

Examining EFL Students' Self-Regulated Motivation for Improving English Speaking Skills: A Study of High-Achieving Thai University Students in an English Speaking Course

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Abstract

Self-regulated motivation is essential in language learning, especially for developing English speaking skills among EFL learners, as it empowers them to plan, monitor, and control their learning, set personal goals, and apply strategies to achieve those goals. Therefore, strong self-regulated motivation can support the learners in overcoming challenges in learning English. The present research thus aimed to examine the self-regulated motivation (SRM) of Thai university students to enhance their English speaking skills in an English speaking course. 37 students who excelled in the English speaking course during the 2024 academic year participated voluntarily, with 5 top-performing students selected for interviews. Data were collected using the SRMIS-EFL questionnaire and structured interviews. Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis were performed to analyze the quantitative data and the data from the interviews were interpreted and presented in a descriptive manner. Findings indicated a high overall SRMIS-EFL level with the highest mean score for SRM attributed to “Task Value Activation”, reflecting a very high motivation level. No significant differences were found in SRM between students with grades A and B+. However, strong correlations among the 4 SRM

subsections were observed. While students utilized 5 various SRM strategies, they unanimously agreed that “Task Value Activation” significantly enhances their English speaking skills. The study suggests that educators should focus on enhancing “Task Value Activation” through activities that highlight the practical benefits of mastering English speaking, particularly to support students with lower grades and boost their motivation.

Keywords: self-regulated motivation, English speaking skills, EFL students, excellent academic performance

1. Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, English skills have become essential for communication, academic success, and career opportunities (Aba Sha’ar & Boonsuk, 2021; Riensumettharadol & Sujarinpong, 2022). According to Ur (1996), effective communication in English requires proficiency in all four key language skills. Among these skills, speaking is considered the most important particularly when learning a foreign language, as it combines and utilizes various language components (Nunan, 1991). For Thai students, proficiency in English speaking is a crucial asset for decades, particularly in non-native English-speaking countries like Thailand, where English serves as a foreign language in academic and professional environments (Ministry of Education, 2015). While many students may face challenges in mastering speaking skills, those who exhibit high levels of motivation and effective self-regulation strategies often achieve greater success in language acquisition and assist them in overcoming challenges in learning English (Tang, Li & Wang, 2024). Understanding the factors that contribute to these students’ superior performance in English speaking courses is hence imperative for improving language education and promoting effective learning strategies among other students.

Self-regulated motivation (SRM) is a component of self-regulated learning (SRL) that specifically addresses the control or regulation of motivation (Salsabila & Maharsi, 2023). SRM plays a critical role in language learning, particularly in the development of speaking skills (Uztosun, 2020). It is crucial in the context of learning a foreign language because it involves students’ ability to plan, monitor, and control their learning processes, setting personal goals, and employing strategies to achieve them (Christopher A. Wolters, 2003; Huh & Reigeluth, 2017; Warni et al., 2024). It can be claimed that students with high self-regulated motivation take responsibility for their learning, demonstrating persistence, resilience, and a proactive approach to overcoming obstacles. Theoretically, Pintrich (2000) identified different areas of self-regulated learning (SRL) such as cognition, motivation and affect, behavior, and context. According to the Pintrich’s model, each area is incorporated into four phases: forethought, planning, and activation; monitoring; control and regulation; and reaction and reflection. To make this model suit with EFL contexts, Uztosun (2020) developed a scale to measure the self-regulated motivation (SRM) of EFL students to speak English. Uztosun focused on the motivational aspects of SRL, creating the Self-Regulated Motivation for Improving Speaking English as a Foreign Language (SRMIS-EFL) scale. This scale includes 4 factors that align with the areas and phases of SRL: task value activation, regulation of the learning environment, regulation of affect, and regulation of the classroom environment. If the

students have high level of these 4 dimensions, they will become more independent and effective learners. In addition, they will develop stronger self-discipline, better stress management, and the ability to navigate challenges in the language learning process (Uztosun, 2021). Consequently, their English speaking skills will improve significantly due to increased motivation, better management of learning conditions, and enhanced emotional resilience, leading to higher academic performance and long-term language proficiency.

In the Thai context, the current state of English speaking skills among Thai university students is a complex issue with several contributing factors. One of the primary challenges is the limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Many students lack opportunities to practice speaking English in real-world contexts, which can hinder their fluency and confidence (Phisutthangkoon, 2024). Additionally, fear of making mistakes and negative attitudes towards English learning can create barriers to effective communication (Ramadan, 2018; Sha'ar and Boonsuk, 2021). Furthermore, traditional teaching methods that focus primarily on grammar and vocabulary may not be conducive to developing speaking skills (Chulee et al, 2023). To restate, a more learner-centered approach that emphasizes communicative competence and self-directed learning is essential for fostering self-regulated motivation and improving English speaking abilities. By examining the relationship between self-regulated motivation and English speaking skills among Thai university students, this study seeks to shed light on the factors that influence language learning and to identify effective strategies for promoting self-regulated motivation and enhancing English proficiency. However, none of any recent study examining the role of Thai university students' self-regulated motivation for improving English speaking skills particularly with those students possessing excellence academic performance in English speaking course presently. Some studies focused on Thai students' SRL. For instance, Imsri and Sangpoom (2022) investigated self-regulated learning (SRL) among Thai EFL students with lower proficiency levels. It was found that these students often face challenges in managing their learning independently. They suggested that teachers should create motivational classroom environments to enhance students' mental well-being and improve learning outcomes. Similarly, Suwanwong, Jamiat, and Phairot (2022) explored SRL and motivation among Thai university students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their study found that students often experienced low motivation and boredom, largely due to limited interaction in online learning settings. Regarding the studies on SRM, several current studies were found conducted in relation to EFL speaking skills outside Thailand (Uztosun, 2020; Alotumi, 2021; Salsabila & Maharsi, 2023; Warni et al., 2024). Therefore, there is still a need for deeper investigation of how self-regulated motivation specifically improves English speaking skills among students who perform exceptionally well academically. These high-achieving students may employ distinct strategies and possess unique motivational factors that contribute to their success, offering valuable insights for both language educators and learners.

