



A review of research on the effect of the use of web-based tools on speaking motivation

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Suggested Citation:

Celik, O. (2018). A review of research on the effect of the use of web-based tools on speaking motivation. *Global Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*. 8(4), 158–164.

Received from February 20, 2018; revised from June 09, 2018; accepted from October, 10, 2018.

Selection and peer review under responsibility of Assoc. Prof Dr. Jesus Laborda Garcia, University of Alcala, Spain.

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Abstract

Speaking is one of the most problematic skills in which learners tend to be low in motivation. There are several factors that negatively and positively affect the motivation of learners regarding speaking. The purpose of this study is to present a review of research on the effect of the use of web-based tools on speaking motivation and making some conclusions and recommendations for further studies. Several studies investigating the effect of web-based tools on speaking motivation were analysed and some conclusions were drawn. In respect to the studies reviewed, it is concluded that web-based tools significantly improve speaking motivation. For further studies, it is recommended that creating a web-based environment before starting an experimental study will be vital in terms of the validity and reliability of the study.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, speaking, motivation, web-based tools.

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1. Introduction

In the foreign language learning process, speaking is one of the essential skills due to several reasons. The first reason is that speaking skills are the most particular parameter showing if the learner speaks the language or not. The second reason why speaking is among the most critical skills is its interdisciplinary nature. In other words, speaking skills are directly related to psychology, sociology and education, in which speaking is considerably affected by concepts belonging to psychology such as anxiety and inhibition, sociologic concepts such as interaction, integration and communication and educational issues such as input and output relation. The third reason supporting its importance is its individuality since it is much more the learner-oriented when compared to other skills. Briefly, speaking skills are quite a complicated process regarding its development within its interdisciplinary nature, vulnerability to individual differences and dependence on several environmental factors. Thus, speaking constitutes a quite complex and problematic field in the EFL context and affected by defined factors.

Speaking skills in EFL teaching and learning contexts are affected by certain factors, namely internal and external factors. One of the principal internal factors adversely affecting speaking skills is the learners' over-monitoring themselves (Krashen, 1981). Having interpreted the comprehensible input, learners ponder how to say they want to say in their mind correctly. A speech, usually interrupted by correcting the grammatical mistakes, hinders the fluency and demotivates the learners. Relevantly to over-monitoring, fear of making a mistake is another internal factor for learners. Some learners avoid using language orally with the fear of making a mistake and build psychological barriers towards speaking in the target language. There are also certain factors affecting the speaking skills externally. For instance, the lack of comprehensible input in the learning environment is one of the significant external effects. The learner needs to process the data they gather in their minds to produce something in the target language. The sources that provide comprehensible input, such as textbooks, teachers and peers, the curriculum guiding about what to teach and language teaching methods instructing how to teach are all external factors affecting speaking skills. Nevertheless, the adverse effects of these internal and external factors on speaking can be pacified and positive effects can be strengthened with the help of strong motivation.

Motivation is both an internal and an external factor that affects speaking skills. It can be pointed out that intrinsic motives are internal factors and extrinsic ones are external factors. In other words, extrinsic motivation arises from outside of the learner, while intrinsic motivation arises from within. When it is about speaking skills, learners have much to do with both outside and within which need to be in coordination with each other and it requires integration and interaction with the learning environment. Internal and external motives are closely related to each other, generally affected by one another in a way that one's result can be the reason for another. For instance, a successful speaking activity—which is an external factor, makes the learners feel positive about speaking resulting with a desire—an internal factor, to do more speaking activities. The reason why the learner wants to do more speaking activities is a strong desire they get after a successful speaking activity. The reason why motivation is so vital in speaking skills is that it has much to do with psychological barriers. The learner may have the speaking competence but she may have psychological barriers to turn competence into performance or they may have gone through a silent period.

Moreover, the motivation helps her to produce what she knows breaking the barriers they build on speaking skills. Demotivated learners, no matter how much they know about the language, cannot produce output because of the negative mood they have gone through. The learner is significantly affected by the environment both positively and negatively which holds various factors that are related to speaking motivation.

