

AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' LEARNING MOTIVATION AND ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITY AT SMAN 1 KUNINGAN

Yosa Dwi Lestari¹, Agatha Diah Winarti², Julia Nur Fadilla³

English Education Study Program
Faculty of Teacher Training and Education
Universitas Kuningan

20220410041@uniku.ac.id; 20220410045@uniku.ac.id; 20210410028@uniku.ac.id

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis motivasi belajar siswa dalam kaitannya dengan kemampuan berbicara bahasa Inggris siswa di SMAN 1 Kuningan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain deskriptif. Partisipan penelitian terdiri dari lima siswa kelas 11 yang dipilih melalui purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bagaimana motivasi belajar tercermin dalam kemampuan berbicara siswa. Ditemukan enam faktor utama, yaitu motivasi intrinsik dan ekstrinsik, peran guru dan teman sebaya, latihan berbicara di luar kelas, aktivitas pembelajaran interaktif, peningkatan kemampuan berbicara, dan kepercayaan diri siswa. Temuan ini diinterpretasikan menggunakan Teori Penentuan Diri yang dikembangkan oleh Deci dan Ryan dan didukung oleh teori motivasi lainnya seperti Teori Penetapan Tujuan, Teori Efikasi Diri, dan Teori Sosiokultural. Siswa dengan motivasi tinggi menunjukkan partisipasi aktif, latihan berbicara terus menerus, dan peningkatan kelancaran, pengucapan, dan kepercayaan diri, sedangkan siswa dengan motivasi rendah cenderung mengalami kecemasan dan takut membuat kesalahan. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa motivasi belajar memainkan peran penting dalam meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara bahasa Inggris siswa.

Kata kunci: motivasi belajar, kemampuan berbicara, kepercayaan diri, pembelajaran EFL, studi kualitatif

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze students' learning motivation in relation to their English speaking skills of students at SMAN 1 Kuningan. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. The research participants consisted of five 11th grade students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The results reveal how learning motivation is reflected in students' speaking skills. Six main factors were found, namely intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the role of teachers and peers, speaking practice outside the classroom, interactive learning activities, improvement of speaking skills, and student confidence. These findings were interpreted using Self-Determination Theory developed by Deci and Ryan and supported by other motivation theories such as Goal-Setting Theory, Self-Efficacy Theory, and Sociocultural Theory. Students with high motivation showed active participation, continuous speaking practice, and improvement in fluency, pronunciation, and confidence, while students with low motivation tended to experience anxiety and fear of making mistakes. This study confirms that learning motivation plays an important role in improving students' English speaking skills.

Keyword: learning motivation, speaking ability, confidence, EFL learners, qualitative study

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is the most important of the four basic language listening skills, speaking, reading, and writing because it shows how well a student can

communicate in everyday situations. Nonetheless, a lot of Indonesian high school students still encounter different challenges when trying to improve their English-speaking

abilities. Their development is frequently hampered by a lack of exposure to English, low self-esteem, a fear of making mistakes, and the use of ineffective instructional techniques. Speaking is one of the hardest skills for EFL learners to acquire because of these difficulties.

One essential factor that strongly influences students' speaking performance is learning motivation. Motivation functions as an internal and external drive that encourages learners to engage in learning, persist through challenges, and strive to achieve their goals. According to Rahman (2022), motivation plays a central role in shaping students' learning behavior and engagement. In the context of language learning, motivation influences how much effort learners invest, how willing they are to practice speaking, and how actively they participate in classroom communication. When students are highly motivated, they tend to take more risks, practice more frequently, and show greater improvement in their speaking skills.

Previous research consistently highlights the significant relationship between learning motivation and English-speaking ability. Kilag et al. (2023) found that motivation has a substantial impact on learning outcomes, including speaking performance. Similarly, Ritonga et al. (2020) emphasized that students with strong motivation are more likely to participate in activities such as presentations, group discussions, and language exchanges, which help them enhance their speaking proficiency. In contrast, students who experience anxiety or fear of making mistakes often show lower motivation to speak. Huon et al. (2022) noted that fear of negative evaluation can significantly reduce students' willingness to communicate in English. However, high levels of motivation can help students overcome these affective barriers. As stated by Miranda et al. (2023), motivated students are more willing to take linguistic risks and participate more actively in speaking activities, leading to faster improvement in their speaking ability.

