



## **Students' Perceptions of Intrinsic Factors Influencing Motivation in Speaking Classes**

**Ruli Antika<sup>1</sup>, Nailul Authar<sup>2</sup>, Edi Pujo Basuki<sup>3</sup>, Mujad Didien Afandi<sup>4</sup>,  
Novi Rahmania Aquariza<sup>5</sup>**

Department of English Language Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,  
Nahdlatul Ulama University of Surabaya  
Email: [ruliantika12@gmail.com](mailto:ruliantika12@gmail.com)

### **ABSTRACT**

This study explores students' perceptions of intrinsic motivational factors that influence their participation in English speaking classes at an Indonesian junior high school. Based on Self-Determination Theory and self-concept in language learning, the study focuses on competence, autonomy, and self-concept as key factors affecting students' willingness to speak. Using a descriptive qualitative design, this research involved 48 students at a junior high school in Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia, with 25 students selected for semi-structured interviews after data saturation was reached. Data were collected through classroom observations and interviews over four weeks and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings show that competence was the most dominant factor, reported by 21 students, or 84%, as students felt more motivated when they completed speaking tasks successfully and received constructive feedback. Autonomy was reported by 18 students, or 72%, showing that topic and peer selection increased engagement. Self-concept was identified by 15 students, or 60%, indicating that students' positive image of themselves as future English speakers reduced anxiety and encouraged participation. This study concludes that competence, autonomy, and self-concept interact as a motivational triad that strengthens students' intrinsic motivation in speaking classes.

**Keywords:** intrinsic motivation, speaking skills, competence, autonomy, self-concept, EFL students.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Speaking skills are a crucial component of language learning; however, many students continue to face challenges related to motivation when participating in oral communication activities. Among various motivational constructs, intrinsic motivation—defined as an internal drive to engage in an activity for personal satisfaction rather than external rewards—plays a central role in determining whether students actively participate or remain passive during speaking tasks (Adhikari et al., 2025). Therefore, understanding the intrinsic motivational factors that support or hinder student engagement is essential for creating more effective and engaging speaking classes.

According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), motivation is influenced by the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. In language learning contexts, these needs are reflected in students' efforts to improve their speaking skills, their willingness to make independent learning choices, and their desire to communicate meaningfully with others. When speaking activities support these needs, students' intrinsic motivation increases, resulting in greater engagement and more meaningful learning outcomes (Fowler, 2022). Conversely, overly controlled classroom environments tend to suppress intrinsic motivation, shifting students' focus toward external pressure rather than genuine interest.

In addition to these psychological needs, self-concept-particularly students' ideal L2 self-image-plays a crucial role in shaping motivation. This self-image influences both students' willingness to communicate and the level of effort they invest in speaking activities (Xuan Mai et al., 2024). However, affective factors such as low self-confidence and speaking anxiety often hinder participation. These internal barriers highlight the importance of understanding students' perceptions as a foundation for designing targeted motivational strategies.

Previous studies have shown that autonomy-supportive teaching practices, such as allowing students to choose topics and providing structured guidance, can enhance intrinsic motivation and improve speaking performance. Furthermore, well-designed speaking activities can gradually shift students' motivation from extrinsic to intrinsic over time (Stefaniak & Tracey, 2020). Positive feedback also strengthens students' sense of competence, whereas excessive external control may weaken their internal motivation.

However, limited research has examined how competence, autonomy, and self-concept interact simultaneously in shaping students' speaking motivation, particularly within Indonesian junior high school contexts (Truong, 2021). In addition, while SDT includes relatedness as a core component, this study focuses on competence, autonomy, and self-concept as the most salient factors emerging from the data.

To address this gap, this study aims to examine students' perceptions of intrinsic motivational factors in speaking classes, focusing on competence, autonomy, and self-concept. It also explores how these factors influence students' willingness to participate in speaking activities. This study contributes to the literature by providing empirically grounded insights into how these intrinsic factors interact within real classroom practices in Indonesian EFL contexts.

This study aims to examine students' perceptions of intrinsic motivational factors influencing their motivation in speaking classes, particularly competence, autonomy, and self-concept, and to explore how these factors shape students' willingness to participate in speaking activities. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more effective, student-centered teaching strategies that enhance both motivation and participation.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted at a junior high school ("AH") in Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia, and the name of the school was anonymized to protect institutional confidentiality. The study employed a descriptive qualitative design to explore students' perceptions of intrinsic motivation in speaking classes. A qualitative approach was selected to gain an in-depth understanding of students' experiences, feelings, and interpretations (Creswell and David, 2023).

