

# Positive emotions and intrinsic motivation: A self-determination theory perspective on using co-created stories in the language acquisition classroom

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## Abstract

A surge in empirical investigations in second language (L2) learning motivation in recent years has revealed a growing link between emotions in the foreign language classroom and language learner motivation. Nonetheless, there remains a distinct focus on the impact of negative emotions such as frustration and anxiety. The current year-long study investigates the links between positive emotions such as enjoyment, interest and excitement, and intrinsic motivation. The enquiry explores the influence of the Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) strategy on students' motivation and emotions using a Self-Determination Theory (SDT) lens. The study analyses the extent to which a group of French language students perceive that TPRS satisfies SDT's three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness. It employs a mixed-methods, longitudinal case study approach, using data obtained from motivational questionnaires, reflective journals, classroom observations, focus group interviews and individual interviews at four stages throughout one academic year. The findings conclude that TPRS results in sustained, heightened positive emotions in the FL classroom and can be a highly effective tool to intrinsically motivate students of FLs. The autonomous nature of co-created stories results in an increased sense of language ability, whilst also fostering strong connections within the class. The students' positive motivational and emotional trajectories were maintained at the end of the academic year. The findings resonate with conclusions from other studies on the importance of positive emotions in the FL classroom for engagement and motivation whilst reflecting previous studies linking increased student motivation to increased teacher motivation.

## Keywords

emotions, language learning, motivation, self-determination theory, stories, teaching, TPRS

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## **I Introduction**

The study of foreign languages (FL) is reaching a crisis point in many countries (Kelly, 2019; Parrish & Lanvers, 2019). Successive annual language trends reports by The British Council note a significant decline in FL study in the UK with the amount of students opting to take French or German at A-level more than halving between 2005 and 2020 (Collen, 2020). While there are many external, socio-political and societal forces at play, the significance of motivation for FL learning at the classroom level is widely recognized (Gardner, 1985; Noels et al., 2000). Nevertheless, the existing research relating to the impact of particular classroom strategies on students' and teachers' motivation and emotions within the FL context remains sparse (Lamb, 2017). While recent meta-analyses (Lamb, 2017; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020) outline the specific conditions that are required to promote engagement, satisfaction and enjoyable learning, many FL learners continue to experience more negative than positive emotions in the FL classroom. Repeated studies emphasize that FL students in Anglophone countries are particularly poorly motivated (Parrish & Lanvers, 2019; Williams et al., 2002). They enjoy FL lessons less than other subjects (Bartram, 2006; Parrish & Lanvers, 2019) and are more likely to discontinue their language studies due to lower motivation (Davis, 2020). FL learners' motivation also deteriorates as students' progress through adolescence in other, non-Anglophone, contexts (Oga-Baldwin et al., 2017).

Teachers, the activities they use and their individual teaching style are regularly identified as central components in FL learner negative emotions such as frustration, hopelessness and demotivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Falout & Maruyama, 2004). Students highlight the over-emphasis on grammar and worksheets as well as teachers being overly controlling as key sources for their disengagement and boredom (Lamb, 2017; Printer, 2021). Dampened teacher motivation and low job satisfaction act as a precursor for less engaging lessons leading to demotivated students (Aydin, 2012; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009). Conversely, FL teachers enjoy their work most when they believe they are helping their students to appreciate the language (Oga-Baldwin & Praver, 2008). When students display high levels of positivity and satisfaction this impacts the teacher's own feelings of competence and contentment in their work (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Lamb, 2017).

Despite the agreement on the importance of language teacher motivation, there remains a distinct deficiency of research linking it with student emotions and motivation. Researchers have called directly on the field to explore this issue further (Dörnyei, 2003; Kassabgy et al., 2001; Katz & Shahar, 2015). Learning languages at school is not only a means to furnish young people with the tools to communicate, it can also help to teach them the importance of cultural acceptance, diversity, inclusion and open-mindedness (Majhanovich & Deyrich, 2017). It is therefore paramount that we actively locate, investigate and promote FL teaching strategies that result in positive, rather than negative, emotions within the FL classroom, so students are motivated to continue to study those languages. The present study responds to the call to investigate language teaching approaches that offer the potential to address both student and teacher motivation and positive emotions concurrently.

Specifically, this empirical research enquiry explores whether the introduction of co-created stories in the language classroom leads to satisfaction of Self Determination

Theory's (SDT) basic psychological needs for intrinsic motivation, and whether this, in turn, results in increased positive emotions in the FL classroom. The longitudinal research design provides insight into how changes in positive emotions and motivation, resulting from the introduction of co-created stories, are sustained over time.

## II Literature review

### I Storytelling

In education, storytelling holds an important historical position (Bowman, 2018) and has been a key teaching tool across cultures for centuries (Kramsch, 1998). The use of storytelling as an engaging and meaningful teaching methodology (Egan, 2005) has received a surge in interest in mainstream media (Lott, 2017). Using a storytelling as pedagogy approach (Phillips, 2013) in the classroom stimulates the learner's brain by connecting to their emotions (Bowman, 2018). Storytelling is a highly effective pedagogical device (Landrum et al., 2019) as this type of learning is an 'emotional process' (Fabritius & Hagemann, 2017, p. 186) and therefore helps to embed the material into long-term memory (Egan, 2005). When novelty (Bowman, 2018) or unpredictability (Saito et al., 2018) are entrenched in a classroom story, students' attention is ignited as emotions are further heightened. Stories of this nature maintain young learners' interest and engagement (Machado, 2012; McMaster, 1998) thus aiding their comprehension and developing language acquisition (Whaley, 2002). Employing storytelling in the FL classroom harnesses learner's innate creativity and imagination (Sneddon, 2008) whilst also building confidence in their use of the language (Anderson & Chung, 2011).

### 2 Teaching proficiency through reading and storytelling (TPRS)

TPRS is a specific type of storytelling employed by the language acquisition teacher which aims to expose the language learner to multiple repetitions of high-frequency, fully understandable, language structures while co-creating a class story together. TPRS was developed from real classroom teaching experience and is noted in the literature as significantly different from traditional teaching (Lichtman, 2019). In contrast to standard storytelling, TPRS incorporates a large degree of autonomy as the teacher asks rather than tells a story to the class. The teacher starts with a set of three to four target language structures embedded into a very basic storyline usually comprising a character, a problem and how the character finally resolves the problem. Three specific steps are applied throughout the process in order to furnish the learners with numerous repetitions of the target language structures so they can be acquired implicitly rather than learned explicitly while the story unfolds in class (Slavic, 2017):

- **Show:** The teacher selects three to four, high-frequency, target language structures as the backbone for the story. For example, a novice story may involve the target structures: *there is / wants to / goes to / always forgets*. At this initial stage, meaning is established through a combination of Total Physical Response (TPR), gesturing, translation and personalized questions.

- Tell: Although the teacher begins with a basic version of the story script, students' ideas for characters, locations and other details are shared, accepted and then inserted into the narrative as the story progresses.
- Read: Throughout and after the story creation stage, students read various versions of their plot. Students will also read other stories with a similar storyline and the same target structures as their story, but details will have changed.

For an example of a story script and how the TPRS story unfolds in class, see Appendix 1 in supplemental material. The TPRS language teaching approach employs Krashen's (1982) Comprehensible Input (CI) theoretical framework; hypothesizing that students will acquire language naturally and implicitly through intent listening and reading when the inputs are repeated, compelling and comprehensible. Long's (1981) Interaction Hypothesis, Swain's (1985, 2005) Output Hypothesis as well as Gass and Mackey's (2007) Interaction Approach, provide further theoretical underpinnings for its use by teachers as TPRS also involves large amounts of meaning negotiation, game-playing, choral output and informal conversations through its co-creative nature.

