

Review of Research on Motivation and EFL Students' Speaking Performance

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Abstract: In the context of global integration, English learning has become a more important topic, especially in developing speaking skills, which plays a vital role in cross-cultural communication. Motivation, as a psychological element that boosts individuals' actions, has a significant impact on improving EFL students' speaking competence. The study focuses on motivation and its influence on EFL students' oral performance, aiming to explore how to improve students' oral ability with motivational strategies effectively. In terms of methods, this study uses literature analysis, including literature review, theoretical analysis and empirical research. Based on the review of existing literature, the challenges posed by low motivation and self-regulation ability to EFL learners' oral language development are identified. At the same time, this paper introduces the L2 motivational strategy, self-determination theory and Keller's ARCS motivation strategy theory and explores how these theories are applied in the real pedagogical context. The results show that intrinsic motivation positively correlates with students' autonomous learning ability, teacher support autonomy and classroom participation. Moreover, self-determination motivation can effectively reduce spoken English anxiety and improve spoken English ability. Based on the result, this study points out the key role of motivational strategies in teaching and provides practical guidance for teachers to improve EFL students' oral performance.

Keywords: Speaking performance, Motivation, Motivational strategy, EFL students

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Context

The process of globalization attaches significance to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) proficiency, with a particular focus on speaking skills. Teachers need to provide oral English lessons with thoughtful attention and completely harness students' excitement for learning the language in light of the growing demand for spoken communication brought about by global integration and the low proficiency of pupils in the language [1].

Schools and educational institutions have been focusing more on speaking English. In college school English teaching, the shift from native language teaching to full English instruction in college English classrooms requires students to enhance their English speaking abilities and adapt [2]. In middle school teaching, the National English Curriculum Standards (2011 Edition) further highlight

the importance of oral English. The curriculum aims to improve students' English communication skills [3].

With the deepening of curriculum reform, spoken language teaching is becoming increasingly important and irreplaceable. It is both necessary for foreign language teaching reform and quality-oriented education [1]. Consequently, it is vital to cultivate students' speaking ability. This study will discuss how motivation affects students' speaking performance and offer pedagogical implications for teachers.

1.2. Persistent Challenges Faced by EFL Learners in Developing Proficient Spoken English

When developing proficiency in spoken English, EFL learners face different challenges.

Firstly, emotional factors can affect students' willingness to practise their oral English. Learners of spoken language may encounter elevated anxiety levels and variations in their self-regulation during the process [4]. When the self-regulation of students' oral learning is low, they will feel anxious and reluctant to practice oral English or have no confidence in improving their oral English performance.

Secondly, learners may lack sufficient English input and output opportunities due to the restricted language environments. The classroom environment may restrict students' spoken language expression, such as teacher-dominated teaching and a tense classroom atmosphere [5]. Traditional classroom teaching emphasizes knowledge points and overlooks oral English. Although the new curriculum standard proposes that English courses focus on core qualities and reflect curriculum concepts, the traditional English classroom teaching mode is difficult to change quickly, and teachers generally focus on explaining knowledge points, ignoring or weakening oral activities in textbooks. Moreover, students rarely have access to real oral communication situations in class, and the only oral teaching is mostly for the examination, so they have fewer opportunities to practice oral English in class. In the long run, it can easily lead to students lacking confidence in oral expression [6].

Thirdly, low motivation is the reason for the poor quality of the students' speaking English. Corder mentioned that anyone can learn a language if they have the motivation [7]. Oral English learning is an important part of English learning, undoubtedly influenced by learners' motivation. Highly motivated learners usually have better achievements. Much research shows that motivation is the key to success in second language acquisition. However, numerous types of research have verified that when students are forced to participate in an activity to fulfil an external obligation, such as required readings at school, they will eventually lose their innate interest in it. According to Brown, traditional school environments tend to foster extrinsic motivation and fail to bring the learner into a collaborative process of competence building because of the dominance of teachers, grades, and tests, as well as a host of institutional constraints that glorify content, product, correctness, and competitiveness [8].

1.3. The Significance of Motivation in the Acquisition of Speaking Abilities

Motivation plays an essential role in L2 acquisition, especially in speaking. Motivation theory is widely applied in language learning and is considered a panacea for solving learning problems by affecting processes and outcomes. In learning to speak, the higher the student's motivation, the better the learning outcomes [9].

