

Examining The Effects of Motivation and Anxiety on EFL Students' Speaking Assessments

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Abstract

In the field of English language instruction, speaking assessment is of utmost importance because it is one of the abilities that students are expected to acquire. Some students, on the other hand, have feelings of both motivation and anxiety during their speaking examination. As a result, the purpose of this study is to investigate the influence that motivation and anxiety have on the speaking assessments of English as a Foreign Language students. From 57 (fifty-seven) English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in their second semester, data was collected through the use of quantitative methodologies by means of questionnaires that measured levels of motivation and anxiety. Despite the fact that students are generally very driven to study and speak English, the findings suggest that they experience varied degrees of anxiety, particularly when it comes to speaking exams. Based on the findings of regression analysis, motivation has a favorable influence on speech assessment scores, whereas anxiety has a negative influence on these scores. The outcomes of this study highlight the significance of effectively controlling anxiety and improving motivation in order to improve the academic performance and speaking ability of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Therefore, future research still needs to explore how various motivational types, such as intrinsic or extrinsic, affect EFL students' speaking ability and how these types interact with anxiety.

Keywords: *Effect; Motivation; Anxiety; Speaking; Assessments*

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1. Introduction

Assessment is an important aspect of teaching and learning activities for EFL students. Teachers use many strategies to assess their students, such as multiple-choice questions, speaking, writing, reading, grammar, etc. Assessment means assessing the learners' achievement or progress, which facilitates evaluating their success. In addition, it plays an important role in determining the quality of teaching and learning (Rachmat & Arfiandhani, 2019). Speaking assessments are an important part of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lessons as they test students' speaking abilities and offer significant suggestions for enhancement. Speaking tests in the EFL setting are crucial since they evaluate students' proficiency in successfully communicating in English, which is essential for achieving academic and professional excellence. A speaking assessment is a formal instrument utilized by English teachers to evaluate pupils' spoken proficiency. The assessment of students' speaking skills encompasses a range of techniques, including oral interviews, role plays, guessing games, storytelling, and oral reports (Kayi, 2006; Richards, 2006; Syafryadin et al.,

2020; Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014). These methods evaluate learners' communication ability, simplicity, and relevance when using different formats of assessments.

The areas of language learning and assessment are often related to psychological aspects such as motivation and anxiety, which have an important effect on learner performance, particularly in spoken assessments. Motivation is essential in encouraging students to actively participate in learning, create objectives, and seek feedback to improve. Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity for its intrinsic pleasure or satisfaction, and it has been found to result in more consistent and successful language learning outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Noels et al., 2000). However, As English is not their first language, pupils struggle to speak and become less motivated to try. Nevertheless, Ismail et al. (2022) claimed that motivation explains why people act in particular ways in various situations. Thus, motivation and speaking assessment are inextricably linked; higher motivation may result in better performance on the speaking assessment, and a successful speaking experience may further improve motivation.

Motivated learners are more willing to engage in speaking activities actively and seek chances to practice, which helps improve their speaking proficiency. Motivation is crucial in influencing learners' tendency to communicate, an important aspect of developing speaking abilities in EFL settings (MacIntyre et al., 1998). When learners possess motivation, they are more likely to engage in conversations, engage in speaking exercises in various contexts, and overcome their nervousness about making errors, which are crucial for enhancing their speaking proficiency (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). Hence, learners' motivation levels should be addressed when assessing their speaking skills, as highly motivated learners are more likely to perform and enhance their speaking skills.

On the other hand, anxiety could hinder learners' ability to communicate effectively, resulting in lower performance and higher stress. According to Ahmad (2012), test anxiety is the degree to which a student feels anxious, fearful, uncertain, panicked, or restless just thinking about an upcoming test or exam. In addition, anxiety can also be a result of being concerned about an upcoming occurrence or scenario. Language anxiety is characterized by feelings of tension and uncertainty that arise in second language contexts such as speaking, listening, and learning (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Thus, anxiety in assessment and language learning can significantly hinder learners' communication capacity, resulting in poor performance and increased stress.

Anxiety is a common condition that can have an important impact on language learning, particularly in speaking tasks when communication is direct and public. According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1991), most problems pupils face during language learning are caused by foreign language anxiety, which hinders the learning process and target language production. Anxiety affects cognitive processes, making it difficult for students to concentrate, recall language, and create sentences. This reduces their willingness to speak effectively. Saito and Samimy (1996) claimed that anxiety is a common phenomenon among foreign/second language learners. Moreover, foreign language anxiety includes a variety of issues in comprehending ideas, emotions, and attitudes toward classroom learning that come from a specific language learning method (Horwitz et al., 1986). As a result, anxiety during a speaking assessment can make language learning difficult and reduce performance due to learners' nervousness.