Researchers now broadly concur that the efficacy of language teaching is largely dependent upon how individual methods are personalized, adapted and enacted in each particular teaching context (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011), allowing for individual interpretations of the over-arching principles leading to the creation of context-appropriate pedagogies (Brown, 2015; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). TPRS fits within the post-method condition (Brown, 2015; Kumaravadivelu, 2002) or post-methods era (Richards & Rodgers, 2014) as it draws upon many of the principles from a variety of over-lapping, established, methods (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011) and approaches (Richards & Rodgers, 2014) in the related literature. Linking closely to Kumaravadivelu's (2002) post-method condition, TPRS has teacher and student autonomy at its heart and its innovative nature enables practitioners to generate context-appropriate, co-created, classroom stories. It also encapsulates many of Kumaravadivelu's (2006, pp. 545–548) 10 'Macrostrategies for Language Teaching' such as 'maximizing learning opportunities, facilitating negotiated interaction, promoting learner autonomy and integrating language skills'.

### *3 TPRS and compelling, comprehensible inputs*

TPRS stories aim to be compelling, as this intense interest helps learners focus only on the message they are hearing or reading. The compelling input (Krashen & Bland, 2014) aspect of a TPRS story is achieved through focusing on students' interests (Davidheiser, 2002), personalization of activities (Watson, 2009), keeping students guessing (Printer, 2021) and including less formal grammar and vocabulary instruction (Pippins & Krashen, 2016). Through this compelling input, learners become lost in a 'state of flow', (Krashen, 2013, p. 103) unaware of which grammatical forms are being used. Students are so intrigued about what might happen next in the story that they acquire the language naturally through focusing entirely on the message and perhaps not even realizing it is in a foreign language (Krashen, 2015).

Sparking language learners' interest in the classroom activity leads to enhanced positive emotions, increased intrinsic motivation and improved long-term learning outcomes (Printer, 2021; Reeve, 2012). Conversely, when learning activities fail to compel students through interest or novelty, they often experience boredom and disengagement (Collins & Halverson, 2009). Various studies report that the compelling nature of TPRS stories results in positive engagement, excitement, eager participation, focus and a keenness to answer teacher questions, contribute details and volunteer ideas (Campbell, 2016; Roof & Kreutter, 2010).

#### **4 TPRS and language learning outcomes**

The present study focuses on changes in language learner motivation and engagement, and not on their test scores or changes in proficiency. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that almost all existing TPRS research compares TPRS favourably to more traditional language instruction when looking at achievement outcomes. Lichtman's (2019) review describes 30 such comparative studies and reports that '21 show advantages for TPRS over another teaching method, seven show mixed results and two show no difference between TPRS and other methods' (p. 2). TPRS is noted across a number of studies as being particularly effective in enhancing students' conversational proficiency and fluency (Armstrong, 2008; Bustamante, 2009; Foster, 2011; Muzammil & Andy, 2017).

Davidheiser (2002), however, argues that TPRS is only effective in beginning students. Nonetheless, the approach has been successfully employed by teachers of all language levels (Printer, 2021). Alley and Overfield's (2008) criticism of the lack of cultural content in TPRS stories has led to many authors of TPRS resources creating a wide range of materials in several languages that are rich in cultural content (for examples, see [www.cpli.net](http://www.cpli.net)).

#### **5 TPRS and emotions**

TPRS's differentiating factor is its ability to develop language whilst also motivating learners and fostering positive emotions such as enjoyment and excitement (Blanton, 2015; Printer, 2021). The affective filter (Krashen, 1982) is the anxiety experienced during the language learning experience that causes inhibition. While this phenomenon is particularly prevalent among teenagers, researchers highlight the capacity of TPRS stories to lower this affective filter as one of its unique success factors in the classroom (Beal, 2011; Whitaker, 2010). TPRS boosts students' confidence (Murray, 2014), helps them to feel more comfortable, reduces pressure (Dukes, 2012) and gives students the confidence to use the FL more often both inside and outside the classroom (Whitaker, 2010). Students report increased enthusiasm, engagement and satisfaction with TPRS (Lichtman, 2019). They prefer it to other, more traditional, methods (Beyer, 2008; Garczynski, 2006; Printer, 2021), overwhelmingly enjoy the TPRS classes, (Armstrong, 2008; Perna, 2007; Wenck, 2010) and find them easier to understand (Bustamante, 2009; Megawati, 2012). Students juxtapose their negative previous language learning experiences such as feeling stupid, embarrassed and bored against the positive emotions of ease, comfort, interest, enthusiasm and happiness experienced with TPRS (Braunstein, 2006; Dukes, 2012; Printer, 2021).

## 6 TPRS and motivation

With regard to language learner motivation, Blanton's (2015) study concludes that students score TPRS higher on all areas of motivation than the popular Communicative Language Teaching approach. Printer's (2021) qualitative research study with high school Spanish learners, reports that students perceive TPRS to be highly motivating whilst simultaneously generating positive emotions such as happiness, joy and enthusiasm. The active learning in story-asking appeals to learners (Davidheiser, 2002) and students emphasize feeling valued and a sense of belonging through the creative co-creation of a class story with their teacher (Brune, 2004), thus boosting student motivation. The entire story being delivered in the target language also raises their perception of competence (Printer, 2021), a critical psychological need for intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

## 7 TPRS and the teacher

Researchers posit that using TPRS in the classroom is effective (Baker, 2017), enjoyable to teach (Dukes, 2012), leads to heightened engagement and excitement (Campbell, 2016) and results in higher job satisfaction (Espinoza, 2015). While TPRS is sometimes viewed as being appropriate only for more extrovert teachers, Foster (2011) highlights that TPRS allows a teacher's own, innate, personality and creativity to flourish. Nonetheless, researchers also point out that in order for TPRS to be received positively by students, it requires training, support and on-going reflective practice on the part of the teacher (Baker, 2017; Campbell, 2016; Printer, 2021).

TPRS is inherently different from most pre-service language teacher programmes, where the emphasis is primarily on grammar-based progression, vocabulary lists and forced output (Espinoza, 2015). A lack of in-school support for teachers experimenting with the innovative TPRS approach can result in giving up and returning to traditional methods (Baker, 2017) or in feelings of low self-worth and isolation (Espinoza, 2015). Safdarian (2012) also highlights the impact of time constraints and completing the curriculum as other potential obstacles for the TPRS teacher. Inadequate initial TPRS training for the teacher can also lead to limited success as teachers try to tell a story rather than co-create one using the specific TPRS steps (e.g. Foster, 2011; Safdarian, 2012). The TPRS classroom revolves around large amounts of student participation (Dukes, 2012), meaning that the classroom can feel chaotic at times (Roof & Kreutter, 2010). Knowledge and practice of effective classroom management strategies as part of TPRS is therefore crucial to its success (Campbell, 2016).

# III Emotions

## 1 Emotions and language learning

Defining a nuanced concept such as emotions in relation to language learning is fraught with difficulty (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Eminent researcher Reeve (2005, p. 294) offers a multidimensional definition: 'Emotions are short-lived, feeling arousal-purposive-expressive phenomena that help us adapt to the opportunities and challenges we

face during important life events.’ In relation to the language learning experience, emotions have been described as ‘fundamentally important motivators’ (MacIntyre et al., 2009, p. 47) and the possible determining factor for the language classroom to achieve its motivational potential, and result in acquisition (Al-Hoorie, 2017). Nevertheless, Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) argue there is an ‘emotional deficit’ (p. 10) within SLA and L2 motivation research with positive emotions, in particular, remaining under-researched in the FL learning context (Al-Hoorie, 2017). This study responds to these calls by exploring the impact of teaching with TPRS on both student emotions and their long-term intrinsic motivation.