This study, therefore, focuses on Thai university students who have excelled in their English speaking course with the aim to understand the role of their self-regulated motivation in improving their speaking skills. By investigating the strategies, goals, and motivational factors used by these students, the research seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of effective language learning practices and reveal the mechanisms that drive language success

and provide practical recommendations for enhancing speaking skills in broader student populations. The findings are expected to offer insights into how self-regulated motivation can be fostered and applied to enhance English speaking proficiency in Thai or EFL higher education contexts.

2. Literature Review

2.1 English Speaking Skills

English speaking skills are essential for students, given their critical role in facilitating communication with other people across various fields, such as education, business, and trade (Brown, 1994; Robert & Meenakshi, 2022; Roengrit et al, 2023). These skills contribute significantly to the process of constructing meaning by enabling effective production, reception, and processing of information during communication (Burns & Joyce, 1997). According to Richards (1990), mastering English speaking skills is a key priority for many learners of English as a second or foreign language. Learners often measure their language progress by how well they improve their spoken proficiency. Bygate (1987), a scholar, emphasized that achieving fluency goes beyond knowledge of vocabulary and grammar; it requires the ability to apply this technical understanding effectively in real-life communication, ensuring accurate meaning at the right time. Bygate describes speaking as the combination of motor-perceptive skills (the ability to perceive and produce language structures) and interaction skills (the ability to communicate meaning effectively through interaction). Crucially, Hellgren (1982) emphasizes the importance of the interactional aspect of speaking, introducing the term ‘oracy’ to denote oral communicative proficiency in speaking English, the following 3 elements which are grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation rules should not be neglected in speech. Regarding ‘grammatical structures,’ it involves the correct use of complex sentences and well-structured clauses. In terms of ‘vocabulary,’ accuracy means selecting the most suitable words for the context, avoiding the misuse of similar words or expressions that do not convey the intended meaning. For ‘pronunciation,’ Thornbury (2005) noted that it is often the least emphasized aspect of language learning, but to speak English accurately, learners must master phonological rules and be aware of various sounds, stress patterns, intonation, and pitch. Additionally, according to Ellis (2009), proficiency in English speaking involves giving due attention to three essential elements: accuracy, fluency, and complexity. The term ‘accuracy,’ as emphasized by Goh and Burns (2012), pertains to the correct use of grammar and pronunciation. On the other hand, ‘fluency’ is described as an individual’s overall speaking proficiency and effectiveness in using language for communication purposes, according to Hunter (2017) and Bailey (2005) adding that it involves speaking fluidly, confidently, and at a rate consistent with native speech norms. Noteworthy is the recent attention to ‘complexity,’ identified as a goal in task-based learning (Brown & Lee, 2015). Complexity involves employing language in more intricate forms, such as subordination, to suit social and cultural contexts by focusing on the roles and relationships between the speaker and the listener, as outlined by Goh and Burns (2012). All in all, English speaking skills are considered essential for students, as they serve as the primary gateway for engaging with people globally. To become

a successful English speaker, they must develop proficiency in all key aspects of speaking, including accuracy, fluency, and complexity. These components must function in harmony during communication.

2.2 Self-Regulated Motivation

Before delving into self-regulated motivation (SRM), it is necessary to understand self-regulated learning (SRL). Self-regulated learning is an approach to education that is proactive, intentional, and reflective which focuses on the need for learners to actively monitor, assess, and modify their own learning processes to achieve optimal outcomes (Tang, Li, & Wang, 2024). Research indicates that higher education students who apply more effective self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies tend to achieve better academic performance (Schneider & Preckel, 2017) and experience greater satisfaction with their educational experience (Liborius et al., 2019). Wolters (2003), a scholar, described self-regulated learning (SRL) as the regulation of various aspects of the learning process, including cognitive skills, metacognition, and motivation. He specifically highlighted the importance of regulating motivation, which is referred to as Self-Regulated Motivation (SRM). According to Wolters, SRM plays a crucial role in determining the extent to which students are motivated to engage in or achieve specific goals. This view positions SRM as a fundamental component of SRL, emphasizing that self-regulated learners are highly motivated individuals (Zimmerman, 1990). Thus, SRM and SRL are interrelated concepts, with SRM being an integral part of SRL (Kumalasari, 2022). This aligns with Kryshko et al. (2020), who noted that SRM enhances academic performance and that various SRM strategies can influence students' academic achievements. The capacity of students to manage their own motivation is a key factor in determining the effectiveness of the learning process (Salsabila & Maharsi, 2023). Moreover, Tang, Li, and Wang (2024) noted that effective self-regulated motivation supports learners in overcoming challenges in learning English and enhances their overall effectiveness in acquiring the language. Regarding SRM with English speaking skills, Uztosun (2021) emphasized the importance of learners developing the ability to regulate their own motivation and apply various motivational strategies. He argued that enhancing awareness of the role of self-regulated motivation (SRM) can significantly contribute to the improvement of foreign language speaking skills. To facilitate this, Uztosun created a tool in 2020 to assess SRM among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. This tool, known as the Self-Regulated Motivation for Improving Speaking English as a Foreign Language (SRMIS-EFL) scale, specifically focuses on the motivational components of self-regulated learning. The SRMIS-EFL scale was designed to measure the effectiveness of different motivational strategies in fostering better English speaking abilities. This scale includes 4 factors that align with the areas and phases of SRL by Pintrich's (2000) model who focused on motivational aspects of SRL. Such 4 factors proposed by Uztosun in 2020 were task value activation, regulation of the learning environment, regulation of affect, and regulation of the classroom environment. 1) *Task Value Activation*: This factor pertains to the extent to which students are motivated and interested in engaging with a particular task. It involves how much value students place on developing their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking skills. 2) *Regulation of the Learning Environment*: This factor involves the management and organization of the physical or digital space in which

