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## THE INFLUENCE OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES ON STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS

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### ABSTRACT

Individual differences are not only visible in physical differences, but there are also differences in terms of social personality differences, intelligence, and basic abilities and skills. This study explores the influence of individual personality differences on students' English speaking at SMPN 3 Sinjai. This study uses quantitative descriptive methods. This study finds that students' attitudes towards learning are primarily in the medium category, with 50% agreeing that they have a good attitude, 42.50% feeling neutral, and only 4.50% disagreed. It shows that there is a dominant positive attitude among students. Regarding speaking skills, most students showed positive beliefs about their character and attitudes, with more than 50% agreeing or strongly agreeing on both components. However, student motivation and interest showed more significant variation, with a higher proportion of neutral students, indicating that there is room to improve student motivation and interest to better align with vital character and attitude aspects. The speaking skills results show that students need improvement in various aspects of speaking ability, especially in comprehension and fluency. At the same time, vocabulary is an area that indicates relatively more robust results.

**Keywords:** Individual Differences, personality differences, English Speaking Skills, Motivation.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Everyone on this earth certainly has differences; even someone born as a twin certainly has differences. It is something that cannot be avoided in the life of every individual. If seen from a religious perspective, Allah created His creatures to complement and know each other intimately Moore, (2015). Individuals are born with genetic inheritance from both parents, so a person is born unique because each person inherits genetics from their father and mother (Jin et al., 2022; Topić, 2021). Therefore, individual differences are commonly found in the development of students at school (Jin et al., 2022; Modersitzki et al., 2021; Topić, 2021; Traut et al., 2021). According to Garry and Thompson, (2010), in the student development book, individual differences are visible not only in physical differences but also in social personality differences, intelligence, and basic abilities and skills. Individual differences, such as character, motivation, interests, and attitudes, play an essential role in the development of students' speaking skills because these factors influence how students interact with learning material and how confident they are in expressing themselves orally in English (Dornyei, 2020; Scott & Medeiros, 2021)

Speaking ability is one of the language skills that are very important in the English learning process (Lian et al., 2021; Namaziandost et al., 2019; Phoeun & Sengsri, 2021; Richards, J. C., & Renandya, 2023). Speaking skills enable students to communicate effectively, clearly conveying ideas, thoughts, and feelings in diverse contexts (Brown, H. D., & Lee, 2023; Elsa

et al., 2021; Mahdi, 2022; Shin & Yunus, 2021). Good speaking skills give students the ability to communicate effectively, enabling them to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings clearly in a variety of situations. This is not only important in the classroom context, but also in everyday life and in the future, when they interact in the wider environment. With adequate speaking skills, students can participate more actively in discussions, work together in teams, and adapt to a dynamic environment. In this era of globalization, English language skills have become an urgent need because English has become an international language used in various fields such as education, business, and technology (Hinkel, 2020).

In Indonesia, especially at the junior high school level, speaking English presents a significant challenge for many students. One of the main obstacles is the lack of exposure to English in their daily lives. English is not commonly spoken outside of the classroom, and students have limited opportunities to hear or use the language in real-life contexts. This lack of immersion makes it difficult for students to develop fluency and familiarity with the language. Furthermore, many students feel less confident when asked to speak English, often due to fear of making mistakes or being judged by their peers. This anxiety leads to passivity in speaking activities, where students avoid engaging in conversations or taking risks to improve their spoken English (Ostrowski et al., 2023). While these methods may be useful for understanding the rules of the language, they do not provide sufficient opportunities for students to practice speaking. As a result, students may excel in written or reading comprehension tasks but struggle with oral communication. The lack of interactive and communicative activities in the classroom limits students' ability to develop their speaking skills. It can be caused by factors such as lack of exposure to English daily, less effective teaching methods (Ma, 2021; Park et al., 2019), and lack of opportunities to practice speaking in a supportive environment, having a supportive environment where students can practice without fear of criticism is crucial for building their speaking skills. However, in many cases, such an environment is lacking, which further discourages students from actively participating in speaking activities. These combined factors create significant barriers to improving students' English-speaking abilities at the junior high school level. (Namaziandost et al., 2019).

