

The Synergy of Talking Stick Strategy and Motivation in Developing Senior High School Students' Speaking Proficiency

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Abstract. This study was aimed to find out: (1) whether or not there was significant difference on students' speaking skill between the students who were taught by using talking stick strategy and those who were taught by using lecturer strategy, (2) whether or not there was significant difference on students' speaking skill between motivated students and unmotivated students, 3) whether or not there was any effect of interaction between talking stick strategy and motivation on speaking skill. The study used a factorial design with a population of 400 tenth-grade students of SMA NEGERI 11 Palembang in the 2024-2025 school year. There were 62 students in the sample, 31 students in the experimental group, and 31 students in the control group. The analysis of the data revealed a significant difference in speaking skills, as evidenced by the result of the Independent Samples T-Test, in which the significance value (0.001) was less than α (0.05). This indicated an improvement in students' speaking skills. However, the Two-Way ANOVA results showed that students' motivation by itself did not have a significant impact, with a significance value (.696). Interestingly, the interaction between the Talking Stick strategy and motivation was found to be significant (0.003). The findings led to the conclusion that the Talking Stick strategy was successfully to improved students' speaking skills regardless of their motivation level, and there was a significant interaction between teaching strategy and motivation in influencing speaking outcomes.

Keywords: Talking Stick Strategy, Motivation, Speaking Proficiency

Introduction

The ability to speak English is one of the important competencies that high school students must master to meet the demands of global communication. In the context of learning a foreign language, speaking skills are not only about mastering grammar and vocabulary but also about students' ability to convey ideas fluently, confidently, and effectively. However, the speaking-learning process in many EFL classes is still dominated by conventional teacher-centered strategies, such as lecturing, so students have limited opportunities to actively participate in speaking practice (Gusmuliana et al., 2021; Irawan & Ahmad, 2025). As a result, many students have difficulty developing fluency in speaking, confidence, and the courage to use English orally (Sofiah et al., 2025). This condition underscores the need to implement a more interactive, participatory learning strategy to improve students' speaking skills. One strategy considered to foster active learning is the Talking Stick Strategy, which encourages students to take turns speaking and directly engage in classroom communication. Although this strategy has been used in several English-learning studies, studies on its effects when combined with student motivation factors still require further attention (Ramli et al., 2024).

Learning motivation is also an important factor in students' success in developing English speaking skills. Students who are highly motivated are generally more active in learning, more confident when speaking, and more enthusiastic about using English as a communication tool. In

contrast, students with low motivation tend to be passive and less engaged in class speaking activities (Gusmuliana et al., 2021; Larasati et al., 2024). In the context of learning at SMA Negeri 11 Palembang, grade X students still face various obstacles in learning to speak, such as fear of making mistakes, lack of courage to speak in front of the class, and low involvement in English communication activities (Aulia & Pratama, 2026; Williyan et al., 2023). Therefore, a learning strategy is needed that not only increases student participation but also accommodates differences in students' motivation levels in speaking learning.

Some previous studies have shown that the Talking Stick Strategy is effective in improving students' participation and English-speaking ability. Other research also revealed that motivation is related to the achievement of EFL students' speaking skills (Hsu & Liu, 2023; Reith - Hall & Montgomery, 2023). However, most previous studies have focused more on the influence of learning strategies and motivation separately (Gusmuliana et al., 2021; Luo & Zhou, 2024). Research specifically investigating the interaction between the Talking Stick Strategy and motivation in students' speaking ability remains relatively limited, especially at the high school level in Indonesia. In addition, there have been few studies that use a factorial design to examine whether motivation significantly influences speaking ability and how the interaction between learning strategies and motivation affects students' speaking learning outcomes. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the synergy between learning strategies and motivation in the development of students' speaking skills.

Based on this background, this study aims to find out: (1) whether there is a significant difference in speaking ability between students who are taught using Talking Stick Strategy and students who are taught using lecturing strategies; (2) whether there is a difference in speaking ability between students who have high motivation and low motivation; and (3) whether there is an effect of interaction between Talking Stick Strategy and motivation on students' speaking ability. This study uses a factorial design, involving grade X students at SMA Negeri 11 Palembang as research participants for the 2024–2025 school year. The results of the research are expected to make theoretical and pedagogical contributions to the development of more interactive and effective speaking-learning strategies in the context of English as a foreign language. This article further discusses research methods, research results, discussion, and conclusions in a systematic manner.

