

Rupantaran: A Multidisciplinary Journal

Vol. X: PP 72-83, May, 2026

ISSN(Print) : 2091-0061, ISSN (Electronic): 2738-9960

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/rupantaran.v10i01.94569>

Research Management Cell (RMC)

Dhankuta Multiple Campus, Dhankuta

Tribhuvan University, Nepal

Encouraging English Speaking through Targeted Motivational Strategies: An Action Research

Pradeep Rai¹ Keshar Nepal²

Email: kesharnepal077@gmail.com

Abstract

Motivation plays very important role in learning the language. This collaborative action research uses motivational strategies to help create an English-speaking atmosphere in English classrooms. English language teachers are often found using force to create such an atmosphere in their classrooms. This research aims at analyzing the teacher led strategies and investigating motivational strategies to encourage students to speak English. Imposing the rule of ‘English-only’ and punishing students for speaking in languages other than English (in this case, Nepali) can have negative repercussions: students may speak even less, or may not speak at all due to fear or hesitation. The same situation was identified in an English-medium private school through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with English teachers and students separately. Suggested by the FGDs and informed by the review of relevant literature, some motivational strategies were formulated and implemented as an intervention. A month-long classroom observation showed that if students are properly motivated, they will speak in English freely and voluntarily, without the need for enforcement. However, a few limitations to the effectiveness of the motivational strategies were also identified, such as the short-lived nature of motivation, insufficient class time for interaction, and students’ preference for intrinsic over extrinsic motivation. The study concludes that well-planned

¹ Mr. Rai (Principal Author) is a Teaching Assistant of English Tribhuvan University, Dhankuta Multiple Campus, Dhankuta, Nepal ORCID: 0009-0003-4504-5333

² Mr. Nepal (Corresponding Author) is a Lecturer of English Education at Tribhuvan University, Dhankuta Multiple Campus, Dhankuta, Nepal ORCID: 0009-0001-5795-3350

motivational strategies can contribute to creating a better and healthier English-speaking atmosphere in the classroom.

Keywords: motivation, motivational strategies, punishment, collaborative action research

Introduction

Private English boarding schools are generally known for creating English-speaking atmosphere within the school premises (Giri, 2021; Dhungana, 2022). At least, English teachers of those schools are expected to create English-speaking atmosphere inside their classroom. Mostly, these teachers use force to make their students speak in English. However, mere compulsion puts students under great pressure and fear and may cause them to hesitate even more, and lose confidence. This will only discourage or suppress learning, rather than enhance it, which is definitely not the goal of English teachers. So, English teachers ought to be aware of this problem and try to find ways of motivating the students in such a way that they will willingly or automatically begin to speak in English. Tragedies are important because simply trying to encourage the students saying things like, “Speak in English. The more you speak, the better you will become. Even when you feel difficulty to say something in English, try your best to say in English. Practice will make you perfect...,” may not actually help. The students need to be enabled to speak in English by providing them necessary support related to discourse content and communicative skills. Hence, this action research formulated some working motivational strategies and implemented them as an intervention, expecting improvement in the existing situation of English-speaking atmosphere.

According to Dornyei (2001), motivational strategies are “methods and techniques to generate and maintain the learners’ motivation” (p. 2). In the context of learning English as a Second Language (ESL) or as a Foreign Language (EFL) like in Nepal, Ellis (1994) defines motivation as “the effort which learners put into learning an L2 as a result of their need or desire to learn it” (p. 715). So, motivational strategies are the techniques or strategically planned activities aimed at making the learners voluntarily put the required effort into learning the second language.

Various scholars have suggested various strategies for making students speak English in class. James (n.d.), an ESL/EFL teacher from UK, advises to rephrase the question from ‘How to make my students speak English?’ to ‘How to inspire my students to speak English?’ This strategy, according to him, will help a teacher come up with a plethora of lessons where his or her students will actually want to speak English and then s/he won’t need to make them. Setting out expectations early, rewarding and punishing, wall posting, allowing for student’s choice, inspiring, creating a diverse student body (making students of two or more different nationalities sit together),

zoning (creating English-not-compulsory site somewhere outside the classroom), etc. are some of the strategies suggested by him for getting ESL/EFL students to talk in English.

Steve (2023), an English Language Teacher, lists out the possible reasons for students' reluctance to speak English in the classroom: introvert nature, being lost for words, lack of confidence, caring too much about grammatical accuracy, not being able to get their mother tongue out of their minds, and fear of embarrassment before their classmates. To motivate the students to come out of their shell and speak English, he suggests cultivating a culture of respect in the classroom, using authentic materials, introducing grammar only if it's going to enhance students' conversation skills, helping students think in English, and getting them to open up.

