

*Enhancing learners' intrinsic motivation.
The impact of the Storyline method*

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Abstract

The success of teaching a foreign language lies undoubtedly in maintaining high levels of learner motivation, particularly their intrinsic motivation. As abundant literature and significant research on intrinsic motivation in foreign language learners exist, this article focuses on the Storyline method as one of the ways of enhancing learner involvement. In doing so, the article presents the fundamentals of the method in question: its history, philosophy and ways of accommodating it in a language classroom. The aim of the study reported below was to examine the extent to which the use of the Storyline method influences learners' intrinsic motivation. Quantitative and qualitative methods have been applied including a self-assessment Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (Deci and Ryan 2010) and semi-structured interviews conducted after a sequence of lessons. The study revealed a positive impact of the Storyline method on learners' interest/enjoyment, perceived choice and perceived competence, and its negative impact on the pressure/tension felt which is a negative predictor of intrinsic motivation. Interviews conducted with the learners further confirmed that the Storyline method enhanced their creativity and added to a general sense of success.

1. Introduction

Motivation, understood in its broadest sense, has been captivating the interest of educational researchers for some time now, and has likewise been given due

attention in the field of foreign language teaching. While various theoretical stances provide us with competing taxonomies of motivation in language education (see Róg 2011: 122-124, for discussion), the present article focuses on generating learners' intrinsic motivation with recourse to the Storyline method. Since no previous studies have examined the impact of the Storyline method on learners' intrinsic motivation in foreign language teaching, the study reported below is an approximate replication of Mitchell-Barrett's (2010) study designed for teaching of History to L1 learners. The conceptualisation of the idea behind the method, its thorough definitional treatment and its accommodation in foreign language education constitute the theoretical backbone of this article. Its second part is of a more empirical nature, being a report on a study conducted by the present author with a view of determining the correlation between the Storyline method and learners' intrinsic motivation. In the course of the study reported below, a group of 17 Polish first grade learners of a secondary school participated in a sequence of EFL lessons conducted according to the Storyline method. Their levels of intrinsic motivation were measured using the *Intrinsic Motivation Inventory* (Deci and Ryan 2010) before and after the pedagogical intervention. Additional information has been obtained from interviews conducted with the learners after the Storyline finished.

2. Learner motivation

The drives to take up and stay on task can be external, internal or both. The need for such drives in enhancing foreign language learning is unquestionable. Therefore, in order to perform well in a language classroom learners as well as their teachers need to be conscious of what motivation is, what its origins are and what types of motivation can be distinguished. Motivation, in the current spirit of motivational psychology, is not only perceived as a reflection of inner emotional forces in an individual, nor in the typically behaviouristic terms of stimuli and responses, but also in the light of one's thoughts, beliefs and processes of interpreting reality and transforming them into action (Dörnyei 2001: 10-11). In a similar vein, Williams and Burden (1997: 120) suggested that motivation is a state of cognitive arousal provoking a decision to act. As a result, there is a sustained physical and mental effort to achieve previously set goals.

A widely used distinction in discussing learner motivation is that between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The external drives are the ones coming from the environment, such as learning to achieve a goal, conforming to the standards of the society one lives in, being influenced by people around a learner or having a natural curiosity about the teacher, the lesson or one's performance (Harmer 2007: 98-99). The strongest and most effective type of motivation

comes from the inside of every learner. Dörnyei (2001: 27) posits that this intrinsic motivation concerns behavior performed for its own sake in order to experience pleasure and satisfaction. According to Wigfield and Eccles (2002: 111), it is the energy needed for developing and participating in activities that satisfies innate needs. Examples of intrinsic motivation can be observed in the curiosity and exploration of newborn infants. Consequently, since humans are naturally equipped with this type of motivation, it can be assumed that internal drives will be the most natural determinants, also in learning a foreign language. However, their power depends on many factors. In this respect, Ur (1991: 280) enumerates learners' tendencies, attitudes, ambitions, conscientiousness, interests, opinions, experiences and engagement. What is more, intrinsic motivation depends on whether learners see the process of learning a foreign language as worthwhile, whether they like the language and its cultural, political and ethnic associations.

