HOW MOTIVATION SHAPES SPEAKING ABILITY: INSIGHTS FROM EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the connection between motivation and speaking ability among eighth-grade students at SMPN 2 Kuta Utara during the 2022/2023 academic year. Out of a population of 413 students, a sample of 42 students was selected through random sampling to represent the group. To collect data, two key research instruments were employed: a motivation questionnaire to gauge the students' level of enthusiasm and determination and a speaking test focused on delivering a descriptive monologue to assess their oral communication skills. The data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation in SPSS Statistics 25, which revealed a correlation coefficient of 0.673. This finding indicates a statistically significant and strong relationship between students' motivation and their speaking ability, with the correlation classified as high (0.60–0.799). In essence, the more motivated the students were, the better their speaking ability tended to be. These results emphasize the critical role of motivation in language learning and suggest that fostering motivation could be a key strategy for improving speaking proficiency in English classes. Such insights could inform teaching strategies and highlight the importance of addressing both cognitive and affective factors in speaking classroom activities.
Keywords: correlation, motivation, speaking ability

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a core component of English as a foreign language (EFL) learning, as it facilitates communication, self-expression, and attitude (Lee & Lin, 2020; Ghafar & Raheem, 2023). Speaking is crucial for students to strengthen their English-speaking skills while they are studying the language (Arini, & Wahyudin, 2022).

Learning speaking abilities means not just understanding the components of speaking but also learning how to communicate. This allows students to comprehend the structure of language as well as how to use it to communicate with the other students.

However, many students struggle with speaking due to limited exposure to English and insufficient practice. Factors like shyness, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes further hinder their ability to communicate effectively.

Those factors make the classroom only for the confident students. While the quieter, less confident students often remain on the periphery, limiting their opportunities to actively practice and improve their English communication skills. This dynamic creates an imbalance in participation, where confident students

dominate. Therefore, students must have opportunities to practice their speaking in the class (Yasa, Pramerta, & Widhiasih, 2023).

Such a classroom environment can exacerbate the existing challenges faced by shy or anxious students, reinforcing their reluctance to participate. Over time, this can lead to a cycle of low engagement and limited improvement in oral communication skills, further widening the gap between confident and less confident students. Thus, their engagement is crucial for ensuring the quality of learning experiences (Aubrey, King, & Almukhaild, 2022).

One factor that influence the students speaking is motivation. Motivation is a key determinant in English language acquisition (Radfar & Lengkanawati, 2020). Motivation is an internal drive to achieve personal goals (Ndruru, 2024). Students with high motivation, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, tend to engage more in learning activities, which enhances their speaking.

In order to offer insights for enhancing teaching methods, especially in the Indonesian EFL environment, this study investigates the correlation between motivation and speaking skill. Therefore, the research is done to answer the following research problem: Is there a significant correlation between students' motivation and their speaking ability?

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed an ex-post facto research design with a correlational approach, as it aimed to analyze pre-existing variables without manipulating them. The participants comprised 42 students selected through a random sampling method using an online spinner application, ensuring equal representation across 13 classes.

There were two instruments used for the study: motivation questionnaire and speaking test. The questionnaire is based on seven aspects of motivation, such as task orientation, ego-involvement, perseverance, and tolerance of ambiguity. It was structured using a five-point Likert scale with statements in the Indonesian language to ensure clarity.

For speaking test, the students selected one of eight public figure pictures and recorded a 2-3-minute descriptive monologue. They were scored using a rubric adapted from Brown (2004), evaluating pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and grammar.

Then, for the data analysis, Pre-requisite tests for normality and homogeneity ensured the data met statistical assumptions. Pearson Product

Moment correlation analysis and a paired-sample t-test were conducted using SPSS 25 to test the hypothesis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Examining the correlation between eighth-grade students' motivation and speaking proficiency at SMPN 2 Kuta Utara during the academic year 2022–2023 was the main objective of this study. Through a rigorous methodological approach, the research yielded significant insights into how motivation influences speaking proficiency.

Before testing the hypothesis, pre-requisite analyses for normality and homogeneity were conducted to ensure the data's validity and reliability.

Table 2 Result of Normality Test

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
Tests of Normality	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Motivation	.095	42	.200[*]	.973	42	.410
Speaking Ability	.143	42	.030	.971	42	.352
*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.						
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

The normality test, conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk method in SPSS 25, indicated that the data for both motivation and speaking ability were normally distributed. The significance values were 0.410 for motivation and 0.352 for speaking ability (both above the threshold of 0.05). This confirmed that the samples came from a population with a normal distribution.

The Levene test for homogeneity verified that the variances of both variables were homogeneous, with

Table 1 Summary of Homogeneity Variances Test

Test of Homogeneity of Variances		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Speaking Ability	Based on Mean	1.364	6	9	.324
	Based on Median	.359	6	9	.887
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.359	6	3.000	.868
	Based on trimmed mean	1.167	6	9	.400

significance values exceeding 0.05. This result validated the data's suitability for hypothesis testing.

