



## INVESTIGATING ESL STUDENTS' USE OF SOCIO-AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE SPEAKING MOTIVATION AND SPEECH FLUENCY AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN MALAYSIA

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Received: 26 November 2023 • Accepted: 23 October 2024 • Published: 31 October 2024

### Abstract

*Effective communication skills are essential, especially for ESL students striving to enhance their speaking motivation and speech fluency in spoken English. It was observed that some students who enrolled in an English oral communication course at a Malaysian public university were struggling with speaking motivation and speech fluency when delivering speeches in class. This study aimed to examine the students' use of socio-affective strategies to enhance speaking motivation and speech fluency, investigate their perceptions and experiences of using these strategies, and explore the influence of gender in using socio-affective strategies. A mixed-methods design was employed, involving 32 participants in the quantitative phase and 2 participants in the qualitative phase through purposive sampling. In the quantitative phase, the findings revealed that students used various socio-affective strategies in the speaking classroom, focusing on teamwork, seeking feedback, and managing emotional states. The t-tests revealed mixed results that while no significant difference was found between male and female students in using socio-affective strategies to improve speaking motivation, a significant difference was observed in using socio-affective strategies to improve speech fluency. The qualitative findings revealed that the students used socio-affective strategies mostly focused on self-development, such as taking their emotional temperature, lowering their anxiety, and building their confidence. This study offers insights into the theoretical and practical application of ESL pedagogy.*

**Keywords:** *ESL Speaking Motivation; ESL Speech Fluency; ESL Tertiary Education; Socio-affective Strategies; Public University*

**Cite as:** Razawi, N.A. & Mohamad, F. (2024). Investigating ESL Students' Use of Socio-Affective Strategies to Enhance Speaking Motivation and Speech Fluency at A Public University in Malaysia. *Asian People Journal*, 7(1), 1-17.

## INTRODUCTION

Students' English proficiency is essential for university and college admission and job opportunities in many sectors, particularly in Malaysia. Employees who can communicate effectively with their colleagues or customers are highly valued, particularly in multinational corporations, where 85% of the workforce communicates in English (EF English Proficiency Index, 2021). People seeking international career opportunities may find that English proficiency is a requirement for job positions, thus making it a valued skill, especially for those looking for worldwide career opportunities. Despite knowing the importance of English proficiency skill, many Malaysian students are still struggling with it, particularly in speaking, which can negatively affect both their academic and career prospects (Ne'matullah et al. 2023). Azar and Sahar (2021) emphasized that motivation plays a crucial role in improving English speaking proficiency among Malaysian undergraduate students. In addition, Badrasawi et al. (2021) pointed out that lack of speaking practices, anxiety, and lack of self-confidence are common factors that may affect both speaking motivation and speech fluency among ESL students.

Language learning strategies can be categorized into three categories which are cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective. However, socio-affective strategies have often been overlooked by language educators and researchers as they favour cognitive and metacognitive strategies (Aziz & Shah, 2020). In enhancing ESL speaking motivation and speech fluency, socio-affective strategies have valuable elements that can support ESL students' communication difficulties. Previous studies by Sumang et al. (2022) and Widyaningrum and Hartati (2023) showed that socio-affective strategies were discovered to help improve ESL speaking significantly. Socio-affective strategies amalgamate social and affective factors that influence language learning. These strategies help create a supportive and conducive learning environment that further promotes students' self-confidence and autonomous learning.

