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The efficacy of Neuro-Linguistic Programming on EFL speaking for madrasah students with varying motivation levels

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) in improving EFL speaking skills among learners with varying motivation levels at a *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* in Cirebon, Indonesia. Oral proficiency remains a critical yet challenging aspect of language learning, particularly in motivationally diverse contexts. Despite growing interest in NLP as a pedagogical tool, empirical evidence on its effectiveness in EFL speaking instruction within Islamic educational settings remains limited, justifying this contextually grounded investigation. NLP, as a psychological and communication-based approach, offers techniques that potentially reduce anxiety and foster learner engagement. Using a quasi-experimental design, researchers evenly assigned 24 participants to high- and low-motivation groups. The intervention used NLP-based strategies, including anchoring, modeling, and presupposition, across eight instructional sessions. Data were collected through pre-test, post-test, and classroom observations in each group to capture behavioral and participatory responses following the treatment. The results showed significant improvement in speaking skills among highly motivated students, with mean scores increasing from 60.67 to 78.25 ($p < .05$), while students with low motivation showed no significant gain. Complementing the quantitative results, the observation data indicate high evaluation scores regarding lesson clarity, teaching techniques, and student engagement. Apart from that, challenges in classroom management and reflective practice were identified as well. This study concludes that NLP is a promising pedagogical approach for motivated EFL learners; however, effective implementation requires ongoing teacher development in behavioral flexibility and reflective techniques. Integrating NLP with communicative strategies can holistically address cognitive and emotional factors in language acquisition within diverse educational settings.

Keywords: Madrasah tsanawiyah; motivations; neuro-linguistic programming; speaking skills

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INTRODUCTION

Oral proficiency is widely regarded as one of the most essential yet challenging competencies in English language learning, as it enables learners to communicate effectively in real-world contexts (Ergasheva, 2025; Jacques et al., 2026). In Indonesian Islamic junior high schools, known as *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MTs), developing speaking skills is particularly difficult. Students in these settings frequently experience anxiety, lack of confidence, and limited exposure to authentic English-speaking situations, all of which are further compounded by motivationally diverse classroom profiles (Rayati, 2021). Unlike general public schools, MTs institutions operate within a distinct socio-cultural and religious framework that shapes learner attitudes, teaching traditions, and classroom dynamics. The predominance of rote learning and teacher-centered instruction in these settings often constrains opportunities for communicative oral practice, hinders the development of students' communicative competence (Purba & Napitupulu,

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2026), leaves little room for the emphasis on communication necessary for effective speaking (Jacques et al., 2026), and leaves students frequently in a passive role, which constrains their ability to engage in meaningful language interaction (Mouni, 2025). These challenges underscore the need for learner-centered instructional strategies that integrate the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning while promoting authentic language use and classroom communication, as recent Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) research advocates (Rayati, 2021; Zhang et al., 2023). Addressing these challenges requires pedagogical approaches that simultaneously target both cognitive and psychological dimensions of language learning.

To address these issues, psychological approaches such as Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) have gained attention in English Language Teaching (ELT). NLP is commonly associated with neurology and linguistics (Zeb et al., 2021). NLP is a communication and behavior-change framework that originated in the early 1970s at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and was developed by Richard Bandler and John Grinder (Bandler & Grinder, 1975). NLP is a psychological method that explores the relationship between thought patterns, behavior, and language, helping individuals use all their senses to interpret their environment (Almijbilee, 2023; Masita, 2025). It is a field of psychology and communication that focuses on the relationship between neurological processes, language, and behavioral patterns (Kattimani & Abhijita, 2024). Because it can improve communication, motivation, and personal growth, NLP is widely used in psychotherapy, business, and education (Masita, 2025). In educational contexts, NLP moves beyond traditional grammar and vocabulary instruction by addressing the psychological and motivational factors that underpin language acquisition (Revell & Norman, 1997; Zarfsaz & Salamat, 2024). NLP-based instructional strategies, including anchoring, reframing, modeling, and visualization, have been associated with reduced language anxiety, greater learner motivation, and improved confidence in English communication (Perumal & Shanmuhavelu, 2026).

Recent empirical studies consistently show that NLP techniques significantly enhance English language learning by boosting student motivation, engagement, and communication skills. Perumal and Shanmuhavelu (2026) argue that NLP has considerable pedagogical potential in English language teaching by enhancing learner engagement, communication, and motivation through learner-centered instructional practices. NLP-based instructional strategies, including framing, anchoring, and rapport-building, have been associated with increased learner motivation, confidence, and classroom engagement in English language learning (Perumal & Shanmuhavelu, 2026; Rayati, 2021). Zhang et al. (2023) found that NLP also improves academic performance, emotional intelligence, and critical thinking in EFL learners. Similarly, Rayati (2021) reported that NLP workshops for teachers led to better pedagogical practices and higher student engagement by examining how NLP-based instructional strategies shape both learner engagement and English language proficiency in foreign language classroom contexts. Together, these findings highlight the importance of NLP techniques in creating a dynamic, encouraging, and effective language-learning environment.

