

The Influence of Motivation and Self-Confidence on Students' Speaking Skills at Vocational Schools

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Abstract. This study explores the perceptions of eleventh-grade students at SMK N 1 Purworejo, SMK PN 2 Purworejo, and SMK TKM Teknik Purworejo regarding the influence of motivation and self-confidence on their English-speaking skills. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research involved 30 student participants through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The findings reveal that students with high levels of motivation and self-confidence generally demonstrate stronger English-speaking abilities. However, a number of these students continued to experience anxiety and apprehension during speaking tasks. Conversely, students with low motivation and self-confidence face significant challenges, such as self-doubt, public-speaking anxiety, limited vocabulary, and fear of mispronunciation. Despite these barriers, many of them express a strong desire to improve through consistent practice. These results highlight the importance of fostering both motivation and self-confidence to support students in developing their English-speaking skills.

Keywords: Influence, Motivation, Self-confidence, Speaking skills

1. INTRODUCTION

Motivation plays a critical role in the learning process, especially in the context of second language acquisition. Effective language learning is largely dependent on teachers' capacity to stimulate and maintain students' motivation, which presents a significant challenge for non-native learners in Indonesia. Motivating students to learn a foreign language can be difficult, and integrative motivation defined as the desire to connect with a community of speakers plays a crucial role in this process, emphasizing the importance of social interaction in language learning [1], [2]. Motivation is a key factor that influences and guides students' speaking abilities, stemming from both internal drives and external encouragement from their environment. Each student possesses unique characteristics and levels of motivation, which can significantly impact their speaking skills. Students with high motivation are more likely to engage in learning activities that enhance their speaking abilities [3]. Motivation is a critical factor that significantly influences the learning process [4].

While motivation shapes students' learning behaviors and outcomes, the complexities of motivation theories can make them challenging to navigate. Each theory employs unique terminology and concepts that address various aspects of motivated behavior. Significant frameworks, such as expected value theory and self-determination theory, have been developed to explain and predict learning behaviors. However, there remains a lack of clarity regarding their practical application in educational settings [5]. Existing research often emphasizes theoretical constructs without providing actionable strategies for educators to enhance motivation in the classroom [6]-[8]. Essential components such as perceived competence, task values, and accomplishment goals have been identified for understanding motivation, yet their practical implications are still underexplored, particularly in the context of evolving educational challenges, such as those posed by the pandemic [9], [10].

Self-confidence refers to a positive mindset and behavior that enables individuals to develop and sustain a favorable perception of themselves, their environment, and the situations they encounter [11]. Despite frequent interactions with English in the classroom, many students still feel less confident when speaking in front of their peers. Self-confidence is the belief in one's ability to accomplish goals and face challenges. Children who lack self-confidence may encounter difficulties in socializing and connecting with others [12]-[14]. This confidence can stem from internal beliefs about one's skills and knowledge, as well as

external factors such as the environment and feedback from others [15]. It is expressed that self-confidence is a profound belief within an individual that they are capable of contributing to themselves, their family, their community, their nation, and their religion [16]. Confidence is a trait commonly found in individuals who possess high or positive levels of self-esteem [17].

The psychosocial development of teenagers is a critical stage where they begin to establish a sense of self, including their roles, personal objectives, and individuality [18]. During this formative period, self-confidence emerges as a key factor influencing learning outcomes, defined as students' belief in their own abilities. Research indicates that self-confidence significantly affects students' capacity to communicate in English, encompassing skills such as speaking, reading, and writing [19]. There is a clear correlation between higher self-confidence and improved academic performance, highlighting the importance of fostering confidence through targeted educational activities. The higher the level of self-confidence, the better the interpersonal communication skills [20]. Self-confidence is among the most essential qualities a person can have, and it is a goal that we all aim to attain [21]. Self-confidence is an attitude that serves as the basis for an individual's capacity to enhance their skills and abilities in order to reach their desired objectives [22]-[24].