At SMPN 3 Sinjai, students' speaking ability in English is shallow. Based on observations and assessment results, most students experience difficulty in expressing themselves orally. They tend to use their mother tongue or remain silent when asked to speak in English. This low speaking ability has implications for students' low participation in communication-based learning activities. It limits the development of their communication skills, which should be one of the main competences' students master in this modern era. Although speaking skills are widely recognized and an integral part of the English language curriculum in Indonesia, there is a significant gap between expectations and reality. At SMPN 3 Sinjai, students' speaking skills are deficient compared to the expected standards. Factors such as minimal interaction in English outside the classroom, learning methods that still focus on grammar and memorization, and limited interactive learning media are the leading causes of this error. Therefore, more serious efforts are needed to improve students' speaking skills and develop practical communication skills in English.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Garry and Thompson, (2010) defined Individual differences as psychological characteristics or enduring tendencies that convey personal distinctiveness, internal causality, and feeling consistency. It shows the unique qualities of each person and differentiates them from each other. Individual differences as psychological characteristics that reflect personal, internal particularities and emotional consistency play an important role in differentiating each person.

Each individual has unique qualities that influence the way they think, feel, and act. In an educational context, especially in learning English, understanding these differences is important because each student brings different backgrounds, traits and motivations to the learning process. These differences not only create diverse classroom dynamics, but also influence how students learn and react to teaching methods. Individual differences are relatively stable psychological traits that distinguish one person from others and contribute to the definition of that person's uniqueness.

Individual differences are essential in shaping how each person interacts with the world around them, influencing their thoughts, behaviors, and emotional responses. These traits are not only consistent over time but also play a significant role in determining how individuals approach challenges, learn new skills, and engage in various activities, including language learning. In the context of education, recognizing and addressing these differences is crucial for creating effective learning environments that cater to each student's unique needs and potential. By understanding the distinct psychological traits that define each individual, educators can better support their students in achieving success. There are five main parts of individual differences that need to be considered in the context of learning English, one of which is Personality differences, which include character, motivation, interests, and attitudes, Garry and Thompson, (2010). First, students' character, such as their self-confidence and courage, determines how actively they participate in activities. Talk in class. Second, motivation acts as the main driver for students to be actively involved in learning and try to master speaking skills. Motivated students are more likely to take the initiative to practice speaking outside class hours. Third, students' interest in English also influences their involvement in developing speaking skills; students with high interest are more easily motivated to communicate in English. Fourth, students' attitudes towards English and speaking activities can strengthen or hinder their speaking abilities; a positive attitude encourages active engagement, while a negative attitude can create feelings of reluctance (Pawlak, 2021).

Speaking skill is a person's ability to express thoughts, ideas, and feelings through spoken language effectively and precisely. These skills include pronouncing words, using correct intonation, and constructing coherent and appropriate sentences in the communication context (Richards, 2021). There are five components of speaking ability, namely Fluency, Accuracy, Pronunciation, Understanding, and Vocabulary (Ortega, 2018).

#### **a. Fluency**

Speaking fluency is speaking the target language continuously and fluently, with few pauses or mistakes (Duong & Suppasetsee, 2024; Hashemifardnia et al., 2021). This includes speaking at a comfortable tempo, using good rhythm, and making seamless word or sentence transitions. Fluent people can express themselves clearly without pausing to think of the correct words. This fluency can be enhanced with regular speaking practice, such as taking part in role-plays or group conversations (Kormos, 2022)

#### **b. Accuracy**

Speaking accurately involves using language correctly in terms of syntax, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Duong & Suppasetsee, 2024). An accurate speaker will employ proper sentence construction, pick words that fit the situation, and pronounce them correctly, Skehan, & Foster, (2021). Accuracy development usually entails grammar and vocabulary exercises and prompt feedback following interactions (Duong & Suppasetsee, 2024; Yu et al., 2022).

#### **c. Pronunciation**

How a person articulates sounds in a target language is known as pronunciation (Al Khateeb & Hassan, 2022). It consists of components, including speech patterns, intonation, word stress, phonemes, and stress on syllables. Words are pronounced clearly and in compliance with

linguistic conventions. They are said to have good pronunciation when they allow listeners to understand them easily. Exercises that concentrate on specific sounds or intonation patterns are frequently employed, along with listening and imitation techniques of native speakers, to help improve pronunciation.

