

Can TikTok Make a Difference?: The Impact of Language Learning Strategies on English Speaking Competence

Wenxuan Cheng

Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia
Email: chengwenxuan01@126.com

Norhakimah Khaïessa Ahmad

Department of Language and Humanities Education, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia
Email: norhakimah@upm.edu.my

Nooreen Noordin

Department of Language and Humanities Education, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia
Email: nooreen@upm.edu.my

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Abstract

Studies have shown TikTok can improve learners' motivation and confidence in English speaking. Although there have been studies on applying language learning strategies to improve speaking skills, there is still a lack of studies to test the usage of language learning strategies (LLS) on TikTok to practice English speaking skills. This paper explores the relationship between language learning strategies and students' speaking competence with TikTok as a learning tool. Quantitative and qualitative methods were adopted to focus on the impact of language learning strategies on speaking competence. A modified version of the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) was used to collect the utility of 403 university students in Beijing on these strategies. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to find the use of language learning strategies by two high-achieving and two low-achieving learners. The results show metacognitive strategies are used most frequently, followed by compensation strategies. Furthermore, compensation strategies significantly correlate with students' speaking competence, followed by affective and social strategies. Among these strategies, high-achieving learners use a wider range of strategies than low-achieving learners. Therefore, the comprehensive use of these strategies is crucial to improving students' speaking competence.

Keywords: Language Learning Strategies, English Speaking Competence, Tiktok, College Students, Learning Tool

Introduction

With the rapid development of globalisation, English speaking has become increasingly valued in the education of non-English speaking countries. As an essential tool, English is no longer just a language course but a necessary skill for cross-cultural and international communication (Pawlak, 2021). With the development of the demand for international communication, the importance of spoken English has increased compared to the traditional three areas of reading, writing, and listening. In this regard, speaking competence refers to the ability to communicate verbally in a clear, coherent, and compelling manner appropriate for the specific purpose, occasion, and audience (Chand, 2014). Speaking competence comprises language knowledge, fundamental speaking abilities, and communication tactics (Goh & Burns, 2012; Sabnani & Renandya, 2019). Meanwhile, the importance of language learning strategies in building oral skills is increasingly being recognised. This is mainly because it has been found that effective language learning strategies can help learners master language skills more systematically and express themselves orally with greater confidence.

The Importance of Language Learning Strategy on Speaking

Scholars devoted themselves to strategy classification to distinguish each language learning strategy (Ranjan et al., 2021). Based on how each strategy affected the language acquisition process of the learners, Rubin (1981) separated the techniques into direct and indirect strategies. Then, Oxford (1990) refined the learning strategy according to this classification. She classifies direct strategies as memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies while indirect strategies as metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. According to Ernomo (2018), Oxford's (1990) classification approach is considered the most comprehensive.

Research has shown that various language learning strategies have diverse roles in improving speaking skills. For example, Oflaz (2019) indicated that learners with more language learning strategies, such as metacognitive and compensation strategies, can get higher speaking levels. Dewi et al. (2017, January) found that metacognitive strategies can help students improve their English-speaking skills by controlling the learning process and giving a suitable evaluation of the learning results. In contrast, Taheri et al. (2020) found that compensation strategies also have the most significant positive relationship with speaking competence, which facilitates learners in overcoming communication barriers by equipping them with the ability to resolve misunderstandings (Nakatani, 2006).

In addition, memory, cognitive, affective, and social strategies are practical tools in learning to speak. Memory strategies help learners store, retain, and recall new information, such as vocabulary and phrases, essential for improving oral proficiency. Ghorbani and Riabi (2011) found that memory strategies, like mnemonics, involve associating a new word with a familiar word or image pronounced similarly. For example, to remember the English word "gigantic", a learner can associate it with "giant" and imagine a giant standing over a city. For cognitive strategies, Di Carlo (2017) indicated that cognitive strategies mainly involve encoding, storing, and retrieving information. For this, learners need to identify and

categorise new vocabulary into different categories for better understanding. For example, learners could classify sentence patterns and vocabulary in daily conversations into categories according to context, such as “ordering food,” “asking for directions,” and “introducing yourself,” which can help them apply what they have learned more easily in different situations. Zakaria et al.’s (2019) research shows affective strategies refer to managing emotions, attitudes, and motivation during language learning. Social strategies refer to strategies for facilitating language learning through interpersonal interaction and cooperation. Educators can better support students in developing their language-speaking competence by incorporating affective and social strategies into language learning.

