THE CORRELATION BETWEEN INTRINSIC MOTIVATIONAND SPEAKING PROFICIENCY IN EFL CLASSROOM

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ABSTRAK

Kemampuan berbicara merupakan aspek penting dalam menentukan keberhasilan siswa dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, namun masih banyak pembelajar EFL yang mengalami kesulitan dalam keterampilan ini. Salah satu faktor internal yang diyakini berperan besar adalah motivasi intrinsik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui hubungan antara motivasi intrinsik dan kemampuan berbicara siswa, yang diukur menggunakan rubrik penilaian analitik dari David P. Harris. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain korelasional, melibatkan 81 siswa kelas X. Instrumen penelitian terdiri atas kuesioner motivasi yang diadaptasi dari Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) dan tes berbicara yang dinilai oleh dua penilai berdasarkan lima aspek: pelafalan, tata bahasa, kosakata, kelancaran, dan pemahaman. Hasil analisis menunjukkan adanya hubungan positif dan signifikan antara motivasi intrinsik dan kemampuan berbicara siswa (r = 0.579; p < 0.001). Dari keempat subskala motivasi, Enjoyment–Interest memiliki korelasi tertinggi, sedangkan Perceived Competence memiliki korelasi terendah. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa motivasi intrinsik memiliki peran penting dalam meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara siswa EFL. Oleh karena itu, strategi pembelajaran yang mendukung otonomi siswa, kesenangan dalam belajar, dan keterlibatan aktif perlu diterapkan untuk mendorong perkembangan keterampilan berbicara.
Kata Kunci: *motivasi intrinsic, kemampuan berbicara, pembelajaran EFL*

ABSTRACT

Speaking proficiency is a crucial aspect in determining students' success in learning English. Nevertheless, many EFL learners still encounter challenges in developing this skill. One internal factor believed to play a significant role is intrinsic motivation. This study aims to examine the relationship between students' intrinsic motivation and their speaking proficiency, which was assessed using David P. Harris's analytical scoring rubric. Employing a quantitative approach with a correlational design, the research involved 81 ten-grade students. The research instruments included a motivation questionnaire adapted from the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) and a speaking test evaluated by two interrater based on five components: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The results indicated a positive and significant correlation between intrinsic motivation and students' speaking proficiency (r = 0.579; p < 0.001). Among the four subscales of intrinsic motivation, *Enjoyment–Interest* showed the highest correlation, whereas *Perceived Competence* had the lowest. These findings underscore the importance of intrinsic motivation in enhancing EFL students' speaking proficiency. Consequently, to support the development of speaking skills, instructional strategies that foster student autonomy, enjoyment in learning, and active engagement highly recommended.
Keywords: *Intrinsic Motivation, speaking proficiency, EFL classroom*

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INTRODUCTION

In the increasingly accelerated era of globalization, the mastery of English, particularly in the aspect of speaking proficiency, has become a crucial competency. This ability not only significantly impacts the world of education but also serves as an essential prerequisite for competing in the business world and actively participating in international communication. The English language functions as a bridge connecting individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, opening access to global knowledge, and expanding career opportunities on the world stage. Therefore, fostering fluent and confident English speaking skills in the younger generation is a strategic investment in the nation's progress, which will determine the competitiveness of Indonesia's human resources in the future.

Ideally, the English language education system in Indonesia is designed to produce graduates who possess a balanced mastery of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Within this framework, speaking proficiency is often considered a key indicator in assessing student progress in the foreign language acquisition process (Richards, 2008). A successful student in English language learning should ideally be able to spontaneously and accurately express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings orally. Achieving this level of proficiency would demonstrate that the learning process has not only stopped at theoretical understanding but has successfully reached a functional level of communicative application.

However, the reality on the ground often presents a persistent and widespread challenge. Although English has been formally taught from the elementary to senior high school levels, many students in Indonesia still face significant difficulties in speaking fluently and confidently. This condition indicates a considerable gap between the curriculum's expectation, which emphasizes the balanced mastery of the four language skills, and the actual classroom practice, which in reality tends to focus more on developing reading and writing skills (Lestari et al., 2019). Consequently, the skill of speaking often becomes the most undertrained aspect.

