

Media Literacy in the Digital Age: Examining the Use of Tiktok to Enhance Speaking Skills

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Abstract

In accordance with technological advancement, social media including TikTok has been adopted for educational purposes which is facilitated by media literacy to promote borderless communication among learners and flexible learning. However, TVET students were reported to lack proficiency in English, including speaking fluently using this second language. Therefore, this quantitative study seeks to investigate the use of TikTok in enhancing the speaking skills of polytechnic students in Malaysia. It was discovered that students reported high usefulness of TikTok in improving their pronunciation through exposure to native speakers, motivating them to practice speaking the language, and providing a variety of contents to aid vocabulary expansion, speaking fluency, accuracy, and grammar. Nevertheless, students also experienced certain extent of challenges in using this digital platform as a learning tool in terms of the short duration of TikTok videos, distraction caused by non-educational content, as well as limited interactive feature for direct language practice. The potential of TikTok as a valuable teaching aid brought through the findings of this study encourages English lecturers to integrate TikTok into their curricula, classroom instructions, or teaching activities, and increases support for teacher training in digital literacy or social media pedagogy.

Keywords: Speaking Skills, Social Media, Tiktok Videos, Media Literacy

Introduction

In this digital era, people engage in social media every day for various purposes which leads them to a certain extent of media literacy. This type of literacy has extended the traditional literacy of reading and writing to social communication that involves people sharing their stories and texts in numerous forms in the digital environment to connect with other users and explore interpersonal relationships. Hence, the basic and easily understood definition of media literacy is provided by Livingstone (2004, p. 3) which refers to "the ability to access, analyse, evaluate, and create messages across a variety of contexts". The skills of analysing, evaluating, and creating are associated with learning, thus education sector needs to address media literacy in its agenda.

Technological advancement demands the education sector to keep up with the current trend and layout robust digitalisation initiatives. As such, the approach to teaching and learning is transformed toward more innovative ones using various digital tools and platforms including social media to promote borderless communication among communities of learners and flexible learning. Social media is an overarching concept that encompasses social networking sites (SNS) besides blogs or microblogs, users' generated projects, content communities, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds (Haque & Al-Salem, 2019). At present, there are numerous SNS platforms that allow users to connect with others, but the most prominent ones are TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (Shahid et al., 2024). The use of such platforms for educational purposes like language learning among teachers and students is to be facilitated by media literacy which deals with their capacity to access and evaluate social media content as well as create media information (Cho et al., 2022).

Recently, TikTok has grown incredibly popular, especially among young adults, not just as a source of entertainment but for educational purposes as well. In 2022, the reported number of TikTok users in Malaysia reached up to 4 million people (Tan, 2022). With the attractiveness of TikTok, educators have started to incorporate this social media application into their classroom practices including teaching and learning of English language. Unfortunately, it was discovered that TVET students' proficiency in the English language is still lacking despite being well-versed in their content-based subjects (Abdullah & Majid, 2013). These students experience issues with speaking English fluently including weak pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar due to limited opportunities of using this language (Kim et al., 2017). The students' lack of English proficiency will affect their chances of being marketable on the job market. A check on labour force survey by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2023) reported that the issue of joblessness or unemployment continues to be a concern as a large number of 591,900 persons in this country were found to be jobless in 2023. Hence, this study aims to investigate the use of TikTok in enhancing the speaking skills of polytechnic students in Malaysia. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- i. What are the benefits of using TikTok videos as a tool for enhancing speaking skills among polytechnic students in Malaysia?
- ii. What are the challenges of using TikTok videos as a tool for enhancing speaking skills among polytechnic students in Malaysia?

Literature Review

Media Literacy and Social Constructivist Theory

The most prominent theory to address media literacy in the context of social media usage in assisting language learning is the social constructivist theory (Anumanthan & Hashim, 2022; Haque & Al-Salem, 2019; Shahid et al., 2024). Social constructivist theory believes that language development takes place when individuals engage in social activities or cultural settings. These three traits of interaction, community engagement, and culture distinguish this theory from the other constructivism theories. In other words, social constructivist theory posits that language is utilised to communicate concepts, which are then deciphered and comprehended via experience and interaction in a cultural context. As such, this theory does not emphasise the individual's innate cognitive ability to explain how a person learns or acquires any language. Since cognitive structure necessitates the shared linguistic and cultural elements, knowledge is thus not only socially formed but also co-

constructed among a group of people (Shahid et al. 2024). In formal education, this theory places more importance on collaborative learning with other students under the supervision of a facilitator (Anumanthan & Hashim, 2022; Shahid et al., 2024). Vygotsky believes that social learning through social interaction results in a continuous process of the individual's cognitive development (Akpan et al., 2020; Anumanthan & Hashim, 2022). As the interaction normally occurs in the social context, the interaction is not only limited to teachers but also those around them such as family members, acquaintances, and peers who are also the users of the same social media platform. On this note, this theory introduces the concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD) to explain and distinguish between what the students can do by themselves and what can be learned with the assistance of others (Vygotsky, 1978). In order to accomplish the desired learning aim, ZPD encourages student-centred learning and guided practices. This means students' language skills and knowledge are developed through engaged learning with teachers, peers, and other collaborators in the social platform with teachers' facilitation.

