

Enhancing Speaking Proficiency and Learning Motivation through Integrated Active Learning Tasks in Secondary EFL Classrooms

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Abstract: Speaking proficiency in EFL classrooms requires more than linguistic knowledge; it depends on sustained opportunities for interaction, participation, and meaningful language use. This study investigated the effects of integrated active learning tasks on secondary students' speaking proficiency and learning motivation in Indonesian EFL classrooms. Using a quasi-experimental sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, the study included 60 students from two state senior high schools in Makassar, Indonesia, who were divided into an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received integrated active learning tasks, including role-plays, problem-solving discussions, peer interviews, project-based presentations, and reflective group activities. In contrast, the control group received conventional teacher-centered instruction. Data were collected through speaking pre- and post-tests, a motivation questionnaire, classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and teaching materials. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired and independent-sample t-tests, effect sizes, and correlation analysis, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings showed that the experimental group achieved substantial improvement in speaking proficiency, particularly in fluency, vocabulary use, and overall performance. Motivation also increased significantly, with the strongest gains in task engagement and intrinsic motivation. Classroom observations and interviews revealed higher participation, more balanced peer collaboration, increased target-language use, and stronger reflective engagement. Positive correlations between motivation and speaking gains further indicated that students who became more motivated and engaged tended to show greater improvement in speaking. These findings suggest that integrated active learning tasks can transform speaking instruction from teacher-dominated performance practice into a more participatory, motivating, and communicative learning process.

Keywords: active learning tasks, speaking proficiency, learning motivation, task engagement, EFL speaking, communicative competence, secondary education.

1. Introduction

In many EFL classrooms, the main challenge of speaking instruction is not simply that students lack vocabulary or grammatical knowledge, but that they are rarely positioned as active speakers. Speaking proficiency develops when learners are given opportunities to express ideas, respond to others, negotiate meaning, manage hesitation, and use language for communicative purposes. Yet in many secondary EFL settings, speaking practice remains limited by teacher-dominated interaction, textbook-based exercises, and

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accuracy-oriented classroom routines. Under these conditions, students often become listeners or brief responders rather than active participants in communication. This is problematic because speaking is a real-time skill that requires learners to coordinate fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, confidence, and interactional strategies simultaneously (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Tran & Duong, 2018; van Batenburg et al., 2019). When classroom participation is restricted, students may have fewer opportunities to develop oral fluency, communicative confidence, and learner-initiated interaction (Alrayah, 2018; Pawlak et al., 2016; Zhou, 2015).

This issue is particularly relevant in Indonesian secondary EFL classrooms, where students are expected to communicate in English but often show hesitation, fragmented responses, limited confidence, and low willingness to speak. Previous studies have associated these difficulties with teacher-centered classroom discourse, limited student agency, scripted dialogues, display questions, and insufficient opportunities for sustained oral production (Ahmadi & Kurniawan, 2020; Andika et al., 2022; Nasir et al., 2019; Nasmilah, 2022; Sidik, 2018). In such classrooms, speaking activities may become performances to be evaluated rather than communicative practices to be developed. Students are frequently asked to produce correct answers, but they are less often encouraged to initiate responses, collaborate with peers, solve problems orally, or reflect on their speaking development. This creates a gap between the communicative goals of EFL instruction and the actual interactional opportunities available to students in the classroom.

Speaking development is also closely tied to students' motivation. Learners who are motivated are more likely to participate, take communicative risks, sustain effort, and remain engaged despite mistakes or anxiety. Conversely, students with low motivation may avoid speaking, contribute minimally, or rely on passive participation. Motivation is therefore not an additional outcome of speaking instruction; it is one of the conditions that enable speaking practice to become meaningful and sustained. Studies have shown that motivation, enjoyment, emotional experience, and willingness to communicate are strongly related to students' speaking performance and classroom participation (Arabai, 2022; Amiryousefi, 2018; Dewaele & Pavlescu, 2021; Lee, 2022; Mulyono & Saskia, 2021; Saito et al., 2018; Waluyo & Bakoko, 2022). This suggests that speaking instruction should not only provide students with more speaking tasks but also create learning conditions that make students want to speak, collaborate, and reflect on their progress.