From a psychological point of view, the advantage of intrinsic motivation over other types of motivation is connected with the subconscious level of learner functioning. As Szałek (2004: 60) explains, intrinsic motivation relates to learners' interests and curiosities. A teacher can inspire their learners' internal drives by giving them a chance to exercise their natural propensities, enhancing learner autonomy and providing learners with optimally challenging tasks. *Self-determination theory* (Deci and Ryan 1985) is one of the most important theories concerning intrinsic motivation, assuming that every person is motivated intrinsically towards learning, advancement and intellectual challenge. Yet, in order to remain effective, this internal drive needs support from the interpersonal environment and from learner autonomy (self-determination). From this perspective, the connection between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation seems indispensable. Likewise, supporting learner autonomy will facilitate one's self-determined learning. At present, *self-determination theory* is seen (Miur and Dörnyei 2013: 368) as a further theoretical strand relevant to *directed motivational currents* – a theoretical construct described as a motivational drive which fuels sustained and long-term behavior. A version of Deci and Ryan's (2010) *Intrinsic Motivation Inventory* was used in the study reported below.

3. The Storyline Method – terminological considerations

Prior to discussing the ties between Storyline and intrinsic motivation, the status of the former in educational sciences needs to be explicated. Various theoretical positions adopt one of the two general stances perceiving Storyline as either an approach or a method. In point of fact, one of the creators of Storyline, Sallie Harkness (1993), refers to it inconsistently labelling Storyline as a method and an approach alternately. In the field of foreign language teaching, an approach

is a general theoretical stand or a philosophy towards teaching whereas a method is one of the ways of implementing it by the application of certain principles and procedures (Richards and Schmidt 2002: 29, 330; Thornbury 2006: 131). As will be evidenced in the discussion on the origins of Storyline, it bears the features of both. One can treat it as a teaching method since a set of precepts about how the teaching should be conducted and, as practitioners might attest, the guidelines for how a lesson could be devised are clearly delineated. At the same time, Storyline is just as importantly an approach to learning. Though lacking in firm theoretical basis, it was developed over many years with the involvement of many Scottish teachers and educators. The philosophy behind it falls roughly within the social constructivist standpoint since it takes into consideration learners' experience and promotes the idea of peer cooperation. Worth noting here are Bell's remarks regarding his slant on Storyline as one of its creators: "The Storyline method is based on the theory that knowledge is complex and many layered, that learning is guided by one's prior knowledge and experience, and that learners construct their own meaning through action and experience" (2006, cited in Creswell 1997: 3). Having no bias in favour of any of the two concepts, for the purposes of this article, we shall use the term *method* when referring to Storyline.

4. The main tenets of the storyline method

Archetypal Storyline proceeds according to a particular schedule. Of pivotal significance is the concept for a story upon which a series of lessons is built. Planned in a linear fashion, it should include the customary story elements: the setting, the characters, the time and the plot. When thoroughly considered, the story will constitute the driving force behind the teaching material to be covered. One such topic might include a radio station, a series of lessons in which learners are involved in creating their own radio programs. The key elements to be considered in this particular Storyline would be the division of roles, equipment, and timing. Such Storyline might begin with learners inventing a name for their radio station, working on a good advertising slogan, and deciding on the programs they wish to record. The subsequent tasks might oscillate around deciding on the specific roles for the learners (journalists, DJs, researchers, news presenters, etc.), recording their radio programs, presenting them (e.g. on a school website), and possibly visiting a real radio station.

The primary impetus for initiating Storyline takes shape of a key question that elicits the collective knowledge and draws out learners' shared experiences which are the mould on which the subsequent lessons are cast. As Creswell (1997: 7) explains, learners need to build their conceptual model first and in that

the Storyline method differs from thematic learning. Additionally, this initial brainstorming boosts learners' motivation to pursue an activity. Following the example of a radio station Storyline, the key question might simply be: *What is a radio?* The social constructivist nature of the method manifests itself in the joint creation of the story, not only in the teacher – learner interaction, but also in the ownership on the part of the learners. The questions that they frame at this initial stage of the Storyline are an indication of their educational needs and the basis of the following lessons. In this way, the learners take the ownership in their own education. A beneficial ramification of such an approach also lies in the fact that it allows the learners to confront their later work with a *bona fide* equivalent. Further, the human element of the Storyline should also be given due credit at this point. The defining feature of the method is its learner-centred approach which allows for focusing the series of lessons on learners' feeling and perceptions. The topics touched upon in the course of the lessons are perceived through the eyes of the characters in a safe classroom environment, allowing for sensitive issues to be discussed with a fair degree of security on the part of both the learners and the teacher.

