

STUDENTS' VOICES IN UTILIZING TIKTOK AS A DYNAMIC TOOL FOR ENHANCING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS AT SMA ISLAMIC LEADER SCHOOL

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Abstract

This study explores the use of TikTok as a dynamic tool to enhance students' English-speaking skills. The study aimed to explore how students utilize TikTok to enhance their English-speaking skills, the role in their learning process, and the challenges they face. This research is a qualitative case study approach, conducted at SMA Islamic leader School with two students as participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and supported by documentation. Data were analysed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes data condensation, data display and drawing and verifying conclusions. The findings revealed that TikTok, as an engaging learning medium, can provide exposure to authentic English input. Students utilize interactive features such as voice over and video content, which can help them enhance pronunciation accuracy and expand vocabulary. Students also reported increased confidence and motivation to practice speaking, despite facing several challenges, including limited speaking interaction, difficulty with pronouncing words, feeling of embarrassment in delivering spoken content, and unstable internet connection. Overall, this study concludes that TikTok can be a supportive and effective tool for enhancing students' English-speaking skills if used purposefully and consistently. The platform offers both linguistic and motivational benefits, although its impact depends on how actively students engage with the platform.

Keywords: TikTok, English-speaking skills, pronunciation, vocabulary, motivation.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an essential part of the educational world, providing opportunities for engagement, creativity, and independent practice. The TikTok platform presents exciting opportunities as a learning tool due to its short-form video format, personalized content recommendations through the For You Page (FYP), and various creative features, including effects, music, voice over, and interactive functions (Dewi, 2023; Wilson, 2020). TikTok is particularly popular among Gen Z students, who actively engage with content that can support language learning while fostering creativity and self-expression (Fitria, 2023; Gunawan et al., 2024). The platform allows learners to create and share English language videos, which may enhance communicative competence and speaking confidence. Exposure to authentic and contextual language input through TikTok can simulate real-world social interactions, supporting

informal second language acquisition (SLA) (Thorne, 2013; Swain, 1985; Long, 1996). The purpose of this study was to explore how students utilize TikTok to enhance their English-speaking skills, focusing on usage patterns, interactions, content viewing and creating content, the role of TikTok in motivation and speaking skill enhancement, and the challenges encountered during its use. This study also considered the pedagogical implications of integrating social media platforms into English language learning.

METHOD

a. Research Design

This study used qualitative case study approach to explore in-depth students' experiences using TikTok as an English language learning tool to enhance their speaking skills (Creswell, 2014). A purposive sampling who actively use TikTok for language learning purposes.

b. Participants

Two students, with the initial N and A, were selected intentionally because of their active engagement with TikTok for English speaking practice.

c. Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, guided by the research questions and supported by documentation of participants' TikTok usage. The interview protocol was developed based on previous studies (e.g., Putri et al., 2022) to ensure alignment with the research objectives.

d. Data Analysis

Data were analysed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) framework, which involved three stages:

1. Data Condensation – extracting meaningful statements and coding initial themes.
2. Data Display – organizing codes into tables to clarify patterns.
3. Drawing and verifying Conclusions – interpreting findings in relation to the theoretical framework.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

a. Finding

How students utilize TikTok to enhance their English-speaking skills:

Frequency of Using TikTok

Excerpt 1

N: *“Once a week.”*

A: *“Around every 3 days.”*

Participant A uses TikTok approximately every three days to support active learning of English pronunciation, indicating moderate and intentional engagement with the platform to enhance their language skills. Furthermore, participant N only uses TikTok once a week, without referring to a specific learning focus, indicating minimal interaction with the app as a language learning tool. This difference between the two participants suggests that personal motivation and learning goals (e.g., pronunciation focus) may influence the frequency of TikTok use for speaking practice.

Types of English content watched

Excerpt 2

N: *“Watches pronunciation, vocabulary, and motivational content in podcast form. The content often appears on FYP because the algorithm detects their interest in English language content.”*

A: *“Such as motivational content and pronunciation practice in English, often by public figures. Actively seeks out pronunciation materials when needed. Follow the Indonesian content creator account named @marcellalumowa”*

Participant N relies on algorithmically suggested content and passively engages with material that appears on the For Your Page (FYP). This approach allows for continuous exposure without actively seeking out specific sources. Repeated exposure to pronunciation, vocabulary, and motivational content through the algorithm, providing diverse and meaningful input, may support the development of their speaking skills. In contrast, participant A demonstrates a proactive strategy by actively following specific accounts such as Marsela. This selective approach intentionally seeks out specific content, motivation, and pronunciation exercises from public figures such as Marcella. This demonstrates a directed input strategy, where students consciously select materials based

on their learning needs. This demonstrates intentional and goal-directed engagement with the content.