For learners, language learning is a long-lasting process that requires great effort. Without strong motivation, learners cannot maintain an active learning state. It is difficult to achieve a teaching goal by simply having one interesting class. To achieve long-term speaking improvement, applying motivation theory is indispensable. The teacher's task is not only to use different methods to stimulate students' learning interests but also to find ways to transform short-term learning interests into lasting

intrinsic motivation. As a result, educators ought to teach students how to properly use their aptitude, foster an enjoyment of learning, and motivate themselves to learn based on their unique features. When individuals feel that learning activities are related to their interests and goals, they will be motivated to learn. Therefore, in English-speaking teaching, teachers must effectively stimulate and maintain students' motivation to learn [9,10].

1.4. Purpose

This study aims to examine the impact of learning motivation on the development of EFL students' speaking skills. The purpose of this study is to determine how motivation and speaking skills are interrelated by reviewing previous motivation theories and analyzing motivation and its sub-categories. The objectives include reviewing previous empirical studies on this topic and providing practical implications for teaching speaking, such as implementing targeted motivational and confidence-building strategies and improving the speaking environment inside and outside the classroom. The ultimate goal is to offer theoretical guidance for language teaching practices.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Definition of Motivation

'Motivation' derives from 'motive', which means 'to move'. Motivation is widely used in various situations to explain why people have different thoughts and behaviors. It is an inherent capacity to satisfy wants, inspire and sustain personal behavior, and compel people to dedicate themselves toward a common objective. Stimulating, guiding, and maintaining behavior are some of its primary roles [11].

Many similar ideas and overlapping components, such interest, curiosity, or the drive to accomplish, are all embodied in the concept of motivation [12]. Due to its diversity, motivation has been the subject of multiple theories and theoretical controversies for a long period. Quite a few scholars have attempted to explain and define it from different perspectives. Dörnyei proposed the three-level theory of second language learning motivation: language level, learner level, and learning situation level, which have become classic frameworks in this field of study. This theory was developed in foreign research on the influence of second language learning motivation on spoken language acquisition. There are a lot of empirical research results in foreign countries that directly or indirectly explore and demonstrate the influence of second language motivation on students' oral learning. They also provide specific suggestions on how to improve oral ability through motivation. Noels et al. Systematically demonstrated that self-determined motivation theory can effectively evaluate intrinsic and external motivation; Dincer and Yesilyurt explained that the teacher is the main factor of the shadow machine in the classroom in spoken second language learning through self-determination theory.

2.2. Theories of Motivation

2.2.1. Dörnyei' s L2 Motivational Strategy

Three systems are included in this theory: L2 Learning Experience, Ought-to L2 Self, and Ideal L2 Self. The term "ideal L2 self" describes the language qualities that students ought to strive to have and can stimulate intense study. The concept of "ought-to L2 Self," which serves as extrinsic motivation, describes the linguistic qualities that learners feel they ought to have. The term "L2 Learning Experience" describes the experiences and learning environment that have an effect on learning motivation [13].

2.2.2. Keller's ARCS Motivation Strategy Theory

Professor John M Keller introduced the ARCS motivated design pattern, a technique for raising the motivational appeal of educational materials in 1983. It has three unique characteristics.

First, it consists of four conceptual categories—attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction—that encompass a wide range of particular ideas and factors that define human motivation. Its motivational motivation and maintenance strategies greatly promoted daily teaching and built a good theoretical foundation for teaching. Secondly, it comprises sets of tactics that can be applied to improve the instructional materials' motivating appeal. Thirdly, it integrates motivating design, a methodical design process that works well with conventional instructional design models [14].

Overall, Keller's ARCS motivation strategy theory effectively combines the motivation principle with instructional design and presents a series of specific solution strategies on the premise of problem-solving.

2.2.3. Self-determination Theory

According to the theory of self-determination motivation proposed by Deci and Ryan, learners are active growth-oriented organisms with the tendency to seek psychological growth and development, as well as subjective initiative. Through efforts, learners can maximize their potential development and utilization. The core idea of this theory is that the reason why an individual learner chooses to carry out a particular activity depends on the extent to which the learner can make an autonomous choice [15]. Therefore, the theory of self-determined motivation focuses on the results that learning goals can bring and divides motivation into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

The fundamental drive behind learning is thought to be intrinsic motivation, which shows that students pay attention to what they are learning, enjoy what they are learning, and fulfil their curiosity. Stated differently, learning behavior arises from learners' willingness to participate and serves as a model of self-determination [16].

