

## **EFL Students' Perceptions on the Use of TikTok in Improving Speaking Skill**

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### **Abstract**

Currently, a diverse range of techniques are being employed to acquire proficiency in the English language, incorporating various forms of media or applications, such as TikTok videos. Various student attitudes arise due to the potential of learning English via Tiktok videos. The objective of this study is to examine the perspectives of students and the challenges they face when utilizing TikTok videos to enhance their speaking skills. This study utilized a descriptive qualitative technique. The study's subjects consisted of nine students from a reputable Islamic private senior high school in Bekasi, West Java. After identifying that certain students were utilizing TikTok videos as a means to enhance their English language skills, nine individuals were chosen and deemed suitable for data collection via interviews. According to the findings of this study, students held various viewpoints regarding the use of TikTok videos for English language learning, encompassing both positive and negative opinions. Moreover, employing TikTok videos as a means of instructing English to students posed some challenges. Consistent with the findings of this study, students expressed both favorable and unfavorable views regarding the use of TikTok videos for English language learning. Moreover, many challenges emerged when pupils employed TikTok short video for English language learning.

**Keywords:** *English; Learning English; EFL; TikTok; Speaking Skill*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Social media literacy is the capacity to actively and critically interact with social media platforms, comprehend their influence on communication, and utilize them a responsible manner (Hobbs, 2021; Maphosa & Bhebhe, 2019). However, more students are not social media literate which raises serious concern in the area of teaching English as a foreign language. Ineffective communication abilities and restricted vocabulary are two components of a lack of social media literacy in the context of teaching English (Ying et al., 2021). Social media can encourage abbreviated forms of communication and the choices of messages, such as text messages, emojis, and acronyms (Cho et al., 2022). This may impede the acquisition of effective English communication abilities, both in writing and speaking. Students could get accustomed to using casual language, which is not always appropriate in official or academic settings.

Social media, which has many benefits and challenges in the current digital era, is increasingly widely utilized by students in schools. One of those uses is TikTok as a tool for language learning according to (Pratiwi et al., 2021). Using the TikTok platform is

one of the ways for assisting children to improve speaking ability (Pratiwi et al., 2021). TikTok is a popular application with millions of users that includes a social networking platform for sharing short videos (De Leyn et al., 2022). On this social media platform, users may upload and share videos through individual accounts on Tiktok (A. Rahmawati et al., 2023).

Regarding language instruction, particularly in the context of teaching English due to the abundance of English-focused content creators, students have the opportunity to acquire English language skills through the utilization of TikTok. Therefore, TikTok serves as a valuable platform for EFL teachers to establish themselves as micro-celebrities, attracting a larger audience of students who engage with their educational content (Vizcaíno-Verdú & Abidin, 2023). They can acquire and understand English by watching instructional films. The native speakers on TikTok play a crucial role in providing exposure to English language aspects such as pronunciation, syntax, and vocabulary. In their study, Jung & Zhou (2019) shown that films containing informative content elicited higher levels of viewer engagement. Furthermore, these movies were found to enhance users' learning mindsets, effectiveness, and overall engagement. TikTok helps students develop confidence by offering accurate pronunciation, a wide range of vocabulary, and a straightforward framework that is easy to comprehend via exposure. Therefore, students possess a considerable quantity of knowledge and exhibit a lack of shyness and a strong sense of confidence when speaking English.

Since the public may view the videos, uploading them on TikTok encourage students to provide the finest speaking performances. If they talk incorrectly, their followers on the TikTok application will penalize them digitally as stated by (Celeste, 2021). Xiuwen & Razali(2021) strongly believe that TikTok's use in English language communication acquisition has the potential to benefit EFL students due to its role as a platform that allows for the sharing of short videos. As a result, learning materials for English language communication based on TikTok short videos might be made available for EFL students to develop their English listening and speaking skills by viewing these English learning videos created by English teachers or native English speakers (muhammad ilyas, 2020).In short, Tiktok offers a massive opportunities in spesific purpose of language learning such to enhancing English speaking skill.