Over the past five decades, numerous studies have demonstrated that language learning strategies play a pivotal role in enhancing learners' English-speaking proficiency (Lai, 2009). These strategies not only facilitate the effective acquisition of vocabulary, grammar, and other linguistic knowledge but also improve learners' communication skills and motivation, thereby enabling them to navigate the complexities of language acquisition with increased confidence. However, the use of these strategies varies according to learners' proficiency levels. Typically, more proficient learners employ metacognitive and cognitive strategies, such as planning, analysis, and reasoning, whereas less proficient learners tend to rely on memory and social strategies. Additionally, research indicates that highly motivated learners are more inclined to utilize advanced strategies, including social and affective strategies (Chang & Liu, 2013). Social strategies, in particular, involve enhancing language skills through interaction with others, such as engaging in group discussions and actively seeking opportunities for communication, with interaction with native speakers recognized as the most effective approach. Thus, interaction emerges as a critical component of language learning strategies.

Up to now, second language learners still lack opportunities to interact with others when learning to speak. Studies have shown that many English learners who show English as a foreign language (EFL) or those English learners who show English as a second language (ESL) are unable to effectively translate their acquired language knowledge into practical communication opportunities due to a lack of authentic communication opportunities (Wharton, 2000). This difficulty has also been reported in China. It was found that most Chinese students have a low language learning situation when learning English due to the strict examination mechanism. Most Chinese students learn English through rote memorisation without practising communication skills and only "dumb English" skill access (Yu & Wang, 2009). In addition, learners may lack confidence in oral expression or be uncomfortable with the language environment when they use other languages to speak. This often leads to scholars' failure to effectively apply what they have learned in life, which affects the performance of strategy usage (Woodrow, 2005).

Using TikTok to Learn to Speak

In modern educational environments, there is a close link between the use of technology and the effective use of language learning strategies. With the development of network technology, especially the popularity of social media and short video platforms, learners' language learning methods have changed significantly (Al Fadda Hind, 2020; Otchie & Pedaste, 2020). Specifically, many learners widely regard social media platforms such as TikTok as practical educational tools (Xiuwen & Razali, 2021). TikTok is a new, trendy social

media platform that learners use to practice speaking English. The exciting, vivid, and well-made English videos and online streaming provide abundant materials for students to access native English (Ferstephanie & Lady Pratiwi, 2022; Xiuwen & Razali, 2021). Studies have identified positive attitudes among teachers and learners to use TikTok in class to improve speaking competence (Yang, 2020; Zhen et al., 2022).

First, TikTok provides a wide range of educational resources and opportunities for oral practice. For example, TikTok helps improve learners' confidence in speaking English through unlimited repetition, which is popular with the general public (Novitasari & Addinna, 2022). Meanwhile, TikTok allows users to create short videos on various topics, and students can express themselves on topics that interest them, such as education, culture, and entertainment. Users can post their English-language story films or share English learning strategies with others. By creating trendy English-related videos, learners can pay attention to the content they are interested in, improve their creativity, and make learning English enjoyable and not boring (Herlisya & Wiratno, 2022). Herlisya and Wiratno (2022) argue that this practice can help students use relevant vocabulary and expressions in real-life situations and improve fluency and practical language skills. Moreover, some studies have shown that TikTok provides opportunities to watch and imitate videos of native speakers. Students can imitate the pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm in these videos to improve their pronunciation accuracy and natural intonation (Fitria, 2023; Jessica Ruth Melvira & Katemba, 2023; Yang, 2020).

Second, as a social media platform focusing on short video content, TikTok provides a unique interactive and multimodal language learning opportunity. It enables learners to learn languages from multiple countries without geographical restrictions (Ferstephanie & Lady Pratiwi, 2022; Komariyah et al., 2022). For example, TikTok has a variety of functions that can help students improve their oral skills. In the study by Zhen et al. (2022), the “two-person challenge” was pointed out, which is a function that allows learners to have real-time conversations with others and motivates them to use the learned language in actual communication. Users are encouraged to improve their fluency and confidence in expressing themselves in English by imitating, repeating, and improvising. In addition, TikTok allows users to interact with other users through comments, likes, and video reactions. Other participants can provide feedback after watching the user's video performance, thus achieving a cooperative learning model. Sarkila et al. (2024) have shown that such feedback mechanisms help learners gain real-time suggestions and encouragement when practising speaking, improving their confidence and expression.