Materials and Methods

This study used an experimental design to investigate the influence of the Talking Stick Strategy and motivation on the speaking ability of high school students, and to answer research questions regarding differences in speaking ability between the experimental and control groups and the interaction between learning strategies and student motivation. The research participants came from a population of 400 tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 11 Palembang for the 2024/2025 academic year. Using purposive sampling, 62 students were selected who had a relatively equivalent level of English proficiency, based on the results of the initial evaluation and the recommendations of the subject teachers. The sample was then divided into two groups of 31 students each: the experimental group, taught using the Talking Stick Strategy, and the control group, taught using the conventional lecture method. Data collection was carried out using two main instruments. Students' speaking ability is measured through speaking tests administered at the pre-test and post-test stages, with assessments covering grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension, based on rubrics adapted from Brown (2010). In addition, a motivation questionnaire was used to assess students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation levels using 30 five-point Likert-scale statements adapted from Gardner's (2010). The research procedure was carried out in three stages: the administration of a pre-test to measure students' initial ability, the implementation of the treatment using the Talking Stick Strategy in the experimental group, and the administration of post-tests and the distribution of motivational questionnaires after the treatment was completed. Data were analyzed using SPSS 26, with normality and homogeneity tests as preliminary tests, followed by an Independent

Samples t-test to assess differences in speaking ability between groups and a Two-Way ANOVA to examine the influence of motivation and the interaction between learning strategies and motivation on students' speaking ability. The selection of experimental design and analysis techniques was intended to yield more accurate empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of the applied learning strategies.

During the research, several obstacles were encountered. First, the limited learning time in schools means that treatment cannot be sustained for a longer period, so the influence of learning strategies is only observed for a short time. Second, some students still show nervousness and lack of confidence when taking the speech test, which could affect their performance during data collection. In addition, differences in motivation and student participation in the classroom pose a challenge to maintaining consistent involvement among all participants throughout the learning process. Nevertheless, the research is still carried out systematically, following procedures designed to maintain the validity and reliability of the results.

Results and Discussion

Results

Descriptive statistic

The descriptive analysis demonstrated the pre-test and post-test results of students from the experimental and control groups through frequency analysis, as well as normality and homogeneity tests.

Based on the result of the pre-test in the experimental group, the highest score was 52.60 gotten by 1 student, and the lowest score was 46.25 gotten by 1 student. The mean score was 49.31, including the standard deviation of 1.806. Then, based on the result of the post-test in the experimental group, the highest score was 75.50 gotten by 1 student, and the lowest score was 57.40 gotten by 1 student. The mean score was 66.99 with a standard deviation of 4.209. The result of the pre-test in the control group demonstrated that the highest score was 52.40 gotten by 1 student, and the lowest score was 39.80 gotten by 1 student. The mean score was 47.15 with a standard deviation of 3.443. After that, the post-test results in the control group revealed that the top score of 53.90 was achieved by one student, while the lowest score, 42.30, was obtained by one student. The mean score was 48.83, with a standard deviation of 3.235. Table 1 below displays a summary of the pre-test and post-test scores of students in both the experimental and control groups.

Table 1.

Descriptive Analysis of the Experimental and Control Groups

Variable	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test Experimental	31	6.35	46.25	52.6	49.3097	1.8063
Post-test Experimental	31	18.1	57.4	75.5	66.9903	4.20946
Pre-test Control	31	12.6	39.8	52.4	47.1548	3.44324
Post-test Control	31	11.6	42.3	53.9	48.8323	3.23547
Valid N (listwise)	31					

The Analysis of Frequency

In the pre-test, all 31 students (100%) in the experimental group were at the average level. Following the post-test, 1 student (3.2%) remained at the average level, while 30 students (96.8%) achieved the good level. In contrast, the control group's pre-test results demonstrated that 30 students (96.8%) were in the average proficiency band (41–60), and 1 student (3.2%) was at the low level. After the post-test, all 31 students (100%) in the control group remained at the average level. These findings suggest a marked improvement in the experimental group after the treatment, whereas the control group experienced no significant change.

Table 2.

Frequency Analysis of the Experimental Group

Score	Category	Pretest	% Pretest	Posttest	% Posttest
81-100	Excellent	0	0.0%	0	00.00%
61-80	Good	0	00.00%	30	96.8%
41-60	Average	31	100.00%	1	3.2%
21-40	Low	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
00-20	Poor	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
TOTAL		31	100%	31	100%

Table 3.

Frequency Analysis of the Control Group

Score	Category	Pretest	% Pretest	Posttest	% Posttest
81-100	Excellent	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
61-80	Good	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
41-60	Average	30	96.8%	31	100%
21-40	Low	1	3.2%	0	0.0%
00-20	Poor	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
TOTAL		31	100%	31	100%

Motivation

Referring to the motivation data shown in the table above, it could be seen that the average of students' motivation in the experimental class was higher than the control class, namely $94.56 > 89.37$. The maximum and minimum scores obtained in both the control and experimental classes were different. The highest score in the experimental group was 145, and the lowest score was 78. In the control group, the highest score was 132 and the lowest score was 74. The total cumulative score for the experimental group was 3026, while for the control group it was 2860. This further supports the observation that the experimental group generally exhibited higher motivation levels.