learning occurs. It encompasses creating a conducive environment that enhances focus and minimizes potential distractions. 3) *Regulation of Affect*: This factor refers to students' ability to manage and control their emotional responses that may affect their proficiency in EFL speaking. 4) *Regulation of the Classroom Environment*: This factor relates to how students can influence and adapt to their classroom setting. It includes their interactions with peers and teachers, their level of participation, and how they engage in group dynamics.

2.3 Current Situation of Self-Regulated Motivation in EFL Context

Uztosun (2020) developed a scale aimed at measuring self-regulated motivation (SRM) to enhance speaking competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The scale's development involved item selection, followed by exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. The research was conducted in 3 phases, involving a total of 1,065 EFL college students. The study culminated in a 20-item scale covering 4 key factors: regulation of affect, regulation of classroom environment, task value activation, and regulation of learning environment. Uztosun emphasized the importance of fostering positive emotional responses and increasing interest in tasks, which are essential for improving EFL speaking skills. Similarly, Alotumi (2021) surveyed 300 EFL college students from an English department at a Yemeni university and found that while various self-regulation strategies were used to improve speaking skills, there was no significant link between SRM and academic performance. In a related study, Salsabila and Maharsi (2023) conducted a survey among 92 English language education students at a private university in Yogyakarta, focusing on self-regulated motivation across the first three academic years. It was found that among 92 EFL students, task value evaluation was the most commonly regulated factor. More recently, Warni et al. (2024) conducted a quantitative study to evaluate the self-regulated motivation of university students in improving their English speaking skills (SRMIS-EFL). The research also explored whether SRMIS-EFL varied based on academic levels. The study involved 156 EFL students from the English Department of a private university in Jakarta, using a self-reported SRMIS-EFL questionnaire for data collection. Results indicated that the overall SRMIS-EFL among the students was high, with participants employing various self-regulatory strategies to improve their speaking skills. Together, these studies underline the critical role of SRM in EFL speaking development and the variations across academic groups. However, research on self-regulated motivation (SRM) in relation to English speaking skills, particularly involving students with high academic performance in speaking course, is limited within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Thus, the present study utilized a mixed-methods approach not only to assess the levels and correlations of SRM but also to explore the strategies students employed to enhance their speaking skills through qualitative data. This combination of quantitative and qualitative methods provides a deeper understanding of how motivated students improve their English speaking abilities, which has been rarely explored in the current existing literature.

2.4 Research Questions

1. What is the level of self-regulated motivation of Thai university students possessing excellent academic performance in English speaking course?
2. Is there a significant difference in the self-regulated motivation between Thai university

students with different grades (A and B+) in the English speaking course?

3. Is there any correlation among the 4 subsections of students' self-regulated motivation (SRM) of the students with excellent academic performance in English speaking course?

4. What are the students' self-regulated motivation strategies in enhancing their academic performance in English speaking course?

2.5 Research Hypothesis

H1: There is no significant difference in self-regulated motivation between Thai university students who achieve different grades (A and B+) in English speaking course.

H2: There is a significant correlation among the 4 subsections of students' self-regulated motivation for students who excelled in English speaking course.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research utilized a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data for collection and analysis. The study aimed at examining the students' self-regulated motivation for improving their English speaking skills of those who excelled in the English speaking course. The use of multiple approaches, including interviews, enhances the reliability and validity of the findings. Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) emphasized that combining data from diverse sources can help confirm and cross-validate conclusions. Turner (2006) further recommended mixed methods research for addressing specific types of research questions, especially those related to classroom contexts.

3.2 Participants and Context

The participants in this study were 37 EFL university students in southern part of Thailand who demonstrated excellent academic performance in an English speaking course during the first semester of the 2024 academic year, with grades ranging from B+ (75-79) to A (80-100). 16 students achieved the score between 80-100 (A) and 21 possessed the score between 75-79 (B+). 28 males and 9 females from different departments voluntarily participated in this study. To attain in-depth data, 5 students from 37 students who possessed the highest score in the English speaking course were purposefully invited to the interview session. Considering the number of participants in this study, Roscoe (1975) recommended that a sample size between 30 and 500 is appropriate for most behavioral research. This range is particularly relevant given that the participants in this study were selected based on specific qualifications related to their academic performance.