Language, as a tool of communication and identity, is central to personal and social development. Speaking, in particular, is a foundational language skill that supports expression and critical thinking. It is challenging to master and requires consistent practice, motivation, and confidence. [25]. Language is a system of sounds that is arbitrary in nature, utilized by individuals within a social group for purposes of collaboration, communication, and self-identification. It functions to convey personal identity, social class, ethnicity, and nationality, and is essential in shaping cultural identity [26]. Moreover, language serves as a medium of communication through which individuals convey information, including thoughts, emotions, and ideas [27]. Furthermore, language is a sophisticated and organized system that is exclusive to humans, playing a vital role in cognition and creativity. It affects the way we interpret information, impacts cognitive abilities, and alters brain structure, mirroring both cultural heritage and personal experiences over the course of an individual's life [28].

In an era characterized by rapid technological advancement, English has established itself as the primary medium of communication globally. This prominence poses significant challenges for individuals who lack proficiency in English, as navigating personal, academic, and professional landscapes increasingly demands this skill [29]. The cognitive aspects of language, intertwined with cultural and communicative activities, further underscore its complexity and importance [30]. Language is a cultural construct and a tool for thought that is interdependent with it. It is essentially a byproduct of social life, reflecting cultural and cognitive processes, and it is an essential communication tool in human society [31]. The primary form of communication in human life, language is an essential component of everyone's existence. There are certain ways to learn it, such as using educational materials like images to improve comprehension and learning [32].

Speaking is a fundamental element of both learning and teaching a language, serving as a crucial skill in the acquisition of a second language. It functions as an interactive activity that encompasses creating, receiving, and processing information, which is essential for effective communication [33]. Additionally, the ability to speak freely is vital for students to develop higher-order thinking skills, which are important for academic success and personal expression. Mastery of speaking is not only necessary for communication in English but is also considered the foundation of language acquisition [34]. Given that speaking is one of the most critical communication abilities, it underscores the idea that communication is impossible without speech [35]. Speaking is an essential skill in English that enables the expression of opinions, ideas, and information [36]. Therefore, speaking is a challenging skill in language learning that necessitates student engagement and encouragement [37].

This study identifies a specific gap in the literature: the limited exploration of students' personal perceptions regarding the influence of motivation and self-confidence on their English-speaking abilities. While prior research acknowledges these factors as important, few studies have investigated how vocational high school students themselves perceive their impact or what underlying beliefs shape these perceptions. Understanding these perspectives is crucial for designing instructional strategies that genuinely support learners' psychological needs and communication goals.

To address this gap, the present study seeks to explore two key questions: (1) What do students think about the influence of motivation and confidence on speaking English? (2) What underlies the students' judgment that motivation and confidence can enhance English speaking in the classroom? Through these questions, the research aims to provide meaningful insights that will help educators create more supportive, engaging, and empowering environments to enhance students' motivation, boost their confidence, and ultimately improve their English-speaking proficiency.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research methodology aimed at obtaining an in-depth understanding of social phenomena and human behavior [38]. Qualitative methods are rooted in the interpretive paradigm, where the researchers serve as the primary instrument for data collection. The data collection technique utilized triangulation, combining various sources of information to gain a comprehensive perspective. Data were analyzed inductively, with a focus on uncovering meaning rather than generalizing findings [39].

The participants were drawn from three vocational schools: SMK PN 2 (11th-grade TKR students), SMK TKM Teknik (11th-grade TPA students), and SMK Negeri 1 Purworejo (11th-grade TPYTA students), during the 2024/2025 academic year. In the study using a questionnaire instrument, the researchers used questions summarized from previous researchers [40], [41]. Student participation in the questionnaire was taken from 30 students out of a total of 80 students in the three schools. Each school contributed 10 students, resulting in a total of 30 participants who engaged in interviews and completed questionnaires addressing the impact of motivation and self-confidence on English-speaking skills.

The instrument of this study was a qualitative questionnaire, which was distributed to 30 participants via Google Forms, and interviews were conducted with 30 students from three schools, where each school had 10 students. Participants were able to complete the questionnaire online from any location. It takes approximately 10 minutes to answer all the questions. The questionnaire is divided into three sections for statements. The first section gathers participants' demographic information; the second section assesses their motivation and academic confidence in the learning process. The questionnaire consisted of 10 items using a four-point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree to 4 = strongly disagree), enabling the researchers to assess students' levels of motivation and confidence. Following the questionnaire, in-class semi-structured interviews were conducted. Each participant was interviewed individually, with each session lasting approximately three minutes. The interview guide included 10 core questions designed to elicit students' perceptions of their motivation and confidence in speaking English. To ensure better comprehension and comfort, interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia.