Table 4.

Questionnaire Scores

	Experiment Group	Control Group
Average	94.56	89.37
Highest score	145	132
Lowest Score	78	74
Score	3026	2860

Students Speaking Motivation

In the experimental group, 7 students (22.6%) show high motivation, and 24 students (77.4%) are categorized with low motivation. Similarly, in the control group, 11 students (35.5%) are categorized as having high motivation, while the majority, 20 students (64.5%), are categorized as having low motivation. Overall, both groups show a higher proportion of students in the low motivation category compared to the high motivation category based on the defined scoring intervals.

Table 5.

Student Speaking Motivation Category

Experiment Group			
Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
145-94	High	7	22.6%
93-78	Low	24	77.4%

Control Group			
Interval	Category	Frequency	percentage
132-89	High	11	35.5%
88-74	Low	20	64.5%

Normality Test

Normality test was done to examine whether the data of the speaking test results, both the experimental and control groups, were normally distributed.

Table 6.
The Result of the Normality Test for Pre-Test and Post-Test

	Pre-Test Experiment	Post-Test Experiment	Pre-Test Control	Post-Test Control
Kolmogorov Smirnov	0.104	0.138	0.121	0.131
Sig (2-tailed)	0.200	0.137	0.200	0.185

As shown in Table 5, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results indicate that the Sig. (2-tailed). The value for the pre-test in both the control and experimental groups was 0.200. Since these values exceed 0.05 ($0.200 > 0.05$), the pre-test data for both groups can be considered normally distributed.

Furthermore, the normality test results for the post-test data demonstrated consistent findings. The Sig. (2-tailed) values from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test were 0.185 for the control group and 0.137 for the experimental group. As both values are greater than 0.05, the post-test data in both groups are also considered normally distributed.

Homogeneity Test

To verify the equality of variances in the post-test data for the control and experimental groups, the writer conducted a homogeneity

Table 7.
The Result of the Homogeneity Test

Levene Statistic	Df1	Df2	Sig.
6.369	3	120	0.237

Based on the data in Table 20, the homogeneity test yielded a significance value of 0.237, which is greater than 0.05. This indicates that the variances of both groups were homogeneous.

Paired Sample T-test

A paired-sample t-test was utilized by the researcher to analyze the effectiveness of the talking stick strategy on enhancing speaking skills.

Table 8.
The Result of the Paired Sample t-Test

Group	T	df	Sig. (2tailed)
Pre-test and Post-test	19.061	30	.001

The results in Table 7 show a significance value of 0.001, which is below the 0.05 threshold. This indicates that the Talking Stick strategy had a statistically significant effect in improving the speaking skills of students in the experimental group compared to the control group.

Independent Sample t-Test

An independent samples t-test was used by the author to analyze data obtained from both the control and experimental groups.

Table 9.
The Result of the Independent Sample t-Test

Varian's Assumes	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal Variances assumed	-19.104	60	< 0.001	-17.197
Equal variances not assumed	-19.104	51.336	< 0.001	-17.197

Referring to the table above, the significance value (0.001) was found to be less than the alpha level (0.05). These findings led to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_{01}) and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H_{a1}). This means there was a significant difference in speaking skills between the students who were taught by using the talking stick strategy and those who were taught by using the lecturing strategy.

Two-Way Anova

The writer conducted a two-way ANOVA to assess the progress of students' motivation and speaking skills after being taught using the talking stick strategy.

Table 10.
The Result of Two-Way ANOVA

Dependent Variable: Hasil

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	4693.671 ^a	3	1564.557	140.970	<.001	.879
Intercept	176736.840	1	176736.840	15924.353	<.001	.996
Strategy	3363.458	1	3363.458	303.054	<.001	.839
Motivasi	1.706	1	1.706	.154	.696	.003
Strategy * Motivasi	104.909	1	104.909	9.452	.003	.140
Error	643.715	58	11.099			
Total	216733.710	62				
Corrected Total	5337.386	61				

a. R Squared = .879 (Adjusted R Squared = .873)

b. Computed using alpha = .05

'The motivation variable had no significant effect on the students' speaking skills, with an F-value of 0.154 and a significance value of 0.696. This means there was no significant difference in speaking skills between motivated students and unmotivated students. A notable interaction was identified between the Talking Stick strategy and motivation, as demonstrated by an F-value of 9.452 and a significance level of 0.003. This means there was an effect of interaction between the talking stick strategy and motivation on the students' speaking skills.

