

THE CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO STUDENTS' DEMOTIVATION IN ENGLISH SPEAKING CLASSES

FAKTOR-FAKTOR YANG MENYEBABKAN DEMOTIVASI SISWA DALAM KELAS BERBICARA BAHASA INGGRIS

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Abstract

Speaking is one of the fundamental yet difficult skills for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to master. This study investigates the most significant sources of demotivation among English speaking class students using a mixed-method approach through the distribution of Likert-scale questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to 35 first-year students of an Indonesian English Education Study Program. The findings reveal four general areas of demotivating factors: psychological-emotional, pedagogical-instructional, social-classroom environment, and institutional-technological. Psychological barriers such as fear of mistake, lack of confidence, and fear of peer judgment were revealed as the most salient. Pedagogical issues, particularly a lack of clear evaluation criteria and constructive feedback, also emerged as major contributory factors. Socially, while the majority of students liked group class activities, fear of criticism from peers still influenced their willingness to speak. Technical problems in online learning—i.e., unstable internet, no access to digital devices, and lack of familiarity with virtual communication—also demotivated students' speaking. The study concludes that speaking demotivation is multifaceted in nature and requires holistic solutions addressing both internal learner factors and external learning environments. Recommendations are given to instructors and institutions on how to develop more positive, engaging, and confidence-building speaking classes, both face-to-face and online.

Keywords: Anxiety; Demotivation; English Speaking; EFL Learners; Online Learning

Abstrak

Berbicara merupakan salah satu keterampilan dasar yang penting namun sulit untuk dikuasai oleh pembelajar Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL). Penelitian ini menyelidiki sumber utama dari demotivasi dalam kelas berbicara Bahasa Inggris dengan menggunakan pendekatan metode campuran melalui penyebaran kuesioner skala Likert dan wawancara semi-terstruktur kepada 35 mahasiswa tahun pertama dari Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di Indonesia. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan empat area umum faktor penyebab demotivasi: psikologis-emosional, pedagogis-instruksional, lingkungan sosial-kelas, dan institusional-teknologis. Hambatan psikologis seperti rasa takut membuat kesalahan, kurang percaya diri, dan takut dinilai oleh teman sebaya muncul sebagai faktor yang paling dominan. Dari segi pedagogis, kurangnya kriteria evaluasi yang jelas dan umpan balik yang membangun juga menjadi faktor penyebab yang signifikan. Secara sosial, meskipun sebagian besar mahasiswa menyukai kegiatan kelompok di kelas, rasa takut akan kritik dari teman tetap memengaruhi kemauan mereka untuk berbicara. Masalah teknis dalam pembelajaran daring—seperti koneksi internet yang tidak stabil, tidak adanya akses terhadap perangkat digital, dan kurangnya keterampilan dalam komunikasi virtual—juga menjadi penyebab menurunnya motivasi berbicara. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa demotivasi dalam berbicara bersifat kompleks dan memerlukan solusi holistik yang mencakup faktor internal dari peserta didik maupun lingkungan pembelajaran eksternal. Rekomendasi diberikan

kepada pengajar dan institusi untuk menciptakan kelas berbicara yang lebih positif, menarik, dan membangun kepercayaan diri, baik dalam pembelajaran tatap muka maupun daring.

Kata Kunci: Kecemasan; Demotivasi; Berbicara Bahasa Inggris; Pembelajaran EFL; Pembelajaran Daring

INTRODUCTION

Spoken English is graded among the most basic of English language learning skills, yet at the same time, it is one of the most challenging skills to achieve among most learners. Despite a few decades of English instruction, students still exhibit resistance, fear, or absence of enthusiasm during speaking practice. The phenomenon raises a very critical question: why are students demotivated against English speaking classes?

Previous studies have found a number of internal and external motivations that discourage students from using English. Internal motivations such as lack of self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, low self-esteem, and anxiety are commonly cited to be major demotivators (Ningrum & Fahmi, 2020; Pale & Wisrance, 2021). Students think that speaking is a high-stakes task in which flaws are easily exposed and cause embarrassment or disapproval by teachers and students.