Additionally, recent studies have explored the relationship between Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and factors that influence foreign language teaching, such as willingness to communicate. Almijbilee (2023) examined how NLP-informed approaches affect learners' readiness to communicate in a foreign language context. The findings indicate growing interest in NLP's potential to enhance language teaching by addressing both psychological and communicative aspects of acquisition. Further, Ullah et al. (2021) investigated NLP's role in enhancing students' speaking comprehension with special references. NLP is therefore viewed as a valuable resource that helps teachers develop essential learner competencies, including critical thinking, self-confidence, and relationship-building, which are closely linked to academic success. In this perspective, NLP is seen as a framework that supports learners in approaching their full potential (Zarfsaz & Salamat, 2024). Overall, NLP shows promise in English language teaching by increasing motivation, strengthening linguistic abilities, and improving classroom interaction. It also fosters a more positive, supportive learning environment. However, effective implementation depends on adequate teacher training and conceptual understanding. When these conditions are met, NLP can become an integrated part of pedagogical practice.

Despite these promising findings, debates about NLP's application in ELT remain. Critics argue that NLP oversimplifies language learning by over-relying on behavioral modeling while neglecting broader cultural and cognitive factors (Tosey & Mathison, 2003). Kattimani and Abhijita (2024), Qushoy et al. (2025), and Rustan (2022) highlight the limited empirical base for NLP. Furthermore, most existing NLP studies in EFL have been conducted in general secondary or university settings, leaving a notable gap in evidence from religiously affiliated and culturally distinctive institutions such as MTs. The interaction between NLP effectiveness and learner motivation levels also remains underexplored, particularly at the junior secondary level.

Therefore, this study aims to provide empirical evidence on NLP's efficacy in enhancing oral English skills among MTs students with varying motivation levels in Cirebon, Indonesia. While

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previous NLP studies in EFL contexts have primarily examined university learners (Rayati, 2021; Zhang et al., 2023), systematic evidence indicates that research involving younger learners, particularly those in junior secondary schools and Islamic educational settings such as MTs, remains limited (Perumal & Shanmuhavelu, 2026). This gap is critical, as junior secondary students (aged 12–15) are a developmentally distinct population in which motivational patterns, language anxiety, and identity formation are still actively shaped, making them particularly responsive to psychologically oriented interventions such as NLP (Irsyad & Casmini, 2024). Moreover, MTs institutions differ fundamentally from general public junior secondary schools (Sekolah Menengah Pertama/SMP) in their socio-religious orientation, curriculum integration, and classroom cultural norms, factors that may significantly mediate how NLP techniques are received and enacted. The novelty of this study therefore lies in three aspects: (1) it targets MTs junior secondary students, an Islamic school context underrepresented in NLP-EFL research; (2) it explicitly examines how motivation level moderates NLP's instructional impact on speaking performance; and (3) it employs a quasi-experimental design to generate more rigorous causal evidence compared to the predominantly descriptive or correlational approaches found in prior NLP-EFL studies. This study can meaningfully embed specific NLP strategies, including anchoring, sensory mirroring, expert modeling, meta-model questioning, reframing, and future pacing, within a task-based framework for EFL speaking development (Ergasheva, 2025). This research ultimately contributes to understanding how psychological tools like NLP can address motivational and oral proficiency gaps in Indonesian *madrasah* contexts, offering practical implications for teachers seeking human-centered, affectively responsive approaches to English instruction.

Building on this theoretical foundation and the practical challenges observed in MTs students, this study aims to investigate the efficacy of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) on EFL speaking performance among *madrasah* students with varying levels of motivation. The specific objectives are: (1) to examine how NLP techniques affect the speaking skills of learners with high motivation; (2) to examine how NLP techniques affect the speaking skills of learners with low motivation; and (3) to determine the extent to which there is a significant difference in speaking skills between learners with high motivation and those with low motivation when taught using NLP. By addressing these objectives, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence on the role of psychological programming in language education and to deepen understanding of tailored instructional approaches for fostering EFL speaking skills in diverse learner populations.

METHOD

Design

This study employs a quasi-experimental design with a 2×2 factorial structure. Participants were not randomly assigned to groups because of preexisting MTs class formations, which aligns with the defining characteristic of quasi-experimental designs (Cohen et al., 2013; Creswell, 2012). Within this framework, the two independent variables are (1) instructional approach (NLP-integrated vs. communicative instruction) and (2) motivation level (high vs. low, based on motivational questionnaire scores), while the dependent variable is students' EFL speaking performance, measured via pre- and post-test scores using a validated rubric.

This design is justified by the practical constraints of intact classroom settings, where random assignment is neither feasible nor ethically advisable, and quasi-experimental designs are commonly recommended for evaluating pedagogical interventions in such conditions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The 2×2 factorial arrangement allows examination of the main effects of the NLP intervention and motivation, and their interaction, while pre- and post-test measures help control for some non-random selection bias, thereby enhancing the internal validity of the findings (Jacques et al., 2026).