#### **d. Understanding**

Understanding speaking skills includes the ability to understand and interpret information in conversation and convey it clearly and effectively (Adipat, 2023). The first aspect is understanding the context, which involves understanding the theme of the conversation, the purpose of the communication, and the relationship between the conversation participants. Appropriate exposition is also essential to ensure the message is well understood, along with correct sentence structure and grammar. Active listening skills greatly support speaking skills, allowing for appropriate responses and smooth conversation. Additionally, organizing and conveying ideas is logistical and simplifies understanding. Adapting how you speak to your audience and using non-verbal skills such as body language and intonation also contribute to better understanding. Reading comprehension in speaking skills helps a person communicate more effectively, reduce misunderstandings, and build productive interactions in various situations. Mendelsohn, (2023)

#### **e. Vocabulary**

Vocabulary is an essential component of speaking skills that influences a person's communication ability (Homayouni, 2022; Jablonkai, 2020; Ludewig et al., 2023). A broad and precise vocabulary allows individuals to convey ideas and information accurately and according to the context of the conversation. Mastery of vocabulary helps choose appropriate words, avoid ambiguity, and enrich verbal expressions. Also, choosing the correct vocabulary plays a role in building confidence when speaking and makes it easier for the audience to understand the message conveyed. Good speaking skills require not only knowledge of vocabulary but also the ability to use those words appropriately in various situations. Therefore, developing adequate vocabulary is the key to increasing fluency and success in communication, (Zhang, and Wang, 2023). Therefore, understanding how individual differences influence each aspect of speaking skills can provide valuable insight into improving speaking skills effectively and adapting teaching approaches to meet students' needs

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The research method used is descriptive quantitative. It aims to describe and analyze data obtained from samples systematically and objectively. This method involves collecting quantitative data through speaking test results and questionnaires for students' personalities, which are analysed to provide an overview of students' speaking skills. The descriptive analysis presents detailed information regarding class 8A students' speaking abilities, including pronunciation, intonation, fluency, and coherence. The data obtained was processed and presented as descriptive statistics to clearly understand students' speaking skills status.

## **3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The questionnaire results provide a comprehensive picture of how students rate themselves regarding character, motivation, interests, and attitudes. The data collected was analyzed to identify existing patterns and reveal areas where students show significant levels of agreement or disagreement. The following explanation outlines the questionnaire results in detail, providing insight into how students measured each dimension and how this information can be used to understand and improve aspects of their personality differences in the learning environment.

**Table 1. Students' personality differences**

Response	Personality differences			
	Character (36 items)	Motivation (4 items)	Interest (6 items)	Attitudes (8 items)
Strongly Agree	101 (score)	10 (score)	0 (score)	6 (score)
Agree	372 (score)	31 (score)	91 (score)	100 (score)
Neutral	369 (score)	36 (score)	59 (score)	85 (score)
Disagree	58 (score)	21 (score)	0 (score)	9 (score)
Strongly Disagree	0 (score)	2 (score)	0 (score)	0 (score)

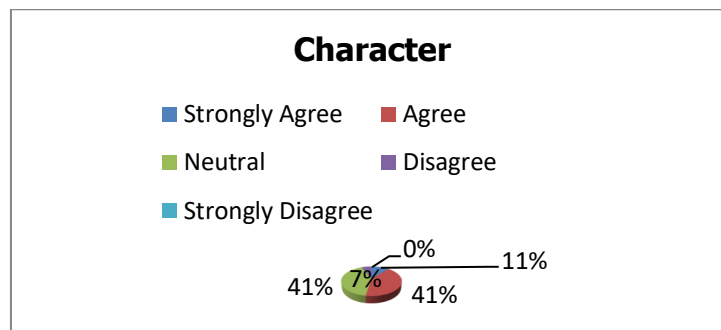
The questionnaire results show that students have varying views regarding their character, motivation, interests, and attitudes. In terms of character, most students (372 scores) agreed with statements related to character, indicating that they felt they had characters that fit that description. However, a significant number of neutral students (369 scores) also indicated uncertainty or a lack of solid views about character. Only a few students strongly agreed (101 scores) or strongly disagreed (0 scores) with character statements, indicating that extreme views are rare.