The low speaking proficiency among students has been confirmed by various studies across different regions in Indonesia. Research conducted by Lestari et al. (2019) at SMA Sriwijaya Palembang, for instance, found that 46.5% of students had difficulty speaking English, which was largely attributed to factors of anxiety and a lack of self-confidence. Similar findings were revealed by Haya et al. (2022) at SMK Negeri 1 Jambi, who concluded that students' low speaking proficiency was influenced by internal factors such as low intrinsic motivation, as well as external factors like a less supportive learning environment. Furthermore, Arofah (2024) reported that students at a high school in Banyuwangi experienced speaking difficulties due to a dominant anxiety of making mistakes.

Amidst the various factors identified, motivation, particularly intrinsic motivation, is believed to play a very important role in the language learning process. Based on the Self-Determination Theory developed by Ryan and Deci (2000), intrinsic motivation is a drive that stems from within an individual, such as interest, a sense of challenge, and personal satisfaction. This type of motivation tends to result in higher quality and more sustained learning engagement compared to extrinsic motivation, which is based solely on rewards or punishments. As emphasized by Dornyei (2015), intrinsic motivation plays a crucial role in supporting students to continue learning and to actively engage in speaking activities.

From this, a significant gap between the ideal condition and the psychological reality experienced by students becomes apparent. The ideal vision is an English classroom where every student possesses high intrinsic motivation. They learn because they feel happy, challenged, and confident, which in turn encourages them to voluntarily improve their speaking skills. However, the prevailing reality is a classroom filled with many students who feel

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anxious, lack self-confidence, and are unmotivated. The gap between the critical role of intrinsic motivation and the minimal presence of this factor within students becomes a fundamental problem that hinders the success of speaking instruction.

Although a great deal of research has discussed the important role of motivation in English language learning, the majority of these studies still tend to view motivation in general terms and have not specifically separated the roles of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In particular, research focusing on the relationship between intrinsic motivation and students' speaking ability in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at the secondary school level in Indonesia is still relatively limited. This gap in the literature review is the primary justification for conducting this study, which aims to provide a deeper and more specific understanding of the role of intrinsic motivation.

Stemming from this phenomenon and the identified research gap, this study holds significant novelty value. The innovation of this research lies in its effort to quantitatively test the correlation between intrinsic motivation and students' speaking proficiency within the EFL learning context of the tenth grade at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Hidayah Jember. By utilizing the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) instrument and David P. Harris's speaking assessment rubric, this study will provide a new contribution by strengthening the empirical evidence regarding the vital role of intrinsic motivation. The findings are expected to serve as a foundation for educators in designing more effective and motivating learning strategies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was designed using a quantitative approach with a correlational design. This design was chosen because the main objective of the research is to determine and statistically measure the strength and direction of the relationship between two main variables: intrinsic motivation as the independent variable and students' speaking ability as the dependent variable. The context of this research is the learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in a formal educational setting. The subjects involved in this study were the entire population of tenth-grade students at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Hidayah Jember, which consisted of 81 students at the time the research was conducted. The use of the entire population as the sample (total sampling) was done to increase the generalizability of the research findings within the scope of the school, so that a more comprehensive and representative picture of the relationship between the two variables could be obtained without sampling error.

To collect the research data, two primary tested instruments were used: a questionnaire and a performance test. The first instrument was the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) questionnaire, which was adapted to the local context and had undergone validity and reliability testing to ensure its suitability as a measurement tool. This questionnaire consists of 14 valid statement items aimed at measuring four dimensions of students' intrinsic motivation: interest-enjoyment, perceived competence, effort-importance, and pressure-tension, using a 7-point Likert scale.[1] The second instrument was a speaking test administered to objectively measure the students' speaking proficiency level. This performance assessment was based on a comprehensive scoring rubric from David P. Harris that covers five essential aspects: grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, where each aspect was scored on a 1 to 5 scale.[2]