Motivation and anxiety have a strong connection, particularly in the context of EFL speaking assessment. High motivation increases self-confidence and resilience, which can successfully overcome anxiety, whereas low motivation contributes to anxiety, resulting in a vicious cycle of avoidance and poor performance. Understanding this interaction is essential since it can significantly affect EFL learners' speaking abilities. For example, research has shown that highly motivated students are less likely to feel anxious and engage in speaking activities, but less motivated students are more likely to experience anxiety and avoidance

behaviors (Dewi, 2023; Handayani & Ngadiman, 2018). Understanding the complex relationship between motivation and anxiety might help educators create more effective ways to improve speaking performance and overall language learning outcomes.

Previous research has investigated the relationship between motivation, anxiety, and speaking skills in various educational contexts. Uztosun (2020) highlighted the need to develop positive emotional responses and generate interest in the job to improve EFL speaking skills. Menggo (2018) and Putra (2017) discovered significant relationships between learning styles, motivation, and speaking ability, demonstrating how interconnected learning preferences, motivation levels, and speaking ability are. Nurjannah et al. (2013) discovered that motivation had an important effect on speaking ability in secondary school. Furthermore, Handayani and Ngadiman (2018) and Aulia and Dalimunte (2024) found a negative relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking skills, citing causes such as a lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes. Mira and Isna (2023) observed that anxiety levels differ among junior high school students during classroom speaking performances.

Additionally, in investigating the junction of motivation and anxiety in speaking, Dewi (2023) explored the impact of anxiety-inducing elements on the EFL learning process, causing low motivational issues in speaking English, while Liu and Cheng (2014) highlighted the negative relationship between anxiety levels and motivation in higher education settings. Mukhayyaroh and Winta (2024) investigated the relationship between motivation and anxiety, concluding that increased motivation was related to reduced anxiety. On the other hand, Hadi et al. (2018) discovered no significant relationship between motivation and fear during speaking among junior high school students. Sayuri et al. (2022) presented information about the combined impacts of anxiety and motivation on English speaking skills.

Most studies above investigate the complicated relationship between motivation, anxiety, and speaking skills. However, limited research particularly examines the impacts of motivation and anxiety on EFL students' speaking assessments. To fill the gap, this research examines the effects of motivation and anxiety on EFL students' speaking assessments. This study proposes the following research questions:

1. To what extent do the EFL university students' motivation and anxiety in speaking?
2. How do motivation and anxiety affect EFL students' speaking assessment?

This research aims to investigate the level of motivation and anxiety in speaking English and the impact of motivation and anxiety on students' performance in speaking assessments.

2. Method

This study uses a quantitative research design involving a systematic empirical investigation of an observable phenomenon using statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The participants were second-semester 57 (fifty-seven) EFL students, comprising males ($n = 18$) and females ($n = 39$), enrolled in compulsory English courses at one of the universities in Surabaya in the academic year 2023-2024, selected through random sampling. Simple random sampling ensures that every individual in a population has an equal probability of being chosen (Blumberg et al., 2014).

The data were collected through students' responses to a Google Forms questionnaire. The questionnaires were based on two adopted instruments: the students' motivation questionnaire (Gardner, 2004) and the students' anxiety questionnaire (Nist & Diehl, 1990). The survey included 15 questions about pupils' motivation and anxiety in EFL students' speaking assessments. Participants responded to both questionnaires using a Likert scale. The numerical scores included options such as Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Not Sure (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The participants' responses were divided into two

categories based on the scale: Disagree (1.00 - 2.50) indicates that they do not agree with the statement, and Agree (2.60 - 5.00) indicates that they agree.

The reliability of the questionnaires was checked to determine their level of consistency so that the questionnaire could be relied on even though the research was carried out repeatedly with the same questionnaire at different times.

Table 1. Reliability of The Questionnaires

Reliability Statistics		
Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Students' Motivation	.773	10
Students' Anxiety	.897	10

As shown in Table 1, Cronbach's alpha for the 10-item student motivation part was .773, suggesting an acceptable degree of internal consistency. In contrast, Cronbach's alpha for the 10-item student anxiety part was .897, indicating a very high level of internal consistency. These reliable data suggest that the questionnaire is a valid tool for assessing student motivation and anxiety.

The data obtained was analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the data, while inferential statistics regression analyses were performed to investigate the links between motivation, anxiety, and speaking assessment outcomes.

