

# The Role of Motivation and Attitudes in Improving Saudi EFL Students' Speaking Skill

Ameerah Adlan Ghazi Alshamrany

College of Languages and Translation, AL-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

**Email address:**

ameerah-alshamrany@hotmail.com

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**Abstract:** This study investigated the role of motivation and attitudes in improving Saudi EFL students' speaking skill. The purpose of the study was to identify the correlation between motivation, attitudes, and the speaking ability of Saudi EFL students and to raise the learners' awareness of the importance of these psychological factors. The study explored whether the level of motivation and favorable attitudes correlate with the speaking proficiency levels. The Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) questionnaire and structured interviews were the main instruments of the study. The sample of the study consisted of 50 randomly selected female students majoring in English at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU). The results showed that there was a positive significant correlation between motivation and attitudes, and the speaking proficiency of Saudi EFL students. Based on the results, the researcher presented a number of recommendations for further research.

**Keywords:** Motivation, Attitudes, Speaking Skill, EFL Students, SLA

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## 1. Introduction

Recently, researchers and linguists have become more interested in investigating certain psychological factors that influence language learning. They started to analyze the psychology of the learners and its effects on language acquisition and learning. In fact, many researchers have attempted to establish a relationship between individual difference factors -which include the psychological factors- and second language learning and acquisition [9].

Motivation, which is the focus of this paper, is one of the most important affective variables that have been discussed in the literature. It can be defined from different perspectives; behavioral, cognitive, and constructivist. From a behavioral perspective, motivation is defined as the anticipation of reward. Thus, it is aroused by the need for positive reinforcement and "driven by previous experiences of reward for behavior, we act accordingly to achieve further reinforcement" [6]. From the cognitive perspective, motivation is related to the individual's decisions. People can be motivated to do something because of certain goals or experiences they wish to achieve or avoid. With regard to the constructivist view of motivation, social contexts as well as individual personal choices both play a role in motivation.

Another key factor that affects the success of EFL learners is attitude. Attitude can be defined as "A predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person, or situation" [3]. Many studies proved that positive attitudes and motivation are associated with a willingness to keep learning [9].

Hence, there is no doubt that motivation and attitudes play a crucial role in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Many previous researches investigated the role of motivation and attitudes and emphasized their importance in second language success. Nevertheless, the relationship between motivation and attitudes and the ability to speak EFL has not received much attention. In Saudi Arabia, in particular, little work has been done in this regard. Therefore, the present study investigated the role of motivation and attitudes in improving Saudi EFL students' speaking skills.

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

Psychological factors play a crucial role in learning and acquiring a foreign language. Motivation and attitudes are two of the most important and related factors that affect language learning and acquisition. Several studies showed that highly motivated students and those with positive attitudes towards learning the language are more successful

than those who are not motivated and have negative attitudes [5, 18].

Many studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between motivation and attitudes and language acquisition and learning in general. Yet, there are only few studies that examined specifically the relationship between these two variables and the language skills; reading, writing, listening, and speaking. There are even fewer studies that investigated the speaking skill in relation to motivation and attitudes in Saudi Arabia. Many students in Saudi Arabia face a difficulty in dealing with this particular skill. It is noted that the level of students' achievement in speaking English was low, and the proficiency levels were insufficient. Although many studies examined EFL students' speaking difficulties, most of them were not conducted in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, there is a need to conduct such a study that will probably reveal whether or not motivation and attitudes correlate with Saudi EFL students' ability to speak English as a foreign language. Thus, exploring Saudi EFL students' speaking skill is an issue which deserves investigation.

## **1.2. Purpose of the Study**

This study aims at investigating the correlation between motivation, attitudes and the speaking ability of Saudi EFL Students. This study also hopes to raise the teachers' and students' awareness of the role of motivation and attitudes since it included some implications for language teaching and learning.

## **1.3. Significance of the Study**

Speaking is one of the most important language skills nowadays since it is an effective way to communicate with the native speakers and exchange information. Besides, speaking is also essential to achieve a high academic success. Nevertheless, speaking is considered as one of the most difficult language skills and needs perseverance and practice. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there are no studies in Saudi Arabia that examined the impact of motivation and attitudes on the speaking proficiency.

Thereupon, the findings of this study may be functional for different categories of people; it may help EFL curricula designers and EFL methodologists develop teaching materials which match the students' level of motivation as well as their levels of achievement in English. Moreover, the study may help to raise language teachers' and students' awareness regarding the effective role of motivation and attitudes. Finally, this study may encourage other researchers to conduct further studies on the same topic, which will enrich both the local and international literature.