The learning environment is an external factor that has both a positive and negative effect on speaking skills. Learning environment holds the input that learners need to gain competency. Every input in the learning environment should be arranged as comprehensible to be acquired by the

learners and also be challenging which is described as 'i + 1' by Krashen (1981). The learners can easily speak in the target language in a well-set learning environment, in which she feels less anxious, more motivated and the input is comprehensible. The environment also has adverse effects on speaking motivation, mainly stemming from the learning environment such as a class, the tools used in the class, teachers, peers and learning resources. For instance, a teacher-dominant class atmosphere, reluctant peers mocking with the speaking learners in the class, poorly prepared speaking activities and a classroom setting that lacks posters and charts that serve the function of creating peripheral motivation can be seen as some examples of external factors adversely affecting speaking motivation. A learning environment providing comprehensible input, giving learners the chance to use the language in an authentic way, making them feel that they really learn using the language, creating slight challenges in their learning process, making them less monitor their production and lessening psychological barriers motivates learners to the full resulting in a successful transferring process from competence into performance. As a final point, neither most teachers have the capacity to set such a learning environment nor the schools may not be suitable for this. This disadvantage can be eliminated with the help of web-based tools.

There is a wide variety of web-based tools on the Internet served for the use of teachers and learners. In this sense, the web-based tools that may increase motivation in speaking skills can be grouped under two categories; competence and performance-based tools. The former aims to create speaking competence for learners, also motivating them with their oral production whereas performance-based tools enhance production motivation by eliminating the factors adversely affecting oral production. The latter consists of web pages including speaking tips, phrases that are categorised under certain situations, videos including the dialogues of certain situations, movies, songs and TV channels broadcasting in the target language. Performance-based web-based tools are web pages giving learners the chance to speak with native speakers, social networks, messenger software, video conferences and interactive webinars. On the other hand, research on how the web-based tools contribute to speaking motivation is relatively new. Thus, there is a need to review the studies on the issue before clarifying the theoretical background of speaking motivation within the scope of web-based tools.

This paper aims to draw a theoretical framework on the use of web-based tools on speaking motivation and draw some conclusions after reviewing the literature about the topic.

2. Theoretical framework

Speaking skills are related to how one uses what she knows about the target language which is linguistically described as competence and performance (Chomsky, 1988). In the language learning process, first, the learner tries to build linguistic competence and then turn it into performance. In order to build a linguistic competence, the learner needs input which can be described as any information learners get about the target language. What is crucial about the input is that it should be comprehensible for learners (Krashen, 1981). Comprehensible input forms a basis for output to emerge. Speaking skills are the tools that produce an output by interpreting the comprehensible input which means the communication in the target language.

Motivation plays a dominant role in every part of the learning process from gaining competence to reveal performance. It is a must for all theories and methods to fulfil their principles with its autonomous nature. According to constructivist theory, learning is an active process requiring effort, so students need to be motivated to make that effort. In a constructivist classroom, teachers should, therefore, aim to arouse students and maintain their motivation at optimum levels throughout the learning process (Palmer, 2005). Letting students 'construct' their own learning process requires high motivation and—as a result of this, self-confidence. All learning theories took motivation into account within their mental framework and emphasised the necessity of it in terms of exploiting their principles to the full in the learning process. Each method tries to find a way to promote motivation in accordance with their principles and mental background. While in cooperative learning, learners are

given the opportunity to interact with each other, as well as steady encouragement and support of their learning efforts to motivate learners (Abass, 2008), in autonomous learning, learners are encouraged to take the responsibility of their own learning process by understanding and accepting their learning success that ends up arousing their motivation (Dickinson, 1995). It is obvious that a motivated learner is always persistent, attentive, confident and positive in the learning process (Gardner, 2007). Thinking about where motivation exactly stands in the language learning process, it can be assumed that motivation is a 'supraskills' concept, in that it takes part in both gaining competence and performing phases of skills acting as a catalyser.

Web-based tools have been used in English language teaching area for a couple of decades, but more extensive and functional use of them dates back to 2004, the introduction of Web 2.0 technologies, which enable users a more interactive and collaborative web use. Since then they have been in the centre of interest of the researchers and have been included in the techniques of contemporary methods, also enriching the applicability of theories such as situated cognition and self-determination. Situated cognition theory is mainly concerned with the nature of learning consisting implications for design and development of classroom instructions, including the design of the technology and computer-based instruction (Altalib, 2002). In creating an active and authentic classroom design, web-based tools acts as a saviour by letting teachers use a variety of tools to motivate learners. In situated cognition theory, learners shall form, modify and construct their own knowledge through a process of observation, imitation and practices with the help of web-based tools (Lin, Hsu & Cheng, 2011). The primary objective and function of web-based tools are to individualise the learning process making it more student-centred by reducing the stress that demotivates the learners. So, it can be concluded that web-based tools have a significant role in motivating the learners.

