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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS' LEARNING MOTIVATION AND THEIR SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

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Abstract
Speaking proficiency is a crucial yet often difficult goal for English language learners, particularly in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts where opportunities for authentic communication are limited. While motivation is widely recognized as a key factor in language learning, its specific link to speaking performance has not been sufficiently explored. This study addresses that gap by investigating the relationship between students' learning motivation and their English-speaking performance, with a focus on identifying which motivational aspects most influence oral language development. The study adopted a quantitative, correlational-comparative design and involved undergraduate EFL students enrolled in intermediate-level speaking courses at a private university in Indonesia. Data were gathered through a standardized motivation questionnaire and a structured speaking test aligned with international language proficiency benchmarks. The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4.0 to assess both the validity of the constructs and the strength of the hypothesized relationships. The findings revealed a clear and positive relationship between learning motivation and speaking performance. Students who demonstrated higher levels of motivation consistently achieved stronger results in their speaking tasks and exhibited greater fluency, confidence, and coherence. Additionally, those with strong motivation tended to show more consistent performance and greater emotional resilience during speaking activities. These results highlight the importance of integrating motivational support into language instruction. Educators are encouraged to adopt learner-centered approaches that foster autonomy, goal-setting, and emotionally supportive learning environments. This study contributes to the growing body of research in English Language Teaching by offering empirical evidence that motivation is a powerful predictor of speaking success and by providing practical insights into how teaching strategies can be optimized to enhance learners' communicative competence.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, learning motivation, speaking performance

INTRODUCTION

The ability to speak fluently and accurately in English remains a key objective for language learners worldwide. Among the four primary language skills, speaking is often regarded as the most challenging due to its spontaneous nature and the demand for real-time processing. In classroom settings, students' speaking performance can be influenced by various internal and external factors, one of which is learning motivation. Motivation, as an essential psychological construct, drives learners to engage actively in language learning tasks, particularly those that require verbal output and interaction. The dynamic relationship between what students feel and what they achieve in speaking contexts has drawn increasing attention in English Language Teaching (ELT) research.

Understanding how motivation aligns with speaking proficiency is crucial for educators and curriculum designers, particularly in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts where opportunities for authentic speaking practice may be limited. In such contexts, learners must rely heavily on classroom interaction, self-directed learning, and motivational resilience. Investigating this relationship is

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instrumental in enhancing instructional approaches that support student engagement, promote sustained learning efforts, and address persistent challenges related to oral fluency and confidence. As speaking continues to serve as a visible measure of communicative competence, identifying its motivational foundations provides a practical basis for improving performance outcomes.

Recent studies have highlighted the complex and multidimensional nature of learning motivation in relation to language proficiency. Abid (2022) emphasized the interplay between individual learner differences and task-specific motivation, while Buana and Miftachudin (2021) examined how motivation is mediated by sociocultural contexts. Other scholars such as Eldeeb and Jerma (2024) and Februansyah et al. (2023) explored how intrinsic and extrinsic motivations affect classroom participation and oral performance. Moreover, Hafita et al. (2024) demonstrated how motivational strategies could improve learners' speaking confidence and performance in EFL settings. Despite these insights, research often leans heavily on general language proficiency without isolating the specific relationship between motivation and speaking ability.

Much of the existing literature explores motivation as a broad factor affecting overall language learning success, often clustering it with reading, writing, and listening skills. Although several researchers have acknowledged speaking as an anxiety-inducing skill, they tend to subsume it under general performance indicators, overlooking the unique cognitive and affective demands of speaking. This oversight limits the understanding of how particular types or levels of motivation directly correlate with speaking proficiency, especially within structured academic environments. A more focused exploration is needed to understand this link more clearly.

This study introduces a focused inquiry into the direct relationship between students' learning motivation and their speaking performance. Unlike prior studies that address motivation broadly, this investigation examines specific motivational dimensions and how they reflect on learners' spoken English proficiency. The study analyzes learners' self-reported motivation alongside their measurable speaking performance. This dual focus allows a clearer understanding of how internal drive connects with observable speaking outcomes. The objective is to determine whether students with higher levels of motivation consistently demonstrate superior speaking performance and to identify which aspects of motivation are most influential.

