

# The Impact of Motivation on Enhancing Speaking Skill Among Saudi Learners: A Literature Review

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## Abstract

This literature review examines the impact of motivation on enhancing speaking skill among Saudi learners. It aims to demonstrate one psychological factor (motivation) and the impact that it has on developing Saudi English-speaking skill. Previous studies findings suggest that Saudi learners' lack of motivation to speak English is highly influenced by their surroundings, such as their family, classmates, teachers, and even textbooks, other teaching materials, and teaching methods. Therefore, teachers should use various kinds of materials and teaching formats such as discussion sessions, news articles, television shows, conversations, interviews, and stories because they capture students' attention and boost their motivation.

**Keywords:** motivation, Saudi learners, speaking skill, English as a foreign language EFL, literature review

## 1. Introduction

Many Saudi English learners encounter difficulties when expressing themselves in the target language. Speaking is one of the most challenging skills for Saudi learners because it needs practice as well as a great deal of exposure to English. However, practice and exposure to the language may not be enough if the learner's motivation to learn is low.

Dörnyei and Schmidt (2001) called motivation to learn a "complex phenomenon involving a number of desire sources and conditions" (p. 399). Therefore, considering other factors affecting Saudi students' speaking skills is important. Among these could be anxiety and fear of making errors, resulting in hesitation to speak or communicate. In this sense, Saudi learners encounter challenges affecting their English-speaking skills in the classroom, such as a lack of motivation, encouragement, or practice. Moreover, Saudi students fear criticism when making mistakes, and their shyness inhibits them from speaking English (Al-Hassaani & Al-Saalmi, 2022). As a result, many Saudi English learners avoid oral communication in English-speaking classes, whether interacting with classmates or teachers. Thus, examining how motivation boosts Saudi students' oral communication in English classes is crucial.

This literature review aims to demonstrate one psychological factor (motivation) and the impact that it has on developing Saudi English-speaking skills. This brief scope of the literature is presented in five main sections. The first section gives a broad theoretical background in motivation theories. The following section defines the term motivation from different researchers' perspectives and gives a brief differentiation of the four types of motivation. The next gives an overview of some related literature and the relationship between motivation and English language learning. The fourth section presents the findings of relevant studies, particularly the relationship between motivation and Saudi learners' English-speaking skills. Finally, the relationship between gender and the impact of motivation on speaking skills is considered.

Many significant articles have been published on the rich psychological factor of motivation. This brief literature review considers the most relevant articles on motivation and Saudi English-speaking skills. However, a diversity of articles are not included, such as those addressing several types of motivation, teachers' perspectives of learners' motivation, and the research debate on enhancing learners' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

## 2. Theoretical Background

According to the socio-educational model by Gardner, Lalonde and Moorcroft (1985), there are factors not directly associated with either integrative or instrumental motivation that support motivation. These factors include learners' orientation, attitudes, and effort (Ellis, 1989). Gardner et al.'s socio-educational model explains how social and cultural factors influence the development of cognitive abilities that enable people to learn. These factors include individuals' family backgrounds, educational experiences, and cultural values as well as societal expectations. However, researchers criticized Gardner et al.'s theory. For example, Ellis (1989) noted that his theory "Took no account of the impact that success in learning can have on a learner's motivation" (p. 60).

Self-determination theory (SDT) is another theory of motivation. The theory defines intrinsic and extrinsic sources of motivation. Intrinsically driven behaviors refer to activities such as exploration and curiosity since they are not dependent on external rewards or pressure but rather give their own satisfactions and joy (Ryan, & Deci, 2020). Deci and Ryan (1985) proposed and defined SDT as a theory for examining "how biological, social, and cultural conditions either enhance or undermine the inherent human capacities for psychological growth, engagement, and wellness, both in general and in specific domains and endeavors" (p. 3). The theory is built on the common-sense notion that people are motivated by both external factors (such as rewards or grades) and internal factors (such as personal interests or curiosity) (Ellis, 1989). The theory focuses on social environments' influences on attitudes, values, motivations, and behaviors (Deci & Ryan, 2012).

