

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background, research questions, purposes, research significance, research scopes, and conceptual framework. It also contains a number of things that are examined and developed based on the fows of research.

1. Background of Study

This research focuses on the correlation between students' learning motivation in speaking and their speaking performance. Speaking is widely recognized as a core component of communicative competence and a critical indicator of second language (L2) proficiency. Among the four language skills, speaking is often considered the most direct measure of a learner's ability to use the language in authentic contexts. Nunan (2003, p. 48) asserts that "success is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the target language." In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, especially in junior high schools, developing speaking skills is particularly challenging due to learners' limited opportunities for real-life communication, low exposure to spoken English, and psychological barriers such as shyness or fear of making mistakes.

While linguistic competence such as knowledge of vocabulary and grammar is essential, learners' motivation to speak plays a central role in determining whether they actively engage in oral communication. In this regard, the theoretical construct of *Willingness to Communicate* (WTC), proposed by MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1998, p. 547), provides a robust framework to explain the complex psychological and situational variables that influence a learner's readiness to initiate communication in a second language. WTC is defined as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person, using a L2," and it integrates affective factors (such as anxiety and self-confidence), motivation, perceived communicative competence, and situational context.

Distinct from general learning motivation theories, WTC specifically addresses the learner's intention to engage in speaking activities, making it highly relevant for EFL classrooms where learners often hesitate to speak despite having adequate linguistic knowledge. Research by Yashima (2002), Peng & Woodrow (2010), and

Kang (2005) further supports the application of WTC in explaining learners' communicative behavior, particularly in Asian EFL contexts where cultural and educational factors may heighten communication apprehension and reduce oral participation.

At SMP Habibi Bina Cendikia, classroom observations suggest that many eighth-grade students exhibit low participation in speaking. Although students often show competence in written English assignments, they hesitate to express themselves verbally. This behavior may not solely result from language difficulties but rather from psychological barriers and low communicative motivation. As such, investigating the students' willingness to speak and its correlation with their actual speaking ability becomes a critical area of inquiry.

In addition, the school is actively promoting an English-speaking environment through initiatives such as English Day, bilingual teaching aids, and encouragement to use English during classroom interactions. While these institutional efforts are commendable, they have not yet yielded consistent oral engagement among students. Many learners still appear hesitant or lack confidence to speak, suggesting that successful implementation of such programs requires a deeper understanding of internal factors such as student motivation and readiness to communicate.

The choice to focus on eighth-grade students is both strategic and pedagogically justified. At this level, students are in a critical transitional phase where they move from foundational language learning to more communicative applications, including speaking activities such as presentations, discussions, and role-plays. Teachers at SMP Habibi Bina Cendikia have reported significant variation in student participation: some students are confident and expressive, while others remain passive despite possessing adequate language knowledge. This contrast highlights the need to explore the psychological and motivational variables that influence students' speaking performance.

Whereas existing research has explored affective and motivational variables in L2 speaking performance, few studies have explicitly adopted the WTC model to examine speaking motivation in junior high school learners. For example, Nana Nurjanah (2011) conducted a correlational study on students' interest and speaking

scores at MTsN Parung, finding a positive relationship. However, this study focused on interest rather than the broader and more predictive construct of WTC. Likewise, Nerfi Istianti (2013) investigated the correlation between general learning motivation and speaking ability among senior high school students using Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). While the findings indicated a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.555$), the study employed a general motivation scale and did not target speaking motivation nor use a theory specific to L2 communication such as WTC. Furthermore, the participants were senior high school students in an urban context, which differs significantly from the educational environment of SMP Habibi Bina Cendekia.

These previous studies are valuable, but they leave key gaps. First, they do not apply *Willingness to Communicate* (WTC) as a theoretical framework to explain students' readiness to speak English in the classroom. Second, the studies did not focus specifically on junior high school students, where external motivation and communicative opportunities are often limited. Third, most prior research used broad constructs like interest or general language motivation, whereas the current study specifically examines motivation in speaking, grounded in the WTC framework.

Therefore, the present study is distinctive in three main ways it applies WTC as the grand theory to understand speaking motivation more comprehensively it focuses specifically on eighth-grade students at a private junior high school; and it employs a quantitative correlational method using a WTC-based questionnaire and structured speaking test to assess both motivation and performance. This study is expected to provide clearer insights into how students' willingness to speak in English relates to their actual speaking ability and to offer pedagogical implications for improving speaking instruction in similar EFL contexts.

2. Research Questions

Based on the background above, the researcher formulates a research question as follows:

- 1) What are the level of students' motivation in speaking?
- 2) What are the students' speaking performance in dialogue pairs?

- 3) How is the correlation between students' motivation in speaking and their performance in dialogue pairs?