3.3 Instrument

The research applied a mixed-methods design, incorporating both an online questionnaire as the main data collection instrument and structured interviews to gain more in-depth insights. Regarding the questionnaire, according to Dörrenbächer-Ulrich et al. (2021) and Alotumi

(2021), a questionnaire is an effective method for measuring students' motivational self-regulatory strategies. In this study, the questionnaire was divided into 3 parts. The first section contained a participant information sheet and a consent form. The second part included demographic details, gathering information on the participants' genders and academic grades. The third part consisted of a modified online version of Uztosun's (2020) scale for assessing self-regulated motivation in improving English as a foreign language (EFL) speaking skills (SRMIS-EFL). This section comprised 4 subsections:

1. *Task Value Activation*: A seven-item subscale (items 1–7) measuring how students valued improving their EFL speaking skills.
2. *Regulation of Learning Environment*: A five-item subscale (items 8–12) evaluating how students sought exposure to English-rich sources despite limited EFL input in their environment.
3. *Regulation of Affect*: A three-item subscale (items 13–15) assessing students' ability to manage emotions that might impede their speaking skill development.
4. *Regulation of Classroom Environment*: A five-item subscale (items 16–20) measuring student participation in classroom activities.

Participants responded to these items using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Despite Uztosun's (2020) scale already having strong reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$) and all subscales showing high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > .80$), the modified online version in the present study was reviewed by 3 TESOL experts and tested with 15 students previously enrolled in an English speaking course to ensure it was valid and reliable within the Thai context. Prior to this pilot testing, the questionnaire was translated into Thai to assist participants' comprehension. The content validity of the entire questionnaire was rated at 0.89, and its reliability was 0.85. None of any items were discarded. Additionally, the structured interview questions also showed strong reliability, as confirmed by the experts.

3.4 Procedure

After identifying the participants who voluntarily took part in the research, the researcher created an online group as a platform for communication in case they needed assistance or had questions. An online version of the questionnaire was created using Google Forms due to its simplicity and accessibility for the participants. The survey link was subsequently shared with the participants through the online group. In addition to the interviews, a structured interview was conducted with the 5 students who achieved the highest scores in the English speaking course. These interviews, which lasted approximately 30 minutes, focused on 4 key questions related to the students' self-regulated motivation strategies for improving their performance in English speaking. This allowed the researchers to gain deeper insights into the approaches used by high-achieving students. Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process. Participants' anonymity was strictly protected, as no personal information such as email addresses, or phone numbers, were collected in either the questionnaire or the interview, with the exception of their academic grades. Moreover, all participants were fully informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any negative

effects. Confidentiality was also upheld, with access to the data restricted to the research team, ensuring that the information was used solely for the purposes of the study.

3.5 Data Analysis Tools

The data obtained from the questionnaires and structured interviews were statistically analyzed according to the research questions formulated. To answer research question 1 regarding the level of self-regulated motivation of Thai university students who excelled in the English speaking course, mean (\bar{X}), standard deviation (S.D.), and percentage (%) were run to analyze the data which were presented in tabular form. To interpret the data, Alotumi (2021) developed a mean score interpretation framework to indicate the level of self-regulated motivation (SRM), as shown in the table below.

Mean	Level
1.0 to ≤ 1.8	Very low motivation
1.8 to ≤ 2.6	Low motivation
2.6 to ≤ 3.4	Medium motivation
3.4 to ≤ 4.2	High motivation
4.2 to ≤ 5.0	Very high motivation

To achieve research question 2, an independent sample t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in self-regulated motivation between Thai university students who earned different grades (A and B+) in their English speaking course. In regard to research question 3, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to explore the relationships among the 4 subsections of self-regulated motivation. This bivariate analysis examined whether significant correlations existed among these variables. Lastly, to answer research question 4, the interview data were transcribed and systematically organized to align with the study's objectives. Content analysis was then applied to interpret and analyze the findings, which were presented in a descriptive format.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Participants were clearly informed that their involvement in the study was entirely voluntary, and they could choose to participate or withdraw without any pressure. Additionally, they were assured that all responses would be treated with strict confidentiality, ensuring that their personal information and input would remain private and be used solely for research purposes. This approach was designed to create a secure environment, encouraging honest, and open responses from the participants.

4. Results

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Quantitative data were gathered and analyzed statistically using a widely used statistical software, while the

qualitative data were transcribed, and interpreted through content analysis, which is presented in this section.

4.1 Participants' Demographic Profiles

The majority of the participants were male (76%), with females making up 24% of the group. In terms of academic performance, 43% of the participants earned a Grade A in the English speaking course, while 57% achieved a Grade B+.

4.2 RQ 1: What is the level of self-regulated motivation of Thai university students possessing excellent academic performance in English speaking course?

To address the first research question, the data were analyzed descriptively and presented in relation to 4 key variables: Task Value Activation, Regulation of Learning Environment, Regulation of Affect, and Regulation of Classroom Environment. The comparison included the mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (S.D.) for each item.

4.2 Table 1. Mean Score of All SRMIS-EFL Factors of the Students with Excellent Academic Performance in the English Speaking Course

Subsections of SRM in Speaking Factors	Mean	S.D.
Task Value Activation	4.29	.534
Regulation of Learning Environment	3.63	.790
Regulation of Affect	3.98	.753
Regulation of Classroom Environment	3.95	.617
Overall	3.96	.673

As shown in the table 1, the highest mean score for self-regulated motivation (SRM) in speaking among students with excellent academic performance in the English speaking course was for “Task Value Activation” ($\bar{x} = 4.29$, S.D. = 0.53), indicating a very high level of motivation. This was followed by “Regulation of Affect” ($\bar{x} = 3.98$, S.D. = 0.75), “Regulation of Classroom Environment” ($\bar{x} = 3.95$, S.D. = 0.61), and “Regulation of Learning Environment” ($\bar{x} = 3.63$, S.D. = 0.79), respectively. According to Alotumi’s (2021) criteria, the remaining three categories reflect high levels of motivation. The findings reveal that “Task Value Activation” plays a crucial role in driving the self-regulated motivation (SRM) of students who excelled in English speaking. This suggests that students who recognize the importance and relevance of speaking tasks are highly motivated to improve their performance.