## *2 Reducing negative emotions*

Within FL classrooms, positive and negative emotions often co-exist and can be triggered while engaging with a variety of language skills (Boudreau et al., 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Wang & MacIntyre, 2021). The L2 learning experience can therefore be a source of emotional turmoil for many learners (Murphy, 2010). While negative emotions are known to develop and permeate gradually over time in the FL learning setting, positive emotions are often more transitory and associated directly with the current learning experience (Dewaele, 2015; Dewaele et al., 2019). Teachers’ pedagogical practices are routinely reported as the main sources of both anxiety and enjoyment in the FL classroom (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018), yet the role of positive emotions is frequently overlooked in the research (Saito et al., 2018). Ensuring classroom environments are adequately creative, surprising and challenging for FL learners, will reduce anxiety in the long-term (Al-Hoorie, 2017; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Leveraging these positive emotions has been found to promote psychological resilience and raise self-confidence among FL learners and can serve as a ‘protective function’ against negative emotions, especially when comprehension is challenging (Wang & MacIntyre, 2021, p. 507). Enjoyment and other positive emotions have been found to outweigh the negative emotion of anxiety on FL performance (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018) and developing these emotions in class may significantly boost attainment and achievement (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014).

## *3 Raising positive emotions*

Saito et al. (2018) recommend that teachers should concentrate on raising enjoyment in the FL classroom through a positive emotional atmosphere. The authors argue that positive emotions will be strengthened in the FL classroom when a ‘range of interesting challenges involving risk-taking, autonomy, and unpredictability beyond regular routine’ are employed (p. 736). The unpredictable and surprising elements are cited as particularly important in encouraging emotional investment in the FL classroom (Dewaele, 2015) and are also reported as highly motivating aspects of TPRS (Printer, 2021). Positive emotions such as satisfaction, enjoyment and joy have been found to widen learners’ perspective, free-up working memory and facilitate engagement with the FL learning process (Boudreau et al., 2018; Fredrickson, 2001; Graham, 2011). In their study of 108 high school students of English in Japan, Saito et al. (2018) report that the



heightened enjoyment experienced in their English classroom helped to reduce their anxiety. Enjoyment is noted in the literature as being particularly beneficial to FL learners as it helps them ‘attend to, process, and acquire a target language’ (Saito et al., 2018, p. 712).

#### **4 Theoretical framework**

The current study employs a Self-Determination Theory (SDT) lens to explore whether the introduction of TPRS stories impacts upon the positive emotions of a French teacher and her students, leading to changes in long-term intrinsic motivation. Ryan and Deci’s (2000) Self-Determination Theory (SDT) posits that satisfying the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness leads to enhanced intrinsic motivation and when thwarted can result in diminished motivation. Autonomy is concerned with choice, opportunities for self-direction and student ownership of their learning (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Competence includes students’ perceptions about their capacity to achieve success, (Fried & Konza, 2013) while relatedness refers to a sense of belonging, support and inclusion in the classroom (Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT has been successfully employed as a means to study FL motivation and motivational strategies by numerous researchers over two decades (e.g. Noels et al., 2000; Oga-Baldwin et al., 2017; Printer, 2021).

Intrinsically motivated activities are associated with positive feelings of excitement, engagement and joy. People choose to freely participate in them out of pure enjoyment and interest rather than due to any external forces or rewards. Intrinsically motivated students typically elicit higher levels of self-confidence, task persistence, desire towards learning and sustained positive learning behaviours (Cerasoli & Ford, 2014; Muñoz & Ramirez, 2015; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). By utilizing teaching approaches that satisfy SDT’s needs of competence, relatedness and autonomy, educators can boost positive emotions and engagement, leading students to more intrinsically motivated behaviours (Cerasoli & Ford, 2014; Jang et al., 2016).

### **IV The study**

The research enquiry aimed to explore whether the use of co-created TPRS stories in the FL classroom resulted in the satisfaction of SDT’s three basic psychological needs for intrinsic motivation and whether this, in turn, led to increased positive emotions among students. The participants in this study represented a bounded, within-site, single case study (Richards, 2011; Yin, 2009) of a class of nine students of French, aged 16–18 years, and their teacher. Whilst only a small class, the particular group was chosen as the nine students comprised a broad cross-section of gender identities, ethnicities and FL proficiency in order to be as representative as possible of the wider student body. Case studies allow for in-depth analysis (Creswell, 2014) and their value related to social processes in education is widely recognized (Denscombe, 2014). They are ‘strong in reality’ (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 292) and have been found to be particularly effective when researchers employ a variety of data collection procedures over a specific and sustained time period (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Given the small sample size, the findings of this study are confined to the school context in which it was conducted.



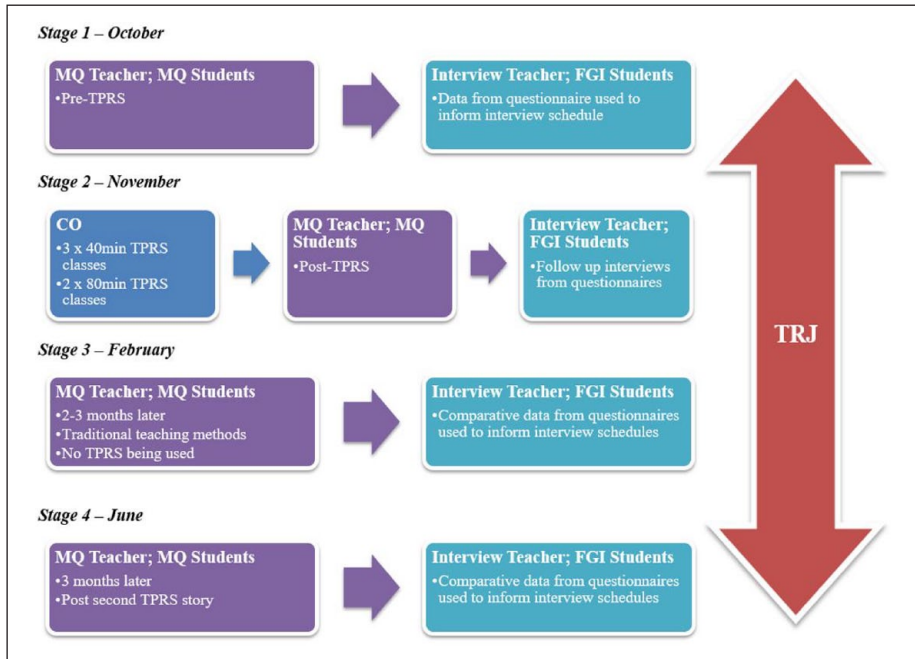
## *1 Methods*

A longitudinal, explanatory-sequential, mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2014) was employed. A variety of both quantitative and qualitative data sources were used. Initial data from motivational questionnaires (MQ) and classroom observations (CO) were followed-up, expanded and triangulated through qualitative interviews with the students (SI) through focus group interviews (FGI), and with the teacher (TI) through a one-on-one interview, as well as a teacher's reflective journal (TRJ). Instruments were selected both for their efficacy in addressing the research problem, as well as their efficiency for collecting longitudinal data in a busy school environment. Given the small sample ( $n=10$ ) and central aim of unpacking and exploring the perceptions of a teacher and her students, the quantitative aspects of the study were used primarily to inform the interview schedule for the qualitative aspects of the study. The responses on the MQs were used as starting point for discussion in the semi-structured interviews through open-ended questioning. Similar research designs are successfully employed in other studies to explain FL learning motivation (Bower, 2019) and student engagement (Turner et al., 2014) in a secondary school context.

