



Enhancing Speaking Skills through English Conversation Content on TikTok: EFL Students' Practices and Perceptions

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Abstract

As a social media platform, TikTok has a lot of features that draw users in and may help students improve their knowledge and foreign language proficiency, especially in speaking. The purpose of the study was to find out how students utilized TikTok's English Conversations content to improve their speaking abilities and how they felt about the platform as a learning tool. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed in the study. Research instruments such as questionnaires and interviews were used to gather data from 13 individuals. Additionally, a thematic and descriptive analysis was used to collect the data. The results of the study revealed that 12 of the 13 participants were frequent TikTok users who utilized the platform for both learning and fun. In addition, 12 respondents said that the English Conversations material on TikTok enhanced their speaking abilities when questioned about the use of the content and its impact on speaking abilities. The study revealed several difficulties that the students had while using TikTok as a learning tool, though, including the fact that they were easily distracted by entertainment material, that the learning information needed to be more visually appealing, and that the length of the content was excessive. In order to facilitate comparisons, future research might benefit from the use of alternative instruments with bigger sample numbers. These studies may provide additional theories to evaluate if the results support the conclusions of the present inquiry.

Keywords: *challenges, English conversation content, speaking, TikTok*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic made a significant impact not only on the business industry but also on the education field. This can be felt when the pandemic came; people were drawn to the internet, especially when the offline learning process was stopped. According to Firdaus et al. (2022), the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic has shifted traditional face-to-face classroom learning towards a more online approach. However, technological advancements have vastly expanded our global reach in the contemporary era, particularly by integrating social media into education. Consequently, teachers have had to embrace social media platforms to convey subject matter to their students, as Putri (2022) highlighted. Notably, TikTok, a widely popular social media platform, has emerged as a transformative force in the educational landscape post-pandemic. Pasaribu et al. (2022) suggest that teachers can harness TikTok as an effective educational tool, leveraging its various elements to engage users and facilitate learning, mainly speaking skills. Embracing social media as an educational resource is seen as a beneficial approach in contemporary English teaching and learning, urging technology integration into the curriculum.

Mastering speaking is crucial when acquiring a second or foreign language. It is one of the four core language skills, and speaking is the most crucial, as acknowledged by Rao (2019). This aligns with the primary objective of learning a foreign language, which is to enhance communication skills. TikTok is a modern technological phenomenon with potential for digital citizens, particularly Generation Z, due to its widespread adoption (Xiuwen & Razali, 2021). English educators, academics, and universities should explore TikTok's potential, especially in the context of English language education and speaking skill development. The use of technical media like TikTok is crucial for creating innovative digital learning programs. TikTok has become a popular tool for improving speaking skills, especially for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners who are immersed in foreign language acquisition (Putri, 2022). Utilizing TikTok's diverse capabilities can transform English language teaching by providing students with a dynamic platform for comprehensive skill development.

Simanungkalit & Katemba (2023) discuss the advantages of using TikTok in education. Firstly, the ability to replay videos promotes independent learning. Secondly, the limitless accessibility of educational content on phones provides

learners with a flexible and boundless learning experience. Thirdly, the emphasis on making learning enjoyable and stress-free contributes to practical education for students. Finally, the use of native speakers in video clips can make accents more comprehensible, enriching learners' exposure to general English conversation topics. As a result, English-speaking TikTok videos can improve language fluency and understanding of native English speech.

Previous studies such as Yulita and Hertiki (2023) have mainly concentrated on how EFL students view TikTok as a learning tool nevertheless, a thorough investigation of the precise influence of TikTok material on public speaking abilities has not yet been conducted in-depth (Komariyah et al., 2022). Initial studies indicate that TikTok unexpectedly boosts students' motivation to speak English. Additionally, Herwanto (2022) delves into role-play exercises for ESL learners in secondary school using TikTok's app, revealing positive outcomes in pronunciation, confidence, and expressiveness—however, a lack of study on the precise impact of TikTok content on students' speaking abilities. However, few studies have been conducted on the types of content on TikTok that affect students' speaking abilities. Past studies have only highlighted the efficiency of the TikTok app in helping students improve their speaking skills, but have not identified which TikTok content improves students' speaking skills. Therefore, the objective of this study is to investigate how students utilize TikTok's English conversation content to improve their speaking skills and their perspectives towards the challenges while using it.