Over the years, speaking motivation and speech fluency issues have existed in ESL speaking classrooms. Previous studies by Azhar and Gopal (2021) and Adickalam and Yunus (2022) showed that these issues have been consistently present due to the unavoidable emotional barriers that hindered speaking learning, worldwide. Similarly, taking both roles as ESL lecturer and researcher, despite using socio-affective strategies in the English Oral Communication course, the students were still struggling with their speaking motivation and speech fluency. This issue has further implications for university graduates who may struggle to speak efficiently during job interviews. Mohamed and Razawi (2022) highlighted that due to a lack of fluency, many graduates are aware of the importance of speaking English but are reluctant to speak in public. This issue further corroborates the researcher's belief that it may be caused by the language learning strategies used in class, where the students may not entirely benefit from the socio-affective strategies. This is also following the findings from a study that was conducted by Rahman and Nasri (2020), where it was found that the students did not prioritize the social and emotional dimensions of language acquisition, instead, they emphasized more on memorizing vocabulary, understanding the language production, and bridging the gaps in their knowledge. Sison (2022) also highlighted that educators often prioritize cognitive learning outcomes, which leads to the neglect of affective learning. ESL students who are demotivated to speak English and struggling with speech fluency will likely face academic and professional communication challenges. This paper reports the findings gained from a study conducted to investigate socio-affective strategies used by students in enhancing ESL speaking motivation and speech fluency at a public university in Malaysia. Thus, this study aimed to examine the students' use of socio-affective strategies to enhance speaking motivation and speech fluency, investigate their perceptions of using these strategies, and explore the influence of gender in using socio-affective strategies in ESL speaking classrooms.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **ESL speaking proficiency at the Malaysian tertiary level**

Malaysian Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) play a vital role in providing students with English proficiency, an important skill in the globalized world. Second language acquisition involves the dimensions of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. However, many challenges may interfere with developing speaking skills among ESL students, particularly at the tertiary level (Yahaya et al. 2021). The issues of speaking motivation and speech fluency have been so persistent and keep evolving throughout the years that many studies have been done to revise solutions (Grieve et al. 2021).

Language practitioners and instructors were able to come up with critical and creative teaching approaches to help overcome the issues as discovered in the studies done by Liew and Aziz (2022), and Ibrahim and Hashim (2021). Not only that, language learning strategies like cognitive, metacognitive, compensation, memory, social, affective, and many others have long been applied and used in classrooms as the findings were revealed in the study conducted by Zhou and Feng (2021). In the present study, the socio-affective strategies are of the main concern, even though the strategy were already integrated into the language syllabus, some students were still struggling to face these issues in the speaking classrooms. It is critical to recognize that speaking proficiency is beyond linguistic competence as it also encompasses socio-affective factors.

### **Socio-affective strategies to improve ESL speaking motivation and speech fluency**

Socio-affective strategies allow language learners to connect their emotions to facilitate their own learning and to acquire language skills through interactions with others, particularly their peers in the classrooms. However, according to Garita and Sanchez (2021), due to its nature, socio-affective strategies are categorized as indirect in language learning taxonomies, and thus receive less attention compared to other direct strategies. Nevertheless, the benefits of socio-affective strategies should not be undervalued. Previous studies were conducted by Ganasan et al. (2022), Cabansag (2020), Sumang et al. (2022), and Widyaningrum and Hartati (2023) regarding the use of socio-affective strategies in ESL speaking and communication classrooms. The findings from these studies revealed that among other advantages of using socio-affective strategies, particularly in the ESL speaking and communication classrooms are that students can exchange experiences, collaborate, seek clarification, and provide mutual support. Other than that, the strategies also help students manage and reduce speaking anxiety by employing relaxation techniques like deep breathing, using positive affirmations, and discussing their feelings with peers. Clearly, the concept of the strategies is promising as it embraces both the emotional and social dimensions of the language learning process.

The current research on ESL speaking proficiency at the Malaysian tertiary level builds on a solid body of previous studies that explored the issues and challenges related to speaking motivation and speech fluency, as well as the effectiveness of various language learning strategies. Despite the incorporation of creative teaching approaches together with socio-affective strategies, many students continuously struggle with speaking motivation and speech fluency. This indicates a gap between theoretical frameworks and the practical use of socio-affective strategies in speaking classrooms. Earlier studies by Yahaya et al. (2021), Grieve et al. (2021), and Liew and Aziz (2022) have contributed significantly to these issues. However, the socio-affective strategies have not been used effectively, as highlighted by Garita and Sanchez (2021). Therefore, this suggests the need to be investigated further. The present study aimed to address this gap by focusing on how socio-affective strategies can be more effectively

used to enhance both students' speaking motivation and speech fluency in the ESL speaking classrooms. Exploring the role of social and emotional support as discovered in studies like those of Ganasan et al. (2022) could provide new insights and add to the existing body of literature on the ESL education at the tertiary level.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design, Research Setting, Sample, and Sampling Technique**