For motivation, the questionnaire results show that a small number of students agree (31 scores) or strongly agree (10 scores) with motivation statements, while many students are in the neutral category (36 scores). It suggests that most students may not feel motivated by high intensity. Some students disagreed (21 scores) with the motivation statement, but only a few strongly disagreed (2 scores), indicating that negative views of motivation are not expected.

In the exciting aspect, no students strongly agreed (0 scores) with the interest statement, and several agreed (91 scores), indicating a good level of interest among some students. Many students were neutral (59 scores), indicating uncertainty or less intense views about their interests. No students disagreed or strongly disagreed (0 scores) with the statement regarding interests, suggesting that all students generally accepted interests.

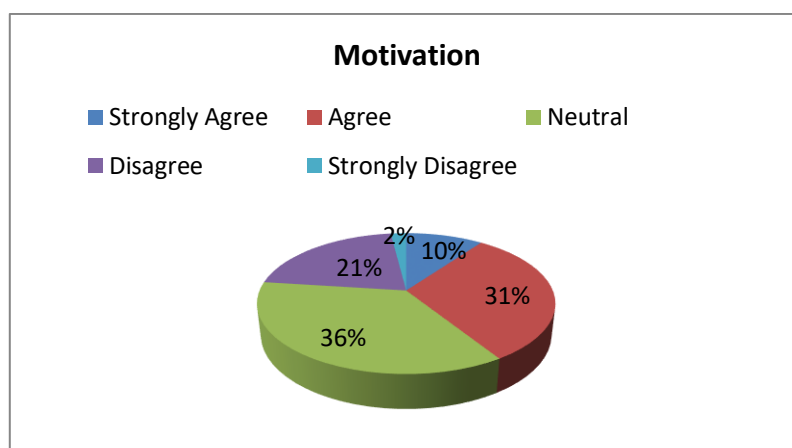
Meanwhile, for attitudes, many students agreed (100 scores) with statements about attitudes, indicating that their attitudes tended to be positive or following the statements. Although several students were neutral (85 scores) and some disagreed (9 scores), there were no students who strongly disagreed (0 scores) with the statement about attitudes. It shows that students' attitudes tend not to show extreme rejection, but there is still variation in their views.

Overall, the questionnaire data indicated that students showed higher levels of agreement on character and attitudes, while motivations and interests showed more significant variation. It underlines the need for further understanding and intervention to improve motivation and interest in the learning environment.



**Figure 1.** Students Character

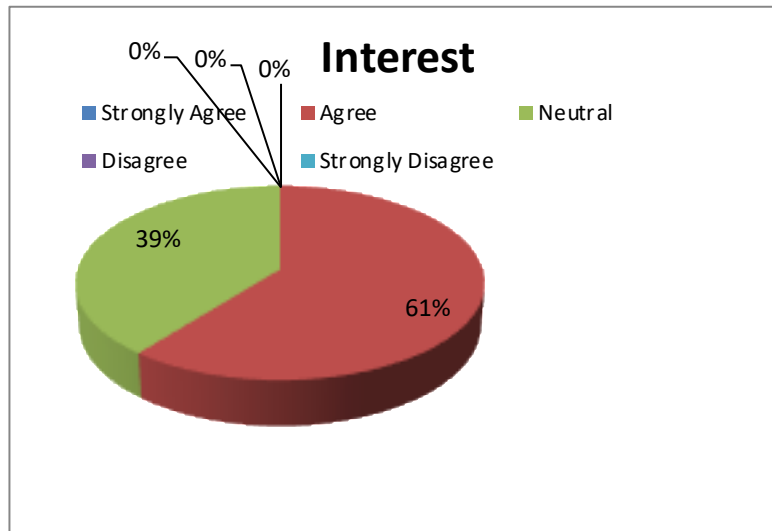
Based on Figure 1, it can be concluded that most students agree or are neutral regarding their perceptions of the characters. It shows that, although many students felt their character was consistent with the statements given, a large number were not wholly convinced or neutral about this. The small number of students who disagreed indicated a need to deepen students' understanding of their character.