Excerpt 3

N: *"I prefer native speakers because their intonation and accent are more natural, I focus on learning pronunciation, imitate the words/intonation they speak, and I feel my knowledge and fluency have enhanced."*

A: *"I learn more from Indonesian influencers, but I still repeat pronunciation. I find this very helpful, especially since my weakness is pronunciation."*

Participant N tended to be more content than native speakers because their intonation, accent, and pronunciation quality were perceived as "lebih masuk" or authentic. Interacting with the content used a direct imitation strategy (shadowing) for words, intonation, and pronunciation. This strategy resulted in increased vocabulary knowledge and pronunciation fluency. These findings suggest that N utilized exposure to authentic input as the primary learning source, followed by production practice to strengthen phonological representations. Furthermore, participant A more frequently accessed content from Indonesian influencer discussing English learning. Although the input source differed from participant N's, participant A still used repetition and imitation strategies in the learning process. Participant A stated that this learning method was very helpful, especially for pronunciation, which acknowledge as a major weakness. Because it was done concurrently with learning activities, A's strategy tended to be more structured. As a result, pronunciation repetition occurred regularly and aligned with learning needs.

Excerpt 4

N: *"Watching 'Bali speak' videos, where foreigners are interviewed in English in Bali, to learn daily conversation."*

A: *"Watching Syifa Hadju's motivational content in English that is relatable to young people and increases vocabulary."*

The findings indicate that participant N benefited from the "Bali speak" content, which consisted of interviews with native speakers in real-life situations. This content provided authentic input in contextual, daily conversation, thus supporting practical vocabulary acquisition that could be applied immediately. Furthermore, participant A gained input through motivational English content presented by Indonesian public figures such as Syifa

Hadju. This content not only provided new vocabulary but also had emotional appeal because the topics were relevant to the lives of teenagers. This has the potential to increase motivation and engagement in language learning. Overall, both participants used TikTok to obtain different types of English input: (N) authentic and practical and (A) motivational and relatable. Both participants contributed to enhancing their speaking skills in different ways.

Creating English-based TikTok videos

Excerpt 5

N: *“Yes, but only a few times.”*

A: *“Maybe one video.”*

Findings from both participants indicate that the practice of creating and uploading English videos on TikTok is still somewhat limited. Participant N has only tried it a few times, while participant A has perhaps tried it once. This suggests that although TikTok’s features allow learners to practice speaking productively through content creation, participants have not yet fully utilized this opportunity.

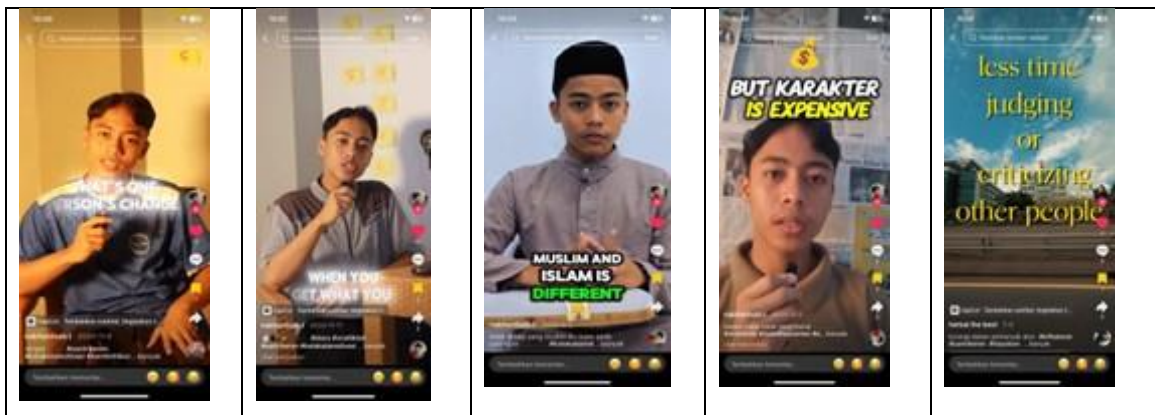


Figure 1. Some examples screenshot of the TikTok content made by participant

The screenshot above shows a create motivational video in English by participant N using TikTok’s basic recording feature. These videos almost entirely consist of simple motivational phrases delivered in English. This screenshot above illustrates a motivational video produced by participant A using TikTok’s interactive “Voice Over” feature. In this video participant A delivers a motivational message by combining English voice recordings with specific visuals. Utilizing the voice over feature allow participant A to

prepare for subsequent material in advance, resulting in clearer and more structured pronunciation. Both participants demonstrated how TikTok is utilized as a tool for independent speaking practice, where students not only consume content but also actively produce their own English, thus supporting the development of speaking skills.