The participants consisted of 48 junior high school students who were actively engaged in regular English-speaking activities. Using purposive sampling, participants were selected based on teacher recommendations and classroom observations to ensure their relevance to

the research focus. However, for more in-depth data collection, 25 students were interviewed, as data saturation was reached when no new themes or codes emerged.

Data collection was conducted over a period of four weeks during regular English classroom sessions, allowing the researcher to observe natural learning interactions as they occurred throughout the teaching and learning process. The study involved two main instruments:

1. Classroom observations, conducted to capture students' participation, interaction patterns, and engagement during speaking activities.
2. Semi-structured interviews, used to explore students' perceptions in depth while allowing flexibility in responses.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, triangulation was applied by comparing findings from interviews and observations. Data analysis followed thematic analysis procedures, including data familiarization, open coding, categorization, and theme development, with a focus on competence, autonomy, and self-concept. Cross-data comparison was conducted to strengthen consistency, while peer debriefing, prolonged engagement, and repeated code checking were applied to enhance credibility.

Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their participation was voluntary. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by using codes and pseudonyms in reporting the data.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

The results of this study show that students' motivation in speaking classes is influenced by three connected intrinsic factors: competence, autonomy, and self-concept. These factors appeared repeatedly in the interview and observation data, indicating that they play an important role in shaping students' engagement and participation in speaking activities.

*Competence* emerged as the strongest factor, mentioned by 21 of the 25 participants, or 84%. Students explained that they felt more motivated to speak when they could complete speaking tasks successfully and receive helpful feedback from the teacher. This experience of success increased their confidence and made them less hesitant to speak. One participant stated, "When I can finish the task by myself, I feel more confident to speak." The classroom observations supported this result. Voluntary participation increased by 48% in sessions that used scaffolding and guided support compared with sessions that relied more on teacher-centered instruction. This finding indicates that successful learning experiences strengthen students' perceived competence and encourage more active classroom involvement.

*Autonomy* also appeared as an important motivational factor, reported by 18 participants, or 72%. Students said that the opportunity to choose topics and work with preferred peers made speaking activities more interesting and engaging. They felt that this freedom made the tasks more relevant and enjoyable. One student explained, "Talking about my favorite topic makes me feel more excited to speak." Observation data also showed that spontaneous interactions, including unprompted questions and peer-led discussions, increased by 62% during activities that supported student autonomy. This suggests that autonomy encourages more natural and meaningful communication in speaking classes.

*Self-concept* became the third major factor, identified by 15 participants, or 60%. Students explained that seeing themselves as future fluent English speakers helped them manage anxiety and participate more actively. Their ideal image of themselves as L2 speakers encouraged them to take risks when speaking. As one participant said, "I imagine I can speak English fluently, so I try to be brave." Observations confirmed this pattern, showing that

students with positive self-perceptions produced longer utterances, with an average of 18 words, and demonstrated a 35% increase in peer support. This finding shows that self-concept affects both students' emotional readiness and their speaking performance.

The cross-data analysis further revealed that these three factors interact closely. Competence and autonomy appeared together in 78% of high-motivation cases, showing that both factors often reinforce students' self-concept and help reduce anxiety. This pattern suggests that intrinsic motivation in speaking classes develops through the interaction of psychological factors rather than through separate or independent influences.

### Discussion

The findings emphasize the significant role of competence as a major source of intrinsic motivation. This is consistent with Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which explains that individuals become more motivated when they feel capable, effective, and able to master a task (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The increase in students' classroom participation indicates that successful task completion and constructive teacher feedback play an important role in improving learners' confidence and willingness to communicate. This result supports earlier studies showing that perceived competence strongly affects language learners' engagement and communicative behavior (Amerstorfer & Freiin von Münster-Kistner, 2021).

The autonomy factor found in this study also reflects the relevance of learner-centered instruction in language learning. When students receive meaningful opportunities to make choices, they tend to show stronger engagement and interaction. This pattern appeared in the increase of spontaneous communication during speaking activities. The finding aligns with recent research showing that autonomy-supportive teaching enhances students' engagement, motivation, and self-regulated learning in EFL contexts (Phithakmethakun, 2020; Wijaya, 2023). In addition, the combination of clear structure and flexibility observed in this study supports the idea that guided autonomy-where students experience choice within a supportive framework-contributes to more effective language learning (Alrabai, 2021; Nurpermadi, 2024).

The findings also show that self-concept contributes to lower speaking anxiety and stronger classroom engagement. Students who had a positive view of themselves as English speakers showed greater confidence, persistence, and willingness to participate. This result corresponds with the L2 Motivational Self System proposed by (Yousefi & Mahmoodi, 2022). It also supports previous empirical studies indicating that a strong academic self-concept can improve learners' resilience and engagement (Derojat et al., 2025; Ebn-Abbasi et al., 2022) Therefore, speaking instruction needs to address emotional and affective aspects of learning.