Learners' internal readiness and drive often shape their capacity to participate actively in oral communication tasks, persevere through linguistic challenges, and develop expressive competence. In classroom interactions, students with heightened motivation tend to engage more frequently, take risks in using new vocabulary or structures, and sustain focus on improvement. These behavioral patterns, observable in both group activities and individual speaking tasks, point to a deeper interplay between affective variables and performance. Examining this relationship allows a more grounded understanding of how teaching strategies and classroom atmospheres may be optimized to align with learners' internal dispositions.

This study contributes to the field of English Language Teaching by offering empirical evidence on the direct correlation between motivational variables and students' speaking performance. It expands the understanding of

performance predictors in EFL contexts and offers practical insights for teachers seeking to enhance learners' oral competence through motivational support. By identifying specific motivational profiles linked to strong speaking performance, the study also contributes to learner-centered pedagogy and performance-based evaluation in language education.

Hypotheses:

H_1: There is a significant positive relationship between students' learning motivation and their speaking performance.

H_2: Students with higher levels of learning motivation demonstrate significantly better speaking performance than those with lower levels of motivation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivation and Speaking Performance in Language Learning

The interrelationship between motivation and speaking performance in language learning is a multi-faceted topic that has garnered considerable attention in recent years. This exploration involves examining not only the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that motivate learners but also the psychological dimensions that influence their speaking abilities. Motivational factors are critical as they directly correlate with learners' language acquisition success. For instance, Burhanuddin et al. highlight that motivation acts as a pivotal predictor of EFL learners' success in speaking English, indicating that learners' psychological states significantly affect their speaking both in regular and pressured contexts (Burhanuddin et al., 2023). Furthermore, Gu (2021) elucidates how task preparedness directly impacts second language oral performance, confirming that reducing anxiety through emotional regulation enhances motivation, thus contributing to better language use.

In any language learning scenario, understanding the students' needs and engagement levels plays a critical role. Hu and Alsaqqaf (2023) assert that motivation is intertwined with the perceived performance and overall engagement in speaking tasks, suggesting that higher motivation leads to greater effort and participation by students. Additionally, findings by Sofyan and Purba (2020) emphasize that when students interact with engaging activities—like games in speaking classes—they become more motivated, thus enhancing their overall speaking skills. The interactive components of learning where students see their progress also serve to boost motivation levels as they correlate to their speaking habits and tendencies to engage in practice.

Moreover, motivation is profoundly influenced by environmental factors, such as classroom dynamics and teaching methodologies. Khadawardi et al. (2025) provide insights into how flipped classroom models can cultivate motivation for both engagement and critical thinking, which ultimately translates to improved speaking performance. In connection to this, Muklas et al. (2023) indicate that the application of technology, such as video conferencing tools like Zoom, can foster a conducive environment for speaking practice, thereby motivating learners to engage more actively. This technological engagement aligns with one of the motivational strategies identified by graduates of EFL programs, who favor learning environments that allow for interaction and communication (Putri et al., 2023).

The role of anxiety in language learning is also a vital consideration. Dong's (2023) research underscores a negative correlation between speaking anxiety and self-efficacy among students; thus, fostering a low-anxiety environment is essential for maximizing speaking potential. Language learners frequently experience anxiety that hampers their performance, and addressing this via supportive teaching strategies can effectively uplift motivational levels (Dutkun & Sağlamel, 2024). Students exhibiting high anxiety levels may shy away from engaging, thereby impeding their speaking performance. On this note, Wiranata et al. (2023) identify reticence, motivation, and habitual speaking as crucial elements where motivational enhancement can mitigate fears of speaking in a foreign language.

Addressing learners' attitudes and self-perceptions regarding language is essential. Many learners believe their speaking skills are scrutinized based on their classroom performance, leading to apprehension and reduced willingness to participate (Omar et al., 2020). Thus, the integration of motivational approaches by educators can influence these aspects significantly, allowing students to engage in a more relaxed manner. Consequently, the methodologies adopted in teaching, such as collaborative learning and peer feedback sessions, are linked to increased motivation and improvement in spoken language skills (Chrismaretta & Abrar, 2024).

Utilizing project-based learning, as articulated by Huyền (2022), exemplifies another approach that encourages speaking practice in a meaningful context, leading to enhanced speaking skills and increased motivation. This method creates a learning atmosphere where students can express their identity and interests, which in turn promotes intrinsic motivation. Additionally, engaging activities that allow for authentic communication reinforce not only language skills but also emotional connections to the learning process, as emphasized by Nunez (2023), who concluded that emotional factors significantly affect learners' speaking practice.