Data analysis is the systematic process of organising and interpreting data from interviews and qualitative questionnaires to ensure findings are clear and shareable [42]. This study examined how students perceive the influence of motivation on their self-confidence in speaking English in class. Qualitative questionnaires complemented the interviews, providing additional insights into student perceptions. The interview results were presented in narrative form, simplifying complex information and highlighting the link between motivation and self-confidence in English speaking.

The questionnaire was used to find out the motivation and confidence of students in speaking English at SMK Negeri 1 Purworejo, SMK PN 2 Purworejo, and SMK TKM TEKNIK Purworejo. Thereafter, interviews in the form of semi-structured interviews with students were used to collect further information as to the reasons why there is motivation and confidence or how students feel motivated and confident in speaking English. The results of the data collection are raw data. Classify the data into two parts: high and low. To present the results in a systematic and easily understandable manner, the researchers displayed the data as descriptions. The data displayed in the form of descriptions aims to make it easier for readers to see that students have motivation and confidence in speaking English. The results of the data that have been processed are data that determine high and low motivation and confidence in speaking English in class by students of SMK Negeri 1 Purworejo, SMK PN 2 Purworejo, and SMK TKM TEKNIK Purworejo.

To conducting this research, ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the English Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Purworejo. Formal permission was also secured from the principals of all participating schools, and informed consent was obtained from every student involved in the study. Students were clearly informed about the research objectives, their voluntary participation, the right to withdraw at any time without consequences, and the assurance that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous. Throughout the research process, all ethical principles were upheld to protect the participants' rights and privacy. Following data collection through questionnaires and interviews, the researchers organized, verified, and reviewed the raw data to ensure its credibility and accuracy. The data were categorized based on levels of motivation and self-confidence to present clear descriptions of students' English-speaking abilities. Conclusions were drawn only after confirming that the analyzed data effectively addressed the research questions, resulting in a comprehensive understanding of how motivation and confidence influence students' speaking performance at SMK Negeri 1 Purworejo, SMK PN 2 Purworejo, and SMK TKM Teknik Purworejo.

In line to the explanation in this chapter, the novelty of this study lies in its specific exploration of the intricate relationship between motivation, self-confidence, and English-speaking skills among eleventh-grade students in Indonesian vocational high schools (SMK), revealing nuanced findings such as the

persistent anxiety among highly motivated and confident speakers and the strong desire for improvement even among those with low motivation and self-confidence.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a study analyzing data from 30 students from three vocational schools, focusing on motivation, self-confidence, speaking practice, and group preferences. The study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the psychological and contextual elements that shape students' speaking behavior in the classroom. The data is analyzed using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, drawing connections to theoretical frameworks like Self-Determination Theory, Self-Efficacy Theory, and the social-interactionist view. The chapter aims to provide a deeper understanding of students' perceptions of affective factors on their English-speaking performance.

Table 1. Questionnaire Result

No	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Confidence in improving speaking skills	0%	0%	53,3%	46,7%
2	Feel motivated to learn English	0%	0%	36,7%	63,3%
3	Believe they can improve their speaking skills	0%	3,3%	50%	46,7%
4	Confidence when speaking in front of others	0%	43,3%	40%	16,7%
5	Do not feel anxious about making mistakes when speaking	10%	26,7%	26,7%	36,7%
6	Feel comfortable speaking English with classmates	3,3%	36,7%	43,3%	16,7%
7	Feel anxious when having to speak English in public	3,3%	30%	16,7%	50%
8	Confidence when speaking English in front of others	3,3%	53,3%	10%	33,3%
9	Have high motivation to improve speaking skills	0%	3,3%	36,7%	60%
10	Speaking skills improve after getting motivation from peers	3,3%	3,3%	43,3%	50%

A. Motivation

Motivation emerged as a critical factor influencing students' engagement and effort in learning to speak English. The questionnaire results showed that 63.3% of students strongly agreed and 36.7% agreed that they felt motivated to learn English. During interviews, students frequently mentioned that their motivation stemmed from understanding the importance of English for their future careers and communication in global settings.