A previous study by Anumanthan and Hashim (2022) integrates this theory when examining the effectiveness of TikTok in improving students' vocabulary usage because it promotes student-centred learning and thus active learning and group interaction in e-learning that focuses on students may lead them to a dynamic learning process. As such, teachers are responsible for applying this student-centred approach in a traditional classroom or online learning. In the context of mastery vocabulary, which is the focus of this study, the researchers believe that the learners can acquire the words better when they choose their own list of vocabulary and teachers can assist by encouraging students to make their digitalised vocabulary journals using social media platforms. In doing so, the teachers provide freedom to students to decide on what they will learn while simultaneously promoting their intrinsic motivation. However, this statement is arguable and contradicts the concept of guided practice in ZPD because, in the case of young pupils who are the study samples, the students should not be given total control as they might not be mature enough to decide on their own vocabulary list by themselves. Thus, teachers who are more knowledgeable might need to play an extra role in the early stage by providing options of vocabulary lists for the students to choose and acquire or using collaborative work for the students to explore vocabulary among themselves rather than leaving the task to each student to solve themselves. This engaged learning with teachers or peer interaction facilitates language learning better as outlined by this theory.

Moreover, a study by Shahid et al. (2024) also adopted this theory given that media literacy through social networking sites (SNS) including TikTok facilitates genuine and cooperative interaction in discourse practices, demonstrating the interaction of social constructivist theory and social media language learning. Users can co-create knowledge and meaning by using language as a medium to remark on and review their own views, values, and knowledge in response to other people's stories, posts, or comments. Social involvement is increased in technology-mediated settings because students must demonstrate social abilities such as socio-cultural sensitivity, teamwork, responses, empathy, and tolerance for other people's opinions and behaviours in order to develop a sound or positive network. A collaboration between co-creators and critics on TikTok content promotes collaborative learning and can be a beneficial motivational force for language learners (Henry, 2018). Pictures and images presented on social media sites also provide multimodal input namely

text-based and audiovisual modes that can scaffold individuals' learning of a language (Carver, 2019).

In addition, Haque and Al-Salem (2019) used this theory to assess social media's perceived impact on students' attitudes toward learning English as a foreign language. The researchers reported that media literacy enables social media to be used as a medium that allows distant and borderless interactions among people. Technological affordance in which social media provides prospects for students to communicate online and sources to gain knowledge aligns with the concepts of social constructivism. The findings of the positive impact of social media on students' English language skills such as reducing the use of their mother tongue to communicate with peers, providing learning excitement, helping understand jargon, and better pronunciation demonstrate students' meaningful interaction within social context which stems from social constructivist theory.

Media Literacy and Benefits

Previous studies revealed that social media such as TikTok offers several benefits in assisting students to enhance their English-speaking skills. The first benefit of learning English using social media is that it can bring pleasure to the students by making the lesson fun, simpler, and flexible. Students claimed that they immediately feel joy after a lesson that incorporates TikTok (Anumanthan & Hashim, 2022). The features available in TikTok are also interesting as it serves as exciting resources and create positive perceptions among them to learn to speak (Tarmizi et al., 2021).

The second benefit that social media offers for language learning is increasing students' motivation by promoting security, self-esteem and confidence, interest, as well as enthusiasm. TikTok was reported to make students more confident and motivated to speak in English as they feel that conversing on TikTok is more secure than in the classroom (Ahmad Tarmizi et al., 2021). In addition, students found that posting uploading and content sharing, as well as incidental learning using these media platforms give them the encouragement to purposely learn, acquire the language subconsciously (Shahid et al., 2024), and communicating in English with others in the platform (Haque & Al-Salem, 2019). The fact that English being the main language used in social media, the accents, and proper use of the language among social media users also contributed to students' motivation in learning this target language in order to understand the messages and communication made in such platforms (Haque & Al-Salem, 2019). In addition, one of the TikTok features that is the TikTok voice-over challenge was found helpful to enhance students' self-esteem to use English expressions but insignificant to improve the non-verbal communication aspect of facial expressions (Chuah & Ch'ng, 2023). Students' confidence levels increase because the students' anxiety level is reduced when learning English using social media and low affective filters allow better language acquisition (Chen & Kang, 2023; Shahid et al., 2024). As such, students are also keen to continue using TikTok and make their own TikTok content in English learning after being taught with this social platform (Anumanthan & Hashim, 2022). Besides, social media such as TikTok also enhances students' willingness to take part in speaking activities without being urged (Chuah & Ch'ng, 2023). This shows that TikTok has increased their intrinsic motivation to be accountable for their own learning and be self-sufficient. With TikTok, students are allowed to make multiple attempts to complete the tasks because the activities are not carried out in real-time, and are not afraid of making mistakes in speaking

practices (Chuah & Ch'ng, 2023). This demonstrates that TikTok is an effective tool to motivate students to learn English which could benefit the sample group of the present study as well.