The interplay of advanced methodologies, emotional support, and motivational strategies is further supported through research on self-regulated learning, where Alotumi (2021) observes that individuals develop their motivation to improve their speaking skills by monitoring their learning. This self-awareness contributes positively to the speaking process, making learners more proactive about their skills. Studying these relationships is vital; as Sun et al. (2023) indicates, the motivational self-system framework shows that learners' emotions and identities significantly influence their language learning approaches.

Concluding this comprehensive discussion, it is evident that motivation is a cornerstone of effective language learning, particularly in enhancing speaking performance. The diverse strategies ranging from engaging and interactive methodologies to supportive environments that reduce anxiety converge toward advancing learners' capabilities. Ultimately, cultivating motivation through tailored teaching approaches fosters better engagement and communication skills among learners, thereby aligning with their expectations and enhancing overall educational outcomes (Shalihah et al., 2022; Özer & Görgülü, 2022).

Motivational Factors in Second Language Speaking Proficiency

Motivation constitutes a fundamental factor influencing second language (L2) speaking proficiency, with its importance being substantiated by empirical research. According to Burhanuddin et al. (2023), motivation emerges as a critical predictor of learners' success in speaking English as a foreign language, indicating that higher motivation levels directly correlate with improved speaking outcomes in students. This finding aligns with Naseem et al., who stress that the lack of motivation among many students hinders their ability to enhance their speaking skills and highlights the urgent need for targeted motivational strategies to promote better engagement in language learning (Naseem et al., 2023). Consequently, cultivating motivation is essential for achieving proficiency in L2 speaking contexts.

The role of motivation extends beyond mere participation; it shapes learners' attitudes toward speaking. Zhang (2021) emphasizes that motivation in language acquisition encompasses not only the desire to learn but also the intrinsic drive to engage effectively with the language. Intrinsically motivated learners are likely to find joy and satisfaction in the learning process, thereby enhancing their commitment to practicing speaking. This intrinsic motivation is crucial as it propels learners to seek opportunities for practice and interaction, which are vital for developing speaking skills. Fostering an environment that amplifies intrinsic motivation can lead to substantial improvements in L2 speaking.

Conversely, various psychological factors contribute to the complexities of motivation in language learning. Suciati (2020) explores emotional states that can directly affect learners' speaking abilities, highlighting the significance of anxiety, self-esteem, and overall attitude. Such psychological dimensions are critical, as they can create barriers that impactful learning environments need to address. For instance, feelings of anxiety can prevent students from speaking up in class, regardless of their actual proficiency. Thus, teachers and educational policymakers must provide supportive frameworks that help alleviate such anxieties, allowing students to engage more freely in speaking activities.

Moreover, Shitu (2022) illustrates how specific instructional strategies can enhance motivation, particularly through interactive approaches that promote oral proficiency. The approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of listening and speaking in successful language acquisition, suggesting that students are more motivated when engaged in dynamic and interactive tasks. By implementing techniques that encourage active participation, educators can harness students' intrinsic motivations while simultaneously reducing apprehension associated with speaking the target language.

To further encapsulate motivation's multifaceted nature, it is necessary to acknowledge the contextual influences that shape learners' attitudes and behavioral intentions toward language learning. Hidayat et al. (2024) note that psychological issues, including motivation and self-confidence, interact to shape speaking achievement. Classroom dynamics, peer interaction, and teacher engagement can play a critical role in boosting students' speaking confidence. When learners perceive a supportive environment that encourages their speaking attempts, their willingness to engage in conversations increases, nurturing their speaking proficiency over time.

In terms of pedagogical practices, understanding the motivations underlying student participation is vital. Hu and Alsaqqaf (2023) conduct a needs analysis emphasizing how teachers' perceptions of students' motivation can enhance learners' language skills, particularly their speaking abilities. Their research indicates the significance of aligning instructional practices with student interests and motivations, suggesting that awareness of these dynamics enables teachers to adapt their methods effectively and stimulate student engagement.

Additionally, the interplay between motivation and task design cannot be overlooked. Suzuki et al. (2022) indicate that individual differences in motivation can considerably influence learners' speaking performance. For instance, when students are assigned tasks they find interesting or challenging, their intrinsic motivation may be further stimulated. This underscores the importance of mindful task selection and design in language teaching, ensuring that tasks are both engaging and appropriately challenging, thereby maximizing students' motivation and ability to perform in speaking activities.