Although many studies have investigated the role of motivation in language learning, a research gap still exists. Much of the previous research focuses on general learning motivation

without specifically examining how it influences the English-speaking ability of senior high school students in Indonesia. Many studies also overlook the role of affective factors such as confidence, anxiety, and fear of making mistakes, which may mediate the relationship between motivation and speaking performance. For educators, understanding these factors is important for designing effective strategies that encourage active participation and communication in the classroom.

Based on these issues, the present study aims to analyze the impact of learning motivation on students' English-speaking ability at SMAN 1 Kuningan. This research seeks to provide deeper insights into how motivation influences students' speaking performance and confidence. By identifying the extent to which learning motivation contributes to speaking ability, this study is expected to support teachers in developing more supportive, engaging, and motivating learning environments. Furthermore, the results of this research may offer practical guidance for students to build stronger motivation and confidence in speaking English, better preparing them to compete in a globalized world.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the relationship between learning motivation and students' English-speaking ability. A qualitative approach was chosen because it enables an in-depth investigation of complex psychological and linguistic phenomena that cannot be fully captured through numerical data alone. Through descriptive and interpretive analysis, this approach allows the researcher to examine students' experiences, perceptions, and the affective factors that influence their motivation and speaking performance. The methodological choices in this study including data collection procedures, participant selection, and analysis techniques were organized in a way that ensures the entire process can be replicated by other researchers under similar conditions.

The research was conducted at SMAN 1 Kuningan, a public senior high school located in Kuningan, West Java. This site was selected because preliminary observations indicated that students demonstrated varying levels of learning motivation and tended to engage more frequently in listening and writing activities rather than speaking. The school environment, which represents a typical Indonesian EFL context, provides a suitable setting for examining how learning motivation influences students' ability and willingness to speak English. The focus on this school is also supported by the researcher's prior experience during the PLP 2 program, which allowed early identification of the issues relevant to this study.

The participants consisted of eleventh-grade students from class XI.6, with a total population of 36 learners. From this group, five students were selected as research participants using purposive sampling. The sampling criteria included the students' varying levels of learning motivation (low, medium, and high) as well as their willingness to participate in the study. The selection of a small but diverse sample is considered appropriate for qualitative research, as the aim is not statistical generalization but rather a rich, contextualized understanding of the phenomenon. Each selected participant contributed unique information based on their motivational backgrounds and experiences with speaking English, which allowed for a comprehensive exploration of differences in speaking performance.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, which provided flexibility for the researcher to probe deeper into students' explanations and clarify emerging themes. The interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions designed to investigate students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, their self-confidence when speaking English, the challenges they faced, and their general attitudes toward speaking activities. Each interview session lasted approximately 20–30 minutes and was conducted individually in a quiet room within the school to ensure comfort and focus. All interviews were audio recorded

using a mobile recording device to ensure accuracy and allow for detailed transcription during the analysis stage.

The collected interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which is suitable for identifying and interpreting patterns within qualitative data. The analysis process began with transcribing all recorded interviews verbatim. After transcription, the researcher conducted initial coding by highlighting significant statements related to motivation, speaking challenges, confidence levels, and students' efforts to overcome anxiety or fear. These codes were then grouped into broader themes, such as intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, speaking anxiety, practice habits, and perceived improvement. The themes were analyzed across participants to identify similarities and differences between students with low, medium, and high levels of motivation.

To ensure reliability, the researcher re-read the transcripts multiple times and compared emerging themes with the raw data. The analysis also involved constant comparison between participants' levels of motivation and their speaking performance, which helped explain not only *whether* motivation influences speaking ability but also *how* and *why* this influence occurs. Direct quotations from participants were included in the findings to preserve authenticity and to provide evidence for the interpretations. The detailed description of the analytical steps ensures that other researchers can replicate the method if they conduct a similar study in comparable contexts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses six key factors influencing students' English-speaking ability, which are derived from interview findings and interpreted through several motivational theories. The analysis primarily draws on Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985; 2000), particularly the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Additional perspectives are adopted from Pelletier et al. (1995) on motivational continuity, Niemiec and Ryan (2009) on need-supportive learning

environments, Vansteenkiste et al. (2010) on the quality of motivation and autonomy support, and Reeve (2012) on student engagement. These theories collectively inform the discussion of six factors, namely intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, teacher and peer support, speaking practice outside the classroom, motivating learning activities, improvement in speaking ability, and speaking confidence.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation in Speaking English