It is the teacher's responsibility to allocate precious classroom time to developing the events planned in the Storyline. The whole story usually takes between 5 to 10 lessons, in which time learners invent their characters, take on their roles and respond to any problems which occur. Although the learning process is led by learners, the teacher is "an educational designer" (Bell 2006: 5) who controls the key learning outcomes. They design the story in a manner which guarantees that the necessary curriculum content is met and which ensures that the sequence of lessons is divided into a number of episodes, each with its own logical narrative sequence. Bell and Harkness (2006: 9) are of the view that the Storyline should ideally comprise five episodes. In the first of these, a setting is created in answer to the key questions; in the second, the characters necessary for the story are created by the learners; in the third episode, events are initiated according to the next key questions. The fourth episode entails learners suggesting incidents which are used for further development, and, finally, there is a culminating event in the fifth episode, followed by a review of what the learners have learnt in a particular story.

Once the Storyline context is functioning, the teacher's role is to challenge their learners to react to unforeseen incidents. An incident, for instance a break-in, flood, fire, or robbery, prompts learners to swiftly provide "specific pieces of required content" (Creswell 1997: 8). The tribulations may be resolved in a multitude of ways: by doing additional research, asking a knowledgeable other, acting out a role-play, drawing cartoons, or writing an article, to mention but a few. The incidents can also be learner-initiated; however, in general, they arise out of

curricular needs, e.g. an outbreak of fire in a radio station could serve as a point of departure for studying the rules of industrial safety.

By principle, the bulk of Storyline topics conclude with a high point: a celebration marking the completion of a series of lessons. This may include a visit from an expert, a field trip to a place of interest, a ceremony, or a performance. The intention of a high point is to summarise the Storyline, draw conclusions, and collate the experience gained during the study with its real-life equivalent. Oftentimes, as Creswell (1997: 8) observes, learners prefer their invention or solution to the real thing. In such instances, the teacher's and learners' work is inevitably marked by success.

The key elements used in creating any Storyline explained above can be summarised in the following points:

1. Begin the Storyline with a question.
2. Design a number of key episodes.
3. Get the learners to prepare a display in order to bring the story to life.
4. Ask the learners to create their own characters (make them invent their names, biographies, and personalities).
5. Prepare a series of incidents occurring at different stages of the Storyline, to which the learners-characters should respond.
6. Conclude the Storyline with a 'high point' – a celebration or an event.
7. Review with the learners what has been learned in the process.

5. Accommodation of Storyline in FL education

A brief look at the main tenets of the two philosophies dominant in FL education in the past decades, namely behaviourism and constructivism, will serve as a point of departure for discussing the place of Storyline in language education. To begin with, it needs to be stressed that the behaviorist approach to FL teaching has been reflected for decades in a particular sequencing of the material to be learned, such as dividing it into modules, units and chapters. Each of these dealt with specific grammatical units, lexical items or functions: prepositions, travelling vocabulary, agreeing or disagreeing, etc. The teacher fed those to learners who were supposed to digest and store them. The behaviorist approach has also been reflected in the division of language learning into skills which, when practiced separately, could supposedly create a skilful language user. As Beatty (2003: 85) notes: "lessons should proceed along strictly sequenced lines". Using Pavlov's idea of stimulus and response, learners get incentives in the form of good marks for good linguistic performance, which in turn increases their motivation. In order to move to higher stages of language proficiency, learners should be taught increasingly complex items and practice them through drills

while being awarded for good responses (Beatty 2003: 86). This reinforcement is seen as crucial since it "increases the likelihood that the behavior will occur again and eventually become a habit" (Richards and Rogers 2004: 56). A learner is seen as a *tabula rasa*, an empty vessel that needs to be 'filled' with information by an expert.

Being a dominant paradigm in modern foreign language teaching, constructivism can be characterized in opposition to the previously applied approaches, mainly behaviorism. The constructivist learning theory stands in contrast to the behaviorist one first and foremost in that it claims that every learner, being a social creature, learns best when working collaboratively and the true nature of learning lies in the social construction of knowledge rather than it being received or discovered (Richards and Rogers 2004: 109). There is a step away from the aforementioned dividing language into chunks as happens when creating curricula, towards focusing on learners' needs and expectations. The role of the teacher changes from the sole repository of knowledge to a facilitator who collaboratively constructs knowledge with learners. In order to do this, learners need to tie the new information with their existing knowledge and experience (Beatty 2003: 91). Teachers provide assistance by using generative words and themes drawn from learners' experiences, for instance through problem-posing techniques.