4.3 Table 2. Level of Students' Self-regulated Motivation of the Students with Excellent Academic Performance in English Speaking Course

SRMIS-EFL Questionnaire				
No	Statement	Mean	S.D.	Level
1	I remind myself that I have to speak well in English.	4.43	.603	Very high motivation
2	When the teacher talks in English, I listen to him/her carefully.	4.43	.603	Very high motivation
3	I keep up my interest and willingness to learn English.	4.35	.588	Very high motivation
4	I learn from my mistakes when I speak English.	4.27	.769	Very high motivation
5	I learn from the mistakes other people make so that I speak English more correctly.	4.16	.764	High motivation
6	I try to pay attention all the time in English lessons.	4.14	.631	High motivation
7	I look for various ways to improve my motivation to speak English.	4.27	.732	Very high motivation
8	I look for international friends to practice English.	3.78	.947	High motivation
9	On the internet, I try to speak with foreigners in English.	3.59	.927	High motivation
10	I get in touch with native speakers of English.	3.51	.989	High motivation
11	I try to visit places with lots of foreign visitors during the holidays to improve my spoken English.	3.49	.961	High motivation
12	I try to practice my English when I encounter foreigners.	3.78	.821	High motivation
13	When I speak English, I can get over my fear.	3.89	.875	High motivation
14	When I speak English, I can rise above my anxiety.	3.84	.958	High motivation
15	When I speak English, I try to maintain a high degree of confidence in myself.	4.22	.712	Very high motivation
16	I use every chance during lessons to speak	4.03	.645	High motivation

SRMIS-EFL Questionnaire				
No	Statement	Mean	S.D.	Level
	English.			
17	I talk in English with the people I know (e.g., classmates, friends).	3.76	.863	High motivation
18	In class, I try to engage in English speaking tasks and activities as much as possible.	3.70	.878	High motivation
19	In class, I entertain the notion of speaking English.	4.24	.796	Very high motivation
20	I pass the time with friends who help and motivate each other to speak English.	4.03	.763	High motivation
	Total	4.00	.792	High motivation

Table 2 showed the levels of self-regulated motivation among students who excelled in the English Speaking Course. The overall self-regulated motivation, as measured by the SRMIS-EFL scale for enhancing English speaking skills, was high, with a mean score of 4.00 (S.D. = 0.79). Among each item, the highest mean scores were: “I remind myself that I have to speak well in English” ($\bar{x} = 4.43$, S.D. = 0.60) and “When the teacher speaks in English, I listen attentively” ($\bar{x} = 4.43$, S.D. = 0.60), followed by “I maintain my interest and willingness to learn English” ($\bar{x} = 4.35$, S.D. = 0.58). “I look for various ways to improve my motivation to speak English” ($\bar{x} = 4.27$, S.D. = 0.73), “I learn from my mistakes when I speak English” ($\bar{x} = 4.27$, S.D. = 0.76), “In class, I entertain the notion of speaking English” ($\bar{x} = 4.24$, S.D. = 0.79), and When I speak English, I try to maintain a high degree of confidence in myself ($\bar{x} = 4.22$, S.D. = 0.71), respectively. These items were classified as very high motivation according to SRM criteria. On the other hand, the three lowest mean scores were for the items: “I try to visit places with many foreign visitors during holidays to improve my spoken English” ($\bar{x} = 3.49$, S.D. = 0.96), “I get in touch with native English speakers” ($\bar{x} = 3.51$, S.D. = 0.98), and “I try to speak with foreigners online in English” ($\bar{x} = 3.59$, S.D. = 0.92). Despite being the lowest-ranked, these items still reflected a high level of motivation in overall.

4.4 RQ 2: Is there a significant difference in self-regulated motivation between Thai university students with different grades (A and B+) in an English speaking course?

To answer the second research question, an independent sample t-test was run to assess the significant difference in self-regulated motivation between Thai university students who have different grades (A and B+) in the English speaking course. The hypothesis tested was that there is no significant difference in self-regulated motivation between Thai university students who achieved different grades (A and B+) in the English speaking course.

4.4 Table 3. Significant Differences in Self-Regulated Motivation Among Thai University Students with Different Grades (A and B+) in the English Speaking Course

Grade	N	Mean	S.D.	t	P
A	16	4.10	.736	1.236	.225
B+	21	3.86	.450		

* $p \leq .05$

The above table showed that there is no statistically significant difference in self-regulated motivation between Thai university students with different academic performance (A and B+) in the English speaking course due to the p -value is greater than 0.05. In this study, the p -value was found to be .22. Consequently, the hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in self-regulated motivation based on academic performance of Grade A and B+ is accepted. This can be assumed that the students achieving both grades may possess similar levels of self-regulated motivation.

4.5 RQ 3: Is there any correlation among 4 subsections of students' self-regulated motivation (SRM) of the student with excellent academic performance in English speaking course?

To address the third research question, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation was conducted to evaluate the correlations among the 4 subsections of self-regulated motivation (SRM) in Thai university students who excelled in an English speaking course. The hypothesis tested whether there is a significant correlation among the 4 SRM subsections for these high-performing students.