## **1.4. Research Questions**

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the role of motivation and attitudes in improving Saudi EFL students' speaking skill?
2. Are Saudi EFL students motivated and have positive attitudes towards speaking English as a foreign language?

## **1.5. Definition of Terms**

### **1.5.1. Motivation**

In a general sense, motivation is defined by Dörnyei and Ottó as the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, priorities, operationalized and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out [7].

### **1.5.2. Instrumental and Integrative Motivation**

Dörnyei and Ushioda believe that integrative motivation concerns a positive disposition toward the L2 group and the desire to interact with valued members of that community [8]. Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, is defined as "the utilitarian counterpart of integrative orientation in Gardner's theory, pertaining to the potential pragmatic gains of L2 proficiency, such as getting a better job or a higher salary" [41].

### **1.5.3. Attitude**

Attitude is an intrinsic component that reveals one's thoughts and beliefs on a language, a culture, people or an activity which consequently helps to predict the behavior of the individual. In the context of language learning, different attitudes can help predict how successful a language learner can be [14].

### **1.5.4. Speaking Skill**

Burns and Joyce define speaking as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information [16]. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, the participants and the purposes of speaking.

Torky defines speaking as the students' ability to express themselves orally, coherently, fluently and appropriately in a given meaningful context to serve both transactional and interactional purposes using correct pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary and adopting the pragmatic and discourse rules of the spoken language [16].

## **1.6. Limitations of the Study**

Because of the time limit, the sample included only 50 female participants. This sample size was too small and hence the results could not be generalized to the entire population neither could it be generalized to the two genders. Besides, since the assessment of the students' speaking performance was done by the researcher herself, it's inevitable that a small amount of subjectivity could be found.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Overview of the Historical Development in Motivation**

It can be said that the study of motivation and motivation theories has two main milestones. The first one occurred before the second half of the twentieth century and marked

by Behavioral/mechanistic approach and the works of some physiologists such as Ivan Pavlov and John Watson [12]. During that time, human behavior was thought of as a response to certain stimuli. Behaviorism can be defined as an approach that focuses on studying the overt behaviors of human and animal [17]. Thus behaviorists focused mainly on the observable variables and ignored the role of cognition.

The second critical movement in the history of motivation appeared as a consequence of the cognitive revolution in psychology, which took place during the second half of the twentieth century. During that time, researchers became more interested in investigating the role of cognition and how it influences the human behavior. Thus, in response to behaviorism which ignored the role of cognition and viewed humans as passive individuals who act in response to particular stimuli that are present in the surrounding, cognitive theories of motivation emerged. [8]

## 2.2. *Empirical Studies on Motivation, Attitudes, and EFL*

Bernaus investigated the role of motivation in learning English as a foreign language (EFL) [5]. The sample of his study included 137 secondary school students in Barcelona, Spain, who were studying EFL. His study aimed to show that motivation affects students' English proficiency and also to investigate the role that English teacher plays on students' motivation. Bernaus used correlations and questionnaires; the correlations were performed on the students' English proficiency and their motivation. The questionnaires of his study were submitted to the ideal English teacher and to the students' actual English teacher. The results of his study indicated that significant correlations existed between motivation and foreign language learning. The study also found out that foreign language teacher's personality and his/her way of teaching affect student's motivation.

Besides, Balghaith examined Saudi secondary school students' motivation and its influence on language achievement [4]. She also explored the types of motivation of 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade female students in two private schools in Riyadh. Examining the attitudes of Saudi students towards learning EFL was also among the purposes of Balghaith's study. A questionnaire was used to identify the different types of motivation; instrumental, integrative, or personal. The second part of the questionnaire included items that question the students' attitudes towards learning EFL. A quantitative method was used to analyze the data. The results showed that most students were instrumentally motivated and had positive attitudes towards learning EFL. Furthermore, integrative motivation received the second highest score and personal motivation received the least score. Surprisingly, there was no clear correlation between the students' motivation (in all its forms; instrumental, integrative, and personal) and language achievement. Besides, there was a weak correlation between positive attitudes and the learners' achievement. One of the researcher's recommendations was to find ways that would enhance the learners' integrative motivation.