As can be seen, the main difference between behaviorism and constructivism lies in the treatment of the initial state of the learner. Constructivism employs learners' previous knowledge and experiences and draws from it to choose language areas to work on. Additionally, it uses it within the community of learners to construct new knowledge. This mental structure, also known as schema, was introduced into psychology by Frederic Bartlett. It is a complex network of background knowledge which people use to interpret their experience. Another difference between behaviorism and constructivism lies in the fact that the former relies heavily on rote learning while the latter favors collaboration in negotiating meaning. Following a constructivist paradigm, learners work together in order to reflect on their own schemata in the light of what they observe at others. They verify and extend their knowledge. The role of the teacher is to create opportunities for learning by repeating and rephrasing and to encourage reflective thinking (Beatty 2003: 94).

For reasons mentioned above, the Storyline method is in keeping with the constructivist approach. As Harkness (1993) explains, it hinges on learners' experience, their social skills and their (indispensable) willingness to communicate. It enables learners to overcome their reluctance to use a foreign language as it does not downgrade them for using ungrammatical structures. As a matter of fact, achieving language proficiency can be seen as a by-product of the method. Strictly speaking, the aim of the lessons, from a learner's point of view,

is to complete a specific task, not to improve their language skills. Understandably, these skills will develop just the same in the course of a series of communicative tasks involved.

The course of language learning depends on the context in which it takes place. Numerous psychological processes occurring in the minds of learners require careful consideration on the part of the teacher. The many and multifarious individual variables beyond the teacher's control are not the subject of this paper. However, lowering learners' inhibitions can successfully be achieved with recourse to the Storyline method. First of all, it allows choosing topics which are of interest to the learners. High motivation engages them in active participation. Secondly, Storyline provides opportunities to analyze one's own progress and informs them of their (linguistic) abilities. Learners can see for themselves how well they would cope in specific situations. Thirdly, Storyline allows identification with the characters, which, in effect, partially takes the burden of responsibility for making mistakes off learners. In other words, learners function on the basis of the assumption: "It wasn't me; it was my character".

The construction of new knowledge in the Storyline method is always related to the existing background knowledge of a learner. The activation of schemata and integration of new information with the previous knowledge is embodied in the Storyline's linear fashion. The sequence of lessons based on the frame of a story allows smooth development, contextualization, integration of language and content, and its more efficient allocation within the existing structures. For this to be achieved, the technique of brainstorming is commonly applied. In the example of the radio station Storyline, learners are asked about the rudiments of a radio at many points of the procedure. The teacher may ask questions about the inventor of the radio, the differences between FM and AM waves, the way a radio functions, employees, etc. This helps to establish what learners already know and what requires further exploration.

6. The study

The study set out to explore the effectiveness of the Storyline method in increasing learners' intrinsic motivation. Specifically, it sought to discover the level of intrinsic motivation among learners prior to introducing them to the Storyline method and after they completed their first Storyline. As the numerical data could not be sufficient in explaining the impact of the Storyline project on learners' intrinsic motivation, the study was also intended to offer insight into learners' perceptions of the Storyline method – their reflections and critical comments. It therefore took a form of quantitative and qualitative study conducted with the help of written questionnaire and interviews. This blend of data allowed

exploring the relationship between the Storyline method and intrinsic motivation. The study reported here has been to a large extent inspired by a study conducted by Mitchell-Barrett in 2010, designed for her doctoral dissertation. It can be said to be a replication study, although the original research project was aimed at primary school children, it was carried out in their mother tongue, the topic of the Storyline was different and its aim was to view the Storyline method in a wider context of the English primary school curriculum.

The assessment procedure consisted of a pretest conducted shortly before commencing the Storyline in a classroom of 17 secondary school learners of English as a foreign language, an immediate posttest given on the first lesson after the Storyline ended, and oral interviews with five of the students carried out within two weeks after the end of Storyline sequence. The collected data underwent quantitative and qualitative analyses. The reported study involved conducting a sequence of Storyline lessons with the topic of creating a radio station. The learners had not been familiarized with the method beforehand and had not been informed about the fact that the study had been undertaken. Two hypotheses have been put forward:

H_0 = There is no relationship between the use of the Storyline method and learners' intrinsic motivation.

