time. In the case of online class, a slow internet day did not derail the lesson.

In the traditional classroom, stronger and weaker students paired up and tasks came in easy–hard versions. Thus, in the classroom, it is crucial to blend the student with higher language proficiency with those who have lower language proficiency.

Storytelling activities should always be embedded in a new story theme (mystery, news, sci-fi) and class votes for "story of the day" kept the energy high.

Suggested next steps (optional). Teachers who like the one-off lesson can run a 2-week pilot repeating My Future Dream Job. If most students want a third round and anxiety stays low, add a four-week mini-cycle with a new scenario every second week, alternating with textbook work. For a longer time, use scenarios every other week and share ideas at short staff meetings. The plan flexes to the timetable and class size.

4.4 Limitations

Although this study provided significant information on the effectiveness of the Case-Scenario Method in language learning, several limitations should be recognized, as they affect the scope and depth of observations and their general applicability.

First, the relatively small sample size represents a considerable limitation. Although the traditional classroom with 24 students, and one online group of three students allowed to conduct thorough qualitative research, it limited the scope for broader generalizations. Future studies involving larger and more diverse populations will increase generalizability and increase the reliability of conclusions.

Secondly, there were inherent differences between the two educational contexts studied: the traditional environment and the online environment. Despite careful planning and careful execution of specific actions in both situations, individual factors such as group dynamics, individual mastery of technology, and interaction with facilitators were able to independently influence the results. Therefore, future research may benefit from stricter controls or clarify these contextual differences to facilitate comparisons.

In addition, participants, especially younger students, may have had difficulty accurately expressing their experiences or giving answers based on social convenience, which may lead to the possibly biased data from questionnaires, feedback forms, and semi-structured interviews.

Thirdly, we face the risk of obtaining potentially distorted data. A biased attitude towards social desirability can make it difficult for students to accurately convey their experiences or make an actual self-assessment. The use of more objective assessment methods, such as checklists for direct observation or long-term monitoring methods, can help minimize these distortions and increase the reliability of future research.

Another point to consider, the short-term nature of this study limited the ability to assess its long-term effects on language proficiency, motivation and anxiety. The effectiveness of the Case-Scenario Method may vary, as initial enthusiasm deteriorates or increases over time. In

this way, longitudinal research models would provide more valuable information about the long-term development and sustainability of the observed benefits.

Despite efforts to ensure consistency, small logistical difficulties, especially related to online learning, may unintentionally affect the quality and continuity of learning. Additional research should focus on the integration of advanced technologies and the ability to adapt to different learning environments to ensure minimal interference and improve the reliability of academic performance assessments.

The recognition of these limitations will contribute to a more equitable interpretation of research results and to the establishment of clear guidelines for future research aimed at improving the general applicability and sustainability of results in foreign language teaching.

Conclusion and insights into further research

This study featured the value of storytelling tasks applying the case-scenario method in language teaching and their role in improving students' motivation, involvement, and stress reduction in foreign language (FLA). Through qualitative analyses of classroom observations, students' questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, the research provided solid evidence of the positive effect of the method in traditional and online learning environments.

Considering the inclusion of case-scenario based tasks in language teaching, raised the motivation of students by cultivating a sense of narrative belonging and autonomy. Students showed more enthusiasm and commitment, actively participated and expressed themselves with more confidence. The use of carefully structured scaffolding, such as images created by

artificial intelligence and digital support tools, further strengthened students' self-confidence, helped them overcome initial stress and allowed for more fluid and authentic language use.

In addition, narrative activities have managed to reduce the emotional barriers usually associated with oral tasks. By shifting students' attention from linguistic accuracy to meaningful communication and narrative coherence, the script has effectively reduced students' anxiety when speaking. Participants reported that they were less afraid of mistakes and that they were better able to cope with the challenges associated with speech production.

However, the study also identified some limitations, including small groups of participants, possible variations in educational context, the use of self-reported data, and short-term sensitization. These aspects shed light on future research areas, such as the need for greater diversity of participants, longitudinal studies to assess long-term outcomes, and the integration of objective observational measures.