In terms of extrinsic elements, poor instruction techniques, limited speaking practice, and a dull classroom atmosphere also make greater contributions to demotivating students (Ameen & Emir, 2023; Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2021). In addition, teacher-related problems such as ineffective feedback mechanisms, too much grammar focus, or insufficient encouragement also decrease students' motivation (Huwari et al., 2023; Wathoni et al., 2021).

In some settings, cultural and institutional factors exert a significant impact on the attitudes of students towards English speaking. For instance, EFL students may receive minimal actual exposure to English, lowering functional use of language and speaking skills (İsaoğlu, 2020; Talpur et al., 2021). Additionally, past failure of language learners and previous unfavourable experience with speaking exercises may accumulate, reinforcing demotivation sentiments (Nugroho, 2022).

Though motivation has been well researched in language learning, the need to look into demotivation—why it occurs, its trends, and how it impacts speaking performance increases. An understanding of the reasons for students' demotivation is crucial for teachers, education planners, and policymakers to create more supportive and motivational speaking environments (Zolkapli et al., 2023).

Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore what causes students' demotivation in English speaking courses based on learners' experience and perception. Through this, it attempts to provide pragmatic recommendations to be implemented when developing more effective pedagogical methods and a more motivating classroom setting.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative-descriptive approach supported by qualitative findings was employed in the research to examine the reasons behind students' demotivation in English speaking classes. According to Sugiyono (2023), quantitative research is used to examine a specific population or sample using instruments for data collection and statistical analysis. This approach allows researchers to objectively describe trends and frequencies within the data.

Primary data were obtained from a close-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews given to undergraduate students of the English Education Study Program. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative data provides a more comprehensive understanding of the demotivating factors students encounter, aligning with Sugiyono's (2023) emphasis on methodological triangulation for more accurate and valid results.

PARTICIPANT

The participants of the research were 35 first-year students of an English Education study program in Universitas Riau Kepulauan. The selection of participants was determined by a purposive sampling technique. As described by Sugiyono (2023), purposive sampling is a technique of sample determination with specific considerations so that the selected subjects are deemed to provide rich and relevant data. In this context, participants were chosen because they had just experienced English speaking classes and could provide fresh reflections on their motivation levels.

INSTRUMENT

The main instrument was a Likert-scale questionnaire, consisting of four dimensions:

- Psychological and Emotional Factors
- Pedagogical and Instructional Factors
- Social and Classroom Environment Factors
- Institutional and Technological Factors

Each item had a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. As noted by Sugiyono (2023), Likert scales are widely used to measure attitudes, opinions, and perceptions in educational research, particularly in descriptive studies. The questionnaire was developed and piloted with students by the research team to ensure clarity and reliability.

Semi-structured interview questions with a subsample of students supplemented the quantitative data. These interviews aimed to gain deeper insights and contextual background on the questionnaire responses.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

To ensure the psychometric quality of the research instrument, both validity and reliability tests were conducted using standard statistical procedures appropriate for educational and psychological measurement.

Validity Test

The construct validity of the instrument was assessed through item-total correlation, wherein the score of each item was correlated with the total score of the entire scale. Based on the critical value of Pearson's correlation at $\alpha = 0.05$ with $N = 35$ ($r \approx 0.334$), most items yielded significant coefficients above this threshold. According to Sugiyono (2023), items that exceed the critical correlation value are considered to possess acceptable construct validity because "they reflect consistency with the overall scale and measure the same intended construct" (p. 133). Therefore, the instrument items were confirmed to be valid in measuring demotivating factors in EFL speaking classes.

Reliability Test

To assess internal consistency, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated. The resulting reliability coefficient was $\alpha = 0.946$, which is considered excellent. As reported by Gliem and Gliem (2021), "a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.90 indicates outstanding internal consistency, suggesting that

the items reliably reflect the underlying latent construct being measured” (p. 4). Such a high alpha value confirms that the questionnaire items are highly consistent in measuring student demotivation and that the instrument is suitable for research application.