Integrated active learning tasks offer a pedagogical response to these linguistic and motivational challenges. Active learning positions students as active participants who construct understanding through interaction, collaboration, problem-solving, and reflection rather than as passive recipients of teacher explanation (Cavanagh et al., 2016; Deslauriers et al., 2019; Opdal, 2022; Theobald et al., 2020). In EFL speaking classrooms, tasks such as role-plays, problem-solving discussions, peer interviews, project-based presentations, and reflective group activities can create repeated opportunities for students to use English in purposeful and socially meaningful ways. These tasks can support speaking development by requiring students to exchange ideas, negotiate meaning, respond spontaneously, and use language to achieve communicative goals. At the same time, they can strengthen motivation because students experience English learning as more interactive, relevant, collaborative, and achievable (Albino, 2017; Chen & Hwang, 2022; Dao, 2021; Sirisrimangkorn, 2021; Syahida et al., 2022).

Existing research has shown that active learning can enhance students' motivation, attitudes, anxiety management, classroom interaction, and language performance. For example, Saiphet (2018) found that active learning increased Thai university students' motivation to learn English, while Mohammed and Al-Hassan (2023) reported that students taught through active learning outperformed those taught through traditional instruction and showed more positive attitudes toward English learning. Rezai et al. (2025) further demonstrated that active learning promoted motivation, reduced anxiety, and fostered positive attitudes among EFL learners. However, other studies have also highlighted challenges in implementing active learning, including teacher dominance, insufficient training, large classes, mixed proficiency levels, and time constraints (Devira, 2020; Minh & Duong, 2023). These studies are valuable, yet much of the existing literature has examined motivation, speaking development, and implementation challenges separately. Less

attention has been given to how integrated active learning tasks simultaneously influence speaking proficiency and learning motivation in secondary EFL classrooms, particularly in Indonesian school contexts.

This study addresses this gap by investigating the effects of integrated active learning tasks on students' speaking proficiency and learning motivation in secondary EFL classrooms in Makassar, Indonesia. Unlike studies that focus only on speaking scores or motivational perceptions, this study combines speaking pre- and post-tests, a motivation questionnaire, classroom observations, and student interviews to examine both measurable learning outcomes and classroom processes. The intervention included role-plays, problem-solving activities, peer interviews, project-based presentations, and reflective group discussions, allowing the study to explore how active learning tasks shaped students' oral performance, motivation, participation, collaboration, target-language use, and reflective engagement. The following research questions guide the study: (1) To what extent do integrated active learning tasks improve students' speaking proficiency in secondary EFL classrooms? (2) How do integrated active learning tasks influence students' learning motivation? and (3) What relationship emerges between students' motivation and their speaking proficiency gains during the intervention?

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental sequential explanatory mixed-methods design to investigate the effects of integrated active learning tasks on secondary EFL students' speaking proficiency and learning motivation. In a sequential explanatory design, quantitative data are collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data to explain, contextualize, and deepen the quantitative results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2025). This design was appropriate because the study aimed not only to examine whether active learning tasks improved students' speaking performance and motivation, but also to understand how these changes were reflected in classroom participation, peer collaboration, target-language use, and students' learning experiences. A quasi-experimental design was selected because the intervention was implemented in naturally occurring classroom settings where random assignment of individual students was not feasible. In classroom-based educational research, quasi-experimental designs are commonly used to compare instructional effects across intact groups while maintaining ecological validity (Shadish et al., 2002; Mackey & Gass, 2015). The experimental group received instruction through integrated active learning tasks, while the control group received conventional teacher-centered instruction. The mixed-methods structure strengthened the study by allowing statistical outcomes to be interpreted alongside qualitative evidence from classroom observations and student interviews.

2.2 Research Context and Participants

The study was conducted in two Indonesian state senior high schools in Makassar. These schools were selected because, in the observed context, speaking instruction was still largely influenced by teacher-centered practices, textbook-based exercises, and limited opportunities for authentic spoken interaction. Such conditions are frequently reported in Indonesian EFL classrooms, where teacher talk, scripted exercises, and limited student agency may restrict opportunities for meaningful oral production (Nasir et al., 2019; Ahmadi & Kurniawan, 2020; Nasmilah, 2022). The participants were 60 secondary EFL students aged between 15 and 17 years. They were distributed into two intact classes: 30 students in the experimental group and 30 students in the control group. The use of intact classes was consistent with quasi-experimental classroom research, particularly when random assignment is impractical or disruptive to existing school structures (Shadish et al., 2002; Mackey & Gass, 2015). To reduce instructional variability, both groups were taught by the same English teacher and followed the same curricular objectives. The main difference between the groups was the instructional approach used during the intervention.