English is currently indispensable due to its status as the most commonly spoken language and its widespread global usage (Dutta, 2020). Based on all of these statements, English is currently the predominant and paramount language employed worldwide. Oral communication is a crucial element in language acquisition. Proficiency in communication and speaking are closely interconnected. Oral communication is commonly employed in everyday life. In today's interconnected world, language serves as a crucial means of communication and is indispensable for achieving success in various pursuits. Without the use of language, achieving flawless communication between persons is unattainable (Rao, 2019). When it comes to academic competitiveness, students must possess the skill of effective verbal communication. The objective of acquiring English language proficiency is to develop effective oral communication skills. Communicative competence encompasses the capacity to effectively convey, comprehend, and navigate meanings between individuals within a certain context. Being exposed to the target language helps in the development of speaking skills.

Being able to communicate in a foreign or second language is the most crucial ability that must be acquired. Speaking is regarded as the most crucial of the four essential language abilities to master when studying a foreign or second language as stated by (Rao, 2019). Speaking is the main form of social communication between individuals in the social context (Namaziandost, 2019). (Pratiwi, A. E., Ufairah, N. N., Sopiah, 2021) revealed that Six key factors are believed to be useful for helping someone speak more clearly and fluently. These are confidence, accuracy and fluency, choosing the right words, illustrating our point, keeping listeners' interest, and natural sounding (Apoko & Chong, 2022) (Yusuf & Mabagits, 2020). These indicators are believed to create an activity which produces information involving words and body language. Additionally, the goal of speaking while communicating in a foreign language is to communicate understandings. For accurate and precise meaning to be communicated, someone has to employ the right words along with appropriate grammar.

This current study has some relevant results on the use of TikTok in promoting English speaking skill (Zaitun et al., 2021) showing that the utilization of TikTok could increase students' confidence in speaking English. In addition, some studies found that TikTok videos had improved students' speaking skill in English (Cagas, 2022; Mandasari et al., 2022; Xiuwen & Razali, 2021). These studies in fact focus on the use of TikTok in the contexts of junior high schools and higher education in teaching speaking skill. Thus, this current study conducted in a senior high school was still rare.

Based on the necessities of TikTok app and some relevant supporting ideas, the aim of this study is to investigate the students' perceptions on the use of Tiktok in improving students speaking abilities, and the research question addressed is: What are EFL students' perceptions on improving English speaking skill through TikTok application?

## **METHOD**

This research design employed a qualitative descriptive study. According to Taylor et al. (2015), the steps that need to be accomplished in a qualitative descriptive study begin with collecting the data. The data collected has to be relevant to the issue under study. The following step is data analysis process. The researcher must be extremely attentive when analyzing the data to ensure the results may be presented appropriately. The final phase is to make conclusions. The following conclusion is reached after thoroughly analyzing all the available data. The objective of this qualitative study is to clarify non-statistical or descriptive data. It relates to a research technique that generates written or spoken descriptive data. The data from recorded talks with students who used videos on TikTok to learn English were collected. As claimed by Bogdan and Biklen, data acquired for qualitative research was descriptive data as well as data typically in the form of text or visuals.

A total of five students from one reputable Islamic senior high school, Bekasi participated in the study as respondents; of these, five students were from the science class and from the entrepreneur class. The five students are labelled S1, S2, S3, S4, S5. The researcher selected these participants considering TikTok as a popular application. For collecting the data, two instruments were employed. The first instrument was an observation to observe students while they learned English. This observation intended to describe the situations of students' TikTok video learning activities. The observations were conducted for three times by the researchers. The other instrument was the interview. The Interviews were utilized to address the first research question on the EFL students' perceptions about learning English through TikTok application. In order

to respond to unexpected responses that were interesting or related to the planned-out questions, interviews were conducted. Five students were interviewed by the researchers to gather pertinent data. Each selected student was interviewed within 10-15 minutes. After the data were collected, they were analyzed by having data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Miles et al., 2014)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section explains the findings after conducting semi-structured interviews with TikTok users regarding the research question: What are EFL students' perception about learning English through TikTok application? In the following section, specific narratives and quotes have been shown to demonstrate these findings.