The findings show that students' speaking ability is influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation was reflected in students' enjoyment and personal interest in speaking English, while extrinsic motivation was driven by external goals such as career aspirations. This distinction aligns with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as initially formulated by Deci and Ryan (1985), who classify motivation based on the source of regulation.

One student stated, *"I enjoy learning the language and want to express myself better,"* which represents intrinsic motivation. This finding can be further explained by Vansteenkiste et al. (2010), who argue that intrinsic motivation is associated with higher-quality engagement, confidence, and persistence in learning. Learners who are intrinsically motivated tend to view learning activities as personally meaningful, which helps explain why students in this study were more confident and willing to speak English despite making mistakes.

Meanwhile, extrinsic motivation was expressed by students who perceived English as important for future goals. As one respondent explained, *"I am motivated to learn English speaking skills because of my career goals."* This type of motivation corresponds to identified regulation within the motivational continuum proposed by Pelletier et al. (1995). Identified regulation occurs when learners engage in an activity because they recognize its personal value, even though the motivation is still extrinsic.

According to Pelletier et al. (1995) and further supported by Ryan and Deci (2000), extrinsic motivation can positively support learning outcomes when it is internalized. This theoretical perspective supports the findings of the study, where extrinsically motivated students showed effort in developing their speaking ability. However, consistent with SDT, the findings indicate that their confidence was less stable compared to intrinsically motivated students, as their engagement relied more on external goals than internal enjoyment.

Role of Teachers and Peers in Supporting Motivation

The findings reveal that teachers and peers play a significant role in supporting students' motivation to speak English. Students reported feeling more motivated when they received encouragement from teachers and observed positive speaking behavior from their peers. This finding highlights the importance of the classroom social environment in shaping students' willingness to speak.

This finding can be explained through the concept of need-supportive teaching proposed by Niemiec and Ryan (2009), which emphasizes the role of teachers in fulfilling students' psychological needs. According to Niemiec, when teachers create a supportive and non-threatening classroom atmosphere, students are more likely to feel comfortable and motivated to participate in speaking activities. In this study, supportive teacher behavior helped students feel accepted and encouraged, which strengthened their motivation.

Peer influence was also evident in motivating students to speak English. One student stated, *"Seeing my peers speak well motivates me to improve and keep practicing."* This finding aligns with Reeve's (2012) concept of student engagement, which suggests that peer interaction and modeling can increase learners' behavioral and emotional engagement. Positive peer interactions encourage students to participate more actively in speaking tasks.

Furthermore, Reeve (2012) emphasizes that learning environments that reduce fear of

judgment promote greater student engagement. This supports the findings of the study, where students felt more confident and willing to speak when they perceived the classroom as psychologically safe. Thus, teacher and peer support function as key motivational factors that enhance students' participation and confidence in English speaking activities.

Speaking Practice Outside the Classroom

The findings show that highly motivated students practiced speaking English outside the classroom through informal activities such as talking to friends, practicing alone, and engaging with English content on social media. These self-initiated activities indicate that students were not solely dependent on classroom instruction to develop their speaking skills.

One participant stated, *"I usually just react or respond to something I watch or read on Instagram in English."* This behavior can be explained through Reeve's (2012) concept of student engagement, which emphasizes that motivated learners actively seek opportunities to engage with learning materials beyond formal settings. According to Reeve, engagement is reflected in learners' initiative, persistence, and active involvement in learning activities.

This finding is further supported by Vansteenkiste et al. (2010), who highlight the importance of autonomous motivation in sustaining learning behavior. Vansteenkiste argues that when learners perceive learning activities as self-chosen and meaningful, they are more likely to practice consistently without external pressure. The students' willingness to practice speaking independently reflects a high level of autonomous motivation.