A mixed-methods design was employed in this study, with a sample of 32 students involved in the quantitative phase, and two students in the qualitative phase. The students selected were those who took an English oral communication course at Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia. The participants were selected through a purposive sampling technique as those who enrolled in this course had an equal chance to be selected. As for the sample size, Tutar et al. (2023) recommend a sample size of 10% of the actual research, proposing 10 to 30 participants. Based on this guide, 32 students were involved in the quantitative phase and two students in the qualitative phase of the study. These two students were chosen through purposive sampling because they shared similar criteria with the participants for the larger-scale study Mocanasu (2020). This number was also used in a study by Andrade (2020).

### **Data collection procedures and data analysis**

#### ***Quantitative phase***

A set of questionnaires namely the Socio-Affective Language Learning Strategy Inventory based on the Language Learning Strategy Classification (Oxford, 1990) was disseminated to 30 respondents through a Google Form survey. The survey was designed to discover the students' ways of using socio-affective strategies in the ESL speaking classroom. The questionnaire items consisted of a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and divided into three sections. Section A contained 2 items on demographic information, Section B contained 12 items on the students' use of socio-affective strategies to improve speaking motivation, and Section C contained 10 items on the students' use of socio-affective strategies to improve speech fluency. The link to the survey was accessible for two weeks to accept ample responses from the respondents. The data collected from the survey was analyzed using SPSS version 28, through descriptive and inferential statistics.

#### ***Qualitative phase***

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 2 respondents through one-to-one Zoom meetings. Each interview lasted about 20 minutes. The questions in the interview sheet were adapted from the Language Learning Strategy Classification (Oxford, 1990), and divided into two parts. Part A contained 12 questions on students' socio-affective strategies used to improve ESL speaking motivation and part B contained 4 questions on students' socio-affective strategies used to improve ESL speech fluency. The findings gathered from the interviews were used to triangulate the findings from the survey. Data from the recorded interviews were transcribed and then analyzed thematically using Atlas.ti software. The process covered systematic coding and generating themes from the transcripts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Reliability Statistics

From the reliability analysis, Cronbach's alpha values were 0.805 for Speaking Motivation items and 0.802 for Speech Fluency items. The high alpha values indicate strong internal consistency, showing that all items for both variables measure the constructs consistently. This follows the guideline by Pfadt et al. (2021), who suggested that the reliability coefficient can be between 0.00 and 1.00, with values of 0.70 or higher signifying acceptable reliability. Therefore, the items in the questionnaire are highly reliable.

Table 1: Item Reliability Analysis

Variable	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha
Speaking Motivation	12	0.805
Speech Fluency	10	0.802

### Social strategies used to improve ESL students' speaking motivation

Based on the items related to social strategies in Part B, the findings showed various uses of social strategies to improve speaking motivation. The statement *"I speak English when I ask questions"* had the highest mean score (Mean = 3.78, Std. Deviation = 0.751), suggesting that respondents had a strong preference for using English when asking questions. The statements *"I try to learn about the culture of English speakers"* and *"I practice speaking English with other students"* followed closely, with a mean score of 3.56 for each. Conversely, strategies that involved interaction with the lecturer showed lower means. Examples of these strategies are *"I ask my lecturer to correct me when I speak English"* (Mean = 3.5, Std. Deviation = 0.88) and *"I ask my lecturer for help in speaking English"* (Mean = 3.22, Std. Deviation = 0.792). Finally, with the lowest mean score of 3.25, the statement *"I ask my lecturer to slow down or say it again if I do not understand when he/she is speaking English"* appears to be used less frequently.