According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011, as cited in Kálmán & Eugenio, 2015) the attribution theory "has been recognized as the motivational model that encompasses both the cognitive and affective aspects influencing human behavior" (p. 587). In light of this theory, Dörnyei (2005, as cited in Ellis, 1989) argued that learners' past experiences can affect their motivational disposition while learning positively or negatively. The factors to which students attribute their past successes or failures in learning second/foreign languages are a major influence on their attitudes toward and motivation to continue studying languages (Kálmán & Eugenio, 2015).

## 3. Definitions and Types of Motivation

### 3.1 Definitions of Motivation

A major initial factor that effectively encourages Saudi learners to learn English is motivation. Generally, the driving force to do something is referred to as "motive." In contrast, to be unmotivated means a lack of interest or inspiration to achieve a goal (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Many different definitions exist of the term motivation. For instance, according to Gardner (1985, as cited in Ellis, 2015), motivation is a complex construct that includes learners' motivation or desire to learn, the effort they expend while learning, and the characteristics they develop as a result of their efforts to learn a second language. Williams and Burden (1999, as cited in Alhmedi, 2014) defined motivation as being composed of several different factors including interest, curiosity, and a desire to achieve. Accordingly, individual learners' motivation is driven by both internal and external factors to fulfill their learning goals. In language learning, Dörnyei and Németh (2006) refer to motivation as:

"a highly complex term, widely used in everyday life but also in many areas of social sciences, for example in various branches of psychology (e.g., differential, organizational, social, and in educational) in educational studies in applied linguistics" (p. 9).

### 3.2 Types of Motivation

Ryan and Deci (2000) explained the complexity of motivation: "People have not only different amounts, but also different kinds of motivation" (p. 54). Well-motivated students show a high level of performance in English-speaking classes. In this sense, some students may improve their speaking skills because they are simply interested in speaking English and want to communicate in the target language. Other learners, for instance, may practice their speaking skills for the sake of getting good grades or passing a course. Hence, to understand the different motives among these individual learners, this section briefly distinguishes between some of the most essential types of motivation.

One of the crucial types of motivation is internal motivation. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), intrinsic motivation is "doing an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence" (p. 56). In other words, when learners are intrinsically motivated, they are moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external factors such as pressures or rewards. In a classroom context, teachers still play a significant role, but students should also take charge of learning. This shift of roles in the classroom significantly influences students' intrinsic motivation to learn English (Alharbi, 2015). Vallerand and Ratelle (2002), suggested three types of intrinsic motivation. The first is intrinsic motivation to know, which implies "engaging in

activities because of the pleasure and satisfaction derived from learning, exploring, and understanding new things.” Intrinsic motivation to accomplish refers to “engaging in activities because of the pleasure and satisfaction derived from trying to surpass oneself, creating, or accomplishing something.” Finally, intrinsic motivation to experience operates “when one is engaged in an activity because of the stimulating sensations associated with it” (p. 42). According to Griffiths (2008), long-term language learning success is more likely for intrinsically motivated students. In terms of speaking skills, for instance, learners who are intrinsically motivated perform better since motivation is driven by their interest and willingness, reflected in their inner acceptance of the value of a particular task. Daif-Allah and Aljumah (2020) defined intrinsic motivation as the desire to engage in a task because it is enjoyable and satisfying.

Although intrinsic motivation is a significant type of motivation, most of the activities people do are not necessarily, intrinsically motivated. Griffiths (2008) refers to extrinsic motivation as “doing something as a means to some separable outcome, such as gaining a qualification, getting a job, pleasing the teacher, or avoiding punishment” (p. 21). In other words, extrinsically motivated behaviors are done in anticipation of a reward from outside and beyond the self (Alizadeh, 2016). Shamiry and Al Fuad (2020) identified extrinsic motivation as doing something because you want to earn a reward or avoid punishment. They conducted research focusing on the internal motivation that negatively impacts Saudi college student learning outcomes at King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. The researchers carried out qualitative research methodology through intensive personal interviews with 20 students, and a survey of 90 students. The student's responses indicated that the majority of the participants are not highly motivated as a result of being unable to join the colleges of their choice. Shamiry and Al Fuad's (2020) findings suggested that the majority of students suffer from a lack of intrinsic motivation as they are found to be driven only by different extrinsic motivational factors such as getting a job.