4.4 Table 4. Results of the Correlations among 4 Subsections of Self-Regulated Motivation Among Thai University Students with Excellent Academic Performance in English Speaking Course

		TVA	RLE	RA	RCE
TVA	Pearson Correlation	1	0.728**	0.664**	0.793**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	37	37	37	37
RLE	Pearson Correlation	0.728**	1	0.660**	0.777**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001
	N	37	37	37	37
RA	Pearson Correlation	0.664**	0.660**	1	0.627**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001
	N	37	37	37	37
RCE	Pearson Correlation	0.793**	0.777**	0.627**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	37	37	37	37

Note: TVA= Task Value Activation, RLE= Regulation of Learning Environment, RA= Regulation of Affect, RCE= Regulation of Classroom Environment

Based on the table above, it was found that “Task Value Activation” (TVA), which had the highest mean score, showed strong and statistically significant correlations with other variables. TVA’s correlation with “Regulation of Learning Environment” (RLE) was 0.728 (Sig. < .001). Similarly, the correlation between TVA and “Regulation of Affect” (RA) was 0.664 (Sig. < .001). Besides, the strongest correlation was between TVA and “Regulation of Classroom Environment” (RCE) at 0.793 (Sig. < .001), Additionally, RLE also had significant positive correlations with RA (0.660) and RCE (0.777). All in all, these findings emphasize TVA as a key factor in managing learning, classroom environments, and emotions.

4.5 Results of Students’ Self-Regulated Motivation Strategies in Enhancing Their Academic Performance in English Speaking Course

To answer the fourth research question, the qualitative results from the structured interview regarding the students’ self-regulated motivation strategies in improving the academic performance were discussed in this part. The results were purposefully drawn from 5 university students who achieved the highest scores in the English speaking course.

Question 1: How do you plan and set goals for improving your English speaking skills?

Student A: “I study on my own and practice speaking English with my friends, especially simple conversations like daily greetings or small talk, to build confidence in using the language in real-life situations. I also set personal goals to track my progress and consistently remind myself of the importance of improving my English speaking skills, staying motivated to get better each day.”

Student B: “I consistently work on enhancing my English speaking skills by immersing myself in various forms of practice. I use everyday resources like songs, movies, and conversations as opportunities to pick up new phrases and improve my pronunciation.”

Student C: “I often listen to English songs or watch my favorite movies to improve my listening, speaking, and pronunciation skills. I am determined to improve my English speaking skills before graduation.”

Student D: “I usually start by practicing vocabulary, then move on to studying sentence structures and how to use words appropriately in different situations. After that, I try to consistently use them in my daily conversations.”

Student E: “I set a goal for my learning by dedicating time to it, studying, and practicing speaking. Once I become fluent, I will practice with native speakers.”

From the findings of question 1, it was found that the students demonstrate a strong recognition of the importance of improving their English speaking skills. This reflected “Task Value Activation” through goal setting and motivation for success. They effectively “Regulate their Learning Environment” by using resources like songs and movies, making practice enjoyable. Their “Regulation of Affect” is evident in their commitment to practice and confidence-building, which helps manage anxiety during language use. Lastly, by engaging with peers and planning to interact with native speakers, they use “Regulation of Classroom Environment.”

Question 2: What are the key factors that motivate you to practice speaking English on your own?

Student A: “I want to watch movies and understand them right away, so I want to improve my English skills both speaking and listening.”

Student B: “I want to use English for conversations and communication, especially in my future job.”

Student C: “I want to English speak well because I feel that being able to communicate in English is very important in today’s world.”

Student D: “Personally, I enjoy playing online games, where language is very important for communicating with other players. Therefore, I strive to improve my English skills.”

Student E: “I want to travel abroad without relying on others for translation, so I can speak and enjoy my trips comfortably using my own skills.”

The results revealed that the students are motivated to practice speaking English on their own for various reasons, including the desire to watch movies without missing context, use English for future job opportunities, and effectively communicate in today’s globalized world. They also recognize the importance of language in online gaming for better interaction with other players. Additionally, the aspiration to travel abroad confidently, without needing translation assistance also drives the student to improve English speaking skills.

Question 3: How do you manage the challenges or obstacles you encounter while practicing English conversation?

Student A: “One challenge I face is misspelling words even though I can communicate verbally. To overcome this, I will practice reading and use English more frequently.”

Student B: “Even though I can communicate in English to some extent, I still have deep-seated fears and anxiety. I will work on overcoming these fears and boosting my confidence.”

Student C: “I tend to get bored easily, so I need to find activities that do not force me too much. If I start to feel bored, I switch to something else for a while and then return to studying later. I try to practice consistently, and I believe that my English will gradually improve.”

Student D: “I fully understand that English is quite challenging for me, and it is difficult because it is not my native language. Therefore, I take it step by step, practicing consistently and making sure to train regularly.”

Student E: “I believe that English is difficult because it is not my mother tongue. Therefore, I try to stay focused and concentrate during practice, constantly reminding myself that I can do it.

The students manage their challenges in various ways while practicing English speaking skills. Student A focuses on improving spelling through frequent reading and usage. Student B works

on overcoming anxiety and building confidence. Student C manages boredom by alternating activities and believes in gradual improvement through consistent practice. Student D takes a step-by-step approach, and practices regularly. Student E stays focused and uses self-encouragement to overcome the difficulty of mastering a foreign language.

Question 4: How do you feel when you improve your English speaking skills, and how does this affect your learning?

Student A: “I feel very happy because if my English speaking skills improves, I will be able to use it in many ways, such as during internships and speaking with foreigners.”

Student B: “I feel proud of my efforts because what I have worked hard on has actually come true and is possible. I believe that practicing something repeatedly is not in vain, and it has proven to be effective.”

Student C: “I feel really good that my English has improved through studying and putting in effort. Therefore, if I keep learning and practicing regularly, I will truly get better. As my English improves, I will have more opportunities in my career as well.”