Furthermore, Vansteenkiste et al. (2010) suggest that autonomous learning behaviors contribute to improved performance and confidence over time. This theoretical perspective helps explain why students who practiced speaking English outside the classroom experienced positive development in their speaking ability, including increased

fluency and confidence, as reported in the findings.

Learning Activities that Enhance Motivation and Speaking Ability

The findings indicate that interactive learning activities play a significant role in enhancing students' motivation and English speaking ability. Most participants reported feeling more motivated and confident when learning activities required active participation rather than passive listening. Activities such as role play, group discussion, and presentations were frequently mentioned as effective in improving speaking skills.

This finding can be explained through Vansteenkiste et al. (2010), who emphasize the role of autonomy-supportive learning activities in enhancing the quality of students' motivation. According to Vansteenkiste, learning activities that allow students to actively participate and express themselves freely foster autonomous motivation, which leads to greater confidence and engagement. In this study, role play was perceived as less pressuring and more meaningful, enabling students to practice speaking in realistic contexts.

Group discussions were also reported as motivating activities. One student stated, *"Discussion helps me speak more because I can share my opinion and learn from my friends."* This finding aligns with Niemiec and Ryan's (2009) concept of need-supportive classroom environments, particularly in fulfilling students' need for relatedness. Through discussion, students interact socially, feel connected to their peers, and become more willing to speak.

Furthermore, presentations were identified as activities that helped students build confidence over time, despite initial nervousness. According to Niemiec and Ryan (2009), providing structured challenges with appropriate support helps fulfill learners' need for competence. Successfully completing speaking tasks such as presentations strengthens students' sense of competence,

which in turn enhances their motivation and confidence in speaking English.

Development of Speaking Skills

The findings indicate that all participants experienced improvement in their speaking ability, including fluency, pronunciation, and confidence. One student stated, *“Now I can speak directly without fear of making mistakes.”* This improvement suggests that students’ speaking development occurred gradually through continued engagement in speaking activities.

Furthermore, Ryan (2000) highlights the process of internalization, in which learners gradually adopt the value of a learning activity as their own. When students internalize the importance of speaking English, they engage more deeply and sustainably in learning tasks. This internalization process helps explain why students in this study showed steady improvement in multiple aspects of speaking ability.

According to Pelletier et al. (1995) and Ryan (2000), sustained engagement driven by internalized motivation leads to long-term skill development. This theoretical perspective supports the findings that consistent practice and increased confidence resulted in observable improvements in students’ fluency, pronunciation, and overall speaking performance.

Learning Motivation and Speaking Confidence

The findings demonstrate a clear relationship between students’ motivation and their speaking confidence. Students with high motivation showed greater confidence and were not afraid of making mistakes. One student stated, *“I’m confident, because I’m not afraid to make a mistake.”* In contrast, students with lower motivation expressed anxiety and fear of being judged when speaking English.

This finding can be explained through Vansteenkiste et al. (2010), who emphasize that the quality of motivation influences learners’

emotional experiences during learning. According to Vansteenkiste, students with autonomous motivation tend to experience lower anxiety and greater confidence because they perceive learning as personally meaningful rather than evaluative. This perspective helps explain why highly motivated students in this study viewed mistakes as a natural part of learning.

In contrast, students with lower motivation experienced higher levels of anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. This aligns with Reeve’s (2012) concept of psychological safety and student engagement, which suggests that learners are less likely to participate actively when they feel threatened or judged. When motivation is low and the learning environment feels controlling, students’ willingness to speak decreases.

Furthermore, Reeve (2012) argues that supportive learning environments promote confidence by encouraging active participation without fear of failure. This theoretical perspective supports the findings of the study, where motivated students demonstrated greater speaking confidence, while low motivation limited confidence and discouraged active engagement in speaking activities.

Based on findings of this study indicate that students’ English speaking ability is influenced by learning motivation as explained through several motivational theories. While Self-Determination Theory proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985; 2000) explains how autonomy, competence, and relatedness encourage active participation and sustained speaking practice, the findings related to goal-oriented extrinsic motivation can also be interpreted through Goal-Setting Theory developed by Locke and Latham (1990). Students who were motivated by academic achievement or future career goals engaged in speaking activities when they perceived clear objectives, even though their confidence was less stable than intrinsically motivated learners. In addition, students’ willingness to practice speaking outside the classroom aligns with Social Cognitive Theory by Bandura (1986), which emphasizes self-initiative and self-regulation as key factors in

skill development. These combined perspectives show that motivation enhances speaking ability through both internal interest and purposeful external goals.

