

ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDENTS' MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES IN ACQUIRING PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILLS BASED ON THE ACTIVITY THEORY PERSPECTIVE

Aplonia Nelci Ke Lomi^{1*}, Markus Budiraharjo²

¹ Widya Mandira Catholic University

² Sanata Dharma University

¹ aplonialomi@unwira.ac.id, ² mbudiraharjo1@gmail.com

Abstract

From the perspective of Activity Theory (AT), this study demonstrates the existence of motivational strategies and influencing factors acknowledged by English Education students to acquire public speaking skills. Subject, object, outcome, tools, community, rules, and division of labor are all components of Activity Theory (AT). This mixed-method study examines the learning experiences of English Education students in relation to AT components. This study included 16 English Education students. The researchers collected data using questionnaires and interviews. The study found that students used a variety of strategies. They were basically forcing themselves to speak, practicing with their peers, and self-practicing (division of labor). The students reported their happiness with the public speaking class learning process (object). The lecturer's varied learning sources also helped the students succeed in class (tools). Their classmates and lecturer aided and supported them positively (community). There were their obligations in the class were made to manage the class (rules). As a result, English Education departments should promote students' motivation in mastering language skills. Future researchers are encouraged to study language skills acquired by language students in a broader context and with more participants.

Keywords: English Education, Public Speaking Skills, Activity Theory Perspective

INTRODUCTION

It is vital to master speaking skills when learning a new language. Because the primary objective of learning a new language is to communicate in various settings and situations, primarily through speech (Kusdianang & Bharati, 2016). Nowadays, the ability to speak in public is necessary. Public speaking differs from general speaking. Many language users will interact directly through public speaking. Audiences gather in a controlled environment to listen to the main speaker. Speaking in public can serve a variety of purposes, including telling a story, sharing thoughts and experiences, informing messages, and motivating people to take action. For example, if the speaker is excellent at bringing personal sharing and demonstrating sincerity into his delivery, the audience's emotions may be aroused. Public speaking is also required for presenting new ideas and projects, selling specific products, and completing important meetings (Rizakhojayeva & Orazali, 2022). At the least, the audience should be able to take away a message from the speech.

Language students have a legitimate need to develop public speaking skill (Fathikasari et al., 2022). Specifically the English Education students, who are expected to be educators, they should have sufficient skill to use English appropriately and speak in front of their students. Mastering English good speaking skills also directly impact the students' ability to enjoy the language (Kusdianang & Bharati, 2016). Jones (2017) specifically points out that speaking in

front of an audience in a foreign language can be an intimidating proposition. The speakers need to deal with anxiety and other affective issues regarding the context, content, environment, and language. The skill is quite challenging for the EFL students that sometimes they may feel challenged to practice in the class. In (Chen Hsieh et al., 2017), EFL students frequently examined their experiences regarding their level of anxiousness. Many previous studies present the struggles and anxieties in speaking faced by Indonesian EFL students (Fathikasari et al., 2022; Foutz et al., 2021; Mbato, 2020; Paradewari, 2017; Riadil, 2020). They mostly discovered that language students frequently suffer shyness and anxiety when speaking in public, such as in front of their mates because they fear making mistakes.

Shyness and anxiety have a direct impact on the motivation and confidence of EFL students (Fallah, 2014). It needs not only sufficient knowledge but also self-confidence and strong motivation. Motivation deals with our state of mind, which could navigate how we behave. Sanjay and Narayana (2021) imply that motivation determines the choice of action or why individuals do something, the perseverance with this activity or how long people are willing to sustain it, and the effort invested in it or how hard people are eager to pursue this activity (p.38). As stated above, Indonesian EFL students have speaking anxiety, including fear of making mistakes and receiving criticism (Riadil, 2020). Because of the undeniable pressures emerging through public speaking, the EFL students tend to display low willingness and effort in approaching the skills. Apparently, Many EFL researchers highlight the importance of motivation, as it is widely known that even students with the most remarkable abilities cannot achieve long-term objectives without it. Thus, the English Education departments in Indonesia need to be aware of their students' speaking anxieties and the strategies to increase their motivation in supporting their learning process and become prospective English teachers.