In the modern era, students who are digital natives incorporate technology and social media into their daily lives, which leads to a preference for integrating technology into the learning process (Yulita & Hertiki, 2023). Furthermore, Zaitun et al. (2021) argue that learning mediums must adapt to evolving trends and expansions, with TikTok emerging as a notable platform. Furthermore, as mentioned by Indriastuti et al. (2023), content is the basic unit of digital information that includes text, photos, graphics, video, sound, documents and reports. In addition, in many types of English education or training content, the researchers examine English conversation content in relation to content that can improve a learner's speaking skills. The researchers define this content as content that contains examples or practice of native speakers speaking English in everyday life and also at specific events. Here are some examples of English conversation

content contained in the TikTok application uploaded by @englishcentral in the picture 1 and @speakenglishwithzach in the picture 2 below.

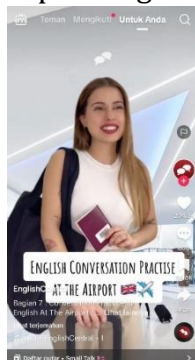


Figure 1. Content by @englishcentral

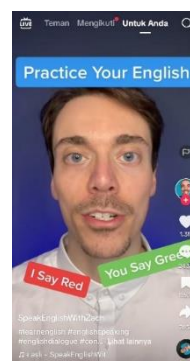


Figure 2. Content by @speakenglishwithzach

The content focuses on the area of English conversation, where in the Picture 1 showed English conversation content while at the airport, and in the Picture 2 present English conversation content that invite users to participate in the conversation by having the content creator say the conversation text in red and the user say the conversation text in green. Furthermore, in using TikTok as a medium to practice speaking skills, the researcher also investigated how students use the app to overcome some of the challenges or problems that arise. Therefore, the researcher conducted this study by focusing on two research questions, namely, 1) how students use TikTok English conversation content to improve their speaking abilities and 2) how they view the platform's English conversation content on TikTok as a learning tool. This study aims to explore innovative ways of using TikTok content to improve English speaking skills.

Method

Research design

This study examined and discussed the acquired data using a qualitative descriptive method. 13 students from UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta's Department of English Language Education class 3C participated. Participants were chosen according to their active usage of TikTok and familiarity with English-learning contents. In order to gather the data, the researchers employed a Google form questionnaire and a Zoom online tool for in-depth interviews with three

individuals who had already completed the questionnaire. In terms of the questionnaire, the researchers used a Google form, displaying items with four different levels of agreement: "A" for agree, "SD" for strongly disagree, "D" for disagree, and "SA" for strongly agree. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted to extract more comprehensive insights into participants' responses from the previous questionnaire. The online interview sessions were facilitated through Zoom meetings, involving three participants who had previously completed the questionnaire. The focus of the interviews was to explore the participants' perception about the utilization of English conversation content on TikTok influenced students' speaking skills and the way they overcome the challenges that arise in the learning process. The collected data from the questionnaire were analyzed by using descriptive analysis while the in-depth interview data were analyzed by using thematic analysis.

Data Collection

The data collection was designed by using Google Forms and online Zoom meetings to collect the data from the participants. There were a number of questions that expose their responses, identities, and answers to the questions. In order to get valid data, participants need to be responsible for the answers that they give on the Google form and the in-depth interview session. The only treatment provided was the research itself, which was conducted through the distribution of questionnaires to 13 students and 3 chosen students to attend the in-depth interview session from class 3C English Education Department in UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, who filled out the questionnaire. Researchers collected the data by using table presentations for questionnaires and brief summaries for interview sessions.

Data analysis

Questionnaire

Descriptive analysis was used to examine the information gathered from the questionnaire. According to Lambert and Lambert (2012) the whole process of the qualitative descriptive method is data-driven, with codes generated directly from the study's data. Similar to other qualitative research approaches, qualitative descriptive studies are characterized by the concurrent gathering and processing of data. Researchers use descriptive analysis to exhibit the data, which consists of offering a summary of the collected data.

In-depth Interview

Thematic analysis was used to examine the data gathered from in-depth interviews. Although the methodology has limitations, it is still a reasonably straightforward method for identifying patterns in qualitative data and creating themes that characterize them (Lochmiller, 2021) Patterns discovered by researchers are then presented as themes established by the researcher. Thematic analysis can be aimed to "report experiences, meanings, and the reality of participants," (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the case of interviews or focus groups, thematic analysis assumes that the participant's memories are valuable and should be extensively investigated, synthesized, and explained.

Results and Discussions

This research examined the practices of students using English conversation content on TikTok to improve their speaking skills and perceptions of using TikTok as a learning medium. The findings section revealed two main themes that emerged from exploring the research question and the data collected: the theme of students' practices and the theme of students' perceptions. These themes captured the essential nature of the students' practices and perspectives in using TikTok for their language studies.