H_1 = There is a positive correlation between the use of the Storyline method and an increase in learners' intrinsic motivation.

6.1. Participants

The participants were 17 Polish learners of English as a foreign language aged 16-17. They were first grade students of a secondary school, among whom there were 10 females and 7 males, with at least 4 years of instruction in English. Their level of English oscillated around A2/B1 (as evidenced in a TOEFL Junior® test administered outside the scope of the present study a month earlier by the teacher-researcher). The school was set in Piła, in the North-West of Poland and catered for learners aged 13-19 years old (middle school being a part of the complex of schools), with approximately 400 students attending it.

6.2. Tools

The levels of the participants' intrinsic motivation were measured before and after they participated in the Storyline project. To this end, the present author utilized a shorter, 22 item version of Deci and Ryan's (2010) *Intrinsic Motivation Inventory* (IMI) prepared by Mitchell-Barrett (2010: 190-194) for the purposes of her previously-mentioned study (Appendix 1). In order to enhance the scores attained through the motivational questionnaire and to provide a broader context,

the posttest was followed by a semi-structured interview (Appendix 2) with five of the learners. Its aim was to provide more insight into their perception of the Storyline method. The interviews were digitally recorded and analyzed by the author who checked for keywords and recurring themes. The participants of the interview were selected by applying a formula of $n/3$ to the class register. It is worth noting that the study was intended at measuring the direct impact of the Storyline on learners' intrinsic motivation and therefore applying a delayed post-test would be unjustified.

The IMI used for collecting motivational scores is task-specific and, thus, the pretest had to be worded in view of 'today at school', allowing the learners for a shared context (Mitchell-Barrett 2010: 80). Likewise, the posttest was completed as 'today in the Storyline'. Such an adaptation of the items in the inventory is quite natural and does not affect the results of the study. The modified IMI measured four areas of the participants' intrinsic motivation: interest/enjoyment, perceived competence, perceived choice, and pressure/tension felt. The interest/enjoyment subscale is the only subscale that directly measured learners' intrinsic motivation. The perceived competence and perceived choice are its positive predictors, while the pressure/tension subscale is the negative predictors of intrinsic motivation (Mitchell-Barrett 2010: 81). As already noted, the pre- and post-questionnaires were distributed to the learners during lessons respectively before and after conducting the Storyline project. The learners were assured of their anonymity and encouraged to give honest answers. Similarly, during the interviews which took place within two weeks of the end of the Storyline, the learners were encouraged to talk honestly about their impressions and to openly share their critical comments. Some of the participants needed mild verbal encouragement; however care was taken not to suggest any answers.

6.3. Data analysis

Each item on the IMI was given a score from 1 to 7 (a Likert-type scale). The scores were collated according to the participant and question number, bearing in mind, that questions 2, 9, 11, 14, 19 and 21 were reverse-scored, i.e. the factual item score was established by subtracting the response from 8 (in other words, a lower score in these questions described more of the subscale concept). The final scores were averaged for each of the four subscales. An average score for subscales was established by dividing the subscale scores by the number of participants. The procedure was applied to both the pre- and posttest results.

The interviews with the learners were conducted in their mother tongue and recorded onto a mobile device. In analyzing the interviews, the present author listened to the collected data several times to become familiar with the

content and to establish recurring motives and patterns. This also meant looking for inconsistencies and contradictions (as advised by Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 160). Such an approach is commonly used where a variety of answers makes it infeasible to attach a numerical value to each of them. As is typical of an interview, the respondents decided themselves how detailed their responses were. Whenever the participants gave varied answers, the researcher searched for keywords in each response and later grouped them into different categories. Fragments of the interviews considered most relevant by the present author were transcribed using first-level coding (i.e. participants' direct words).

6.4. Storyline topic

The topic for the Storyline was inspired by Creswell's (1997: 53-66) *The radio station* Storyline which had a language art focus. The aims were to encourage the learners to write for a specific purpose, to show them how to edit their writing, to improve their creative thinking, to develop their IT skills, to teach group work, to teach about the work of a radio station and to make them reflect on the criteria of designing a logotype. The sequence comprised eight lessons/episodes. The structure of this Storyline is presented in Table 1.