Moreover, the relationship between motivation and speaking confidence is supported by theories emphasizing competence and self-belief. According to Self-Efficacy Theory by Bandura (1997), students who believe in their ability to speak English are more confident and less afraid of making mistakes, which was evident among highly motivated participants. This confidence was further strengthened through interactive learning activities such as role play and group discussion, which reflect Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), where learning occurs through social interaction and collaborative practice. Conversely, students with lower motivation experienced anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, which limited their participation. Overall, the findings suggest that speaking confidence develops through the interaction of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan), goal clarity (Locke & Latham), self-efficacy (Bandura), and social interaction (Vygotsky), all of which play complementary roles in motivating EFL learners at SMAN 1 Kuningan.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that learning motivation plays a crucial role in influencing students' English speaking ability among eleventh-grade students of class XI.6 at SMAN 1 Kuningan. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation function as driving forces that affect students' willingness to participate in speaking activities, their persistence in practicing English, and their overall speaking development. However, intrinsic motivation appears to have a stronger and more consistent impact on students' speaking ability, as intrinsically motivated students tend to engage more actively, practice more independently, and view mistakes as a natural part of the learning process.

The study also reveals a clear relationship between the level of learning motivation and students' confidence in speaking English. Students with higher motivation demonstrated

greater confidence and were less afraid of making mistakes, while students with lower motivation experienced anxiety and fear of being judged. In accordance with Self-Determination Theory, students' confidence develops when their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled. When students feel capable, supported, and given opportunities to express themselves freely, their motivation and confidence in speaking English increase.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that supportive teachers, positive peer interactions, and interactive learning activities such as role plays, group discussions, and presentations significantly enhance students' motivation and speaking ability. These activities encourage active participation, provide meaningful speaking practice, and create a low-pressure learning environment that supports students' psychological needs. As a result, students become more motivated to practice speaking both inside and outside the classroom.

Overall, this study confirms that learning motivation, as explained through Self-Determination Theory, has a significant impact on students' English speaking ability and speaking confidence in the EFL context. Creating a supportive learning environment that fosters intrinsic motivation and encourages active communication is essential for improving students' speaking performance. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to design learning activities that promote autonomy, competence, and relatedness in order to enhance students' motivation and confidence in speaking English.

REFERENCES

- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York, NY: W. H. Freeman.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in*

- human behavior*. New York, NY: Plenum Press.
- Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (1990). *A theory of goal setting and task performance*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Niemiec, C. P., & Ryan, R. M. (2009). Autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the classroom: Applying self-determination theory to educational practice. *Theory and Research in Education*, 7(2), 133–144. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878509104318>
- Pelletier, L. G., Fortier, M. S., Vallerand, R. J., & Brière, N. M. (1995). Toward a new measure of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation in sports: The Sport Motivation Scale (SMS). *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 17(1), 35–53.
- Reeve, J. (2012). A self-determination theory perspective on student engagement. *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement*, 149–172.
- Vansteenkiste, M., Niemiec, C. P., & Soenens, B. (2010). The development of the five mini-theories of self-determination theory: An historical overview, emerging trends, and future directions. *Advances in Motivation and Achievement*, 16, 105–165.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Richard M. R., & Edward L. D. (2000). Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68-78.
- Houn, T., & Em, S. (2022). COMMON FACTORS AFFECTING GRADE-12 STUDENTS'SPEAKING FLUENCY: A SURVEY OF CAMBODIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS. *Jurnal As-Salam*, 6(1), 11-24.
- Kilag, O. K. T., Catubay, R. C. F., Balicoco, J. R. M., Contado, M. B., Yray, F. S., & Bendanillo, A. A. (2023). Anxiety in English Language and Motivation to Learning among EEGAFI Senior High School Students: Case Study. *EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF INNOVATION IN NONFORMAL EDUCATION*, 3(6), 60-67.
- Miranda, J. A., & Wahyudin, A. Y. (2023). PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS'STRATEGIES IN IMPROVING STUDENTS'SPEAKING