

Role of Motivation in Enhancing Speaking Skills in the English Language Classroom in Nepal

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Abstract

Motivation is crucial for second language learners. It impacts learners' engagement, confidence, and willingness to learn. The aim of this study is to investigate the role of motivation in enhancing speaking skills in English language classrooms in Nepal. The present study attempts to explore the role of motivational strategies such as role-play, picture describing, and conversation in developing students' speaking skills. I adopted an action research design, which was qualitative in nature. The steps of the research included 1) planning, 2) implementing, 3) observing, and 4) evaluating or reflecting. The required data were collected through tests. The sample size included twenty-eight students from grade 10 in Shree Siddhakali Secondary School in the Taplejung district of Nepal. The test scores of all four tests showed significant increments, which indicates that motivational strategies played a constructive role in developing students' speaking ability. The findings underscore the significance of positive teacher-student interactions, technology integration, and addressing language anxiety in nurturing learners' motivation. This research provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and language learning institutions to design effective strategies that foster a supportive and motivating learning environment, ultimately empowering ESL learners to achieve their language learning goals.

Keywords: Motivation, Strategies, Competence, Influences, Factors, Esl

Introduction

English has become a widely used international language in today's globalized world. It has been taught in schools, colleges, and universities as a compulsory subject (Ly, 2022). Motivation is crucial for students to engage in activities and develop language skills (Adhikari, 2025). Motivation, in the context of language learning, refers to the inner drive and desire that pushes learners to engage, persist, and excel in acquiring a new language (Beyene et al., 2024).

Motivation is a pivotal factor in successful second language acquisition (SLA), particularly regarding speaking skills among secondary-level students (Nurhidayah, 2020). It directly

influences learners' willingness to communicate (WTC), engagement, effort, and persistence, which are essential for developing oral proficiency (Aladini & Gheisari, 2025). It is a central concept in psychology that drives behavior, influences cognitive processes, and ultimately shapes an individual's actions, goals, and desires. It is the internal mechanism that initiates, guides, and sustains goal-oriented behavior (Filgona et al., 2020). Understanding motivation is crucial for explaining why individuals engage in certain behaviors and how they prioritize their goals. Motivation is often defined as the psychological process that influences the initiation, direction, intensity, and persistence of behavior. It can be broadly understood as the "why" behind any

action. Various psychological theories have defined motivation in different ways, but most definitions converge on the idea that motivation is a force that drives individuals to fulfill their needs, desires, or goals (Braver et al., 2014).

Motivation acts as the driving force that encourages learners to practice speaking, overcome hesitation, and take risks in communication (Duyen & Hao, 2023). Speaking is one of the most essential skills in language learning, as it enables learners to express ideas, share experiences, and engage in meaningful communication (Al-Khresheh, 2024). However, developing strong speaking skills often requires more than just linguistic knowledge—it demands confidence, persistence, and active participation. This is where motivation plays a crucial role (Buesaquillo Buesaquillo & Rodríguez Velásquez, 2018). It can be intrinsic, arising from personal interest, enjoyment, or a desire for self-improvement, or extrinsic, driven by external rewards such as grades, recognition, or career opportunities. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors play crucial roles, and the classroom environment, teacher practices, tasks, and peer interactions significantly mediate its effects (Asadpour et al., 2025). When learners are motivated, they are more likely to engage in conversations, seek feedback, and consistently work on improving their fluency and accuracy. In the context of language learning, motivation not only boosts the willingness to speak but also helps reduce anxiety, build self-confidence, and sustain long-term progress (Welesilassie & Nikolov, 2022). Therefore, understanding and fostering motivation is essential for teachers, trainers, and learners to create an environment where speaking skills can flourish naturally and effectively.

Language learning, particularly in the context of English as a Second Language (ESL), is a multifaceted process influenced by various factors. Among these, motivation stands out as a crucial element. Motivation is not just the driving force behind the decision to learn a new language; it also plays a significant role in

the effectiveness and efficiency of the learning process (Lapadat & Lapadat, 2024). Motivation in language learning can be defined as the learner's desire, willingness, and effort to learn and master a language. It's a complex blend of the learner's internal desires and external factors that push them towards achieving their language learning goals (Papi & Hiver, 2020). The importance of motivation cannot be overstated – it directly influences the learner's persistence, attitude, and ultimately, their success in acquiring a new language.

English language is prioritized in Nepal's schooling education (Bista, 2011; Shrestha & Gautam, 2022). However, learners' speaking skills remain limited, emphasizing the role of motivation. This research aims to explore the role of motivation in enhancing speaking skills in the English language classroom in Nepal. This article identifies the different aspects of motivation in language learning, its types, impacts, and strategies to enhance it.