Storyline episode/ lesson	Key activities
1. Letter from a radio station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners read a letter from a radio station asking them to create their local radio and produce their own programming. • Learners write their replies.
2. Radio station name	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners brainstorm what they know about a radio station. Key questions are asked. As homework, they are to find out missing information. • Working in groups, learners invent names for their radio stations.
3. The logo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners find out how an advertising campaign is designed. • Learners discuss what a successful logo should look like. They design it in groups. Later, they invent their advertising slogan.
4. The team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the Internet and other resources available, learners find out about different responsibilities of radio station workers. They invent characters for themselves and distribute tasks.
5. The program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners work in their groups designing a short radio program.
6. The recording (could be done at home)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners record their radio programs, edit them, add sound effects, etc.
7. Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners present the results of their work to the other learners in class.
8. Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners share the things they found out while working on this Storyline, and discuss greatest difficulties.
9. High point/celebration (if possible)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners visit a local radio station.

Table 1: The sequence of the Storyline lessons used in the study.

As evidenced in Table 1, each episode involved problem-solving and took the form of task-based learning. Therefore, it aroused learners' curiosity and

made learning meaningful. At the same time, the whole Storyline was conducted in English, i.e. in a foreign language, which adds to learners' feeling of success. The key questions in this project were the following:

- How does a radio station work?
- What is the difference between AM and FM waves?
- How many people are needed to run a radio station? What are their specific roles?
- How can one organize a successful advertising campaign?
- What should a good logo look like? What about a good advertising slogan?
- How can one make a radio program interesting for the listeners? What topics should be included? What kind of music?
- How can one record a radio program? How can it be edited?

The learners were challenged to find their own answers to these questions, as well as others, which appeared in the course of this Storyline. In this way, they were actively involved in carrying out the project.

6.5. Results

The study was carried out in February and March 2014 in a group of 17 first grade students of a secondary school in Piła. The present author, who was also the teacher-researcher, analyzed the data in accordance with the rules outlined in section 4.3. The results of the IMI questionnaire and learner interviews are presented in the next two sections.

6.5.1. IMI questionnaire results

The pre- and post-Storyline IMI questionnaire enabled tracking learners' intrinsic motivation levels in four areas: interest/enjoyment, perceived competence, perceived choice, and pressure/tension felt. Each of the 22 questions related to one of these subscales, as shown in Table 2 (taken from Mitchell-Barrett 2010: 119). The (R) symbol indicates reversed scores, i.e. the need to subtract the numerical value from eight when calculating the question score.

Subscale	Question number
Interest/ enjoyment	1, 5, 8, 10, 14 (R), 17, 20
Perceived competence	4, 7, 12, 16, 22
Perceived choice	3, 11(R), 15, 19(R), 21(R)
Pressure/ tension	2(R), 6, 9, 13, 18

Table 1: The relationship between IMI subscales and question items.

The results obtained in both the pretest and posttest were calculated by finding out the average score of each subscale for each participant of the study. The scores for the particular subscales were then averaged for the whole group. These scores can be treated as dependent variables indicating trends in the researched group. The Storyline method used in this study was the independent variable. Table 3 demonstrates the results of the IMI questionnaire prior to and after taking up the Storyline method in the researched class. The Δ (delta) indicates the difference between the pretest and posttest.

n=17	Pretest M	Posttest M	Δ
Interest/enjoyment	5.4	6.6	+1.2
Perceived competence	3.3	4.0	+0.7
Perceived choice	3.7	4.5	+0.8
Pressure/tension	2.8	2.3	-0.5

Table 2: Pre- and post-test IMI scores collated.

What can be inferred from Table 3 is that in the first three of the measured subscales, the learners' average scores increased from +0.7 to +1.2. At the same time, the average scores of pressure/tension decreased by -0.5 from 2.8. to 2.3. The highest increase was noted in the area of interest/enjoyment. This score is said to be central in the IMI questionnaire (Deci and Ryan 2010, cited in Mitchell-Barrett 2010: 125) as it is a self-report of learners' intrinsic motivation. The average scores increased by +1.2 in the post-test. It is therefore our first confirmation that learners' level of intrinsic motivation increased as a result of taking part in the Storyline. A second argument in favor of this assumption comes from the results of the perceived choice subscale. It was the second highest increase indicating a growth in learners' feeling that they were taking responsibility for their own learning. Having a sense of control and becoming autonomous in their own learning is vital for learners' intrinsic motivation. The increase in this subscale equaled +0.8. Moreover, the reported drop in the pressure/tension felt, being the negative predictor of intrinsic motivation, confirms that learners' general level of intrinsic motivation increased. In general, the results of the pretest and posttest indicate that, as a result of participating in the Storyline, learners' felt free from pressures, responsible for their actions and interested in their lessons. In other words, their levels of intrinsic motivation has risen.

