Exploring Tiktok's Impact on ESP Students' Speaking Engagement

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Abstract

The growing influence of social media on language acquisition has opened new avenues for enhancing student engagement in foreign language learning. However, its impact on verbal participation remains underexplored. This study investigates the role of TikTok as an instructional tool in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) speaking classes, focusing on its effectiveness in fostering student engagement. Employing a mixed-methods approach, this study integrates quantitative pre-test and post-test assessments to measure engagement levels and qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to capture students' perceptions. The findings indicate a significant increase in engagement: statistical analyses reveal notable improvements in students' participation, while qualitative insights highlight TikTok's capacity to enhance motivation, peer interaction, and authentic language practice. These results suggest that TikTok is a dynamic platform for improving speaking skills and engagement, offering valuable implications for educators seeking innovative teaching strategies in the digital era.

Keywords: *Engagement; ESP; Foreign Language Learning; Social Media; TikTok.*

A. Introduction

The rapid advancement of technology has led to the emergence of innovative pedagogical approaches that align with the evolving educational landscape. Social media has transformed communication and learning engagement, with platforms such as Facebook and YouTube extensively analyzed for educational benefits (Manca & Ranieri, 2016; Mao, 2014; Kabilan et al., 2010). Researchers have highlighted the potential of social media to enhance student engagement and motivation (Eaton, 2015; Barrot, 2020). However, while numerous studies have explored the role of social media in education, most have focused on widely established platforms like Facebook and YouTube, leaving emerging platforms such as TikTok relatively underexamined (Hew & Cheung, 2014; Paul & Friginal, 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital platforms in education, with TikTok emerging as a widely used informal learning tool (Szobonya & Roche, 2021). By 2024, TikTok had amassed 1.6 billion users, a substantial portion of whom are young learners (Curry, 2024). Its short-form video format provides an engaging medium for spoken language practice, vocabulary acquisition, and memory enhancement through diverse content types, including instructional parodies and speech analysis (Barrot, 2021). Despite its growing popularity, research on TikTok's effectiveness in fostering speaking engagement remains limited, particularly in formal language learning contexts (Gao & Liu, 2023).

Existing studies on social media and language acquisition predominantly focus on written communication and overall participation rather than oral proficiency (Hew & Cheung, 2014; Manca& Ranieri, 2016). Although some research acknowledges TikTok's educational potential, empirical investigations into its impact on speaking skills and student engagement are scarce (Paul & Friginal, 2019). This study aims to fill this gap by examining TikTok's role in enhancing active participation and conversational proficiency among foreign language learners. Employing a mixed-methods approach, this research integrates quantitative analysis of engagement improvements with qualitative insights into learners'

experiences. Unlike prior studies that broadly address social media in education, this study investigates TikTok's potential to promote interactive learning, offering fresh perspectives for educators seeking to integrate social media into formal classroom instruction.

Integrating digital tools in language learning has garnered increasing attention, with social media emerging as a dynamic platform for fostering engagement and communication skills. Among these platforms, TikTok is an interactive medium that enables learners to practice speaking through real-world simulations, peer collaboration, and exposure to authentic language use (Yang, 2020; Khlaif & Salha, 2021). Despite the growing recognition of social media's role in language education, limited research has specifically examined TikTok's effectiveness in developing oral proficiency within structured learning environments.

Speaking instruction involves more than just linguistic accuracy; it requires fluency, proper pronunciation, and confidence, which are best cultivated through interactive and contextualized practice (Brown, 2019). Traditional teaching methods often rely on teacher-led instruction, role-playing, and dialogue-based exercises to facilitate speaking development. However, recent studies suggest that social media platforms, including YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok, offer alternative spaces where students can engage with spoken language more authentically (Barrot, 2020; Che Lah et al., 2023). TikTok, in particular, provides short, engaging videos that allow learners to observe, mimic, and respond to speech in dynamic ways, making language learning more appealing and accessible (Jariah & Rahmaniah, 2024).

Building on Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, which underscores the importance of social interaction in learning (Cole & Scribner, 1978), TikTok facilitates peer engagement through duet videos, collaborative content creation, and interactive challenges. These features offer learners opportunities to use language meaningfully and spontaneously beyond traditional classroom settings (Gunduz & Hursen, 2015). Empirical studies indicate that such digital interactions enhance vocabulary retention,

pronunciation, and speaking confidence, reinforcing TikTok's potential as an effective tool for improving oral proficiency (Rahman, 2021).