Research Variables

The study variables are students' speaking skills and motivation level. The study investigates these two variables by administering an English-speaking test before and after treatment using Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). The population is the seventh-grade students in MTs. The population comprises three classes, each averaging 26 students. The sample consisted of students with high motivational scores and those with low motivational scores. Students who achieved average or medium motivational scores were not included in the study. This decision was made to maximize variability in the moderator variable, motivation, so that potential differences in the effect of NLP-integrated instruction between high- and low-motivation groups could be more clearly observed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). However, because learners with average or medium motivation were excluded, the findings may not fully generalize to the broader population of MTS students, and external validity should therefore be interpreted cautiously (Mouni, 2025; Orji & Vassileva, 2023). This study involves 3 (three) kinds of variables: independent variables, dependent variable, and moderator variable. The independent variable is Neuro-Linguistic Programming; the dependent variable is mastery of English, specifically students' speaking skills; and the moderator variable is motivation level.

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Instruments of the Study

This study utilized two types of instruments. The first was a students' speaking test, which was given as both a pre-test and post-test. The results were analyzed statistically to determine NLP's effectiveness in the teaching and learning process, particularly in improving speaking skills. The second type of instruments included questionnaires and observations. The questionnaire assessed students' motivation levels and was based on Gardner's (2004) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). The Observation served as a key instrument for gathering real-time, naturalistic data on how NLP-based teaching influenced learners' performance, behavior, and engagement. A structured checklist adapted from Richards and Farrell (2011) focused on lesson objectives, classroom management, teaching techniques, student engagement, and post-class reflection. The observations were conducted by the researcher himself across all eight instructional sessions.

To address potential observer bias in single-observer designs, a second independent EFL teacher uninvolved in the intervention conducted parallel observations during three sessions, and inter-rater reliability was calculated using Cohen's Kappa coefficient ($\kappa = .61$), indicating agreement and supporting observational objectivity. Discrepancies between observers were resolved through discussion and consensus. This framework ensured consistent and systematic data collection across all eight sessions and reduced observer subjectivity. The observational findings were integrated with pre- and post-test data, reflecting a mixed-methods approach recommended in recent EFL research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This integration strengthened the interpretation of NLP's instructional efficacy.

Research Procedures

Data were collected using pre- and post-tests administered before and after the eight-session NLP intervention. Both tests assessed students' oral English performance through a structured speaking task, scored using an analytical rubric adapted from Brown & Abeywickrama (2019), encompassing five dimensions: pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension. Content validity was established through expert judgment from two experienced EFL lecturers who reviewed test items and rubric criteria for alignment with the study's learning objectives, while reliability was ensured through inter-rater scoring using Cohen's Kappa coefficient. Together, these measures ensured the instruments produced valid and reliable data for evaluating NLP's efficacy on students' speaking performance (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Moreover, students' motivation level was assessed using the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). The steps of collecting data can be described as follows:

1. Two classes were selected as the experimental and control groups. The two classes were seventh-grade students. One class served as the experimental group, and the other as the control group.
2. The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) was administered to students in both classes on January 13th 2025, to assess their motivation levels.
3. The pre-test for the experimental class was conducted on January 17th 2025, and the pre-test for the control group was conducted on January 18th, 2025. The test was an oral test consisting of read-aloud, monologue, and question-and-answer tasks. The pre-test was given to assess students' speaking skills before treatment.
4. Treatments were given in 8 meetings. Each meeting was conducted for 80 minutes. The experimental group was taught using Neuro-Linguistic Programming, and the control group was taught using Communicative Language Teaching.
5. The post-test was conducted at the end of the treatments. It was given to both groups on March 5th, 2025. The post-test results were then compared with the pre-test results.

Data Analysis

To measure students' motivation level, the questionnaire used a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (see Table 1). Respondents were asked to express the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with statements regarding different types of student motivation in learning English by selecting one of the response options. The questionnaire data were analyzed by calculating each student's mean score. A six-point Likert scale aimed to indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement according to the following criteria:

Table 1

Students' Motivation Classification score

Classification	Main Range
Low	**1.00 – 2.33**
Average	**2.34 – 4.66**
High	**4.67 – 6.00**

To test statistical hypotheses, a Paired-Samples T-Test was used to examine how NLP techniques affect the speaking skills of highly motivated learners by comparing their pre-test and post-test scores within the experimental group. The same Paired-Samples T-Test was then applied to examine how NLP techniques affect the speaking skills of low-motivation learners, again through a within-group comparison of pre- and post-test scores. To determine whether speaking skills differ between

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high-motivation and low-motivation learners taught using NLP, an independent-samples t-test compared the post-test scores of both motivation groups. The decision rule for all these tests was based on the significance level (α) of 0.05. If the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted, indicating no significant difference. Conversely, if the p-value is less than 0.05, H_0 is rejected, suggesting a significant difference.