**Figure 2.** Students Motivation

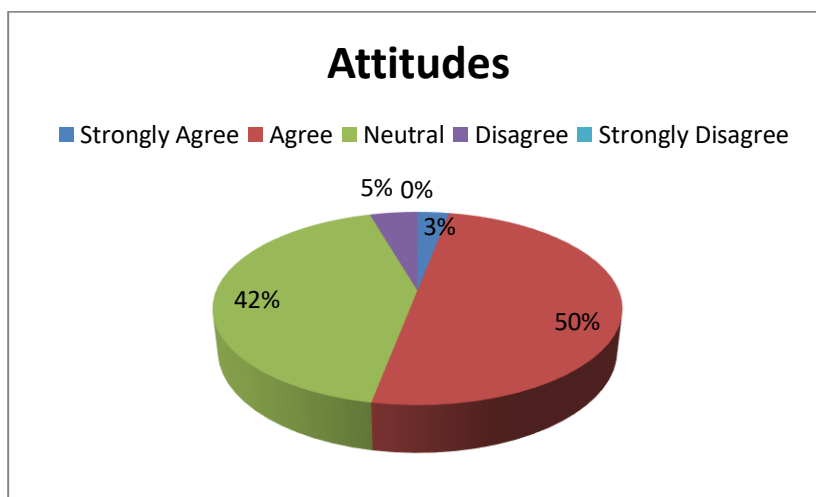
Figure 2 illustrates that student motivation in this class is generally uneven, with a noticeable tendency towards medium to low levels of engagement. A significant portion of students exhibit only a neutral level of motivation, suggesting that they may not feel strongly encouraged or inspired by the current learning environment. Additionally, a number of students even report feeling unmotivated, which can further hinder their participation and progress in class activities. This lack of strong motivation may negatively impact their overall performance, particularly in areas requiring consistent practice, such as speaking skills. The findings underscore the importance of implementing more targeted interventions to address

these motivational gaps. Strategies such as introducing more engaging and interactive activities, offering personalized feedback, and creating a more supportive classroom atmosphere could help boost student interest and motivation. By fostering a more stimulating learning environment, it may be possible to increase student engagement and, in turn, improve their language learning outcomes.



**Figure 3.** Students Interest

Overall, these results indicate that although most students have a good interest in learning, a large number of neutral students may require more innovative approaches to arouse their interest. It is hoped that engagement and learning outcomes can be improved by increasing overall student interest.



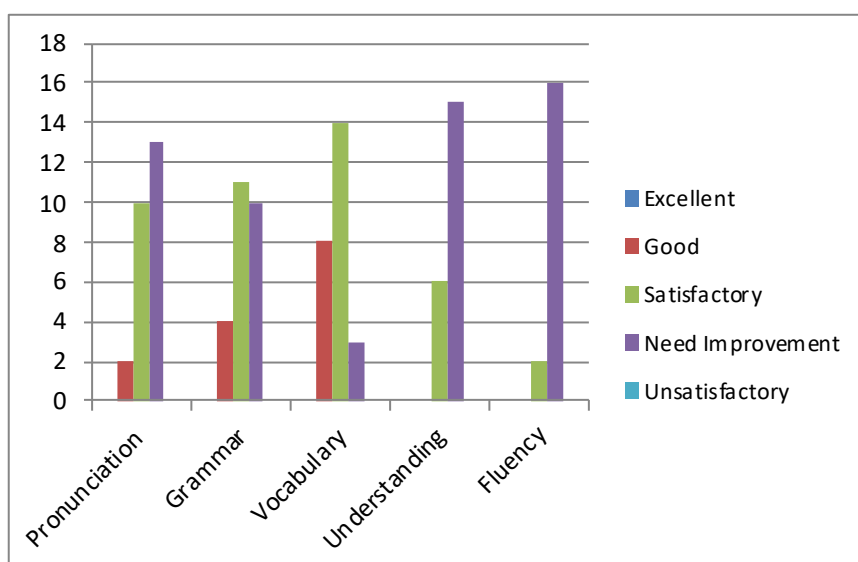
**Figure 4.** Students Attitudes

Based on Figure 4, although most students have a positive attitude toward learning, many are in a neutral position, and a few are less supportive. This suggests a need to explore further the factors influencing students' attitudes and perhaps develop more effective strategies to increase their positive attitudes toward learning. With the right approach, it is hoped that more students will have a more supportive and positive attitude in their learning process.