A key point in this study is the interaction among competence, autonomy, and self-concept as a motivational triad that sustains student engagement. These three factors do not work separately; instead, they support and strengthen one another within a dynamic motivational process. Competence builds students' confidence, autonomy increases their sense of ownership, and self-concept helps reduce emotional barriers in speaking. This finding is consistent with contemporary applications of Self-Determination Theory in language learning, which show that satisfaction of competence, autonomy, and relatedness needs is closely linked to autonomous and intrinsic motivation in EFL contexts (Quint Oga-Baldwin & Ryan, 2025). It also aligns with recent empirical work indicating that intrinsic motivation produces deeper engagement and more sustainable learning outcomes than extrinsic forms of motivation (Calafato, 2024; Surlitasari et al., 2023).

From a pedagogical standpoint, the findings indicate that teachers need to apply instructional strategies that support competence, autonomy, and positive self-concept at the same time. Teachers can implement scaffolded speaking tasks, provide constructive and

specific feedback, give students opportunities to make choices in topics and partners, and create a supportive classroom atmosphere that reduces anxiety and encourages risk-taking. These practices are consistent with the principles of communicative language teaching, which prioritize meaningful interaction, learner-centeredness, and active engagement (Drajad Alkautsar & Dwigustini, 2026). Recent studies on scaffolding and CLT in EFL contexts show that structured yet flexible speaking tasks, such as role-plays, interviews, and collaborative problem-solving, significantly enhance students' speaking performance and confidence (Bao & Hung, 2022; Daflizar & Kamil, 2022).

Methodologically, the involvement of 25 interview participants allowed the study to explore students' perceptions in depth and reach data saturation. This strengthened the credibility of the findings (Johnson et al., 2020). The use of interview and observation data also enhanced the trustworthiness of the study through triangulation, since the findings were supported by multiple sources of evidence. This methodological approach helps connect theoretical perspectives with classroom practice, particularly within the Indonesian EFL context (Neupane et al., 2026).

Although the study offers important contributions, it also has limitations. The research was conducted in only one school setting, so the findings may not be fully generalizable to broader educational contexts. Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples from different types of schools or learning environments. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to examine how intrinsic motivation develops over time and how competence, autonomy, and self-concept interact at different stages of language learning.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that students' intrinsic motivation in speaking classes develops through three key factors: competence, autonomy, and self-concept. Competence became the most influential factor because students demonstrated higher motivation when they succeeded in completing speaking tasks and received constructive feedback from the teacher. These learning experiences strengthened their confidence, reduced their hesitation, and encouraged them to participate more actively in classroom speaking activities.

Autonomy also contributed to students' engagement in speaking classes. Students showed greater interest and involvement when they could choose speaking topics and work with peers they preferred. This result indicates that meaningful choice makes speaking activities more relevant to students' interests and supports more natural classroom communication.

Self-concept also affected students' willingness to speak. Students who perceived themselves as capable future English speakers showed stronger confidence and courage during speaking activities. A positive self-concept helped them control speaking anxiety and encouraged them to take risks in oral communication.

The findings further indicate that competence, autonomy, and self-concept are strongly interrelated. These three factors reinforce one another in developing students' intrinsic motivation. Competence increases confidence, autonomy strengthens students' ownership of learning, and self-concept reduces emotional barriers. Therefore, motivation in speaking classes should be viewed as a dynamic process shaped by the interaction of several internal factors.

Based on these findings, English teachers should develop speaking activities that promote competence, autonomy, and positive self-concept simultaneously. Teachers can use scaffolded tasks, constructive feedback, topic selection, peer interaction, and a supportive classroom environment. These strategies can help students become more confident, engaged, and willing to participate in speaking activities.

This study adds to the discussion of intrinsic motivation in Indonesian junior high school EFL contexts. Since the study took place in only one school, future research should include wider and more varied educational settings. Future studies may also apply longitudinal designs to investigate how students' intrinsic motivation changes over time and how competence, autonomy, and self-concept interact at different stages of language learning.