Marie (2025), an English educator, observes that the students love talking when the teachers want them to listen, but unfortunately, they are told to keep silent. According to her, fear of messing up (or making mistake), introvert nature, lack of confidence, and not being sure what to say are some common obstacles for students in speaking English. Her prescription to overcome these obstacles contains eliminating pressure, holding competition, finding relevant topics, creating opportunities, and setting goals, among others.

Dornyei (2001) has theorized a process-oriented approach to motivational teaching practice. According to this approach, the process of motivation begins with creating the basic motivational conditions, which refers to creating a pleasant and supportive atmosphere in the classroom coupled with appropriate teacher behavior. Having thus created a favorable classroom environment, initial motivation is generated by increasing the learners' goal-orientedness and expectancy of success. Once initiated, motivation should be maintained and protected by making learning stimulating and enjoyable through different learner-centered activities. Finally, positive retrospective self-evaluation is encouraged in learners by providing them motivational feedback and rewards. Dornyei's ideas are for the whole of teaching and learning process, but they can be well related and narrowed down to apply in one particular area only at hand, that is, speaking the language.

Amoah and Yehoah (2021) identify the reasons for speaking inhibition among Chinese EFL learners. These reasons are mainly psychological factors like anxiety, fear of mistake, and fear of negative evaluation. Linguistic factors such as lack of vocabulary, pronunciation and insufficient knowledge of grammar rules were other reasons. Based on the findings of the research, the authors give recommendations like creating anxiety-reducing environment in the class and conducting regular oral presentations and classroom debates to boost speaking confidence. Likewise, to

overcome linguistic difficulty, they recommend watching native English movies, news, documentaries, and talk shows, reading literature, learning vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation, and so on. Similarly, Andhara and Alfian (2023) investigate Indonesian secondary level students' difficulties in speaking English. They find students' deficiency in English vocabulary and grammar, and fear of being judged, among the difficulties. Knowing these findings is important as they reflect the learning difficulties in speaking English in EFL context, which is also the context of Nepalese students.

Shrestha (2021), a school teacher, did an exploratory action research on the problem because his students hesitated communicating in English with each other though his school was reputed for being an English medium school. Students spoke more in Nepali than in English, though the textbooks used in all subjects (except Nepali) were in English. In his observation, his students could be found speaking Nepali here and there. The students spoke English only in rare cases or in front of teachers, but they tried to speak Nepali even in English class. After conducting the action research, Shrestha found that "peer pressure" in the form of teasing, humiliation, and segregation was the main reason behind this situation. He also observed in his students the lack of tendency to learn from each other. Similarly, the students were also found of lacking proper vocabulary and grammar for day-to-day English conversation and have no confidence while speaking English. Besides, the teachers at the school were not speaking in English with each other, and the students thought that they ought to speak in English with only the English teachers. As his intervention plan, Shrestha formed English Speaking Monitoring Committee in the coordination of the Vice-Principal. Particularly, he used student-centered teaching methods in his class which were meant to motivate the students to speak in English. His new teaching methods included pair/group discussions, role play, brainstorming, storytelling, interviews, story completion, reporting, and picture describing. In more than a month's observation, the situation was found to be improved. He observed that the students started opening up more and asking more questions to him, and they were always ready to take part in any classroom activity that he assigned to them. They were friendlier and more supportive to him. This shows that action research can be a very good means to improve the practice of English teachers and bring about the desired change in the field of English language teaching.

The literature implies that students' reluctance to speak English is driven more by psychological barriers such as fear of judgment, anxiety, and a lack of confidence than a simple lack of knowledge. To address this, teachers must shift from a traditional, authority-based approach to a "motivational" one that prioritizes creating a safe, supportive classroom culture. By using action research to identify local challenges like peer teasing or linguistic gaps, and implementing student-centered activities like role-

plays and group discussions, educators can transform the classroom into a low-pressure environment where students feel inspired to speak voluntarily rather than being forced to do so.