These findings confirm that the instrument employed in this study is both valid in structure and reliable in measurement, ensuring confidence in the interpretation of the results.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data collection was carried out personally as well as online. The results of the questionnaire were tabulated and descriptive statistics were used to analyze them in order to determine the percentage distribution of the responses for each factor. This step is aligned with Sugiyono's (2023) guidance that descriptive statistics are suitable for summarizing and interpreting quantitative data patterns. Analysis was done to identify which areas were most frequently cited as causing demotivation.

In addition, the interview answers were thematically analyzed to extract broader patterns regarding student demotivation, such as vocabulary limitations, fear of judgment, and the impact of instructional methods.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Prior to data collection, the participants were informed of the research intention and assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their answers. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained. This ethical practice is in line with standard procedures in educational research as emphasized by Sugiyono (2023).

FINDINGS

Findings of the current study reveal four major categories that cause demotivation among English speaking class students: psychological-emotional, pedagogical-instructional, social-classroom environment, and institutional-technological.

1. Psychological and Emotional Factors

Statistical findings indicated that psychological issues such as fear, anxiety, and low self-esteem were predominant. For instance:

- 45.72% of the students (agree/strongly agree) indicated fear of making mistakes.
- Peer judgment was also prevalent, with 48.58% agreeing or strongly agreeing.
- Self-doubt about being able to communicate was acknowledged by 57.15% of the population.
- Pressure from teacher expectations received mixed responses but around 31.43% disagreed, indicating it wasn't a main factor.
- Feeling dumb when speaking in English was agreed upon by 36%, expressing a big self-esteem barrier.

These results suggest that psychological discomfort—social anxiety and self-doubt in specific—is strong disincentives to speaking proficiency.

2. Pedagogical and Instructional Factors

The interviewees had mixed perceptions of instructional processes:

- No teacher feedback: While 42.86% disagreed, 42.85% agreed, reflecting disagreement on the usefulness of teacher responses.
- Speak task relevance: A positive—a majority of 57.14% agreed that tasks were interesting and relevant.

- Unhelpful ways of teaching are not seen as being significant, with 54.29% disagreeing that teaching was unhelpful.
- Uncertain assessment criteria confused 48.57% of the students.
- Teachers seen as being too critical were identified by 37%, but the others were neither nor disagreed.

Thus, instructional demotivators most strongly identified were absence of clarity in assessment and inconsistent feedback rather than task design or teaching styles per se.

3. Classroom and Social Environment Variables

Classroom dynamics played a role:

- 48.57% made explicit "fear of laughing."
- On the other hand, 80% felt comfortable collaborating, and 57.14% strongly agreed class climate was helpful.
- Covetousness of quietness instead of risk-taking had a variable trend: 34% agreed, and 37% were neutral.
- Peer support boosting confidence was more variable with 48.57% being neutral.

These findings suggest that even though there is support in class, fear of judgment by colleagues is still a barrier, especially for less confident students.

4. Institutional and Technological Factors

Learning online was the top cause of demotivation:

- 74.28% of the students agreed or strongly agreed that online classes diminished speaking comfort.
- 65.72% of the students had problems with the internet, and 42.86% of them found online assignments dull.
- 54.29% agreed that not enough access to technology affected their motivation.
- Opinions about digital platforms were diverse: 42.86% were neutral, and 34.29% disagreed they were a failure.

These results confirm that technical constraints and web-based formats pose substantial challenges, further reducing students' performance in speaking tasks.

Tabel 1 Summary Findings

Factor Category	Key Issues Identified	Agreement (%)
Psychological-Emotional	Fear of mistakes, low confidence, fear of peer judgment	45–57%
Pedagogical-Instructional	Lack of feedback, unclear assessment	~43–49%
Social-Classroom Environment	Peer pressure, mixed collaboration experiences	~48–57%
Institutional-Technological	Discomfort in online classes, technical problems	65–74%

These results underline the multifactorial nature of demotivation in speaking classes, with internal psychological concerns and external technological limitations standing out as the most pressing issues.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study bring to light that demotivation in students in English speaking classes is affected by a combination of psychological, pedagogical, social, and technological factors. These results are consistent with previous studies and offer new knowledge on how these factors function within EFL learning contexts.

a. Psychological and Emotional Dimensions

Consistent with Ningrum and Fahmi (2020) and Pale and Wisrance (2021), the current study confirms that fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, and fear of judgment from peers are dominant psychological barriers that hinder students from speaking. Students commonly perceive speaking as a high-stakes activity, wherein errors are not merely chances to learn but also potential embarrassment. This finding aligns with Sánchez-Hernández et al. (2021), who argue that speaking anxiety can significantly hamper student learning and participation.