2.3 Instruments and Instructional Materials

Several instruments were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data: speaking proficiency tests, a motivation questionnaire, classroom observation checklists, semi-structured interviews, and active learning-based teaching materials. The speaking proficiency test was administered as both a pre-test and a post-test. It measured students' oral performance across key speaking components, including fluency, vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, interactional strategies, and communicative confidence. These components were selected because speaking proficiency involves not only linguistic accuracy but also fluency, interactional ability, intelligibility, and communicative control (Fulcher, 2010; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019; van Batenburg et al., 2019). Students completed meaning-focused speaking tasks requiring spontaneous oral responses rather than memorized answers. Their performances were assessed using an analytic speaking rubric adapted from communicative speaking assessment principles. Two trained raters scored the performances independently to enhance rating reliability, as multiple-rater assessment is recommended in speaking evaluation to reduce subjectivity and improve scoring consistency (Fulcher, 2010; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019).

The motivation questionnaire was adapted from established L2 motivation frameworks, particularly Dörnyei's work on second language motivation and Self-Determination Theory. It used a five-point Likert scale and measured three dimensions: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and task engagement. Intrinsic motivation referred to students' enjoyment, interest, and internal desire to learn English; extrinsic motivation referred to external goals such as grades, future opportunities, or teacher expectations; and task engagement referred to students' active involvement, effort, persistence, and participation during classroom tasks. These dimensions were relevant because motivation has been shown to influence learners' willingness to communicate, participation in speaking, and language achievement (Dörnyei & Dewaele, 2023; Alrabai, 2022; Lee, 2022; Waluyo & Bakoko, 2022).

The classroom observation checklist documented students' classroom behavior during the intervention. The checklist focused on student participation, peer collaboration, target-language use, and reflective engagement. These indicators were selected because active learning emphasizes learner participation, collaborative meaning-making, interaction, and reflection (Cavanagh et al., 2016; Deslauriers et al., 2019; Opdal, 2022; Theobald et al., 2020). Observation data were used to identify whether students volunteered responses, shared speaking turns, supported peers, used English during tasks, and reflected on their learning after speaking activities. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 students from the experimental group after the intervention. Semi-structured interviews were appropriate because they allowed the researcher to explore students' experiences in depth while maintaining alignment with the research objectives (Mackey & Gass, 2015). The interviews examined students' perceptions of active learning tasks, improvements in speaking, motivational changes, peer collaboration, confidence, and challenges encountered during the intervention.

The instructional materials consisted of integrated active learning tasks embedded in regular speaking lessons. These tasks included role-plays, problem-solving discussions, peer interviews, project-based presentations, and reflective group activities. Such tasks were selected because communicative and active learning approaches emphasize authentic interaction, collaboration, negotiation of meaning, learner agency, and purposeful language use (Albino, 2017; Chen & Hwang, 2022; Dao, 2021; Kunitz et al., 2022; Sirisrimangkorn, 2021). These tasks were designed to provide repeated opportunities for students to practise speaking in meaningful, collaborative, and reflective contexts.

2.4 Intervention Procedures

The study was conducted over 8 weeks, spanning 10 class meetings. The procedures consisted of three stages: pre-intervention, intervention, and post-intervention. In the pre-intervention stage, the researcher developed the speaking test, motivation questionnaire, observation checklist, interview protocol, and active learning materials. The English teacher was briefed on how to implement active learning tasks to ensure

consistency throughout the intervention. Before instruction began, both the experimental and control groups completed the speaking pre-test and motivation questionnaire.

During the intervention stage, the experimental group received speaking instruction through integrated active learning tasks. Role-plays were used to help students practise situational communication; problem-solving discussions encouraged them to negotiate meaning and express opinions; peer interviews supported interpersonal interaction and question formulation; project-based presentations required students to organize and deliver information orally; and reflective group discussions helped students evaluate their learning and speaking progress. These activities were aligned with active learning principles, which emphasize learner participation, collaboration, problem-solving, and reflection (Cavanagh et al., 2016; Opdal, 2022; Theobald et al., 2020). The control group received conventional teacher-centered instruction during the same period. Instruction focused mainly on textbook-based speaking exercises, teacher explanation, grammar and vocabulary drills, and guided speaking practice with limited peer interaction. Both groups followed the same curricular objectives, but they differed in the levels of student participation, collaboration, and engagement in communicative tasks.