Zainol Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi, and Alzwari inspected

Libyan secondary school students' attitudes towards learning English in terms of three significant aspects; behavioral, cognitive, and emotional [19]. The study also aimed to investigate differences in the students' attitudes towards the English language based on their demographic profiles i.e., gender, field and year of study. The sample included 180 students; 94 were male and 86 were female. They were chosen randomly from different secondary schools in Al Mergeb, Zliten in the west of Libya. A questionnaire was used as a measuring instrument for the study. The result of the study showed that participants have a negative attitude towards learning English. With regard to the three attitude aspects that were examined, the cognitive aspect represented the highest mean score of attitudes towards English. In addition, regarding the participants' demographic profile, the results showed that the attitudes of female secondary school students towards English were slightly higher than that of male ones. Finally, the researchers concluded that teachers should attempt to create an encouraging atmosphere in the English classes to promote the students' positive attitudes towards English.

Alfawzan examined the attitudes of Saudi students towards the benefit of English and their desire to learn it [1]. The participants of the study were 40 Saudi students enrolled in an intensive English program at a US university. Alfawzan conducted a mixed method design for his study in which both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. A survey was used as an instrument for the study. The study found that the majority of the students had positive attitudes towards the utility of English. The participants also showed their willingness towards learning EFL. The study also revealed that most of the participants were instrumentally motivated to learn English. Thus, they thought of English as a means of getting into educational programs and finding better jobs' opportunities.

In addition, Alzayid investigated how motivation in English L2 learning changed over time for Saudi students [2]. The general framework of the study was influenced by Dörnyei and Otto's Process Model of L2 Motivation [7]. According to this model, the construct of motivation can vary over time. The design of the study was qualitative and hence the sample included only seven Saudi students at a mid-western University in the U.S. The instruments that the researcher used included a semi-structured interview and a language history questionnaire. The results of the study showed that the nature of motivation in learning English for Saudi students is temporal and changing.

Furthermore, Liu explored motivation and attitudes as major non-intelligence factors that influence the success or failure in English learning [15]. Liu argued that "motivation drives students towards a desired goal, while attitude shapes students' perceptions of the curriculum, peers, as well as the instructor" [15]. Besides, Liu insisted that it's not only intelligence but also motivation and attitudes that play a crucial role in English learning since Ochsenschmidt found that motivation accounts for 33% while intelligence takes up 20% in terms of contributing to English learning [15]. In

particular, the paper aimed to examine the role of non-intelligence factors in arousing students' potentialities in learning English, with a special focus on motivation and attitude. In addition, Liu's paper included ways to arouse students' motivation.

Moreover, Yang conducted a study on motivation and attitudes among University of Malaya students; non-English major master students [18]. The study wanted to examine why some people acquire and learn the language better than others. He hypothesized that motivation and attitudes could be the key towards successful language learning. A questionnaire was used as an instrument for the study. One of the research main questions was also to examine which form of motivation is more affective; instrumental or integrative. The sample included 20 students from different nationalities and races. Yang concluded from his study that motivation and attitudes do influence English learning.

These studies were conducted to investigate motivation, attitudes, and language learning and explains how these studies examined these variables. Although there are a large number of studies which focused on motivation and attitudes and their relationship to language achievement, none of these studies investigated the correlation between motivation, attitudes, and speaking proficiency. Therefore, most of these studies investigated motivation, attitudes and general language proficiency rather than a specific foreign language skill. Therefore, the present study is needed since it aims to fill this gap by investigating the correlation between motivation, attitudes, and speaking proficiency.

### 3. Methodology

As previously mentioned, this study was conducted to investigate the role of motivation and attitudes in improving the speaking skill of Saudi EFL students. This was carried out with the aim of clarifying the impacts of these psychological factors on the acquisition of English speaking skill as a foreign language. This study also aimed to raise the teachers and students' awareness of the role of motivation and attitudes. Therefore, qualitative and quantitative methods were used to examine the correlation between the different variables. The specific design of the study is correlational since the study attempted to investigate the relationship between motivation and attitudes on one side and the level of speaking proficiency on the other side, and to find out any existing correlation.

#### 3.1. Study Sample

The participants of the study were 50 randomly-selected female EFL students at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU), majoring in the English language. The researcher first got the participants' initial consent to take part in the study. Then the purpose of the study was explained to them to ensure they were still willing to be involved in the study and to contribute to the results. The participants were also informed of the confidentiality of their responses.

#### 3.2. Study Instruments

The researcher used two main instruments to collect data: AMTB questionnaire and a structured interview. Each instrument is used as a vehicle to help answer the different research questions.

