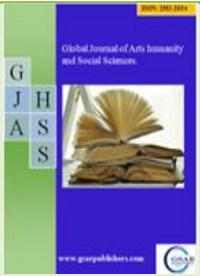
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The Relationship between Students' Motivation and Their Speaking Competence at a Vietnamese Foreign Language Center

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Abstract

Motivational factors are focused by many researchers and educators for years. However, most of them have focused in motivational types or status of learners' motivation. This study was conducted to find out not only the types of students' motivation but also the relationship between motivational factors and learners' speaking result. What can be found after the study is that students at a Vietnamese foreign language center were both intrinsic and extrinsic motivated. Besides, the researchers did not have enough evidence to conclude the link between students' motivations and their speaking result. However, the research led to an application for educators to invest more in teaching methodologies to maintain and improve students' motivation thus achieve higher result in teaching and learning.

Keywords: motivation, speaking, intrinsic, extrinsic, implication, education

1. Introduction

Nowadays, there are chances for people from all over the world to work and interact with each other (Friedman, 2005). As a result, English becomes the most commonly used language as a mean of communication. There are many situations where people need to talk using English such as in a meeting, a presentation, a conference, a dialogue with partners or even a phone call. Therefore, speaking is undoubtedly the most necessary skill a learner needs to achieve. However, speaking a second language is a long term process that requires much of learners' investment. In order to do that, they need to have positive motivations to get themselves involve in the target language.

Because of this necessity, more and more people put more efforts in language investment. However, not all of them consequently receive same level of achievement despite the fact that they have the same input. This is the biggest problem that involving educators and researchers' consideration for ages (Gadner, 1985). In fact, learners are different in many ways. Among those, motivation is considered one of the most important factors in second language acquisition. Being positive motivated, a learner

may have high level of attraction, willingness and enjoyment to learn new things. Without sufficient motivation, even a learner with good ability cannot achieve long and difficult targets that are varied on the way to acquire a language (Dörnyei, 1998). Moreover, Gadner and Lambert (1972) indicated that although aptitude is the key factor of individual variation, motivation may override the aptitudes' influence. In a specific setting where L1 is a local language and L2 is the official one, Gadner and Lambert pointed out that people have a tendency to master the L2 despite of the aptitude differences. Consequently, motivation seems to affect all sides of language proficiency.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of Motivation

As what Ellis (1989) defined in his book, motivation is the way an individual actually behaves regarding to his own interests and needs. With the help of motivations, people are energized, directed and pushed toward a specific goal and finally achieve it. Particularly, in language aspect, motivation is the level of learner's attempt to achieve a language because of their own desire to do this (Gadner, 1985). In another point of view, Cook and Artino (2016)

stated that motivation is a complex process which is original from learners' needs and leads to their behavior to move forward and finally achieve the target goals. This will then build up other factors inside learners such as willingness, eagerness or attitudes toward learning new information.

2.2. Types of Motivation

The definitions of motivation are varied from a large number of researchers. Brown (1981) indicated three kinds of motivation comprising global motivation – a focus in learning goal, situational motivation – situations where learning occurs and task motivation – motivation to perform a specific task. These definitions are different from those of Gardner and Lambert who defined motivation as integration where learners have the willingness to immerse in L2 environment and instrument as advantages of learning a new language or “the wish to learn the language for purposes of study or career promotion” (Ur, 2012, p. 276). In the rationale of this study, the researcher aims to analyze the motivations of learners in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic ones.

Deci & Ryan (1985) defined motivations as inside and outside factors toward learners. Inside or intrinsic motivation takes place when people involving in activities for their own satisfaction rather than other consequence. When a person is intrinsically motivated he will have the readiness to explore any new things around him without any encouraging rewards expectation. On the contrary, extrinsic motivations refer to behaviors toward a specific goal because of its accomplishment (Urhahne & Wijnia, 2023). This occurs inside learners' thought but it aims at outside goals. Besides, in language learning aspect, the environment in which learners are centered including instructors, books, parents, curricula or classroom activities, the outside factors, may also affect learners' behaviors toward the language learning and finally distract their achievement.