Literature Review

The review section is structured into: types of motivation and motivation theories, suggesting gaps that lay the foundation to conduct this research.

Types of Motivation

Amotivation is often seen as a lack of motivation or a complete absence of intention, and it is typically the result of low self-efficacy or a mismatch between an individual's goals and their perceived ability to achieve them (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Based on the source or nature of the driving force, motivation can be categorized into intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and a motivational state. More nuanced types of motivation have been introduced through specific theoretical models, such as achievement motivation and social motivation.

Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity for its inherent satisfaction, enjoyment, or personal interest (Oudeyer & Kaplan, 2007).

It is driven by internal factors, such as a sense of accomplishment, personal growth, or the pleasure derived from the activity itself. Individuals who are intrinsically motivated perform tasks because they find them interesting, engaging, or fulfilling, rather than to receive external rewards (Morris et al., 2022).

For example, a person who enjoys reading for pleasure is intrinsically motivated because they derive satisfaction from the activity itself, rather than from any tangible reward. Similarly, an artist may engage in painting purely for the enjoyment of expressing their creativity. According to Ryan & Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory (SDT), intrinsic motivation is characterized by autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When individuals feel they are in control of their actions (autonomy), capable of achieving their goals (competence), and connected to others (relatedness), they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated (Bandhu et al., 2024).

Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation, in contrast, refers to engaging in an activity not because it is inherently enjoyable, but because it leads to external rewards or outcomes (Legault et al., 2020). These rewards can be tangible, such as money or prizes, or intangible, such as praise, recognition, or approval from others. Extrinsic motivation involves performing a task to achieve a specific outcome, such as getting a promotion, passing a test, or avoiding punishment (Hennessey et al., 2015).

For instance, a student may study hard to get a good grade or receive a scholarship, rather than out of genuine interest in the subject. Similarly, an employee may work overtime to earn a bonus or to avoid criticism from their boss. In Self-Determination Theory (SDT), extrinsic motivation is divided into different types, ranging from more controlled to more autonomous forms of motivation:

- **External regulation:** This is the most controlled form of extrinsic motivation, where behavior is driven by external

demands, rewards, or punishments.

- **Introjected regulation:** In this form, individuals perform an activity to avoid guilt or anxiety, or to gain approval from others.
- **Identified regulation:** Here, individuals recognize the value of an activity and engage in it for personal reasons, even if they don't enjoy the activity itself.
- **Integrated regulation:** This is the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation, where the activity is fully integrated into one's values and beliefs, making it more intrinsically motivating (Thøgersen-Ntoumani & Ntoumanis, 2006).

Achievement Motivation

Achievement motivation is a form of motivation that drives individuals to pursue success and accomplishment in competitive and goal-oriented environments. People with high achievement motivation are driven by the desire to achieve excellence, overcome challenges, and attain mastery in specific domains, such as academics, sports, or work (Werdhiastutie et al., 2020). The concept of achievement motivation was first introduced by David McClelland (1961, cited in Ogunbiyi-Davies et al., 2023), who argued that individuals differ in their need for achievement, which can be defined as the drive to accomplish goals, meet standards, and succeed in challenging tasks.

Social Motivation

Social motivation involves the desire to establish and maintain relationships, connect with others, and gain social approval or belonging. It is driven by the need to feel accepted, loved, and supported by others. Social motivation can include the desire for friendship, family connections, romantic relationships, and social recognition (Chevallier et al., 2012).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) outlines social motivation as one of the key factors in human behavior, placed at the third level of the pyramid, following physiological and safety

needs. According to Maslow, once basic survival needs are met, individuals are motivated to seek love, belonging, and social connections, which are critical for psychological well-being (Kaze et al., 2024; Maslow, 1943).

Although motivation has been studied extensively through intrinsic, extrinsic, achievement, and social perspectives (Chevallier et al., 2012; Maslow, 1943; McClelland, 1961, cited in Ogunbiyi-Davies et al., 2023; Ryan & Deci, 2000), there is limited research on how these types of motivation influence English speaking skills in Nepalese classrooms. Most studies focus on general learning outcomes or Western contexts, neglecting the unique socio-cultural and pedagogical environment in Nepal, such as teacher-centered instruction and limited English exposure. Furthermore, the interaction of different motivational types and their specific effects on students' oral communication skills remains underexplored. This research addresses this gap by examining how various motivational factors enhance speaking proficiency among Nepali learners of English.