The third benefit that students obtain from learning using social media is the potential to improve their language performance. TikTok videos containing regular verbs were proven to greatly improve their sentence constructions with regular verbs after being exposed to the content as a classroom activity for two days (Anumanthan & Hashim, 2022). Students also experienced new vocabulary (Haque & Al-Salem, 2019), diverse variations or forms of both spoken and written English, enhanced vocabulary with regard to commonly used words, and autonomous use of the language through participation in social media or networking platforms (Shahid et al., 2024). In addition, social media assists students' understanding by demonstrating contextual meaning to numerous words and phrases that they come across (Haque & Al-Salem, 2019). Hence, learning English by watching TikTok videos is deemed sufficient to help them construct sentences better with guidance from the teachers. In terms of mastery of speaking skills, specific TikTok features as in TikTok voice-over challenges help students improve their pronunciation, intonation, fluency, and spoken vocabulary (Chuah & Ch'ng, 2023). Shahid et al. (2024) explained that social media including SNS and TikTok benefits their users in enhancing pronunciation skills and altering speaking accents after listening to fluent speakers' content. In contrast, among all language skills, writing skills were deemed to have improved greatly through the creation of social media content as a result of genuine language usage situations in the digital platform, and less significant impact on speaking skills, pronunciation, and accent (Shahid et al., 2024). Nonetheless, social media is also impactful in assisting students to comprehend English acronyms and minimising the occurrence of repeating their mistakes as reported by Haque and Al-Salem (2019).

The fourth benefit of learning English using social media is that this social media is rich in information. In comparison to textbooks that are used in traditional classrooms, TikTok can deliver contents that promote colloquial and practical expressions, and vast information presentation in many forms such as movie clips and role-play (Chen & Kang, 2023) as well as contains numerous videos that offer ways to comprehend grammar better than books (Novitasari & Addinna, 2022). This may facilitate students learning toward a more natural use of the language in social and communication contexts. TikTok also allows them to find new acquaintances and a community to rehearse and exercise their English (Novitasari & Addinna, 2022), to interact meaningfully in English, express themselves creatively, and exemplify genuine language usage beyond the school environment (Shahid et al., 2024). TikTok also provides a variety of tools for practice such as slang and natural use of the language, which is absent in classroom lessons, and introduces students to other cultures in various nations in which they acquire distinct linguistic dialects or accents (Haque & Al-Salem, 2019; Novitasari & Addinna, 2022; Shahid et al.; 2024). Thus, social media is seen to have the capacity to provide practical support to students which is similar to and beyond classroom learning.

In short, social media including TikTok can promote enjoyable learning, increase motivation, improve language performance, and offer content richness to help improve students' language learning specifically for developing the speaking skills of the majority group of students. These vast benefits that TikTok is able to offer may lead to a positive attitude for students to embrace this digital platform as their preferred learning tool. The

students' level of media literacy in navigating this digital platform including their ability to find, access, evaluate, reflect, and create content may also directly influence their view of this platform's usefulness and ease of use in assisting them develop their speaking skills in English. In other words, the more media savvy students may benefit more from learning using this platform as they find such platform as user-friendly in comparison to those who are less literate. Besides, students also need to apply critical thinking, which is one of the demanded 21st century learning skills, when selecting and evaluating content suitability to avoid misinformation which may lead to learning fossilisation. Hence, students' ability to interact well with this social media will enable them to collaborate and communicate with other users to support each other's learning as posits by the socio-constructivist theory.

Media Literacy and Challenges

Despite the numerous potential benefits that students obtain from using social media such as TikTok in assisting language learning, there are several prominent challenges as outlined by previous studies. The first challenge that students may face is in relation to non-technical issues including language structure, linguistic traits of native speakers, discomfort, limited selection, and inadequate support. TikTok voice-over challenge for instance has limited language patterns. It does not provide students the chance to explore other language forms as the students need to oblige to the same repetitive patterns of conversation that were provided (Chuah & Ch'ng, 2023). This occurs because the practices given using the TikTok voice-over challenge are seen as drilling activities where the students need to imitate certain set elements of the language. In addition, students also have difficulty understanding the accent and utterance speed of native speakers in the TikTok content (Chuah & Ch'ng, 2023). The native users of the English language tend to speak fast and have thick accents based on their country of origin. This offers students the chance to be introduced to the authentic language, but it may also be a challenge, especially to students with a low English proficiency level. Students also find self-recording in TikTok to be uncomfortable (Chuah & Ch'ng, 2023). It may be difficult to produce natural conversation when the students are aware that they are being recorded as they tend to read or memorise the script in turn leads to monotonous speech and the lack of proper intonation. Apart from this, TikTok content provides limited support for a specific task such as duet selection. Chuah and Ch'ng (2023) found that students need to try many times to find the appropriate speakers for TikTok challenge practice and even so the sentences are too short with limited lines for them to try out. It can be inferred that even though TikTok is resourceful and rich in information, it still has its limit in providing specific content for a specific task. In addition, TikTok provides inadequate support to its users. Students sometimes face difficulty understanding the content and they can only make any inquiry using the comment columns but the chances of the content creator to respond are very thin (Novitasari & Addinna, 2022). In sum, these non-technical challenges are often caused by humans, and these challenges could hinder the social interaction to promote the development of speaking skills among polytechnic students who are the target sample of this project. As indicated in the social constructivist theory, interaction is one of the key elements for successful language learning.