Extrinsic motivation emphasizes learning behavior as "a means and means to achieve a goal, that is, to obtain some extrinsic reward or avoid punishment", according to Deci and Ryan. They split extrinsic motivation into four categories: external regulation, introjected regulation, identifiable regulation, and integrated regulation. They also classify the learner's degree of autonomy for behavior on a scale from low to high. Lack of motivation is the type of motivation with the least number of self-determining factors, manifested by the individual's inability to be aware of actions and actions. The nature of extrinsic motivation determines that learners with this motivation will have learning behaviors under certain pressure, but they are not interested in second language learning itself [15].

The three fundamental psychological requirements of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are also emphasized by the self-determination theory. The term "autonomy" describes a person's sense of control over their learning process, which includes selecting their learning activities and goals as well as their teaching strategies. Feeling autonomous in learning increases intrinsic motivation to learn. Competence is an individual's belief in their learning ability, progress and achievement. Feeling up to learning and making progress can enhance intrinsic motivation to learn. Relatedness refers to an individual's tendency to form positive relationships with others in a learning environment, including with teachers and peers. Feeling connected to others can enhance intrinsic motivation to learn. By satisfying these needs, students can enhance intrinsic motivation and promote learning [15].

Because of the correlation between results, they think they can't learn well or lack the desire to succeed. According to the theory of self-determined motivation, these types of motivation are not opposites but are in the continuum of the degree of self-determination or degree of autonomy, from

low to high; there are motivation lack, subcategories of extrinsic motivation and subcategories of intrinsic motivation.

These literature summaries collectively illustrate the diversity of second language learning motivation theories, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, providing important theoretical foundations for English language teaching.

3. Empirical Evidence on the Influence of Motivation on EFL Speaking Performance

3.1. Application of Keller's ARCS Motivation Strategy Theory

Several scholars applied 4 of Keller's ARCS motivation strategy theory: Attention strategies, Relevance strategy, Self-confidence strategies, and Satisfaction strategy by using novel teaching methods, humorous language, multimedia aids, etc., to attract students' attention, connecting teaching content with students' actual life to improve student's learning interest, providing appropriate learning difficulty, help students set goals, and give encouraging evaluation to improve students' self-confidence and encouraging evaluation should be given in time to make students feel the sense of achievement in learning and enhance their learning satisfaction.

When combining the ARCS motivation strategy in the practical teaching context, scholars followed the four steps: In the definition phase, audience analysis is performed, motivational issues are identified, and motivational goals are formulated. In the design phase, potential strategies are generated and selected. In the development phase, motivational elements are prepared and integrated into teaching. During the assessment phase, a trial assessment is conducted, and motivational outcomes are assessed [14].

In Mingjin's study, after the ARCS motivation model teaching, students' motivation for oral English learning has been significantly improved, and their oral English scores have also been significantly improved. It implies that students' speaking English proficiency can be greatly enhanced by the ARCS motivation model, which can both increase and sustain students' motivation for oral English learning [3]. In Lu Xinyue's study, the research results show that after using the ARCS motivation strategy, students' attention, relevance, confidence and satisfaction have been significantly improved. Meanwhile, students' oral fluency and coherence, vocabulary resources, grammar range and accuracy, pronunciation and other oral abilities have also been significantly improved [16].

Overall, the ARCS strategies have significantly improved students' spoken English proficiency by increasing their motivation, confidence, and enjoyment of learning, ultimately leading to more active engagement and better communication skills. The results are generally positive, with students experiencing noticeable improved spoken English abilities. At the same time, teachers can increase their understanding of students by analyzing their motivation in oral English learning. They can also continuously improve their teaching ability by mastering motivation strategies and effectively implementing them.

3.2. Application of Self-determination Motivation Theory

Ali Dincer and Savas Yesilyurt applied the self-determination motivation theory to explore the relationship between Turkish EFL students' motivation orientations in English-speaking classes and their autonomous learning, teacher support for autonomy, and classroom engagement [9]. In their study, teachers provide options and opportunities for students to feel autonomous and learn with more self-determination. This includes listening to students, understanding their progress, encouraging voluntary participation, providing feedback, accepting students' individuality, and allowing students to express their ideas freely. They adapted various pedagogical strategies based on self-determination theory, including using communicative methods such as cooperative learning and task-based

language teaching, designing various oral activities (role play, drama, group discussion, etc.), reducing reliance on textbooks and choosing topics related to students' lives and providing more time for each student to speak.