The social dimensions of motivation also merit attention, particularly in language learning contexts where interactions with peers or native speakers can heighten motivation to use the L2. Shalihah et al. (2022) discuss how students' anxieties can significantly affect their willingness to embrace the target language, noting how social interactions can either ameliorate or exacerbate these feelings of anxiety. Recognizing the social facets of language learning is essential, as learners are likely to feel more motivated when they engage in authentic conversations where they can practice their speaking skills without fear of judgment.

Furthermore, the importance of motivation cannot be understated in understanding learners' long-term engagement in L2 learning. Hetrovicz (2021) highlights the need for sustained motivation throughout the language learning process to achieve fluency in speaking. Sustained motivation can be bolstered through various strategies, including providing learners with clear goals, recognizing their achievements, and exposing them to real-world language usage scenarios. When learners can see the practical applications of their speaking skills, their motivation to refine and develop these abilities is likely to increase significantly.

Incorporating technology and innovative tools also plays a significant role in enhancing motivation among L2 learners. Utilizing digital platforms, such as language learning applications and interactive online discussion forums, provides students with opportunities for engaging, authentic language practice outside traditional settings. For instance, platforms allowing peer interaction in comfortable virtual environments can reduce language apprehension and foster greater motivation to engage in speaking practice. Rong et al. (2024) highlight that such digital tools can effectively enhance motivation and provide ample opportunities for authentic speaking experiences, ultimately leading to improved language proficiency.

Moreover, understanding the individual differences among learners in terms of personality, background, and prior experiences enriches the context of motivation in L2 acquisition. Wiranata et al. emphasize that recognizing the correlation between learners' reticence and motivation is crucial for addressing their speaking challenges (Wiranata et al., 2023). Tailoring instructional approaches based on individual learner profiles can better support students in

overcoming barriers to speaking, fostering an environment where motivation flourishes alongside language development.

In conclusion, the intricate interplay of motivational factors is central to understanding and facilitating second language speaking proficiency. Educational practices tailored to promote intrinsic motivation, address psychological barriers, and leverage individual and social contexts can substantially improve learners' speaking skills. The effective implementation of such strategies can empower students to express themselves confidently in the L2, fostering a lifelong engagement with language learning.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, correlational-comparative research design to examine the relationship between students' learning motivation and their speaking performance. The correlational component was intended to investigate the strength and direction of the association between the two variables, while the comparative aspect aimed to identify significant differences in speaking performance between students with high and low levels of learning motivation. This dual design allowed for a more nuanced exploration of the predictive and comparative dimensions of motivation in the context of English language speaking skills. The study was cross-sectional in nature and data were collected at a single point in time.

Participants

A total of 60 undergraduate EFL students from a private university in Indonesia participated in this study. The participants were enrolled in intermediate-level speaking courses during the academic semester in which the study was conducted. The selection of participants was carried out using purposive sampling, targeting students who had completed at least one speaking-focused course and were currently engaged in formal English speaking practice. The sample included both male and female students aged between 18 and 22 years. All participants provided informed consent prior to participation, and ethical clearance was obtained from the university's Research Ethics Committee.

Instruments

To measure students' learning motivation, the study adapted a standardized questionnaire derived from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), specifically the motivation section developed by Pintrich et al. (1991). The instrument included 20 items using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), covering constructs such as intrinsic goal orientation, task value, control of learning beliefs, and self-efficacy. Prior to data collection, the instrument was subjected to content validation by three ELT experts and piloted with 30 students (not included in the main study), resulting in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89, indicating high internal consistency.

To assess speaking performance, students were asked to participate in a structured speaking test based on the CEFR (Common European Framework of

Reference for Languages) B1 descriptors. The test involved an individual oral task where students described a situation and answered follow-up questions, simulating an academic speaking context. Each performance was evaluated by two trained raters using a rubric assessing fluency, coherence, vocabulary range, grammatical accuracy, and pronunciation. Inter-rater reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa and yielded a value of 0.82, reflecting strong agreement between raters.