The second challenge that may hinder the effective use of social media platforms for language learning among students is concerning technical issues namely video speed and internet quota. Students voice out a downside with the TikTok video speed that leads to distractions and difficulty for them to understand the meaning without replaying them

(Novitasari & Addinna, 2022). It can be inferred that this issue occurs because the approximate duration of a TikTok video is three minutes, thus it leads to a fast presentation of the content to meet the duration limit. Besides, students also complain about the need for a large internet quota and having to pay for such data to access TikTok as a challenge (Novitasari & Addinna, 2022). This issue relates to students' socioeconomic background and might be impacting those from lower-income families. Their unaffordability to own digital devices and proper internet access would hinder them from leveraging media literacy to their full advantage. Devices and the internet are gateways to digitalisation and without these students would have difficulties to familiarise themselves with digital platforms. Hence, it may result in digital divide among communities of learners. Thus, lower-income students may lack the skills in using media appropriately to help them enhance their English language acquisition in general and speaking skills in specific. However, it is worth investigating this challenge to check if the sample group of the present study would be experiencing the same issue in the present day to suggest suitable means to address this issue.

In summary, the challenges of using TikTok to assist students' language learning present in the form of non-technical and technical issues. However, previous studies showed that students faced fewer issues with using this media platform as they were reported to benefit greatly in helping them improve their English. The existence of both benefits and challenges in learning using social media calls for a proper strategy to maximise its advantages while coping with latent downsides. This implies that media or digital platforms such as TikTok are more suitable to be integrated into traditional learning instead of becoming the sole learning platform that entirely replaces conventional teacher-students contact in physical classrooms.

Media Literacy and Teaching Implications

The shift to digitalisation in pedagogical approach and 21st-century teaching instructions created a feasible need for teachers or educators to embrace media literacy. Even though social media including TikTok videos can be utilised to encourage anxious students to speak and take charge of their own speaking skills development at their own pace, teachers still need to consider students' contextual and individual factors when integrating TikTok into the classroom or beyond the classroom learning (Ahmad Tarmizi et al., 2021; Chen & Kang, 2023) including accessibility and quality of the content (Novitasari & Addinna, 2022). Therefore, teachers can assign students to create their own content or activities using social media to polish their speaking skills and potential (Ahmad Tarmizi et al., 2021; Anumanthan & Hashim, 2022). However, before that teachers must lay out strategies to supervise students' engagement in such digital platforms to ensure optimal and responsible media usage for learning (Anumanthan & Hashim, 2022; Chuah & Ch'ng, 2023; Haque & Al-Salem, 2019) including inculcate students with critical media literacy (Shahid et al., 2024), setting rules (Haque & Al-Salem, 2019), provide feedback (Ahmad Tarmizi et al., 2021), use privacy control and content filter (Anumanthan & Hashim, 2022; Chuah & Ch'ng, 2023).

Methodology

The formulated research question is quantitative-centred as it involves measuring students' perceived benefits and challenges based on previous literature within the scope of this study. This study also did not involve any form of experiments in its data collection. Hence, this study adopted a mono method of non-experimental quantitative research design

(Saunders et al., 2012) which according to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) involves collecting and analysing close-ended information quantitatively within a single study. Hence, this study uses a questionnaire which is a significant research instrument adopted by many other researchers for quantitative research (Bjornsson, 2023; Eidan, 2024; Jahromi, 2020; Ramzan et al., 2023). The questionnaire employs a 5-point Likert scale with Strongly Disagree correlating to 1 while Strongly Agree correlating to 5. This questionnaire consists of four sections with a total of 20 constructs. The first section is the participants' consent, followed by demographic information in the second section, benefits of using TikTok for language learning in the third section, and finally its challenges in the fourth section. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 29.0 was used to analyse the data and reliability of the instrument. The Cronbach's alpha value for the questionnaire was 0.969 which indicates a strong reliability as it is close to +1.00 (Jackson, 2006). Simple descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentages, and means are used to report the findings. In addition, this study's sample selection was based on convenience and non-probability sampling techniques. This type of sampling method is often used in research because they are quick, easy, and inexpensive to conduct (Wiśniowski et al., 2020). A total of 94 students participated in this study. This sample size has met the proper representation of the population of semester one diploma students who are undertaking commerce programmes at the selected polytechnic for the generalisation of the findings (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

Findings and Discussion

Demographic Background

Table 1

Distribution of Participants' Demographic Background

Constructs	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	27	28.7
Female	67	71.3
Age		
18	60	63.8
19	13	13.8
20	5	5.3
21	9	9.6
22	7	7.5
Programmes		
Diploma in Accountancy	15	16.0
Diploma in Marketing	24	25.5
Diploma in Business Administration	41	43.6
Diploma in Retail Management	14	14.9
Time spent on TikTok in a day:		
less than 2 hours a day	23	24.5
between 2 hours to 3 hours a day	40	42.5
between 4 hours to 5 hours a day	20	21.3
between 6 hours to 7 hours a day	5	5.3
more than 7 hours a day	6	6.4