In the post-intervention stage, both groups completed the speaking post-test and motivation questionnaire. Classroom observations were finalized, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected students from the experimental group. The qualitative data were then used to explain the statistical patterns found in the speaking and motivation results, following the logic of sequential explanatory mixed-methods research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2025).

2.5 Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, mean gains, and percentage changes, were used to summarize students' speaking proficiency and motivation before and after the intervention. Paired-sample t-tests were used to examine within-group changes between pre-test and post-test scores, while independent-sample t-tests were used to compare the experimental and control groups. Cohen's *d* was calculated to determine the magnitude of the intervention effects. These procedures are commonly used in quasi-experimental educational studies to evaluate pre-post change and group differences (Field, 2024; Shadish et al., 2002). Motivation questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired-sample t-tests to identify changes in intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, task engagement, and overall motivation. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between students' motivation and gains in speaking proficiency. Prior to inferential analysis, assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were checked. Because the study used intact classes and non-random group assignment, the results were interpreted cautiously as intervention-related improvement and association rather than absolute causal proof (Shadish et al., 2002; Field, 2024).

The qualitative data from classroom observations and semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) procedure, involving repeated reading, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, theme refinement, and interpretation. Thematic analysis was suitable because the qualitative phase aimed to identify recurring patterns in students' classroom participation, collaboration, confidence, motivation, target-language use, and reflective engagement. The qualitative findings were then compared with the quantitative results to identify convergence and divergence across data sources, consistent with mixed-methods integration principles (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2025).

2.6 Validity, Reliability, and Trustworthiness

Several procedures were used to enhance the study's quality. For quantitative data, the speaking test was aligned with communicative speaking components, including fluency, vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, interactional strategies, and communicative confidence. The use of an analytic rubric helped

ensure systematic assessment of students' oral performance (Fulcher, 2010; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). Two trained raters independently scored students' speaking performances to improve reliability and reduce scoring bias. The motivation questionnaire was adapted from established motivational frameworks and organized into theoretically relevant dimensions: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and task engagement. Pre-test and post-test administration allowed the study to examine motivational change over time. The classroom observation checklist and interview protocol were aligned with the study objectives to ensure that the qualitative data addressed the same instructional and motivational phenomena examined in the quantitative phase. For qualitative data, trustworthiness was supported through triangulation, peer review, and participant checking. Observation data documented students' actual classroom behavior, while interview data provided insight into students' perceptions and experiences. A second researcher reviewed coding and interpretations to reduce researcher bias. Selected interview excerpts were also checked with participants to ensure that the interpretations reflected their intended meanings. These procedures are consistent with qualitative trustworthiness principles, particularly credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data strengthened the overall interpretation of the findings. Speaking test and motivation questionnaire results provided evidence of measurable change, while classroom observations and interviews explained how these changes appeared in participation, collaboration, target-language use, and reflective engagement. This integration is central to sequential explanatory mixed-methods research because qualitative evidence helps explain the meaning of quantitative outcomes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2025).

3. Findings

3.1 Improvement in Students' Speaking Proficiency after Integrated Active Learning Tasks

The results of the speaking test showed that students in the experimental group demonstrated improvement across the assessed components of speaking proficiency after participating in integrated active learning tasks. As shown in Table 1, the students' overall speaking proficiency increased from a pre-test mean of 62.97 to a post-test mean of 79.63, with a mean gain of 16.67 points, representing a 26.5% improvement. The increase was statistically significant, $t(29) = 19.10$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.87$). This result indicates that the intervention had a substantial positive effect on students' overall speaking performance.

Table 1. Speaking Proficiency Gains in the Experimental Group

Speaking component	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Mean Gain	% Change	t(df)	p	Cohen's d	Interpretation
Fluency	61.57	79.70	18.13	+29.4%	26.56 (29)	< .001	0.95	Significant, large effect
Interactional strategies	60.03	101.00	40.97	+68.3%	1.84 (29)	.076	0.47	Descriptive gain, not significant
Vocabulary use	64.80	78.30	13.50	+20.8%	14.47 (29)	< .001	0.82	Significant, large effect
Overall speaking proficiency	62.97	79.63	16.67	+26.5%	19.10 (29)	< .001	0.87	Significant, large effect
Communicative confidence	2.77	4.40	1.63	+58.8%	—	—	0.23	Descriptive gain

The greatest statistically significant improvement was found in fluency, which increased by 29.4%. This suggests that students became more able to speak with smoother delivery, fewer hesitations, and greater continuity after being exposed to repeated communicative tasks such as role-plays, peer interviews, and

problem-solving discussions. Vocabulary use also improved significantly by 20.8%, indicating that students were able to use a wider or more appropriate range of words during speaking tasks after the intervention.

