



SITUATIONAL FACTORS: BASES FOR IMPROVING THE ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION OF ESL LEARNERS' SPEAKING SKILLS IN THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND LETTERS

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Abstract:

This paper highlights the importance of enhancing the speaking skills among ESL freshmen in the College of Arts and Letters of Bulacan State University. The respondents in this study were Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication Major in Broadcasting Sections A to D. Although this course requires oral communication proficiency for global competitiveness, only a few students participate actively in classroom discussions. Many of them lag behind in terms of speaking skills. The ability to speak English has become the norm in the country and around the world. Graduates who possess such a skill can have better opportunities locally or internationally compared with those who cannot speak fluently. Hence, the researchers looked into the role of attitude and motivation in enhancing speaking skills among the respondents in terms of the following: demographics, the attitude of students toward English, situational factors affecting the attitude of students toward English, the motivation of students in learning English, and students' beliefs about learning English. The research instrument was administered to the respondents via Google Forms. The 32-item questionnaire was designed to determine the attitudes and motivation of ESL students toward learning English. Each of the respondents was scored from 1-5 on a Likert scale. Through the use of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient, Fisher Z-test, and P-value in testing the hypotheses, data were analyzed and interpreted. The Likert scales show the participants had an incredibly positive attitude and behavior toward English in general. Among all motivation items, the top factors affecting students to learn more in English are the Student's Practical Purpose, Correction of the Teacher during Class, Communication Focused Class Activities, and Positive Atmosphere during class. Based on the findings of the study, language teachers should take advantage of motivation to foster a positive attitude among the students when it comes to speaking skills through the use of authentic

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materials such as audio, video, printed, and softcopies. Factors such as activities, environment, and teachers' attitudes should be the point of reference in determining which learning materials work best in enhancing the speaking skills of the students.

Keywords: motivation, attitudes, situational factors, ESL students, speaking skills

1. Introduction

The ability to speak the English language fluently is one of the most important skills ESL students need to acquire. In the global arena, this skill prepares learners for their future careers. However, students find it very challenging to communicate orally during discussions in speaking classes. Limited opportunity to interact because of class size, poor curriculum implementation, and low motivation among the students are some of the hindrances in motivating them to speak the English language. In this research, the latter was addressed because the respondents needed to become determined in developing a positive attitude in enhancing their oral communication skills. This study also made use of the Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation Theory of Robert White in 1959 by which Anjomshoa and Sadighi (2015) declared that motivation is the lifeblood of teaching and learning situations. The purpose of this study was to identify the situational factors influencing the motivation of freshmen in developing speaking skills in English to be able to determine the kinds of motivation teachers use to encourage students to speak English in class for the purpose of enhancing the oral communication skills of freshmen students of the College of Arts and Letters majoring in Broadcasting during the school year 2022-2023, first semester. Specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions: What are the attitudes of students toward learning English as a second language? What are the situational factors that motivate students to speak English in class in terms of teaching styles, class environment, and teachers' attitudes? What kinds of motivation do teachers use to encourage students to speak English in class, intrinsic or extrinsic? and What are the students' beliefs about learning English? Since most studies have focused on EFL learners when it comes to situational factors affecting student motivation in enhancing their speaking skills, it is also crucial to investigate the motivation of ESL learners considering these situational factors which affect their oral communication skills.

2. Methods

This study used the quantitative research design involving the following statistical techniques: Likert scale, Pearson Correlation Coefficient, Fisher Z-test, and P-value in testing the hypotheses.

A 32-item questionnaire was administered to gather data to determine ESL students' attitudes and beliefs about the language learning process in their English classes. This questionnaire was used by Nakatani in 2010 to find the situational factors that motivate the speaking skills of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. The

questionnaire was changed and approved by four experts in Language Education whose master's and doctorate degrees are related to Language and Communication. The questionnaire is divided into four sections: (A) Situational factors that can affect learning; (B) Students' attitude toward English; (C) Motivation of students to learn English; and (D) Students' beliefs about learning English. Section A of the questionnaire consists of 10 items with specific questions referring directly to a certain situational factor of interest. Of the 10 questions, 3 items are about "Teaching Style", 3 items are about "Class Activities", 2 items are about "Class Environment", and 2 items are about "Teacher's Attitude." The respondents' responses were scored from 1 to 5 on a Likert scale: 1 (Not Very Likely); 2 (Not Likely); 3 (Likely); 4 (Very Likely); and 5 (Extremely Likely).