Note: $n = 94$, valid percent = 100%

Table 1 captures the details of the demographic background of all participants. First and foremost, all 94 students who took part in this study answered all constructs asked in the questionnaire, thus none of the questions had missing responses. As for their details, Table 4.1 shows that in terms of gender, the majority of the participants are females with 71.3 %, against 28.7 % of males. It was also discovered that most of them, 63.8%, are 18 years old followed by 19 years old of age (13.8%), 21 years old (9.6%), 22 years old (7.5%), and the least is 20 years old (5.3%). In addition, out of four academic programmes offered under the commerce department, the largest proportion of participants (46.3%) are undertaking Diploma in Business Administration while a significant 25.5% enrolled for Diploma in Marketing. Unfortunately, Diploma in Accountancy and Diploma in Retail Management have the lowest number of students participating in this study with 16% and 14.9%, respectively. Interestingly, this study disclosed that a majority of 42.5% spent two to three hours a day on the TikTok application. Meanwhile, the lowest recorded readings of time spent on this application is between six to seven hours a day with only 5.3%. Surprisingly, 6.4% of the participants spent more than seven screening hours a day in front of devices to use this application.

Benefits of Using TikTok Videos as a Tool for Enhancing Speaking Skills

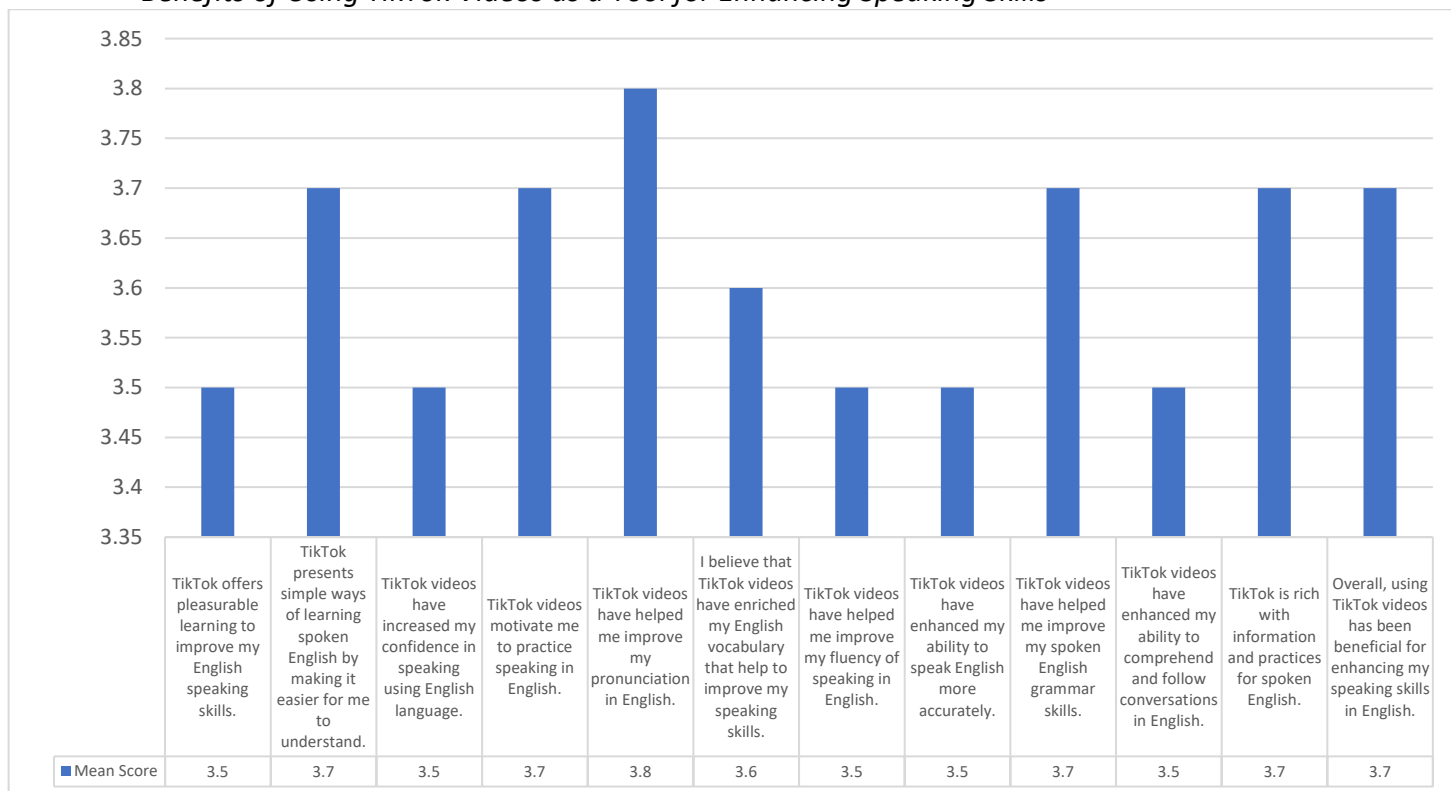


Figure 2 Mean scores of benefits of using TikTok videos as a tool to enhance English speaking skills