3. Research on the effect of the use of web-based tools on speaking motivation

Several studies found that web-based tools were significant agents in enhancing learners' motivation in their learning process, also supporting the confidence and awareness of learners. To begin with, Wang and Reeves (2007) explored the effects of a web-based learning environment on student motivation by creating a web-based learning environment and implementing it into the syllabus of a 10th-grade classroom as a 3-day student-centred learning activity. After obtaining data from individual student interviews, teacher interviews, motivation questionnaires and observations, they found that the web-based learning environment and the associated learning activity considerably improved student motivation. Similarly, Chaiprasurt and Esichaikul (2013) aimed to study the motivational development of learners in an online course based on the e-learning system, also adding another variable that is the support of mobile communication tools. In this quasi-experimental research study, results indicated that the use of the tools was effective in improving learner motivation, especially in terms of attention and engagement.

Moreover, they noted that there were significant differences in subjective motivation with a higher level achieved by experimental-group learners than control-group learners. Another study by Lin and Jou (2013) investigated students' learning motivation and performance by integrating popular web applications, such as SkyDrive, Evernote, Dropbox and Google Apps in learning environments. Their study revealed that students had higher learning motivation and participation when using the proposed web application supported learning environment during and after class. In his experimental study, Monje (2014) aimed to test the hypothesis that students who use Web 2.0 based materials such as forums, collaborative glossaries, social repositories with annotated past papers, podcasts, social bookmarking, a wiki and a blog instead of traditional EFL resources achieve better results and have higher motivation. Using a quasi-experimental methodology, Monje (2014) collected the data from both groups (one group used web-based tools and another group used traditional EFL resources) during a whole academic year and compared students' Spanish university entrance examination results. As a result of his study, it was qualitatively shown that Web 2.0 tools in EFL increased

motivation in students. Another paper aiming to integrate Web 2.0 tools in a learning strategy to enhance the motivation of the students was studied by Majid (2014). Using PQR strategy, which includes three components, namely previewing, questions and reflections, his sample group consisted of 39 undergraduate students for identifying their preference towards the use of Web 2.0 tools which include Blog, YouTube, Google Form and Padlet. The results of the study showed that the perception of students towards the use of web 2.0 tools was positive which encourages teachers to integrate a learning strategy with specific web 2.0 tools.

The effect of web-based tools on learning motivation was widely studied and some researchers validated the positive effect of web tools on motivation. Along with this, the effect of web-based tools on speaking skills was studied explicitly by several researchers. First, in their study, Hwang, Shadiev and Huang (2011) aimed to explore whether Virtual Pen ('VPen') improved students' English as Foreign Language writing and speaking performance with appropriate learning activity design supported by 'VPen' which is a multimedia web annotation system. By investigating students' pre- and post-attitudes using 'VPen', they concluded that learning activities supported by the 'VPen' system could facilitate students' writing and speaking performance and therefore, improve their learning achievement. Second, Sun (2012) intended to examine the effectiveness of extensive speaking practice on speaking performance in voice blogs and to examine learners' perceived gains in extensive speaking practice via voice blogs. Her sample group was 46 college students learning English as a foreign language in Taiwan who took a one-semester English speech class that lasted for 18 weeks. The results were evaluated by two raters who examined the learners' first three and last three voice blog entries. The study revealed that students generally perceived gains in their speaking proficiency but there was no significant improvement in their pronunciation, language complexity, fluency or accuracy. Third, a study aimed to investigate whether an online radio enhanced students' confidence when speaking (Lemos Tello, 2012). Working with 28 students, he collected data using surveys applied to students, audio and video recordings and a teacher's journal and analysed using procedures such as blending of inductive analysis, grounded theory and trend analysis. At the end of his study, Lemos Tello (2012) found that the research process prompted students' speaking confidence through the use of technology. Fourth, a comparative study carried out by Abal (2012) emphasised the considerable speaking anxiety that English language learners experience which plays a vital role in hindering their language development and aims to show the decreasing effect of a virtual learning environment on speaking anxiety. In his study, he used an experimental treatment control group repeated measures design to compare the perceived speaking anxiety levels of 11 English learners (five in the control group, six in the experimental group) when speaking to native English speakers during 10 simulation activities. Simulations in the control group were done face-to-face, while those in the experimental group were done in the Second Life which is a virtual environment. The results demonstrated that both groups showed a significant decrease in anxiety, but the experimental group showed a greater anxiety reduction. Fifth, aiming to investigate the effectiveness of using a multimedia-based programme for developing EFL speaking fluency skills, Diyyab, Abdel-Haq and Aly (2013) worked with 30 second-year, English section student teachers at Sadat Faculty of Education, Minufiya University, Egypt. They used a speaking fluency test with a rubric for assessing the participants' performance. After a pretest-posttest evaluation, their study illustrated that sample group's EFL speaking fluency skills were developed after using the programme which also revealed that the multimedia-based programme was found to be effective in developing EFL speaking fluency skills.