In analyzing the supporting system of students learning, various models of motivation theories can be applied, such as expectancy-value theory, self-determination, goal orientation theory, and self-efficacy theory (Kim & Zhang, 2016). Activity Theory is one of the frameworks or descriptive tools which deals with the social-cultural components of specific actions or behaviors. Activity Theory is an interdisciplinary approach to human sciences that originates from Vygotsky, Leont'ev, and Luria's cultural-historical psychology (Engestrom et al., 1999). There are plenty of recent studies in education, specifically in language teaching and learning, that employ the framework of Activity Theory (Andriani et al., 2022; Barhoumi, 2020; Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2018; Nguyen & Habók, 2021; Rahmati et al., 2019; Townsend & Pan, 2019). In some previous studies (Kim & Zhang, 2016; Song & Kim, 2016) within the perspective of activity theory, the focus is to examine the L2 teachers' motivation. It was about the fluctuation of the teachers' motivation. This study focuses on the students' motivation and factors that influenced them to acquire public speaking skills. Recently, Andriani and colleagues (2022) presented an Educational Psychology class's cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) analysis. They suggest that the CHAT framework is beneficial to evaluate the learning process. Furthermore, based on the activity theory perspective, Nguyen and Habók (2021) researched the motivation of Vietnamese non-English majors to acquire English as a foreign language (EFL). They found that the students possessed more internal motivation than external motivation in learning English.

Considering the six components included in the theory, this current research is carried out to specifically find out Indonesian English Education students' motivational strategies in acquiring English public speaking. The EFL students' motivation is complex and complicated because it fluctuates while interacting with social and cultural factors in the dynamic context of the

learning process. As also suggested by Kim and Zhang (2016) that AT is a broad framework that does not separate individuals from society but instead emphasizes the two's dynamic connection. Therefore, to understand EFL learners' motivation deeper, it is vital to use an inclusive approach. Kim and Zhang (2016) elaborate that AT model can be a practical option in this regard for the following reasons: 1) AT perspective is comprehensive enough to examine the interactions between individuals and their social, cultural, and historical contexts; 2) AT can effectively explain the contradictions or tensions often identified in the language learning context, and 3) AT can capture longitudinal changes in language students motivation.

Engestrom (1999) defined six fundamental components of human activity as follows: subjects, mediational tools (or instruments), objects, rules, communities, and division of labor. For this study, the researchers employs the AT perspective with its components, particularly on English education students in public speaking classes. The components of the English Education students in acquiring public speaking skills can be illustrated within the AT framework below:

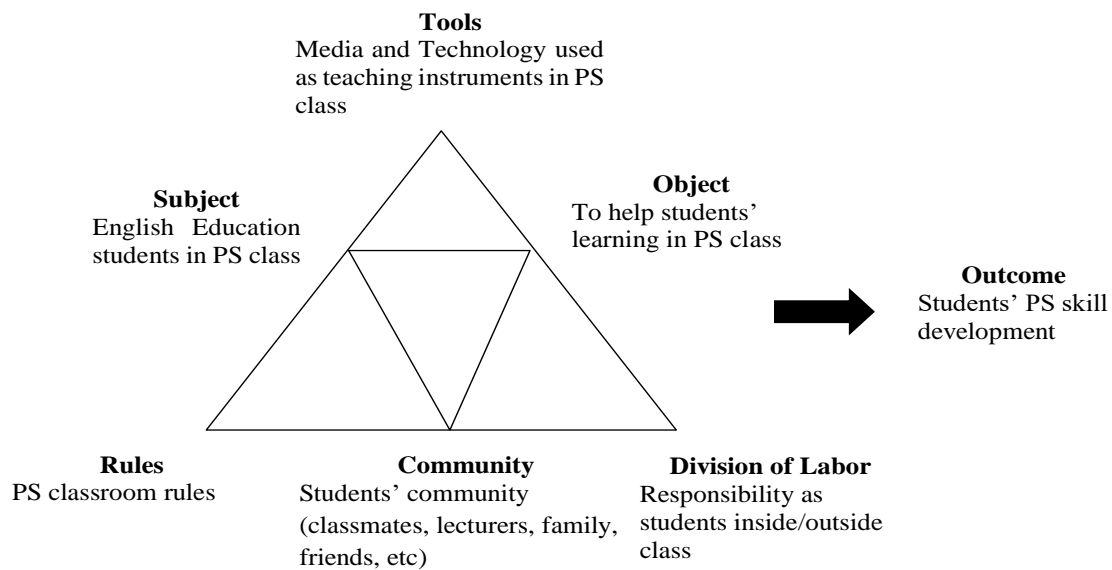


Figure 1. Activity Theory Model for English Education students in PS class

According to the framework above, some significant factors influence students' motivation to learn public speaking skills. First, in the model, English Education students in the Public Speaking class represent the subject. As can be seen, this component of activity theory is concerned with the internal aspects that underpin how subjects behave and act in their surroundings (Song & Kim, 2016). Feelings, emotions, perspectives, opinions, or points of view are all indications. The students were then grouped together as a learning community to demonstrate social interactions and progress. A community is made up of people who are all accountable for the same thing (Engestrom, 2016). According to Ihsan (2016), students require a supportive community in order to bring about improvements in their learning process. The AT object is the learning process in public speaking class, which is the primary focus of this study (Hasan & Kazlauskas, 2014). Furthermore, as a result of the framework, students were supposed to achieve sufficient skills in public speaking. They were facilitated by tools (lesson plans, sources of learning) in the classroom to achieve the result. The lecturer demonstrated the tools that would be useful to the students in the public speaking class. According to Kaptelinin and Nardi (2018), the interaction of students with media and technology as learning tools becomes a particular interest in activity theory. Later on, the community constrains rules, obligations, and responsibilities to support their learning progress (rules and division of labor).

Rules define human activity within a community (Engestrom, 2016, p.122). The division of labor also refers to how students organize their academic activities (Andriani et al., 2022). The division of labor made it possible for the individual subject to deal with both internal and external responsibilities. These rules and responsibilities are expected to have implications for the community.

From the perspective of Activity Theory, the researcher emphasizes the motivational strategies used by English Education students to acquire public speaking skills in this research. This research is also being carried out to determine their motivation to improve their general speaking skills. The researchers formulated the problems in the form of questions based on the background and goals stated above: (1) Based on the Activity Theory Perspective, what are the students' motivational strategies for acquiring English Public Speaking skills? (2) Based on the Activity Theory Perspective, what factors influenced students' motivation to learn English Public Speaking? The aim was to investigate how English Education students' motivation influences their progress toward learning public speaking skills.

METHOD

To obtain verifiable data, this study employed a mixed qualitative-quantitative methodology. It is useful for providing images or factors related to the development of foreign language learning. The researchers did not perform any treatment in this study but instead collected and analyzed data from the students' interactions and processes in developing public speaking skills. The participants were students enrolled in a public speaking class as part of their university in Yogyakarta. The participants in this study had to meet the following criteria: they had to be students in a Public Speaking class and they had to agree to participate in this research voluntarily. As a result, 16 students from the public speaking class were chosen to take part in this research. A questionnaire and interviews were used in the study. First, the researchers specifically requested students' willingness to participate in the study by distributing a consent form. Following that, the students were instructed to complete the researchers' online questionnaire. The questionnaire points address the students' perceptions and learning experiences in the Public Speaking class. The researchers modified the questionnaire form proposed by Ihsan (2016) in his article "Students' Motivation in Speaking English." It is made up of 19 different items. The quantitative data (percentages) from the questionnaire were described in detail below (Ihsan, 2016):

Table 1. Range and description of the percentages

Percentages (%)	Descriptions
100	All of the students
80-99	Most of the students
60-79	Many of the students
40-59	Some of the students
21-39	Few of the students
1-20	Very few of the students

Semi-structured interviews were used in this study to collect more detailed information. Some students were chosen to participate in the interviews because they were unique, and had the lowest and highest level of development. During the interview, the students discussed the difficulties of English public speaking in class. The interviews were taped and transcribed; the length of the interviews ranged from 15 to 30 minutes. The data was analyzed in the weeks following the interview. The researchers also collected feedback from the lecturer of the public

speaking class in order to obtain more detailed data and for data triangulation. The detailed notes were kept and interpreted before drawing conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The researchers tried to investigate: 1) the students' motivational strategies in practicing speaking English through Public Speaking class. 2) The factors that influence the students in practicing speaking English are based on the Activity Theory perspective elements. The researchers tried to find out each element of Activity Theory in the students' motivational strategies and its effects on their motivation to acquire public speaking skills in the class.