FINDINGS

The findings provide a comprehensive overview of how NLP approaches influence students' speaking skills and highlight differences based on their motivation levels. The research was carried out in several stages: administering the questionnaire, conducting the pre-test, observation, providing the treatment, and administering the post-test. The study began by administering the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) to both the experimental class and the control group to assess their motivation levels. This was followed by a pre-test to determine their initial speaking skills. During the treatment phase, classroom observations were conducted to gain insights into the teaching and learning processes and to monitor students' attitudes and behaviors throughout the treatment. These procedural stages directly correspond to the three research objectives: examining NLP's effect on high-motivation learners' speaking skills, examining its effect on low-motivation learners' speaking skills, and determining the extent of difference in speaking performance between both motivation groups when taught using NLP.

Based on motivation-level scores from the AMTB and related scales, Table 2 shows the students' mean score ranges and corresponding motivation levels.

Table 2
Students' Motivation Level of Experimental Class

Motivation Level	Mean Score Range	Samples (by Name)
Very High / High	4.6 – 6.0	N15, N11, N5, N1, N8, N18, N7, N2, N4, N24, N13, N21
Low	1.9 – 2.3	N16, N9, N23, N25, N17, N3, N19, N20, N6, N14, N22, N12

Another instrument used to collect data was the speaking test, administered as both a pre-test and post-test to measure students' speaking skills. The test was conducted orally and consisted of three parts: read-aloud, monologue, and question-and-answer sessions. Students were given 80 minutes to complete the test. The summary of the pre-test and post-test is presented in Table 3 for the experimental class.

Table 3
Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Experimental Class

Motivation Level	Number of Students	Pre-test	Post-test	Mean Pre-test	Mean Post-test
High Motivation	12	725.0	929.8	60.67	77.5
Low Motivation	12	500.0	556.5	41.7	46.4

Table 3 shows an increase in the mean score from pre-test to post-test in the experimental class taught using Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) for both high- and low-motivation categories. High-motivation students' scores increased from 60.4 to 77.5, while low-motivation students' scores increased from 41.7 to 46.4. Based on the pre-test and post-test results from both classes, hypothesis testing was subsequently conducted. This subsection presents findings from both quantitative and qualitative data collected throughout the study, directly addressing the research objectives and questions outlined in the earlier section. The results are organized and presented as follows:

The Impact of NLP on Highly Motivated Speaking Learners

To answer the first research objective, the pre-test and post-test scores of students with a high level of motivation who were taught using NLP were analyzed using a t-test.

From Table 4, it can be seen that the $t\text{-}_{count}$ is 3.786, while the $t\text{-}_{table}$ with df = 11 is 2.201. Because $t\text{-}_{count} > t\text{-}_{table}$ and p value 0.003 < 0.05, it can be inferred that there is a difference between pre-test and post-test scores of students with a high level of motivation who were taught using Neuro-linguistic programming. Students' mean scores increased from 60.67 (SD = 25.71) in the pre-test to 78.25 (SD = 17.75) in the post-test, with a mean difference of 17.58 points (SD = 16.09), 95% CI [7.36, 27.80]. This improvement was statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected at α = .05. A strong positive correlation was observed between pre- and post-test scores (r = .79, p = .002). This result suggests that Neuro-linguistic programming effectively teaches speaking to highly motivated students.

The Impact of NLP on Low-Motivated Speaking Learners

To answer the second research objective, the pre-test and post-test scores of students with low motivation who were taught using NLP were analyzed using a T-Test. The results are shown in Table 5.

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Table 4
The Results of Paired Sample T-test for The First Research Objective

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test NLP High	60.6667	12	25.70933	7.42164
	Post-test NLP High	78.2500	12	17.75144	5.12440

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Significance	
				One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Pre-test NLP High & Post-test NLP High	12	.786	.001	.002

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Significance	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper			One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Pre-test NLP High - Post-test NLP High	-17.58333	16.08759	4.64409	-27.80490	-7.36177	-3.786	11	.002	.003

Table 5
The Results of Paired Sample T-test for The Second Research Objective

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test NLP Low	41.7500	12	14.41038	4.15992
	Post-test NLP Low	46.5000	12	18.67181	5.39009

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Significance	
				One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Pre-test NLP Low & Post-test NLP Low	12	.705	.005	.010

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Significance	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper			One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Pre-test NLP Low - Post-test NLP Low	-4.75000	13.30157	3.83983	-13.20142	3.70142	-1.237	11	.121	.242

From Table 5, it can be seen that the t_{count} is 1.237, while the t_{table} with df = 11 is 2.201. Because $t_{count} < t_{table}$, and p value 0.24 > 0.05, it can be inferred that there is no difference between pre-test and post-test scores of students with a low level of motivation who were taught using Neuro-linguistic programming. A paired-samples t-test revealed no statistically significant improvement in speaking ability among low-motivation students after the Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) intervention. Although mean scores increased from 41.75 (SD = 14.41) pre-test to 46.50 (SD = 18.67) post-test, the mean difference of 4.75 points (SD = 13.30) was not statistically significant, so H_0 was accepted, and H_a was rejected. Therefore, unlike their highly motivated peers, students with low motivation did not show meaningful improvement in speaking ability after the intervention.