One of TikTok's most notable advantages in language learning is its ability to simulate real-life conversations. Social media platforms have been widely recognized for enhancing student engagement by providing interactive and immersive learning environments (Eaton, 2015). Studies have shown that short-form video content facilitates language acquisition by breaking down complex linguistic structures into more digestible segments, making it easier for learners to absorb and apply new knowledge (Manca& Ranieri, 2016; Paul & Friginal, 2019). For instance, Che Lah et al. (2023) examined TikTok-based speaking activities and found that incorporating real-world dialogues, such as banking transactions, helped students internalize conversational patterns. Similarly, Yang (2020) highlighted how TikTok's user-generated content fosters a more engaging and immersive language-learning experience, enabling learners to interact with native speakers and apply newly acquired vocabulary in meaningful contexts.

Despite the growing body of research on social media in education, studies examining TikTok's impact on speaking engagement remain scarce. Most prior research has focused on its role in vocabulary acquisition and general motivation rather than on structured speaking practice (Gao & Liu, 2023). Furthermore, much of the existing literature broadly discusses social media's educational potential without isolating TikTok's unique pedagogical contributions (Hew & Cheung, 2014). Addressing this gap, the present study investigates how TikTok enhances learner engagement in foreign language speaking practice. By employing a mixed-methods approach, this study explores both quantitative improvements in engagement levels and qualitative insights into learner perceptions, providing educators with a more structured understanding of TikTok's role in fostering active speaking participation.

Using engagement theory as a framework (Skinner et al., 2009; Veiga et al., 2014), this study examines TikTok's capacity to foster

behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in language learning. Engagement is a critical factor in educational success, as it encompasses students' level of attention, effort, and persistence in learning activities (Skinner et al., 2009; Indrayadi et al., 2024). Emotional engagement, characterized by interest and enthusiasm, plays a crucial role in sustaining student motivation, while cognitive engagement refers to deep learning processes, including self-regulation and critical thinking (Fredricks et al., 2005; Walker et al., 2006). Studies have shown that collaborative learning through technology, particularly social media, can enhance emotional engagement by creating a supportive and interactive learning community (Shneiderman et al., 1998). Dewi et al. (2023) further emphasize that multimedia components, such as videos and simulations, are instrumental in capturing students' attention and evoking curiosity, leading to deeper emotional involvement in learning. Given these findings, TikTok's interactive features align well with engagement theory and its emphasis on immersive and participatory learning experiences.

Empirical research also suggests that technology-enhanced learning positively influences student engagement and academic performance. Hazzam and Wilkins (2023) found that integrating engaging technologies in higher education significantly improved student learning outcomes, while Zilvinskis (2017) demonstrated a strong correlation between engagement and perceived learning gains. Li et al., (2023) also applied the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework to analyze factors predicting student engagement during emergency online learning, concluding that digital tools such as TikTok can foster a sense of community and effective self-directed learning. Panigrahi et al. (2021) similarly identified that information system quality and digital literacy positively influenced perceived learning effectiveness, reinforcing the importance of technology-driven engagement in higher education.

Despite these promising findings, engagement levels in digital learning environments are influenced by various factors, including instructional design, teacher guidance, and individual student motivation (Zepke et al., 2010; Tas, 2016). Research has highlighted that teacher

involvement is crucial in shaping student engagement, suggesting that platforms like TikTok can be most effective when strategically integrated within structured learning activities. Although previous studies have examined TikTok's impact on language learning motivation and English competence (Zhang et al., 2023), there remains a lack of research on its explicit effects on speaking engagement and oral proficiency. Given the importance of improving communicative competence for students' future academic and professional success (Barrot, 2020; Canani & Zulli, 2022), this study explores TikTok's potential to enhance speaking engagement through interactive and multimedia-driven learning experiences.

By investigating the impact of TikTok on behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in speaking practice, this study aims to contribute to the growing discourse on digital learning tools and their implications for language pedagogy. The findings will provide educators with insights into the role of social media platforms in language teaching and offer practical recommendations for leveraging TikTok to enhance student involvement and speaking proficiency in formal educational settings.