## *2 Stages in the research*

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected at four distinct stages throughout the academic year, resulting in four sets of MQ data and four sets of teacher (TI) and student interviews (SI). At each stage, students and the teacher-participant completed a MQ, followed up closely by the qualitative, exploratory, interview phase. Both the TI and student focus group interviews (SI) took place within 48 hours of the MQ being completed, in line with recommendations to minimize the time elapsed between each phase so as to generate rich and valid discussion (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2014). The teacher, Laura (a pseudonym) taught her class using a TPRS story-asking approach twice during the year: once in early November, before Stage Two of the research and once more at the end of May, before Stage Four. During each of the TPRS teaching phases, Laura used the co-created, story-asking, steps outlined in Appendix 1 in supplemental material, during a period of approximately 10 days of lessons. In total this amounted to four  $\times$  40-minute classes plus two  $\times$  80-minute classes for each of the TPRS stories in November and May. Homework tasks allocated during the TPRS stories were typically short recap activities such as 'Write six true or false questions based on what we learned in the story today.' No rote learning of lists of vocabulary or any form of summative assessment was given as part of the story. Laura assessed the student's knowledge of the story formatively using mini whiteboard activities, retells and rewrites of the story during class.

Initially, the research had been planned in just three stages, spanning from September until February and including one TPRS story with the class during stage two. However, Laura chose to do a second TPRS story with the class at the end of May, before students' exams. Despite there being no CO of the second story due to time constraints and availability, further data was collected again after the second TPRS story, using the same format of MQ followed by interviews, in order to have a more complete picture of the



**Figure 1.** Stages in the research enquiry.

long-term impacts on students' motivation and emotions. In line with recommendations in the literature relating to longitudinal studies on motivation (Cheon & Reeve, 2015; Jang et al., 2016), the time between each stage of data collection was set at a minimum of two months. An overview of the stages in the research process is graphically presented in Figure 1.

For the MQ, a 41-question blended variation of Noels et al.'s (2000) LLOS-IEA and Oga-Baldwin et al.'s (2017) SRQ-A was established comprising four sections. Similar to Dörnyei and Taguchi's (2010) MSLQ and Noels et al.'s (2000) LLOS-IEA, it comprised a 7-point Likert scale in order to provide the most reliable results. The MQs for both students and the teacher were identical in order and by item, but with slightly adapted wording. Question order was randomized to control for order effects (Katz & Shahar, 2015). The final versions were cross checked by two teachers and four students, independent of the study, for understanding and any inconsistencies. All participants completed the form independently and under the researcher's supervision. Completion rate was 100% at each stage. Triangulation was achieved through the employment of a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods, thus helping to counteract any potential weaknesses in each of the individual methods (Gray, 2014).

## V Context

The educational setting was an English-medium, international school in Switzerland (ISS). At commencement of this longitudinal study, the school comprised approximately

**Table 1.** Summary information of student participants.

Name	Gender identity	Home language	At beginning of enquiry:		
			Age (years)	Years studying French at ISS	Total years studying French
Alex	Male	Greek	17	4	5
Eve	Female	English	16	3	5
Grace	Female	Italian or English	16	0.5 (6 months)	0.5 (6 months)
Jane	Female	English	16	1	6
Maya	Female	Spanish	16	0	0
Martin	Male	English	17	3	6
Melanie	Female	Swedish or English	16	0.5 (6 months)	0.5 (6 months)
Oscar	Male	Danish or English	16	1	5 (4 years as a child)
Victor	Male	Danish	18	4	4

Notes. ISS = international school in Switzerland.

400 students in the primary school and 500 students in the secondary school, representing almost 60 nationalities with 38 languages spoken. All students at ISS were required to study French until their final two years of High School. The particular school was chosen as this is where the researcher was employed at the time, allowing him access to the class and their teacher. The study cleared a full ethical review and ethics committee at The University of Bath before commencing.

### *1 Selection of participants*

A purposeful sampling strategy (Barnard & Burns, 2012; Cowie, 2011) was employed with specific selection criteria. Laura had over 10 years teaching experience and had recently attended a week-long training workshop in TPRS and other CI approaches. In line with the conventional focus group size, whilst also adhering to the recommendation to over-recruit so as to allow for absentees (Millward, 2012; Morgan, 1997; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009), Laura chose her ab initio French class comprising 10 students, aged 16–18 years to partake in the study. One student exited the study as he moved to a different class. The remaining nine students completed the entire longitudinal research enquiry over one academic year. All names are pseudonyms in line with ethical standards (see Table 1). According to the teacher-participant, this unusual mix of experience in what was supposed to be a novice class was due to the fact that many students in the class had repeated the beginning levels of the language on numerous occasions, as they had not achieved the required grades or proficiency to progress.

### *2 Data analysis*

The mean, range and difference for both the collective and individual's scores for each item on the MQ were calculated at each stage in order to inform and act as stimulus for the qualitative interviews. The cumulative scores within each of the 11 scales in the MQ were also computed to track their trajectory. This analysis was descriptive rather than

inferential (Creswell, 2014) and utilized to triangulate and support the more detailed qualitative analysis. Qualitative analysis of the TRJ, SIs and TIs followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis including coding, collating data into themes and categorization (Li & Walsh, 2011; Sanchez & Borg, 2014). Analysis of a combination of interviews, CO and written comments is recognized as a sound approach to FL teaching research and has been widely implemented in the field (Ahn & Class, 2011; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Kim, 2013). Following a theory-driven, deductive approach (Gray, 2014), interview transcripts were first coded for SDT's psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness and competence. Subsequent read-throughs allowed for locating utterances related to the specific area of emotions. Frequency counts were also completed for specific words that recurred in the data and had a direct link to one of the themes such as 'fun' (engagement) and 'free' (autonomy). Finally, themes were also organized by stage to allow for comparisons between stages and the MQ data.

Analysis of the COs followed a structured, systematic observation (Flick, 2009; Patton, 1990) approach using adapted version of Oga-Baldwin et al.'s (2017) observation protocol for measuring engagement and SDT in FL classrooms. For coherence, students' collective engagement was rated on a 7-point Likert scale at two-minute intervals during the class, where 1 represented 'everybody off task, chaotic' and 7 was 'everyone actively paying attention and participating' (Oga-Baldwin et al., 2017). For validity and reliability, video recordings of the CO were sent to two external researchers, to rate for collective engagement using the same observation protocol. Final versions of interview schedules and questionnaires were cross checked (Cohen et al., 2011) by others in the school to ensure clarity and reliability. A sample of the interview transcripts was also subject to double-code analysis (Arksey & Knight, 1999) by another researcher to ensure the suitability of categories and accuracy of coding. Students' and teacher's perceptions and feelings are presented via their direct quotations using pseudonyms. Findings were then sent to all participants to verify that their words, actions and feelings had been accurately portrayed (Gray, 2014).

## **VI Findings**

Laura and the student's thoughts, feelings and perceptions regarding the introduction of the co-created stories and how they impacted their emotions are now presented via their direct quotations as well as through their responses to the MQ.