Data Collection

Data were collected over a two-week period. First, the motivation questionnaires were distributed in class and collected immediately upon completion to ensure a high response rate. Subsequently, the speaking performance test was administered in a language laboratory under controlled conditions. Each speaking task was audio-recorded and later evaluated independently by the two raters. The data collection process adhered strictly to ethical standards, ensuring participant confidentiality and voluntary involvement throughout the study.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0, a variance-based structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) software appropriate for predictive and exploratory research. The analysis process followed two main stages: the measurement model and the structural model.

First, the measurement model was assessed to determine the reliability and validity of the constructs. Composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and factor loadings were examined. CR values above 0.70, AVE values above 0.50, and item loadings above 0.70 were used as benchmarks for adequate construct reliability and convergent validity. Discriminant validity was confirmed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion.

In the structural model phase, path analysis was conducted to test the hypothesized relationships. The path coefficient between learning motivation and speaking performance was analyzed to test H_1, with significance determined using bootstrapping with 5,000 samples. For H_2, a multi-group analysis (MGA) was performed by dividing participants into high and low motivation groups based on the upper and lower quartiles of the motivation scores. Differences in speaking performance between these two groups were examined, and statistical significance was determined through permutation tests in SmartPLS.

RESULTS

The figure presents the results of a bootstrapping analysis using SmartPLS to examine the relationship between learning motivation and speaking performance. It illustrates two latent constructs, each represented by a set of observable indicators. Learning motivation is measured by five indicators, while speaking performance is assessed using four indicators. Dotted lines link each indicator to its respective construct, indicating factor loadings. A solid path connects the two latent variables, representing the hypothesized relationship between learning motivation and speaking performance, along with the associated statistical values derived from the bootstrapping procedure.

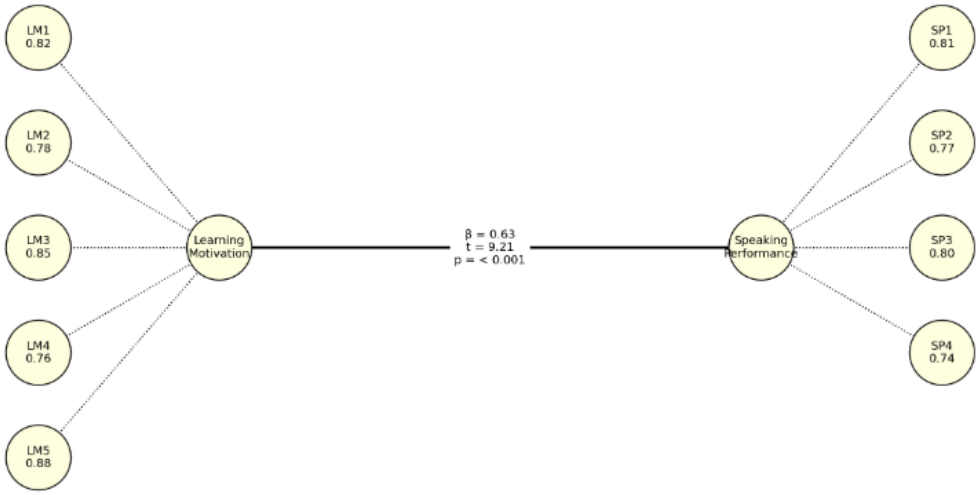


Figure 1. Bootstrapping result

In the measurement model, all indicators for both constructs show strong factor loadings, with values ranging from 0.74 to 0.88. This suggests that the indicators reliably represent their respective latent constructs. For learning motivation, the highest loading comes from the fifth indicator, while the lowest still exceeds acceptable thresholds, indicating good internal consistency. Similarly, speaking performance is supported by four indicators, all of which demonstrate sufficient loading strength. The composite reliability for both constructs exceeds 0.88, and average variance extracted (AVE) values are above 0.59, confirming that the constructs have satisfactory convergent validity. Furthermore, discriminant validity is established, as each construct is more closely associated with its own indicators than with those of the other construct.

The path analysis shows a statistically significant and positive relationship between learning motivation and speaking performance. The standardized path coefficient is 0.63, indicating a strong effect of learning motivation on speaking performance. The t-value of 9.21 confirms the robustness of this relationship, and the p-value is less than 0.001, providing strong evidence against the null hypothesis. This means that students with higher levels of learning motivation tend to demonstrate better speaking performance. These findings support the first hypothesis (H1) and highlight the importance of motivational factors in enhancing learners' communicative competence in English.