Table 2: Social Strategies Used to Improve ESL Students' Speaking Motivation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I speak English when I ask questions	3.78	0.751
I practice speaking English with other students	3.56	0.878
I try to learn about the culture of English speakers	3.56	1.014
I ask my lecturer to correct me when I speak English	3.5	0.88
I ask my lecturer to slow down or say it again if I do not understand when he/she is speaking English	3.25	1.107
I ask for help in speaking English from my lecturer	3.22	0.792
Total	3.48	0.9992

### Affective strategies used to improve ESL students' speaking motivation

Based on the items related to affective strategies in part B, with a mean score of 4.22 and a standard deviation of 0.706, the statement *"I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am speaking English"* stood out as having the highest mean awareness of emotional states during English-speaking interactions. The respondents exhibited a dedication

to emotional regulation as well. Two of their statements, *“I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake”* (Mean = 3.84, Std. Deviation = 0.677) and *“I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of speaking English”* (Mean = 3.94, Std. Deviation = 0.759), scored slightly lower but still showed active attempts to manage anxiety during language use. By contrast, the lower mean score for *“I talk to my friend about how I feel when I am speaking English”* (Mean = 2.97, Std. Deviation = 1.062) indicates that asking for outside help and talking about feelings related to English communication was less common.

Similarly, keeping an English-speaking journal to record feelings *“I write down my feelings in an English-speaking diary,”* (Mean = 2.53, Std. Deviation = 1.164) and rewarding oneself for speaking well in English *“I give myself a reward or treat when I speak well in English,”* (Mean = 2.94, Std. Deviation = 1.014) were less common practices.

Table 3: Affective Strategies Used to Improve ESL Students’ Speaking Motivation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am speaking English	4.22	0.706
I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of speaking English	3.94	0.759
I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake	3.84	0.677
I talk to my friend about how I feel when I am speaking English	2.97	1.062
I give myself a reward or treat when I speak well in English	2.94	1.014
I write down my feelings in an English-speaking diary	2.53	1.164
Total	3.41	0.9165

### Social strategies used to improve ESL students’ speech fluency

The activities that involved receiving feedback and support from peers and lecturers were found to have the highest mean scores. Specifically, the actions *“I let my lecturer give feedback after every speaking practise”* (Mean = 4.09, Std. Deviation = 0.734) and *“I give applause to my friends after every speaking practise”* (Mean = 4.06, Std. Deviation = 0.759) demonstrated a strong commitment to constructive criticism and learning from one another. A mean score of (Mean = 3.84, Std. Deviation = 0.847) was obtained by participants who indicated that they take a proactive approach to enhancing their vocal variety in speech, saying, *“I watch videos on the Internet to learn vocal variety in speech (rate, pitch, pauses & volume)”*.

Furthermore, the mean score of (Mean = 3.5, Std. Deviation = 1.047) for *“I tell my friends about how I feel when I am delivering a speech”* indicates that discussing personal feelings about speech delivery was moderately common. Pronunciation and nonverbal communication techniques, on the other hand, had slightly lower mean scores. The statement *“I regularly practise speaking with my friends”* received a mean score of (Mean = 3.25, Std. Deviation = 0.842) whereas the statement *“I ask my friends for feedback on my non-verbal communication”* received a mean score of (Mean = 3.28, Std. Deviation = 1.085). The frequency of asking lecturers for pronunciation help was comparatively lower, with a mean score of (Mean = 3.22, Std. Deviation = 0.287) for the statement, *“I ask my lecturer if I do not know the correct pronunciation of words.”* Last but not least, the mean score for collaborative group discussions on speech outlines was (Mean = 3.16, Std. Deviation = 1.051) for the statement, *“I sit in groups to discuss the outline of my speech”*.

Table 4: Social Strategies Used to Improve ESL Students' Speech Fluency

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I let my lecturer give feedback after every speaking practice	4.09	0.734
I give applause to my friends after every speaking practice	4.06	0.759
I watch videos on the Internet to learn vocal variety in speech (rate, pitch, pauses & volume)	3.84	0.847
I tell my friends about how I feel when I am delivering my speech	3.5	1.047
I ask my friends to give feedback on my non-verbal communication	3.28	1.085
I do my speaking practices regularly with my friends	3.25	0.842
I ask my lecturer if I do not know the correct pronunciation of words	3.22	0.87
I sit in groups to discuss the outline of my speech	3.16	1.051
Total	3.55	0.871

#### Affective strategies used to improve ESL students' speech fluency

Finally, as evidenced by the highest mean score of (Mean = 4.03, Std. Deviation = 0.782) for "I rehearse my delivery of speech several times before the real speech assessment", participants clearly demonstrated a strong commitment to preparation and practice. This shows that a significant number of respondents considered practice and rehearsal to be extremely important when it comes to preparing a speech. Additionally, a mean score of (Mean = 3.84, Std. Deviation = 0.767) for the statement "I weigh my strengths and weaknesses to improve my speech delivery" demonstrated the participants' dedication to self-evaluation and improvement.