In order to answer the second research question, "Are Saudi EFL students motivated and have positive attitudes towards speaking English?", the researcher adapted the Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) which was developed by Gardner [11]. Gardner argued that AMTB was developed to fill the need for instruments that assess the non-linguistic aspects of a second language [10]. The researcher of this study modified many items and not all the aspects of the original battery were assessed. Thus, the instrument was modified to fit the purpose of the present study.

The adapted version of the AMTB questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part contains 23 items and the second part contains 7 items. The first part required the students to respond to a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2), to strongly disagree (1). The second part included items followed by a semantic differential scale that has two different words on each side such as *low, high, favorable, unfavorable* and there are numbers, 1 to 5, between these semantic differences. Similarly, the students were required to rate the items based on what best describes them. The AMTB questionnaire was translated into the students' native language- Arabic- to cancel out any possible misunderstanding caused by lack of English proficiency.

##### 3.2.1. Validity & Reliability of AMTB Questionnaire

In order to test the validity of the items in the questionnaire, five professors of linguistics were kindly requested to examine the validity of the items (see Appendix A). The professors' suggestions were taken into consideration and modifications were made. In addition, to ensure that the instrument is reliable, a pilot study was conducted. The Cronbach's Alpha for the pilot study was 79.6%. This rate is statistically acceptable since it is more than 60%.

As for the first research question, "What is the role of motivation and attitudes in improving Saudi EFL students' speaking skill?" the researcher needed to specify the participants' speaking proficiency levels and make a correlation between the speaking scores and the levels of motivation and attitudes which were measured by the questionnaire. Hence, a structured interview was conducted to test the participants' approximate ability to speak English.

##### 3.2.2. Validity of the Structured Interview

To ensure that the questions in the interview are appropriate and fit the study purpose, the same professors who validated the questionnaire were also kindly requested to give their opinions on the suitability of the questions in the interview (see Appendix A). Besides, the participants of the pilot study were also interviewed to make sure that the interview elicits rich data.

### 3.2.3. Scoring the Structured Interview

The researcher used an analytic scale to assess the students' performance of their speaking proficiency. Analytic scoring requires "a separate score for each of a number of aspects of a task" [13]. One of the advantages of this method is that it leads to greater reliability. Furthermore, Hughes argues that in this method of scoring "scorers are compelled to consider aspects of performance which they might otherwise ignore" [13]. Therefore, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension are all aspects of speaking that were assessed during the interview (see Table 1). Based on the total scores of the participants' performance, they were assigned different proficiency levels (see Table 2).

**Table 1.** Analytic Scale to Test the Oral Ability (Weighting Table).

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Pronunciation	0	1	2	2	3	4
Grammar	6	12	18	24	30	36
Vocabulary	4	8	12	16	20	24
Fluency	2	4	6	8	10	12
Comprehension	4	8	12	15	19	23
Total:						

*Note.* The total of the weighted scores is then looked up in the conversion table below, which converts it into a rating scale. Adapted from Adams and Frith, 1979 [13].

**Table 2.** Analytic Scale to Test the Oral Ability (Conversion Table).

Score	Rating	Score	Rating	Score	Rating
16-25	0+	43-52	2	73-82	3+
26-32	1	53-62	2+	83-92	4
33-42	1+	63-72	3	93-99	4+

*Note.* From Adams and Frith, 1979 [13].

### 3.3. Data Collection Procedure

All the participants were kindly requested to be part of the study of their own free will. Before giving them the questionnaires, the purpose of the study was explained to them. They were also required to give their honest answers and choose only one answer for each item. Then each participant was interviewed individually. The interviews took place in quite empty classrooms at IMSIU to help put the participants at their ease. General topics were covered to ensure that all the participants can answer the questions. In addition, the interviews lasted about 10 minutes for each participant, and they were recorded using a digital voice recorder. The recording allowed the researcher to listen to the interviews several times and hence assess the participants' performance as accurately as possible.

### 3.4. Data Analysis Procedure

The students' answers in the questionnaires and their speaking scores were analyzed using appropriate statistical measures. The Cronbach's Alpha was examined using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the total questionnaire was

0.65. With regard to the speaking scores, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.641. These rates are statistically acceptable to conduct the study.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Saudi EFL Students' Motivation to Speak English as a Foreign Language

The participants of the study were 50 randomly-selected female students majoring in English at IMSIU. In order to examine their motivation and attitudes towards speaking English, they were asked to fill an AMTB type of questionnaire. They had to respond to the first part of the questionnaire- which contains 23 items- using a five-point Likert scale response format. For the second part of the questionnaire, they had to respond to 7 items using semantic differential scale. The following sections present the percentage of the students' responses to the variables of motivation and attitudes which were examined by using the questionnaire.