### *I Negative emotions in FL experiences*

At the beginning of this study, Laura lamented how she 'struggled to teach' (TI1) this group and felt 'reluctant to go' to class as she thought she would 'disappoint them' (TI2). Many of the students in this class had repeated the beginning levels of the language on numerous occasions, as they had not achieved the required proficiency to progress. Laura described this leading to her feeling 'worried' about doing a TPRS story with the class due to their 'indifference to the subject' (TRJ). She found the huge 'mix of abilities' to be 'very complicated' (TRJ). This lack of perceived competence meant Laura felt 'uncomfortable' and 'quite depressed after each class' as she could not 'create

a good relationship with the students' (TRJ). The students' previous negative experience of TPRS with a different teacher resulted in a distinctly adverse attitude towards learning with stories from the outset of the study. 'Saying the same exact thing over and over again' (Eve, SI1) became 'extremely boring' (Jane, SI3) and 'really annoying' (Martin, SI3). They felt 'fed up with it' (Melanie, SI3) and found the overall experience to be 'really bad' (Eve, SI1) and 'horrible' (Martin, SI5). Their negative emotions were amplified due to both a lack of autonomy as they 'weren't adding to the story' (Eve, SI4) and a lack of competence 'as there wasn't really any progress' (Victor, SI4).

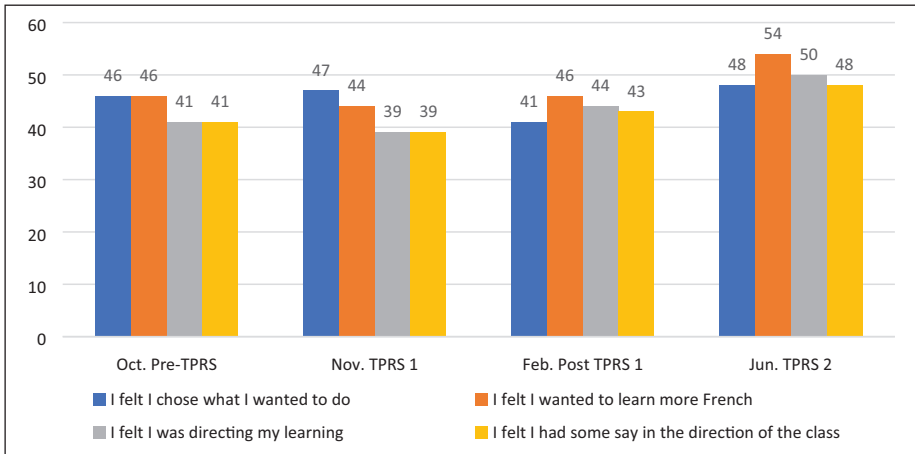
Students highlighted how, in previous classes, French teachers would typically 'just give us sheets and not teach us anything' (Grace, SI1) and classes were about 'sitting down for half an hour and writing' (Alex, SI5). Students emphasized their dislike of 'the grammar worksheets' (Martin, SI5) which they felt were 'very boring' and 'not connected to anything' (Victor, SI5). In previous FL classes they frequently felt 'really awkward' (Maya, SI3) and 'uncomfortable' (Melanie, SI1; Maya, SI3) as 'you're just sitting there and have no clue what's going on' (Melanie, SI1). Not understanding made them feel 'terrible, absolutely dying' (Grace, SI1), 'scared' (Jane, SI4) or like 'a bad student' (Melanie, SI1) as 'the people around you seem to know a lot and you don't' (Maya, SI3). This lack of comprehension was compounded over time as 'everything else that you add on, it just confuses it even more' (Grace, SI3) meaning 'you don't want to participate either and then the class just moves on' (Oscar, SI3). Overall, there was a clear dampened sense of intrinsic motivation from the lack of autonomy, competence and relatedness in previous FL classes.

## *2 The role of the teacher in TPRS*

Similar to other subjects, students felt that with TPRS, 'if the teacher isn't good, it certainly does lower your interest level' (Alex, SI1). For Grace, success with a new technique was hinged on 'if a teacher is really passionate' as this helps the students to 'enjoy the language more' and allows the teacher to 'go with the students' (SI1).

In addition to a teacher's innate personality, both Laura and her students acknowledged that successful TPRS teaching requires a certain level of skill and lots of practice. When Laura was using TPRS, she would 'make sure everybody knew' what was happening and 'would explain it also in other ways' employing 'different words that meant the same thing' (Grace, SI3). For Martin, it was just 'the way she told the story', that helped him to 'understand almost everything' (SI4). This was in stark divergence to TPRS the year before when 'we were just doing the same thing over and over again and we were just side tracked all the time' (Alex, SI1).

Grace agreed that 'the students lose interest' (SI1) in the stories when the teacher can't control the class (SI1). Victor pointed out that in the previous year, with a teacher who had very little training experience with TPRS, that 'most people were just shouting over each other' (SI5). For Alex this meant 'I didn't find it engaging at all and everybody was starting to lose attention' (SI5). Victor compared this to the current year when it was 'more a discussion and we can all talk to each other' (SI5). Laura attributed her success not just to her personality but to the techniques she witnessed at a workshop the previous summer (TI3) and to the preparation, research and 'homework' she was doing (TI3).



**Figure 2.** Students: Whole class total for autonomy items individually represented.

TPRS requires teachers to break the traditional teacher-student power dynamic, which Laura acknowledged was ‘not for everyone’ as ‘you have to be ready to feel not safe’, to be out of your comfort zone (TI4). Alex agreed that ‘not every teacher should do it because some teachers want more control over the class’ and when the teacher has too much ‘control of the story then it won’t be fun and the students won’t interact with it’ (SI5). Jane agreed that student input was essential but that the story must be ‘somewhat led by’ the teacher (SI4). This intricate balance of teacher scaffolding whilst allowing students to feel like they are directing the story was acknowledged multiple times by participants.

### *3 Positive emotions from increased perceptions of autonomy*

In Laura’s storytelling classes, TPRS stories were asked rather than told; giving students the perception that ‘we basically make a story as we go and it’s really good because we’re listening and memorizing’ (Grace, SI3).

Laura emphasized if ‘you want them to be motivated by the story’ (TI4), then you must put students’ ‘own experience’, interests and personalities at the heart of it (TI3). Laura planned her second story around a funny incident relating to two students in the class (TI4), leading to students’ scores for each of the autonomy items spiking sharply during TPRS 2. Scores from the MQ data, represented above in Figure 2, reflect these perceptions of increased autonomy.

Students felt the second story was even ‘more creative’ (Alex, SI5) as we were ‘coming up with ideas for different people’ which ‘really felt good’ (Martin, SI5). Having personal details in the story ‘really does engage us and focus us’ (Victor, SI5). The autonomous nature of the co-created story where ‘everybody chips in their ideas’ led to positive emotions in the students as it felt ‘more interesting and fun’ (Jane, SI3) as they could ‘relate’ to it and ‘find an interest in the story’ (Melanie, SI3). Being in control and able to ‘make up our own names for the characters’ (Grace, SI3) meant ‘we were more engaged’ (Eve, SI4).

#### 4 Positive emotions from increased perceptions of competence

Laura noted the change in students' emotions and body language when she was teaching with TPRS, stating that students were no longer 'coming to class with a negative attitude' (TI2). Students who were 'kind of bored usually' were 'being very happy' and positive when they were co-creating the story together (TI3).

Teaching with TPRS also resulted in increased positive emotions for Laura thanks to the growth in her competence as a teacher. In contrast to the beginning of the enquiry, when Laura said she felt 'so down' as she 'was not doing a good job as a teacher' (TRJ), at the end of the study, after doing a second TPRS story, she stated 'now I feel good about it, I really enjoy teaching this class' (TI4). Laura felt that TPRS allowed her to reach students of all levels, even those who were 'struggling with the language' because 'they can understand everything' and then 'they feel less frustrated' (TI4) resulting in more feelings of happiness and fulfilment. Laura's heightened self-competence led to increased feelings of happiness, joy and pride, writing it was '*So* amazing to see how much they can talk about thanks to a simple story'. She highlighted that it felt 'quite magical' (TRJ) and was unequivocal that this progress was 'thanks to TPRS, definitely' (TI4).