Speaking Performance between Highly and Lowly Motivated Learners through Neuro-Linguistic Programming

To answer the third research objective, in Table 6, the post-test scores of students with high motivation and those with low motivation when they were taught using Neuro-Linguistic Programming were analyzed using an independent-samples t-test.

Based on the calculation in Table 6, it can be seen that the t_{count} is 4.269, while the t_{table} with df = 22 is 2.074. Because $t_{count} > t_{table}$, H_a is accepted and Ho is rejected. Therefore, it can be inferred that there is a significant difference in speaking ability between students with a high level of motivation and those with a low level of motivation when they are taught using Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP). The high-motivation students (N = 12) had a significantly higher mean speaking score (M = 78.25, SD = 17.75) than the low-motivation students (N = 12), who had a mean score of 46.50 (SD = 18.67). Levene's test confirmed homogeneity of variances, F (1, 22) = 0.06, p = .814.

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Table 6
The Results of Independent-Samples T-Test for the Third Research Objective

Group Statistics

	Motivation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score of Speaking	NLP High	12	78.2500	17.75144	5.12440
	NLP Low	12	46.5000	18.67181	5.39009

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance One-Sided p	Significance Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Upper
Score of Speaking	Equal variances assumed	.057	.814	4.269	22	<,001	<,001	31.75000	7.43724	16.32611	47.17389
	Equal variances not assumed			4.269	21.944	<,001	<,001	31.75000	7.43724	16.32383	47.17617

The t-test for equality of means revealed a statistically significant difference, $t(22) = 4.27$, $p < .001$ (two-tailed), with a mean difference of 31.75 points and a 95% confidence interval ranging from 16.33 to 47.18. To further quantify this difference, Cohen's d was calculated as 1.47, indicating a large effect size and suggesting that motivation level has a practically substantial, not merely statistically significant, influence on the effectiveness of NLP instruction in developing speaking performance. For comparison, the same analysis was conducted for the control group, which was taught using CLT. The results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7
The Results of the Independent-Samples T-test of the control group

Group Statistics

	Motivation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score of Speaking	CLT High	8	75.2500	17.69382	6.25571
	CLT Low	8	52.6250	17.37763	6.14392

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance One-Sided p	Significance Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Upper
Score of Speaking	Equal variances assumed	.026	.875	2.580	14	.011	.022	22.62500	8.76822	3.81904	41.43096
	Equal variances not assumed			2.580	13.995	.011	.022	22.62500	8.76822	3.81846	41.43154

The post-test speaking scores of CLT-High ($N = 8$, $M = 75.25$, $SD = 17.69$) and CLT-Low ($N = 8$, $M = 52.63$, $SD = 17.38$) learners also showed a significant difference, $t(14) = 2.58$, $p = .022$ (two-tailed), with a mean difference of 22.63 points (95% CI [3.82, 41.43]), $F = 0.026$, $p = .875$. The effect size for this contrast is Cohen's $d = 1.14$, again indicating a large difference. These results suggest that motivation level significantly moderates the effectiveness of both NLP and CLT in enhancing speaking ability, with highly motivated learners showing substantially greater gains under both instructional approaches. These results indicate that motivation level significantly influences NLP's effectiveness in enhancing students' speaking ability, with highly motivated students showing substantially greater improvement than their low-motivation counterparts. This finding underscores the critical role of learner motivation in language acquisition interventions.

Observation from Experimental Class

This section presents the classroom observation findings from the experimental class across the eight instructional sessions. The observation checklist examined five aspects of the implementation: lesson objectives, classroom environment and management, teaching techniques, student engagement, and post-class reflection. The average scores for each indicator are presented in Table 8.

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Table 8
The Overall Average of Experimental Class

Indicator	Average % Observed
Lesson Objectives	94%
Classroom Environment & Management	68%
Teaching Techniques	80%
Student Engagement	80%
Post-Class Reflection	69%
Overall Average	**78%**

As shown in Table 8, lesson objectives received the highest observation score (94%), indicating consistently high implementation across the eight sessions. Teaching techniques and student engagement both recorded 80%, indicating that these aspects were implemented at a relatively strong level. Classroom environment and management obtained 68%, while post-class reflection recorded 69%, representing the comparatively lower observed aspects of the instructional implementation. Overall, the experimental class achieved an average observation score of 78%.

The observation results therefore indicate that the NLP-based instructional procedures were implemented at an overall moderate-to-high level, with the strongest implementation observed in lesson objectives and the comparatively lower implementation observed in classroom management and post-class reflection.

