

EXPLORING TIKTOK'S IMPACT ON ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS: PERCEPTIONS OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

NASRUDIN, N.^{1*} – AKHIR, N. M.¹ – AZIZ, M. N.¹

¹ *Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Selangor, Malaysia.*

**Corresponding author
e-mail: nasihanasrudin[at]uitm.edu.my*

(Received 28th July 2024; revised 20th October 2024; accepted 27th October 2024)

Abstract. This study aims to identify the perceptions of TikTok as a tool for enhancing English speaking skills among undergraduate students at UiTM Shah Alam. A quantitative research methodology was employed to achieve this objective, involving the distribution of a 24-item questionnaire, measured on a 5-point Likert scale, to 30 undergraduate students at UiTM Shah Alam via Google Form. The questionnaire was divided into five sections to gather responses on the respondents' demographic profile, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, attitudes, and behavioural intentions in using TikTok as a tool in learning English. The findings shed light on the potential of TikTok as a language learning tool that offers a fun and engaging way to improve English speaking skills. It also provided deeper insights into the current needs and perceptions of students regarding the use of TikTok as a tool for practicing and improving their English proficiency. By exploring how students engaged with TikTok for language learning, educators gained a better understanding of how to tailor their teaching strategies to meet the evolving preferences and learning habits of their students.

Keywords: *perception, English speaking skills, TikTok, undergraduate students*

Introduction

Social media can be an effective tool for enhancing learners' English language skills. It offers opportunities for language exposure, interaction with native or proficient speakers, and access to various resources. Nasution (2022) noted that incorporating social media into language learning has been reported to boost students' reading, writing, and vocabulary skills, as well as their engagement in language learning and motivation to improve their performance in these areas. However, it is important to recognize the potential downsides of using social media for language learning. One major concern is the risk of distraction, as well as the possibility of being exposed to inaccurate or overly informal language. Additionally, social media platforms enable people worldwide to share and exchange opinions on a wide array of topics. This broad exposure to diverse reading materials and writing styles can sometimes lead to rapid but superficial and potentially incorrect comprehension of content (Zolkapli et al., 2023; 2022; Yunus et al., 2013).

Despite these concerns, not all research agrees on the impact of social media on students' language performance (Al-Rahmi et al., 2021; Faktor, 2021; Iqbal, 2020). For instance, Al-Rahmi et al. (2021) found that platforms like Facebook have minimal or no significant effect on students' academic performance, particularly in enhancing writing skills. Their findings suggest that students seldom use Facebook to improve their writing abilities. This highlights the importance of further investigating how social media, especially newer platforms like TikTok, is used among Malaysian university students to better understand its role in their language learning. In recent years, TikTok has made significant strides in the education sector, becoming one of the leading

platforms for learning worldwide. The platform's #LearnOnTikTok initiative has attracted substantial attention, amassing over seven billion views (Faktor, 2021; Iqbal, 2020). This campaign highlights TikTok's potential as a digital educational tool that can transform the teaching and learning experience, offering an engaging and accessible way for learners to enhance their English language skills. As part of contributing to this pool of knowledge, the present study aims to explore undergraduate students' perceptions of TikTok as a tool for enhancing English speaking skills.

Literature review

Teaching language with digital technology

In the context of language education, especially English language learning, digital technology is vital in facilitating a more engaging, personalised, and effective learning experience. It offers learners a wide range of resources, interactive exercises, and real-time feedback, all of which are crucial for building language proficiency. The importance of digital technology in this field cannot be overstated, as it not only facilitates traditional learning but also introduces innovative methods that cater to the evolving demands of modern education (Biletska et al., 2021). By integrating these technologies, educators can create a more immersive and effective learning environment, helping students to better grasp complex language concepts and improve their overall communication skills.

Social media and language learning

With the rapid advancement of technology and the growing demand for incorporating social media into the learning process in Malaysia, numerous studies have explored how social media can be leveraged to create informal learning environments. A study found that students who used social media for foreign language learning showed significant improvements in both their motivation and attitudes toward the subject. Additionally, these students made considerable progress in their speaking and listening skills. These findings highlight the potential benefits of integrating social media into education, as it offers a more relaxed and engaging learning environment. In such settings, students are encouraged to share their creative insights, which can further enhance their learning capabilities.