### Students Speaking Skill

To understand and improve students' speaking skills, more detailed data has been provided to provide data regarding the state of students' speaking skills. Speaking skills are essential to learning English, as they enable students to communicate effectively, conveying their ideas, thoughts, and feelings in various contexts.

The results of this analysis will be presented through a visualization graph designed to provide an easy-to-understand picture of the student's speaking skill level. This visualization covers various aspects of speaking skills, such as comprehension, fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary use, all of which contribute to practical communication skills.



**Figure 5.** Students Speaking skill

Based on chart 1, it can be concluded that fluency and comprehension are the most critical areas and require the most improvement. Teaching approaches that focus more on speaking and listening practice and using learning strategies that encourage active student participation may be most helpful in improving these skills.

The relationship between personality differences aspects, especially motivation and interest, and speaking ability, in terms of understanding and fluency, influence each other.

Motivation Influence on Speaking (understanding and Fluency) Students who have low motivation tend to be less enthusiastic about being active in learning activities, including speaking practice. When motivation is lacking, students are reluctant to try speaking English, which leads to low fluency and understanding Liu and Jackson, (2021) Motivation is the primary driver that helps students to continue trying, practicing, and improving their abilities.



(Guillermo, 2023). Motivation mainly encourages students to continue trying, practicing, and improving their abilities. Motivation not only inspires students to start the learning process but also serves as fuel that keeps their enthusiasm high. Students who feel motivated tend to be more active in communicating, overcoming challenges, and developing their skills. Intrinsic motivation, which stems from personal interest and satisfaction with the task, often results in deeper engagement and learning. Conversely, extrinsic motivation, such as getting awards or praise, can also encourage students to achieve their goals. Both work together to create a productive and positive learning environment. Additionally, motivation helps students to face failure and difficulties with a more positive attitude, motivating them to learn from mistakes and keep trying. Thus, firm and consistent motivation is the key to achieving significant and successful progress in the learning process, one of which is in speaking skills

Interest Influence on Speaking (Understanding and Fluency). Low interest in subject matter or learning activities can cause students to be less involved in speaking activities. Suppose students are not interested in the material or activities provided. In that case, they may not focus or put enough effort into understanding and practicing saying, which harms their comprehension and fluency. Besides that, when students do not have sufficient interest, they tend not to participate actively in discussions or speaking practice, which ultimately affects the development of their speaking abilities.

Low motivation and lack of interest are significant barriers to developing speaking skills, particularly in the context of learning a second language like English. When students are not motivated, they are less likely to engage with the material, participate in class activities, or invest time in practicing their speaking skills. (Gardner, 2010). highlights that motivation is a key factor in determining how much effort students are willing to put into learning, and this directly influences their understanding and fluency in speaking. Without motivation, students may avoid taking part in speaking exercises, feel less inclined to ask questions, and miss out on opportunities to improve their fluency through conversation practice.

Additionally, a lack of interest in the subject matter can further exacerbate the problem. When students are not interested in what they are learning, they tend to approach lessons passively, viewing the material as a chore rather than an opportunity for personal growth. This disengagement leads to minimal effort, and as a result, their understanding of the language remains superficial. Speaking fluently requires regular practice and active engagement with the language, but students who are disinterested are unlikely to put in the time needed to develop these skills. As a consequence, their ability to understand complex language structures and use them in conversation becomes limited.

Research by Martin, L., and Ginsburg, (2023) emphasizes the importance of increasing both motivation and interest to foster better language learning outcomes. When students are motivated and find the content interesting, they are more likely to practice speaking regularly, both inside and outside the classroom. This increased practice leads to greater familiarity with the language, helping students to internalize vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, all of which are crucial for achieving fluency. By cultivating a learning environment that stimulates motivation and interest, teachers can significantly improve students' speaking abilities, leading to more confident and competent language users.

Meanwhile, the results of character and attitudes show that most students possess good character and hold positive attitudes, which are crucial components of their personality differences. That is, traits can significantly impact their approach to learning, including speaking skills. Good character traits, such as responsibility, perseverance, and respect, lay the foundation for a disciplined and focused learning environment. Students with solid character

are more likely to exhibit self-discipline, take responsibility for their learning, and persevere through challenges, essential for mastering speaking skills. Students are also more likely to approach learning with integrity and a commitment to doing their best, which can lead to more consistent and meaningful practice.