Figure 2 illustrates the mean scores of participants’ perceptions regarding the benefits of using TikTok for enhancing their speaking skills. The overall mean scores range between 3.5 and 3.8 across various constructs, reflecting consistent high agreement on the platform’s usefulness. The most significant benefit discovered in this study was in the area of pronunciation. With a mean score of 3.8, students felt that TikTok helped them enhance their

pronunciation through exposure to native speakers and consistent practice. Previous studies by Novitasari and Addinna (2022), align with this finding from the current study which claims that students seek videos on TikTok that illustrate different ways to speak English words in order to get guidance on their development in the pronunciation aspect. In this light, media and information literacy is an important element that students must possess for them to be able to understand the content of the video, evaluate the information conveyed by the creator, connect with the media services, and make use of this information and interaction to attain their intended result. This means students must be able to access and filter contents that are relevant in helping them improve their speaking skills in English. Only then, students' oral proficiency and speaking skills can be improved via the use of TikTok by altering their accents (Shahid et al., 2024), mimicking conversations, and making use of the subtitles that are provided in TikTok videos (Gao et al., 2023). These accounts demonstrate that social media platforms like TikTok present authentic conversational contexts where students can model native-like pronunciation. By mimicking pronunciation, students gain practical exposure, leading to better language learning. This scenario shows that TikTok videos support the fundamentals of social constructivist theory concerning interaction in social settings (Vygotsky, 1978). TikTok videos enable students to learn in social and cultural settings through various accents and colloquial expressions from native speakers, thus improving their target language acquisition and speaking skills.

Another prominent benefit reported in the findings of this study is motivation to practice speaking with a high mean score of 3.7. TikTok's interactive and engaging content encourages students to challenge themselves in speaking exercises, thus boosting their confidence. Chuah and Ch'ng (2023) support this claims by explaining that TikTok informal nature reduces anxiety students typically feel in traditional learning environments, creating a safe space for students to practice willingly without fear of making mistakes. Practicing speaking in the digital space gives students more time to plan for their speech or responses as they could hide behind a camera in comparison to classroom learning that takes place in real-time. Besides, social media gives flexibility for the practices to be done using recordings such as responding to peers' points of view uploaded in TikTok shots. Unfortunately, even though learning from social media could reduce students' anxiety, it may invite threats worse than in classroom contexts such as public shaming and widespread video-sharing which may backfire the students. In traditional teaching, these negative effects are limited within four walls but any mistake made in social media can reach anyone as it has no boundary. Hence, it is important for students to note that all engagement in the digital social platform must be ethical since all digital content and comments leave permanent prints. Students ought to make constructive comments, instead of negative ones, and respect other users to promote democracy in information and communication, foster active social participation, facilitate a conducive learning environment, and avoid inappropriate use of media. These attitudes of students' openness require them to integrate their intercultural competencies with media literacy where they need to reach a mutual understanding with diverse users. As such, TikTok still has the potential to motivate students by sparking the urge to utilise and improve their English proficiency in order to be able to understand the content and messages conveyed by other users on TikTok that are usually made in English (Haque & Al-Salem, 2019). According to social constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978), engagement with cultural tools such as TikTok facilitates language learning through active and meaningful interaction with others which stimulates dialogue among its members. Consequently, this will benefit the students in their

continuous cognitive development (Akpan et al, 2020) which leads to improved speaking skills.

TikTok's content richness was also highlighted in this study (mean score of 3.7) which aids in vocabulary expansion (mean score of 3.6), speaking fluency (mean score of 3.6), accuracy (mean score of 3.5), and grammar (mean score of 3.7). This finding is consistent with studies by Anumanthan and Hashim (2022) and Rahmawati et al. (2023), which indicate that TikTok's exposure to everyday language helps students acquire useful vocabulary and expressions as well as significantly enhance their sentence structures. In addition, students claimed that TikTok had shown positive effects in their oral proficiency by enabling them to deliver their speech smoothly using accurate word choice or pronunciation (Gunawan et al., 2023). TikTok videos that discuss English provide better ways for students to understand the complexity of English grammar more effectively in comparison to traditional books (Novitasari & Addinna, 2022). As TikTok relies on algorithms to suggest content to its users, it may present bias by automatically showing contents that are favourable towards certain dialects such as American or British English which have different linguistic features in terms of their spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, et cetera. Therefore, students may be geared toward learning only American English over others. However, this bias could help students to be consistent in their use of English and avoid confusion of English variation across countries. Besides, the disclosed benefits of the present study deem students to reflect and make further inquiries of TikTok videos that they watched rather than consume them passively without any mental processing. The richness of content presented in TikTok platform could be overwhelmed for the students, thus requiring active learning and media literacy where they critically analyse video content that is created by credible professionals rather than mere influencers to garner views and be trapped by artificial intelligent (AI) suggestion made based on recent search, most viewed or FYP (for your page). Variations of reliable and specialised English content shared on TikTok can help students to progress in their zone of approximal development (ZPD) as it structurally scaffolds and develops students' understanding from not knowing to knowing with the assistance of content creators and collaborators described by the social constructivist theory.