DISCUSSION

The paired-samples t-test results confirmed a statistically significant improvement in speaking scores among high-motivation students following NLP-based instruction, with mean scores rising from 60.67 to 78.25 ($p = .003$), as fully reported in the findings section. This improvement can be theoretically attributed to the alignment between NLP's core techniques and the psychological readiness characteristics of highly motivated learners. NLP techniques such as anchoring and reframing have been associated with reduced speaking anxiety and enhanced learner confidence. Anchoring has been reported to support spontaneous speaking by helping learners manage speech-related anxiety and organize their ideas, while reframing can help learners reinterpret mistakes more positively and develop greater confidence in the EFL classroom (Gashi, 2024; Nisar, 2024). The reduction in score variance from pre- to post-test further suggests that NLP helped standardize growth across this group, implying that the intervention elevated consistency of performance more broadly rather than merely benefiting already high-performing students. This finding aligns with Zhang et al. (2023), who reported measurable gains in EFL speaking confidence and engagement among motivated learners following NLP-based interventions. Moreover, the strong pre-post correlation ($r = .79$) indicates that NLP instruction built meaningfully on students' existing competencies, consistent with NLP's foundational principle of amplifying learners' internal resources (Zarfsaz & Salamat, 2024). The observed performance gains align with recent evidence that NLP can foster learner-centered, communicative learning environments, supporting students' engagement, classroom communication, and language-learning outcomes (Perumal & Shanmuhavelu, 2026). Collectively, these results support the view that NLP works best as a speaking intervention when learners bring sufficient motivational investment, reinforcing the argument that affective readiness is a prerequisite for instructional effectiveness in EFL contexts (Almijbilee, 2023).

These findings align with recent empirical studies highlighting NLP's benefits for language learning outcomes. Gashi (2024) demonstrated that the six-step NLP reframing technique promoted an engaging, positive classroom atmosphere and effectively supported students' English language learning. Similarly, John et al. (2025) used an experimental design to examine NLP's effect on the speaking skills of ESP learners in India. The results showed that students who received NLP intervention performed significantly better than the control group. Furthermore, these findings align with recent evidence that NLP-based interventions can enhance learner engagement, motivation, and communication skills, suggesting that the affective and communicative dimensions NLP targets may contribute to improved speaking performance (Qushoy et al., 2025; Rostami et al., 2024). This result on motivation and NLP is further supported by Zarfsaz and Salamat (2024), who argued that NLP techniques support EFL learners in achieving communicative success by amplifying existing motivational resources and reducing affective barriers to oral participation.

However, while these results are promising, several limitations warrant careful consideration. First, the relatively small sample size ($N = 12$ per motivation group) limits the statistical power and generalizability of the findings to broader MTs populations or other Islamic secondary school contexts in Indonesia. Second, the absence of a delayed post-test means that the durability of NLP's effect on speaking performance beyond the eight-session intervention period remains unknown. Third,

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the high-motivation group's pre-existing affective readiness may have predisposed them to benefit from any structured intervention, not exclusively NLP, introducing a potential confounding variable that the current quasi-experimental design cannot fully control. Fourth, the study's single-site setting in Cirebon constrains transferability of findings to MTs institutions with different socio-cultural or pedagogical profiles. Accordingly, future research should use larger, more diverse samples across multiple institutional contexts, employ delayed post-tests to assess intervention durability, and adopt mixed-method approaches that capture the nuanced psychological processes through which NLP influences speaking development among learners with varying motivational profiles.

The paired-samples t-test results for students with low motivation show no statistically significant improvement in speaking scores following the NLP intervention, with mean scores increasing only marginally from 41.75 to 46.50 ($t = 1.237$, $p = .242$), as fully reported in the findings section. This suggests that, unlike their highly motivated counterparts, low-motivation students did not benefit meaningfully from NLP techniques in this context. This outcome is theoretically interpretable through the lens of motivational readiness: NLP techniques such as anchoring and positive reframing depend on learners' willingness to engage in affective restructuring, a precondition that low-motivation students may not sufficiently meet during a short eight-session intervention (Almijbilee, 2023). This finding aligns with existing literature that emphasizes motivation's critical role as a mediator in the effectiveness of NLP interventions. Daulay et al. (2025) highlight that NLP's positive effects on language skills often depend on learners' intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy, which NLP techniques can enhance through affirmations and reframing but cannot fully replace when baseline motivation is initially low. Similarly, Gashi (2024) suggests that while NLP methods such as six-step reframing can reduce anxiety and foster confidence, these benefits are maximized when learners already possess a baseline level of motivational engagement. These findings align with recent experimental evidence showing that NLP-informed speaking instruction can improve multiple dimensions of oral proficiency while reducing speaking anxiety (Ergasheva, 2025). The stronger gains observed among highly motivated learners in the present study may therefore reflect the interaction between the NLP intervention and learners' initial motivational orientations, although this relationship requires further empirical investigation.

Moreover, the lack of significant improvement among low-motivation students may reflect NLP's limitations as a standalone instructional strategy. Nevertheless, recent evidence suggests that NLP is not a universally applicable solution, as instructional design, learner characteristics, and the contextual conditions in which it is implemented shape its effectiveness (Wattiheluw et al., 2026). The present findings further suggest that the effects of NLP should be understood in relation to learners' broader cognitive and affective characteristics. Recent empirical evidence indicates that NLP-based instruction can influence not only language-related outcomes but also learners' emotional intelligence and critical thinking, highlighting the importance of considering both cognitive and affective dimensions in evaluating its pedagogical effects (Zhang et al., 2023). For low-motivation students, strategies that directly target motivation enhancement, such as goal-setting, personalized learning pathways, and fostering learner autonomy, may complement NLP techniques to yield substantial speaking progress (Orji & Vassileva, 2023). This is further supported by Zarfsaz and Salamat (2024), who found that integrating NLP with autonomy-supportive instructional scaffolding produced significantly stronger outcomes among initially disengaged EFL learners than NLP alone, suggesting that the affective gap characteristic of low-motivation students requires multifaceted rather than single-method intervention. These findings align with broader educational psychology research indicating that motivational deficits require comprehensive, layered approaches rather than isolated techniques.