TikTok as an educational tool

Despite TikTok's widespread popularity and its emerging role as a beneficial educational tool, its potential in language teaching and learning remains relatively underexplored, particularly in Malaysia. While TikTok is widely recognized as a platform for entertainment and creative expression, its application in educational contexts is gaining attention. Some educators and learners have started to recognize the platform's value as a teaching and learning resource. Putri (2021) highlighted TikTok's functionality and user-friendly features, which allow users to capture and share creativity, knowledge, and meaningful moments directly from their phones. These technical advantages have carved out a unique niche for TikTok in the competitive social media landscape, making it a promising tool for language learning. Further research by Alexandro et al. (2022) emphasised TikTok's potential as a platform for activism and education, particularly among millennials. The platform's various

educational hashtags have demonstrated that TikTok can be a valuable resource for today's youth, offering opportunities for informal learning in a format that resonates with them.

Given the growing interest among researchers in the educational potential of TikTok, more studies are beginning to explore its acceptance and effectiveness in the classroom. Recent research has focused on TikTok's pedagogical implementation in enhancing English language teaching and learning, and its ability to develop students' language skills and proficiency (Muftah, 2022; Zaitun et al., 2021). Muftah (2022), explored the impact of various social media platforms on the learning of the English language during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically from the students' perspective. The findings indicated that the use of social media was widely perceived to have a positive influence on English language acquisition. This influence was observed across several areas, including improvements in writing style, reading skills, listening abilities, lexical diversity, communication skills, and grammar usage.

Similarly, Zaitun et al. (2021) conducted research aimed at assessing the enhancement of students' speaking skills through the use of storytelling on the TikTok application. In this study, students were tasked with describing a person, object, or place through TikTok videos. The results demonstrated that using TikTok as a medium for speaking not only boosted students' confidence in speaking English but also provided them with a novel experience in freely expressing their ideas on the platform. Finally, Suwanda et al. (2024) investigated the effectiveness of using TikTok to improve students' English pronunciation. The action research was conducted in grades IV at Sanggar Bimbingan Sentul, Kuala Lumpur Malaysia, for the 2022 academic year. The study was divided into two cycles, each of which included four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The video used as the learning media was obtained from the TikTok account under the name of "*learnenglishwithcamille*". The findings indicated that the utilisation of TikTok media resulted in an improvement in the English pronunciation of students. The improvement was a direct result of the students' enjoyment of learning pronunciation through TikTok media.

In recent years, numerous studies have identified TikTok as a user-friendly platform that enhances student engagement in online learning. This has contributed to positive perceptions and increased participation in virtual classrooms. Nevertheless, the TikTok user experience is still largely unexplored, particularly in the context of Malaysian online education, due to the inherent subjective nature of perception. Therefore, this study aims to explore the perceptions of Malaysian undergraduate students regarding the use of TikTok as a tool for enhancing English speaking skills.

Materials and Methods

Research design, participants and instrument

This study adopts a quantitative approach, i.e. the distribution of a survey to explore the undergraduate students' perceptions of TikTok as a tool for enhancing English speaking skills. This was done through the use of an adapted questionnaire consisting of close-ended questions. The study involves 30 undergraduate students from the Academy of Language Studies (APB), Universiti Teknologi MARA Shah Alam, who are enrolled in the ELC590 English for Oral Presentations short course. The course is specifically designed to cultivate the strategies and abilities required for effective oral presentations, with an emphasis on students' communication abilities. The emphasis is not solely on

oral communication theory; it also extends to practice, emphasising both verbal and nonverbal communication abilities. Throughout the seven-week period, students engage in a variety of activities to enhance their confidence and proficiency.