The students highlighted that the fact that 'it's a story' raised their perceptions of self-competence as 'you want to understand how everything just hangs together' (Melanie, SI3). This resulted in students feeling they 'actually learned from it' as 'it was quite easy to follow' which 'was really fun' (SI3). The stories 'felt really good' and raised their positive emotions as 'everyone just snapped it up really fast' (Melanie, SI3) and 'it just kind of went in' (Victor, SI5).

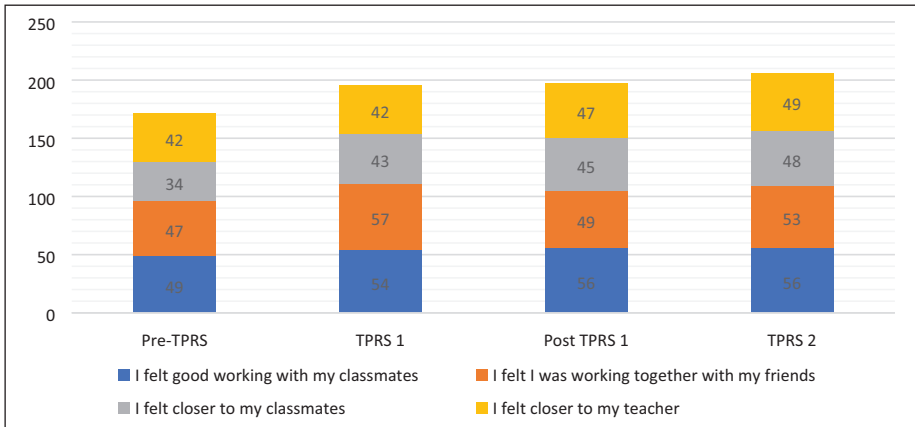
Maya, the only total beginner in the class, declared the stories were 'really good' because 'I understood much more' and 'the repetition really helped the phrases to stick in your head', (SI3) contrasting it to the negative feelings in previous classes where she felt she understood nothing. The stories were 'easier to remember' because 'a lot of emotions are connected' to them (Melanie, SI4) and because 'she left it up to us' (Victor, SI5) to direct the story. The autonomy granted to students in TPRS developed their retention of language, bolstered their competence and forged strong emotional ties:

Oscar: We know it and it's a story we like. That helps us remember it. It tends to stick with you more because you feel attached to it in a sense, instead of it being just some random story (SI5).

#### 5 Positive emotions from increased perceptions of relatedness

The improved relationships in the class after the introduction of the TPRS story boosted Laura's positive emotions stating it felt 'so nice to have this kind of relationship with the students' (TI2) and that 'I truly believe that doing the story united us, it united them' (TRJ). The TPRS stories led to a rise in her own positive emotions, where she felt 'excited to go to class' to 'continue the story' and 'surprise them' with varied activities (TI2), and this led to increased positive emotions on the part of the students.





**Figure 3.** Students: Whole class total for relatedness items individually represented.

As the students ‘could come up with the story’ and it was ‘not imposed on them’, Laura felt it fostered a ‘sense of belonging’ to their class (TI3) as ‘everyone was buying into it’ (TI2). As ‘it was our little group with our little story’ (TI3), the co-created narrative forged a cohesive tie with the students as ‘we felt more connected to each other’ (TI3). Laura exclaimed ‘the best thing is that now we have a nice atmosphere in the class’ (TI3) and ‘I love it’ (TI2). The MQ data supported Laura’s perception that TPRS had a direct impact on the positive emotions in the class:

Laura: I’m not saying maybe the story is responsible 100% . . . but there’s definitely *before* and *after* the story, definitely. In my relationship with the students, with their motivation. They find more meaning, they like coming to class (TI3).

The students echoed Laura’s sentiments, using words like ‘everyone’, ‘together’ and ‘included’ repeatedly and highlighted how the stories ‘gave them’ a friendly classroom ‘environment’ (Victor, SI5). The fact that ‘everybody was joining in ideas’ made you feel ‘very confident in talking and making mistakes’ (Grace, SI3). Students agreed that TPRS created a special environment that was ‘more focused and fun’ (Maya, SI3) and was conducive to building strong relationships as ‘you can include everybody’ (Grace, SI3). For Maya, who was both new to the school and to French, the stories were revolutionary as it was all ‘just more natural and fun. The atmosphere was much friendlier; it wasn’t like ‘me and the teacher’ with these verbs’ (SI3). The spike in belonging and togetherness arising from the stories was also reflected in the results from the student MQ as shown in Figure 3.

At the end of the year students attributed their enhanced desire to learn French to ‘the environment’ and sense of belonging that the stories created because ‘everyone is really supportive’ and that’s why we ‘really like them’ (Martin, SI5). The stories allowed them to develop ‘friendships’ and ‘had built confidence’ in them (Victor, SI5), meaning ‘that we’ve got closer’ (Maya, SI4).

Melanie: Because we've done these stories and because we're all open as a class, I think our relationship with each other has been developed a lot . . . I don't feel like this with any of my other classes (SI5).

The French class felt unique to the students by the end of the year as the stories allowed the teacher 'to get to know us better' (Martin, SI5) which 'over time just builds into a relationship' (Victor, SI5). Laura echoed the students' sentiments about sustained positive emotions, saying how 'happy' she was, that 'the story helped me to create a better relationship with my students' (TRJ) and now we 'feel that we are really connected' (TI4).

Laura: We're all working together . . . so I can feel that it's a bond. I think it's thanks to the stories. For me it's very strange to have this relationship with them now and thinking back to September. I don't really know what it is but I *know* that it changed with the story (TI4).

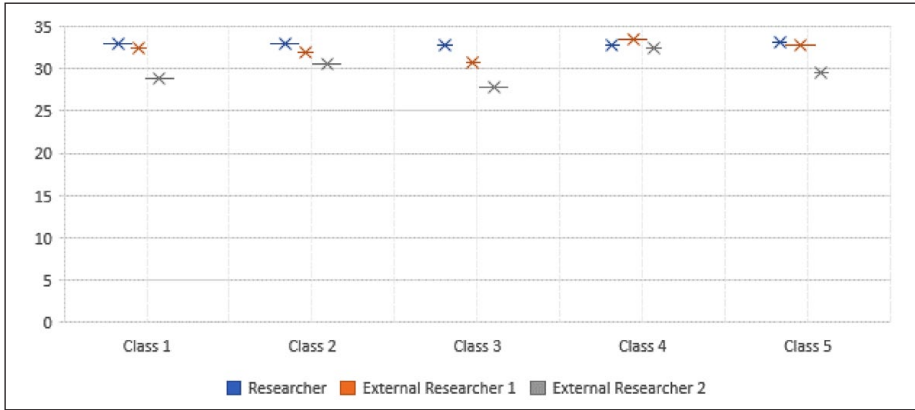
## 6 Increased emotional engagement

Data from the COs, as verified by both the researcher and two external researchers, concurred that TPRS resulted in sustained high levels of overall engagement and positive body language throughout the class when TPRS was being used. All five observed classes had both external researchers' scores broadly in line with the researcher's ratings. Given that each 2-minute section observed was scored on a 1–7 Likert scale for collective engagement, the maximum cumulative score for each 10-minute block was 35. Table 2 shows the average 10-minute block scores for collective engagement in each of the observed classes as noted by the researcher and the two independent external researchers. Figure 4 plots these scores on a box and whiskers graph:

Self-reported data from the students on their MQ supported the CO data relating to high levels of emotional and behavioural engagement during these TPRS classes. Laura noted the increase in 'smiles' (TI2) during story creation and how much students were 'enjoying it' (TI2) and 'having fun' (TI3, TI4). The students' increased enthusiasm and interest was clear to Laura through their 'body language' as 'they were more present' and 'all wanted to know what was going to happen' in the story (TI2). The word 'fun' surfaced on 31 separate occasions from students when referring to TPRS in their French class (SI3, SI4, SI5). They reported 'laughing' with the story (Eve, SI3) and 'a more

**Table 2.** Average 10-minute block scores for collective engagement.

	Researcher	External researcher 1	External researcher 2	Description
Class 1	33	32.5	28.8	Setting up story
Class 2	33	32	30.6	Story asking
Class 3	32.8	30.8	27.8	Story asking/revision of story
Class 4	32.8	33.4	32.4	Revision of story and reading stage
Class 5	33.2	32.8	29.6	Writing and re-tell stage



**Figure 4.** Average 10-minute block scores for collective engagement graphically represented.

playful atmosphere’ (Maya, SI3) which meant ‘we were really engaged’ (Eve, SI3). The ‘enjoyment’ (Grace, SI3) and positive emotions experienced with the story (Melanie, SI4) resulted in strong sense of ‘emotional attachment’ (Oscar, SI5) that made it easy to recall and retain.