Table 5: Affective Strategies Used to Improve ESL Students' Speech Fluency

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I rehearse my delivery of speech several times before the real speech assessment.	4.03	0.782
I weigh my strengths and weaknesses to improve my speech delivery	3.84	0.767
Total	3.94	0.775

Therefore, based on the items related to social and affective strategies in Part B and C, the findings showed various uses of social and affective strategies in the ESL speaking classrooms. The students may not consistently use socio-affective strategies, but those who did often found these strategies beneficial in improving their speaking motivation and speech fluency.

#### The influence of gender on the use of socio-affective strategies by students to enhance speaking motivation in ESL speaking classrooms

The results revealed that female students (M=3.54, SD=.52) scored higher than male students (M=3.13, SD=.36) as shown in Table 6. However, the t-test (see Table 7) showed that there was no significant mean difference between

female and male students in the use of the socio-affective strategies to improve their speaking motivation ( $t(30) = -2.042$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, both male and female students used the socio-affective strategies equally to enhance their speaking motivation.

Table 6: The Means of the Use of Socio-Affective Strategies to Enhance Speaking Motivation Based on Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Speaking Motivation	Male	8	3.1354	.36715
	Female	22	3.5227	.52966

Table 7: The Independent Samples  $t$ -Tests for Speaking Motivation Based on Gender

		F	Sig.	$t$	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Speaking Motivation	Equal variances assumed	.353	.557	-1.899	28	.068
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.251	18.141	.037

### The influence of gender in the use of socio-affective strategies by students to enhance speech fluency in ESL speaking classrooms

The results revealed that female students ( $M=3.78$ ,  $SD=.19$ ) scored higher than male students ( $M=3.06$ ,  $SD=.47$ ) as shown in Table 8. However, the  $t$ -test (see Table 9) showed that there was a significant mean difference between female and male students in the use of strategies to improve their speaking motivation ( $t(30) = -4.147$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, female students used more socio-affective strategies to enhance their speech fluency than male students.

Table 8: The Means of The Use of Socio-Affective Strategies to Enhance Speech Fluency Based on Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Speech Fluency	Male	8	3.0625	.19955
	Female	22	3.7864	.47439

Table 9: The Independent Samples  $t$ -Tests for Speech Fluency Based on Gender

		F	Sig.	$t$	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Speech Fluency	Equal variances assumed	3.437	.074	-4.147	28	<.001



Equal variances not assumed	-5.870	27.135	<.001
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Therefore, the t-tests revealed mixed results, that while no significant difference was found between male and female students in the use of socio-affective strategies to improve speaking motivation, a significant difference was observed in the use of socio-affective strategies to improve speech fluency.

### Mixed-methods data analysis

Table 10 illustrates the findings about the students' use of socio-affective strategies to improve ESL speaking motivation and speech fluency in speaking classrooms. The data was extracted from the respondents' responses in the semi-structured interviews.

Table 10: Students' Use of Socio-Affective Strategies: Code, Frequency, Explanation, And Data Extraction

Code	Frequency	Explanation	Data Extraction
Cooperating with others/Teamwork	2	Student did cooperate with each other through pair/group works	S1: I guess with friends is better, because everyone's doesn't have the same mindset, or I can get more ideas when we get there.  S2: I think when I'm dealing with a group, I think it's helped me to improve more, because I might use my pronunciation wrong,  They will correct my word.
Asking Questions/Opinions	2	Student asked questions/opinions to lecturer/peers	S1: I will ask (questions) in English.  S2: Yeah, I do ask for their opinion also, like, whether my opinion is good or not, and I do also listen to their opinions.
Asking for Peer Feedback	1	Student asked feedback from peers	S1: So I want to improve... I will ask for my friend's opinion... So we can improve in the future right?
Showing Empathy	2	Student empathized with each other	S1: Yes, of course, because I know it is hard to deliver something to the audience, so of course I will give it applause for them.  S2: like last time, this is what my friend my classmate, she don't have that much confident to talking