The researchers used Google Forms to administer the questionnaire and to gather data. The link to the form was sent to the students during their scheduled classes in Purposive Communication. The Google Form was administered to the sections on the same date and time and collected through Google Classroom. There were no assigned points to each question and no automatic feedback was provided. Responses settings did not allow any respondent to miss questions. Responses were collected and protected. The setting did not allow responses to be edited once given to safeguard the immediate thought that had been selected that best described the experience and feeling of the respondents. The target participants in the questionnaire were ESL students taking up Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication Major in Broadcasting sections A to D in the College of Arts and Letters at Bulacan State University whose subject was Purposive Communication under the Department of English. Their grades in English from their previous years in senior high school were not part of the study for ethical considerations. Their former teachers in English and their styles of teaching were not in question although somehow might have affected the result and findings of this research. The questionnaires were distributed to the one hundred sixty (160) first-year CAL students of Bulacan State University.

3. Results

3.1 Demographics

The tables below refer to the demographics of the 153 respondents who answered the questionnaire.

Table 1: Number of Respondents According to Age

Age	Number of Respondents
17	5
18	88
19	39
20	13
21	8
Total	153

Table 2: Number of Respondents According to Gender

Gender	Number of Respondents
Male	55
Female	98
Total	153

Table 3: Number of Respondents According to Section

Section	Number of Respondents
AB Mass Communication Major in Broadcasting 1-A	50
AB Mass Communication Major in Broadcasting 1-B	41
AB Mass Communication Major in Broadcasting 1-C	38
AB Mass Communication Major in Broadcasting 1-D	24
Total	153

3.2 Attitudes of Students towards English

Items 11 and 12 of the questionnaires give an insight into the attitudes and behaviors of students about English. Item 11 refers to the students' view of "*Learning English*" directly while Item 12 refers to the students' more general view of "*Speaking English*". With this, the average across all responses was computed for each item to give insight into the respondents' attitudes and behaviors about English.

Table 4: Scores on Attitude of Students in English

Question	Item 11: " <i>Learning English</i> "	Item 12: " <i>Speaking English</i> "
Sample Average	4.3791	4.1242

Given the designation of values in the Likert scale, it is concluded that the participants had an incredibly positive attitude and behavior towards English in general. Both Item 11: "*Learning English*" and Item 12: "*Speaking English*" got an average between "*Very Likely*" and "*Extremely Likely*". This shows that based on the survey, respondents did not only like English in general, but they also loved to speak and learn more about the language.

Table 5: Scores on Attitude of Students of English per Age

Question / Sample Average	Item 11: " <i>Learning English</i> "	Item 12: " <i>Speaking English</i> "
Age: 17	4.0000	3.6000
Age: 18	4.3523	4.1932
Age: 19	4.5128	4.0256
Age: 20	4.3077	4.2308
Age: 21	4.3750	4.0000

Students in their 19s were the ones who got the highest score for "*Learning English*" while students in their 20s were the ones who got the highest score for "*Speaking English*". In the contrast, students in their 17s were the ones who got the lowest score for both "*Learning English*" and "*Speaking English*".

Table 6: Scores on Attitude of Students towards English per Gender

Question / Sample Average	Item 11: "Learning English"	Item 12: "Speaking English"
Gender: Male	4.3818	4.0182
Gender: Female	4.3776	4.1837

Male students got a slightly higher score for "Learning English" while female students got a higher score for "Speaking English".

Table 7: Scores on Attitude of Students in English per Section

Question / Sample Average	Item 11: "Learning English"	Item 12: "Speaking English"
Section: AB Mass Communication Major in Broadcasting I-A	4.2400	4.0400
Section: AB Mass Communication Major in Broadcasting I-B	4.4390	4.2195
Section: AB Mass Communication Major in Broadcasting I-C	4.5526	4.3947
Section: AB Mass Communication Major in Broadcasting I-D	4.2917	3.7083

Students of Section 1-C were the ones who got the highest score for both "Learning English" and "Speaking English". In the contrast, students of Section I-A were the ones who got the lowest score for "Learning English" while students of Section I-D were the ones who had the lowest score for "Speaking English."

3.3 Situational Factors Affecting the Attitude of Students

To figure out the relationship between each situational factor and the attitude of students toward English, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was computed for each situational factor against students' attitudes about English and then tested for its level of significance. The average was taken per respondent for items belonging to the same category of situational factor: "Teaching Style", "Class Activities", "Class Environment", and "Teacher's Attitude" to be correlated to the average attitude of students about English. Scores for items 2 and 4 were reversed since both statements were structured negatively.