Third, TikTok helps to improve learners' confidence and motivate them to learn. When learners speak English on TikTok, they can put themselves in a comfortable zone, and they rarely feel stressed or embarrassed when they talk to others (Herlisya & Wiratno, 2022; Komariyah et al., 2022; Putri, 2022). Unlike traditional social settings, where they need to face other learners (Komariyah et al., 2022), they often feel less nervous and stressed in this mode, which provides them with a more relaxed learning environment. However, virtual learning does not affect the efficiency of English learning. In this regard, Ferstephanie and Lady Pratiwi (2022) observed that learners who used TikTok to learn English improved their oral skills effectively. Moreover, Zaitun et al. (2021) also showed that learners' oral skills improved significantly after participating in activities on TikTok.

Input Hypothesis

The input hypothesis is a theory proposed by a linguist named Krashen, who explained the acquisition mechanism of a second language (L2). This hypothesis shows that language acquisition mainly depends on “comprehensible input,” meaning that learners are exposed to the input they understand, which must be slightly higher than their current language proficiency level (White, 1987). Moreover, the Input Hypothesis is considered a psycholinguistic and pedagogical model. Regarding psycholinguistics, the Input Hypothesis fails to adequately explain how the widely accepted phenomenon of language acquisition stagnation (such as fossilisation) occurs in a language acquisition-rich environment. On the side of the pedagogical model, the Input Hypothesis may not be directly applicable in high school and college foreign language classrooms, which are far removed from the immersive second language environment on which the model is based (Higgs, 1985).

In short, according to the input hypothesis, online learning of a second language makes up for the deficiency of traditional education in not providing immersive learning. Thus, this theory offers an essential perspective for understanding language acquisition online (such as the TikTok platform).

Output Hypothesis

The output hypothesis was proposed by the Canadian linguist Merrill Swain in 1985. This theory emphasises the importance of language output in second language learning, especially in promoting language development through the actual use of the language. The output hypothesis believes that language learners can effectively promote their language skills development by using language to communicate (Liming, 1990). Swain (1993) shows that the output hypothesis is of great significance to immersive education and second language learning, which aims to ensure that through active use of the language by learners themselves, learners can improve their communication skills.

Despite growing interest in the use of social media platforms like TikTok for language learning, there is limited understanding of how learners employ language learning strategies when practising speaking skills on this online platform. While previous research has demonstrated the general benefits of TikTok for language acquisition, particularly in improving oral skills, the specific role of various LLS (e.g., metacognitive, cognitive, social) in enhancing speaking competence remains unclear. Most existing studies about language learning strategies focus on offline classrooms, leaving a gap in knowledge about how LLS are utilized and their impact in informal, online platforms like TikTok.

This lack of empirical data creates a challenge for educators and learners who wish to leverage TikTok's potential to develop speaking proficiency effectively. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the relationship between the use of LLS on TikTok and learners' speaking competence and to explore how different strategies influence oral communication abilities in this unique virtual context. Addressing this gap will provide valuable insights for improving English language teaching practices through social media-driven learning strategies. Thus, this study is done to answer the following questions;

- What is the relationship between language learning strategies using TikTok and speaking competence?
- How do different language learning strategies influence students' speaking competence?

Method*Research Design*

This study aims to evaluate the correlation between various language learning strategies employed through TikTok and students' speaking skills. The study also explores which strategies are more advantageous in enhancing students' speaking competence. To address the research questions of this correlational research, a quantitative methods approach is utilised to support the qualitative method. First, this research uses a quantitative method via collecting questionnaire data to analyse the relationship between language learning strategies and students' speaking competence. Then, semi-structured interviews were used as the qualitative method to understand which strategies are more advantageous in enhancing students' speaking competence (Dornyei, 2007).

Population

The population of this study is college students in universities in Beijing, China. Beijing is a first-tier city in China, where students are quicker to embrace new learning tools and ideas, which can lead the way for students from other provinces. 403 informants finished the online questionnaire, including 267 undergraduates and 136 postgraduates. All of them were selected randomly in Beijing universities. 4 students in Beijing were selected purposefully on TikTok to conduct the semi-structured interview. They are chosen by purposive sampling. The criteria are as follows: informants are students in higher education who learn English speaking by using TikTok. Two of them have achieved higher scores on English-speaking tests than the other two to some degree.