Subjects

The English Education students were the subject of this language learning process. The students expressed various ways related to the way they acquire public speaking. They stated that they faced trouble motivating themselves and managing their own emotions in public. Most of them deal with anxiety and fears imagining their speaking in public. Some students also stated that they lack self-confidence facing many many people. The students' perceptions regarding their preferences and abilities in acquiring public speaking are presented in the table below:

Table 2. Students' self-perception

No	Statement	Students' Options	Frequency	Percentage
1.	How much do you like speaking English in class?	a. I do not like speaking English in Class	0	0
		b. I like speaking English in class	12	75
		c. I love speaking English in Class	4	25
2.	I feel confident when I am speaking in front of many people	a. True	2	12.5
		b. Somewhat true	2	12.5
		c. Less True	4	25
		d. Not True	8	50
3.	So far, I feel happy and satisfied with my progress during the learning process in English Public Speaking Class	e. True	8	50
		f. Somewhat true	5	31.25
		g. Less True	3	18.75
		h. Not True	0	0

According to the table above, **many of the students** enjoyed speaking English in class (1b=75). One of the students expressed a strong interest in public speaking, saying, *"I enjoy public speaking. I enjoy all of the public speaking classes. When speaking in front of a large group, I'm not nervous, embarrassed, or insecure. I'm not afraid, embarrassed, or unsure.* –Students 16, On the contrary, **some of them** were afraid to speak in public (2d=50). Only **very few of them** expressed confidence in public speaking (2a=12.5). It is in line with the findings of an interview with a student who expressed a dislike for public speaking and preferred writing to speaking: *"I dislike public speaking. I used to be most afraid of speaking in public, especially*

in front of many people. I could write if I were told to, but I just couldn't speak properly if I was instructed to." - Student 5.

We realize that because of the dynamic nature of the classroom context, no single motivational strategy can always motivate every single student in every situation (Guilloteaux, 2013). Still, **some of them** expressed satisfaction with their learning progress in the class (3a=50). regardless of the difficulties appearing in the learning process, one of the students expressed her satisfactio: *"The public speaking class helps me prepare better for my presentation in front of a large group. Initially, I was embarrassed to speak English in public. It's odd. Maybe I wasn't used to it. But now I enjoy speaking English in front of big audiences."* - Student 16

Tools

Here is presented the students' perception of the tools applied by the lecturer in the public speaking class. There were mainly presentations and discussions. In a public speaking class, student presentations may consist of either individual or group speeches based on class lessons or outside projects (Sari, 20102, p.2).

Table 3. The Influence of Tools in the Class

No	Statements	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
4.	Do you like the English Public Speaking Class materials presented in the classroom?	Yes, I like it very much	4	25
		Yes, I like it	10	62.5
		No, I do not really like it	2	12.5
		No, I hate it	0	0
5.	Do you like being a part of this speaking class so far?	a. Yes, I like it very much	6	37.5
		b. Yes, I like it	9	56.25
		c. No, I do not really like it	1	6.25
		d. No, I hate it	0	0
6.	Do you like the teaching method implemented in the class?	a. Yes, I like it very much.	5	31.25
		b. Yes, I like it	9	56.25
		c. No,	2	12.5
		d. I do not really like it	0	0
		e. No, I hate it	0	0
7.	How is the material of the English Public Speaking Class in the classroom?	a. It is very difficult.	0	0
		b. It is difficult	1	6.25
		c. It is a little difficult	12	75
		d. It is not difficult	3	18.75
8.	Have I ever felt it difficult completing a task in English Public Speaking Class?	a. True	0	0
		b. Somewhat true	1	6.25
		c. Less True	12	75
		d. Not True	3	18.75

Some of the students stated that they like learning materials and methods implemented in the classroom (4b=62.5). **Very few of them** shared their dislike ness to those tools (4c=12.5) and for being part of the Public Speaking class (5c=6.25). In the interview session, one of the students was asked about the tools equipped in the learning process: *"Usually, we are given a video and divided into several groups. In the group, we shared what we got from the video, especially the aspects that support Public Speaking"*- Student 08.