In order to verify the two hypotheses (H_0 and H_1), the scores obtained through the questionnaires were tested using a paired-samples *t*-test with the help of SPSS 15.0 software. The mean scores obtained from both the pretest and posttest were compared, taking into account the number of participants and scores variability. The results obtained in the analysis entailed the mean of the subscale scores, difference between the means and standard deviation (SD).

These, in turn, were used to calculate the *t* value. The accepted level of significance was set at 0.5. As transpires from Table 4, the statistical significance of the *p* value allows rejecting the zero hypothesis and accepting H1, i.e. there is a positive correlation between the use of the Storyline method and the increase in learners' intrinsic motivation.

	Pre-test	Post-test	<i>t</i>	Significance (two-tailed) <i>p</i>
Interest/ enjoyment	M=5.44115; SD=0.26478	M=6.68476 SD=0.16948	-16.879	.002
Perceived competence	M=3.33748 SD=0.19334	M=4.00928 SD=0.39883	-4.084	.007
Perceived choice	M=3.73974 SD=0.76348	M=4.51938 SD=0.34981	-15.678	.000
Pressure/ tension	M=2.83847 SD=0.32298	M=2.34886 SD=0.22983	-0.178	.003

Table 4: Results of the analysis of the questionnaire scores.

6.5.2. Interview results

Being an extremely useful research technique in social sciences, an interview was adopted in the last part of this investigation. An interview enables greater understanding of the phenomena occurring in the subjects' minds and, apart from being an insightful tool, it is also a flexible one, allowing the retrieval of various types of information from the respondents. In ELT research, semi-structured interviews give researchers more freedom to explore learners' views of language learning without preempting any fixed ideas. The necessary data were gathered in the course of interviewer's direct contact with the subjects. The interview was semi-structured, which allowed retrieving additional information from the participants, apart from those arising from the key questions.

In the first question, the participants were asked whether they enjoyed the Storyline experience. Further, they were also asked to justify their answers. None of the interviewees claimed that they did not enjoy the Radio Storyline and all of them were very enthusiastic. Reflecting on the lesson sequence, the interviewed learners stressed their freedom to invent their own solutions. Some of them talked about the need to negotiate with their classmates. The following examples are illustrative of this stand:

These lessons were interesting. I liked the fact that we were solely responsible for organising everything.

It was great that we could make our own decisions. Nobody told us what to do, we could do everything the way we wanted.

I was allowed to do things the way I wanted, although not all my group mates liked my ideas.
In my opinion, these lessons were interesting, the teacher told us what to do but not how to do it.

The second question concerned the learners' favorite parts of the Storyline. They clearly indicated that they enjoyed the part in which they had to invent an advertising campaign for their radios. At the same time, many stressed the fact that they liked the process of recording their programs. It was evident when they said:

Recording the radio programme was a lot of fun. It took a lot of time but we didn't even notice. We had some microphone problems first, and then we didn't know how to edit music, but the final result was great.

One of the participants was clearly convinced that these had been one of the best English lessons he has ever had. He stressed that learning new vocabulary and skills had been a lot of fun and commented that in his opinion this was the way all lessons should be conducted. The other interview participants also appreciated a lot of hands-on experience in this Storyline.

In the case of question three, the participants listed those features of the Storyline they did not enjoy. When talking about her experience, one of the students said she had been a bit confused at the beginning and she had not known what to do. The opinions voiced by the other learners confirmed that many learners were simply not used to the fact that they were to do most of the work autonomously. In fact, some of them mentioned that they thought their teacher had been playing a trick on them and they were unsure how much independence they had in conducting the tasks.

With respect to the next question, the participants were requested to discuss how the Storyline was different from their everyday school experience. The reported answers oscillated around independence and motivation. In this context, the participants mentioned a very motivating topic and the sense of success after completing the Storyline. The learners were obviously proud of the outcomes of their work. The following excerpts illustrate these points:

It's great we recorded the programs, I didn't expect they would turn out so good. I am really happy with what we did together, the radio programme was great. I wish we could repeat it in the future.
These lessons were really interesting. Finally something really involving, not just boring lessons.
In these lessons we were allowed for a lot of creativity and making our own decisions, which does not happen on other lessons.

