

**THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF TIKTOK AS A LEARNING MEDIUM FOR
SPEAKING ENGLISH: A QUALITATIVE STUDY WITH ENGLISH
EDUCATION STUDENTS**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of using TikTok as an informal digital learning medium for developing English speaking skills. With its growing popularity, TikTok has become an important platform for authentic language practice, yet its use in the EFL context in Indonesia still lacks a unified theoretical framework. This study aims to (1) explore how university students use and perceive TikTok, (2) analyze its impact on their speaking proficiency and confidence, and (3) identify the challenges and self-regulation strategies they develop. This research employs a qualitative case study approach involving five English teacher training students selected through purposive sampling. The criteria include students who actively use TikTok for learning and practicing speaking, utilize its features, and demonstrate good speaking ability based on academic performance. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed thematically by integrating Social Learning Theory (SLT), Communicative Competence Theory (CCT), and Krashen's Monitor Model. The findings reveal that students act as autonomous agents who strategically utilize the platform's features. TikTok is perceived to have a holistic impact, improving both linguistic aspects (pronunciation and fluency) and affective factors such as self-confidence. The integration of the three theories provides a strong explanatory framework, particularly through Krashen's Affective Filter concept, which highlights the role of confidence. The study implies that educators should shift their role toward facilitating digital literacy and metacognitive skills.

Keywords: TikTok, speaking skills, social learning theory, communicative competence

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji dampak penggunaan platform media sosial TikTok sebagai media pembelajaran digital informal dalam pengembangan keterampilan berbicara bahasa Inggris. Popularitas TikTok menjadikannya ruang penting untuk praktik bahasa autentik, namun dalam konteks EFL di Indonesia masih belum didukung kerangka teoretis yang terpadu. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk (1) mengeksplorasi praktik dan persepsi mahasiswa dalam menggunakan TikTok, (2) menganalisis dampaknya terhadap kemampuan dan kepercayaan diri, serta (3) mengidentifikasi

tantangan dan strategi regulasi diri yang dikembangkan. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus terhadap lima mahasiswa pendidikan bahasa Inggris yang dipilih secara purposive berdasarkan kriteria tertentu, yaitu aktif menggunakan TikTok untuk belajar berbicara, memanfaatkan fitur platform, serta memiliki kemampuan berbicara yang baik berdasarkan nilai akademik. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dan dianalisis secara tematik dengan mengintegrasikan Social Learning Theory (SLT), Communicative Competence Theory (CCT), dan Monitor Model dari Krashen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa bertindak sebagai agen otonom yang mampu memanfaatkan fitur TikTok secara strategis. Penggunaan TikTok memberikan dampak holistik, baik pada aspek linguistik (pelafalan dan kelancaran) maupun aspek afektif seperti kepercayaan diri. Sintesis ketiga teori terbukti mampu menjelaskan fenomena ini secara komprehensif, terutama melalui konsep "Affective Filter" yang menekankan pentingnya kepercayaan diri. Implikasinya, pendidik perlu berperan sebagai fasilitator dalam pengembangan literasi digital dan keterampilan metakognitif mahasiswa.

Kata kunci: Tiktok, keterampilan berbicara, teori pembelajaran sosial, kompetensi komunikatif

A. Introduction

The development of digital technology has transformed the way people interact and learn, including in language learning. Social media platforms such as TikTok are no longer merely used for entertainment, but also serve as participatory, interactive, and experience-based learning spaces. This platform offers features such as short videos, duets, and real-time interaction that enable authentic and contextual language practice (Tan et al., 2022; Zhen et al., 2021). This aligns with the shift in educational paradigms toward more learner-centered approaches.

In the context of English language learning, speaking skills are essential as they are directly related to the ability to communicate effectively. TikTok provides an environment that supports the development of these skills through a combination of visual, audio, and textual elements that enrich the learning experience (Tan et al., 2024). Several studies have shown that the use of TikTok can enhance students' confidence, motivation, and speaking ability through flexible and interactive practice (Lee Mei & Abdul Aziz, 2022; Novitasari & Addinna, 2022; Xiuwen & Razali, 2021).

However, studies on the use of TikTok in the EFL context in Indonesia remain limited, particularly in terms of integrated theoretical frameworks. Most research is still descriptive and has not deeply connected TikTok features with relevant language learning theories. In fact, the characteristics of TikTok strongly align with Social Learning Theory (SLT), which emphasizes learning through observation and imitation (Bandura, 1977), as well as Communicative Competence Theory (CCT), which highlights the effective use of language in social contexts (Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1980).

To strengthen the analysis, this study also integrates the Triadic Model of Speaking Skills, which includes Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency (CAF) as the main indicators for assessing speaking ability (Housen & Kuiken, 2009). The integration of these three frameworks provides a more comprehensive perspective in understanding how TikTok features can support the holistic development of speaking skills.