Methods and Materials

his action research first explored English teachers' use of force to create English-speaking atmosphere in class in an English-medium Secondary school. It sought to find answers to the questions like: How are teachers trying to create English-speaking atmosphere in their classroom? What are the problems they have faced while trying to do so? Have they ever tried to use any motivational strategy? Such exploration helped to identify the problem in the teachers' teaching practice. Then, the researcher formulated a set of motivational strategies and with the help of the teachers used them in the class as an intervention and observed the result

This study has followed qualitative research design. It uses focus group discussion (FGD) with English teachers of an English medium school of Dhankuta district to explore their practice of creating English-speaking atmosphere. Altogether five English teachers were engaged in the FGD. Two female teachers taught English in Grade 1 to 5. One female teacher taught in Grade 6 to 8. And one male teacher taught in Grade 9 and 10, and another male teacher taught in Grade 11 and 12. They were asked pre-set questions and were encouraged to respond freely giving factual information about the situation of English-speaking atmosphere in their English classes and about their practices as English teachers in creating such atmosphere. With the participants' prior consent, the researchers recorded the FGD with the help of a mobile phone. They also, later, conducted a similar kind of FGDs with Grade 11 and 12 students regarding their unwillingness and difficulty to speak English in the classroom.

After the FGDs were conducted, the researchers transcribed the participants' responses, and analyzed them in relation to the research questions. Combining insights gained from the FGDs and the review of the relevant literature, they then formulated a set of motivational strategies to use in the class as an intervention plan to bring about the positive change in the existing scenario. These motivational strategies are very carefully planned activities that are expected to help overcome the speaking difficulties and enable and encourage students to speak in English.

The following table shows these motivational strategies/activities along with their expected effects or outcomes for motivation. We have not used any specific motivational battery recommended by the established studies. We have compiled these activities from various literature related to our research. These are the motivational activities informed and supported by the established theories of motivation and learner engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Dornyei, 2001; Ushioda, 2020).

Table 1*Motivational Strategy and Expected Outcome for Motivation*

S.N.	Motivational Strategy/Activity	Expected Effect/Outcome for Motivation
1	Think, Pair, Share	pair discussion; interaction; content enrichment; the weak is assisted by the smarter one;
2	Audio-visual and picture-assisted learning	immediate arousal of interest; removes boredom; triggers thoughts for saying something
3	Learning exponents and role-play	language support; knowledge of context-specific vocabularies and expressions; overcomes
4	Speech delivery on the topic of the student's choice	develops a habit of research and self-study; overcomes shyness and hesitation; develops self-
5	Language games	immediate arousal of interest; removes boredom; fun, excitement, refreshment

“Think, Pair and Share” as the first activity, was designed to engage student in collaborative and interactive exercise. Pairing up was preferred to group division because both students in a pair would get the opportunity to speak and interact with each other, whereas, in a group of more than two students, one could be left out of the interaction. So, to ensure that every student involved in interaction, the students were paired up and made to read and discuss in the pair for a certain period of time. While pairing up, a weak or less-speaking student was usually paired up with a smart or much-speaking one so that the weak would get help from the smarter one. While discussing, the students were allowed to speak in Nepali too, so that they could share their problems and ideas freely. However, they had to share or present before the whole class in English afterwards. A few students were randomly picked to present the ideas gained from the discussion. The teacher then asked some questions that any willing student could answer, or the teacher sometimes directly called a student's name and asked the question. The unanswered questions were later answered or clarified by the teacher before the class period ended.

The second activity, audio-visual and picture-assisted learning, was designed to immediately capture attention of students, and provide them rich content for thought and engagement, along with refreshment. Such pictures and audio-visuals had power to trigger thoughts and emotions in students, arousing desire to say something about the subject.

The third activity, learning conversation exponents and role-play, was designed to provide linguistic support and practice for actual conversation in English in real-life situations. The students were given a list of English exponents and taught language functions rather than the sentence structures. They were taught to use right expression in right context and provided practice for conversation through role play.

The fourth activity, speech delivery, was designed to provide students with speaking practice and build confidence in them. The speciality of this strategy was allowing the students to prepare their speech on any topic or subject matter of their choice or interest. They could even prepare the content of their speech from some chapters or lessons already learnt in the class. Each student was encouraged to deliver a speech in his or her turn, set alphabetically by their name, one student each day. Once everyone had got the turn, the cycle was repeated.

The fifth activity, language learning games, was designed to create fun-filled, flexible environment to practice speaking. Mostly the game called 'hot seat' was played, where one student sat on the chair facing his/her classmates, then behind his/her back, the teacher wrote something on the board and asked other students to describe the word for their friend sitting on the hot seat. The teacher forbade them from using Nepali or any sign language or gesture. The students who were motivated to speak tried their best to speak in English and describe the words as well as possible.