The main themes that were identified from the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews gave meaning to the research question. Several students' statements in the interviews were cited to support the research findings. Every student's perception on using TikTok is varied. The use of TikTok videos for enjoyment also has a good influence to be productive as claimed by S1. S1 statement is also supported by S2 and S4.

- S1 : *"Yes, I'm a Tiktok application user. I use the Tiktok application to find something that could entertain me, even ideas to make something productive, such as cooking, ways/techniques for painting, drawing, even learning many languages, one of which is English, etc".*
- S2 : *"Yes, I usually utilized Tiktok to make a video such short vlog, and also I do use Tiktok to look for some tips that I need such cooking tutorial, makeup, educational content, and singing".*
- S4 : *"Yes, I'm a Tiktok user, I use Tiktok for enteraining me and to gain new knowledge"*

Thus, TikTok has a major impact on students' capacity to overcome unproductive habits since it provides a range of ideas that may be implemented. It is supported by (Y. Rahmawati & Anwar, 2022) who said that nearly all participants claimed they felt happy shortly after they were taught English through the TikTok app. They concurred that utilizing TikTok for learning had a lot of fun. However, a study found that TikTok had negative impacts as it has some inappropriate contents such as inappropriate English lyrics and offensive English songs (Jaffar et al., 2019).

TikTok is utilized extensively in the field of education, especially when teaching English. The responses to the interview questions accorded. S2 claimed that TikTok provided a simple method of learning since she considered traditional learning methods proved frequently distracting. S1 also supported the ideas.

- S2 : *"Usually for me, I like simple things, on Tiktok it's easier for people to deliver and follow trends. So educational content can be made into easier way and it's a very flexible learning on Tiktok. I got distracted easily by traditional styles of learning".*

S1 : *“On the use of Tiktok, people or the content creators have lots of ways to make the educational content fun and comprehensive”.*

Tiktok, therefore, offers flexibility in learning, for instance by delivering instructional information in a way that is interesting. According to (Xiuwen & Razali, 2021), TikTok has become a type of social media integrated with short videos of practical and fascinating English language contact resources for learning posted by English teachers or native English speakers, and this was accepted by Chinese EFL students who learned English speaking skill in the modern digital English language. Moreover, students liked utilizing Tiktok as a good and new teaching tool as well as easy to use (Adnan et al., 2021).

In order to further develop their English, specifically speaking skills, interviewees used Tiktok by surfing for information that was relevant to upgrading their speaking abilities. They frequently sought for videos that included complete English speaking contents. The following responses from S2 and S3 are described.

S2 : *“I watch videos that invite me to speak English as well, such as conversation and acting”.*

S3 : *“I followed the accounts that are intended to provide knowledge about the English language. However, not always learning accounts I followed, it can be entertainment accounts that use English on their videos”*

As stated by (Xiuwen & Razali, 2021), their results showed that TikTok might be used as a language testing tool. TikTok could be used by teachers to evaluate their student learning results. Additionally, TikTok were utilized to encourage students to study expressive languages with the aim of improving their speaking abilities. It means, they seek out stuff that would encourage them to speak English and expose themselves to that language. Tiktok also showed much higher learning motivation and speaking ability than those who exclusively used traditional teaching methods (Gao et al., 2023).

The material that they actually require has been provided by Tiktok. S2 believed that watching a video with entirely English-language material could help the individual improve their speaking abilities despite the fact that the topic was not educational, such as an acting challenge. To strengthen her speaking abilities, S2 frequently watched videos of the kind. Then, according to S3, she liked to watch videos with an emphasis mostly on education, such as videos that taught vocabulary, English slang, idioms, lyrics analysis, and public speaking tips and techniques.