3. Findings and Discussion

The extent of EFL university students' motivation and anxiety in speaking

The purpose of this section is to answer the first research question. The result shows that most EFL university students are highly motivated to learn and speak English due to their future career goals and desire to achieve English language skills. However, pupils' willingness to participate in English-speaking activities varies, with some expressing moderate anxiety while speaking English inside and outside the classroom. The results of the data analysis can be seen in Table 2. It shows that most EFL university students agreed to 10 statements, ranging from 4.56 – to 3.12. The description can be seen as follows:

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Motivation in Speaking Performance

	Descriptive Statistics	
	Mean	Std. Deviation
I really enjoy speaking English.	4.0702	1.03267
I seek out extra opportunities to practice speaking English outside of class.	3.6842	1.07168
I keep up to date with English by speaking about it almost daily.	3.7193	.99560
I speak English because it will be beneficial for my future career.	4.4211	.90529
I wish I could speak English perfectly.	4.5614	.88676
I never feel quite sure of myself when speaking in English class.	3.1579	1.09853
I am motivated to speak English to improve my language skills.	3.1930	.98992
I am eager to participate in English-speaking activities.	3.2281	1.19549

I would feel uncomfortable speaking English anywhere outside the classroom.	3.1228	1.21111
I feel motivated to speak English when I receive positive feedback.	3.4561	1.26872

EFL university students are generally highly motivated to learn and speak English, owing to employment opportunities and a desire to improve their English language skills. This is shown in the highest means of their strong agreement with the statements that they believe English will be useful in their future careers (mean = 4.4211, SD = .90529). This demonstrates that students believe strongly in the practical benefits of studying English, particularly in terms of enhancing their job opportunities. It is in line with the studies conducted by Uztosun (2020) that developing positive emotional responses and generating interest in the job can improve EFL speaking skills. When students perceive the link between proficiency in English and career success, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated in their language learning efforts.

Furthermore, EFL university students wish to learn English perfectly (mean = 4.5614, SD = .88676). It reveals that pupils are not just passively interested but actively seeking to reach a high level of proficiency. It is supported by Menggo (2018) and Putra (2017), who found significant relationships between learning styles, motivation, and speaking ability. It indicates that students motivated to learn a language are more likely to actively participate in language learning activities, modify their learning strategies to their preferred style, and enhance their speaking skills.

However, the lowest means show that EFL university students indicated moderate nervousness when speaking English, notably in class (mean = 3.2281, SD = 1.19549) and outside of class (mean = 3.1579, SD = 1.09853), showing varying levels of comfort. It contradicts the research conducted by Nurjannah et al. (2013), who discovered that motivation had an important effect on speaking ability. In short, EFL students are highly motivated to learn and speak English for career prospects and fluency goals. They experience moderate nervousness when speaking English, indicating a need for confidence-building support.

Besides, the result shows that most EFL university students' anxiety appears to be common to them, particularly when it presents as a physical symptom before speaking assessments. This indicates that, while nausea is not as common as other worries among students, it is still an accurate indicator of a student's overall anxiety level. The description can be seen as follows:

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Anxiety in Speaking Performance

	Descriptive Statistics	
	Mean	Std. Deviation
I have visible signs of nervousness, such as sweaty palms, shaky hands, and so on, right before the speaking test.	3.0702	1.20800
I have "butterflies" in my stomach before taking tests.	2.8772	1.26872
I felt nauseated before the speaking test.	2.3860	1.09796
After reviewing the questions, I feel uncertain about my knowledge of these topics, so I do not have any ideas to speak about.	2.8947	1.06376
I panic before and during the speaking test.	3.1228	1.18126
My mind goes blank during the speaking test.	3.0000	1.10195
I tend to remember the information I could not recall during the test as soon as I leave the testing situation.	3.1053	1.01214
I had trouble sleeping the night before the speaking test.	2.7895	1.22090

No matter how much I prepare or rehearse, I still feel uncertain about my speaking test.	3.1579	1.20697
I often find it challenging to choose the right answers based on the topic given.	3.1053	1.09682

Based on Table. 3, the highest mean is the statement, “Students often panic before and during the speaking test, suggesting moderate anxiety” (mean = 3.1228; SD = 1.18126). This suggests that, on average, pupils experience considerable fear throughout the speaking test. The relatively high standard deviation indicates significant variance in the degree to which students experience panic. Some learners may experience it strongly, while others may not. Despite their preparation, students are nervous about the speaking test (mean = 3.1579; SD = 1.20697). This slightly higher mean indicates that preparation does not reduce pupils' nervousness. A similar standard deviation indicates that, like fear, students experience nervousness to various degrees. However, the lowest mean is the statement that some students experienced nausea before the speaking test, indicating a lower but still considerable level of anxiety (mean = 2.3860, SD = 1.09796). Although the low mean suggests that few students feel nausea, those who experience it find it to be a significant and annoying symptom of anxiety. The slightly lower standard deviation compared to the other claims indicates that this specific physical sign of anxiety is less variable.