A 24-item questionnaire, which was adapted from Shin and Yunus (2021) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), was employed in this study to evaluate the perceptions of undergraduate students regarding the use of TikTok as an aid for improving their English speaking abilities. The questionnaire comprises 24 items and is structured around five primary constructs. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was employed to assess the reliability of the questionnaire for each construct, and the results indicated an acceptable level of reliability ($\alpha=.960$). The five-point Likert scale survey will be presented in the following manner (*Table 1*):

Table 1. *Distribution of items in the survey.*

Distribution	Number of questions
Demographic data	3
Perceived ease of use	6
Perceived usefulness	5
Attitudes	5
Behavioural Intentions	5

Sampling technique and data collection

This study employs a convenience sampling method by recruiting a group of students taking the ELC590 English for Oral Presentations. Convenience sampling was chosen because it allows for the efficient collection of data from participants who are readily available and willing to participate. In order to evaluate their perception of TikTok, these students were directed to engage in activities associated with oral presentations on the platform. Throughout the semester, their growing familiarity with TikTok allowed them to further explore its potential as a tool for enhancing their English speaking skills. They were able to experiment with various methods to practise speaking, pronunciation, and fluency in an interactive and engaging manner as they became more accustomed to the platform's features, such as creating and sharing videos. This familiarity allowed them to incorporate TikTok into their learning process, thereby enhancing their language abilities and fostering creative self-expression. Furthermore, the platform's format promoted a more immersive learning experience, regular practice, and peer feedback. Since no specific criteria were required, the inclusion of these participants was considered appropriate for the study's objectives. The questionnaire was distributed to participants through a Google Forms link. Subsequently, the data collected via Google Forms will be analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 28. Descriptive statistics, particularly mean values, will be employed to examine undergraduate students' perceptions of TikTok as a tool for enhancing their English speaking skills.

Results and Discussion

This section presents data to answer the study's research question, to explore the perceptions of Malaysian undergraduate students regarding the use of TikTok as a tool for enhancing English speaking skills. According to a researcher, the distribution of mean scores is categorized as follows: 1.00-1.80 (Very Low), 1.81-2.60 (Low), 2.61-

3.40 (Average), 3.41-4.20 (High), and 4.21-5.00 (Very High). As presented in *Table 2*, the overall mean score for perceived ease of use is 4.25 (S.D.: 0.84), which falls within the High category. Notably, the fourth statement ("I would find TikTok easy to access to learn the English language") received the highest mean score of 4.40 (S.D.: 0.56), followed closely by the fifth statement ("My English language learning via TikTok would be clear and understandable") with a mean score of 4.33 (S.D.: 0.66). These results indicate that students held positive perceptions regarding the use of TikTok and that they enjoyed utilising TikTok and found it both user-friendly and beneficial for their overall learning experience. As indicated in *Table 3*, the majority of students considered that TikTok facilitated the development of their English speaking abilities, with a mean score of 4.05 (S.D.: 0.76). The third statement (TikTok can help learners become more familiar with different accents in English.) had the highest mean with (M: 4.37, S.D.: 0.56) and the second statement (TikTok can help learners improve their pronunciation in English.) was the next in line with (M: 4.23, S.D.:0.74).

Table 2. *Perceived ease of use.*

No.	Statements	Mean	S.D.
1	I would find English language content on TikTok easy to follow and focus on.	4.03	0.85
2	I would find TikTok to be flexible in English language learning anytime and anywhere.	3.97	1.07
3	I would find it easy to access TikTok which has English language learning content.	3.97	1.07
4	I would find TikTok easy to access to learn the English language.	4.40	0.56
5	My English language learning via TikTok would be clear and understandable.	4.33	0.66
6	It would be easy for me to become skilful at using TikTok in English language learning.	4.17	0.83
Total		4.15	0.84

Table 3. *Perceived of usefulness.*

No.	Statements	Mean	S.D.
1	TikTok can help learners develop their speaking skills in English.	3.93	0.87
2	TikTok can help learners improve their pronunciation in English.	4.23	0.74
3	TikTok can help learners become more familiar with different accents in English.	4.37	0.56
4	TikTok can help learners learn English in a more natural and authentic way.	3.73	0.83
5	TikTok can help learners overcome language barriers and connect with English-speaking.	4.00	0.79
Total		4.05	0.76