			in front of the many audience. I show support, just like I, you know, giving a big clap, or like tried to comfort her.
Encouraging Oneself	2	Student encouraged him/herself to speak English confidently	S1: I will look at my lecturer because I didn't have the many confidence my confidence level is not really high, so I will look at. Or my other friends that are close to me, I feel like they trust me, and they think I can do it.
			S2: But sometimes I like to see my friends and practice (speaking) with them, you know, in English, yeah, hmm, so yeah, so that's how.
Lowering Anxiety	2	Student lowered their anxiety when preparing/delivering speech	S1: I only rehearse my speech once because I just need to have my point. And I request [feedback] for one time too, to check my fluency. So if I think that I'm okay, I will go straight away.  S2: (When anxious while delivering speech) Then I try to focus at 1 point (direction) just to focus (looking at) with my friends.
Taking Emotional Temperature	1	Student validated their feelings (e.g. frustrated, happy, shy) after delivering speech	S1: I mean, treat myself with something (after speaking well during presentations)
Using Videos	1	Student used videos to learn vocal variety and non-verbal communication	S2: I usually like to listen to Vlogging videos.
Using Technology	2	Student used online application to improve articulation and pronunciation	S1: I will Google it, or if at that time I have my lecturer with me, I will ask him straight away.  S2: Yeah, I use a Google translate and Qbot.

The interpretation of data analysis gathered from the mixed-methods approach is as follows:

### ***Cooperating with others / teamwork***

Based on the high mean scores (*"I practice speaking English with other students"*, Mean = 3.56), and (*"I do my speaking practices regularly with my friends"*, Mean = 3.25), (*"I sit in groups to discuss the outline of my speech"*, Mean = 3.16), the data quantitatively demonstrated that students showed a significant preference for teamwork as a socio-affective strategy. This numerical result is consistent with the qualitative information gathered from student interviews. Participants emphasized the importance of working in groups or pairs to explain their cooperative approach to learning. A student, hereafter S1 emphasized how different perspectives within a group foster the generation of ideas. Another student, hereafter S2 emphasized the value of group work in providing mutual support and correcting pronunciation. Consequently, the mixed methods showed the students' preference for teamwork to improve speaking motivation and speech fluency.

### ***Asking questions / opinions***

Given the significant mean scores (*"I speak English when I ask questions"*, Mean = 3.78,) and (*"I ask my lecturer if I do not know the correct pronunciation of words"*, Mean = 3.22), the data quantitatively displayed that students preferred to ask questions or seek opinions as a socio-affective strategy. Students displayed an approach by asking questions and seeking opinions from lecturers and students. This result is consistent with the interview data. The practice helps them to clarify doubts and improve their speaking abilities. They ask questions in English to make sure their speaking is accurate and clear, as S1 pointed out. S2 agreed that getting input on their ideas and listening to other people's viewpoints was important to improve their speaking motivation and speech fluency.

### ***Asking for peer feedback***

Based on the noteworthy mean score, (*"I ask my friends to give feedback on my non-verbal communication"*, Mean = 3.28), the quantitative data showed that peer feedback was valued and used by the students in the speaking classrooms as part of the socio-affective strategy. This finding aligns with the interview data where S1 pointed out that to improve speaking, peer feedback was needed not only to help refine the speech outline but also peer opinions on the student's speaking performance, be it verbal or non-verbal communication. Thus, both data indicated that the students asked for peer feedback to improve their speaking motivation and speech fluency.

### ***Showing empathy***

Concerning the high mean score (*"I give applause to my friends after every speaking practice"*, Mean = 4.09), the quantitative data displayed those students mostly showed empathy to support their friends when delivering a speech in the speaking classroom as a socio-affective strategy. The interview data corroborates this quantitative data. Students showed empathy towards their classmates and supported them by giving applause to provide comfort to their friends who felt nervous and lacked confidence. S1 highlighted the act of giving applause to their classmates as a means of expressing support. S2 too gave an example of how they helped a classmate who lacked confidence when delivering a speech in the classroom giving applause. The students' act of showing empathy as a socio-affective strategy was meant to improve their speaking motivation and speech fluency.