Interactional strategies showed the largest percentage increase, at 68.3%, but the result was not statistically significant, $p = .076$. Therefore, this finding should be interpreted cautiously. It suggests that students may have begun to develop stronger turn-taking, responding, and interaction-management skills, but the intervention period may not have been long enough to produce a statistically stable improvement in this dimension. Communicative confidence also increased descriptively from 2.77 to 4.40, although no inferential test was reported for this component. This descriptive gain suggests that students appeared more confident after the intervention, but the result should be treated as supportive rather than conclusive evidence.

Classroom observation data helped explain these speaking gains. During the early sessions, many students were hesitant to volunteer responses and tended to rely on more proficient classmates during group work. By the final sessions, students showed more active verbal participation, more balanced peer collaboration, and greater willingness to use English during classroom tasks. The observation results indicated that student participation increased from 35% in the baseline sessions to 68% in the endline sessions, while target-language use increased from 52% to 76% of class time. These changes suggest that the active learning tasks created more opportunities for students to practise speaking in meaningful and collaborative contexts.

Table 2. Classroom Engagement during the Active Learning Intervention

Observation indicator	Baseline, Sessions 1-2	Endline, Sessions 5-6	Change / Improvement
Student participation	Low; 35% of students volunteered responses	High; 68% actively volunteered	+33% participation
Peer collaboration	Uneven; dominated by high achievers	More balanced; speaking turns were shared more fairly	Qualitative improvement
Target-language use	52% of class time in English	76% of class time in English	+24% instructional time
Reflective engagement	Minimal reflection on the learning process	Frequent reflective discussions after activities	Qualitative improvement

The observation results show that the intervention changed not only students' speaking scores but also the classroom conditions in which speaking occurred. Students became more willing to initiate responses, collaborate with peers, and use English for interaction. These classroom changes help explain why fluency and overall speaking performance improved significantly after the intervention.

3.2 Changes in Students' Learning Motivation after the Intervention

The motivation questionnaire results showed that students' motivation increased across all measured dimensions after the active learning intervention. As shown in Table 3, students' overall motivation increased from 3.25 to 4.12, with a mean gain of 0.87 points, representing a 27% improvement. This increase was statistically significant, $t(29) = 8.05$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.47$). This indicates that integrated active learning tasks had a strong positive effect on students' motivation to learn English.

Table 3. Motivation Gains in the Experimental Group

Motivation dimension	No. of items	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Mean Gain	% Improvement	t(df)	p	Cohen's d
Intrinsic motivation	10	3.18 (0.55)	4.08 (0.46)	0.90	+28%	7.02 (29)	< .001	1.28
Extrinsic motivation	8	3.50 (0.59)	3.99 (0.52)	0.49	+14%	4.14 (29)	< .001	0.76

Motivation dimension	No. of items	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Mean Gain	% Improvement	t(df)	p	Cohen's d
Task engagement	7	3.07 (0.57)	4.29 (0.45)	1.22	+40%	9.16 (29)	< .001	1.67
Overall motivation	25	3.25 (0.57)	4.12 (0.48)	0.87	+27%	8.05 (29)	< .001	1.47

The largest improvement was found in task engagement, which increased by 40%, with the largest effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.67$). This suggests that the active learning tasks were particularly effective at increasing students' involvement, effort, and participation during speaking lessons. Students were not only more motivated overall but also more engaged in the specific classroom tasks. Intrinsic motivation also increased substantially by 28%, indicating that students became more interested in, and more internally motivated to, participate in English-speaking activities. This finding suggests that tasks such as role-plays, problem-solving discussions, peer interviews, and project-based presentations made speaking activities feel more enjoyable, relevant, and meaningful. Extrinsic motivation showed a smaller but still significant 14% increase, suggesting that external goals such as grades, teacher expectations, or future benefits remained relevant. At the same time, the intervention appeared to work more strongly through students' internal interest and task engagement.