Many of the students stated that the materials were difficult to them (7b=75) and **few of them** ever felt difficult to accomplish a certain task in the class (8a=37.25). However, according to the lecturer’s feedback, she tried to provide exciting sources that could inspire them to deliver a speech in public. She provided videos as the sources of learning in the classroom. She expressed that the students' progress was significant, and they seemed to enjoy the activities placed in the class:

"The teaching method is more or less a mix of discussion and practice. I used to share interesting videos. I identified one of their flaws: attracting the audience's attention. For the weekly test, I split the class into three. I instructed them to present the attention-getting opener strategies, and it worked well. The topic was marketing and selling. One of the students was hawking new Indomies. Intriguing images enticed her friends to buy the brand. She also acted like an Indomie customary. She also presented the brand's uniqueness well." -Lecturer.

Outcomes

Students envisioned specific outcomes after completing the class for the semester. Here are some goals that the students want to achieve in practicing English speaking skills:

Table 4. Students’ Objectives in Acquiring Public Speaking Skills

No	Statements	Options	Frequency	Percentage
9.	I practice speaking English because I want to have a good mark on my report.	e. True	8	50
		f. Somewhat true	5	31.25
		g. Less True	1	6.25
		h. Not True	1	6.25
10.	I practice speaking English because I want to be able to speak English fluently.	a. True	12	75
		b. Somewhat true	4	25
		c. Less True	0	0
		d. Not True	0	0
11.	I practice speaking English because it is one of the essential things to get a job.	a. True	12	75
		b. Somewhat true	4	25
		c. Less True	0	0
		d. Not True	0	0
12.	I practice speaking English because I want to be able to talk and make a conversation with native speakers.	a. True	12	75
		b. Somewhat true	4	25
		c. Less True	0	0
		d. Not True	0	0

Many of the students knew they wanted to learn public speaking for three reasons: fluency (10a=75), job satisfaction (11a=75), and communication with native speakers (12a=75). **Some of them** chose a good grade on their learning report over the other three (9a=50). Chen & Hwang (2020) imply that EFL students should be able to have clear goals in class. *"The*

technique was used to make the students confident to speak, to be good public speakers. Also, this semester's class is designed to prepare students to be teachers, a micro-teaching course.” the lecturer explained in response to the researchers’ questions.

Community

Most of the students stated that their community or the environment affected their acquiring public speaking skills. The environment includes their classmates and their lecturer.

Table 5. The role of the community

No	Statements	Options	Frequency	Percentage
13.	Where did you first learn to speak English?	a. Elementary School	10	62.5
			2	12.5
		b. Junior High School	1	6.25
			2	12.5
		c. Senior High School	1	6.25
	d. Playground			
	e. Family			
14.	In a daily conversation, I mostly use with my classmates.	a. Indonesia Language	13	81.25
			1	6.25
		b. English Language	1	6.25
			0	0
	c. Javanese Language	0	0	
	d. Mother Tongue			
15.	My friends in the class help me a lot to acquire the speaking skill	a. True	6	37.5
		b. Somewhat true	8	50
		c. Less True	2	12.5
		d. Not True	0	0

From the data in the table above, **many of the students** had been exposed to English since elementary school (13a=62.5). **Some of them** stated it is somewhat true that their classmates helped them improve their English (15b=50), though **most of the students** still speak Indonesian in daily conversation with their friends (14a=81.25). Speaking English in everyday conversation with each other can accelerate their speaking progress. The anxiety of EFL students in language learning is reduced by social relationships such as classmates' support and encouragement (Triutami & Mbato, 2018).