2.3. Difficulties of Students to Enhance Their English speaking competence

Speaking is a vital skill for learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) as it enables them to communicate with others orally (Aleidan, 2024). Although speaking is an essential skill for EFL learners, many learners find it difficult to speak English fluently (Eltayeb & Elbashir, 2023; Vu & Nguyen, 2024). This difficulty may come from various factors, such as a lack of practice opportunities, fear of making mistakes, or limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge (Shen & Chiu, 2019). Besides, the pressure to speak correctly in front of peers or teachers can also create anxiety, further hindering their progress (Quvanch et al., 2024). Additionally, some learners may not have sufficient exposure to authentic spoken English, making it harder to develop natural conversational rhythm and intonation.

2.4. Previous Studies in the Field of Motivation

Many studies have been conducted to analyze the level of learners' motivation toward language acquisition. Filgona et al. (2020) conducted a research and found out that the more motivational level was increased, the higher level of language acquisition students might acquire. Similarly, Shuaib et al. (2021) indicated

that in foreign language classroom context, students' tendency was stronger when they had a specific goal to achieve in their learning.

There are many studies conducted about motivational aspect in second language acquisition (Jiao et al., 2022; Nurhidayah, 2020). Normally, researchers tended to analyze whether or not learners were motivated, what factors affected learners' motivation or what kind of motivation did they have (Dang et al., 2021; Jiao et al., 2022; Nocom, 2022). In addition, some researcher focused on students' attitude toward English learning in general rather than motivation (Herwiana & Laili, 2021). However, not many of them particularly focused in the speaking aspect and especially the relationship between students' motivations and their result in the context of a Vietnamese foreign language. In this research, I intended to analyze motivational types of students at a Vietnamese foreign language center and whether motivated students consequently achieve high result in their speaking competence. The research aimed to analyze two questions as follows:

1. What are students' motivations toward English speaking at a foreign language center?
2. Do highly motivated students consequently have high speaking competence?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

Joining the research was the participants of 35 students learning at a Vietnamese foreign language center. They are varied in ages from 13 to 16 years old. In the day time, they studied at different schools with the normal program delivered by the Educational Minister. Having awareness on the disadvantages of this program which is only focusing in mastering grammar rather than developing communicative skills (Le, 2013), they joined the Cambridge Key English Test training program where they are trained all four skills in the evening. These students are more likely to be motivated to learn English in a more practical way. This is the reason for the researcher to conduct the study on this group.

3.2. Research Instruments

Questionnaire: In order to evaluate students' motivation toward speaking ability, the researcher use a questionnaire adopted from the Attitude and Motivation Test Battery designed by Gardner (2004). In the questionnaire, students were asked twenty questions about their motivational trend. These questions were prepared in Likert scale that was easier for students to select the answers. The questionnaire comprised two separate parts with the first ten items were to measure students intrinsic motivation and the rest were for extrinsic factors. Questions 9 and 10 were specifically designed to check if participants paid enough attention when finishing the survey so they were written in negative wording. This was also true for question 15. There three questions were then input into SPSS program in the opposite direction with other questions. This action was to maintain consistency in our data.

Students' test: With the aim to analyze the relationship between students' motivation and their speaking competence, a test following Cambridge Key English Test format was prepared to

serve this goal. In this test, candidates were asked to respond to questions about themselves such as their name, original country, subjects in school or free time activities. Then they were asked to act in a role-play activity by asking and answering for information using every day situational language.

3.3. Procedure

Before delivering the questionnaires to students, the manager of the center was asked for permission. This was to seek for legality of the study. The study then started with students fill in the questionnaires. Since there were some questions relating to the teachers, questionnaires delivery and collection were done by the researcher without any possible influence of relevant teachers. This made the study more reliable. Then, students' responses were recorded and analyzed.

At the end of each course, students would join a final test with required four skills including speaking aspect. In order to gain truthfulness for the study, speaking exams were marked by other teachers rather than the relevant teacher or the researcher himself. Results of the speaking test would then be analyzed to find out the correlation between students' competence and their motivational status.