Instrumentation

This study adapted the Oxford (2016) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) according to TikTok and English-speaking features. The new questionnaire was named as SILL-TikTok. The questionnaire was divided into the background information part and the SILL scale. The second part included 24 questions about strategies usage. Five Likert ratings were employed to indicate how frequently each type of tactic was used. 1 denotes that I am never or very never true; 2 indicates that I am typically not true; 3 indicates that I am somewhat true; 4 indicates that I am usually true; and 5 indicates that I am always or almost always true. The SILL-TikTok questionnaire was designed in English at first. Then, it was translated into Chinese because the informants were Chinese. Chinese is better for them to understand. Importantly, to ensure semantic equivalence, the researcher invited another translator to do back-translation (Behling & Law, 2000).

Qualitative Instrumentation – Semi-structured Interview

A semi-structured interview was conducted with four informants. The information collected from the interview can give a comprehensive understanding of the strategies used by learners. The interview lasted 20 minutes on average. The informants were interviewed one by one via TikTok or WeChat voice call; two were from TikTok and two from WeChat. Informants do not need to show their faces to feel relaxed and express themselves freely. Therefore, the researcher can collect enough information. The interviews were conducted in Chinese. The researcher took a record first and then translated sentence by sentence into English (Behling & Law, 2000).

Data Analysis

The primary analysis method is the Pearson correlation analysis. The data was analysed by SPSS 26.0. Pearson correlation coefficient is a parametric rank correlation measure that uses a monotone function to evaluate the relationship between two variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient ranges from -1 to 1, with a perfect positive relationship of +1 and a perfect negative one of -1 (Privitera & Ahlgrim-DeLzell, 2018). Description analysis was used to analyse the data collected by semi-structured interviews. The whole interview process of each informant was recorded with the permission of them. The researcher translated the content into English and excerpted the key sentences about the utility of language learning strategies.

Result and Discussion

Result

The findings are presented based on two research questions. This section displays the relationship between language learning strategies using TikTok and speaking competence. Table 1 shows learners' mean of each strategy when learning to talk on TikTok. Metacognitive strategies are the most frequently used strategies with a mean of 2.92, followed by compensation (2.89), cognitive (2.75), memory (2.66), affective (2.64), and social (2.51) strategies.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Strategies Use

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Memory	403	1.71	3.85	2.66	0.44
Cognitive	403	1.65	4.77	2.75	0.57
Compensation	403	1.52	4.46	2.89	0.56
Metacognitive	403	1.34	4.68	2.92	0.63
Affective	403	1.53	3.77	2.64	0.49
Social	403	1.58	3.68	2.51	0.59

The significance of the association between speaking competency and each type of technique is shown in Table 2. All six methods and speaking competency are significantly correlated. Among the six types, compensation strategies have the most significant and positive relationship (.268) with speaking competence, followed by affective and social strategies.

Table 2
Correlations between LLS Use and English-speaking Competence

	English Speaking Competence
Memory	.177(*).044
Cognitive	.217(*).013
Compensation	.268(**).002
Metacognitive	.217(*).013
Affective	.245(**).005
Social	.241(**).006
Strategies in all Pearson Correlation	.320(**).000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

To further illustrate this finding from the information collected by interview, this research found that the higher-achieving informants 1 and 2 used more strategies than lower-achieving informants 3 and 4. In particular, the higher-achieving informants use five kinds of strategies: metacognitive, cognitive, compensation, affective, and social strategies, while lower-achieving informants only use fewer strategies, such as only four in metacognitive, compensation, cognitive, and affective strategies.

First, this research found that metacognitive strategies are frequently used by higher-achieving and lower-achieving informants. Thus, metacognitive strategies play a crucial role in managing students' learning process. To illustrate, *Informant 1 stated that "using language learning strategies, such as metacognitive strategies, helped her gain a high score in English" so that she "can be admitted to dreaming college."* *Informant 2 was "aware that listening and speaking are the weak parts of his English, but metacognitive strategies help him"*. This fact explains the positive attitude of higher-achieving informants toward metacognitive strategies. On the other hand, informant 3 stated that *"using metacognitive strategy, such as making a learning plan both in the short and long term, could improve his speaking competence."* Meanwhile, informant 4 also agreed that metacognitive strategies such as *"doing practice and evaluating the progress earned regularly"* helps him better manage his learning process. Hence, it can be seen that metacognitive strategies allow students to learn English on both sides of higher-achieving informants and lower-achieving informants.