The study found that students had a high level of intrinsic motivation, which was positively correlated with autonomous learning, teacher support for autonomy, and classroom engagement. In the qualitative analysis, students believed that the teacher's autonomous support behaviors were key for participating in speaking classes, including listening to students, providing feedback, and creating a relaxed atmosphere. Moreover, according to Luo's study, students who show high levels of self-determination motivation also tend to speak English at greater levels, while students who reflect low levels of decision-making motivation generally experience higher levels of oral English anxiety, which in turn impacts their oral English proficiency [4]. This finding implies that there is a negative correlation between self-determined motivation and oral English anxiety, which can reduce anxiety and improve oral English proficiency.

The research results indicate that the teachers' autonomous support motivation style is closely related to students' intrinsic motivation orientation, autonomous learning ability, and classroom participation. Therefore, teachers should focus on students' intrinsic motivation and improve students' English speaking ability by supporting students' autonomy and using instructional activities. This provides insights for improving EFL students' speaking performance and integrating them into teaching activities.

3.3. Other Applications of Motivational Strategies

Multiple motivational strategies were applied in the study of Cheng and Dörnyei [17]. Ten motivational macro-strategies were identified, and these include leading by example, rewarding hard work, boosting confidence, establishing a positive learning environment, efficiently presenting assignments, improving goal-orientation, making tasks engaging, acquainting students with L2 culture, encouraging group cohesion, and cultivating learner autonomy. Teachers are encouraged to demonstrate care for students, recognize their efforts, provide positive feedback, etc.

To apply these motivational strategies in a real pedagogical context, the article mentions some specific teaching designs, such as designing tasks suited to students' abilities, introducing interesting topics, using various audio-visual aids, encouraging students to create products, allowing students to get to know each other, explaining the importance of class rules, inviting native English speakers to the classroom, etc.

The research result offers important insights for teachers, highlighting the critical role of motivational strategies in teaching. Firstly, teachers are encouraged to utilize various motivational strategies to stimulate and sustain student's learning motivation. Moreover, it also emphasizes that different cultural contexts may have varying effects on the efficacy of particular motivational techniques and that educators should modify their approaches according to the particular situations they face.

4. Conclusion and Implications for Teaching Speaking

4.1. Conclusion

Learning motivation plays a significant role in students' learning outcomes and achievements. Studies indicate that students with strong motivation more frequently use oral communication strategies, and their use frequency is positively correlated with intrinsic motivation.

Motivation theories can help teachers improve teaching strategies and enhance students' oral proficiency. Therefore, teachers should stimulate students' intrinsic motivation and create a positive teaching environment.

4.2. Implications for Practice

4.2.1. Implement Targeted Motivational and Confidence-Building Strategies

Motivation theories such as the ARCS motivation design model and self-determination theory can guide teaching practice. These theories argue that teachers need to stimulate students' intrinsic motivation by satisfying their autonomy, competence, and relatedness to promote their learning motivation.

Teachers can stimulate and sustain students' learning motivation by utilizing attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction tactics. These strategies aim to increase students' interest in learning, enhance their confidence, and provide successful experiences.

4.2.2. Improve Speaking Environment

In-class environment. Interaction and Participation: Teachers should encourage active student participation in classroom activities through questioning, group discussions, role plays, and other methods to give students more opportunities to practice speaking.

Cooperative Learning: Teachers should organize students for cooperative learning through group discussions and group activities to increase students' involvement and motivation. It is recommended that role models be set for students to learn and that they be guided to learn in application.

Fair and Positive Classroom Atmosphere: Encouraging students to actively participate in class activities and ensuring that every student has a voice are two ways that teachers can foster a fair and positive classroom environment.

Personalized Teaching: Teachers should design personalized teaching content and activities based on students' needs and interests to enhance their sense of involvement and motivation.

Positive Feedback: Teachers should give students positive, timely, specific and constructive feedback and encouragement to help them build confidence and recognize their progress.

Flexible Teaching Methods: Teachers should use various teaching methods, such as games, multimedia, etc., to maintain students' attention and stimulate their interest in learning.

Out-class environment. Emotional Support: Teachers should offer emotional support to students to help them overcome learning difficulties and reduce their anxiety and pressure.

Speaking input activities: To increase their students' enthusiasm and skill in speaking English, teachers should encourage them to participate in more extracurricular English-speaking activities, such as watching English videos and listening to English songs.

Appropriate Learning Tasks: Teachers should provide learning tasks suitable for students' learning levels to ensure that every student can complete the tasks and experience satisfaction.

Student Autonomy: Teachers should give students more autonomy, allowing them to make choices and decisions in learning to increase their motivation.

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