At the pedagogical level, teachers must prioritize the autonomy of students, create a visible and manageable framework, and guarantee flexibility of time and pace to maintain a positive emotional climate in language classes. Both traditional and online classrooms benefit from well-designed case scenarios, if the methods are adapted to the specific needs and technological possibilities of each classroom.

Further research could delve into the long-term effects of storytelling activities, examining cross-cultural applicability, and systematically scaling case-scenario storytelling tasks in larger groups or in the entire curriculum. In addition, a case-by-case study of teacher training will provide valuable information for wider teaching practice.

Ultimately, this study complements the existing knowledge and demonstrates that well-organized storytelling activities increase the desire, involvement and speaking skills of

language learners. Teachers mastering the Case-Scenario Method can build an environment where language learners get educational insights and strengthen their skills without having FLA.

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Appendix A. Observation Criteria

Category	Indicators	Rating (1–5)	Comments
Student Engagement	- Frequency of participation - Attentiveness - Responsiveness during activities		
Anxiety Indicators	- Willingness to speak - Body language - Hesitation or reluctance		
Creativity	- Originality in narratives - Use of imagination - Ability to build upon story elements		
Peer Interaction	- Collaboration with peers - Feedback exchanges - Group storytelling dynamics		
Teacher Interaction	- Responsiveness to teacher prompts - Seeking clarification - Engagement in discussions with the teacher/researcher		
Rating Scale: 1 = Not Observed, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Occasionally, 4 = Frequently, 5 = Consistently			

Appendix B. Student Reflection Questionnaire

Instructions:

Please read each statement carefully and select the option that best represents your opinion.

Use the following scale:

Scale	Description
1	Strongly Disagree
2	Disagree
3	Neutral / Not Sure
4	Agree
5	Strongly Agree

Motivation to Speak

- I wanted to share my ideas in English during this task.
- The topic made me eager to participate.
- I would choose to do a similar speaking task again.

Creativity and Expression

- The task let me use my imagination freely.
- I found new ways to express myself in English.

Anxiety and Confidence

- I worried about making mistakes while speaking.

- I felt more relaxed than in my usual English activities.
- I was confident using English during this task.
- I held back because I feared my classmates' judgment.

Perception of the Method

- The case-scenario felt realistic and engaging.
- It helped me practice vocabulary or grammar I will need outside class.
- I prefer this kind of activity to textbook exercises.

Open-Ended Feedback

What did you enjoy the most about this activity?

Appendix C. Interview Questions for Traditional Classroom students

1. How did you feel about speaking English during this activity?
2. What part of the task did you enjoy the most, and why?
3. Did the AI portrait help you speak, make it harder, or have no effect?
4. Were you worried about making mistakes while you spoke?
5. Do you feel more confident about speaking English now than before the task? Why or why not?
6. Would you like to do a similar activity again? Why or why not?

Appendix D. Summary of Online Task-Based Activities

Task Title	Grammar Focus	Speaking Goal	Activity Description	Skills Practiced
<i>Voices from the Past</i>	Narrative tenses (past simple, past continuous, past perfect)	Role-play a historical figure; storytelling	Students chose a famous historical figure, researched their life, and narrated key events in the first person. Others guessed the character based on the narrative.	Storytelling, grammar in context, critical thinking, listening comprehension
<i>If I Were the President</i>	Second conditional	Hypothetical thinking, expressing policy ideas	Students imagined themselves as presidents and presented changes they would make in various policy areas such as education, environment, and health. Prompts were provided.	Argumentation, grammar accuracy, creativity, and structured speech

Appendix E. Interview Questions for Online Classroom students

1. Which of the two activities - speaking as a historical person or speaking as president, did you enjoy more? Why?
2. Before you started speaking, how nervous did you feel in each activity?
3. What helped you keep talking while you told your story?
4. Did either activity make you want to learn more English? How so?
5. After these activities, do you feel more confident or less confident about speaking English online? Why?
6. Would you like to do a similar storytelling task again? What one change would make it better?