The hypothesis test used the Pearson Product Moment correlation to determine the relationship between motivation and speaking ability. The results revealed a correlation coefficient of r=0.673, indicating a high positive correlation. This study's correlation level is high, as evidenced by the interval between 0.60 and 0.799. The significance value was less than 0.05, confirming that the correlation was statistically significant. The findings

Table 3 Pearson Product-Moment Results

Correlations		Motivation	Speaking Ability
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	1	.673[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	42	42
Speaking Ability	Pearson Correlation	.673[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	42	42
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

indicated a strong correlation between

students' motivation to learn to speak and their speaking proficiency.

After the analysis on those phases, descriptive results of motivation and speaking ability are provided. Students with higher motivation tended to demonstrate better performance across various components of speaking ability, including fluency, vocabulary, grammar,

Table 4 The Paired Samples T-test

	Paired Differences							
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Motivation - Speaking Ability	72.643	13.425	2.072	68.459	76.826	35.067	41	.000

comprehension, and pronunciation. Conversely, students with lower motivation faced challenges such as hesitation, limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, and unclear pronunciation.

All data groups that were analyzed using the paired-samples t-test had a level of significance below 0.05, according to the above table. Additionally, 0.000 was the data's significant value. This demonstrated that the study's directional hypothesis—that there was a substantial relationship between the eighth-grade pupils at SMPN 2 Kuta Utara's speaking ability and motivation in the academic year 2022–2023, was ultimately accepted. In conclusion, the statistical analysis of the data had already shown that motivation had a significant correlation with the students' speaking ability.

The findings reveal a robust relationship between motivation and speaking ability, corroborating prior studies that stress how important motivation is to language learning.

Motivated students are more likely to approach learning with enthusiasm, which helps them persist in challenging tasks such as speaking in English. Their willingness to take risks and seek opportunities for practice often results in improved speaking skills. This aligns with a study conducted by Dörnyei & Henry (2022). The study highlights motivation as a driving force in determining the intensity, persistence, and quality of learning behaviors.

Students with intrinsic motivation found satisfaction in mastering speaking skills, often demonstrating self-confidence and persistence. For example, a student motivated by personal goals (e.g., studying abroad) displayed fewer pauses and more coherent monologues. This result sis supported by the previous research conducted by Ummat and Retnowati (2022).

Students with lower motivation often avoided speaking activities, resulting in less practice and lower

proficiency. These students reported feelings of anxiety and embarrassment when speaking, leading to hesitation and frequent errors.

Results on how motivation affects speaking components have also been discovered. Highly motivated students spoke with fewer interruptions, showing better flow in their speech. They engaged in more practice, which helped reduce pauses and hesitation.

Then, motivated students exhibited a wider range of vocabulary, likely due to their active efforts to expand their word bank through reading and listening activities. Further, the students with higher motivation often demonstrated better grammatical accuracy, as they were more willing to review and refine their language structures.

It was also found that high motivation encouraged students to focus on their pronunciation, using tools such as audio recordings and mimicry to improve clarity and intelligibility. The motivated students were better at organizing their thoughts and delivering clear messages, which improved listener comprehension.

Regarding on the findings, there are also practical implications for teaching. These results highlight how crucial it is to encourage motivation in order to improve speaking skills. Teachers can implement strategies to address motivational gaps. It sets clear goals. Encouraging students to set personal learning objectives can increase intrinsic motivation. It provides constructive feedback. Offering positive reinforcement for effort and improvement boosts confidence.

Then, it also creates authentic tasks. Role-playing real-life scenarios (e.g., ordering at a restaurant, giving directions) can make speaking practice more engaging and meaningful. Additionally, it can leverage technology. Using digital tools like language learning apps or recording platforms allows students to track their progress and refine their speaking skills.

The study also highlighted barriers that hinder speaking ability. Low self-confidence, lack of exposure to English outside the classroom, and limited vocabulary were common challenges among low-motivation students. To mitigate these issues, it is essential to create a supportive environment where students feel safe to make mistakes and learn from them (Sayfulloevna, 2023).

The significance of the findings is not merely in the statistical correlation but in the real-world implications for students and educators. A motivation score of 0.673 points to more than just a numerical relationship; it reflects the transformative

potential of motivation in shaping a student's learning journey. Consider a student who started the year hesitant and uncertain, struggling to construct sentences. With the introduction of motivational strategies such as peer collaboration and digital tools, that same student showed remarkable improvement in fluency and confidence.

Similarly, the results showcase the dynamic interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic factors. For instance, intrinsic motivation propelled some students to seek resources beyond the classroom, such as YouTube tutorials on pronunciation. Meanwhile, extrinsic motivators, such as rewards or public recognition, helped reluctant speakers participate actively in classroom activities.

In essence, the findings call for a pedagogical shift: one that values motivation not as a secondary factor but as a foundational pillar for developing English-speaking skills. By addressing the underlying causes of low motivation and fostering a positive learning atmosphere, teachers can unlock the latent potential of every learner.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that motivation plays a significant role in shaping students' speaking abilities. The high correlation coefficient highlights that motivated students are more likely to excel in speaking tasks.

Teachers should prioritize motivational strategies, such as providing clear instructions, constructive feedback, and opportunities for authentic communication.

Schools should create an environment where students feel encouraged to practice speaking English both in and outside the classroom.

Further research could explore how specific motivational strategies impact different aspects of speaking, such as fluency or pronunciation.

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