According to *Table 4*, the overall mean score for attitudes towards TikTok is 4.36 (S.D.: 0.74), which is classified as Very High. For instance, the first statement (Learning English speaking skills via TikTok is enjoyable.) has the highest mean score of 4.43 (S.D.: 0.73), while the second statement (Learning English speaking skills via TikTok is a fine idea.) has the second highest mean score of 4.40 (S.D.: 0.62). One

might suggest that students prefer to acquire English speaking abilities through TikTok. Regarding students' behavioural intentions toward TikTok, as detailed in *Table 5*, the overall mean score is 3.93 (S.D.: 0.80), which is classified as High. The highest mean score was recorded for the first statement, (I intend to recommend TikTok to my friends for learning English speaking skills.) with a mean score of 4.30 (S.D.: 0.84). This was followed by the second statement, (I intend to use TikTok as one of my tools to improve my English-speaking skills.) which received a mean score of 4.10 (S.D.: 0.71). The third statement, (I intend to use TikTok frequently to practice my English-speaking skills.) and the fourth statement, (I intend to spend more time on TikTok to enhance my English-speaking skills.) both shared the same mean score of 3.97, with standard deviations of 0.81 and 0.76, respectively. This indicates that students are inclined to use TikTok as one of their preferred platforms for learning English speaking skills. However, it is notable that only a moderate number of students intend to make TikTok their primary choice for improving their English speaking skills, as evidenced by a mean score of 3.30 (S.D.: 0.88), which falls within the Average category.

Table 4. Attitudes.

No.	Statements	Mean	S.D.
1	Learning English speaking skills via TikTok is enjoyable.	4.43	0.73
2	Learning English speaking skills via TikTok is a good idea.	4.40	0.62
3	I like using TikTok to learn and improve my English-speaking skills.	4.37	0.76
4	I am enthusiastic about using TikTok to continue improving my English-speaking abilities.	4.33	0.84
5	Learning English speaking skills via TikTok is a wise idea.	4.23	0.77
Total		4.36	0.74

Table 5. Behavioural Intentions.

No.	Statements	Mean	S.D.
1	I intend to recommend TikTok to my friends for learning English speaking skills.	4.30	0.84
2	I intend to use TikTok as one of my tools to improve my English-speaking skills.	4.10	0.71
3	I intend to use TikTok frequently to practice my English-speaking skills.	3.97	0.81
4	I intend to spend more time on TikTok to enhance my English-speaking skills.	3.97	0.76
5	I intend to make TikTok my primary choice for learning English speaking skills.	3.30	0.88
Total		3.93	0.80

This study found that participants held a positive perception of using TikTok, appreciating its role in their language learning and recognizing its positive impact on their speaking abilities. The platform's perceived ease of use and usefulness for improving English speaking skills are evident in its accessibility and user-friendly nature. Students regard TikTok as an effective tool for language learning, enabling flexible access to content anytime and anywhere. They can also follow language-

focused TikTok creators who offer valuable advice on pronunciation, vocabulary, and common phrases. This finding is consistent with Suwanda et al. (2024), who observed improvements in students' English pronunciation after using TikTok, and with Ibrahim et al. (2023), who found that TikTok complements traditional language learning by providing a fun and engaging way to enhance language skills. In addition, this study shows that students generally hold a positive view of using TikTok to improve their English speaking skills, valuing its engaging content and perceiving it as effective for language learning. However, despite appreciating the platform's features, they are also open to exploring other tools and platforms, suggesting that their behavioral intention is not limited to TikTok. They are willing to use additional resources to further enhance their language proficiency. Therefore, while TikTok is appreciated, it is not regarded as the sole or primary platform for improving speaking skills. This aligns with Ibrahim et al. (2023), who suggested that TikTok is a helpful tool for language learners but should be used alongside traditional resources for better results. Combining both methods allows learners to improve their English while enjoying TikTok's entertaining format.