Interview data supported the questionnaire results. Students reported that the active learning tasks felt less stressful and more enjoyable than conventional speaking activities. One student explained, "*Because the tasks were less stressful and more enjoyable, I spoke more during role-plays.*" Another student stated, "*I felt more confident working in groups because my friends supported me when I made mistakes.*" These comments suggest that motivation increased because the tasks created a more supportive and collaborative learning environment. Students were more willing to speak when they felt that the classroom atmosphere allowed mistakes, peer support, and meaningful interaction. The observation data also showed that reflective engagement improved during the intervention. At the beginning, only a few students reflected on their learning process. By the final sessions, students more frequently discussed what they had learned, how they had improved, and what they wanted to do better in future speaking tasks. One student stated, "*I wanted to try harder next time after realizing how much I had improved.*" This indicates that reflection helped students become more aware of their progress and encouraged continued effort.

3.3 Relationship between Motivation and Speaking Proficiency Gains

The third research question examined the relationship between students' motivation and their gains in speaking proficiency. The correlation results showed positive, statistically significant relationships between the motivation dimensions and improvements in speaking. As shown in Table 4, the strongest correlation was between task engagement and gains in interactional strategies, $r = 0.68$, $p < .01$. This indicates that students who became more actively engaged in classroom tasks tended to show greater improvement in interactional aspects of speaking.

Table 4. Correlations between Motivation and Speaking Proficiency Gains

Motivation dimension	Speaking proficiency aspect	Pearson r	Significance
Intrinsic motivation	Fluency gains	0.62	< .01
Extrinsic motivation	Accuracy gains	0.34	< .05
Task engagement	Interactional strategies gains	0.68	< .01
Overall motivation	Overall, speaking proficiency gains	0.59	< .01

Intrinsic motivation was also strongly associated with fluency gains, $r = 0.62$, $p < .01$. This suggests that students who developed greater enjoyment and internal interest in speaking activities tended to show greater fluency gains. Overall motivation was positively correlated with overall speaking proficiency gains r

= 0.59, $p < .01$), indicating that motivational growth was meaningfully associated with improvements in speaking performance. Extrinsic motivation showed a weaker but still significant correlation with accuracy gains, $r = 0.34$, $p < .05$. This suggests that external motivation was associated with some improvement in accuracy. However, it was less strongly associated with speaking development than with intrinsic motivation and task engagement. Triangulation between observation, questionnaire, and interview data strengthened this interpretation. As shown in Table 5, observed classroom behavior largely aligned with students' motivation scores and interview responses. Active participation was observed in 82% of cases and aligned with high intrinsic motivation. Peer collaboration was observed in 76% of group interactions and was associated with a strong increase in task engagement. Target-language use increased from 52% to 76%, supporting the questionnaire finding that students became more engaged and motivated to use English during tasks.

Table 5. Triangulation of Motivation, Observation, and Interview Data

Observation indicator	Positive occurrence	Alignment with the questionnaire	Supporting interview evidence	Interpretation
Active participation	82%	High intrinsic motivation, $M = 4.08$	"Because the tasks were less stressful and more enjoyable, I spoke more during role-plays."	Enjoyable tasks encouraged students to participate more actively.
Peer collaboration	76%	Strong task engagement gain, +40%	"I felt more confident working in groups because my friends supported me when I made mistakes."	Collaboration supported confidence and task engagement.
Target-language use	Increased from 52% to 76%	Linked to intrinsic motivation and authentic communication	"Because the tasks felt natural to practice, I tried to use English more."	Meaningful tasks encouraged more consistent use of English.
Reflective engagement	70%	Higher post-test motivation across dimensions	"I wanted to try harder next time after realizing how much I had improved."	Reflection strengthened awareness of progress and future effort.

The triangulated results show that motivation and speaking improvement were closely connected during the intervention. Students who found the tasks enjoyable and meaningful were more willing to participate, collaborate, use English, and reflect on their learning. These behaviors, in turn, appeared to support improvement in speaking proficiency. However, because the study used intact classes and a quasi-experimental design, the correlations should be interpreted as associative rather than strictly causal.

4. Discussion

The findings indicate that integrated active learning tasks substantially reshaped students' speaking development in the secondary EFL classroom. The experimental group showed significant improvement in fluency, vocabulary use, and overall speaking proficiency after participating in role-plays, problem-solving discussions, peer interviews, project-based presentations, and reflective group activities. These gains suggest that students' speaking ability improved when English was no longer practised mainly through controlled textbook responses, but through tasks that required them to initiate ideas, respond to peers, negotiate meaning, and sustain oral interaction. The most significant gain was in fluency, indicating that repeated communicative exposure helped students speak with greater continuity and less hesitation. This finding aligns with the view that speaking proficiency develops through meaningful, socially interactive, and repeated use of language rather than through isolated form-focused practice alone (Albino, 2017; van Batenburg et al., 2019; Dao, 2020; Kunitz et al., 2022). In the context of Indonesian EFL classrooms, where speaking is often constrained by teacher-dominated interaction and limited student talk, the results suggest that active learning tasks can create the interactional space needed for students to practise English more productively (Nasir et al., 2019; Ahmadi & Kurniawan, 2020; Nasmilah, 2022).