Secondly, cognitive strategies give the learners specific learning techniques to practice speaking skills, such as rehearsal, which involves repeating information to enhance memory, reading aloud or silently reciting, or setting particular goals and steps to solve problems encountered in their studies gradually. For instance, informant 2 stated that he always *"downloaded the English videos from TikTok and read step by step followed by videos"*. He argued that his routine is typically *"watches the videos first without the subtitles many times until he cannot catch more information."* Then he *"checks the subtitles word by word"* and *"practices the subtitles repeatedly"* until he can follow the whole video. In contrast, Informant 3 stated that he always *"takes some intensive listening lessons to grasp oral skills like linking and weak reading and take notes of the difficult sentence."* Apparently, these cognitive strategies help learners understand English grammar and vocabulary, which is the foundation of speaking. Paying attention to the pronunciation and intonation of the speaker in videos helps them better catch the content. Learners use cognitive strategies even more than metacognitive strategies.

Third, one interesting finding that must be highlighted in this study is that compensation strategies are used at a relatively low frequency but by both sides of higher-achieving and lower-achieving informants. As an illustration, informant 2 showed that the compensation strategies, like *"using gesture or paraphrasing to convey information"* and *"guessing the unknown expressions according to the pronunciation, tone of voice, and body language of others,"* make Informant 2 finish the conversation and speech on TikTok smoothly and successfully. In contrast, as a low achiever, informant 3 stated that compensation strategies like *"using simple words or describing the function or purpose of the words to replace the exact words"* help informant 3 boost fluent conversations. However, they all stated that they do not often use substitutes like synonyms or gestures to communicate with

others, as over-substitution can lead to inaccurate expression of meaning, except when dealing with specific words they are unsure how to express.

Fourth, Informants believed that using affective and memory strategies played crucial roles in their learning process on TikTok. Affective strategies helped them build confidence to speak openly, with both higher- and lower-achieving informants expressing sentiments like, "I can do it" or "It doesn't matter if I make mistakes, as long as others understand my message." These statements reflected a boost in confidence after sharing English-speaking videos on TikTok. Additionally, memory strategies were essential for vocabulary retention and fluency. For example, Informant 1 shared that making and reviewing word cards helped her remember new vocabulary, while Informant 3 mentioned that associating new words with specific scenes or images enabled him to quickly recall vocabulary in real conversations. Together, these strategies not only enhanced vocabulary mastery but also improved oral expression fluency.

Lastly, this study found that social strategies are only used by higher-achieving informants. For example, Informant 1 participates in the "English corner" to chat with other users in English. Social strategies allow her to practice speaking with real people on TikTok rather than artificial intelligence (AI). However, the low achiever, informant 4 mentioned that she always *"tries to make full preparation of the speech topic about all possible questions to avoid feeling nervous."* Thus, for lower-achieving learners, talking with others on TikTok is their last choice for practising English or not choosing. In other words, they are unwilling to use social strategies to practice spoken English. They tend to practice speaking skills by themselves. If they have to make a speech in public, they will encourage themselves to be brave to give the speech successfully.

Discussion

This study found that the metacognitive strategies used by the participants are most frequent. This result aligns with Kehing et al. (2021), who found that metacognitive strategies are the most popular strategies students use for speaking practice with newly developed digital tools. Wael et al. (2018) also discovered that when advanced learners take advantage of opportunities to converse with native speakers in the UK, they employ more metacognitive methods than other learners. Basalama et al. (2020) thought that female students select metacognitive methods primarily because they frequently assess their learning process to investigate and appraise their abilities. Although metacognitive strategies are essential in enhancing language learning, overreliance on these strategies may not be beneficial. Koban-Koç and Koç (2016) show that overreliance on metacognitive strategies may cause students to neglect other essential learning strategies, such as cognitive and social strategies, affecting their overall language competence. For example, they may feel insecure in real-life communication, leading to a lack of speaking proficiency.

Although metacognitive strategies were the most commonly employed, correlation data indicate that compensation strategies demonstrated the most substantial effectiveness. In other words, the more compensation strategies learners use, the better their speaking competence is. The findings are consistent with Taheri et al. (2020). They found that compensation strategies were mainly correlated with speaking skills. Compensation strategies play an essential role in language learning. Compared with traditional learning

methods, TikTok is a valuable platform providing more opportunities for learners to practice speaking by talking to other users in English or taking English videos. Compensation strategies help learners continue the speech or conversation when they cannot recall the words or phrases they want to say by expressing them differently with similar meanings. Consequently, using compensation strategies can make speaking more fluent and smoother.