#### 4.1.1. Motivational Intensity to Learn and Speak English

Four items in the AMTB helped to indicate the motivational intensity of the participants; items 7, 10, 17, and 22 (part I). The highest percentage of responses was for item 22, "I really work hard to improve my language"; 40% of the students agreed with this statement. Moreover, 36% of the students agreed with item 17, "I take every opportunity to improve my speaking skill". Apparently, 32% of the students seem to have a long-term motivation, which was affirmed by the responses to item 10, "It's OK for me to spend lots of time studying English". Besides, 30% of the students agreed with item 7, "I make a point of trying to understand all the English I see or hear". Nevertheless, only around 22% to 24% of the students strongly agreed with these four items which may indicate that their motivation is not very intense.

#### 4.1.2. Integrative Orientation

Another variable that relates to motivation is the integrative orientation towards learning English. Four items investigated the integrative motivation of Saudi EFL students; items 5, 19 (part I), and 1 (part II). The highest percentage of responses was for item 5, "Learning English is important for me because it will allow me to meet and speak with speakers of English"; 60% of the students strongly agreed with this statement. In addition, 46% of the students strongly agreed with item 19, "Learning to speak English is important for me because it will enable me to participate in the activities of other cultural groups". With regard to the second part of the questionnaire, 44% of the students regarded themselves as having very strong integrative motivation and hence chose the strongest rate (5); this was indicated by item 1, "My motivation to learn English in order to communicate with English speaking people is" followed by the semantic differential scale that has "weak" on the left and "strong" on the right. From these findings, it can be said that Saudi EFL students' integrative motivation ranges from

moderate to high.

#### 4.1.3. Instrumental Orientation

With regard to the instrumental orientation to learn and speak the language, the researcher included four items to investigate this variable, 6, 12, 18 (part I), and 6 (part II). The fear of failure acted as a strong incentive to speak the language for most of the students. Thus, 82% of the students strongly agreed with item 18, "I have to learn to speak English because I don't want to fail some of my college courses". Furthermore, 78% of the students strongly agreed that speaking English is important to get a decent job; this was affirmed by the responses to item 12 "Learning to speak English is important for me because I will need it for my career". Speaking English in particular seems to be instrumentally more important than learning English in general for many students. Hence, fewer students- 66%-strongly agreed with item 6 (part I), "Learning English is important for me because it will be useful in getting a good job". Item 6 (part II), "My motivation to learn English for practical purposes (e.g., to get a good job, good grades) is" followed by a "weak" versus "strong" semantic differential scale, showed that 58% of the students considered themselves to have a very strong instrumental motivation to learn English; this was indicated by their choice of rate (5). Moreover, only less than 6% of the students disagreed or strongly disagreed with these four items. This suggests that the instrumental motivation of Saudi EFL students is very high.

#### 4.1.4. Desire to Know and To Speak English

Items 2, 4, 20, 21, 9 (part I), and 3, 4 (part II) measured the students' desire to know and to speak English. Very high percentage of responses was for item 2, "I want to speak English so well that it will become natural to me"; 94% of the students strongly agreed with this statement. Fewer students- 60%-strongly agreed with item 20, "I have a strong desire to know all aspects of English". This may indicate that the students' desire to speak English is stronger than their desire to know other aspects of English. Besides, less than 9% of the students agreed or strongly agreed with item 4 (part I), "I have little interest in speaking English", and 48% of them strongly disagreed with it. With regard to goal-setting, most of the students believed that it's important to both master English in general and to be a proficient English speaker in particular. Therefore, 66% of the students strongly disagreed with item 21, "Becoming a proficient speaker in English isn't really an important goal to me", and item 9, "Mastering English isn't really an important goal to me".

Items 3 and 4 (part II) also affirmed the finding that the majority of the students showed that their desire to speak English is stronger than their desire to learn other skills of English. Hence, around 84% of the students chose the strongest rate (5) for item 4, "My desire to speak English is" followed by "weak" versus "strong" scale, while only 70% of the students chose rate (5) for item 3, "My desire to learn

English is" followed by the same scale. None of the students chose the weak rates (1) and (2) for these two items.

