



## HOW MOTIVATION INFLUENCES SPEAKING PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH CLASSROOMS

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**Abstract:** This article explores the integral relationship between motivation and speaking performance among learners in English classrooms. It delves into the theoretical underpinnings of motivation in second language acquisition, the kinds of motivation that drive learners, and the pedagogical strategies for fostering motivation. The article further discusses the obstacles demotivating learners, the influence of classroom environment, teacher roles, peer interactions, and the sociocultural context. By synthesizing theoretical frameworks, practical experiences, and research findings, the article illustrates the direct and indirect pathways through which motivation shapes oral language development, communicative confidence, and overall classroom participation.

**Keywords:** motivation, speaking performance, English classroom, language learning, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, communicative competence, second language acquisition.


Speaking is often considered the central skill in mastering a foreign language. For learners of English, speaking proficiency represents not only the ability to use the language for practical communication but also a means to demonstrate achievement and personal identity. However, the journey to competent speaking is rarely linear or easy. One of the primary factors influencing this journey is motivation—the invisible engine that propels learners to persevere, experiment, and stretch beyond their linguistic comfort zones. Motivation is complex, dynamic, and deeply embedded in both personal and environmental contexts. In English classrooms, it is affected by learners' prior experiences, their goals, the classroom atmosphere, and the teaching strategies employed. Understanding how motivation shapes speaking performance can empower educators to craft more effective, engaging, and supportive learning environments. This article provides an in-depth discussion of the foundational role of motivation, its sources, its effects on speaking abilities, and methods to enhance learner motivation in the context of contemporary English language education [1].

Motivation has been described by psychologists and linguists as the driving force that initiates, guides, and sustains goal-oriented behaviors. In the context of language learning, motivation is critical for persistence and willingness to use the foreign language actively, especially through speaking. Researchers such as Dörnyei and Gardner have established two broad categories of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation stems from the learner's internal desires—such as enjoyment, curiosity, or self-fulfillment—whereas extrinsic motivation is generated by external rewards or pressures, such as grades, recognition, or future career prospects. Both forms can stimulate engagement, but intrinsic motivation is




most often associated with deeper, longer-lasting learning and genuine communicative skill. Learners' beliefs about their self-efficacy (their confidence in performing language tasks) also play a vital role. Those who sense that they are competent, or who have had previous positive experiences, are more likely to take risks in speaking and to recover quickly from mistakes. Conversely, low self-efficacy may inhibit participation and impede progress. The dynamic interplay between these internal forces and various classroom or societal influences gives rise to a rich diversity of motivational profiles among students. Recognizing and nurturing these differences is central to effective teaching and successful speaking development [2].

English speaking performance depends on much more than knowledge of vocabulary or grammar. It requires learners to use language spontaneously, often in unrehearsed and authentic contexts. For many, this can provoke anxiety, fear of embarrassment, and self-doubt—emotional obstacles that only motivation can help them overcome. Motivated learners are more likely to seek speaking opportunities, participate actively in class discussions, and practice outside the classroom. They prepare for presentations, volunteer to answer questions, and initiate conversations. Over time, such engagement leads to improved fluency, greater communicative confidence, and finer pronunciation and pragmatic skills. Motivation also fosters resilience. Speaking involves frequent errors, false starts, and occasional failures to communicate. Highly motivated students are less deterred by these setbacks. They use feedback constructively and view mistakes as opportunities to learn, rather than as reasons to withdraw. Cumulatively, motivation transforms the classroom from a place of passive absorption to a thriving community of communicative practice. It enables learners to move beyond memorization towards meaningful, real-life use of English, which is ultimately the hallmark of true language acquisition [3].



Intrinsic motivation is often seen as the gold standard in educational psychology. When students are intrinsically motivated to speak English, they are driven by curiosity, enjoyment, or a personal sense of achievement. They may be fascinated by the language, by its sounds and rhythms, or by the culture it represents. Such students are more willing to experiment, to use language creatively, and to persist in spite of difficulties. Extrinsic motivation, while sometimes criticized as shallow, cannot be dismissed. For many learners, speaking English well is a stepping stone toward passing exams, winning scholarships, or qualifying for preferred university programs. Rewards, recognition, and social approval can activate effort and push students to practice speaking tasks that they might otherwise avoid. Optimal classroom environments blend both motivational sources. Teachers can frame speaking activities as opportunities for fun and creativity while also linking them to tangible achievements. Recognizing students' progress with praise or small awards, creating real audiences for presentations, and connecting lessons to learners' aspirations can nurture both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations [4].

Motivation to speak English does not develop in a vacuum. It is shaped by the broader social and cultural context in which learners live. In some societies, English is associated with



upward mobility, access to information, or global citizenship. Motivations in these environments are often high and linked to powerful future-oriented goals. However, for learners in contexts where English is marginalized or seen as irrelevant to daily life, it can be harder to sustain interest. Socioeconomic factors—such as family support, peer norms, or perceived opportunity—also shape motivational orientations. Cultural attitudes toward speaking, silence, and error management further color how motivation translates into action. In cultures where silence is valued, students may be less willing to risk embarrassment, even if they are internally motivated. Teachers who are sensitive to these factors can better adapt their motivational strategies and create bridges to more active participation.


Despite best efforts, many learners face demotivational forces that restrict their willingness to speak. Fear of negative evaluation, high anxiety, lack of perceived relevance, and previous experiences of failure can all suppress motivation. Teachers can counteract these obstacles by normalizing mistakes, reframing errors as natural steps in learning, and providing scaffolding to ensure early success. Using humor, music, games, or culturally relevant materials can re-energize interest. Explicitly teaching communication strategies—such as asking for clarification or paraphrasing—empowers students to keep conversations going, even with limited proficiency. Offering choice in topics and activities allows students to express themselves on subjects they care about, making speaking more meaningful and motivating [5].

### **Conclusions**

Motivation stands as a central pillar in the development of speaking performance in English classrooms. It influences how much effort learners invest, how they navigate obstacles, and how persistently they seek to use their developing language skills. The nature and sources of motivation are diverse and fluid, shaped by internal desires, classroom and peer dynamics, teacher interactions, and larger social forces. For educators, the challenge and opportunity lie in recognizing these sources, nurturing them through supportive environments, and adopting practices that sustain motivation over time. Every learner brings a unique motivational profile to the classroom; it is the task of a reflective, empathetic teacher to respond creatively and flexibly.

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