The non-significant result for interactional strategies, despite a large descriptive increase, deserves careful interpretation. Interactional strategies involve more than speaking more frequently; they require students to manage turn-taking, respond spontaneously, repair breakdowns, invite others' contributions, and negotiate meaning in real time. These skills may need longer exposure and more explicit instruction than the eight-week intervention provided. This finding does not weaken the value of the intervention, but it suggests that some dimensions of speaking develop at different rates. Fluency and vocabulary use may improve more quickly because students receive repeated opportunities to speak and access more language resources during tasks. Interactional competence, however, requires students to develop sensitivity to conversational timing, peer responses, and collaborative meaning-making. Previous studies have similarly emphasized that interactional competence develops through sustained peer interaction, guided feedback, and repeated communicative practice over time (Artunç & Hart, 2019; Sippel, 2021; Kunitz et al., 2022). Future active learning interventions should therefore include more explicit scaffolding for interactional moves, such as asking follow-up questions, giving clarification, responding to disagreement, and supporting quieter group members.

The motivation findings show that active learning tasks not only improved students' speaking performance, but they also changed the motivational quality of the classroom. The largest increase was found in task engagement, followed by intrinsic motivation, while extrinsic motivation improved more modestly. This pattern is important because it suggests that the intervention worked primarily by making speaking activities more meaningful, enjoyable, collaborative, and personally engaging, rather than merely increasing students' concern for grades or external rewards. Students' interview responses support this interpretation: they spoke more when tasks felt less stressful, more natural, and more supportive. This finding is consistent with research showing that enjoyment, classroom engagement, and willingness to communicate are closely related to language participation and performance (Dewaele & Pavelescu, 2021; Lee, 2022; Mulyono & Saskia, 2021; Waluyo & Bakoko, 2022). It also supports studies on active learning that show that participatory tasks can strengthen learners' motivation, reduce anxiety, and foster more positive attitudes toward learning English (Saiphet, 2018; Mohammed & Al-Hassan, 2023; Rezai et al., 2025). In this study, motivation increased because students were given more space to act as speakers, collaborators, and reflectors, rather than merely as recipients of teacher explanations.

The correlation results further clarify the relationship between motivation and speaking development. Intrinsic motivation was strongly associated with fluency gains, while task engagement showed the strongest relationship with interactional strategy gains. These patterns indicate that students who enjoyed the tasks and became more actively involved tended to show greater improvement in speaking. This supports the argument that speaking development is not driven by the quantity of practice alone; it is also shaped by how students experience practice. When students perceive speaking tasks as meaningful and manageable, they are more willing to take risks, sustain effort, and use English with peers. This finding is in line with studies showing that motivation, affective experience, and learner engagement influence willingness to communicate and language performance (Saito et al., 2018; Alrabai, 2022; Li et al., 2022). The triangulated observation and interview data strengthen this interpretation: increased participation, more balanced collaboration, greater use of English, and more frequent reflection all appeared alongside higher motivation scores and speaking gains. The relationship should still be understood as associative, given the quasi-experimental design, but the convergence across data sources makes the interpretation more persuasive.

The classroom observation results reveal why the intervention was effective. At the beginning of the intervention, participation was limited, and high-achieving students dominated group work. By the final sessions, more students volunteered responses, peer collaboration became more balanced, English use increased, and reflective discussion became more frequent. These changes suggest that active learning tasks gradually redistributed participation in the classroom. Students who might have remained silent in teacher-centered instruction were given structured opportunities to speak in pairs, groups, and project-based formats. Peer support also appeared to reduce the emotional burden of speaking. One student's comment

about feeling more confident because friends supported mistakes shows that collaboration created a safer space for oral practice. This is particularly relevant in EFL classrooms where speaking anxiety and fear of mistakes often limit participation (Botes et al., 2020; Hidayati et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2020). The intervention, therefore, helped shift the classroom from a performance-oriented space toward a practice-oriented environment in which students could try, receive support, reflect, and improve.