Discussion

This study aims to evaluate the influence of the Talking Stick Strategy and student motivation on the improvement of tenth-grade students' speaking ability. According to the study, students who were taught using the Talking Stick Strategy showed greater improvement in

speaking skills than those taught using conventional lecture methods (Hamdani & Rambe, 2022). These findings answer the first research question that focuses on the effectiveness of learning strategies on students' speaking skills (Purnama & Nurdianingsih, 2019). In addition, the study's results show a significant interaction between learning strategies and student motivation in the development of speaking skills. Thus, readers can understand that the use of interactive learning strategies not only improves students' speaking performance but also creates a more participatory learning environment and supports students' active use of English (Gusmuliana et al., 2021; Marzuki et al., 2016).

The findings of this study align with previous studies that show that cooperative and interactive learning strategies can improve EFL students' speaking skills (Altun & Sabah, 2020; Apriani, 2016). Research by Arianti et al. (2025) shows that the Talking Stick Strategy is effective in increasing students' courage to speak up because it provides every student with an equal opportunity to participate in class activities. In addition, this study's results support Gardner's (2010) theory of motivation in second language learning, which states that motivation plays an important role in the success of second language acquisition. In this study, interactive learning strategies appear to strengthen students' motivation to engage in speaking practice. The results of this study also extend previous findings by showing that the Talking Stick Strategy not only improves speaking skills but also helps reduce the passive learning that often occurs in traditional English classes (Ramli et al., 2024).

One of the most unexpected results in this study was that motivation, independent of the Talking Stick Strategy, did not have a significant effect on students' speaking ability, although there was a significant interaction between motivation and the Talking Stick Strategy. Theoretically, motivation is often considered the main factor in determining the success of second-language learning (Hu, 2021). However, this study shows that students with low motivation still improve their speaking skills when they engage in learning activities using the Talking Stick Strategy. This finding suggests that the strategy's characteristics can "force" all students to participate actively, so that the opportunity to speak is not monopolised by students with high motivation. In other words, the activity structure in the Talking Stick Strategy serves as a pedagogical mechanism that reduces the participation gap between students (Matondang & Nababan, 2022). These results are important because they show that effective learning strategies can help overcome psychological barriers and increase student engagement without relying solely on individual motivation.

Although this research makes an important contribution to learning to speak English, some limitations need to be noted. First, the number of research samples was relatively limited, comprising only 62 students from one high school, so generalising the research results to a broader context needed to be done carefully (Lawrie, 2021). Second, the treatment duration in this study was limited, so the long-term impact of the Talking Stick Strategy on students' speaking skills development is unclear. Third, this study focuses more on the quantitative aspects of speaking ability and motivation, so it has not explored in depth students' experiences, perceptions, or challenges during learning using these strategies. In addition, external factors such as the learning environment, speech anxiety levels, and students' initial abilities may affect the study's results but have not been comprehensively analysed.

Given these limitations, further research can expand the scope of the study by involving a larger number of participants from diverse school contexts, thereby strengthening the study's generalizability. Future research may also employ a mixed-methods design to deepen understanding of students' experiences during the implementation of the Talking Stick Strategy. In addition, further investigation of the relationship between interactive learning strategies and other variables, such as speech anxiety, self-confidence, or interpersonal communication skills, may also contribute more broadly to the development of English language learning. Longitudinal research is also recommended to examine the long-term effects of these strategies on students' speaking development.

Overall, this study confirms that the Talking Stick Strategy is an effective learning strategy in improving the speaking skills of high school students. The research findings show that these strategies can create more equitable participation, reduce speech anxiety, and encourage active student engagement in English language learning. In addition, a significant interaction between learning strategies and motivation indicates that an interactive learning environment can strengthen the acquisition of speaking skills. Therefore, this study makes an important contribution to the English language learning literature, particularly in the development of communicative, student-centered learning strategies. The pedagogical implications of this study confirm that English teachers need to integrate interactive and participatory learning strategies to create a more effective and inclusive speaking learning process.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the Talking Stick strategy is an effective approach to improving the students' speaking skills. By ensuring equal participation and creating a more interactive learning atmosphere, the strategy helps reduce the students' anxiety and encourages them to communicate more confidently in English. The findings also highlight that motivation, although not the sole determining factor, strengthens the positive impact of the strategy. The significant interaction effect further confirms that engaging teaching methods combined with student motivation can produce better learning outcomes. The importance of these findings lies in their pedagogical implications. They stress that speaking, as a core component of language learning, requires more than traditional lecture-based methods. Interactive strategies such as the Talking Stick provide a practical solution for teachers who wish to foster confidence, participation, and fluency among learners. In conclusion, the Talking Stick strategy not only enhances speaking performance but also offers a meaningful way to bridge motivational differences among students. It gives educators a powerful tool to transform the speaking classroom into an inclusive, engaging, and productive learning space. This reinforces the central thesis of the study—that effective teaching strategies can make a significant difference in language learning—and leaves a clear message for future educators: active participation leads to stronger voices.

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