Rules

For this component, the researchers present the gained data that related to the general rules implemented in the Public Speaking class:

Table 6. The rules implemented in Public Speaking Class

No.	Rules
1.	Cell phones must be switched to silent mode during the course (offline)
2.	Students must respect the lecturer and other students by coming on time and should put the class interest first.
3.	Students must be present during all the class activities (online/offline). Should the students be absent, it will be no more than three times (for sickness and other reasons)
4.	Students absent more than three times will be automatically dismissed from the class and thus considered FAIL.

5. Students must participate in all class activities actively.

Gultekin and Acar (2014) suggest that the students' impressions of good teachers are shaped by their experiences with teachers who are fair, democratic, communicative, and disciplined (in the sense that they set rules for the classroom and activities). However, the number of rules students must learn in a speaking class can make them feel overwhelmed (Juwitawati & Pratiwi, 2018).

Division of Labor

Table 7. Division of Labour in Public Speaking Class

No	Statement	Students' Options	Frequency	Percentage
16.	I Speaking English in English Public Speaking Class.	a. Always Practice	7	43.75
		b. Sometime Practice	9	65.25
		c. Do not Practice	0	0
		d. Do not care	0	0
17.	Besides practicing Speaking English in English Public Speaking Class, I	a. Join other English Speaking course	0	0
			6	37.5
		b. Practice with my friends	10	62.5
			0	0
18.	What are you going to do if you do not understand the words or sentences uttered by your lecturer in your English Public Speaking Class?	a. I will ask the lecturer about the meaning	2	12.5
			13	81.25
		b. I will look for the meaning in the dictionary	1	6.25
			0	0
19.	When attending an English Public Speaking skill class, I	a. Always pay attention to the practice	6	37.5
			6	37.5
		b. Force myself to practice	4	25
			0	0
19.	When attending an English Public Speaking skill class, I	c. Sometimes daydreaming	0	0
		d. Feel bored	0	0

From the division of labor component, we could see how the students took responsibility for their progress in learning. In attending the class, **some of them** always practiced (16a=43.75) while many of them took some time to practice (16b=65.25). Many of the students preferred self-practice outside the class (17c=65.25) while **few of them** keep practicing with friends (17b=37.5). When dealing with unfamiliar words, **most of the students** tend to look for the meaning in the dictionary (18b=81.25) while **very few of them** would just keep silent (18c=6.25). Last, a few of the students always pay attention to the practice (19a=37.5) and force

themselves to practice (19b=37.5). Interestingly, also **few of them** stated that they sometimes daydream in attending public speaking class (19c=25).

In the interview session, the students were aware of what they needed to concentrate on: "we need to focus more on public speaking techniques." *"So that we can understand the purpose of the speech and the audience understands what we mean."* - Student No. 5. Menggo (2018) suggests that when EFL students are highly motivated to learn a language, they will likely take advantage of opportunities to practice it. Students must understand why the speech is being given, how the information on stage affects how it is delivered, and how the relationships between the speakers and the audience affect how it is delivered (Chen & Hwang, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Students expressed various opinions and feelings about how they acquired their public speaking skills. Their motivation changes over time primarily because of their emotions and feelings while joining the class. The elements of Activity Theory found so far are the subject, the objects, the rules in the class, the role of tools, and the community where the students are located. Students used a variety of strategies, according to the analysis. They were primarily coerced into speaking, practicing with their classmates, and conducting self-practices (division of labor). Students expressed their confidence in speaking English (the subject) and their satisfaction with the process of learning public speaking in class (object). Additionally, the students made significant progress in class as a result of the lecturer's varied sources of information (tools). They were assisted and supported positively by their classmates and lecturer. They were mindful of their class responsibilities (rules). Most students stated that they faced trouble motivating themselves and managing their own emotions to speak well in public. As a result, it is important for teachers/lecturers, particularly those teaching public speaking, to be aware of this issue in EFL learning. Paying attention to the role of motivation in the teaching process and cultivating, enforcing, and strengthening it may be beneficial and effective for students' language learning. The teacher's awareness of students' motivation and its relationship to the teaching process must be enhanced, particularly the ability to develop more useful and effective classroom methods.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper and the research that preceded it would not have been achievable without the second author's remarkable support and assistance.

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