Maya: I think it’s (TPRS) a way of fun learning . . . we come into French and have a fun time and we’re still learning (SI4)

For Laura, the TPRS classes were ‘something special that the students really enjoy’ (TI2) as ‘everyone was engaged’ (TI2) in the story. She felt the ‘unknown elements definitely connected’ to students’ emotions ‘because they keep asking me what’s inside the box’ (TI2) and this kept them all ‘really engaged’ (TRJ) this is ‘how they got interested’ and why ‘it worked so well’ (TI4). This resulted in increased on-task attention, effort and persistence in her students during class. The students agreed that stories ‘feel different’ (Jane, TI2) and led to heightened emotional engagement and interest, stating that with TPRS ‘you’re able to get up and you’re interacting with everyone so you have more fun’ (SI3). The participatory nature of classmates ‘acting out right in front of you’ meant ‘it’s kind of hard not to be entertained’ (Eve, SI3). This interactive element of stories was ‘a lot more interesting and a lot better for learning purposes’ (Victor, SI4), meaning the classes now felt ‘more focused and fun’ (Maya, SI3) and this led to students feeling ‘we’ve all got closer’ (Grace, SI4).

## VII Discussion

This study offers empirical support for Oga-Baldwin et al.’s (2017) longitudinal SDT supposition that FL teachers who provide interesting and exciting tasks within a fun, supportive classroom, will enhance motivation and also enhance positive emotions in their students. The findings from this study support recent research (Saito et al., 2018; Wang & MacIntyre, 2021) that grasps the significance of actively fostering positive emotions

such as enjoyment and happiness in the FL classroom rather than continuing to focus on the detrimental impact of negative emotions such as anxiety and fear which are already widely reported in the literature (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Murphy, 2010). Students in this enquiry frequently juxtaposed negative experiences from previous approaches, such as feeling stupid, embarrassed and bored, against the positive emotions of comfort, excitement and enthusiasm with TPRS.

The novelty of co-creating a class story speaks directly to Dewaele's (2015) research highlighting the importance of unpredictable and surprising elements in encouraging excitement and emotional investment in the FL classroom. Building on Printer's (2021) findings in the same context, TPRS allowed the teacher in this study to foster a love for the language and instil a sense of pleasure and enjoyment in coming to their FL class. The strong emotional connection to their own co-created story was cited as a fundamental reason why both Laura and her students found it so captivating. Students were actively trying to follow along and understand the storyline, resonating with Graham's (2011, p. 9) contention that when students successfully apply tools to 'crack the code of L2 speech', this enhances the positive emotion of self-efficacy. The resultant feeling of enjoyment facilitates an openness to engage and try to decode new language through intent listening (Fredrickson, 2001) leading to a positive emotion-competence cycle thus supporting Wang and MacIntyre's (2021) conclusion that fostering positive emotions in the FL classroom may provide learners with a protective shield against negative emotions related to comprehension difficulties.

### *1 TPRS raises positive emotions leading to increased engagement*

At the commencement of the study, increasing and maintaining student enjoyment were paramount for Laura and central to her conceptualization of FL learning. She stressed wanting 'to make them like' French (TI1), as FL students 'want to do well' and engage more in the process when 'they're having fun and it's not boring' (TI3). Consistent with child psychology and emphasizing low anxiety (Lichtman, 2019), the TPRS approach aligned with Laura's values around helping students to enjoy and engage in the FL class. This study's findings resonate with related studies, reporting that high school FL students prefer learning activities that include 'jokes, games or funny stories' (Astuti, 2016, p. 6) and that having fun is important in FL learning (Yurtseven et al., 2015).

Similar to other qualitative studies, participants in this study overwhelmingly compared TPRS favourably against other, more traditional, teaching approaches (Beyer, 2008; Garczynski, 2006; Wenck, 2010). The excitement and eager participation arising from the compelling TPRS story results in heightened, active engagement among students (Campbell, 2016). Aligning with a smaller study conducted previously in the same context (Printer, 2021), students again found the novel, unpredictable, autonomous nature of TPRS stories to be fun and captivating. TPRS also aligned with the students' ideas that in a FL class when 'you're having fun, you tend to learn better' (Mike, SI2) as it helps to 'enjoy the language more' (Grace, SI1). They highlighted how being able to include their own funny details in the story kept them entertained, made them more memorable and compelled them to engage and listen attentively to find out what happens next whilst also reporting 'feeling good' as their sense of competence was raised from understanding everything.

Positive emotions in the FL classroom tie closely to Krashen's (2013) notion of 'compelling comprehensible input', a central element to TPRS teaching. The results reported here align with contentions in the literature (Pippins & Krashen, 2016; Printer, 2021) that co-created class stories lead to students being lost in a 'state of flow' as they become so engrossed and intrigued about what might happen next (Krashen, 2013, p. 103). The students frequently reported the language 'just getting stuck in their heads' (SI4), resonating with the idea that storytelling is principally an emotional process (Fabritius & Hagemann, 2017) that humans find engaging and compelling (Bowman, 2018) where one often becomes lost in the input, failing to even realize it is happening in a foreign language (Krashen, 2013; 2015).

Resonating with related studies (Murray, 2014; Roof & Kreutter, 2010), students in this study presented a keenness to answer teacher questions, contribute details and volunteer ideas during storytelling. TPRS classrooms are witness to Reeve's (2012) notion of 'agentic engagement' as students proactively create, enhance and personalize the story. This enthusiastic engagement immediately improves the overall learning environment (Dincer et al., 2019; Reeve, 2012), which in turn develops positive emotions.

Whilst this study did not seek to explore changes in FL proficiency from TPRS, it did seek to explore whether TPRS led to heightened engagement, positive emotions and motivation as there is broad agreement in the SLA community that much of language acquisition takes place implicitly and unconsciously through attending closely to comprehensible inputs (Henshaw & Hawkins, 2022). Locating teaching strategies that both motivate students internally and result in excited, fervent, agentic engagement is rare. TPRS provides one such empirically tested tool that fosters this crucial notion of agentic engagement in the FL classroom whilst also increasing motivation and fuelling their positive emotions. When students are more engaged and emotionally invested in the FL classroom, they listen more intently and are more likely to acquire more language implicitly through actively following the story as it unfolds.

## ***2 Effective TPRS teaching requires training and support***

Like any other FL teaching method, activity or resource, TPRS will not motivate and instil positive emotions in students without the right conditions. While the role of the teacher is paramount in these conditions, the view among FL teachers that you must be loud, extrovert and overtly enthusiastic in order for TPRS to be a success is misplaced. Both the CO from this study, as well as the students' responses in their interviews, highlight that Laura is an excellent TPRS teacher but she is not loud or overly extrovert in class. Nevertheless, this study's findings clearly support conclusions from other TPRS related research (Campbell, 2016; Foster, 2011; Printer, 2021), as well as other longitudinal L2 motivation studies (Chambers, 1999; Nikolov, 1999), that the teacher and their individual style, play a vitally important role.