Challenges of Using TikTok Videos as a Tool for Enhancing Speaking Skills

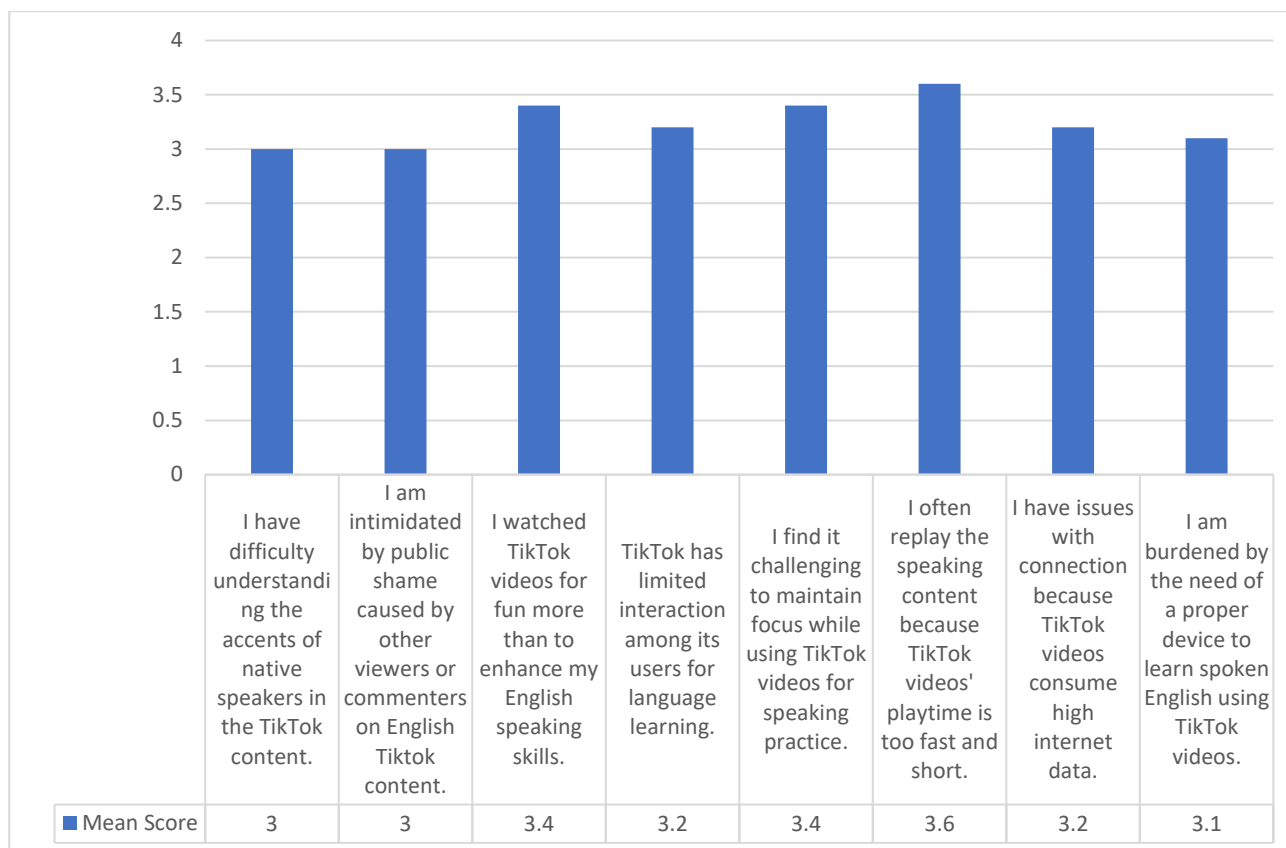


Figure 3 Mean scores of challenges of using TikTok videos as a tool to enhance English speaking skills

Figure 3 presents the challenges that the participants face while using TikTok videos as a tool for enhancing their speaking skills. A prominent challenge reported by students was the short duration of TikTok videos, which often required them to replay content multiple times to fully grasp the information (mean score of 3.6). This issue relates to the cognitive load imposed by the fast-paced nature of TikTok, as students may struggle to fully comprehend and internalise language input within the limited time frame. The nature of rapid articulation and thick accents demonstrated by native speakers in the videos add to students' difficulty in comprehending TikTok content (Chuah & Ch'ng, 2023; Gao et al., 2023). Novitasari and Addinna (2022) echo this finding, noting that TikTok's short video format may hinder deeper learning because it was designed for brevity which leads to oversimplification of complex concepts. However, simplification of grammar concepts for instance could be beneficial to certain groups of students as different people have different attention spans to focus on long or winding explanations and make sense of English intricacy. Some students prefer information to be presented in short and simple ways as they would be impatient and start scrolling to other content. Moreover, it was reported that the short time limit set for TikTok videos has also resulted in restricted speaking practices since students needed more time to articulate their ideas and creativity (Rahmawati et al., 2023). This claim is arguable since the duration of three minutes allowed for TikTok videos could be too much or just sufficient for low proficiency or anxious students to demonstrate their speaking skills or deliver impromptu speeches or oral presentation using this digital platform. As such, this

restriction of time encourages students to plan and organise their oral productions well by reducing fillers and eliminate irrelevant content.

