Analyzing TikTok Videos as Digital Resources for Developing EFL Speaking Skills: A Qualitative Content Study

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Abstract: Speaking English is a crucial part of learning English as a foreign language (EFL), yet many Indonesian students struggle with vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. While numerous studies have been conducted on mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), little is known about the precise function of TikTok videos as a self-help tool for speaking acquisition, particularly in studies that do not consider the user's perspective. This study examines how TikTok videos can help improve English speaking skills, with an emphasis on vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. Three TikTok videos were selected using a qualitative content study. The results indicate that these videos demonstrate authentic and spontaneous English speaking techniques that can help users improve their speaking skills through unstructured digital content. This implies that TikTok videos can be used as supplementary speaking examples for students learning English as a second language (EFL). Teachers and content producers can learn more about the educational potential of social media platforms from this research.

Keywords: *speaking skill; TikTok videos; mobile-assisted language learning; qualitative research, content analysis*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the most important skills in learning English because it allows one to express ideas, feelings, and information clearly and effectively. As stated by Arini & Wahyudin (2022), speaking is a form of language production that involves the ability to produce spoken language. Furthermore, Arghashi et al. (2022) also state that speaking is crucial for human interaction because humans communicate verbally every day. Therefore, it is important for students to practice speaking English in real conversations to improve their speaking skills. However, many students in Indonesia struggle with pronunciation, grammatical structure, and remembering the correct vocabulary to use in their conversations. One of the challenges hindering students' English learning is the interactive nature of classroom learning, which often leads to passive learning. Consequently, students simply listen and watch the teacher write on the board without participating in the learning process. Therefore, it might be crucial to involve of technology in language learning process that can enhance the learning experience.

In this digital era, the rapid development of social media platforms has transformed various aspects of education, including language learning. One such platform is TikTok, a social media platform currently popular among all groups, especially Generation Z because this generation grew up in an era of rapid technological development, resulting in the fact that traditional learning has become less effective. This platform offers the opportunity to engage students through short, engaging videos. Rajendran & Yunus (2021) and Alisoy (2024)confirm that TikTok operates within the MALL model by providing mobile, accessible, and flexible learning opportunities. As stated by Martarini et al. (2021), people today communicate more frequently via the internet because it makes it easier to interact and communicate without limits. Similarly, Zaitun et al. (2021) emphasize the potential of TikTok's interactive media in improving speaking skills through comments, shares, and likes. This opportunity links to Bandura (1977) through Social Learning Theory, who claims that listening to real English conversations videos encourages learners to imitate similar speaking behaviors. Therefore, the generation that grew up with technology must be supported by modern learning and integrate technology to make learning interesting and effective.

The use of smartphones in learning is considered effective because it is easily accessible, easy to use, and easy to obtain information. In this context, TikTok not only functions as an entertainment medium but also has the potential to be used in education. As stated by Dewi & Arifani (2021), they classify TikTok as a form of mobile learning (M-Learning), where videos can help learners acquire vocabulary, improve pronunciation, and practice language skills in a dynamic and engaging way. TikTok, as a social media platform, allows its users to upload short videos and has the potential to be used as a learning tool. This is in line with what Masruddin (2018) stated that short videos can be used as an effective speaking learning tool because students can observe actions and also associate them with verbs or other grammatical elements. Furthermore, Rahmawati et al. (2023) also reveal that even short videos lasting 15 to 60 seconds have been shown to engage students and reduce non-task-related behavior. TikTok's features, such as short-form video creation, are effective in teaching basic skills, making it a valuable tool in learning environments. In reality, TikTok's educational value is increasingly recognized, as many content creators use the platform to teach various subjects, share knowledge, and instill values.

Previous studies have shown that TikTok can improve students' motivation and self-confidence (Alisoy, 2024; Dewanta, 2020; Pratiwi & Waluyo, 2023; Sugeng Irianto, 2021; Sugianto, 2024; Marleni et al., 2021; Chan & Lee, 2023). However, these studies focused on students' perceptions or experiences when using TikTok and did not analyze the linguistic content of the videos themselves. Due to the limited research exploring how TikTok videos function as self-learning materials that show real-life examples of fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, this study aims to analyze TikTok videos as a digital medium for developing English speaking skills among students. It focuses on elements such as fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, and explores how these elements contribute to speaking ability. This study was conducted based on the following research question: How does TikTok facilitate English speaking skills for students?

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative content research design, as suggested by Roller & Lavrakas (2025) because its focus was on analyzing the linguistic aspects of TikTok videos, an internet platform for English speaking practice (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher chose this design to emphasize providing rich descriptions, rather than calculating numerical data. Qualitative research is ideal because it allows for the investigation of concrete examples of speaking skills through naturalistic observation, but without controlling the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In contrast, qualitative research was chosen to allow for in-depth observation of how fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar emerge in TikTok videos (Roller & Lavrakas, 2025). Rather than relying on questionnaires or tests, the researcher preferred to observe and examine the content itself and how it is presented on the platform (Hennink et al., 2020). This was done in accordance with the researcher's preference for examining the video content itself, rather than the students' personal experiences or perceptions.