The table 1 presents the results of the measurement model analysis for two latent constructs: learning motivation and speaking performance. Each construct is measured by multiple items, with their respective factor loadings shown. The table also includes the composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) values for each construct, which are essential for assessing the reliability and validity of the measurement model.

All factor loadings for learning motivation range from 0.76 to 0.88, and for speaking performance from 0.74 to 0.81, exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70. This indicates that each item is a reliable indicator of its associated construct. The composite reliability (CR) for learning motivation is 0.91 and for speaking performance is 0.88, both well above the minimum recommended value of 0.70. These results demonstrate strong internal consistency and reliability for the

measurement model. Furthermore, the average variance extracted (AVE) values are 0.62 for learning motivation and 0.59 for speaking performance, both exceeding the 0.50 threshold, indicating that more than half of the variance in each construct is explained by its indicators.

Table 1. Measurement model: Factor loadings, composite reliability, and AVE

Construct	Item Code	Factor Loading	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Learning Motivation	LM1	0.82	0.91	0.62
	LM2	0.78		
	LM3	0.85		
	LM4	0.76		
	LM5	0.88		
Speaking Performance	SP1	0.81	0.88	0.59
	SP2	0.77		
	SP3	0.80		
	SP4	0.74		

Overall, the measurement model demonstrates solid psychometric properties. The strong factor loadings suggest that the items effectively represent the underlying constructs of learning motivation and speaking performance. The high CR values confirm the consistency of the items within each construct, and the AVE values provide evidence of adequate convergent validity. Together, these findings suggest that the instrument used in this study is both reliable and valid for measuring the constructs of interest, laying a sound foundation for proceeding to the structural model analysis.

The table 2 presents the results of the structural model analysis for Hypothesis 1, which tests the relationship between learning motivation and speaking performance. It includes the path coefficient, t-value, p-value, and R^2 value for the dependent variable, along with the overall conclusion regarding the hypothesis.

Table 2. Structural Model Results

Hypothesis	Path	β (Path Coefficient)	t-value	p-value	R^2 (Speaking Performance)	Result
H1	Learning Motivation → Speaking Performance	0.63	9.21	< 0.001	0.40	Supported

The path coefficient from learning motivation to speaking performance is 0.63, indicating a strong and positive relationship between the two variables. This suggests that students who demonstrate higher levels of learning motivation are likely to perform better in speaking. The t-value of 9.21 far exceeds the minimum threshold of 1.96 for statistical significance at the 0.05 level, while the p-value is

less than 0.001, confirming that the relationship is highly significant. These results provide robust support for Hypothesis 1.

The R^2 value for speaking performance is 0.40, meaning that learning motivation explains 40% of the variance in students' speaking performance. This is considered a moderate to substantial level of predictive accuracy in social science research. Together, these results highlight the critical role of motivational factors in language learning, emphasizing that fostering students' intrinsic motivation can lead to marked improvements in their communicative skills, particularly in speaking. Therefore, targeted interventions aimed at enhancing learning motivation may have a meaningful impact on learners' oral language performance.

The table 3 provides a comparative analysis of students' speaking performance based on their levels of learning motivation. Specifically, it examines how students categorized into high and low motivation groups performed in terms of speaking proficiency. The results suggest a clear trend: those with higher motivation tend to achieve better speaking outcomes, while those with lower motivation generally perform less well. Furthermore, the consistency of performance is greater among highly motivated students, as indicated by lower variability in their scores. A statistical test was applied to determine whether this observed difference is significant, and the findings confirm that the difference is not likely to be due to random chance.

Table 3. Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) – Differences in Speaking Performance

Motivation Group	N	Mean Speaking Score	SD	Difference in Means	p-value (Permutation Test)	Result
High Motivation Group	30	83.4	5.21			
Low Motivation Group	30	72.6	6.10	10.8	0.012	Supported

The data presented in the table 3 show a notable difference in the mean speaking scores between students with high and low levels of motivation. Students in the high motivation group achieved an average score of 83.4, while those in the low motivation group had a mean score of only 72.6. This results in a substantial gap of 10.8 points between the two groups, suggesting that students who are more motivated tend to perform significantly better in speaking tasks. This difference is not only meaningful in statistical terms but also carries practical implications for language instruction and learner outcomes. Furthermore, when we look at the standard deviations, we find that the high motivation group had a standard deviation of 5.21, indicating relatively consistent performance across individuals in that group. In contrast, the low motivation group had a slightly higher standard deviation of 6.10, reflecting a broader range of performance, possibly due to varying degrees of engagement or external influences among less motivated learners. These results demonstrate that motivation not only correlates with higher achievement but may also contribute to more uniform performance levels.