This study employs a qualitative case study approach involving students of the English Education Department at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah

Tulungagung who actively use TikTok as a learning medium. Preliminary findings indicate that students are able to develop their speaking skills independently through social media-based practice, despite limitations in formal learning environments. This suggests that TikTok can function as an alternative learning space that supports the development of communicative competence.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the use of TikTok as a medium for learning speaking skills, analyze its impact from the perspectives of SLT and CCT, and identify the challenges faced by users. This research is expected to contribute to the development of digital-based language learning that is more contextual, interactive, and relevant to learners' needs in the modern era.

B. Research Method

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to explore English Language Education students' perceptions and experiences in using TikTok for speaking skill development. A qualitative approach is appropriate as it enables an in-depth

understanding of participants' perspectives and the dynamics of digital language learning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The case study method allows detailed exploration of how students utilize TikTok features and how their experiences relate to language learning theories. A case study investigates a bounded system (activity, process, or individuals) within a real-life context over time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This research is grounded in Social Learning Theory (SLT) (Bandura, 1977) and Communicative Competence Theory (CCT) (Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1980), supported by the Triadic Model (fluency, accuracy, complexity). SLT explains learning through observation and imitation, while CCT emphasizes effective communication in context. The Triadic Model helps assess speaking performance holistically.

Thus, TikTok is viewed as a dynamic learning environment where students observe, practice, and interact. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of how students develop speaking skills and face challenges in digital learning contexts.

Subject and Setting of the Study

This study uses purposive sampling to select participants with relevant experience. The subjects are English Education students at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung who actively use TikTok for speaking practice.

Participant selection involved two stages: an initial questionnaire (25 respondents) and in-depth selection of five participants who met these criteria:

1. active TikTok users for speaking practice,
2. experienced with interactive features (duet, stitch, live),
3. good speaking performance academically.

This approach ensures rich and relevant data for in-depth analysis.

The research was conducted at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung. This setting is relevant due to students' high digital literacy and active engagement with social media in learning.

Data and Data Sources

This study uses primary and secondary data to ensure comprehensive analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Primary data were collected through:

- Semi-structured interviews (experiences, perceptions, strategies),
- Observation (TikTok interaction and speaking practice),
- Digital documentation (videos, recordings, artifacts).

Secondary data include:

- Theoretical literature (SLT, CCT),
- Previous studies on TikTok and language learning,
- Institutional documents.

This combination supports data triangulation and strengthens validity.

Technique of Data Collection

Data collection follows qualitative principles using multiple methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018):

1. Questionnaire (participant screening),
2. Semi-structured interviews (main data source),
3. Digital documentation (supporting evidence).

These techniques ensure data richness and depth.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) following Creswell's stages:

organizing, coding, developing themes, and interpretation.

Steps include:

1. Transcription and familiarization,
2. Initial coding (data-driven, theory-informed),
3. Theme development (SLT, CCT, speaking aspects),
4. Interpretation and conclusion.

Triangulation was applied to ensure consistency across data sources.

Technique of Data Verification

To ensure credibility, this study applies:

1. Triangulation (interviews, observation, documentation),
2. Member checking (participant validation),
3. Peer debriefing (discussion with peers).

These strategies enhance accuracy and reliability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Trustworthiness of Data

Trustworthiness follows Lincoln & Guba (1985):

- Credibility: triangulation and member checking,
- Transferability: detailed contextual description,

- Dependability: audit trail and peer review,
- Confirmability: reflexivity and data transparency.

C. Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents findings from in-depth interviews with five participants on how TikTok supports English speaking skills. The data are organized into three themes: (A) use of TikTok, (B) perceived impact, and (C) challenges.

A. Students' Use of TikTok as a Learning Medium

This section addresses how students use TikTok through three aspects: usage patterns, feature selection, and feedback utilization.

1. How Students Use TikTok to Enhance Their Speaking Skills

Findings show no single usage pattern; students demonstrate diverse and autonomous learning approaches. Participant 1 applies purposeful observational learning, selecting slow-paced content: *"I follow the 'Slow Podcast'..."*. This reflects self-regulation (SLT) to improve comprehension and discourse competence (CCT).

Participant 2 focuses on private production practice, using Duet

without uploading: *"I read while recording..."*. This shows controlled SLT cycles and emphasis on pronunciation (CCT) without social pressure.

Participant 3 engages in interactive learning, joining live sessions: *"the tutor invites participants..."*. This strengthens social reinforcement (SLT) and real-time communicative competence (CCT).

Participant 4 uses a planned approach via search, while Participant 5 learns incidentally: *"I use TikTok more for entertainment..."*. These contrasting styles highlight both intentional and unconscious learning pathways.