#### 4.1.5. English Teacher as a Source of Motivation or Demotivation

English teacher as one of the factors that may influence the existing of motivation was investigated in the questionnaire. Items 8, 14, 15, and 23 (part I) tested this variable. Apparently, more than 80% of the students perceived English teachers' good techniques as one of the sources that motivate them to learn; this was found from the responses to item 23, "English teachers' dynamic and interesting teaching techniques and strategies motivate me to learn the language". In contrast, 62% of the students perceived teachers' boring techniques as something that can demotivate them to learn English; this was concluded from their responses to item 8, "Teachers' boring techniques decrease my motivation to learn English". While only 34% of the students agreed or strongly agreed with item 15, "My teachers give me a chance and encourage me to speak in English", 38% of the students disagreed or strongly disagreed with it. Furthermore, about 42% of the students agreed or strongly agreed with item 14, "Most of my English teachers are great sources of inspiration to me", and 33% of the students either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this item. Accordingly, these responses confirmed that the students' motivation to learn and speak English can be increased or decreased by their English teachers.

The students' attitude towards learning and speaking English is another main variable that was measured using the questionnaire. Items 1, 3, 11, 13, 16 (part I), and 2, 5 (part II) tested this variable. 86% of the students strongly disagreed with item 11, "Learning to speak English is really a waste of time". Moreover, 54% of the students strongly agreed with item 3, "I'd like to speak English". 40% of the students agreed with item 16, "I really enjoy learning to speak English". In addition, 24% of the students think that learning English is boring; this was affirmed by the responses to item 13, "I think that learning English is dull". The majority of the students considered their attitudes towards speaking English as very positive ones; 56% of them chose rate (5) for item 5 (part II), "My attitude toward speaking English is" followed by "unfavorable" versus "favorable" semantic differential scale. Similarly, 52% of the students showed that their attitudes towards learning English are very positive ones, this was found from the responses to item 2 (part II), "My attitude toward learning English is" followed by the same scale. With regard to the students' attitudes towards English speaking people, 40% of the students neither agreed nor disagreed with item 1, "Most English speakers are so friendly and easy to get along with; I wish to have them as friends". Hence, these findings clarify that the students' attitudes towards speaking English were very favorable. Yet, their attitudes towards English speaking people did not seem very favorable.

**Table 3.** Responses, Percentage, Means, and Standard Deviation of AMTB (part I).

No	AMTB Questionnaire	Responses%*					Mean	Standard deviation	Ranking	Degree
		SD	D	N	A	SA				
1	Most English speakers are so friendly and easy to get along with; I wish to have them as friends.	0	8	40	32	20	3.640	0.89807	13	Agree
2	I want to speak English so well that it will become natural to me.	0	0	0	6	94	4.940	0.23990	1	Strongly Agree
3	I'd like to speak English	0	2	10	34	54	4.4000	0.75593	7	Strongly Agree
4	I have little interest in speaking English.	48	28	14	8	2	1.8800	1.06215	19	Disagree
5	Learning English is important for me because it will allow me to meet and speak with speakers of English.	0	4	10	26	60	4.4200	0.83520	6	Strongly Agree
6	Learning English is important for me because it will be useful in getting a good job.	0	0	6	28	66	4.600	0.60609	5	Strongly Agree
7	I make a point of trying to understand all the English I see or hear.	2	16	30	30	22	3.54	1.07305	16	Agree
8	Teachers' boring techniques decrease my motivation to learn English.	12	8	18	34	28	3.5800	1.31071	15	Agree
9	Mastering English isn't really an important goal in my life.	66	22	8	2	2	1.5200	0.88617	21	Strongly Disagree
10	It's OK for me to spend lots of time studying English.	2	14	28	32	24	3.62	1.06694	14	Agree
11	Learning to speak English is really a waste of time.	86	14	0	0	0	1.1400	0.35051	23	Strongly Disagree
12	Learning to speak English is important for me because I will need it for my career.	0	0	2	20	78	4.760	0.47638	3	Strongly Agree
13	I think that learning English is dull.	48	28	0	16	8	1.8400	0.97646	20	Disagree
14	Most of my English teachers are great sources of inspiration to me.	12.2	20.4	26.5	26.5	14.3	3.1020	1.24574	17	Neutral
15	My teachers give me a chance and encourage me to speak in English.	4	34	28	32	2	2.9400	.95640	18	Neutral
16	I really enjoy learning to speak English.	2	2	20	40	36	4.0600	0.91272	10	Agree
17	I take every opportunity to improve my speaking skill.	0	8	32	36	24	3.76	0.91607	12	Agree
18	I have to learn to speak English because I don't want to fail some of my college courses.	2	0	4	12	82	4.720	0.72955	4	Strongly Agree
19	Learning to speak English is important for me because it will enable me to participate in the activities of other cultural groups.	0	4	18	32	46	4.2000	0.88063	9	Strongly Agree
20	I have a strong desire to know all aspects of English.	2	6	22	10	60	4.2000	1.10657	8	Agree
21	Becoming a proficient speaker in English isn't really an important goal to me.	66	26	6	2	0	1.4400	0.70450	22	Strongly Disagree
22	I really work hard to improve my language.	2	2	34	40	22	3.78	0.88733	11	Agree
23	English teachers' dynamic and interesting teaching techniques and strategies motivate me to learn the language.	0	0	2	18	80	4.7800	.46467	2	Strongly Agree