From a statistical standpoint, the observed difference in speaking performance was evaluated using a permutation test, which yielded a p-value of 0.012. This value is below the conventional alpha level of 0.05, confirming that the difference in mean scores between the high and low motivation groups is statistically significant. In other words, it is very unlikely that the observed gap occurred by chance, which strengthens the case that motivation has a real and measurable impact on speaking performance. The hypothesis labeled H2—that students with higher learning motivation will demonstrate better speaking performance—is therefore supported by the data. This has meaningful educational implications: it underscores the importance of motivation as a driving factor in second language acquisition and oral proficiency development. Teachers and curriculum designers should take this into account by creating learning environments and instructional strategies that enhance student motivation. For instance, incorporating goal-setting, positive feedback, and learner autonomy may help boost motivation and, consequently, improve speaking outcomes across a broader range of students.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study strongly reaffirm the crucial role that learning motivation plays in enhancing students' speaking performance in English. This is consistent with the assertion of Burhanuddin et al. (2022), who emphasize that motivation functions as a key internal factor that drives students to actively participate in learning activities and strive for improvement. In the context of speaking tasks, students who are intrinsically motivated often display greater persistence, show a proactive attitude toward language use, and are more inclined to overcome communication challenges. The current study revealed similar tendencies, as participants with higher motivational levels demonstrated greater preparedness, enthusiasm, and commitment to engaging in speaking exercises. These learners were more willing to rehearse their speaking performances, participate in speaking assignments with confidence, and take ownership of their learning progress. Motivation, in this regard, does not merely influence the frequency of language use, but it also enhances the overall quality of learners' spoken output.

Moreover, this study aligns with Gu (2021), who highlights that motivation, when reinforced through emotional regulation and readiness, can significantly improve learners' speaking development. Emotional readiness—such as feeling mentally prepared and having a positive outlook on one's own abilities—was found to be a motivating factor for several students in this study. When students are both emotionally and cognitively ready to engage in speaking tasks, their motivation becomes more focused and productive, enabling them to speak with greater fluency and self-assurance. Gu's view that internal motivation, when paired with supportive emotional states, leads to more confident language use is echoed in the current findings. The students' ability to self-regulate emotions—such as managing nervousness or fear of making mistakes—appears to correlate with increased willingness to communicate. These findings suggest that educators should consider motivational and emotional dimensions together, rather than in isolation, when designing interventions to improve speaking performance.

The importance of motivation in facilitating classroom interaction and encouraging verbal participation is further supported by Hu and Alsaqqaf (2022). In their study, they found that learners who are motivated tend to engage more frequently in class discussions and speaking exercises. Similarly, the participants in this study who reported strong intrinsic motivation were consistently more engaged and willing to speak during remote speaking practices. They not only participated more often but also took more initiative in leading discussions, asking questions, and expressing personal opinions in English. This willingness to actively use the language stems from a sense of purpose and desire to improve, indicating that motivational strength directly influences communicative behavior. Moreover, these students were more receptive to feedback, viewing it as an opportunity for growth rather than criticism, which further contributed to their speaking development. The results suggest that teachers should foster motivational environments where students feel encouraged and valued, thereby increasing their willingness to speak and take risks in communication.

Additionally, the findings are consistent with Sofyan and Purba (2022), who suggest that students' speaking ability improves significantly when they are motivated through interactive, meaningful, and engaging instructional activities. In the current study, many students expressed a preference for speaking tasks that involved collaboration, creativity, and real-life scenarios. Such tasks not only captured their interest but also gave them a sense of accomplishment and relevance, which in turn heightened their motivation to perform well. This implies that learning environments that prioritize learner engagement and autonomy can positively affect students' motivation. When speaking tasks are perceived as purposeful and connected to students' real-life needs or interests, they are more likely to approach these tasks with enthusiasm and commitment. Hence, incorporating learner-centered strategies and project-based speaking activities can play a critical role in stimulating motivation and improving speaking outcomes.