Student D: “I feel proud of myself for being able to achieve this, and I will continue to improve my English. This has shown that if we are dedicated to practicing anything, good results will follow. This principle can apply to all forms of learning.”

Student E: “I feel proud and that I am skilled, which boosts my self-confidence. This motivates me to keep improving and encourages me to be more willing to learn new things.”

Students express a strong sense of pride and satisfaction when they improve their English speaking skills. They feel motivated to continue learning, as progress reinforces their belief in the value of consistent practice. For example, Student A is excited about the practical applications, such as internships, while Student C views improvement as a way to open more career opportunities. Others, like Student B and D, emphasize how perseverance pays off and boost their confidence in all areas of learning. This sense of accomplishment motivates them to keep developing their skills and explore new challenges.

5. Discussion

This section discusses the results derived from 2 sets of instruments: self-regulated motivation for improving speaking English as a foreign language (SRMIS-EFL) questionnaire and a structured interview.

5.1 Student's level of self-regulated motivation of Thai university students possessing excellent academic performance in English speaking course

The overall mean score of the students' self-regulated motivation (SRM) in all 4 subsections was at 3.96 which was considered at a high motivation based on Alotumi's (2021) criteria. Considering each subsection, the highest mean score for SRM in speaking among students who

excelled in the English speaking course was for “Task Value Activation” ($\bar{X} = 4.29$) which was at a very high level of motivation while the remaining three categories reflect high levels of motivation. Those were “Regulation of Affect” ($\bar{X} = 3.98$), “Regulation of Classroom Environment” ($\bar{X} = 3.95$), and “Regulation of Learning Environment” ($\bar{X} = 3.63$). This finding is consistent with research from Chou (2018), Zhang et al. (2020), Uztosun (2020), and Warni et al. (2024), all of whom highlight the significance of task value in driving students’ motivation to improve their English speaking skills in an EFL context. According to Collins (2009), as cited by Salsabila and Ista Maharsi (2023), confirmed that task values serve as a crucial motivational factor that significantly contributes to self-regulation. Following this, “Regulation of Affect” also showed strong motivation, indicating that students manage their emotions effectively to stay focused on learning. Similarly, “Regulation of Classroom Environment” and “Regulation of Learning Environment” were also identified as important motivational factors, though to a slightly lesser extent. These insights highlight that a combination of recognizing task value and managing emotions and the learning environment can significantly boost the students’ motivation and overall speaking achievement.

Considering each item, the highest mean scores were: “I remind myself that I have to speak well in English” ($\bar{X} = 4.43$), and “When the teacher speaks in English, I listen attentively” ($\bar{X} = 4.43$), followed by “I maintain my interest and willingness to learn English” ($\bar{X} = 4.35$), “I look for various ways to improve my motivation to speak English” ($\bar{X} = 4.27$), “I learn from my mistakes when I speak English” ($\bar{X} = 4.27$), “In class, I entertain the notion of speaking English” ($\bar{X} = 4.24$), and “When I speak English, I try to maintain a high degree of confidence in myself” ($\bar{X} = 4.22$), respectively. These items were classified as very high motivation according to the criteria. The findings imply that the highest-rated items reflect a strong internal drive to succeed in speaking English. For example, the students frequently reminded themselves of the importance of speaking well and paid close attention when their teacher spoke English which highlighted their active engagement in the learning process. They also maintained a strong interest and willingness to learn English, sought ways to improve their motivation and learned from their mistakes. Confidence-building was evident, with students actively trying to maintain self-assurance while speaking English. These results indicated that the students with high motivation levels actively employ strategies such as self-reflection, attentiveness, and confidence-building, which are crucial for fostering continued progress in their English speaking skills. The results were in accordance with Pratiwi (2024), who explored the internal factors influencing EFL students’ high speaking performance. Her research highlighted that students’ success was largely driven by internal factors, including a positive attitude, high motivation, significant interest in learning, and minimal levels of anxiety, which all contributed to their elevated speaking achievement.

Delving into the items with the three lowest mean scores “I try to visit places with many foreign visitors during holidays to improve my spoken English” ($\bar{X} = 3.49$, S.D. = 0.96), “I get in touch with native English speakers” ($\bar{X} = 3.51$, S.D. = 0.98), and “I try to speak with foreigners online in English” ($\bar{X} = 3.59$, S.D. = 0.92), despite being the lowest-ranked, these items still reflected a high level of motivation overall. This suggests that while students may engage less in these specific strategies, they remain highly motivated in other areas of their language learning. The

lower scores could indicate limited opportunities for real-world interaction with native speakers as they are in an EFL context (English as a foreign language). This is supported by Dincer and Dariyemez (2020), who noted that despite technological advancements, speaking remains the most difficult skill to master, with many EFL learners lacking opportunities to practice outside the classroom. Nonetheless, the high motivation across the board indicates that students are still driven to improve their English speaking skills, even if certain activities are less frequently practiced.

5.2 The differences in self-regulated motivation between Thai university students with varying grades (A and B+) in their English speaking course

This study found no statistically significant difference in self-regulated motivation between Thai university students who earned different grades (A and B+) in their English speaking course, as the p-value was greater than 0.05. As a result, the hypothesis suggesting there is no significant difference in self-regulated motivation between students with Grade A and B+ academic performance is accepted. This can be assumed that the students achieving both grades may possess similar levels of self-regulated motivation. This could mean that both groups are equally committed to improving their English speaking skills. Overall, this result suggests that while academic performance may slightly differ, the underlying motivations for engaging in English speaking courses may remain constant among students with grades A and B+.