The students spoke strongly about how negative their experience had been with TPRS stories in the past with a different teacher. Students mentioned the over-repetition being 'really annoying' (Martin, SI3) and that the classes became 'extremely boring' (Jane, SI3) as they were 'fed up with it' (Melanie, SI3). The students had suffered a negative previous experience with TPRS as their teacher had not been trained in the

approach nor received any support in implementing it. It is certainly not the fault of their previous teacher, nor a reflection on their teaching. Indeed, the teacher should be commended for trying something new and innovative with their students.

TPRS actively satisfies the psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness, which makes it more likely to be motivating than other tools. Nonetheless, the findings presented show that teachers require adequate training and support in the approach in order to make it a success. The fact that Laura, who had received extensive training in TPRS, started out with a class with overwhelmingly negative preconceptions towards TPRS and a resultant low motivational starting point, was able to turn the students into advocates for a TPRS approach, underscores the importance of training teachers properly.

As a relatively new strategy, it is not part of most initial teacher education programmes worldwide. Training in the approach, on-going support and reflective practice are necessary for TPRS to meet its pedagogical and motivational potential (Baker, 2017). The literature provides many examples of studies where inadequate initial training in the TPRS approach led to limited success as teachers attempted to tell, rather than ask, a co-created story using the specific TPRS steps (Foster, 2011; Safdarian, 2012). Not only does this create problems when comparing findings across TPRS studies, it can also result in negativity towards TPRS stories among students as they were either not exposed to all the requisite steps, or were taught by a teacher who had not received appropriate training.

### *3 TPRS and classroom management*

While TPRS produces the highly sought-after construct of agentic engagement (Reeve, 2012), which leads to growth in positive emotions and motivation, this type of fervent engagement can also spill over into classroom management issues. The TPRS classroom is a vibrant and energetic learning environment where students are actively encouraged to volunteer their suggestions and ideas throughout the story creation. The success of TPRS centres on enthusiastic student participation (Dukes, 2012). While a goal of TPRS is for students to become so lost in the story that they fail to realize they are listening to and acquiring a FL, it can also lead to a chaotic learning environment at times (Roof & Kreutter, 2010). The more naturally extrovert students thrive in this situation. However, careful administration of the classroom expectations is continuously required so that the quieter, less confident, students also feel enthused to participate. Ryan and Deci (2020) support the necessity for structure in order to facilitate need-supportive teaching which reaches all learners and their basic needs.

Effective classroom management strategies are therefore paramount for successful TPRS (Campbell, 2016; Printer, 2021). Both Laura and her students mentioned in the data how things can quickly become unruly unless the teacher is able to ‘control the class’ (S11). Educators who wish to start teaching with TPRS are advised to outline clear and unambiguous behavioural expectations before starting the story, modelling the type of answers students should contribute and those which would be inappropriate. Providing a clear and detailed description of how the class will progress, breaking story creation into short blocks of time, giving students jobs and having them act out roles, are all recommended to maintain a sense of order during TPRS.

#### 4 Future directions for positive emotions in the FL classroom

Teaching language through a co-created story allows the lesson to develop in an unpredictable manner which, in turn, heightens positive emotions (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). This is in direct contrast to many common practices in FL classrooms around the world. Despite the evidence-based advice that high-quality student engagement is ultimately the element that will positively affect students' academic achievement (Reeve, 2012), very little has changed with the majority of FL classrooms still converging on traditional approaches to language learning. When asked about previous FL learning experiences, student-participants in this enquiry, as well as those in the pilot study (Printer, 2021), immediately highlighted the negative impacts on their feelings and emotions from the over-emphasis on worksheets and grammar. Laura also accentuated how previous, more traditional classes with a grammar and vocabulary focus often left her feeling less competent as her students were bored and disinterested. Despite the evidence that activities of this nature fail to compel young learners, resulting in boredom, disengagement and demotivation (Collins & Halverson, 2009), they continue to hold the primary foothold in FL classrooms. Shifting the focus away from learning about the mechanics of the language towards an acquisition-based model of instruction focusing on raising engagement and bolstering positive emotions requires a fundamental change for many practitioners.

FL teachers are advised to focus not only on reducing anxiety but also to provide enjoyable and intriguing FL experiences through the use of compelling, comprehensible inputs (Dewaele et al., 2019). Activities of this nature that bolster positive emotions lead to enhanced psychological resilience and self-confidence among FL learners (Printer, 2021; Wang & MacIntyre, 2021). Saito et al. (2018) argue for developing positive emotions in the FL classroom by employing a 'range of interesting challenges involving risk-taking, autonomy, and unpredictability beyond regular routine' (p. 736). The unpredictable and surprising elements are cited as particularly important in encouraging emotional investment in the classroom (Dewaele, 2015) and are also reported as highly motivating and crucial aspects of TPRS (Printer, 2021). Kramersch (2009) advises planning classroom activities that result in emotional arousal, as this will encourage deeper learner investment, aligning closely with the nature of a co-created TPRS story. The strong emotional connection that TPRS ignites in learners through compelling inputs (Krashen, 2013) is cited by learners as a core reason why they find it so captivating and motivating (Printer, 2021).

In order to make the classroom input compelling, practitioners are advised to focus on students' interests (Davidheiser, 2002), personalize tasks (Watson, 2009) and keep students guessing about what is coming next (Printer, 2021). As highlighted by the student-participants in this enquiry, this personal connection makes a story more effective (Fabritius & Hagemann, 2017) and results in increased on-task attention, effort and persistence during class. The novelty (Bowman, 2018) and unpredictability (Saito et al., 2018) entrenched in TPRS stories ties closely to the research on intensifying positive emotions and igniting student attention (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). By focusing on the development of these positive emotions, teachers will encourage deeper learner investment (Kramersch, 2009) which ultimately leads to increased motivation to learn



(Printer, 2021), improved attainment outcomes (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014) and more natural acquisition of the language (Henshaw & Hawkins, 2022).

While this study provides further empirical evidence relating to the inextricable link between positive emotions and intrinsic motivation in the FL classroom, future studies are required to further explore what Saito et al. (2018) call ‘the complex role of motivation and emotion in L2 development’ (p. 737). Across the literature, teachers are recommended to employ novel and compelling teaching methods that break the traditional mould, centred around students’ personal interests and group collaboration (Kaplan & Madjar, 2017). By explicitly planning lessons around autonomy, competence and relatedness, teachers will boost engagement and foster positive emotions in their classrooms, which have also been shown to significantly enhance achievement outcomes (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Results from this enquiry underscore how a subtle shift in focus from examination to motivation, placing the students, their interests and their passions at the centre of the learning environment, has the ability to dramatically change the overall educational experience for pupils.

## VIII Limitations

The longitudinal, year-long, study was carried out in an international school with one teacher and her class of 10 students. As with most qualitative studies representing an interpretivist research paradigm, this study recognizes its limited generalizability (Yin, 2009) to other contexts. Nonetheless, the particular phenomena found in one case study are also likely to be found elsewhere within similar settings (Stake, 1995). Collecting data from multiple sources and angles, as well as member checking and participant verification of findings and analysis, helped to counteract any potential issues of reliability and validity. Its value lies in the detailed insights about teaching through storytelling by the subjects themselves which will be of interest to both in-service and pre-service FL teachers working in similar educational settings.

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## Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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