**Table 4.** Responses, Percentage, Means, and Standard Deviation of AMTB (part II).

No	AMTB Questionnaire (part II)	Responses%*					Mean	Standard deviation	Ranking
		1	2	3	4	5			
1	My motivation to learn English in order to communicate with English speaking people is (Weak/Strong)	0	8	24	24	44	4.0400	1.00934	7
2	My attitude toward learning English is (Unfavorable/Favorable)	2	2	8	36	52	4.3400	0.87155	4
3	My desire to learn English is (Weak/Strong)	0	0	2	28	70	4.6800	0.51270	2
4	My desire to speak English is (Weak/Strong)	0	0	6.1	10.2	83.7	4.7755	0.55020	1
5	My attitude toward speaking English is (Unfavorable/Favorable)	0	6	14	24	56	4.3000	0.93131	5
6	My motivation to learn English for practical purposes (e.g., to get a good job, good grades) is (Weak/Strong)	2	6	16	18	58	4.240	1.06061	6
7	My motivation to speak English is (Very low/Very high)	0	0	18	28	54	4.3600	0.77618	3

#### 4.2. Speaking Proficiency of the 50 Participants

As mentioned earlier, the researcher conducted structured interviews to specify the levels of speaking proficiency of the 50 Saudi EFL students who participated in the study. The interviews were assessed using analytic scale methods. The used scale contains eight different proficiency levels that range from *elementary proficiency (1)*, *elementary proficiency, plus (1+)*, *limited working proficiency (2)*, *limited working proficiency, plus (2+)*, *general professional proficiency (3)*, *general professional proficiency, plus (3+)*, *advanced professional proficiency (4)* to *advanced*

*professional proficiency, plus (4+)*.

The highest percentage of scores was for the limited working proficiency, plus (2+) level; 30% of the students were assigned this level. The second highest percentage was for the general professional proficiency (3) level; 20% of the students were given this level. In addition, 14% of the students were found to have general professional proficiency, plus (3+). While 16% of the students were assigned the elementary proficiency, plus (1+) level, 10% of them had the limited working proficiency (2) level. Furthermore, 10% of the students were assumed to be very proficient in speaking English. Thus, 4% of the students were assigned the

advanced professional proficiency (4) level and 6% of the students were given the highest score (4+); advanced

professional proficiency, plus (see Table 5).

**Table 5.** Frequency, Percentage, Means, and Standard Deviation of Speaking Scores.

No	Score	Proficiency Level	Frequency	Percent%	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	1	Elementary Proficiency	0	0		
2	1+	Elementary Proficiency, Plus	8	16		
3	2	Limited Working Proficiency	5	10		
4	+2	Limited Working Proficiency, Plus	15	30	4.420	1.64242
5	3	General Professional Proficiency	10	20		
6	+3	General Professional Proficiency, Plus	7	14		
7	4	Advanced Professional Proficiency	2	4		
8	+4	Advanced Professional Proficiency, Plus	3	6		

### 4.3. The Role of Motivation and Attitudes in the Speaking Proficiency

The Pearson product-moment correlation was calculated to answer the first research question which is about the role of motivation and attitudes in the speaking proficiency of Saudi EFL students. The correlations were calculated three times; the first correlation was between motivation and speaking proficiency, the second correlation was between attitudes and speaking proficiency, and the third one was between motivation, attitudes, and speaking proficiency.

#### 4.3.1. Correlation Between Motivation and Speaking Proficiency

The study found that there was a positive correlation between motivation and speaking proficiency of Saudi EFL students. Thus, the students' speaking scores were compared to their motivation levels and the relationship was found to be positive. This means that whenever their level of motivation increases, the speaking proficiency of the students increases as well. Besides, this correlation was found to be statistically significant ( $r = 0.441$ ,  $n = 50$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

#### 4.3.2. Correlation Between Attitudes and Speaking Proficiency

The study also found that there was a positive correlation between attitudes and speaking proficiency of Saudi EFL students. This suggests that positive attitudes can lead to better speaking performance. However, the correlation between motivation and speaking proficiency was found to be statistically more significant than the correlation between attitudes and speaking proficiency. Thus, the correlation between the latter variables was:  $r = 0.297$ ,  $n = 50$ ,  $p < 0.05$ .