The Students' Practices

The first theme, identified as students' practices, addressed the previous research question of how students used the English Conversations content on TikTok to enhance their speaking abilities. The details of the results are provided in Table 1, which can be found below.

Table 1. The students' practices of using TikTok as a learning media

Statement	SD	D	A	SA	Total
I use TikTok every single day.	0	1	6	6	13
I use TikTok for entertainment and learning	1	0	8	4	13
I find English conversation content	0	2	8	3	13

on TikTok every day in
my fyp.

Table 1 shows that 12 out of 13 participants acknowledged their high daily usage of TikTok. Furthermore, in-depth interviews revealed that student 1 expressed, *"I use TikTok every day, mostly 2-5 hours a day,"* underscoring their active engagement with the platform. This finding aligns with Cowen (2020; as cited in Komariyah et al. 2022), who anticipated a significant increase in the time users spend on TikTok, reaching 37 minutes in the first quarter of 2020. The platform's immersive nature, especially its short video format, captivates users. Beyond its primary role in entertainment, TikTok emerges as a valuable resource for learning. Following the data, 12 out of 13 respondents acknowledged using TikTok for entertainment and learning. This resonates with the findings of Herlisya and Wiratno (2022), who emphasized TikTok's potential as a learning medium when used appropriately. They noted that content creators contribute educational, scientific, and creative videos over time. Toha and Umisara (2022) also affirmed the widespread familiarity of students with TikTok, highlighting its versatile use for entertainment, profit-seeking, and knowledge dissemination packaged in an entertaining format.

TikTok is also a learning tool for building learners' English proficiency, especially speaking. This assertion is supported by the findings of Yang (2020), who found positive attitudes among students toward using TikTok as an English Language Acquisition tool. Following this perspective, Zaitun et al. (2021) emphasized that the applications can engage learning media, employing relevant approaches and strategies to improve students' speaking skills. Adding to the discourse, Agting and Pusparini (2022) asserted that the TikTok application is well-suited for incorporation in speaking classes. In conclusion, the distinctive characteristics of the TikTok app position it as a valuable tool in the learning process, especially for improving English speaking skills. To confirm this, 11 out of 13 respondents in our study agreed with the frequent appearance of English conversation content on their personal For Your Page (FYP), showing a strong level of student interaction with this sort of content.

The students' perceptions

The second theme related to the student's perceptions of the English conversation content on TikTok as a language acquisition medium. A complete and explanatory overview of the results can be found in Table 2 below.

Table 2. The student's perceptions of using TikTok as a language acquisition media

Statement	SD	D	A	SA	Total
Watching English conversation content on TikTok has improved my speaking skills.	1	0	6	6	13
I have noticed an increase in my fluency after watching TikTok content.	1	0	8	4	13
TikTok has helped me gain confidence in speaking English.	1	0	8	4	13
TikTok content has enhanced my pronunciation.	0	0	11	2	13
I have noticed my vocabulary expanding through TikTok conversation content	0	0	12	1	13
TikTok's engaging content is a motivating factor for my language practice	0	0	8	5	13
I want to become a content creator on TikTok, specializing in English conversation topics, where I can share valuable knowledge and insights with others	0	1	7	5	13

The second dominant theme identified was students' perceptions of using English conversation content on TikTok as a language acquisition medium. In particular, 12 out of 13 participants believed TikTok was a precious platform for increasing English proficiency. Moreover, these improvements were noted across various speaking sub-skills; 12 respondents stated that TikTok improves their fluency and confidence, and all of the respondents stated that the TikTok application helps them to correct their pronunciation and vocabulary expansion. Furthermore, the agreement of all participants indicates that TikTok's engaging content serves as a motivating force in their English learning journey. This sentiment is echoed by a respondent in an in-depth interview who expressed, *"I think my vocabulary has increased after I watched video content on TikTok. I feel more confident and motivated to learn English, especially my speaking skills."* Consequently, it can be inferred that English conversation content on TikTok significantly contributes to the participants' sense of assistance and improvement in their language learning endeavors.