Third, Gardner (1985) emphasizes that integrative motivation is the learners' motivation to study the second language from a positive disposition to members of the target language and a desire to interact with them. Al Harthy (2017) reported that integration between students' integrative and instrumental motivation raises their confidence, self-esteem, and effort to perform better in learning the language. According to Daif-Allah and Aljumah (2020), there is a strong impact of the integrative orientation, suggesting that language teachers should include a socio-cultural component in the foreign language syllabus. Generally, integrative motivation has a major impact on language learning (Gholami, Allahyar, & Rafik-Galea 2012). Students' motivation in terms of communicating in the second language can be considered the most crucial element as it is a common observation that people who admire a target language, or culture feel more comfortable learning the second language.

The last type of motivation refers to the instrumental motivation that emerges from a belief that learning a second language can help get a job or further an education (Gardner, 1985). Ellis (1994, as cited in Alrabai 2014), noted the relatively higher ranking of instrumental than integrative motivation generally supported the “instrumental motivation” that plays a more prominent role in foreign language contexts since learners who have little or no interest in the target-language culture, and few or no opportunities to interact with target language members. Similarly, Al-Amr (1998, as cited in Shamiry and Al Fuad 2020), acknowledged several valid reasons why instrumental motivation would be much more relevant in the Saudi context rather than integrative motivation. One reason suggested is that the second language is being learned away from the target language speakers and their culture.

#### **4. Literature Review**

The impact of motivation on enhancing speaking skills has been subject to much research in the field of learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Speaking is an important skill for EFL learners since it allows oral communication with others. However, many Saudi learners struggle to speak English fluently. According to Al-Hosni (2014), some also “lack the motivation to speak English” or “do not see a real need to learn or speak English” (p. 24). Other challenges that Saudi learners may encounter, demotivating them to learn English, involve the context of learning EFL. For instance, Saudi learners may face problems because of the non-availability of a natural and interactive environment that enables them to develop their English-speaking ability (Alrasheedi, 2020). Dörnyei and Csizér (2006, as cited in Alhmadi, 2014) noted that learning the target language only at school, without direct contact with native speakers of that language, may affect learners' willingness to communicate and lead to less oral communication. According to Younes and Albalawai (2016, as cited in Kashmiri, 2020), many factors affect the speaking ability of EFL students, such as native language influence, level of motivation, conceptual knowledge, anxiety, confidence, and participation in speaking activities.

Al-Hassaani and Al-Saalmi (2022) conducted research focusing on the challenges that Saudi EFL learners encountered while speaking English in and outside the classroom. The researchers noted that the students learned English from grade seven until university, but they still experienced difficulties in speaking English during classes. Thus, to understand Saudi learners' challenges in speaking English as well as their motivations to learn English, the researchers carried out a quantitative study using a questionnaire. The study participants were 55 female in their second year of majoring in English at the University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia. Learners, especially beginners, need encouragement to overcome speaking difficulties in classrooms. They fear making errors while speaking for multiple reasons such as a lack of confidence, fear of judgment, or even anxiety. However, the researchers reported that the majority of the students received little encouragement from teachers to speak English in classrooms. According to Al-Hosni (2014, as cited in Al-Hassaani & Al-Saalmi, 2022), among the main barriers that learners encounter in speaking English are anxiety and low motivation. In addition, the researcher's findings suggest that Saudi EFL learners need enough time in classes to practice their English-speaking skills.

Likewise, Ali, Shamsan, Guduru, and Yemmela (2019) investigated 50 female and 50 male participants from the English intensive program at the University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia. A quantitative questionnaire was used to determine the factors underlying the students' difficulties in speaking English. The researchers reported that Saudi students experienced difficulty in speaking English since they only studied English in school for six years before college. More interestingly, the research findings revealed that the main reasons behind the learners' difficulty in speaking English were a lack of awareness, a lack of interest or motivation, a lack of exposure to English, peer criticism, and inappropriate guidance and support from teachers and parents (Ali et al., 2019).

#### *4.1 Motivation and English Language Learning*

A strong relationship exists between learning and motivation (Gardner, 1985). Motivation accounts for much language learning success, particularly when English is taught as a second language (Hong & Ganapathy, 2017).