Overall, TikTok functions as a flexible ecosystem where learners adapt strategies based on needs, confidence, and goals.

2. TikTok Feature Most Frequently Used

No single dominant feature emerged; usage is highly purpose-driven.

Participant 2 prefers Duet for guided imitation: *"I can see the text..."*. This reduces cognitive load and supports pronunciation accuracy.

Participant 3 prioritizes Live sessions for immediate feedback, engaging all components of CCT simultaneously.

Participant 1 uses the comment section for indirect learning, while Participant 4 relies on Search for targeted content. These reflect vicarious learning vs. intentional inquiry (SLT).

Participant 5 combines Stitch (private practice) and comments (social interaction), addressing both cognitive and affective needs.

Thus, feature selection reflects strong learner agency and strategic adaptation.

3. Utilizing Feedback to Improve Speaking

Feedback use varies significantly across participants.

Participant 3 actively seeks direct feedback in Live sessions: *“I take note of the feedback...”*, demonstrating a full SLT cycle.

Participant 4 uses comments for clarification, showing strategic competence in questioning.

Participants 1 and 5 rely on community feedback, e.g., *“comments with many likes...”*, reflecting vicarious reinforcement (SLT) and sociolinguistic learning (CCT).

Participant 2 deliberately avoids feedback: *“I never upload...”*, focusing on self-evaluation to build confidence.

Overall, feedback engagement ranges from active seeking to avoidance, showing high autonomy in learning regulation.

B. Perceived Impact of TikTok on Speaking Development

This section examines impacts on fluency, real-life application, and content effectiveness.

1. Impact on Fluency and Self-Confidence

All participants report positive effects, though through different pathways.

Participant 4 gains confidence despite weak grammar: *“My grammar is all over the place...”*, prioritizing fluency.

Participant 1 improves confidence through accuracy-focused correction, e.g., *“Island”*, showing bottom-up learning.

Participant 2 improves fluency but lacks confidence due to absence of feedback: *“around 50%”*, indicating disrupted SLT reinforcement.

Participants 3 and 5 experience gradual improvement, emphasizing consistency.

Thus, fluency and confidence improve, but depend on feedback, practice style, and learning focus.

2. TikTok Videos in Real-Life

Situations

Participants successfully transfer learning to real contexts, especially presentations.

Participant 1 uses TikTok as a presentation guide: *“how to speak, open, move...”*, improving discourse and non-verbal skills.

Participant 4 adopts technical skills (intonation, tongue twisters), strengthening clarity.

Participant 2 develops spontaneous speaking confidence, relying less on memorization.

Participant 5 shows confidence transfer through repeated exposure.

Participant 3 applies skills across contexts (class and Ma’had), demonstrating advanced sociolinguistic competence.

Overall, TikTok supports both technical and psychological readiness for real communication.

3. Memorable Aspect of Content

Effectiveness depends more on presentation style than content itself.

Participant 1 highlights musicality: *“presented in song...”*, aiding memory and rhythm.

Participant 2 values authentic conversations, learning real discourse patterns.

Participants 3 and 4 emphasize audio-visual elements, enhancing attention and retention.

Participant 5 stresses **edutainment**: *“without any spice, people get bored”*, showing motivation depends on engagement.

Thus, multimodal, authentic, and entertaining content enhances learning effectiveness.

C. Challenges and Limitations

Despite benefits, several challenges emerge.

1. Difficulties in Practice

Participant 1 identifies multiple barriers: *“signal... lack of confidence... accent confusion”*. These hinder SLT processes and sociolinguistic development.

Participant 3 highlights content limitations: *“short duration... not structured”*, creating a paradox—engaging but shallow learning.

Overall, challenges include:

- technical issues,
- low confidence,
- inconsistent content quality,
- and lack of depth for grammar learning.

Discussion

This chapter critically discusses the findings by integrating participants' experiences with Social Learning Theory (SLT) and Communicative Competence Theory (CCT). The discussion is structured into three parts: (A) how students use TikTok, (B) its impact on speaking skills, and (C) challenges and strategies.

A. From Practice to Meaning: How Students Use TikTok

The focus shifts from "what TikTok does" to "what students do with TikTok." Findings show that learners are not passive users but active navigators who shape their learning through diverse strategies—planned, incidental, and interactive.

This aligns with prior studies emphasizing learner autonomy in digital environments (Kumar & Nanda; Novitasari & Addinna). However, the findings extend SLT (Bandura) by showing that observation and imitation are **strategically selected**, reflecting constructivist learning (Apoko & Waluyo). Students consciously choose models, content, and features, demonstrating agency.

The variation in feature use (e.g., Duet, Live, comments, search) reflects pedagogical affordances,

where each feature serves specific learning purposes (Zin & Aung). This also indicates **meta-level strategic competence (CCT)**, where learners manage not only communication but the learning process itself (Soyoof et al.).