S2 : *“I usually like watching acting challenge from the content creators since it helps me to improve my speaking skills, so apart from having fun, I also use it to improve my speaking skills because I can follow the dialogue on the acting scripts”.*

S3 : *“I like watching explanatory videos about vocabulary, English slang, idioms, lyrics analysis, tips and tricks for public speaking or even makeup tutorial”.*

They could simply discover the videos they truly needed on Tiktok and used it as a tool to enhance their ability to communicate. Tiktok facilitated people in finding

educational resources for developing their speaking ability. This statement is also supported by (Qiyang & Jung, 2019) who said that Tik Tok's transmission mode would determine the pros and downsides for users. The Educational Creators Group believed that TikTok videos were an effective way to learn due to their brief running times and comprehensive materials. They were pleased with TikTok's video quality and expected to learn more about it. They frequently had mimic what they saw and produced their own drawings, but they seldom shared them online out of fear of receiving unfavorable feedback from those who might unintentionally or publicly become the promoters of popular culture. This result is also strengthened by a study reporting that secondary school students were enthusiastic about using TikTok into EFL classroom instruction. Furthermore, students showed a significant desire to be directed and encouraged by their teachers in order to use TikTok for English learning (Yang, 2020).

TikTok offers a variety of benefits for educational and non-educational purposes; it was discovered that there were several benefits associated with TikTok utilization. S2 highlighted using TikTok to learn about unfamiliar things and how it demonstrated a different culture. Also, it asserted that TikTok broadened her knowledge in a wide range of issues. While S5 claimed that she used TikTok to study English, particularly to improve her speaking ability. It was more probable that she used it as a resource to search for recommendations on beauty of products and fashion.

S2 : *"The benefits that I truly feel are I can learn new things, get to know foreign cultures, learn foreign languages and most importantly for entertainment".*

S5 : *"There is beneficial stuff that includes educational material. My viewpoints are broadened by several of these contents".*

In brief, TikTok encourages people to explore the world further by providing educational content that educates people about different cultures. As stated by (Zuo & Wang, 2019), people might intentionally or unintentionally spread popular culture depending on the TikTok transmission technique.

They also reported that using TikTok had boosted their speaking abilities. They said that they could communicate fluently, which was supported by S1. S3 discovered that her vocabulary increased after using TikTok, and S4 claimed that TikTok had helped her speak without a vocabulary restriction. Meanwhile, S4 pointed out that after using TikTok progressively, her speaking talents had continued improving. She recently gave a speech in front of an audience.

S1 : *"After utilizing the TikTok app, my English has gotten better. Due to my frequent usage of English, it also happened spontaneously (unconsciously), making my English speaking better".*

S3 : *"I feel like watching a lot of TikTok enhance vocabulary skill".*

S4 : *"The TikTok app has allowed me to consistently improve my English. I can now speak in front of a large audience in English and converse with them with very minor language issues and no grammatical errors".*

According to the interview responses, it is clear that using TikTok will enhance speaking skills and is advised, as several students said that consistent practice on the

platform led to improvements in their speaking talents. Ferstephanie and Lady Pratiwi (2022) did a study to examine the impact of TikTok's implementation on pupils' speaking skills. The TikTok app was discovered to be a source of inspiration for students to persist in their studies, particularly in improving their speaking abilities (Herlisya & Wiratno, 2022; Zaitun et al., 2021)

## CONCLUSION

At some point it was clear that each student held a distinct viewpoint about the utilization of TikTok, with numerous individuals acknowledging its beneficial influence on efficiency and the capacity to combat unproductive tendencies by exposing themselves to a wide array of concepts. English educators should prioritize the incorporation of TikTok as a tool for educational objectives, specifically for teaching English language communication.

Employing appropriate instructional resources can facilitate the development of oral proficiency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Students are well-acquainted with social media as a tool for learning. It fulfills four main purposes: socialization, entertainment, information dissemination, and academics. According to reports, TikTok was utilized to enhance their oral communication skills and actively search for videos that had comprehensive English-speaking content as well as educational information pertaining to vocabulary, slang, idioms, lyrics analysis, and public speaking advice. The application provided a multitude of advantages for both educational and non-educational objectives, enabling users to acquire knowledge about foreign subjects and diverse cultures. Furthermore, it can be deduced that TikTok had a notable beneficial influence on their oral proficiency, facilitating more fluent communication and enhancing their lexicon. In general, it is suggested that utilizing TikTok can enhance English speaking abilities, as engaging in practice on the platform has demonstrated measurable enhancements in language proficiency. Therefore, TikTok has the potential to be a beneficial tool for language learning and emphasizes the importance of including interesting and relevant content in educational platforms to improve learning results.

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