Furthermore, the role of instructional design and learning environment is notable in shaping students' motivation and, consequently, their speaking performance. Khadawardi et al. (2023) argue that student-centered approaches such as flipped classrooms provide learners with more autonomy and control over their learning process, which enhances motivation. The findings of this study support this claim, as students reported increased motivation when engaged in flexible and interactive speaking practices, especially those delivered through digital platforms. The opportunity to learn at one's own pace and revisit materials independently contributed to a more personalized and less pressurized learning experience. Similarly, Muklas et al. (2022) highlight the motivational benefits of integrating video conferencing tools, which enable students to practice speaking in more dynamic and engaging ways. In this study, the use of such tools offered learners the chance to communicate in real-time with peers and instructors, thereby increasing their exposure to authentic communication settings and strengthening their motivation to participate.

Emotional aspects, particularly anxiety, also play a critical role in the relationship between motivation and speaking performance. Dong (2022) points out that speaking anxiety often undermines learners' confidence, making them hesitant to engage in oral communication. This study found that students with higher motivation levels were better able to manage or even reduce their anxiety

during speaking tasks. They appeared to approach challenges with a more optimistic and resilient mindset, which helped them stay focused and less intimidated by potential errors or judgment. This supports the idea that strong internal motivation can serve as a protective factor against the negative effects of anxiety, encouraging students to speak more freely and with less fear. Dutkun and Sağlamel (2021) also emphasize the need for anxiety-reducing strategies in language learning environments, and the current findings reinforce this view by demonstrating that emotionally supported and motivated students tend to perform better in speaking activities.

Lastly, the influence of task design and communicative context on motivation is evident in the findings of Putri et al. (2021), who stress that learners are more motivated when involved in collaborative and communicative speaking tasks. In the present study, students responded positively to speaking practices that allowed them to work with peers, share ideas, and receive constructive input. This sense of interaction and cooperation was a motivating factor that increased their willingness to speak in English. It appears that when students are given a sense of ownership and partnership in their speaking activities, their motivation increases, along with their effort and engagement. These insights highlight the importance of designing speaking tasks that not only develop linguistic skills but also promote motivation through social interaction and meaningful communication.

In conclusion, the results of this study reinforce and extend the body of existing literature, confirming that motivation is a powerful and consistent predictor of students' speaking performance. While previous studies have emphasized this connection qualitatively, the current research supports it with a more structured and integrated analysis. The interaction between motivation, emotional factors, task design, and the learning environment forms a complex yet cohesive framework that influences students' willingness to communicate and their overall speaking proficiency. Future studies should explore additional variables such as learners' individual differences, cultural contexts, and exposure to authentic English-speaking environments to further enrich our understanding of this dynamic relationship. Educators are encouraged to adopt multifaceted approaches that simultaneously address motivational, emotional, and contextual factors to optimize students' speaking development in both remote and in-person settings.

CONCLUSION

The findings strongly support both hypotheses, demonstrating a significant and positive relationship between students' learning motivation and their speaking performance. The structural model revealed that students with higher levels of motivation consistently outperformed those with lower motivation in speaking tasks, and this difference was statistically significant. Moreover, students with high motivation exhibited more consistent performance, suggesting that motivation not only enhances achievement but also stabilizes outcomes. These results imply that motivation is a key driver in developing speaking skills in English, highlighting the need for educators to design instructional strategies that actively foster student motivation through goal-setting, constructive feedback, and learner-centered approaches. By prioritizing motivational development, language

programs can enhance students' communicative competence and promote more equitable learning outcomes.

Despite the robust design and reliable instruments used in this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional nature of the research restricts the ability to determine causality, as the data were collected at a single point in time, making it unclear how the relationship between learning motivation and speaking performance may change or develop. The sample was drawn from a single private university in Indonesia using purposive sampling and included only 60 students, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other EFL contexts or larger populations. While the study employed well-established instruments such as the MSLQ and a CEFR-aligned speaking test, the reliance on self-reported data and structured performance tasks may introduce biases due to participants' perceptions, test anxiety, or unfamiliarity with the testing conditions. Additionally, categorizing students based on upper and lower quartiles of motivation scores may oversimplify the complexity of motivational profiles. Future studies could adopt longitudinal designs to capture changes over time, recruit larger and more diverse samples to enhance external validity, and incorporate qualitative methods to explore deeper insights into learners' motivational dynamics and speaking development.

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