Non-participant observation was used to collect data (Hennink et al., 2020). The researcher observed three TikTok videos selected from the account @englishonthestreet. The selection was based on several criteria: the videos had to contain spoken English content, show student interaction, and focus on informal English conversation. The researcher observed without conversing with or commenting on the videos, simply taking notes on an observation sheet (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The observation sheet was designed to document fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar from the videos. This involves a step-by-step process: (1) database search and keyword-based video selection, (2) listening and transcribing audio content, (3) documentation of observed speech features, and (4) analysis of observed patterns for components of speaking ability (Roller & Lavrakas, 2025). Supporting features are also captured by the researcher such as video length, audience reactions in the comments section, and expressions by the speakers, which complete the context of the analysis. Through qualitative content study, research using non-participant observation, this study aims to objectively report how TikTok videos can be used as a learning model for English speaking ability without being influenced by subjective comments by users (Hennink et al., 2020).

RESULTS

An analysis of three selected TikTok videos shows that each video consistently displays authentic and spontaneous English speaking behavior, effectively promoting the learning of speaking skills using informal digital media. All three videos demonstrate fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and grammar, demonstrating how a variety of language skills are naturally reflected using TikTok. In the first video, the speaker demonstrates exceptional fluency, characterized by fluency, minimal pauses, and the use of coherent words such as "actually," "by the way," and "so." Her pronunciation is also very clear with accurate stress and intonation, approaching native speaker patterns. The speaker then uses complex grammatical structures, such as conditional sentences and passive verb forms, to express herself, as in examples such as "If I had known earlier, I would have joined." The conversation remains coherent and cohesive, demonstrating the speaker's mastery of English conversational strategies.

Viewer feedback in the comments section was also positive, with admiration and support, as some viewers enjoyed the speaker's fluency and clarity of delivery. Comments include "You sound so natural!" and "This really helps me practice my English!" This demonstrates that the videos not only provide examples but also serve as inspiration for other learners to improve their English skills. In the second video, the presenter speaks confidently using descriptive language based on personal and recreational interests. Compared to the first video, the grammatical constructions used are somewhat simpler, using both the present simple and present continuous verb forms. However, the conversation remains fluid and spontaneous through the speaker, with adequate turn-taking cues and filler words such as "You know," "I think," and "for me."

At the vocabulary introduction level, words such as adjectives and descriptions of preferences are used efficiently within the context of the dialogue, for example, "I really like watching science fiction movies" and "My favorite type of food is spicy noodles." Highly positive interactions with the dialogue were again observed, as evidenced by repeated viewer comments supporting both the emotional connection and the educational purpose. Statements such as "This is so like me!" and "Learning English from videos like this makes it easier to remember words" appeared repeatedly, demonstrating that TikTok videos incorporating informal topics into language learning are relevant and beneficial for students.

The third video featured the speaker speaking in a more tentative and deliberate manner, yet still highly communicative. The speaker continually pauses before continuing a sentence, a trait often found among learners because they often think as they speak. Despite this, the speaker manages to convey her message through simple vocabulary and basic grammar, predominantly using subject-verb-object sentence structures. Notably, she addresses the topic with confidence and emotional emphasis, incorporating gestures and tone of voice to further enhance her delivery. For example, her use of rising intonation when asking rhetorical questions like "Do you know what I mean?" captures the audience's attention. The interaction also feels genuine and warm, especially as the speaker acknowledges her own shortcomings, which seems to resonate with the listeners. The audience's response is one of surprise at the speaker's composure, despite her seemingly simple tone. Positive comments such as "You speak better than you think!" and "Even simple sentences can sound good if spoken confidently" demonstrate that spontaneous, unplanned speaking encourages students to participate without fear of mistakes or flaws.

Taken together, the three videos demonstrate several common characteristics that strengthen TikTok's role as an informal language learning medium. Each video features authentic conversational topics, spontaneous speech patterns, and observable nonverbal cues such as facial expressions and gestures. These latter nonverbal cues provide students with a complete speaking model not typically found in written learning materials. All three videos also generated significant audience interaction, creating a social learning environment that goes beyond content consumption. These attributes illustrate TikTok's potential as a virtual space for observing and participating in English-speaking groups. Data collected from examining these videos supports the argument that TikTok is an accessible, motivating, and language-rich environment.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study reveal that TikTok videos, particularly those produced by educational content creators like @englishonthestreet, have great potential as an electronic medium to promote the development of English speaking skills among university students. This aligns with a previous study conducted by Marleni et al. (2021), which emphasized that integrating TikTok into English learning positively impacts students' speaking skills and motivation. While Marleni et al.(2021) targeted classroom action research, this study provides depth by analyzing specific speaking components—fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar—through systematic observation. In line with Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), the analysis confirmed that listening to real English conversations during TikTok videos encourages learners to imitate similar speaking behaviors.