#### 4.3.3. Correlation Between Motivation, Attitudes, and Speaking Proficiency

A third correlation was needed to investigate the role of motivation and attitudes as very related psychological factors in the speaking proficiency of Saudi EFL students. Hence, the Pearson product-moment was used to produce this correlation statistically. It was found that the correlation between these variables was a positive one and the relationship was significant ( $r = 0.419$ ,  $n = 50$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

To sum up, these results showed that Saudi EFL students

were motivated and had positive attitudes towards speaking English. Nonetheless, not all the students had intense motivation and put forth an effort to improve their speaking skill. The study also found that motivation and attitudes correlated positively with the speaking proficiency of Saudi EFL students. Highly motivated students and those with positive attitudes towards English seem to be good English speakers and vice versa. However, this study, since it's not an experimental one, cannot prove that high motivation and positive attitudes caused the students to be good or proficient speakers neither can it assure that weak speaking performance was the outcome of low motivation and unfavorable attitudes.

## 5. Discussion

The finding of the first research question showed that motivation and attitudes played a significant role in the speaking proficiency of Saudi EFL students. The relationship between motivation, attitudes, and speaking proficiency was examined and it proved to be significant ( $r = 0.419$ ,  $n = 50$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This relationship was positive which proved that motivation and attitudes had a positive influence on Saudi EFL students' speaking proficiency. This finding conformed to Bernaus' result [5], "Students with a high motivation correlated with [sic] highest improvements between the English proficiency pre-test and post-test" [5].

With regard to the second research question, the findings indicated that Saudi EFL students were both integratively and instrumentally motivated to speak English. However, the findings indicate that the students' instrumental motivation is stronger than their integrative motivation. Getting a good job and the fear of failure are external stimuli that incite the students to improve their speaking skill.

With regard to the students' attitudes towards speaking English, most of the students showed that their attitudes towards speaking English are positive ones. Nonetheless, the results showed that the motivational intensity of the students was not very high. Thus, the students didn't seem to exert the great effort needed for speaking proficiency.

## 6. Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, the study indicates that



motivation and attitudes play a significant role in the speaking proficiency of Saudi EFL students. Thus, a significant positive correlation was found between motivation, attitudes, and the speaking proficiency of Saudi EFL students. Saudi EFL students' speaking proficiency seems to increase whenever their motivation and favorable attitudes increase. The study also found that Saudi EFL students are motivated and have favorable attitudes towards speaking English. Nevertheless, the results showed that some of the students don't exert the effort needed for language proficiency and hence cannot be considered to be truly motivated individuals. The study also indicates that English teacher's way of teaching can contribute to the students' motivation or demotivation.

One of the important implications of the study is that learners should put forth a lot of effort to improve their speaking proficiency. Speaking requires continuous practice and perseverance. Motivation is responsible not only for the choices of actions but also for the persistence and effort expended on them. Therefore, it's not enough to have a strong desire and favorable attitudes to be proficient in speaking English.

Another implication is that English teachers should create an interesting and relaxed atmosphere to motivate their students. The study found that the students' instrumental motivation is stronger than their integrative motivation. Accordingly, teachers should use strategies to promote the students' integrative orientation. They should also encourage their students to talk and express their opinions in English. To conclude, high motivation and favorable attitudes help the learners to improve their speaking skill and teachers should use good teaching techniques, give the students a chance to speak, and use strategies that promote the learners' motivation to speak English.

## 7. Recommendations

The researcher provides the following suggestions for further research:

1. An investigation of the role of motivation in other language skills; reading, writing, and listening, is recommended.
2. L2 Motivational Self System is a recent framework that was validated by some researchers and deserves to be investigated among Saudi EFL students.
3. The researcher also recommends conducting a longitudinal study to examine L2 motivation among Saudi students.
4. Because the present study included only female participants, further studies are recommended to replicate the study on male participants.

## Appendix

Professors Who Validated the Instruments:

1. Dr. Omar Na'eem Bani Abdelrahman.
2. Dr. Muhammad Abdellatif.

3. Dr. Zuhair Zaghlool.
4. Dr. Nasser Freihat.
5. Dr. Montasser Mohamed Abdulwahab.

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