The research procedure was carried out through several systematic stages, beginning with coordination and obtaining permission from the school to ensure the smooth running of all activities. After permission was granted, the researcher distributed the intrinsic motivation questionnaire to all students who were subjects of the study. The next stage was the administration of the speaking test, which was conducted individually for each student to obtain

accurate ability data. After all data from the questionnaire and the test were collected, the data analysis process was carried out. The quantitative data analysis in this study was performed using the SPSS version 27 statistical software. The main analytical technique applied was the Pearson Product Moment correlation test, which was specifically used to measure the degree and significance of the linear relationship between the students' intrinsic motivation scores and their speaking ability scores.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Intrinsic Motivation

Students' intrinsic motivation in this study was measured using the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) instruments which has been tested for validity and reliability. From a total 22 items on the initial instruments, 14 items were valid and used in data collection. The items involved four main subscales including Enjoyment-Interest, Perceived Competence, Effort-Importance, and Pressure-Tension.

Table 1. Mean Score of Intrinsic Motivation Subscales

No	Subscale	Mean Score
1	Enjoyment-Interest	19.43
2	Perceived Competence	20.17
3	Effort-Importance	15.04
4	Pressure- Tension	10.15
	Total	69.93

Table 1 shows that the total average score is 69.93, indicating that students generally feel confident in their English-speaking proficiency. The lowest score appears on the Pressure-Tension subscale (10.15), suggesting that students do not feel much stress when speaking in the EFL context. The Enjoyment-Interest subscale, with a mean of 19.43, shows that students find the activity enjoyable and engaging—an indicator of strong intrinsic motivation. The Perceived Competence subscale (20.17) reflects that student feel capable and confident, which supports continued effort and engagement. The mean score of 15.04 on the Effort–Importance subscale suggests that students consider their effort worthwhile and see the activity as meaningful, although this perception is slightly less strong than their enjoyment and sense of competence. Meanwhile, the low Pressure–Tension score of 10.15 indicates that students generally feel relaxed, which supports a more self-directed and motivating atmosphere for learning.

Speaking Proficiency

Students 'speaking proficiency was measured through an oral test and evaluated using rubric from David P Harris. The assessment involved five aspects: Pronunciation, grammar, Vocabulary, Fluency, and Comprehension.

Table 2 mean score of Speaking Proficiency

Aspect of Speaking Proficiency	Mean Score
Pronunciation	3.59
Grammar	4.12
Vocabulary	3.59
Fluency	3.28
Comprehension	3.58
Total score	72.69

The total average score of students' speaking proficiency is 72.69, which represents the combined results of five assessed aspects. For the Pronunciation aspect, the average score is

3.59, derived from participants' performance on pronunciation indicators. The Grammar aspect shows a higher average of 4.12, reflecting students' use of appropriate grammatical structures. The Vocabulary aspect also has an average score of 3.59, based on students' mastery and use of relevant vocabulary. In terms of Fluency, the average score is 3.28, indicating how smoothly students speak during performance. Lastly, the Comprehension aspect receives an average score of 3.58, based on students' ability to understand and respond appropriately during conversations.

Correlation between Intrinsic Motivation and Speaking Proficiency

Pearson correlation analysis was used to determine the correlation between intrinsic motivation and speaking proficiency, both based on each subscale and the total score. The results showed that all subscales had significant correlation with speaking proficiency.

Table 3. Correlation IMI and Speaking Proficiency

Subscale	Correlation coefficient (r)	Significance (p)
Enjoyment-Interest	0.474	<0.001
Perceived Competence	0.242	0.029
Effort-Importance	0.448	<0.001
Pressure-tension	0.358	0.001