Under the guidance of the researcher, the respective English teachers applied these motivational strategies/activities carefully and systematically in Grade 6 and 7 (the Basic level) and Grade 11 and 12 (the Secondary level). These four grades were chosen conveniently, as the teachers who taught in these grades were ready to cooperate and also because their class time fitted with the researcher's time. The researchers observed the classes for a month, and recorded the findings. The respective teachers also kept their own record of the observation, and submitted to the researcher later.

Results and Discussion

After collecting data, it was analyzed thematically and the result was discussed separately based on the data collected from the different tools.

Findings of FGDs

During FGDs, it was found that all the teachers were mainly using force to make their students speak in English. They did not usually give physical punishment, but psychological punishments like scolding, charging fine and making the students feel ashamed before others were commonly used. When asked about the effect of using force, the participants shared, though hesitantly, that it made some students speak in English but discouraged some others due to fear, pressure, hesitation, and humiliation. As a result, the students became even less speaking or not speaking at all.

The participant teachers realized that they were not using the right means for creating English-speaking atmosphere in their classrooms. Knowingly or unknowingly, they were using force, but they were also using some of the means of motivation, either consciously or non-consciously, but not in a systematic way. A teacher named Priya (pseudo name) said “We are compelled to force the students to speak English and English only to improve their English language. Otherwise, they may not learn the language and the students will not be happy and will not be ready to pay the fees”. Mainly the two senior-most teachers who taught in Grade 9 and 10, and in Grade 11 and 12 were found to be using such strategies of motivation. The overall motivational strategies being used by these five English teachers from Grade one to Grade twelve included clapping and praising the students who spoke in English, or rewarding them with chocolates, teaching new words, appointing them as monitors, conducting speech and debate competitions, using audio-visuals in the class, recommending the students to listen to BBC English news and watching English movies, and giving them various task-based assignments. These strategies were used now and then, alongside means of force, and not in any strategically planned or systematic way.

The FGDs with the students of Grade 11 and 12 helped identify the reasons that why they didn't speak or didn't like to speak in English in the class. The reasons they told included the habit of speaking in Nepali, not having enough words to express thoughts in English, and fear of making grammatical mistakes.

Findings of Intervention

Think, Pair, and Share strategy was a very effective practice for making students interact with friends and share their understanding. Most of the students enjoyed the activity. They were motivated to interact and speak to their friends. They mostly discussed things in Nepali, but afterwards, when they had to share or present their understanding to others, they felt encouraged to speak and share their ideas in English. The discussion gave them ideas or points to share. They didn't have to go completely blank; they only needed to put the ideas they had gained into English language. Most of the students were able to speak at least a couple of sentences on the subject matter.

Especially in Grades 6 and 7, the strategy of ‘Pair, Share, and Present’ was found to be most effective. In one of the observations in Grade 6, one student, who normally spoke in the class, was extra-excited to speak in English and did very well during the presentation. He also answered the teacher’s questions very well. He seemed to have understood the subject matter quite well and was well-motivated to talk about it. His motivation seemed to have been boosted by the ‘Think, Pair, and Share’ activity. Similarly, in Grade 7, the teacher once made the students read the story from the book and discuss their understanding in pairs for about 15 minutes. Then, she showed a picture depicting the event in the story and asked some of the students to describe it. Almost all of the students she asked were able to tell something about the picture. Most of the students seemed well-encouraged to speak in English.

Audio-visual and picture-assisted learning also showed positive results as expected. Immediate motivation was seen in many students. It removed the students’ boredom and aroused unseen interest in them. Many videos triggered their thoughts and, when asked afterwards, they had some ideas to speak about. Some students spoke promptly in response to the teacher’s query. Particularly, when the content of the video was of real interest to the students, it was not difficult to see the motivation to speak taking place in them.

The conversational words and expressions that the students were taught also helped the students to express their ideas and opinions in English in school or classroom contexts. In particular, the students of Grades 6 and 7 were found using the learnt expressions without any hesitation. They also enjoyed the role play and were more eager and quicker to learn than their seniors.

In speech delivery, many students felt difficulty at the first attempt, but from the second time, they were found to feel it easier. In the beginning, the teacher had to insist most of the students, but from the second time the students were found more confident, more un-opposing, and performing better. When the researcher asked the students how they were feeling about the practice of speech delivery and whether it should be continued or not, many students expressed their liking to it and wanted to have it continued, showing their motivation and a sense of empowerment. Prem Sharma (pseudo name) said “Sir the new strategy has made me ready to speak English among the friends and teacher. It has really changed my mentality and developed confidence in speaking English.” It shows that the students’ attitude towards the practice of speaking in English had changed.