- **The attitude of Students about English** = Average Score of Items 11 and 12;
- **Teaching Style** = Average Score of Items 1, 5 and reversed score of 2;
- **Class Activities** = Average Score of Items 3, 6 and reversed score of 4;
- **Class Environment** = Average Score of Items 7 and 9;
- **Teacher's Attitude** = Average Score of Items 8 and 10.

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was tested for its level of significance through a Fisher Z-test statistic at a 10% level of significance. A p-value of less than 10% proves that the correlation coefficient is significant.

Ho: Pearson Correlation equals 0 (Situational Factor and Attitude about English are independent or not related)

Ha: Pearson Correlation does not equal 0 (Situational Factors and Attitude about English are not independent or related)

- Fisher's Z test

$$z = \frac{\sqrt{n-3}}{2} \log \left(\frac{1+\rho}{1-\rho} \right)$$

is approximately distributed as $N(0, 1)$ under H_0 .

Table 8 Situational Factors

Situation Factor	"Teaching Style"	"Class Activities"	"Class Environment"	"Teacher's Attitude"
Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.2866	0.3261	0.3754	0.3179
Fisher Z-test Statistic	1.5684	1.8005	2.0993	1.7518
P-value	0.1168	0.0718	0.0358	0.0798
Decision	Do not Reject Ho	Reject Ho	Reject Ho	Reject Ho

The table shows that among all the given situational factors, three of them positively relate to the attitude of students toward English: "Class Activities", "Class Environment", and "Teacher's Attitude".

3.4 The Motivation of Students in Learning English

To figure out which type of motivation is important for the students in learning English, the average is taken per item in Section C of the questionnaire across all respondents. Since scores for each item follows the Likert scale, it can be figured out if a type of motivation affects negatively or positively, and which type of motivation has a higher effect on English learning ability of English.

Table 9 Students Motivation (Intrinsic, Extrinsic)

Item	Type of Motivation	Motivation	Average Score
13	Extrinsic	Audiovisual Material and Internet during Class	3.6993
14	Intrinsic	Student's Practical Purpose	4.2026 (1st)
15	Intrinsic	Non-Confidence in Speaking English	3.0654
16	Extrinsic	Taglish Used During Class	3.3203
17	Extrinsic	Grammar-Focused Class Activities	3.4379
18	Extrinsic	No Participation during Class	2.2288 (10th)
19	Extrinsic	Interaction with Peers thru English	3.6993
20	Extrinsic	Communication-Focused Class Activities	3.8627 (3rd)
21	Extrinsic	Positive Atmosphere during Class	3.8431 (4th)
22	Extrinsic	Correction of Teacher during Class	3.9542 (2nd)

Among all motivation items, it can be summarized that the top factors affecting students to learn more in English are the *Student's Practical Purpose*, *Correction of the Teacher*, *Communication Focused Class Activities*, and a *Positive Atmosphere during Class* in order. A

Student's Practical Purpose is the top motivational factor by a big margin. Therefore, it is concluded that this intrinsic factor plays a noticeably key role in a student's mentality to learn English since it is the main language used in the professional world.

On the other hand, *No Participation during Class* has the least score in motivating students to study English. This proves that students prefer to have active participation and the ability to practice their English during class.

3.5 Students' Beliefs about Learning English

The same method was used in deciding the beliefs of students about learning English. The results from the final items of the questionnaire were used in determining student beliefs by averaging scores across all respondents.

Table 10 Students' Beliefs in Learning Language

Item	Belief	Average Score
23	Learning English is learning its grammar rules.	3.6928
24	My English class is a waste of time.	1.2745
25	I believe Taglish should be often used in my English class for my better understanding of the lessons.	3.1503
26	Opening one's mouth to practice speaking in the classroom is essential for English learning.	3.8889
27	A language classroom should be communication focused.	3.6340
28	Languages are learned through communication, with grammar rules explained when necessary.	3.8170
29	A teacher should create an atmosphere in the classroom to encourage interaction as a class or in groups.	3.9085
30	The teacher needs to correct students' errors in class.	3.8235
31	My English improves more quickly if I study and practice grammar.	4.1046
32	It is more important to study and practice grammatical patterns than to practice English interactively in the classroom.	3.1765

The table reveals that the respondents believe that learning English is mastering its grammar because languages are learned through communication by explaining the rules when needed. Thus, it is important for the teacher to correct students' errors in class. On the other hand, students do not believe that attending English classes is a waste of time. Taglish (mixing Tagalog and English) should often be used in their English classes for better comprehension of the lessons. Opening one's mouth to practice speaking in the classroom is essential for learning and speaking English. Language classrooms should have more speaking activities. Therefore, teachers should create an atmosphere to encourage interaction among students in class or in groups.