In English language learning, researchers have concluded that motivation and practice are the two major factors in helping students develop their speaking skills. According to Al-Hassaani and Al-Saalmi (2022), "motivation and practice are two sides of the same coin" (p. 330). Kashmiri (2020) noted that students' learning motivation levels significantly increase when they use computer-mediated learning, but some instructors at many universities, particularly in English departments in Saudi Arabia, are unfamiliar with the use of technology in the classroom. Alharbi (2015) suggested that qualified experts should train teachers on their usage to providing variety in teaching methods and showing models of native speakers.

Students must be motivated in the classroom to practice various activities that allow them to participate and develop their speaking skills. For instance, Saudi students' motivation for speaking could be increased by using methods such as storytelling, speeches, and debates (Al-Hassaani & Al-Saalmi 2022). Teachers could develop a student-centered method for creating a relaxed and positive classroom environment. Furthermore, teaching students relevant topics in English-speaking syllabi is motivating to engage them to communicate and practice the language effectively.

Kashmiri (2020) reported several significant reasons for the difficulties that Saudi students encounter in developing their speaking ability. One is the fact that teachers let students express their answers in Arabic, so Saudi students have insignificant opportunities to practice their speaking skills in the classrooms. Furthermore, such circumstances might be demotivating to students because teachers do not encourage them to practice their speaking skills, such as in role-play or using topics for debate to encourage discussion in the class (Kashmiri, 2020).

Hamad (2013) investigated factors that negatively affect English language speaking. The sample of the study was 10 female instructors and 150 female students at the English Department of colleges of Science and Arts of King Khalid University. In the data analysis, the researcher carried out questionnaire papers for both students and teachers, including interviews. Hamad's (2013) findings revealed several factors such as:

"Using Arabic language, ineffective teaching strategies and motivation, poor speaking practice, and wrong immoral distribution of time between listening and speaking can be indicators for factors negatively affect speaking skills" (p. 93).

In addition, the majority of Saudi students' self-assessment of their speaking ability was generally negative and they expressed themselves as incompetent speakers. Hence, to motivate students speaking skills, Hamad (2013) recommended that instructors should motivate students to speak, and overcome their fear of speaking by using different strategies such as culturally debatable topics, discussions, role-play in the classroom. Increase the time of Listening and Speaking courses to six hours, and teach listening and speaking courses in the labs.

Arabai (2014) demonstrated that motivational techniques were rarely used in EFL classrooms. Therefore, the researcher suggested significant implications to improve teachers' motivational practices that could enhance learner's motivation. For instance, Saudi EFL teachers should "care for their students" motivation by demonstrating proper personal and teaching behaviors in the classroom" (p. 243). Teachers also should encourage students rather than controlling or demanding. Introducing motivational strategies that go beyond traditional methods of EFL teaching.

### **5. The Relationship Between Saudi Learners' Motivation and Their Speaking Skills**

Studies have shown a clear relationship between learners' high level of motivation and their proficiency in speaking English. For instance, as the relationship between motivation and academic performance is reciprocal. Students who are more motivated perform better and students who perform better become more motivated. Thus, well-motivated students develop better English-speaking skills.

The case study conducted by Alhmadi (2014) considered numerous factors such as the English curriculum, teaching strategies, students' motivation, reticence, and anxiety in its determination of the reasons for Saudi students' "lack of speaking" at Taibah University, Saudi Arabia. Considering only one factor (motivation) as one of the major findings of the study revealed that the students encountered a lack of motivation to practice their English-speaking skills due to an extreme focus on writing and reading skills, which ignored speaking and listening practice almost entirely. Therefore, the students' motivation was compromised since speaking lessons were not fully emphasized. In particular, both teachers and students were restricted to a specific textbook, which might limit discussion of relevant and enjoyable topics, hugely reducing motivation. The researcher reported that in one of the English-speaking classes at the University of Taibah, the teacher felt obligated to finish the unit and accordingly focused on the reading materials rather than starting an open discussion involving student participation in the class (Alhmadi, 2014).

Similarly, Alharbi (2015) conducted a study on the causes of Saudi public school students' low proficiency in English communication. A major issue discussed was that teachers were the center in classroom settings, typically speaking most of the time while students only listened and received knowledge. Overall, this resulted in serious problems affecting the students' motivation to participate. Furthermore, most crucial topics were covered by teachers in the students' first language because speaking English was not required in the classroom, and students were less motivated to practice even with their classmates (Alharbi, 2015). The researcher also discussed several examples of Saudi public school students' deficiency in English communication competence. Alharbi (2015) added that students are not encouraged to be creative or analytical in boring or stressful learning environments and they become demotivated by tasks that require them to only listen and mimic. Therefore, to create more lively and motivational classrooms, it is essential to introduce students to authentic exercises and technology in teaching to avoid boring textbooks and tasks.