Participants mentioned that watching TikTok content improved their English vocabulary and pronunciation. This corresponds with Bernard (2021), who emphasized TikTok's function in improving the vocabulary of ESL (English as a Second Language) learners through specific terms and phrases in various videos. The results of this research supported existing theories highlighting the usefulness of TikTok in enhancing EFL students' vocabulary, pronunciation, and general speaking skills (Pratiwi et al., 2021; Rahmawati & Anwar, 2022; Zaitun et al., 2021)). In contrast, Hastomo et al. (2022) examined how TikTok could be used for vocabulary acquisition and found that students could quickly memorize and learn new words through the platform at any time and from any location. As well as vocabulary and pronunciation, using TikTok has a positive impact on students' confidence in their ability to speak English. This is corroborated by research stating that students' self-confidence increased through speaking on the TikTok application (Komariyah et al., 2022; Sagala et al., 2022). Notably, 12 out of 13 respondents wanted to become English conversation content creators on TikTok. It showed participants' desire to share their knowledge and contribute to the learning platform.

Table 3. The student's perceptions about the challenges of using TikTok as a learning media

Challenges While Using TikTok As The Learning Tool	Respondents
Easily distracted	11
The duration of the content is too long	7
The content is boring	4

The data presented in Table 3 reveals that respondents were asked to choose two options. Despite the numerous benefits of the TikTok application as a learning tool, particularly its English conversation content as a medium for developing speaking abilities, there are still some drawbacks. According to the research findings, 11 of 13 students face challenges such as the potential for getting easily distracted by other content, 7 of 13 students thought the duration of content clips was too long, and 4 of 13 students found some content boring. This aligns with statements from in-depth interviews, where a respondent mentioned, "I am also easily distracted by other content on the FYP. Sometimes, I skip that content if there is an interesting video afterward." Lin et al. (2023) support this observation, stating that viewing different content on TikTok can distract students from learning. Distractions in educational and social media use are related to delays in learning time and a lack of concentration in the learning process (Ali et al., 2017). Therefore, respondents often struggled with challenges such as being easily distracted by different content, as TikTok is primarily for entertainment and the perceived difficulty of managing longer videos.

Table 4. The students' perceptions of overcoming the challenges

Statement	SD	D	A	SA	Total
As you have already chosen the challenges above, those challenges affect your speaking skills negatively.	2	4	7	0	13
I think those challenges are easy to overcome	0	1	11	1	13
I know how to overcome those challenges	0	0	12	1	13
I think types of content also become the challenges (ex, content about accent, pronunciation, or QnA)	0	1	10	2	13

Despite their challenges, seven respondents acknowledged that these issues could negatively affect their performance. Moreover, 6 respondents claimed that the challenges had no negative impact. Interestingly, all respondents expressed confidence in coping with the challenges by seeking different English language learning content or continually reviewing the existing content within their study path. In-depth interview data supported this, with one respondent stating, *"I will try to find other content that is short and to the point when explaining the material, and if I only find it long, I will watch it even if it is boring."* Additionally, 12 respondents agreed that the types of content presented on TikTok could pose challenges. However, respondents showed resilience by adopting various strategies to overcome these challenges, such as looking for more compelling content with less time spent or continuing to watch it even when it was boring.

In light of the positive influence on speaking skills, it is highly suggested that educators should add English conversation content to their class presentations or work assignments to encourage students to develop new and more creative skills. In order to obtain maximum results, it is crucial to investigate which methods efficiently integrate English conversation content on TikTok. In this regard, future studies could focus on strategies or methods that effectively integrate English conversation content for oral English learning on the TikTok platform. Such research may increase the effectiveness of using TikTok as a valuable language-learning device.

Conclusion

The study confirms that the English conversation content on TikTok enhances students' speaking abilities, leading to gains in confidence, vocabulary, and pronunciation. In addition, TikTok's fun content is also a motivating factor in their English learning experience. However, students faced difficulties such as extended content snippets, perceived boredom, and diversions but showed resilience in conquering these barriers. This study advances education and technology by showing TikTok's benefits as a learning tool and providing a creative, easily accessible resource for practical teaching scenarios. This is especially important for teachers looking for efficient tech tools to improve language proficiency and design stimulating learning settings. It is crucial to remember, too, that the study did not examine practical methods for adding English conversational material to TikTok.

According to the research, students' speaking abilities are enhanced by TikTok English conversation content, which improves vocabulary, pronunciation, and self-confidence. By emphasizing TikTok's benefits as a learning tool and offering a creative and user-friendly resource for teaching and learning in the real world, this study advances both education and technology. Moreover, this study did not look at practical methods for adding English conversational content to TikTok. Furthermore, the study's main instruments were questionnaires and in-depth interviews, and it primarily concentrated on a small sample size. In order to facilitate comparisons, future research might benefit from the use of alternative instruments with bigger sample numbers. In order to determine whether or not the results are compatible with the current study, such research might go further and reveal new possibilities.

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