The study adds to previous work by showing that active learning is most powerful when implemented as an integrated instructional design rather than as isolated classroom activities. Role-plays, problem-solving tasks, peer interviews, project-based presentations, and reflective discussions each contributed different forms of speaking opportunities. Role-plays supported situational fluency; problem-solving tasks encouraged negotiation of meaning; peer interviews developed question-response patterns; project-based presentations supported extended speaking; and reflective discussions helped students evaluate their progress. This integration allowed students to encounter speaking as a repeated, varied, and purposeful practice. Earlier studies have demonstrated the benefits of active learning for motivation, attitudes, and language performance (Yahyazade et al., 2014; Mohammed & Al-Hassan, 2023; Rezai et al., 2025), while other studies have highlighted implementation problems such as teacher dominance, limited training, large classes, and mixed proficiency levels (Devira, 2020; Minh & Duong, 2023). The present findings show that active learning can be effective in secondary EFL classrooms when tasks are deliberately sequenced, scaffolded, and connected to speaking goals.

The findings have several implications for EFL speaking instruction. Teachers should design speaking lessons that provide repeated opportunities for students to speak for real communicative purposes, not merely to answer teacher questions or perform memorized dialogues. Active learning tasks should also be carefully structured so that all students participate, not just high achievers. This can be done through assigned roles, rotating speaking turns, peer support routines, and post-task reflection. Since interactional strategies did not improve significantly, teachers should include explicit instruction in conversational skills, such as asking follow-up questions, requesting clarification, responding to peers, and managing disagreement. Motivation should also be treated as part of speaking pedagogy. Tasks that are enjoyable, collaborative, achievable, and personally relevant can increase students' willingness to speak and sustain their effort across the learning process.

The study involved 60 students from two state senior high schools in Makassar, so the findings should be interpreted within this specific educational context. The intervention lasted eight weeks across 10 meetings, which may have been sufficient to improve fluency and motivation but insufficient to develop more complex interactional strategies. The use of intact classes also means that the results cannot be interpreted as fully causal, even though the quasi-experimental design and mixed-methods evidence strengthen the credibility of the findings. Future studies should involve larger samples, longer intervention periods, and more varied school contexts. Further research could also examine which specific active learning tasks contribute most strongly to particular speaking components, such as fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, interactional competence, and communicative confidence. The main contribution of this study is to show that integrated active learning tasks can support both the linguistic and motivational dimensions of EFL speaking development. The intervention improved students' speaking proficiency by increasing opportunities for meaningful oral practice and strengthening motivation by making classroom speaking more engaging, collaborative, and reflective. Speaking instruction becomes more effective when students are not only asked to speak, but are placed in learning conditions that make speaking purposeful, supported, and worth sustaining.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that integrated active learning tasks can strengthen secondary EFL students' speaking proficiency and motivation to learn when systematically embedded in classroom instruction. The experimental group showed significant gains in fluency, vocabulary use, and overall speaking proficiency,

indicating that repeated exposure to role-plays, problem-solving discussions, peer interviews, project-based presentations, and reflective group activities created more meaningful opportunities for oral practice. Motivation also increased substantially, particularly in task engagement and intrinsic motivation, suggesting that students became more willing to participate when speaking tasks were collaborative, less stressful, and connected to real communicative purposes. The positive correlations between motivation and speaking gains further indicate that students' oral development was closely related to the motivational quality of the learning environment. However, the non-significant result for interactional strategies suggests that complex conversational abilities, such as turn-taking, negotiation of meaning, and spontaneous response, may require longer interventions and more explicit scaffolding. The findings imply that EFL speaking instruction should move beyond teacher-dominated routines and provide structured, varied, and reflective tasks that allow students to speak, collaborate, take risks, and monitor their progress. Future studies should involve longer instructional periods, larger and more diverse samples, and closer analysis of how specific active learning tasks contribute to different aspects of speaking proficiency.

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7. Declaration of AI Use

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT and Grammarly as supplementary writing-support tools. ChatGPT was used to refine academic expression, improve sentence flow, and enhance the clarity of selected sections, while Grammarly was used to check grammar, punctuation, spelling, and readability. The use of these tools was limited to language editing and presentation improvement. They were not involved in designing the study, collecting data, conducting statistical analysis, interpreting qualitative findings, or determining the conclusions of the research. All AI-assisted suggestions were critically reviewed, modified where necessary, and approved by the authors. The authors retain full responsibility for the intellectual content, accuracy, originality, and integrity of the final manuscript.

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