Excerpt 6

N: *"I get likes from my family on my English content, and that makes me excited."*

A: *"I get a lot of likes and comments that are relevant to my content, which increases my motivation."*

Findings from both participants suggest that feedback such as likes and comment on TikTok can play a significant role in motivating students to enhance their English skills. N felt motivated primarily by family support, besides A was more moved by the broader social response in the form of comments and likes from the audience. This emphasizes that TikTok is not only a language practice platform, but also a space for social interaction that strengthens learning motivation.

The role of TikTok in enhancing students 'English-speaking skills:

Excerpt 7

N: *"I felt changes in pronunciation and frequency of English use, acknowledged by my teacher and friends."*

A: *"My vocabulary increased significantly previously limited to approximately 500 words, but now it has increased after using TikTok."*

Participant N finding suggest that TikTok plays a dual role; enhancing pronunciation accuracy and encouraging the frequency of English use in daily interactions. Speaking more frequently provides more opportunities to refine sound production. Social feedback, including recognition from teachers and friends, serves as external evidence that change is occurring and as a process by which errors/progress are noticed by the speaker, in line with the noticing Hypothesis-conscious attention to language form triggers enhancement). Furthermore, the increase in the "persentase keseringan" of English use suggests that TikTok serves as a trigger for more intensive oral practice. Participant A experienced repeated exposure to the lexicon in the context of short videos, which facilitated incidental vocabulary acquisition. Furthermore, participant A placed a greater emphasis on expanding vocabulary. Previously, felt vocabulary was limited before using TikTok, but after being

exposed to a variety of content, vocabulary increased. This vocabulary expansion may enrich speaking skills, as a broader vocabulary provides greater flexibility in self-expression.

Excerpt 8

N: *"I felt an enhancement in pronunciation, particularly in pronouncing certain words more accurately."*

A: *"I experienced an increase in vocabulary, but felt my speaking skills were not fully developed."*

Finding from both participants indicate that TikTok contributed to enhanced speaking skills, but in different aspects. Participant N demonstrated enhancements in pronunciation. This suggests that repeated exposure to spoken input from TikTok provides a more accurate pronunciation model. Similarly, exposure to spoken content from native speakers through TikTok fostered the process of noticing, namely the learner's awareness of correct language forms. Participant A placed greater emphasis on vocabulary development. Participant A acknowledged that although vocabulary has increased, but speaking skills were still limited. This reflects differences in the level of input utilization, with participant A primarily acquiring lexical knowledge rather than productive speaking skills.

Excerpt 9

N: *"Motivation from TikTok is inconsistent and weaker compared to support from parents and teachers."*

A: *"TikTok enhances motivation in pronunciation and vocabulary learning, but not in uploading or active production."*

From both participants, it can be concluded that TikTok's role in motivating students to learn to speak English is not completely dominant, but still makes a significant contribution. Participant N indicated that motivation derived from TikTok was not as strong as motivation derived from external factors such as parental or teacher support. This emphasizes that TikTok functions more as a complementary factor or secondary motivator, rather than a primary source of learning enthusiasm. In other words, TikTok, in this context, does not function solely as a motivational tool, but rather plays a supporting role in the process of learning to speak. Participant A expressed a slightly different view. Participant A emphasized that TikTok can increase the desire to learn, especially in certain

skills such as pronunciation, vocabulary mastery, and simple speaking practice. However, this motivation did not directly drive A to upload speaking videos on the platform. This suggests that TikTok plays a strength role in providing internalized practice motivation than public performance motivation.

Excerpt 10

N: *"I felt a particular enhancement in pronunciation, especially in distinguishing vowel sounds (ei, ai, a, eu)."*

A: *"I admitted to enhancing, especially because I was encouraged to practice speaking English in real life."*

Participant N demonstrated enhancement in the technical level of pronunciation, especially in distinguishing vowel sound in English. Furthermore, participant A emphasized the motivational dimension of TikTok use, which encouraged to become more confident in practicing English in real life.

Excerpt 11

N: *"I feel confident because TikTok serves as a space for independent practice."*

A: *"I feel confident practicing English in real life."*

Both participants indicated that TikTok contributed to increased confidence in speaking English. N assessed that confidence grew because of the safe space for practice. On the other hand, participant A associated confidence with the courage to apply English in real life. This shows that TikTok serves not only as a practice space, but also as a trigger for channelling skills into real-life contexts. Thus, TikTok can serve as a medium that bridges practice and performance in speaking skills.