## REFERENCES

- Adhikari, N. P., Budhathoki, J. K., & Adhikari, S. (2025). Student Motivation in the Classroom: Practical Techniques and Strategies. *Cognition*, 7(1), 67–75. <https://doi.org/10.3126/Cognition.V7i1.74765>
- Arabai, F. (2021). The Influence of Autonomy-Supportive Teaching on EFL Students' Classroom Autonomy: An Experimental Intervention. *Frontiers In Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.728657>
- Amerstorfer, C. M., & Freiin Von Münster-Kistner, C. (2021). Student Perceptions of Academic Engagement and Student-Teacher Relationships in Problem-Based Learning. *Frontiers In Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.713057>
- Bao, T. L. Q., & Hung, L. N. Q. (2022). The Impact of Scaffolding Strategies on Speaking Performance: EFL Teachers' Perceptions and Practices. *International Journal of Science and Management Studies (IJSMS)*, 157–166. <https://doi.org/10.51386/25815946/Ijsms-V5i4p118>
- Calafato, R. (2024). The Relationship Between Interaction Mindsets and Language Teachers' Self-Development Practices. *Journal Of Further and Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2024.2431721>
- Creswell And David. (2023). Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches. In *SAGE Publications, Inc.: Sixth Edit* (Number 1).
- Daflizar, S., & Kamil, U. (2022). Language Learning Strategies and Learner Autonomy: The Case of Indonesian Tertiary EFL Students. In *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network* (Vol. 15, Number 1). <https://so04.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/LEARN/index>
- Derojat, A., Arifani, Y., & Ma'rifah, U. (2025). The Relationship Between Self-Confidence Speaking Anxiety Toward Speaking Performance for ELF in English Departement. *Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu Bahasa*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.8734/Argopuro.V1i2.365>
- Drajad Alkautsar, K., & Dwigustini, R. (2026). *Communicative Language Teaching (Clt) In Practice: A Case Study at English First Pajajaran Bogor 2025*. 6(2), 174–189. <https://doi.org/10.32627/Jepal.V6i2.1558>
- Ebn-Abbasi, F., Nushi, M., & Fattahi, N. (2022). The Role of L2 Motivational Self System and Grit in EFL Learners' Willingness to Communicate: A Study of Public School Vs. Private English Language Institute Learners. *Frontiers In Education*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.837714>
- Fowler, S. (2022). *Motivating Speaking in The World Language Classroom and Beyond*.
- Johnson, J. L., Adkins, D., & Chauvin, S. (2020). A Review of The Quality Indicators of Rigor in Qualitative Research. In *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education* (Vol. 84, Number 1, Pp. 138–146). American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy. <https://doi.org/10.5688/Ajpe7120>
- Neupane, B. P., Dahal, N., Dhakal, R. K., Hasan, M. K., Villarama, J. A., & Fabros, B. G. (2026). Data Collection Methods in Qualitative Research: Researchers' Reflections. *Frontiers In Research Metrics and Analytics*, 11, 1778160. <https://doi.org/10.3389/frma.2026.1778160>
- Nurpermadi, E. D. (2024). *Students' Engagement in Speaking Teaching Strategies Employed*

by An Indonesian English Teacher.

- Phithakmethakun, M. (2020). Autonomy-Supportive English Language Instruction: An Experimental Study on Students' Motivation in English Language Classrooms. In *Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network Journal* (Vol. 13, Number 1).
- Quint Oga-Baldwin, W. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2025). Competence Need Satisfaction in Language Learning (And beyond): Current State of The Evidence and Directions for Exploration. *Studies In Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 15(2), 279–299. <https://doi.org/10.14746/Ssllt.48236>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2020). Intrinsic And Extrinsic Motivation from A Self-Determination Theory Perspective: Definitions, Theory, Practices, And Future Directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 61. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2020.101860>
- Stefaniak, J. E., & Tracey, M. W. (2020). An Exploration of Student Experiences with Learner-Centered Instructional Strategies. *Contemporary Educational Technology*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.30935/Cedtech/6142>
- Surlitasari, D., I\*, D., & Wilany, E. (2023). The Relationship Between Learner Autonomy and Motivation in EFL Speaking Class. *Of English Language Pedagogy*, 8(2), 169–183.
- Truong, K. D. (2021). Task-Related Motivational Strategies in EFL Classrooms: A Glimpse into Teachers' and Students' Perceptions. *Journal Of Asia TEFL*, 18(2). <https://doi.org/10.18823/Asiatefl.2021.18.2.6.468>
- Wijaya, K. (2023). The Role of Autonomy-Supportive Teaching Method in EFL Learning Contexts Worldwide. *SAGA: Journal Of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 4(2), 127–136. <https://doi.org/10.21460/Saga.2023.42.140>
- Xuan Mai, L., Ngoc, L. K., & Thao, L. T. (2024). Factors Hindering Student Participation in English-Speaking Classes: Student and Lecturer Perceptions. *SAGE Open*, 14(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241266297>
- Yousefi, M., & Mahmoodi, M. H. (2022). The L2 Motivational Self-System: A Meta-Analysis Approach. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/IJAL.12416>