Motivation Theories

Several key theories of motivation have helped shape our understanding of the different types of motivation and how they influence human behavior. Some of the most influential theories include:

- **Self-Determination Theory (SDT)** (Ryan & Deci, 2000): This theory differentiates between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, emphasizing the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering motivation. SDT suggests that individuals are more motivated when they feel in control of their actions and when those actions align with their values and interests.
- **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs** (Maslow, 1943): This theory posits that humans are motivated by a hierarchy of needs, ranging from basic physiological needs to self-actualization. Motivation progresses as individuals satisfy their lower-order needs

(e.g., food, safety) and move toward higher-order needs, such as social connection and self-fulfillment.

- **Expectancy Theory** (Vroom, 1964, cited in Permzadian & Shen, 2024): According to this theory, individuals are motivated by the expected outcomes of their actions. Motivation is determined by the perceived probability that effort will lead to a desired outcome (expectancy), the value placed on the outcome (valence), and the belief that the outcome will lead to rewards (instrumentality).
- **Goal-Setting Theory** (Locke & Latham, 2002): This theory suggests that individuals are motivated by setting specific and challenging goals. According to Locke and Latham, goal commitment, feedback, and task complexity are important factors in achieving motivation through goal-setting.
- **Attribution Theory** (Weiner, 1985): This theory focuses on how individuals attribute their successes or failures to various causes, such as ability, effort, task difficulty, or luck. These attributions influence motivation, as individuals tend to be more motivated when they believe that success is within their control.

Many theories explain motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Maslow, 1943; Vroom, 1964; Locke & Latham, 2002; Weiner, 1985). However, few studies focus on speaking skills in Nepal. English classrooms in Nepal have teacher-centered methods and limited English practice. We do not know which motivational strategies help students speak better. This research gap is addressed in this study.

Research Methodology

This research applied action research (Tripathi, 2022) in grade 10 of Shree Siddhakali Secondary Public School, Phungling Municipality-8, Taplejung. The population of this study was secondary level students (class 10 students), with a sample of twenty-eight students. Among them,

17 were girls and 11 were boys from class 10. Usually, action research consists of four steps: 1) planning, 2) implementing, 3) observing, and 4) evaluating or reflecting (Indriyanti & Prasetyo, 2018). I also followed the same to explore the Role of Motivation in Enhancing Speaking Skills in the English Language Classroom in Nepal. Ethical guidelines were ensured by seeking permission from the school administration to conduct the research. I sought informed consent, maintained participants' anonymity and confidentiality, and ensured voluntary participation of researchers (Ederio et al., 2023).

Findings

This section is structured into four parts: planning, implementing, observing, and evaluating/reflecting.

Planning

In this study, four aspects for English language speaking are analyzed i.e. vocabulary, grammar, content and pronunciation. English vocabulary refers to the lexical knowledge that encompasses the words and their meanings in English language. Grammar is the system of rules governing how words, phrases, and clauses are structured to form meaningful communication in speech and writing. Content refers to the information, subjects or materials contained with something written, said, created or represented something. Pronunciation refers to the way a word or language is spoken, involving the production of sounds, stress, rhythm and intonation.

After selecting the sample, a pre-test was administered. It was done to find out an existing speaking ability of the learners. The result showed that students speaking ability was not satisfactory. Then, I used to motivational techniques and intervened the students for four weeks. I motivated the students by generating students' interest, encouraging positive retrospective and self-evaluation during my actions. I conducted two progress tests in the interval of four weeks. The progress tests result showed the progress of the students' in speaking ability. After completion of 14 lessons, I conducted post-test. Later the score of all four

tests were compared with each other. In the research the questionnaire, describing pictures, providing content were used as research tools for collecting data. Real data was collected through the circulation of questionnaire, describing pictures, and providing contents.

Implementing

Students were tested after motivating and result was found in the following:

Table 1. Analysis of Speaking in four aspects

S.N.	Item	Result in Percent
1	Vocabulary	23.40
2	Grammar	25.00
3	Content	32.60
4	Pronunciation	19.00

Table 1 shows the average score achieved by all the students in four different language items. Their average score in vocabulary was 23.4. Similarly, their average score in grammar was 25, On the other hand, their average score in content 32.6, Likewise, their average score in pronunciation was 19. As seen, pronunciation and vocabulary were the weak points for the students as they achieved the lowest average of 19 and 23.4 respectively. After the test, it was found that the students were strong in content. So, it was found that most of the English language learners were weak in pronunciation and vocabulary but they were able to express themselves in given content and situations. The use of vocabulary of students from class 10 of this school also was poor. They did not have a wide range of vocabulary. There was wrong use of vocabulary as well. It was found that only few active vocabularies were known to them. There was very less use of conjunctions, phrasal verbs, phrase and even the use of parts of speech like adjectives, adverbs, pronoun, etc. was not proper. Due to the lack of vocabulary exposure, they were limited in expression. Students had difficulties in proper use of demonstrative pronouns as well. They were mixing present, past and future tense in same type of sentences or same in language environment. They were found

using wrong subject-verb agreement as well. They seemed to have lack of exposure towards the proper use of singular and plural subjects and their verb agreement.