Table 3 shows that there is significant positive correlation between the subscales of intrinsic motivation and students 'speaking proficiency. Interest-Enjoyment subscale has a moderate positive correlation with speaking proficiency (r=0.474, p <0.001), suggesting that the more students enjoy and are interested in speaking activities, the better their speaking proficiency. Similarly, the Perceived Competence subscale is positively correlated with speaking proficiency (r =0.242, p =0.029), though the strength of this correlation is weak. Nonetheless, it indicates that students 'confidence in their speaking proficiency still contribute to their performance. The Effort-Importance subscale also show a significance and moderately strong correlation (r=0.448, p <0.001), meaning that the more effort students invest and the more they value speaking skills, the better their performance becomes. Interestingly, the Pressure-Tension subscale, although generally seen as a negative factor, reveals a weak but significant positive correlation (r =0.358, p 0.001), which may suggest that a certain level of pressure can still encourage improved performance. Overral, the composite correlation value between intrinsic motivation and speaking proficiency is (r = 0.579 with p < 0.001). This indicates a moderately strong and statistically significant positive correlation, meaning that as students' intrinsic motivation increases—whether through enjoyment, effort, confidence, or even manageable pressure—their English-speaking proficiency tends to improve accordingly.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a significant and positive correlation between intrinsic motivation and speaking proficiency among EFL learners, with a correlation coefficient of (r = 0.579 and a p-value < 0.001). This suggests that students who are more intrinsically motivated tend to demonstrate better speaking skills in English. The result supports the foundational assumption of Self-Determination Theory, which posits that individuals are naturally inclined to grow and seek challenges when their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfil Ryan & Decy, (2000). This finding is also supported by (Heriyanto, 2024) who found that students with high motivation were more active in participating in class activities, including during speaking practice. In EFL contexts, students driven by internal interests are more likely to actively engage in learning activities, especially those involving communication. Self-confidence encourages active engagement and ultimately improves learning outcomes

The Enjoyment-Interest subscale showed the highest correlation with students' speaking proficiency, indicating that feelings of pleasure and interest in the process of learning to speak play an important role. Dornyei (2015) asserts that enjoyment in learning activities encourages students to take more linguistic risks, which in turn improves their speaking skills. Similarly, an experimental study by Saito et al., (2025) stated that students who experienced high levels of enjoyment showed significant improvements in fluency, complexity, and accuracy in English speech. They also emphasized that enjoyment and anxiety tend to counteract one another, meaning that reducing anxiety can lead to improved speaking performance.

Furthermore, the Effort-Importance subscale also contributed significantly. This shows that students' awareness of the importance of speaking in English and the effort they put in, such as participating in class discussions and presentations, have a direct impact on their speaking progress. This finding was reinforced by Arofah, (2024) who found that students who consistently practiced showed significant improvements in courage and fluency. Something similar was also reported by Wilona & Ngadiman,(2010), where students with high intrinsic motivation made more use of speaking opportunities inside and outside the classroom, such as practice with native speakers.

Despite having the highest mean score, the Perceived Competence subscale showed the lowest correlation with speaking ability. This means that students' confidence in their ability does not necessarily reflect real performance if it is not accompanied by active engagement in speaking practice. This is in line with the findings of Raudya Haya et al., (2022), who explained that perceived ability that is not accompanied by practice can lead to a gap between expectations and actual performance. In a similar context, Alzubi & Nazim, (2024) in their research on writing skills showed that when students are given the freedom to choose topics, their self-confidence and intrinsic motivation increase - which can indirectly boost communication performance, including speaking.

Meanwhile, the Pressure-Tension subscale shows a moderate correlation, indicating that emotional pressure within reasonable limits can trigger students' readiness to speak. Research by Lestari et al.,(2019) and Ghafar et al, (2023) concluded that controlled pressure can activate students' mental alertness, motivating them to perform better, especially in performative contexts such as public speaking. This result is also relevant to the study by Saito et al., (2025), who stated that reducing anxiety through positive approaches such as reinforcement of enjoyment contributes greatly to improved speaking performance.

In speaking proficiency, the findings show that the Grammar aspect obtained the highest mean score (4.12). This indicates that classroom learning tends to emphasize language structure. This is in line with Fan & Yan, (2020) research which shows that grammar mastery is the most developed early component in the process of learning English as a foreign language because it is explicitly taught in class. In addition, structured grammar learning allows students to understand the rules of the language they use when speaking, thus improving the accuracy of language use. Support from teachers in the form of sentence structure correction is also an important factor that makes students more confident in constructing sentences correctly when speaking.

However, the Pronunciation and Vocabulary aspects both obtained an average score of 3.59, indicating that students have a fairly good ability to pronounce words and choose the right vocabulary. De Jong et al., (2012) explained that mastery of pronunciation and vocabulary is an important foundation in conveying meaning clearly in oral communication. The combination of the two greatly determines the extent to which the speaker can be understood by the speaker. This finding is also reinforced by Lestari et al.,(2019) who found that adequate vocabulary

mastery is instrumental in increasing students' confidence to speak, especially when they are able to find and use words that are appropriate to the context.