Positive attitudes, such as a willingness to learn, openness to new experiences, and a positive outlook on challenges, further enhance this foundation by fostering a mindset that is conducive to learning. Students with a positive attitude are more likely to engage actively in speaking exercises, embrace feedback, and view mistakes as opportunities for growth rather than failures. This openness to learning and improvement is vital in developing speaking skills, as it encourages students to take risks, try new expressions, and continually refine their language abilities.

Moreover, students with good character and positive attitudes often create a supportive and collaborative learning environment (Ariawan, 2020). They are more likely to encourage their peers, contribute to group activities, and participate in class discussions, critical opportunities for practicing and enhancing speaking skills. This supportive atmosphere can reduce anxiety and create a safe space for all students to practice speaking, which is particularly important for those who may be more hesitant or lack confidence.

However, while good character and positive attitudes provide a strong foundation, they must be coupled with sufficient motivation and interest to realize the potential for speaking skills development fully. Without these driving forces, even students with the best character and attitudes may struggle to engage deeply with the learning process or push themselves to excel in speaking. Therefore, it is essential to cultivate these positive personality differences traits and actively foster motivation and interest to ensure that students are fully engaged and committed to improving their speaking skills. In this way, character and attitudes can significantly enhance the overall effectiveness of language learning and speaking skill acquisition when aligned with motivation and interest.

While character and attitudes are generally strong among the students, other factors like motivation and interest seem lower, hindering their speaking skills development. Character and attitudes are essential in creating a disciplined and respectful learning environment (Lukman et al., 2021; Uge et al., 2019); However, they alone are insufficient to drive active participation and consistent effort in language learning. Motivation is a critical factor that propels students to engage actively in speaking activities, practice regularly, and take risks in language use. Motivation acts as the main driver that influences how much effort students put into developing their speaking skills. When students feel encouraged to learn, they not only participate in learning activities enthusiastically, but also have more courage to face existing challenges. This includes the desire to try speaking a newly learned language, despite possible errors or discomfort. With strong motivation, students tend to be more consistent in practicing and continue to look for ways to improve their speaking skills. However, without enough motivation, students may lack the drive to push through the discomfort and challenges that often accompany learning a new language, particularly in speaking, which requires knowledge, confidence, and persistence.

Interest plays a similarly crucial role (Bi et al., 2023; Krawitz et al., 2022; Ludewig et al., 2023). When students are genuinely interested in their learning, they are more likely to invest time and energy in practicing their speaking skills, exploring the language beyond the classroom, and seeking opportunities to communicate in real-life situations. High interest in learning English can encourage students to be more proactive in developing their speaking skills. When students feel connected and motivated by the material being studied, they tend to seek out more opportunities to use the language, whether through conversations with

classmates, use of language applications, or participation in communication-based activities outside of class. This motivation allows them to practice independently, deepen understanding, and enrich language experience, which in turn accelerates their progress in speaking skills. On the contrary, a lack of interest can lead to disengagement, where students participate minimally in speaking exercises and do not seek to improve their skills outside of required activities, Lamb and Reynolds (2023). This disengagement can stifle the natural development of speaking fluency, vocabulary expansion, and overall communicative competence.

To maximize the influence of their positive character and attitudes on speaking abilities, it is beneficial to focus on enhancing motivation and interest in speaking activities. It could involve making speaking exercises more engaging, relevant, and aligned with the student's interests to encourage greater participation and practice.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Individual differences in terms of Personality differences have a significant influence on students' speaking skills. Of the four aspects of personality differences, motivation and interest are proven to be the most influential factors in students' speaking abilities, especially in two critical components: comprehension and fluency. High motivation encourages students to practice and use English more actively in real situations. Students with solid motivation tend to be more confident and enthusiastic about speaking, directly improving their ability to understand and be fluent in language. They are more open in speaking and overcome challenges in communication, thereby facilitating the acquisition of better speaking skills. A high interest in English also dramatically contributes to students' speaking skills. Students with a strong interest tend to spend extra time practicing and deepening their understanding of the language. This positively impacts their knowledge of English and improves their speaking fluency. Strong interest makes students more involved and active in learning English, improving their speaking skills.

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