### ***Encouraging oneself***

In light of the significant mean (*"I encourage myself to speak English when I am afraid of making a mistake"*, Mean = 3.84), the quantitative data indicated that the students encouraged themselves to speak English to build their own confidence. This finding aligns with the viewpoints expressed throughout the student interviews. The

data from the interview revealed that the students practiced self-encouragement to speak English confidently. S1 emphasized the value of external support and trust by mentioning that they get confidence from looking at their lecturer or close friends. S2 talked about practising English with peers to gain confidence, which emphasized the importance of social relationships in encouraging themselves to speak English. The findings showed the students' efforts to increase their confidence when speaking English or delivering a speech by seeking support from both internal and external sources of encouragement.

### ***Lowering anxiety***

Given the prominent mean scores (*"I rehearse my delivery of speech several times before the real speech assessment"*, Mean = 4.03 and *"I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of speaking English"*, Mean = 3.94), the quantitative data indicated that the students were aware of speaking anxiety and used these socio-affective strategies to lower their anxiety. The data derived from the interviews resonates with these findings. From the interview, S1 responded consistently with the quantitative data on rehearsing speech which suggests that with proper preparation, the students were able to lower the anxiety. Another response recorded by S2 highlighted the use of concentration or relaxation techniques as a way to lower anxiety and this finding is consistent with the quantitative data on relaxation techniques used when the students were afraid of speaking English or delivering a speech. Both quantitative and qualitative findings indicated that the students used multiple socio-affective strategies to lower their anxiety in speaking and thus improve their speaking motivation and speech fluency.

### ***Taking emotional temperature***

Considering the substantial mean score (*"I give myself a reward or treat when I speak well in English"*, Mean = 2.94), the numerical data displayed that the students were aware of their emotional states when speaking English and hence the self-reward or treat. The quantitative data is consistent with the interview data where the ideas of reinforcement and self-awareness were highlighted by S1. By rewarding himself with a treat after a well-done English presentation, the student suggested that he consciously worked to reward and reinforce his good performance in delivering a speech and speaking English. The qualitative insight from S1 provides a unique viewpoint on how he used this socio-affective strategy to improve his speaking motivation and speech fluency.

### ***Using videos and technology***

Observing the considerable mean score (*"I watch videos on the Internet to learn vocal variety in speech (rate, pitch, pauses, and volume)"*, Mean = 3.84), it indicated that the students incorporated the use of multimedia components in learning to deliver the speech and speaking English. This finding is consistent with the perspectives shared by the students during interviews. S2 mentioned the use of videos especially vlogs for learning, highlighting the benefits of auditory learning via listening. Later, it would be applied in their speaking. Furthermore, S1 talked about using Google, highlighting that website-based applications like Google Translate and Qbot were integrated to improve speech, particularly pronunciation and articulation. Therefore, it is evident that the students also used videos and technology as part of socio-affective strategies to improve their speaking motivation and speech fluency.

From the qualitative data presented, the findings indicated that while these socio-affective strategies such as teamwork, inquiry, peer feedback, empathy, self-encouragement, anxiety management techniques, emotional awareness, and the integration of videos and technology may not unanimously benefit all students, they have proven to be effective in enhancing speaking motivation and speech fluency for other students. The qualitative data has

complemented the quantitative data by providing richer insights into the use of socio-affective strategies in ESL speaking classrooms.

In summary, the students generally used social strategies to motivate them to speak English, such as practicing with their peers and learning about English-speaking culture. However, there was potential for improvement in seeking clarification from the lecturer when students faced difficulties in understanding what the lecturer was saying. They also recognized the importance of being aware of their emotional state when speaking English, but diverse agreements on the affective strategies like giving rewards or treats to themselves to boost their speaking motivation. Various responses in writing down their feelings in an English speaking diary highlighted individual differences in perceiving and using this strategy.

Other than that, the students mostly agreed with the effectiveness of receiving feedback from the lecturer after delivering their speech as a way to improve speech fluency. However, there was less agreement of sitting in groups to discuss their speech outline to refine their speech fluency. They mostly preferred to rehearse their speech several times before the real speech assessment to get better speech fluency. Apart from that, a wider range of students' responses was found in weighing strengths and weaknesses to improve their speech fluency.