5.3 The correlation among 4 subsections of students' self-regulated motivation (SRM) of the student with excellent academic performance in English speaking course

This study revealed that “Task Value Activation” (TVA), which had the highest mean score, showed strong and statistically significant correlations with other variables. Specifically, the correlation with “Regulation of Learning Environment” (RLE) showed a Pearson Correlation of 0.728 (Sig. < .001). It indicated that students who perceive learning tasks as valuable are more effective at managing their learning environments. Additionally, the correlation with “Regulation of Affect” (RA) reflected a Pearson Correlation of 0.664 (Sig. < 0.001), which pointed out that students' ability to regulate their emotions is closely linked to their perception of the importance of the tasks. The strongest correlation was with “Regulation of Classroom Environment” (RCE), showing a Pearson Correlation of 0.793 (Sig. < 0.001). This suggested that students who understand the value of their tasks tend to manage the classroom environment more effectively. Besides, the results revealed that “Regulation of Learning Environment” (RLE) had positive and significant correlations with both “Regulation of Affect” (RA) (Pearson Correlation = 0.660, Sig. < 0.001) and “Regulation of Classroom Environment” (RCE) (Pearson Correlation = 0.777, Sig. < 0.001). This implied that students who are effective in managing their learning environments also tend to regulate their emotions and control the classroom environment better. Additionally, “Regulation of Affect” (RA) showed a strong and significant correlation with “Regulation of Classroom Environment” (RCE) (Pearson Correlation = 0.627, Sig. < 0.001). It indicated that emotional regulation is closely linked to effective classroom management. All in all, these findings emphasize that “Task Value Activation” (TVA) plays a pivotal role in helping students with high academic achievement in English speaking courses, manage their learning environments, regulate classroom activities,

and control their emotional responses. These findings were somewhat consistent with the findings of Warni et al. in 2024 who examined the level of self-regulated motivation of university senior and junior students to improve their English speaking skills. It revealed that there was a notably high level of senior students' task value activation which could be driven by their awareness of how these tasks aligned with their goals, personal interests, and future aspirations (Uztosun, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). This awareness played a key role in influencing other aspects of their motivation.

5.4 Students' self-regulated motivation strategies in enhancing their academic performance in English speaking course

All students showed a strong awareness of the importance of enhancing their English speaking skills, driven by goal setting and motivation, reflecting "Task Value Activation." They also regulate their learning environment by engaging with enjoyable resources like songs and movies, making practice both effective and relevant. Their ability to manage anxiety and build confidence shows their "Regulation of Affect." Additionally, through interactions with peers and planning to converse with native speakers, they effectively use "Regulation of Classroom Environment." It is evident that students with strong academic performance utilize all 4 components of self-regulated motivation (SRM), reflecting their high levels of motivation. This aligns with the notion by Chou (2018), Alotumi (2020), and Uztosun (2020), who emphasized that highly motivated learners are more engaged in classroom speaking tasks and activities, leading to greater improvements in their EFL speaking skills compared to less motivated students. It was also found that the students are independently motivated to practice speaking English for a variety of reasons, such as understanding movies without missing the context, preparing for future job opportunities, traveling, improving communication in a globalized world, and engaging better in online gaming. To overcome challenges, students adopt various strategies. Student A enhances spelling through regular reading, Student B focuses on overcoming anxiety and building confidence, Student C alternates activities to prevent boredom, Student D takes a step-by-step approach with consistent practice, and Student E uses self-encouragement to stay focused despite the difficulties of mastering a foreign language. The strategies, particularly building confidence and having self-determination are vital for improving English speaking skills (Ghafar, 2023; Dincer & Yesilyurt, 2017). As they progress, the students feel a sense of pride and satisfaction, which fuels their motivation to continue learning.

6. Limitations and Further Research

This study has certain limitations. First, the sample size of 37 undergraduates who excelled in an English speaking course may not fully reflect the broader student population. Future studies should consider larger sample sizes to increase the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, while this research adopted a mixed-methods approach, the inclusion of observational data in future studies would provide a more in-depth and holistic understanding. Furthermore, comparing the strategies used by students with varying academic performance, as well as exploring potential gender differences, could offer further insights into the diverse aspects of

student motivation.

7. Conclusion

The current study aimed to explore the level of self-regulated motivation of Thai university students who excelled in the English speaking course. It also examined the significant difference in self-regulated motivation between Thai university students with different grades (A and B+) in an English speaking course and the correlation among 4 subsections of students' self-regulated motivation (SRM). The students' self-regulated motivation strategies in enhancing their academic performance in English speaking course were also determined through an interview. The findings showed that the students who achieved high academic performance in the English speaking course exhibited the highest motivation in "Task Value Activation". Considering the significant difference between the grades, the hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in self-regulated motivation based on academic performance of Grade A and B+ is accepted. Likewise, the set hypothesis mentioning that there is a significant correlation among the 4 subsections of students' self-regulated motivation is also accepted. In regard to the strategies utilized by successful students, all 4 subsections particularly the "Task Value Activation" play a key role in their academic success. Based on the study's findings, teachers and educators should focus on enhancing "Task Value Activation" by designing activities that emphasize the practical benefits of mastering English speaking skills, which can help support students with lower grades. This could include setting up real-life speaking scenarios, such as debates, presentations, or role-plays related to students' future career paths and interests. Additionally, educators should create a supportive environment that encourages students to manage their learning resources, regulate their emotions, and actively engage in classroom interactions. Regular feedback and reflective tasks could help students better understand their progress and maintain high motivation levels.

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