3. Research Purposes

Based on the research question mentioned above, the purpose of this research are:

- 1) To assess the level of students' motivation in speaking.
- 2) To find out the students' speaking performance in dialogue pairs.
- 3) To examine the correlation between students' motivation in speaking and their performance in dialogue pairs.

4. Research Significances

This research is expected to offer both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of English language education, particularly in exploring the relationship between students' motivation in speaking English and their speaking ability within an EFL context.

a. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this study contributes to the advancement of motivation theory in second language acquisition by applying the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) framework proposed by MacIntyre et al. (1998). While prior research on language motivation often focuses broadly on learning motivation or general language acquisition, this study narrows its scope to examine speaking motivation, defined as students' psychological readiness and intention to initiate oral communication in English. By doing so, the study provides a more refined understanding of how affective and situational variables such as communicative anxiety, perceived competence, and classroom dynamics influence students' speaking performance. The findings are expected to enrich current literature on motivation in oral language use.

b. Practical Significance

1) For Students

This study may help students become more self-aware of the factors that influence their motivation to speak English. By recognizing what

facilitates or inhibits their willingness to communicate, students can reflect on their language learning attitudes and adopt strategies that enhance their confidence, participation, and autonomy in speaking activities. Greater awareness of their speaking motivation may ultimately lead to improved oral proficiency and more active engagement in communicative tasks.

2) For English Teachers

For teachers, the research provides valuable insights into how students' willingness to speak is shaped by internal and external factors. Understanding the motivational tendencies among students such as their confidence, anxiety levels, or sensitivity to audience can help teachers design communicative tasks that are more effective, supportive, and student-centered. Additionally, the findings may guide teachers in fostering classroom environments that reduce communicative barriers and promote greater speaking engagement, especially among learners who tend to be passive or apprehensive.

5. Research Scope

This study is limited to investigating the correlation between students' motivation in speaking and their performance in dialogue pairs. The research is conducted at SMP Habibi Bina Cendekia, a private school located in Solokan Jeruk District, Bandung Regency, focusing on eighth-grade students. The context of this research is the Indonesian EFL setting, where English is learned as a foreign language in formal education.

The study specifically examines:

1. Students' motivation in speaking English, understood as their psychological readiness and intention to engage in verbal communication using the target language. The framework is based on the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) theory proposed by MacIntyre et al. (1998).
2. Students' speaking performance, assessed through structured speaking tests using dialogue in pairs, which reflect their fluency, accuracy, vocabulary use, and communicative effectiveness.

This research is bounded by several limitations:

This study is situated within the Indonesian EFL context, focusing on one specific school setting. The theoretical framework relies on the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) theory by MacIntyre et al. (1998) as the grand theory underpinning the research. The speaking test instrument is restricted to dialogue in pairs as the measurement of speaking performance, thereby emphasizing interactive communication. The scope of the study only covers motivation in speaking and speaking performance, while excluding other language skills such as listening, reading, and writing.

Compared to previous studies that often employed monologue tasks or interviews to assess speaking ability in other EFL contexts, this research highlights the use of paired dialogues to capture authentic and interactive communication, strengthening its contribution to assessing speaking performance in the Indonesian EFL classroom. Furthermore, the scope of this research is limited to the Indonesian EFL context and therefore may not be directly generalizable to ESL or other foreign language learning environments.

6. Research Framework

This study is grounded in theoretical perspectives that explain the relationship between students' motivation in speaking English and their speaking ability within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Adopting a quantitative correlational design, the study seeks to determine whether students with higher levels of motivation to speak are more likely to demonstrate stronger speaking performance.

The primary theoretical foundation of this research is the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) model proposed by MacIntyre et al. (1998). WTC conceptualizes motivation to speak as a dynamic construct influenced by psychological, linguistic, and situational variables. It focuses not only on learners' intention to speak but also on their perceived communicative competence, language anxiety, and the immediate classroom environment. Within this model, students who are confident in their ability to communicate, and who feel secure and supported in their learning context, are more likely to initiate speech in the target language.