4. Finding and Discussion

4.1. Reliability of the questionnaire

Table 1

Reliability Statistics of the questionnaire to measure students' motivation

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.797	.808	20

The reliability of the questionnaire designed to measure students' motivation was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. As shown in Table 1, the 20-item scale achieved a Cronbach's alpha of .797, and the value based on standardized items was slightly higher at .808. Since reliability coefficients of .70 or above are generally considered acceptable (Taber, 2018), these results indicate that the instrument demonstrates good internal consistency, meaning the items are reliably measuring the underlying construct of student motivation.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Motivation

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Students' Types of Motivation toward English Speaking

	N	Min imu m	Ma xim um	Mean	Std. Deviat ion
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Mean of Intrinsic Motivation	35	3.00	4.90	4.1200	.46197
Mean of Extrinsic Motivation	35	2.20	4.80	4.1686	.52062
Valid N (listwise)	35				

A descriptive statistics analysis indicated that students reported relatively high levels of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation toward English speaking. As shown in Table 2, the mean score for intrinsic motivation was 4.12 (SD = 0.46), with scores ranging from 3.00 to 4.90. Similarly, the mean score for extrinsic motivation was 4.17 (SD = 0.52), with a range from 2.20 to 4.80. These results suggest that, on average, students in the language center were highly motivated to engage in English speaking activities, and both types of motivation were consistently strong across participants.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of students' perspective about their English teachers and parental influence

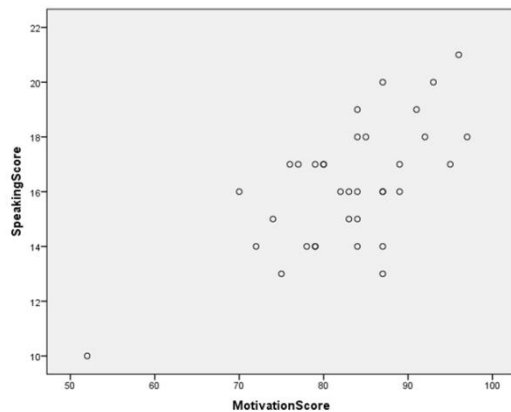
	N	Minimu m	Maximu m	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students' attitude toward English teachers	35	2.20	5.00	4.2114	.57587
Parental Motivation	35	2.20	5.00	4.1257	.66878
Valid N (listwise)	35				

When it comes to extrinsic motivatin, two factors that are commonly found in Vietnamese context are the influence of teachers and students' parents on their English learning experience. Table3 revealed more details about outside factors influencing students' attitude toward English speaking. In general, there seemed to be positive attitudes toward their English teachers and reported strong parental motivation in relation to their English learning. Specifically, the mean score for students' attitudes toward English teachers was 4.21 (SD = 0.58), with values ranging from 2.20 to 5.00, suggesting that most students perceived their teachers favorably. Similarly, that for parental motivation was 4.13 (SD = 0.67), also within the high range, with scores spanning from 2.20 to 5.00. These findings indicate that both teacher influence and parental support were viewed positively by students.

4.3. The Relationship between Students' Motivations and Their Speaking Results

Figure 1

Scatter plot illustrating the correlation between students' motivation levels and their speaking scores



A scatter plot (Figure 1) showed a clear positive relationship between motivation and speaking competence. Higher motivation scores were generally associated with higher speaking scores, consistent with the significant correlation observed, $r(35) = .662$, $p < .001$. It can be concluded that there is a positive correlation between the level of motivation and students' speaking competence. Consequently, it is evident to conclude that students who are more motivated in learning English are more likely to achieve higher speaking ability.

5. Conclusion and Implication

Motivation is undoubtedly important to all learners on the way to achieve the target language. Going on this way without motivations is the same as going without a direction. From the result of this study, students at this center are both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated. Most of them realized the necessity of speaking ability to their future use and expected to be involved more in an English speaking environment. They also highly appreciated their teachers as well as their parents as motivational factors that pushed them forward in their learning.

As discovered by this research, students who are highly motivated in learning English have a tendency to achieve higher scores in their speaking competence. This suggests that teachers should be aware of the importance of motivation in learning English and should always try their best to encourage students. This result is inline with what was stated by Alfiana and Wijirahayu (2024) that students' learning motivation positively affects their speaking ability.

However, despite of their high motivated status, a few students could not achieve high results in their speaking ability. This is a signal for language teachers to find more appropriate methods to help their students overcome any difficulties they may struggle in their studying. Besides, it is worth noting that the result of this paper is contradicted with what was found in the study conducted

by Widayanti et al. (2020) where they found no relevance between students' motivation and their speaking ability.

The limitation of this study is the small number of participants. There were only 35 students joining the study. Although these students came from three different classes, this is not enough to generalize the result to the whole center. Besides, students' results were marked by 3 different examiners which would lead to different result. Because of these reasons, further research on this area should be conducted to analyze the relationship between motivational status of students and their results. Such a research will emphasize the need of motivation for teachers to try more in their teaching to improve students' motivation.

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