4. Conclusions and discussion

Several conclusions can be drawn from this brief review of studies on the use of web-based tools to improve speaking motivation. First, web-based learning environments and associated learning activities considerably increase learners' motivation level, especially regarding attention and engagement. Second, learners have higher learning motivation and participation when using web applications both during and after class. Third, learners' perception of the use of Web 2.0 tools is positive; this encourages teachers to integrate web-based tools into their teaching process. Fourth,

'VPen' which is a multimedia tool used for web annotation system facilitates learners' speaking and writing performances. Next, the integration of web-based tools into the teaching process promotes students' speaking confidence. Then, learner-centred web-based tools allow learners to control their own learning speed and significantly decrease foreign language anxiety. Last, of all, web-based tools are considered effective in developing students' speaking fluency skills.

Along with this conclusion listed above, some recommendations can be made for educational policymakers, curriculum developers, course book writers, teachers and learners, respectively. First of all, for educational policymakers, it would be useful to discuss the nature of teaching of speaking skills and revise its principles in the light of learning theories regarding web-based tools. That is because research shows that speaking is one of the most problematic areas in language learning while speaking skills can easily be overcome with a high motivation, thanks to web-based tools. Second, curriculum developers need to create a standalone speaking skills curriculum in which web-based tools are implemented into syllabus blending in-school and out-school techniques. Moreover, it is not difficult to guess that a further step ahead will be the implementation of traditional techniques into a web-based syllabus. Third, the main problem about speaking skills course books is that although speaking is a productive skill, course books remain relatively impractical. At this point, web-based tools offer a greater chance for course book writers to integrate a more functional and authentic speaking practice environment.

Along with a syllabus that encourages a more practical teaching procedure, course books can have a web-based practice environment that may include online speaking classes. Next, a well-developed educational policy, a well-prepared curriculum and a well-designed course book require equipped teachers to exploit the system to the full. Since speaking motivation is highly tied to web-based tools, teachers are expected to deal with web-tools academically and professionally. That is, teachers should be one step ahead of the learners; they should skilfully implement web-based tools into their lesson plans and classes at the same time, guide and contribute learners' development. Finally, for learners, web-based tools provide excellent opportunities to lower their anxiety and improve motivation in speaking because they help them to control their own learning process by individualising and internalising them.

From this review of the research, several recommendations regarding the use of web-based tools on speaking motivation can be offered for further study. First, it would be useful to profoundly describe the nature of web-based tools and categorise them since no precise and contemporary description and categorical distinction of web-based tools have been made which is mainly because of the rapid changes in web field. Second, given that the 'web-based' title excludes offline and software-based resources, it can be seminal to open parenthesis for offline and software-based tools to be able to grasp the developmental progress of computer-assisted teaching on speaking motivation. Third, an attempt to make an experimental study investigating the effect of web-based tools on speaking motivation would require a web-based environment in which contemporary web-tools whose educational structures are academically discussed should be at present. As it can be understood from the studies reviewed, a web-based environment allows researchers to collect more reliable data. Finally, it will be decisive about the reliability and validity of the study to choose interactional and interrelated web-tools that enable learners to transfer their knowledge between web-tools.

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