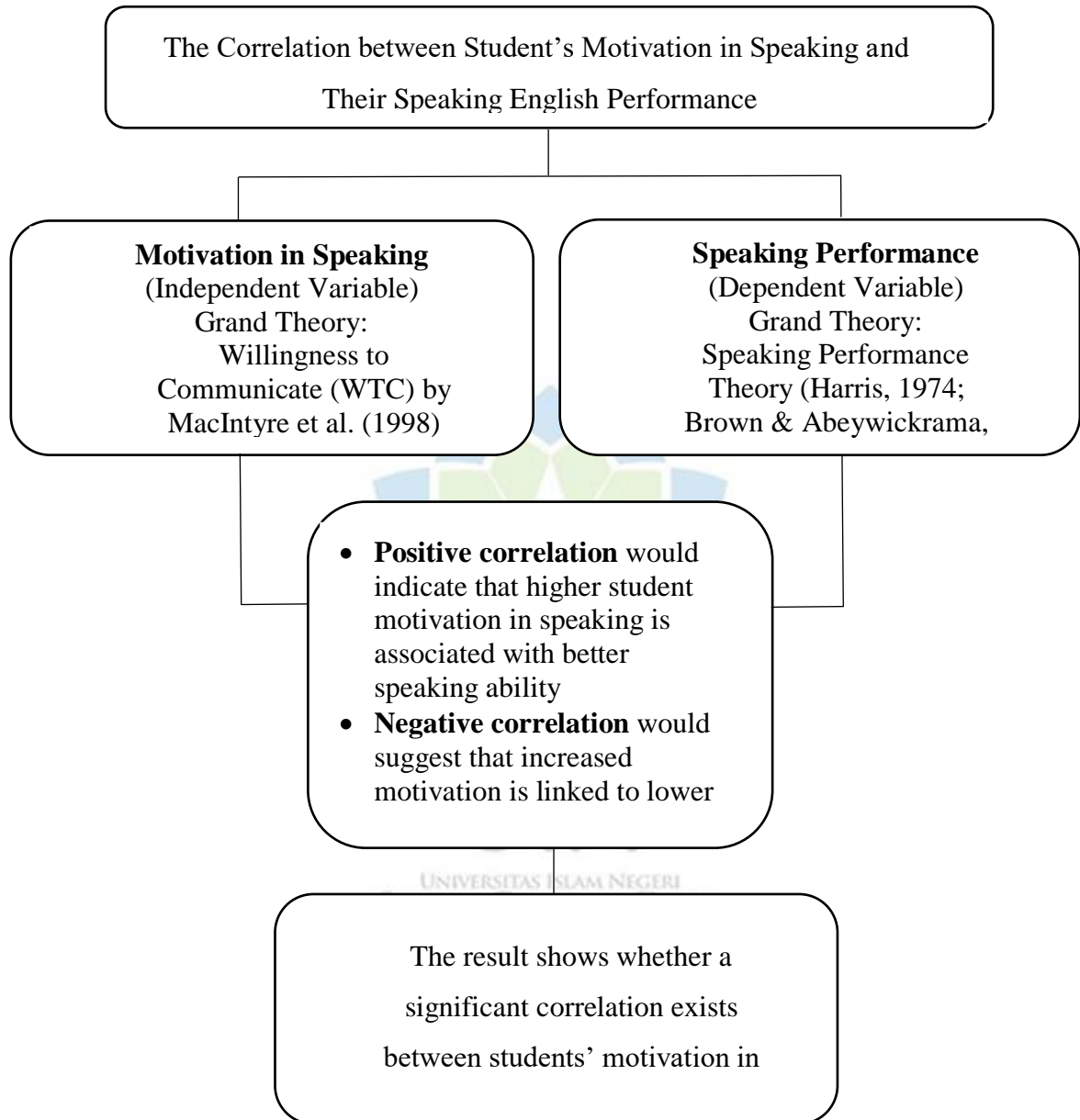
Unlike general motivation theories, the WTC model specifically addresses learners' readiness to initiate communication, making it particularly relevant to the study of speaking motivation. In classroom-based EFL contexts where real communication opportunities are often limited, learners' willingness to speak becomes a critical predictor of speaking success.

In terms of speaking ability, this study adopts the definition proposed by Brown and Abeywickrama (2010), who describe speaking as a productive skill that integrates several linguistic subcomponents fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension. Speaking in EFL settings is further affected by affective factors such as motivation and self-confidence, both of which are central to the WTC model.

By employing the WTC framework, this study examines how internal and external factors influence students' willingness to engage in spoken English activities and how this willingness correlates with their actual speaking performance. The theory provides a structured basis for interpreting questionnaire results, aligning naturally with the use of quantitative instruments and statistical analysis in correlational research.

In summary, this research framework offers a focused lens through which to explore how students' communicative motivation relates to their speaking ability. It underscores the significance of both individual psychological readiness and contextual classroom dynamics in shaping students' oral language development.

Figure 1. 1 Research Framework



7. Hypothesis

Based on the research objectives and research framework, the following hypotheses are formulated:

- **H₀ (Null Hypothesis):**

There is no significant correlation between students' motivation in speaking English and their speaking skill ability.

- **H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis):**

There is a significant correlation between students' motivation in speaking English and their speaking skill ability.

