

# Correlation between English Motivation and Speaking Proficiency: A Mixed-Methods Study at Shafta Senior High School

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## Abstract:

This study investigates the correlation between students' motivation in learning English and their speaking proficiency. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 22 students at Shafta Senior High School Surabaya. Quantitative data were gathered through questionnaires adapted from Gardner's Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), while qualitative data were obtained via semi-structured interviews. The findings reveal a significant positive correlation between motivation and speaking proficiency, emphasizing the importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors in language learning. These insights can inform teaching strategies aimed at improving student engagement and language outcomes.

**Keywords:** English Motivation, Speaking Proficiency, Mixed-Methods Study, Student Engagement, Educational Strategies

## Introduction

In mastering the English language, speaking stands out as a pivotal skill alongside listening, reading, and writing. It serves as a fundamental mode of communication, enabling individuals to convey their ideas, opinions, and emotions effectively. Despite its importance, numerous students encounter substantial challenges in developing their speaking proficiency. These challenges often stem from factors such as limited opportunities for practice and a lack of motivation. This study seeks to delve into the connection between students' motivation and their speaking proficiency, aiming to offer insights that could aid educators in crafting effective strategies to enhance language learning.

Observations made during the Field Practice Program (PPL) at SMA Shafta Surabaya have highlighted several issues related to the teaching and learning of speaking skills. It has become evident that speaking skills are vital

for students learning English. Many students find it difficult to use English effectively in both classroom settings and real-life situations. Motivation emerges as a crucial factor in the acquisition of speaking skills, with various motivational elements, including both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, impacting students' learning outcomes. A significant number of students perceive speaking as a particularly challenging skill to master, which in turn contributes to diminished motivation.

The objectives of this study are threefold. First, it aims to investigate the correlation between students' motivation to learn English and their speaking proficiency. Second, it seeks to understand how different motivational factors influence speaking skills. Lastly, the study intends to provide valuable insights for teachers, enabling them to develop strategies that enhance student motivation and improve speaking proficiency.

## **Review of Literature**

Speaking proficiency is a multifaceted skill encompassing grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency. Effective speaking demands not only a solid grasp of linguistic knowledge but also the capability to utilize this knowledge in real-life contexts. Richards (2008) emphasizes that speaking is a productive skill fundamental for communication and social interaction. Hedge (2000) characterizes speaking as a complex skill that includes a variety of communicative scenarios, such as informal conversations, group discussions, and formal presentations.

Accuracy in speaking involves producing grammatically correct sentences, employing appropriate vocabulary, and ensuring clear pronunciation. Thornbury (2005) defines accuracy as the ability to generate error-free sentences, which is essential for effective communication. In contrast, fluency refers to the smooth, uninterrupted flow of speech, which is vital for engaging listeners. It involves speaking naturally, without undue pauses or hesitations.

Motivation plays a pivotal role in language learning, affecting students' engagement and performance. Motivation can be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic types. Intrinsic motivation arises from an internal desire to learn, while extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards. Research indicates

that motivated learners are more likely to participate actively in speaking activities, leading to enhanced proficiency. Gardner and Lambert (1972) introduced the concepts of integrative and instrumental motivation, which significantly impact language learning outcomes.

Intrinsic motivation is characterized by a genuine interest in the activity itself, rather than seeking an external reward. Deci and Ryan (1985) describe intrinsic motivation as a natural inclination towards assimilation, mastery, spontaneous interest, and exploration, which are crucial for cognitive and social development. Conversely, extrinsic motivation involves performing an activity to achieve a specific outcome, such as receiving rewards or recognition.

Several theoretical frameworks provide insight into motivation in language learning:

- **Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985):** This theory suggests that individuals are inherently motivated to engage in activities that fulfil their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.
- **Language Learning Motivation Theory (Dörnyei, 2001):** Dörnyei's theory outlines various motivational factors, including integrative and instrumental motivations, that influence language learning.
- **Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1997):** This theory underscores the importance of individuals' confidence in their ability to complete specific tasks, which shapes their motivation and performance.

Integrative motivation is driven by the desire to assimilate and connect with the target language community. Gardner (1985) posits that learners with integrative motivation are more likely to develop a favourable attitude towards the language and its speakers, leading to higher proficiency. On the other hand, instrumental motivation is motivated by practical benefits, such as career advancement or academic success. Both forms of motivation are crucial in facilitating effective language learning.

Despite substantial research on motivation and language learning, several gaps persist. Further investigation is needed to understand how changes in

motivation over time affect long-term speaking proficiency. Additionally, the impact of learning context, including classroom environment, teaching methods, and social interactions, warrants more exploration. Cultural factors and the integration of technology into language learning also present promising areas for future research.