Moreover, interview responses revealed students' limited vocabulary and fear of wrong pronunciation as also responsible for their reluctance to speak. Such self-perceived shortcomings resonate with what Ameen and Emir (2023) refer to as self-defeating thoughts, causing students to withdraw from communicative encounters despite having adequate knowledge.

b. Pedagogical and Instructional Factors

Although most students found the speaking tasks relevant, many identified vague assessment criteria and a lack of regular teacher feedback as key demotivators. This is consistent with Huwari et al. (2023), who point out that assessment clarity and regular instructor feedback can be significant contributors to learners' motivation. Although the data did not indicate overall dissatisfaction with teaching methods, it is clear that feedback quality and assessment clarity remain under-addressed aspects in the majority of speaking classes.

In addition, some students noted that passive pedagogy and lack of two-way communication lessened their interest—echoing Wathoni et al. (2021) in calling for more interactive and responsive pedagogical models in order to sustain student engagement.

c. Social and Classroom Environment

Classroom social dynamics were found to be both facilitating and inhibiting. While the majority felt at ease working with their classmates, a big number of the students still feared being criticized and laughed at by their peers—particularly in speaking activities. These findings are corroborated by Zolkapli et al. (2023), who highlight the contribution of safe, non-threatening classroom environments to enabling learner participation. Such a dichotomy would suggest that peer influence can function both as a motivational stimulator and as a demotivating factor, depending on the degree of emotional safety experienced by the learner.

d. Institutional and Technological Constraints

Among the most prominent results was the negative impact on students' willingness to speak brought about by online learning platforms. As over 70% of the respondents expressed discomfort in online speaking classes, the results align with existing studies (e.g., Nugroho, 2022; Talpur et al., 2021) proving that online platforms have a tendency to limit the free flow of communication, reduce spontaneous interaction, and heighten anxiety triggered by technical interruptions.

Recurring issues such as poor internet connection, lack of access to supporting digital tools, and the unnaturalness of online speaking activities were listed as major hindrances. As İsaoglu (2020) emphasized, technological readiness along with institutional support is necessary for effective teaching of speaking, especially in online settings.

IMPLICATIONS

Such findings point to the fact that demotivation does not stem from a single but a complex interplay of emotional, instructional, social, and infrastructural factors. Teachers must become more student-centered and empathetic, more explicit in their evaluation criteria, and create a classroom culture that permits risk-taking in speaking. Institutions, however, must invest in more interactive and stable online platforms and offer training for both students and teachers in order to be able to handle digital speaking contexts.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the current study was to unveil and explore the key sources of demotivation among students in English speaking classes. The results indicate that demotivation has its origin in four interconnected dimensions: psychological-emotional, pedagogical-instructional, social-classroom environment, and institutional-technical ones.

Among them, psychological barriers such as fear of making mistakes, not feeling confident enough, and fearing others' judgment were the most common. Pedagogical issues, particularly the lack of clear feedback and assessment, were also contributory in decreasing the students' motivational level. In spite of the fact that the class environment was perceived as extremely positive, a significant number of the students still felt anxious about speaking up due to social pressure. Virtual learning environments and technological limitations also added to students' inhibition in engaging in speech activity.

These findings point to the imperative of addressing demotivation holistically. English instructors have to create emotionally supportive learning environments, keep open and constructive assessment practices, and foster cooperative classrooms. At an institutional level, the provision of stable technological infrastructure and empowering teachers with strategies of interactive speaking pedagogy offline and online are equally important.

Lastly, the speaking demotivation requires a multi-dimensional and sympathetic solution in consideration of learners' inner problems as well as outer environments where they are studying. With sympathy and elimination of these causative factors, schools, teachers, and students can increase motivation and develop more confident and proficient English speakers.

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