### **6. The Impact of Gender on Saudi Learners' Speaking Skills**

Research has shown systematic differences between men's and women's motivation to learn (Dörnyei & Schmidt, 2001). In learning EFL, gender is an important factor that influences motivation. Therefore, different motivations exist between male and female students, consequently influencing their achievement. The lack of communicative competence by Arab students shows a general problem in English learning (Kashmiri, 2020).

Gender as a variable appears to play a role in EFL motivation among both Saudi and Arab learners. Research findings have suggested that women outperform men in general. For instance, Mahrooqi and Denman (2014) conducted a study of 100 Omani EFL students' motivation types and sources; 27 participants were male, and 73 were female. The researchers conducted both oral and written interviews. A significant overall difference was found between male and female students. Females were less likely to be motivated to learn English than were males participants; only 40% of males were categorized as motivated in their second language studies, compared to 52% of females. Furthermore, in terms of differences in motivation types between participants, Mahrooqi and Denman (2014) reported that English-language learners in Oman primarily engage in instrumental motivation rather than integrative motivation due to the language's utility in various Gulf societies and its social and academic benefits.

Similarly, Al Harthy (2017) reported the findings of many researchers in the Arab world and non-Arab world. The finding suggested that females not only instrumentally motivated, but they show a higher level of integrative motivation. Females have more positive attitudes to learning English for communicating with others, knowing and identifying the other cultures, and for educational purposes are higher compared to male students.

Daif-Allah and Aljumah (2020) indicated that students' gender and academic background affected their motivation for studying English in Saudi Arabia. Significant differences emerged between male and female computer science students' motivation for learning English, with women more highly motivated than men (Daif-Allah and Aljumah, 2020). Lastly, similar to Mahrooqi and Denman (2014) and Al Harthy (2017) findings, Daif-Allah and Aljumah (2020) found that instrumental motivation was the primary orientations for Saudi students learning English at different levels.

## 7. Conclusion

Motivation is a complex phenomenon. Therefore, other factors that influence Saudi students' speaking skills must be considered. For instance, the relationships between ability, motivation, anxiety, and achievement construct a complex process of learning a second language for students. The findings of this brief review have further verified the impact that motivation has on Saudi English-speaking skills. Previous studies have revealed that Saudi students lacked English-speaking skills for several reasons, such as a lack of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, anxiety, demotivating classes, and students' characteristics. Furthermore, studies showed that systematic differences between female and male in learning English indicated that female have higher integrative motivation towards the language, speakers of English, and more openness to other cultures than males (Al Harthy, 2017).

This literature review gains brief insight on the information regarding the type and level of motivation. There are several obstacles to achieve desired language outcomes (Alharbi, 2015). However, action need to be made to encourage Saudi students to practice English, focusing more on listening and speaking classes, implementing sufficient and effective strategies.

Motivation has a key role in the development of speaking skills. Teachers can play a significant role in motivating students to learn the English language. Therefore, due to the increasing benefits of computer-mediated communication presence of technology, Saudi students can enhance their speaking skills with the help of technology. Since students have a positive attitude to learning English when they use technological devices, thus instructors should provide students with various kinds of input such as discussion sessions, news articles, television shows, conversations, interviews, and storytelling because they capture students' attention and boost their motivation; "visual aid is crucial" (Kashmiri, 2020).

After reviewing some of the related and considerable research in the field, a gap exists in the relationship between gender and the impact of motivation on speaking skills in the Saudi context. Hence, future research should fill the gap by taking into account the different motivational factors between males and females in enhancing speaking skills. Finally, the speaking skill is still the only skill that is difficult to be efficiently acquired among the other English language skills as the reasons behind the student's lack of speaking are not always possible to be determined (Alhmadi, 2014). However, Saudi learners' lack of motivation to speak English is highly influenced by their surroundings, such as their family, classmates, teachers, and even textbooks, other teaching materials, and teaching methods.

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