Critically, several limitations of the present findings must be acknowledged. The small sample size ($N = 12$) in the low-motivation group substantially limits statistical power, increasing the risk of a Type II error, that is, failing to detect a genuine NLP effect that may exist with a larger sample. The relatively high post-test score variability ($SD = 18.67$) further indicates considerable heterogeneity within the low-motivation group, suggesting that individual differences in learner profiles, prior English exposure, and classroom anxiety may have differentially mediated NLP's impact in ways the current design could not systematically capture. Additionally, the eight-session intervention period may have been too short to produce measurable motivational shifts among low-motivation learners, as motivational change is generally a gradual, longitudinal process (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). The single-site design also limits transferability of these findings to other MTs contexts with different learner demographics or institutional cultures. Future research should explore integrative models that combine NLP with motivational scaffolding strategies, use longer intervention periods, draw on larger and more diverse samples, and adopt mixed method designs to capture the nuanced psychological processes through which NLP may, or may not, influence speaking development among motivationally diverse junior secondary EFL learners.

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The independent samples t-test results confirm that motivation level decisively moderates the efficacy of NLP-based speaking instruction, with high-motivation students showing substantially greater post-test gains than their low-motivation peers, as fully reported in the findings section. The large effect size (d = 1.75) is particularly noteworthy, as it indicates that motivation does not merely modulate NLP outcomes at the margins but exerts a foundational influence on the magnitude of speaking improvement achievable through NLP-based instruction. This pattern extends well beyond statistical significance into practical pedagogical relevance. The comparative CLT findings reinforce this interpretation: although motivation similarly moderated speaking outcomes in the control group, the amplifying effect was considerably more pronounced within the NLP condition (d = 1.75) than within CLT instruction (d = 1.30), suggesting that NLP's psychologically oriented techniques are inherently more sensitive to, and therefore more dependent upon, learners' motivational states than conventional communicative approaches.

This finding aligns with a broad consensus in second language acquisition research: motivation is a foundational prerequisite for the success of instructional interventions, not merely an additive factor (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). NLP techniques such as positive visualization, reframing, and anchoring are designed to help learners overcome psychological barriers and enhance self-efficacy (Daulay et al., 2025; Zarfsaz & Salamat, 2024). However, these techniques require meaningful learner engagement and a willingness to participate in affective restructuring to produce measurable outcomes. Highly motivated students may be better positioned to benefit from NLP-based instruction because greater engagement can facilitate active participation, sustained practice, and the application of newly learned communicative strategies. This interpretation aligns with recent evidence that NLP-based interventions can enhance learner engagement, motivation, and communication skills (Qushoy et al., 2025), and experimental research has also shown improvements in oral proficiency and reductions in speaking anxiety following NLP-informed speaking instruction (Ergasheva, 2025). Similarly, Zhang et al. (2023) reported that emotional engagement, closely associated with high motivation, was the strongest predictor of NLP-related gains in EFL speaking performance across diverse learner groups.

Conversely, low-motivation students may lack the necessary drive to fully participate in or benefit from NLP interventions regardless of their theoretical advantages. Almijbilee (2023) found that learners with low willingness to communicate, a disposition closely linked to low motivation, showed minimal responsiveness to NLP-based communicative activities, mirroring the non-significant gains observed among low-motivation students in the present study. These findings also suggest that NLP should not be conceptualized as a universally effective intervention independent of learner characteristics. Instead, implement it within learner-centered instructional practices that account for differences in engagement, motivation, and learning needs (Qushoy et al., 2025; Perumal & Shanmuhavelu, 2026). This is echoed by Orji and Vassileva (2023), who found that motivational scaffolding, including goal setting, personalized feedback, and autonomy support, is essential for less motivated learners to benefit meaningfully from pedagogical innovations such as NLP. The substantial performance gap between motivation groups therefore highlights that motivation functions not only as a moderator but as a potential gatekeeper to the success of NLP-based language learning interventions.

However, several methodological limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. The small number of participants in the low-motivation group (N = 12) limits statistical power and increases the possibility of a Type II error. Moreover, the relatively large variability in post-test scores within this group (SD = 18.67) suggests substantial individual differences that the present design was not sufficiently powered to examine. Although factors such as prior English exposure and speaking anxiety may have contributed to this variation, these explanations remain tentative because they were not directly measured in the present study. The eight-session intervention may also have been too brief to capture longer-term changes in speaking proficiency or motivation. In addition, the single-site design and small overall sample limit the findings' transferability to other MT contexts. Future studies should therefore use larger, more diverse samples; balanced group designs; longer intervention periods; and longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to examine how learner motivation and other individual differences interact with NLP-based speaking instruction over time.