Learners tend to ignore using affective and social strategies despite the high relationships between these strategies and speaking skills in the research. As shown above, language learning strategies were significantly correlated with students' speaking competence. This contrasts with the results of Oxford and Nyikos (1989), who discovered no significant relationship between language learning strategies and speaking competence. However, this conclusion is made inside a traditional educational framework. Moreover, by considering the technological learning environment, Xi-ting (2018) indicated that TikTok provides an opportunity for users to use language learning strategies to participate in English practices at any time and at any location, which improves students' speaking competence but increases the sense of fear and shyness. However, we firmly disagree with this Xi-Ting's report. We found that, the higher education students in this study using TikTok has improved their confidence level instead of increasing their sense of fear and shyness. In addition, this research found that utilising affective and social strategies is less frequent when students use language learning strategies to practice their English-speaking skills. The fact is that learners are not fully utilising effective and social strategies, and there is a lack of awareness of the benefits these strategies can offer. Chang and Liu (2013) indicated that it is essential to highlight the benefits of these strategies in the context of language learning.

Our qualitative data indicate that high-achieving learners use a wider variety of strategies, while low-achieving learners use fewer strategies. In particular, high-achieving learners employ metacognitive, cognitive, compensation, affective, and social strategies. In contrast, low-achieving learners rely solely on four categories of strategies: metacognitive, compensation, cognitive, and affective strategies. Higher-achieving students use more metacognitive strategies than lower-achieving students. This result is supported by Dewi et al. (2017, January). This study also suggests that low-achieving learners are not adept at using social strategies to learn language and prefer to practice alone. Ranjan et al. (2021) found the same result that the top 15 successful students use more social strategies than others. However, research by Etxebarria et al. (2012) shows that social strategies are essential for effective real-world oral practice. Unlike artificial intelligence, social interaction with real people can help learners improve their oral skills in the real world.

Conclusion

This study explores the relationship between language learning strategies and speaking competence, as well as the impact of different language learning strategies on students' speaking competence. This study shows that when using TikTok for language learning, language learning strategies are essential, and these strategies can effectively improve students' speaking competence. These strategies include metacognitive strategies, compensation strategies, cognitive strategies, memory strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. Among these, metacognitive strategies are used most frequently, followed by compensation, cognitive, memory, affective, and social strategies. Compensation strategies correlate most significantly with speaking competence, followed by affective,

social, metacognitive, cognitive, and memory strategies. At the same time, different language learning strategies have different effects on students' speaking competence. High-achieving learners use all types of strategies. High-achieving learners tend to use metacognitive, cognitive, compensation, affective and social strategies while low-achieving learners mainly rely on metacognitive, compensation, cognitive and affective strategies.

This study emphasises the diverse effects of language learning strategies on speaking proficiency. Although metacognitive strategies are commonly used, compensation strategies are the most efficient. Additionally, it is essential to prioritise compensation strategies to assist learners in learning to speak. Subsequently, affective and social strategies significantly correlate with speaking proficiency; however, they are not used to their full potential. This suggests increasing awareness of these strategies and incorporating them into curricula. Doing so will assist learners in overcoming emotional obstacles and becoming more actively involved in speaking activities, particularly in digital platforms such as TikTok.

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of language learning strategies by extending their application to the digital learning context, specifically on the social media platform TikTok. By integrating Oxford's classification of strategies into this innovative setting, the research offering new insights into the use and effectiveness of language learning strategies for enhancing English-speaking competence. The findings address inconsistencies in the literature regarding the most frequently used and effective strategies, offering fresh insights into how learners at different proficiency levels—both high- and low-achievers—utilize specific strategies to enhance their speaking skills. Furthermore, the study bridges the gap between traditional classroom-based language learning strategies research and the emerging domain of social media-assisted learning, providing a robust basis for future studies to explore the intersection of language learning and digital innovation. Contextually, this research highlights the potential of TikTok as an interactive and dynamic tool for developing speaking competence among EFL college students in higher education. By examining how learners utilize TikTok's interactive features to practice speaking, the research offers actionable insights for educators to design strategy-driven interventions tailored to students' needs. In doing so, the study addresses a critical gap in the understanding of how digital platforms can be integrated into formal and informal speaking learning, offering actionable insights for students, educators, and policymakers seeking to optimize English speaking education in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

The study's constraints, such as the small sample size, the specificity of the setting, and the reliance on self-reported data, emphasise the necessity for more extensive, long-term, and experimental research. Future research should examine the distinct characteristics of various digital tools, develop techniques for incorporating emotional and social strategies, and enhance our understanding of language learning strategy, ultimately resulting in more efficient language learning methods.

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