Conclusion

In conclusion, TikTok can be a valuable tool for educators to support language learning, particularly in speaking classes, as it has the potential to enhance speaking skills and boost student engagement. However, due to the limited scope of this study, which involved a small sample size, further research is necessary to thoroughly investigate the effectiveness of TikTok in language learning, especially in developing speaking skills. Expanding future studies will provide a clearer understanding of its role and impact in educational settings.

Acknowledgement

This research was conducted without external financial support and was fully funded by the researchers themselves. We acknowledge that this self-funding allowed us the flexibility to independently pursue our objectives and carry out the study as envisioned.

Conflict of interest

The authors hereby confirm that there are no conflicts of interest associated with any individuals, organisations, or entities concerning this research study. All aspects of the study, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation, have been conducted with full independence and objectivity, ensuring that no external influence has affected the research outcomes.

REFERENCES

- [1] Alexandro, R., Hariatama, F., Uda, T. (2022): TikTok analysis as a learning media and activism instrument. – *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran* 55(1): 211-221.
- [2] Al-Rahmi, A.M., Shamsuddin, A., Alturki, U., Aldraiweesh, A., Yusof, F.M., Al-Rahmi, W.M., Aljeraiwi, A.A. (2021): The influence of information system success and technology acceptance model on social media factors in education. – *Sustainability* 13(14): 23p.

- [3] Biletska, I.O., Paladieva, A.F., Avchinnikova, H.D., Kazak, Y.Y. (2021): The use of modern technologies by foreign language teachers: developing digital skills. – *Linguistics and Culture Review* 5(S2): 16-27.
- [4] Faktor, C. (2021): TikTok is a thriving learning community-and may be the future of education. – *Fast Company* 13p.
- [5] Ibrahim, N.H., Shafie, S.A., Rahim, I.N.A. (2023): The Use of TikTok in Learning English as a Second Language. – *Asian Journal of Research in Education and Social Sciences* 5(2): 355-365.
- [6] Iqbal, O. (2020): TikTok makes moves into education market. – *BBC News Web Portal* 3p.
- [7] Muftah, M. (2022): Impact of social media on learning English language during the COVID-19 pandemic. – *PSU Research Review* 8(1): 211-226.
- [8] Nasution, A.K.P. (2022): Social media used in language learning: benefits and challenges. – *Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Language Teaching (JLLLT)* 1(2): 59-68.
- [9] Putri, R.P. (2021): Tiktok as an Online Learning Media During a Pandemic. – In *6th International Conference on Education & Social Sciences (ICESS 2021)*, Atlantis Press 6p.
- [10] Shin, J.L.K., Yunus, M.M. (2021): A Systematic Review of E-Learning in Teaching And Learning of Speaking Skills. – *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 11: 725-740.
- [11] Suwanda, B.S., Harmanto, B., Maghfiroh, A., Shohenuddin, S. (2024): TikTok Trick: Improving Students' Pronunciation of Indonesian Migrant Workers Children in Malaysia. – *Journal of Languages and Language Teaching* 12(2): 974-984.
- [12] Yunus, M.M., Nordin, N., Salehi, H., Sun, C.H., Embi, M.A. (2013): Pros and Cons of Using IICT in Teaching ESL Reading and Writing. – *International Education Studies* 6(7): 119-130.
- [13] Zaitun, Z., Hadi, M.S., Indriani, E.D. (2021): TikTok as a Media to Enhancing the Speaking Skills of EFL Student's. – *Jurnal Studi Guru Dan Pembelajaran* 4(1): 89-94.
- [14] Zolkapli, R.B.M., Kenali, S.F.M., Hadi, N.F.A., Basiron, M.K., Iqbal, M., Latif, M.N.L.A., Rahmat, N.H. (2023): Exploring motivation and demotivation factors for learning communication skills. – *International Journal of Academic Research in Business & Social Sciences* 13(7): 1501-1520.
- [15] Zolkapli, R.B.M., Mohamad, H.A., Mohaini, M.L., Wahab, N.H.A., Nath, P.R. (2022): Code-Switching and Code-Mixing in the Practice of Judgement Writing in Malaysia. – *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities* 30(3): 1365-1382.