These findings align with the Self-Determination Theory [43], which emphasizes that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation play essential roles in learning. Students who felt personally driven or influenced by their goals were more actively involved in speaking activities. Motivation, in this context, is not only an internal drive but also shaped by perceived value and relevance of English in their lives—an idea echoed in Expectancy-Value Theory ([5]).

Similar results were found in a study by [1], who reported that students with clear goals and personal interest in English learning tend to show higher participation in oral communication. This study reinforces the idea that when English learning is perceived as meaningful and connected to

students' identities and futures, motivation increases and positively impacts their speaking development.

B. Self-Confidence

The data revealed varied levels of student confidence when speaking English in front of others. Only 16.7% strongly agreed and 40% agreed that they felt confident when speaking in public, while a significant portion (43.3%) disagreed. Many students expressed anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and self-doubt. However, several participants also mentioned feeling more confident when they were well-prepared or had prior exposure to the material.

This aligns with the concept that self-confidence is a crucial internal factor that influences learners' willingness to communicate, as discussed in the Introduction. According to Bandura's (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory, students' belief in their ability to succeed in speaking tasks is strongly linked to their performance and persistence. Confidence allows learners to overcome the fear of judgment, which is essential in oral language use.

This finding is supported by [12], who found that self-confidence has a strong correlation with interpersonal communication skills. Moreover, [15] noted that students with higher confidence levels perform better in speaking assessments due to reduced anxiety and increased self-assurance. Thus, building student confidence should be a priority in English language instruction, particularly in environments where public speaking and performance anxiety are common.

C. Speaking Practice

Another key finding highlights the role of consistent speaking practice in enhancing student confidence and fluency. Most students acknowledged that regular practice contributed positively to their speaking skills. In the questionnaire, 46.7% strongly agreed and 53.3% agreed that they believed their speaking could improve with practice and motivation from peers.

These findings support the view that speaking is not just a product of language competence but a skill that develops through active use and interaction, as noted by [35]. This reinforces the theoretical idea discussed in the Introduction that speaking is an interactive and productive process that requires more than passive knowledge—it demands real-time processing, risk-taking, and feedback.

According to [25], classroom activities such as role-plays, presentations, and discussions are vital in enhancing both confidence and speaking ability. Moreover, [34] emphasized that the more learners are exposed to meaningful speaking tasks, the stronger their cognitive and linguistic connections become.

This suggests that classroom instruction should integrate frequent and varied speaking opportunities that are low-risk, engaging, and student-centered to build both competence and confidence simultaneously.

D. Group Preferences

Findings also revealed that most students preferred speaking in small groups rather than in front of the whole class. Interview responses indicated that students felt more relaxed and confident in small-group settings. This preference reflects their desire for supportive environments where they can speak without fear of ridicule or negative evaluation.

This finding relates to the affective filter hypothesis and the social-interactionist view of language learning, which emphasize the importance of a safe, low-anxiety environment in second language acquisition. Students are more likely to speak when the affective filter is low—when they feel emotionally secure and socially supported.

Research by [20] also supports this idea, showing that small-group interactions increase student participation and lower communication anxiety. In a similar vein, [30] emphasized that students' confidence improves when teachers create group-based discussion settings that allow for more informal and comfortable interactions.

Thus, promoting group-based speaking tasks and collaborative activities in the classroom not only facilitates language use but also fosters a sense of belonging and support that enhances students' motivation and confidence.

4. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the influence of motivation and self-confidence on the English-speaking skills of vocational high school students. Through a combination of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with 30 participants, the research revealed that students with high motivation generally possessed greater self-confidence and demonstrated stronger speaking skills. These students also showed a higher willingness to participate in public speaking activities. Conversely, students with low motivation often lacked confidence, which hindered their speaking performance and increased their anxiety in classroom interactions.

The findings confirm that both motivation and self-confidence are essential factors in developing students' speaking proficiency. While students with low confidence still expressed a desire to improve, their progress was often dependent on supportive environments and peer encouragement.

Therefore, educators are encouraged to design engaging and student centered learning environments, incorporating strategies such as positive reinforcement, collaborative tasks, and opportunities for low-pressure speaking practice. These efforts are crucial for building learners' confidence and fostering their motivation to communicate effectively in English, an essential skill in both academic and professional contexts.

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