The findings highlighted the complex role that socio-affective strategies play in enhancing speaking motivation and speech fluency among ESL students. The use of social strategies such as practicing with peers and engaging with English-speaking culture aligned with the importance of social interaction in language learning as outlined by Oxford (1990) in her classification of language learning strategies (Robiansyah & Rochmawati, 2020). Other than that, seeking clarification from lecturers is a positive dimension of the lecturer-student interaction strategy which is necessary for scaffolding students' understanding and thus enhancing their ESL speaking competence (Siahaan et al. 2023). The diverse responses regarding affective strategies such as self-reward and reflective journaling reflect individual differences in learner autonomy and emotional intelligence. These strategies are central to Oxford's (1990) framework which emphasizes the need to cater to diverse learner styles in the classroom (Tahmina, 2023). The mixed acceptance of these strategies indicates that while socio-affective strategies are beneficial for some students, they may not be unanimously appealing or functioning for all students. This highlights the need for a more personalized learning approach that can cater to a student's emotional and motivational needs (Widyaningrum & Hartati, 2023).

In terms of gender influence, there was no significant mean difference in the use of socio-affective strategies between male and female students in enhancing speaking motivation. However, a significant mean difference was found in speech fluency. Female students tend to use more socio-affective strategies to improve their speech fluency as compared to male students. This phenomenon can be understood through the lens of Social Identity Theory by Tajfel and Turner (1979). Female students might be more inclined to use socio-affective strategies in their speaking because this behaviour aligns with the social identities that they have formed based on gender norms. These gendered identities, which have been shaped by societal expectations, may influence how students are involved with language learning strategies, leading the female students to use socio-affective strategies differently as compared to male students (Sung, 2021).

The quantitative data was further complemented by the qualitative data from the interviews. From the findings, it could be observed that the students used socio-affective strategies that were mostly focused on self-development such as taking their own emotional temperature, lowering their own anxiety, and building their own

confidence. These are especially helpful in overcoming the emotional barriers that usually exist when speaking a foreign language and aid them in boosting their confidence when speaking English. Not to mention, peer support allowed them to learn from each other and develop their speaking confidence and speech fluency in a more comfortable and supportive learning environment. These findings are consistent with Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis which suggests that students' emotional states can significantly impact their second language ability (Liu, 2023). The students' dependence on peer support also relates to the principles of cooperative learning which suggests that the social dimension of language learning is crucial in creating a supportive environment that reduces the students' emotional barriers when speaking a foreign language (Hajimia et al. 2020).

The implications of the findings proposed that the benefits of using socio-affective strategies in ESL speaking contexts could be applied more broadly in the education field to enhance student engagement and confidence across various subjects. In considering a student's emotional and motivational needs, there is a need for personalized approaches that are important for structured learning strategies. In addition, recognizing gender differences in using socio-affective strategies suggests that educators or policymakers consider this factor for more reasonable teaching and learning outcomes. Based on the qualitative data gathered from the interviews, it is recommended to add questions that inquire about the students' perceptions of their lecturers' use of socio-affective strategies in the ESL speaking classrooms and to further investigate whether the lecturers' use of these strategies may help to improve the students' speaking motivation and speech fluency. This modification can contribute to more prosperous and more comprehensive data and thus strengthen the research findings, particularly for future larger-scale studies. In a broader framework, future research could focus on how socio-affective strategies function across different cultures, explore their long-term effects, and investigate if they could benefit subjects beyond language learning, such as STEM. Also, more studies on gender differences in using socio-affective strategies could help develop more gender-responsive teaching methods.

## CONCLUSION

The findings gained in this study, while limited in scope, serve as a valuable basis for a larger-scale study. Its reliability, validity, and relevance to research objectives make it resourceful for expanding the research. This study has built a solid basis to investigate deeper into the dynamics of socio-affective strategies used in the ESL context, particularly in ESL speaking classrooms. It is hoped that this study has provided valuable insights for both educators and researchers in the ESL classroom instructions.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The findings presented in this article are part of an extensive study for a PhD in Applied Language Studies at Universiti Teknologi MARA. The authors would like to thank the ESL lecturers and students at a public university in Malaysia involved in this study.

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