Challenges faced in utilizing TikTok to enhance students' speaking skills:

Excerpt 12

N: *"Feeling shy and lacking confidence are the main challenges; I have to overcome my shyness and prepare myself more thoroughly."*

A: *"Experiencing difficulty with pronunciation; overcoming this with the help of Google Translate voice and repeated practice."*

These findings indicate that the challenges students face in using TikTok to learn speaking encompass both psychological and technical aspects. Participant N faced the challenge of shyness. This situation suggests that affective factors play a significant role in the speaking

learning process. Participant A struggled to pronounce words correctly. Participant A addressed this challenge by utilizing assistive technology such as Google Translate voice. This demonstrates self-regulated learning, where students take the initiative to find solutions to their challenges.

Excerpt 13

N: *"Most network issues, that's all."*

A: *"So far none."*

Participant N experienced internet network disruptions, while Participant A has not experienced any disruptions so far.

b. Discussion

These findings reveal that TikTok functions as an input-output based learning platform that supports the development of students' speaking skills. Some participants relied on the FYP algorithm for language exposure, which aligns with Krashen's (1985) input Hypothesis language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible input slightly above their comprehension level. Though repeated exposure to pronunciation, vocabulary, and motivational podcast content, students can receive meaningful linguistics input that can enhance their speaking performance. However, this participant chose a selective learning approach, consciously choosing material that aligns with their goals or needs, demonstrating self-directed learning behaviour. Furthermore, the use of imitation and repetition mirrors the shadowing technique (Kadota, 2019), which strengthens the connection between listening and speaking, where students actively imitate pronunciation and intonation. This suggests that TikTok facilitates both passive and active engagement, transforming language input into productive speaking output. English language video production, including those using voice over and live recordings, supports Swain's (1995) Output Hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of language production to enhance fluency and accuracy. Students who record live videos practice spontaneous speech, besides those who use voice over focus on pronunciation accuracy, reflecting self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 2020). Furthermore, social interactions on TikTok, such as feedback, likes and comments, can motivate students to develop their skills, aligning with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of social interaction as a driver of language development. One participant added that students' reasons for producing output are influenced by social

(personal branding) and emotional (relatedness) motivations. Therefore, TikTok is not simply a technical platform but also has social and affective functions in encouraging students to practice speaking. This aligns with the concept of integrative motivation, where students use language as part of their social identity (Rofiah et al., 2024). Overall, TikTok contributed to students' speaking performance by increasing confidence, pronunciation accuracy, and vocabulary acquisition. These findings support the principles of Second Language Acquisition (Brown, 2004; Thorne, 2013), which suggest that authentic language use and frequent practice can enhance productive speaking skills. Enhanced phonological awareness, particularly in distinguishing English vowel sounds (Derwing & Munro, 2015), further demonstrates the role of authentic input. Students also reported that their confidence in their progress was strengthened by external validation from peers and educators, in line with Usher and Pajares' (2019) self-efficacy theory. However, students faced several challenges, both technical and psychological. Technical issues included pronunciation difficulties, which students addressed by using additional tools such as Google Translate. Psychologically, shyness and anxiety were key barriers, consistent with Horwitz et al. (1986), who emphasized that language anxiety can negatively impact speaking performance. These findings suggest that TikTok relies not only on the ease of its technology, but also on students' ability to maintain motivation and overcome challenges within themselves.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that TikTok has proven to be an effective and engaging platform for enhancing students' English-speaking skills. The platform supports input and output processes in second language acquisition by providing authentic, multimodal exposure to English through algorithm-based content and creative features. Students' interaction with TikTok, whether through watching, imitating, or creating English videos, allows for meaningful practice that strengthens pronunciation, fluency, and speaking confidence. These findings indicate that TikTok allows students to experience language use outside the classroom by combining entertainment and education. Students increase linguistic awareness and communicative competence through repetition, imitation, and peer feedback. These results suggest that the integration of social media, particularly TikTok, can facilitate informal and autonomous language learning in language

acquisition. This is consistent with the theories of Krashen (1985), Swain (1995), and Vygotsky (1978). Despite the benefits, students face several challenges, including pronunciation difficulties, limited vocabulary, and shyness when creating videos. These constraints demonstrate for language exposure and delivery, teacher guidance is crucial to maximize its pedagogical potential. In short, TikTok's innovative features and short-form videos format have opened new avenues for language learning and transformed the social media platform into a dynamic learning environment. Therefore, educators are encouraged to integrate TikTok based activities as a supplementary tool to foster students speaking skills and encourage independent, interactive learning outside the traditional classroom.

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