In short, students experience varying levels of anxiety related to speaking tests. Similarly, Mira and Isna (2023) found students’ differences in anxiety levels during classroom speaking performances, reflecting varying responses to speaking tasks. The different responses show the importance of individual variability in how anxiety conveys and affects performance. Supporting this, studies conducted by Handayani and Ngadiman (2018) and Aulia and Dalimunte (2024) found a negative relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking skills, attributing causes such as lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes. It indicates that these psychological barriers play an important role in understanding and controlling EFL university students’ speaking anxiety.

To sum up, the majority of EFL university students are highly motivated to learn and speak English due to their career objectives and desire to achieve proficiency in the language. However, students struggle with moderate anxiety, particularly during speaking assessments, with frequent symptoms, including nervousness and nausea.

The impact of motivation and anxiety on EFL students' speaking assessment

The second research question found that motivation and anxiety impact EFL university students’ speaking assessment scores. The description can be seen as follows:

Table 4. Result of Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	77.140	6.340		12.168	.000
	Motivation	.330	.172	.259	1.920	.060
	Anxiety	-.291	.128	-.307	-2.280	.027

Motivation positively affects the speaking assessment score, with a standardized coefficient (beta) of .259. Motivation has a significant level of 060, indicating its impact is slightly significant. This shows that increased motivation leads to improved student

performance. A unit rise in the standardized motivation scale results in an increase in the speaking assessment score. In contrast, anxiety has a negative impact on the speaking assessment score, with a standardized coefficient (beta) of $-.307$. Anxiety's significance level is $.027$, showing that it has a statistically significant influence. This suggests that increased anxiety is related to poorer performance on the speaking exam. A unit rise in the standardized anxiety scale leads to a decrease in the speaking evaluation score.

It shows that motivation and anxiety significantly impact EFL students' speaking assessment scores. Motivation improves performance, and anxiety has a significant negative effect on pupils' speaking scores. The findings align with Mukhayyaroh and Winta (2024), who found that increased motivation is related to reduced anxiety, reinforcing the beneficial impact of motivation on performance. This shows that motivation may have an additional effect: directly improving performance and indirectly improving performance by reducing anxiety. This link highlights the necessity of creating a motivational learning environment to reduce anxiety and increase overall performance tests.

In contrast, Hadi et al. (2018) discovered no significant relationship between motivation and fear during speaking among junior high school students, suggesting that the dynamics between these factors may vary across different educational levels. Motivation and anxiety appear to be more closely associated with EFL university students, maybe due to their greater awareness of the importance of English language ability for their future careers. Nevertheless, Dewi (2023) found that anxiety-inducing elements in the EFL learning process highlight how anxiety can cause low motivation in speaking English. This implies a connection in which not only does motivation impact anxiety levels, but anxiety also influences motivation, affecting overall student performance on speaking assessments. Similarly, Liu and Cheng (2014) revealed that students with higher levels of motivation experienced much lower levels of anxiety. This implies a connection in which not only does motivation impact anxiety levels, but anxiety also influences motivation.

In summary, the research shows that anxiety has a considerably negative effect on EFL students' speaking assessment scores, while motivation has a minor but positive effect. This implies that managing anxiety is important for improving student outcomes and that reducing anxiety while increasing motivation may benefit EFL students' academic performance.

4. Conclusion and suggestion

This study investigates the effects of motivation and anxiety on EFL university students' speaking assessments. According to the findings, students are highly motivated to learn and speak English due to their job goals and the need to improve their language skills. The motivation is stronger among students who believe that English will benefit their professions and seek perfect fluency. Despite their great motivation, pupils demonstrate slight nervousness, particularly in classroom situations. Furthermore, anxiety is typical during speaking proficiency tests, with symptoms including anxiousness, sweaty hands, and nausea affecting performance. In addition, motivation positively affects speaking proficiency testing scores, implying that more motivation leads to improved performance. In contrast, anxiety has a strong negative influence and is associated with decreased performance. As a result, addressing both factors is important for improving educational outcomes and increasing students' English-speaking skills. Therefore, future research still needs to explore how various motivational types, such as intrinsic or extrinsic, affect EFL students' speaking ability and how these types interact with anxiety.

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