## **Method**

A mixed-methods approach was employed in this study to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between motivation and speaking proficiency. This methodology combined quantitative and qualitative data to provide a more nuanced view of the research questions. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires, while qualitative data were obtained from semi-structured interviews.

The study focused on 22 tenth-grade students from Shafta Senior High School Surabaya during the 2023-2024 academic year. To assess students' motivation, a questionnaire adapted from Gardner's Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) was used. This instrument evaluated various aspects of motivation, including both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, as well as students' attitudes towards learning English. Speaking proficiency was measured through teachers' evaluations of students' performance in different speaking activities, assessing aspects such as fluency, accuracy, and overall communication skills.

In addition to the quantitative data, qualitative insights were gathered through semi-structured interviews with selected students. These interviews aimed to provide a deeper understanding of students' experiences and perceptions regarding their motivation to learn English, their speaking practices, and the challenges they encounter in developing speaking proficiency.

For data analysis, quantitative data were examined using Pearson's product-moment correlation to explore the relationship between motivation and speaking proficiency. This analysis sought to determine both the strength and direction of the correlation between these variables. Qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved coding the data, identifying key themes, and interpreting the findings in relation to

the research questions. This dual approach allowed for a more thorough exploration of how motivation influences speaking proficiency among the students.

### Results and Discussions

The quantitative analysis of the data revealed a very strong positive correlation between motivation and speaking proficiency, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of  $r=0.769$  and a significance level of  $p<0.001$ . This indicates a significant association between higher levels of motivation and better speaking skills, suggesting that students who are more motivated are likely to engage in activities that enhance their speaking proficiency.

**Table 1. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Results**

<b>Correlations</b>			
		Motivati on	Speaking Ability
Motivation.	Pearson Correlation	1	.769**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	22	22
Speaking Ability	Pearson Correlation	.769*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	22	22

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \*\*

The qualitative analysis, based on interviews with students, provided further insights into the factors influencing their motivation and speaking proficiency. Three key themes emerged from these interviews:

1. **Personal Interest in English:** Students with high proficiency often demonstrated a genuine interest in the English language. This intrinsic motivation drove them to participate in activities such as joining English clubs, consuming English-language media, and practicing regularly. One student highlighted, "I love watching English movies and reading English books. It helps me improve my speaking skills and makes learning fun." This intrinsic motivation was crucial for their language development.
2. **Impact of Positive Experiences:** Positive experiences, such as success in English competitions or receiving praise from teachers, played a significant role in boosting students' motivation. These experiences reinforced their belief in their abilities and motivated them to continue improving. As one student shared, "Winning an English speech competition was a big confidence booster for me. It motivated me to keep practicing and get better."
3. **Supportive Learning Environment:** A supportive learning environment, characterized by encouragement from teachers and peers, was identified as a key factor in sustaining motivation. Students who felt supported were more inclined to take risks and actively participate in speaking activities. One student noted, "My English teacher always encourages us to speak in class. It makes me feel more confident and willing to participate."

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research on motivation in language learning. Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Dörnyei (2001) have demonstrated that motivational factors are crucial in influencing language acquisition and proficiency. This study extends these insights by identifying specific factors that contribute to motivation and speaking proficiency among high school students, emphasizing the importance of personal interest, positive experiences, and a supportive learning environment.

## Conclusion

The study has revealed a significant positive correlation between students' motivation to learn English and their speaking proficiency. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors are crucial in influencing students' engagement and performance in speaking activities. The findings underscore the importance of creating a supportive and motivating learning environment to enhance students' speaking skills.

### Implications for Teaching

To improve students' speaking proficiency, educators are encouraged to implement several strategies:

1. **Implement Motivational Strategies:** Schools should develop programs that incorporate goal setting, positive reinforcement, and recognition of achievements to boost students' motivation.
2. **Encourage Regular Practice:** Establish speaking clubs, conversation sessions, and language exchange programs to offer students ample opportunities to practice speaking English in a supportive environment.
3. **Provide Adequate Support:** Supply additional learning materials and foster a supportive atmosphere where students feel comfortable making mistakes and receiving constructive feedback.
4. **Promote Positive Experiences:** Organize English language competitions, cultural exchanges, and immersion programs to enhance motivation and offer real-life speaking opportunities.
5. **Facilitate Effective Feedback:** Implement constructive feedback mechanisms through peer evaluations, self-assessment tools, and individualized sessions to assist students in improving their speaking skills.

### Recommendations for Future Research

Future research could build on this study by:

1. **Increasing Sample Size:** Involving a larger and more diverse sample to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

2. **Exploring Additional Factors:** Investigating other elements that may influence the relationship between motivation and speaking proficiency, such as different teaching methods, family environments, and technological tools.
3. **Conducting Longitudinal Studies:** Examining how changes in motivation over time affect speaking proficiency to gain a deeper understanding of the long-term dynamics between these variables.

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