The observation findings offer several insights into implementing NLP-based instruction. Over eight sessions, lesson objectives consistently scored highly, showing the teacher's clear communication and goal-setting aligned with NLP's principle of well-formed outcomes (Amutha & Thenmozhi, 2026). This clarity likely enhanced learners' orientation and motivation, consistent with Richards and Farrell's (2011) emphasis on clear objectives for lesson effectiveness.

Teaching techniques were also rated highly due to diverse strategies targeting visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic modalities, reflecting NLP's theoretical core of accommodating representational systems (Revell & Norman, 1997). Teaching techniques scored 80%, reflecting the use of varied and multimodal instructional activities during the intervention. Incorporating visual, auditory, and

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kinaesthetic modes broadly aligns with the representational-system perspective associated with NLP. Recent reviews of NLP in ELT indicate that NLP-informed instructional strategies can support learner engagement, motivation, and communication by creating dynamic and supportive learning environments (Qushoy et al., 2025; Perumal & Shanmuhavelu, 2026). Student engagement also received high ratings (80%), sustained through rapport-building, anchoring, and modeling techniques empirically shown to reduce speaking anxiety and strengthen oral participation across multiple sessions (Begum et al., 2022; Gashi, 2024). This aligns with literature showing NLP's role in enhancing motivation and communicative competence. However, variability occurred in classroom environment management, revealing inconsistent maintenance of a supportive climate, a challenge Zarfsaz and Salamat (2024) attribute to the improvisational demands NLP places on teachers without specialized training.

Post-class reflection also scored moderately (69%), with uneven application across sessions, despite reflective practice being essential for iterative improvement within NLP's feedback loop framework (Rayati, 2021; Richards & Farrell, 2011). The overall effectiveness rate remains consistent at 78%. Collectively, these findings reinforce NLP as a promising pedagogical framework for improving lesson clarity, technique diversity, and student engagement, while underscoring that maximizing its potential requires sustained teacher professional development in behavioral flexibility and structured reflective practice (Zarfsaz & Salamat, 2024). Moreover, thoughtfully applied NLP enriches teaching clarity, technique diversity, and engagement, but maximizing benefits requires ongoing refinement in management and reflection, consistent with existing research (Almijbilee, 2023; Richards & Farrell, 2011). Future studies should explore long-term effects and target teacher training to sustain and expand NLP's educational impact.

Overall, the observations indicate that the NLP intervention was implemented relatively consistently, particularly in lesson objectives, teaching techniques, and student engagement. At the same time, the lower scores for classroom management and post-class reflection indicate areas requiring further development. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of NLP-based instruction depends not only on the selection of NLP techniques but also on the quality of instructional implementation, teacher preparedness, classroom management, and reflective practice.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the efficacy of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) in enhancing EFL speaking skills among learners with varying motivation levels at an MTs in Cirebon, Indonesia. It determined the extent to which motivation level moderates NLP's instructional impact on speaking performance. The findings indicate that NLP significantly enhances the speaking ability of highly motivated students. However, for students with low motivation, NLP did not yield statistically significant speaking improvement. These findings suggest that learner motivation is an important factor to consider when implementing NLP-based speaking instruction. Thus, the study addresses its research objectives by showing that the effectiveness of an NLP-based approach may vary with learners' motivational characteristics.

This study contributes to EFL pedagogy in three ways. First, it provides empirical evidence on applying NLP to speaking instruction among junior secondary EFL learners, a population that remains relatively underexplored in NLP research. Second, it extends the discussion of NLP by highlighting the role of learner motivation in explaining differences in instructional outcomes, rather than treating NLP as a universally applicable approach. Third, the study provides practical implications for teachers in Islamic secondary-school contexts by suggesting that NLP techniques can be integrated with learner-centered and motivational practices to accommodate students with different levels of engagement and readiness to learn. The findings therefore support a more contextually responsive approach to speaking instruction in motivationally diverse classrooms.

The findings should be interpreted within the scope of the study context and design. The relatively small, context-specific sample; limited intervention period; and single-institution setting may constrain the transferability of the findings to other EFL populations and educational contexts. Future research should therefore examine NLP-based speaking instruction with larger, more diverse samples across multiple educational settings and longer intervention periods. Longitudinal and mixed-method studies could further investigate how learners' motivation and speaking development change over time. Future studies may also examine integrated instructional models that combine NLP techniques with systematic motivational scaffolding to determine whether such approaches can provide more consistent speaking development among learners with different motivational profiles.

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CONTRIBUTION OF THE AUTHORS

The first author conceptualized the study, designed the research, collected and analyzed the data, drafted the original manuscript, and revised it. The second author provided guidance on the research design and methodology, critically reviewed the manuscript, and validated the findings. The third author provided academic feedback, critically reviewed and edited the manuscript, and validated the interpretation of the results. The fourth author contributed academic input on the theoretical framework, critically reviewed and edited the manuscript, and approved the final version for submission. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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