Finally, the learners were to describe how they felt when participating in the *Radio Storyline*. They expressed their satisfaction with the work they had done and were really proud that they were able to communicate their ideas in English. These points are evidenced in the following excerpts:

I did not believe I could do all this in English. But I did and it makes me very happy. It was all very exciting, and very fresh. I wish all lessons could be like that. I had so much fun!

I felt good, we did everything we planned and I'm happy with the results.

7. Discussion and conclusion

The findings obtained in the present study clearly corroborate the results reported by Mitchell-Barrett (2010), although the context of the two studies was different. In the case of Mitchell-Barrett's study, the participants were primary school pupils who participated in the Storyline with the theme of *Early man* and the *Stone Age people*. The pupils in that study used their mother tongue and the aim of their Storyline was to ensure coverage of the history and geography curriculum, not a modern foreign language. In the case of the present study, the learners were 16-17-year-old Polish learners of English, participating in a Storyline concerned with recording a radio station. The overall aim of the Storyline was to increase their language proficiency; however, as already observed, many other aims were included in this Storyline as well and most of these were cross-curricular in nature. Both studies aimed at measuring the impact of the Storyline project on learners' levels of intrinsic motivation and both brought similar findings: a reported increase in the areas of interest/enjoyment, perceived choice and perceived competence, and a decrease in pressure/tension felt, which is a negative predictor of intrinsic motivation.

The findings of the pre- and post-Storyline questionnaires indicate that learners' level of interest increased as a result of participating in the Storyline. This was confirmed during interviews with the learners, as the participants stressed their involvement in carrying out the Storyline. They claimed that the conducted lessons were 'fresh' and 'extraordinary', and that they appreciated the use of a lot of hands-on experience. The IMI questionnaire scores also demonstrated an increase in learners' perceived choice and perceived competence. Certainly, in the course of the Storyline, the learners' showed a lot of initiative and involvement in their lessons. Often stressed in the interviews was the learners' feeling of success and their pride in being able to record a radio programme in a foreign language. The participants of the present study voiced positive opinions about the Storyline method as such. In addition, in the course

of the interviews, they often underlined the originality of the method, its practicality and the opportunities for creativity it offers.

The study reported above demonstrated a positive impact of the Storyline method on learners' levels of intrinsic motivation. This was evidenced both in the questionnaires results as well as in the interviews conducted with the participants of the study. The prevalence of intrinsic motives, as Pawlak (2012: 271) suggests, translates into greater perseverance in the learning task over time. Following this slant, it can be concluded that the Storyline method can serve as a useful tool in enhancing intrinsic motivation in their learners. Given that intrinsic motivation constitutes a potentially complex area of investigation, it is only prudent that the effect of the Storyline tested in the present study should undergo more rigorous empirical investigation in future research.

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Appendix 1

IMI Questionnaire

Name.....

For each of the following statements, please indicate how true it is for you, using the following scale (The task= school lessons this morning):

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	not at all true		somewhat true			very true	
1.	Today in school I was thinking about how much I enjoyed the task.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2.	Today in school I did not feel at all nervous about the task.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3.	Today in school I felt that the task was my choice.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4.	I think I am pretty good at the task today in school.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5.	I found the task in school today very interesting.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6.	Today in school I felt tense while doing the task.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7.	Today in school I think I did pretty well at this activity, compared to other students.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8.	Doing the task today in school was fun.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9.	Today in school I felt relaxed while doing the task.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10.	Today in school I enjoyed doing the task very much.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
11.	Today in school I didn't really have a choice about doing the task.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
12.	Today in school I am satisfied with my performance at this task.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
13.	Today in school I was anxious while doing the task.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14.	Today in school I thought the task was very boring.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
15.	Today in school I felt like I was doing what I wanted to do while I was working on the task.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
16.	Today in school I felt pretty skilled at this task.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
17.	Today in school I thought the task was very interesting.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18.	Today in school I felt pressured while doing the task.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
19.	Today in school I felt like I had to do the task.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
20.	I would describe the task today in school as very enjoyable.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
21.	I did the task today in school because I had no choice.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7
22.	After working at this task for a while, I felt pretty competent.						1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Appendix 2

Interview questions:

- Did you enjoy the Radio Station Storyline. Why (not)?
- Did you have a favourite part of the Storyline? What was it?
- What did you not like about this Storyline?
- How was it different from your normal lessons?
- How did you feel while taking part in the Storyline?