8. Previous Study

To support the current research entitled the correlation between students' motivation in speaking and their performance in dialogue pairs, it is important to note that this study is situated within the Indonesian EFL context, where English is learned as a foreign language primarily in classroom settings. In such contexts, students' opportunities to practice English outside the classroom are limited, making their motivation and willingness to communicate crucial factors in developing speaking performance. Several previous studies have been examined in relation to this issue. These studies provide theoretical and empirical foundations that help frame the context of this research.

Firstly, Syafrizal et al. (2020) conducted a correlational study exploring the relationships between learning styles, learning motivation, and speaking ability among students of Communication and Broadcasting Islam at UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten. In this study, the researchers used questionnaires based on Reid's (2009) learning style theory and Gardner's (1985) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), along with speaking performance tests. The findings revealed significant correlations between learning motivation and speaking ability. However, this study was conducted in a university setting, which limits its applicability to younger learners. In contrast, the present study offers novelty by focusing exclusively on speaking-specific motivation, applying the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) model by MacIntyre et al. (1998), and targeting junior high

school students, thereby providing a more focused and developmentally appropriate understanding of how motivation influences speaking performance.

Secondly, Saputri and Hamzah (2025) investigated the relationship between English learning motivation and speaking ability among students of Universitas Teknokrat Indonesia. Using a quantitative approach with a Likert-scale questionnaire to assess integrative and instrumental motivation, they found a significant positive correlation between motivation and speaking competence. Notably, this study was guided by Gardner and Lambert's (1972) theory, which emphasizes that integrative motivation involves learners' desire to be part of the target language culture, while instrumental motivation relates to utilitarian goals such as employment or academic success. Their study remained limited to general English learning motivation and did not specifically investigate motivation in speaking. Furthermore, their participants were university students, which restricts the findings' relevance to adolescent learners. In contrast, the present study is novel in its exclusive focus on speaking motivation, its application of the WTC framework, and its implementation in a junior high school, thus addressing both theoretical and contextual gaps.

In addition, Heriyanto (2024) conducted a mixed-methods study to examine the correlation between motivation and speaking proficiency among high school students at Shafta Senior High School. The study utilized both Gardner's AMTB for quantitative data and semi-structured interviews for qualitative insights. The results revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.769$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, this study was underpinned by multiple motivational frameworks including Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), Language Learning Motivation Theory (Dörnyei, 2001), and Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1997). However, it did not focus explicitly on speaking motivation but treated motivation in a more general learning context. In contrast, the present study is distinctive in that it isolates speaking-specific motivation, applies the WTC model as its primary theoretical foundation, and examines its relationship with speaking ability among junior high school students, offering a more targeted and theory-driven contribution.

Furthermore, Fatimah et al. (2019) explored the correlation between students' motivation and their speaking achievement in the English Department at Halu Oleo University. This study applied Gardner's (1985) AMTB and used a correlation analysis approach via SPSS. The findings indicated a moderate but statistically significant correlation ($r = 0.479$, $p = 0.03$) between students' motivation and speaking performance. Additionally, the theoretical grounding drew upon Ryan and Deci's (2000) concept of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, further confirming that higher levels of motivation tend to result in better speaking scores. Nevertheless, the study focused on general motivation in learning English and did not address speaking motivation specifically. Moreover, although the study acknowledged intrinsic and extrinsic aspects, it did not employ WTC as an analytical framework. By contrast, the present study offers novelty by centering on motivation in speaking, grounded explicitly in the WTC model, and by targeting junior high school, thus filling both theoretical and demographic gaps in the existing literature.

Lastly, Alfiana and Wijirahayu (2024) examined the relationship between learning motivation and speaking performance among vocational high school students in East Jakarta. By employing a quantitative method with a Likert-scale questionnaire and speaking performance test, the study found a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.401$). This study emphasized that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation significantly influenced students' ability to communicate in English. Drawing on Gardner and Lambert's motivation theory and incorporating psychometric validation, the researchers concluded that motivation is a critical predictor of speaking success. However, the study did not incorporate the WTC framework, which is more focused on communicative readiness and willingness to engage in oral interaction in language learning settings. In contrast, the present study is novel in its exclusive focus on speaking-specific motivation, its use of WTC as the operational framework, and its investigation of junior high school students, thereby addressing both conceptual and contextual gaps.

Although several previous studies have explored the relationship between motivation and speaking ability, the present study offers a unique contribution by focusing specifically on motivation in speaking, grounded in the Willingness to

Communicate (WTC) model, and conducted among junior high school students in EFL context. By operationalizing WTC's construct through measurable indicators and correlating them with students' actual speaking performance, this research addresses both theoretical and demographic gaps and provides a more targeted contribution to the understanding of affective variables in second language speaking development.