Implication:

Theoretically, SLT must incorporate learner autonomy. Practically, educators should guide students to become strategic "navigators" of digital learning environments.

B. The Holistic Impact of TikTok

The findings reveal that TikTok's impact extends beyond technical skills to affective and performative domains. It enhances **self-confidence, fluency, pronunciation, and real-life communication ability**, largely supported by engaging "edutainment" content.

Within CCT, these improvements reflect:

- Grammatical competence (pronunciation, vocabulary),
- Strategic competence (confidence in spontaneous speaking),
- Discourse competence (presentation skills),

- Sociolinguistic competence (context adaptation).

This supports findings by Nugroho et al. on informal digital learning in Indonesia. Meanwhile, SLT explains the mechanism: engaging content increases attention and motivation, triggering observation–retention–reproduction cycles (Bandura), consistent with Fauzi and Diaz et al.

Implication:

Theoretically, effective analysis requires integrating SLT (process) and CCT (outcome). Practically, “edutainment” should be recognized as a legitimate pedagogical strategy.

C. Challenge–Strategy Dialectic

Challenges such as distraction, anxiety, and content limitations confirm previous studies (Waluyo; Fauzi). However, this study contributes by highlighting self-regulation strategies developed by learners.

Students actively:

- curate content,
- manage attention,
- regulate emotions,
- and adapt learning approaches.

These strategies reflect self-regulation (SLT) and expanded **strategic**

competence (CCT), extending beyond communication into learning management (Soyoof et al.).

Implication:

Theoretically, self-regulation must be central in digital learning models. Practically, educators should train students in digital literacy and metacognitive skills rather than restricting platform use.

D. Synthesis and Theoretical Implications

The findings depict a dynamic interaction between platform affordances and learner agency. Students act as **autonomous agents** who manage learning processes, emotional responses, and challenges.

This extends SLT by emphasizing reciprocal interaction: learners actively shape their environment (e.g., content selection, algorithm training), not merely respond to it (Bandura). Similarly, CCT is broadened, showing that its competencies develop integratively through informal, everyday practices.

Most importantly, strategic competence expands into learning regulation—managing focus, anxiety, and content selection. The study confirms that combining SLT and CCT provides a more comprehensive

framework for understanding digital language learning (Parmaxi et al.).

E. Practical Implications and Recommendations

For educators, TikTok should be viewed as a learning ecosystem, not a distraction. Their role shifts from content providers to **facilitators of digital literacy and metacognition**.

They should guide students to:

- evaluate content credibility,
- manage distractions,
- and strategically use platform features.

For students, a proactive approach is needed:

- curate educational content (Search, Following),
- build learning libraries (Save),
- and use private practice to reduce anxiety and build confidence.

Summary of the Discussion

Overall, students are active agents who strategically use TikTok for language learning. The platform supports both linguistic and affective development while encouraging self-regulation.

The integration of SLT and CCT proves effective in explaining this phenomenon. The key implication is a

shift toward learner autonomy and digital literacy, positioning both

D. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore how Tadris English students utilize TikTok as an informal learning medium to develop their speaking skills, using an integrated framework of Social Learning Theory (SLT) and Communicative Competence Theory (CCT). The findings reveal that students are not passive users but autonomous agents who actively and strategically navigate the affordances of TikTok. They engage in selective modeling, interaction, and self-regulation to manage challenges such as algorithmic distraction and performance anxiety.

The impact of TikTok use is found to be holistic, encompassing both affective development—such as increased self-confidence and motivation—and linguistic improvement, particularly in pronunciation and fluency. Theoretically, this study confirms that combining SLT (as an explanation of learning processes) and CCT (as a framework for evaluating communicative outcomes) provides a comprehensive lens for understanding

language learning in dynamic, participatory digital environments.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be proposed. For future researchers, this study suggests the need for broader and more varied investigations. Quantitative studies with larger samples could be conducted to test and generalize the relationship between specific TikTok features and improvements in speaking proficiency or confidence. Additionally, comparative studies between TikTok and other short-video platforms, as well as longitudinal research tracking learners over time, would provide deeper insights into the sustainability and long-term impact of digital informal learning.

For educational practitioners, including lecturers and students, the findings highlight important pedagogical implications. Educators are encouraged to shift their role from content providers to facilitators of digital literacy and metacognitive awareness. This involves guiding students to critically evaluate content, manage distractions, and strategically select platform features that align with their learning goals. Meanwhile, students are encouraged to move

beyond incidental use toward more intentional and reflective engagement. By curating relevant content, utilizing private practice to build confidence, and actively reflecting on their learning process, they can maximize TikTok's potential as an effective tool for developing communicative competence.

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