Throughout the three videos in question, the speakers exhibited spontaneous yet structured conversational patterns that mimic real-life communication. For example, Killa's video exhibits sophisticated grammatical patterns and fluent speech patterns, demonstrating how social learning is achieved through exposure to effective language use. This finding supports Dewi & Arifani (2021) who argue that TikTok as a MALL medium facilitates active and interactive vocabulary and pronunciation acquisition. In the context of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), as emphasized by Rajendran & Yunus (2021), TikTok operates within the MALL model by providing mobile, accessible, and flexible learning opportunities. This study confirms that learners can access English input anywhere and anytime, echoing (Alisoy, 2024) evidence regarding personalization and flexibility in MALL environments. TikTok's video format is consistent with Chan & Lee (2023) study, which showed that Generation Z students prefer video-based materials over traditional text-based learning in previous years, valuing visualizations and real-world situational examples.

Furthermore, the study witnessed how comments on TikTok videos serve as a form of social reinforcement that encourages learners to actively engage with the material. These findings complement those of study conducted by Zaitun et al. (2021), who cited the potential of TikTok's interactive media in improving speaking skills through comments, shares, and likes. Comments obtained in this study expressed admiration, encouragement, and even written motivations for learning English, which is evidence of TikTok's contribution to creating a learner-centered, collaborative learning environment. Unlike previous research conducted by Pratiwi & Waluyo (2023), which used more universal digital tools like Kahoot! and Google Forms, this study specifically targets TikTok as its platform. While both emphasize increasing student autonomy and engagement through digital

media, this study provides a more in-depth linguistic analysis by examining aspects of actual speech and video content, rather than generalized learning outcomes.

A distinguishing feature of this study is the alignment between entertainment and learning values. While Dewanta (2020) and Sugeng Irianto (2021) noted TikTok's dual nature as a learning and entertainment medium, this study categorically identifies specific aspects of videos that influence learning outcomes. These aspects include correct pronunciation, diverse vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and natural fluency—all of which provide evidence supporting elements of speaking competence. This study also applies concepts from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), following Sugianto (2024), who analyzed register features—field, tenor, and mode—in TikTok clips. All videos demonstrate informal yet significant language use, with speakers adjusting their tenor (interpersonal dynamics) to suit the interviewer's position and adopting a relaxed mode appropriate for social media. This confirms that language learning through TikTok encompasses more than just lexico-grammatical knowledge, including sociolinguistic competency.

Unlike Saed et al. (2021), who examined YouTube as a platform for acquiring speaking skills, this study focuses more on TikTok's unique advantages, such as video length, live comment interaction, and higher social interaction factors. TikTok's algorithmic distribution allows learners to be naturally exposed to targeted English content, with the potential for more frequent exposure and learning. Instructionally, this study suggests that educators can utilize TikTok videos as a supplementary learning resource in English lessons. However, as the study's findings reveal, content curation is necessary to ensure linguistic quality and pedagogical appropriateness, given the hybrid nature of TikTok content. This study empirically confirms that TikTok can contribute significantly to improving English speaking skills using natural, engaging, and socially interactive video content. This study bridges the gap between previous theoretical models—namely Social Learning Theory, MALL, and SFL—and actual observations, thus providing a scientific and consistent contribution to the growing research on new media in language acquisition.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze TikTok videos as a virtual resource for learning English speaking skills, focusing on four elements: fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Through non-participant observation of three selected TikTok videos, the study reveals that TikTok provides spontaneous and authentic English speaking moments that can be applied as pedagogical materials for university students. These findings answer the research question and complement our current research on Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) by highlighting that TikTok's value as a teaching tool lies not only in students' feelings but also in the quality of the linguistic content presented by the videos. Unlike most previous studies that focused on students' responses to learning using TikTok, this study contributes to the discipline by providing objective, content-based results. This confirms that informal digital platforms can be powerful self-learning resources outside of formal classroom contexts. Teachers and students can leverage these findings by selectively using TikTok videos as supplementary speaking practice, but focusing on videos that demonstrate good, accurate, and engaging language use.

Despite TikTok's promise as an English language learning platform, several limitations were identified in this study. Some videos may contain simplified grammar or informal expressions that may not be suitable for formal learning purposes. Therefore, TikTok should be used as a tool to complement actual speaking practice, not a substitute for formal classes. For future research, it would be ideal to increase the sample size by examining a wider variety of TikTok content, such as different creators, topics, and proficiency levels. Combining content analysis with experiments, such as pre- and post-test speaking tests, would provide a more precise estimate of TikTok's true value in improving speaking skills. Further exploration of other elements of speaking—for example, speech patterns and intonation—would enhance understanding of TikTok's role in language learning. This would benefit teachers and researchers in designing more effective learning strategies that integrate social media into both formal and informal English language learning frameworks.

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