Observing

It was found that the most of the students were poor in pronunciation and vocabulary. They were poor in pronunciation. Most of the words they pronounced wrong. They were relatively poorer in vocabulary as they were repeating some of the words time and again to express themselves in the given situations. In grammar, they use past and present without considering time. They missed using subjective verbs and agreements too. So they were even seen poor in grammar too. They were seen comparatively active for speaking with contents. However, motivation empowered students for speaking freely. It was found that the students were good on content. Most of them were able to express themselves on given content even though sometimes they were misleading. Most of the students were not able to pronounce the words correctly. The findings of the study reveals that students' motivation is largely ignored at intermediate level. Furthermore, the researcher noticed that the intermediate level students' motivations are generally based as extrinsic not intrinsic. Teacher's role is mandatory for motivating students for encouraging them to speak English language. It has found that the students faced problems in pronouncing some of the words while describing the pictures or answering the questions. The major issue was lack of English speakers to interact with. Another problem was the use of students' mother tongue in the classroom. Due to that they often hesitated to speak English language. So, motivation helps for reducing hesitation for speaking skill.

Evaluating/Reflecting

Speaking is an act of making vocal sounds. We can say that speaking means to converse, or express ones thought and feeling in spoken language. Speaking skill allows the speaker to convey his/her message thoughtfully and in convincing manner. My focus in this study was to find out the

students' performance and challenges in speaking skill in terms of vocabulary, grammar, contents and pronunciation. To attain the objectives, I selected 28 students from the public schools. The students were good at contents, they were not so good at grammar and they were also not able to pronounce many of the words correctly. It is seen that the performance of the students was not so good in many aspects of English. So, it is very important to focus on all aspects of language equally to get a complete mastery over it. Even though the prime focus of my research study was on speaking performance of students, it also gives an account for the comparison of different aspects of language. In addition to this, my study tried to find out the level of students in terms of their vocabulary, grammar, contents and pronunciation. It can be said that motivation plays vital role in development of speaking skill of language. So, we have to involve learners for fostering a supportive, engaging environment by connecting lessons to their lives providing positive and specific feedback on their effort.

Discussions of Findings

The findings of this study show that motivation plays a crucial role in enhancing students' speaking skills in the English classroom in Nepal. Students performed better in content but struggled with pronunciation and vocabulary. This aligns with previous studies that emphasize the importance of motivation in language learning, especially for oral skills (Adhikari & Pasa, 2021; Adhikari, 2025; Beyene et al., 2024). Motivated students were more willing to participate, express their ideas, and take risks in speaking. The use of motivational techniques, such as generating interest and encouraging self-evaluation, helped students speak more freely and reduced hesitation. This supports the idea that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are necessary to engage learners actively in communication (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Asadpour et al., 2025).

The study also shows that grammar and vocabulary errors were common among learners, which limited their ability to communicate

accurately. Motivation influenced their effort to use language correctly and attempt new words, even if mistakes occurred. These findings agree with previous research highlighting that motivation is linked to learners' willingness to communicate (Nurhidayah, 2020; Aladini & Gheisari, 2025). The results suggest that motivation not only encourages participation but also supports learners in practicing and improving specific language aspects such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (Filgona et al., 2020; Welesilassie & Nikolov, 2022).

Finally, the classroom environment and teacher support were found to be critical in motivating students. Teacher encouragement, providing meaningful tasks, and creating opportunities for English use helped students engage more in speaking activities (Ly, 2022; Buesaquillo Buesaquillo & Rodríguez Velásquez, 2018). However, challenges such as limited English exposure and the use of mother tongue in class affected students' confidence. This confirms the research gap identified in the literature, where the interaction of different motivational types and their effects on speaking skills in Nepalese classrooms remains underexplored (Ryan & Deci, 2000; McClelland, 1961 as cited in Ogunbiyi-Davies et al., 2023; Maslow, 1943; Chevallier et al., 2012). Overall, motivation is a key factor that teachers need to foster to enhance English speaking proficiency effectively.

Conclusion and Implication

This study found that motivation significantly enhances students' English-speaking skills. Students performed best in content but struggled with pronunciation and vocabulary, while grammar was moderate. Motivational techniques, such as generating interest, self-evaluation, and positive feedback, helped students speak more confidently. The study was limited by a small sample size, a single school setting, and a four-week intervention. Future research could explore different types of motivation over longer periods and across multiple schools. The findings imply that teachers should use motivational strategies, create engaging English-speaking opportunities,

and provide feedback to improve learners' oral skills. Overall, motivation is key to developing speaking proficiency and confidence in English.

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