Another common challenge was the distraction caused by non-educational content. The algorithm of TikTok, which prioritises entertainment, often leads students away from their original learning intentions. This issue was evident where students admitted that they sometimes watched TikTok videos for fun rather than learning (mean score of 3.4) hence they faced difficulty maintaining their focus on speaking practices (same mean score of 3.4). The entertaining nature of the platform, combined with its addictive scrolling mechanism, makes it difficult for students to maintain focused on educational tasks (Gao et al., 2023). In contrast, TikTok's fun and enjoyable concept of content presentation could potentially offer a multimodal approach that echoes students varied learning preferences and styles. Even though the participants of this study are adults, some students learn and comprehend better through appealing visuals such as infographics and animations. Fun videos can address the diverse needs of learners by making learning topics more attractive in which certain students could find it challenging when presenting in traditional texts. Even though the present study unveiled that TikTok videos have a positive effect on students' motivation, the platform's distraction towards entertainment may dampen this benefit if not addressed and monitored properly by the lecturer.

TikTok's limited interactive feature for direct language practice was another significant challenge (mean score of 3.2). While TikTok allows for passive learning through video content, it lacks structured interaction such as real-time conversations or feedback can impede the development of more advanced speaking skills. As highlighted by Chuah and Ch'ng (2023), TikTok exhibits restricted linguistic patterns and thus does not provide students the opportunity to explore different language forms since they have to follow the same repetitious patterns of speech that were offered by the speaking activities such as those in TikTok's voice-over challenge. This drilling practice does not represent meaningful use of the target language and has no significance as compared to cultural and social interaction in learning a language as posed by the social constructivist theory. However, this challenge can be overcome through lecturers' creativity in integrating TikTok videos into students' learning. The restricted linguistic patterns can serve as models for students to rehearse their pronunciation and sentence structure to enhance their speech intelligibility. Students are not targeted at becoming native speakers, but linguistic forms supplied in the videos can improve their oral communication by making them more understandable among a wider public or communities. For instance, rather than speaking in local English dialects which limits understanding among the same geographical students, they can pick up proper terms and pronunciation from the model videos and applied in their future classroom practice or real-life conversation. In return, it develops students' ability to interact meaningfully across various contexts for academic and social purposes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the benefits that polytechnic students obtained in improving their speaking skills including pronunciation, vocabulary, and motivation surpass the challenges as evident in the higher mean scores for the earlier aspect than the latter. The social constructivist theory emphasises the role of social interaction and cultural tools in learning, by which TikTok as a social platform provides opportunities for students to learn through

interaction with peers and native speakers. The findings disclosed in this study suggest that TikTok videos are suitable to be adopted for English language learning, particularly in helping students improve their speaking skills. Nevertheless, challenges such as distractions and limited direct interaction barriers need to be addressed to optimise its potential as a language learning tool for language acquisition for polytechnic students in Malaysia.

This study has made several significant implications and contributions to the teaching and learning practice. The findings of this study can inform the development of innovative language teaching practices in Malaysia, specifically polytechnics. This study could encourage the lecturers who are teaching English at polytechnics to integrate TikTok into their curricula, classroom instructions, or teaching activities. The potential of TikTok as a valuable teaching aid brought through the findings of this study, may result to increased support for teacher training in digital literacy and social media pedagogy or andragogy. Teaching resources and courses might be created to assist lecturers in designing materials, facilitating student engagement, and evaluating speaking skills gained via such digital platforms. Furthermore, this study supports student-centred learning methodologies by illustrating the efficacy of the technology-mediated educational tool that enables students to assume responsibility for their own learning process and development. In short, this study emphasises the significance of digital literacy competencies in language instruction. Integrating TikTok into language learning enables both lecturers and students to develop vital digital skills for the 21st century.

This study also has its theoretical and contextual significance. Social constructivist theory by Vygotsky (1978) proposes the importance of social interaction, cultural context, and collaborative learning in knowledge creation. It believes that learning occurs when it replicates social process through context-specific interaction. TikTok's social features enable students to provide and receive scaffolding-related feedback from classmates, other learners, and lecturers. TikTok videos also allow students to engage in real-world language use such as colloquial which exemplifies learning in association with authentic and social contexts. Moreover, this study disclosed that students perceived that their speaking skills improved from their current level to a higher level through exposure to native speakers, content richness, and willingness to practice. Thus, the present study contributes to the theory by proving that TikTok could be a potential platform that facilitates social interaction, scaffolding, and collaborative learning in which a community of learners engage in or with the platform for authentic and contextualised language use in improving their speaking skills within their zone of proximal development. Apart from that, as TikTok is immensely popular among young adults, this study holds particular significance in understanding how digital natives use social platforms to express their views and harness their language proficiency and communication skills. Hence, this study sheds light in understanding how platforms that were originally designed for entertainment can be leveraged for higher educational purposes.

This study has successfully provided vital insights, nonetheless it is still crucial to recognise its limits and pinpoint areas for future research. This study only measures the use of TikTok videos for improving speaking skills. As such, it does not look into other language skills such as listening, reading and writing, or the integration of any of these skills. Receptive skills such as listening and writing are often believed to be acquired before any productive skills including speaking and reading can be performed by students. Therefore, future research can be done to assess the impact of this platform in assisting the development of

students' receptive skills. Besides, as communicative approaches highlight the integration of all four skills in students' learning of a target language, studies that address all these aspects using a digital platform as a learning tool are deemed suitable.

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