4. Discussion

Based on the Likert scales, the participants had an incredibly positive attitude and behavior towards English in general. Both Item 11: "Learning English" and Item 12: "Speaking English" got an average between "Very Likely" and "Extremely Likely". This means that the respondents like English and they also love speaking and reading more about the language. Male students got a slightly higher score for "Learning English" while female students got a higher score for "Speaking English". Among all the given situational factors, 3 of them positively relate to the attitude of students toward English: "Class Activities", "Class Environment", and "Teacher's Attitude".

Also, among all motivation items, the top factors affecting students to learn more in English are Student's Practical Purpose, Correction of Teacher during Class, Communication Focused Class Activities, and Positive Atmosphere during class order. With a Student's Practical Purpose being the top motivational factor by a big margin, the intrinsic factor plays a noticeably key role in a student's mentality to learn English since it is the main language used in the professional world. On the other hand, "No Participation during Class" registered the least score in motivating students to study English. This proves that students prefer to have active participation and the ability to practice their English during the class itself.

As regards Students' Beliefs about Learning English, "I believe my English improves more quickly if I study and practice grammar" got the highest average score. This is followed by the statement "A teacher should create an atmosphere in the classroom to encourage interaction as a class or in groups" which got a score next to the highest. The third to the highest refers to "Opening one's mouth to practice speaking in the classroom is essential for English learning." The lowest score refers to the statement "My English class is a waste of time." Thus, only a few among the respondents considered an English class a waste of time.

Based on the foregoing, language teachers should exhaust all means of motivating the learners, for they like speaking and reading activities using authentic and interesting lesson materials such as audio, video, printed, and softcopies to further enhance their communication skills in the target language. In addition, language teachers should also drop gender as a factor in learning and speaking English among students by properly addressing the issues and influences associated with it to motivate both genders equally. English language lesson designers/developers should make the following factors such as activities, class environment, and teacher's attitude their points of reference in figuring out which of the materials works best for the enhancement of the learners' communication skills.

College of Arts and Letters and the Department of English should capitalize on and encourage "Student's Practical Purpose" as the top motivational intrinsic factor for motivating English language learners through good curricular offerings since English is the main language used in the professional world.

To encourage students to active participation and a chance to practice their English during the class, language teachers should engage each of the language learners through interesting interactive SL (Synchronous Learning) and AOL (Asynchronous Online Learning) activities which can promote the enhancement of communication skills.

Curriculum planners/designers should emphasize the inclusion of grammar exercises and English-speaking activities in all English subjects, which foster an online classroom atmosphere that encourages good interactions among the learners at the College of Arts and Letters. Future researchers may use the insights found in this study as their reference for developing speaking skills among language learners. Likewise, future researchers should include in their research the aspects not covered in this study.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Authors

Florentino G. Pineda, Jr. was born in Pampanga, Philippines. He finished his elementary and secondary education in San Fernando, Pampanga. His interest in English motivated him to finish a bachelor's degree in Secondary Education and major in English. He finished the degree with Magna Cum Laude honors at Holy Angel University in Angeles City. He pursued his Master of Education major in Guidance at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City. Pursued and finished another master's degree in Language Education at Wesleyan University. He finished his Doctor of Philosophy at Bulacan State University in Malolos, Bulacan whose thesis is entitled "Communication Practice as Cultural Formation in the Educational Institution: Practices, Barriers, and Solution." He has taught in elementary, high school, college, and graduate school at known universities in the Philippines. He has written books on Literature, Speech Communication, Study and Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, and Technical Writing. He served as the Department Head of Mass Communication and Performing the Department of English at Bulacan State University.

Issachar A. Dela Cerna was born in Kidapawan, North Cotabato, Philippines. He is a former grade school teacher who taught English, Reading and Phonics, and Music and Arts at the Montessori School of Malolos for three years. Later on, he decided to teach at Bulacan State University where he started as a college instructor in 1999. For more than twenty years, he has taught several English subjects such as Communication Arts, Language, Literature, Technical Writing, Developmental Reading, and Mass Communication. He finished his Master of Arts in Education Major in Language Education at Bulacan State University in 2003. His passion for teaching compelled him to pursue a higher degree. On May 2, 2022, he graduated with a degree in Doctor of Philosophy Major in Language and Literature from La Consolacion University Philippines.

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