The Comprehension aspect obtained a mean score of 3.58, indicating that most students were moderately able to understand the conversation and provide appropriate responses. Richards, (2008) underlines that comprehension of the message conveyed in oral communication is a key prerequisite in creating effective two-way interactions. Comprehension is also closely related to listening skills, which indirectly support speaking skills. Ghafar et al., (2023) added that students who are able to grasp the meaning of a question or statement are more likely to respond naturally in a discussion or conversation. The Fluency aspect was the lowest with an average of 3.28. This low fluency can be caused by several factors such as the lack of frequency of speaking practice, anxiety when performing, and lack of exposure to spoken English. De Jong et al. (2012) stated that speaking fluency is not sufficiently developed only through mastery of language structures, but requires consistent and contextualized practice. Lestari et al. (2019) also found that students with high anxiety levels and minimal speaking opportunities in the school environment showed low fluency performance.

In addition to the findings in this study, various recent literatures also reinforce the importance of intrinsic motivation in improving students' speaking ability in EFL classrooms. Andhara & Alfian, (2023) revealed that students who have high intrinsic motivation-especially those who feel pleasure and personal value in speaking activities-tend to be more actively engaged in class and show improvements in fluency and vocabulary use. This is in line with the results of this study which showed that the Enjoyment-Interest subscale had the strongest correlation with speaking proficiency. Furthermore, research by Jamoom & Bahron,(2024) found that students' motivation to speak is strongly influenced by the classroom atmosphere and opportunities to participate. When students are given space to express their opinions without fear of criticism and get enough speaking opportunities, their intrinsic motivation increases, which has a positive impact on speaking performance.

In line with this, a literature review by Zhang, (2024) emphasized that students who perceive speaking activities as enjoyable and meaningful tend to be able to overcome doubts and anxiety. The review also showed that improvement in fluency and confidence depends not only on the frequency of practice, but also on motivational support from teachers and peers. Overall, the findings confirm that intrinsic motivation is an important foundation in the formation of English-speaking proficiency. Therefore, teachers need to create a learning atmosphere that supports students' psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence, and connectedness. Providing opportunities for students to make choices, involving them in enjoyable learning experiences, and minimizing excessive pressure are strategies that can foster students' sustained improvement in speaking performance.

The findings of this study suggest that teachers should pay close attention to the role of intrinsic motivation in students' speaking development. Instructional strategies that promote enjoyment, interest, and a sense of accomplishment such as group discussions, storytelling, games, and self-selected speaking tasks should be integrated into speaking classes. When students are given autonomy and opportunities to express themselves without fear of judgment, their intrinsic motivation and speaking skills are likely to improve simultaneously. Educators are encouraged to build a classroom environment that reduces pressure, fosters student engagement, and highlights meaningful communication rather than perfection.

CONCLUSSION

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that intrinsic motivation plays a significant and positive role in improving students' English-speaking proficiency in the EFL

context. Students who possess internal drives such as enjoyment, interest, perceived competence, and effort tend to perform better in various speaking aspects, including fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension. Among the four dimensions of intrinsic motivation, Enjoyment–Interest showed the strongest correlation with speaking proficiency, indicating that students who enjoy speaking activities are more likely to engage actively and speak more confidently. Conversely, even though Perceived Competence had the highest mean score, it showed the weakest correlation, suggesting that confidence alone is not enough without regular practice and meaningful engagement.

These findings imply that teachers should consider motivational factors as a central part of speaking instruction. Creating a classroom atmosphere that supports students' autonomy, encourages enjoyable participation, and reduces speaking-related anxiety can foster better learning outcomes. This study was limited to a single educational level (grade X) at one school, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the data were collected at a single point in time, limiting the ability to observe motivational or performance changes over time. Future studies could involve participants from multiple schools, different regions, or employ longitudinal designs to examine how intrinsic motivation develops and affects speaking performance over a longer period. Future studies are recommended to explore this relationship in different educational levels and learning settings. Integrating varied speaking tasks and learner-cantered strategies could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how intrinsic motivation enhances speaking performance over time.

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