Language learning games also proved to be a powerful strategy for motivating students. Even when the students were feeling bored and had no mood to study, they did not say no to playing games. The ‘hot seat’ game made many students speak with

excitement, and with their best efforts. Also, they did not care about the language mistakes at all. They just tried their best to put the ideas into words.

Thus, in a month-long implementation of the motivational strategies and the observation of students' behavior, most students were found to be motivated and speaking more in English. The ones who normally used to speak English were found speaking even more, and the ones who never spoke also gained some motivation and ability and started speaking in English. However, the students' motivation did not last long. It was short-lived especially among the students of Grade 11 and 12. The student who was found motivated in a particular activity on a certain day was not found motivated on some other day. The repeated use of the same type of motivational strategies also tended to bore the students. They sought variety in motivational strategies. Also, many students were not found to be self-motivated. When no motivational strategy was used, they reverted to speak in Nepali.

Grade 11 and 12 students, who are at the ripe age of their adolescence, clearly showed more desire for intrinsic motivation than for extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the motivation that arises from the feeling of pleasure and satisfaction in doing certain activity, whereas, extrinsic motivation is the motivation that arises from the external rewards or outcomes like good marks or good jobs (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Astuti, 2016). The activities or the learning contents that gave the students immediate and easy pleasure were more successful to get them to engage in the activity.

The next important realization was that 40 minutes of class time was not enough for activities like 'Think, Pair and Share'. Filled with ideas gained from the discussion, most of the students wanted to say something, but the remaining short time was not enough for all the interested students to share or present.

Conclusion

This action research concerns using motivational strategies to encourage students to speak in English; it doesn't make any specific exploration in the area of adolescent learning. So, it doesn't pursue this finding further. However, it can be a potential area for further action research.

The successful use of motivational strategies showed that we should not compel the students to speak in English. Compelling the students may have negative or opposite effects instead. If the students are motivated by providing needed content and language-related support, they will speak English voluntarily. But this motivation can be short-lived. So, there should be continuous and varied use of motivational strategies in the class. For better effect, especially among adolescent learners, it is better to use more strategies like gamification, story-telling, information gap activities, group discussion

etc. that provide intrinsic motivation. In addition, 40-minute class time is not enough for interactive sessions; it needs to be increased, at least, to 1 hour.

References

- Amoah, S., & Yeboah, J. (2021). The speaking difficulties of Chinese EFL learners and their motivation towards speaking the English language. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(1), 56-69. Doi: 10.52462/jlls.4
- Andhara, F. S., & Alfian, A. (2023). Investigating students' motivation to speak English in EFL classroom. *Journal of Education and Learning Innovation*, 3(2), 194-201. <https://doi.org/10.35877/454RI.eduline1724>
- Astuti, S. P. (2016). Exploring motivational strategies of successful teachers. *TEFLIN Journal*, 27(1), 1-22. DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.15639/teflinjournal.v27i1/1-22>
- Burns, A. (1999). *Collaborative action research for English language teachers*. Cambridge University Press.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227-268.
- Dornyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dhungana, A. (2022). An ethnographic study on the “Use of English Language by the Students of Grade nine” in a Private Boarding School of Chitwan. *Journal of Balkumari College*, 10(1), 53–60. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jbkc.v10i1.42094>
- Ellis, R. (1994). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford University Press.
- Giri, P. C. (2021). Application of English as a Medium of Instruction Policy in a Private School in Nepal: An Examination. *Journal of NELTA*, 26(1-2), 179–188. <https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v26i1-2.45214>
- James, T. (n.d.). *7 Ways to Motivate Students to Speak English*. ESLFREEWAY. <https://eslfreeway.com/how-to-make-my-students-speak-english/>
- Kumar, R. (2011). *Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners*. Sage.
- Marie, K. (2025, May 27). *How to Motivate Your ESL Students to Speak English in Class*. FluentU. <https://www.fluentu.com/blog/educator-english/how-to-motivate-students-to-speak-english/>
- Shrestha, P. R. (2021). Encouraging students to communicate in English. In L. Gyawali, S. Laudari, & S. Shrestha (Eds.), *Exploratory Action Research: Stories of Nepalese EFL Teachers* (pp. 64-78). Nepal English Language Teachers'

Association

(NELTA). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/379001262_Encouraging_students_to_communicate_in_English

Steve. (2023, November 20). What are the best ways to encourage students to speak English? *Personalized English Language Courses*.

<https://englishcoachonline.com/blog/encourage-students-speak-english/>

Ushioda, E. (2020). *Language learning motivation: An ethical agenda for research*. Oxford University Press.