B. Method

This study employed a mixed-methods approach with a pre-experimental single-group pretest-posttest design to examine the impact of TikTok on student engagement in speaking activities. This design was chosen due to its feasibility in an educational setting where a control group was unavailable. The pretest-posttest comparison allowed for assessing changes in engagement levels following TikTok integration. To mitigate potential biases, such as external factors influencing engagement, data triangulation was conducted using questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs) to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings.

The study involved 124 undergraduate students from the Accounting Study Program at STIE BPD Bank Jawa Tengah Semarang, Indonesia, enrolled in a General English Course during the second semester of the 2023/2024 academic year. Participants were selected through purposive

sampling, ensuring a controlled baseline proficiency level in English. The inclusion criteria for participant selection were enrollment in the General English Course, basic to intermediate English proficiency determined by institutional placement tests, and voluntary participation with informed consent obtained before data collection. This approach ensured that participants had relatively homogenous language backgrounds, allowing for a more controlled assessment of TikTok's influence on engagement.

Data collection was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative instruments. The Engagement Questionnaire, adapted from Miserandino (1996), contained 21 Likert-scale items measuring behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in speaking activities. The questionnaire underwent content validity testing (CVI = 0.98) and demonstrated high internal reliability (Cronbach's α = 0.87), ensuring its appropriateness for measuring student engagement levels. Additionally, semi-structured interviews and FGDs were conducted to explore students' perceptions of TikTok's role in speaking engagement. The interviews provided in-depth individual insights, while FGDs facilitated student discussions, allowing for richer qualitative data. All sessions were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized to maintain confidentiality.

The research procedure consisted of three main phases: pre-test, intervention, and post-test. In the pre-test phase, participants completed the engagement questionnaire to establish baseline engagement levels before TikTok integration. During the six-week intervention phase, students engaged in structured TikTok-based speaking activities, including duet videos, hashtag challenges, and reflective speech videos, encouraging active language use in authentic contexts. Following the intervention, the post-test engagement questionnaire was administered to assess changes in engagement levels, and qualitative data collection through semi-structured interviews and FGDs was conducted to capture students' subjective experiences and insights.

For data analysis, quantitative data from pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed using a paired-sample t-test to determine whether there were

statistically significant differences in engagement levels before and after the TikTok intervention. The Shapiro-Wilk test was employed to assess normality, ensuring the appropriateness of parametric statistical tests. Meanwhile, qualitative data from interviews and FGDs were analyzed using Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, where key themes were identified through systematic coding. To enhance reliability, intercoder agreement was ensured by having two independent researchers code the data, and findings were cross-validated through data triangulation to strengthen the study's credibility (Walidin et al., 2015, 2023).

This study adhered to strict ethical considerations. Ethical approval was obtained from the institution's research ethics committee, and all participants provided informed consent before participating in the study. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing all responses, and data were securely stored and used solely for research purposes. These ethical measures ensured that the study met the standards of responsible research practices (Walidin et al., 2015; Tabrani, Z. A et al., 2024).

By employing a rigorous mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative analyses, and ensuring ethical compliance, this study provides a comprehensive and replicable framework for examining the impact of TikTok on student engagement in foreign language speaking practice.

C. Results and Discussion

Through a mixed-methods approach, quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed to understand how TikTok influences engagement in speaking activities comprehensively. The pretest-posttest comparison offers statistical insights into changes in engagement levels, while thematic analysis of interviews and FGDs provides deeper qualitative perspectives on students' experiences and perceptions. By integrating these findings, this section presents a holistic view of TikTok's role in enhancing student engagement in a structured language learning environment.

1. Results

a. Effectiveness of TikTok in enhancing student engagement

A pretest-posttest analysis was conducted to evaluate the effect of TikTok on student engagement in speaking activities. The paired-sample t-test results demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in engagement levels after the TikTok intervention. Additionally, correlation analysis confirmed a strong positive relationship between students' initial engagement and post-intervention performance. These findings indicate that integrating TikTok into language learning enhances active participation and motivation in speaking practice.

1) Normality test

To determine whether the data met the assumptions for parametric testing, the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was conducted to assess the normality of the data distribution. The results are presented in the following table.

Table 1. The result of the normality test

		Unstandardized Residual
N		124
Normal Parameters[a,b]	**Mean**	.0000000
	Std. Deviation	5.53641354
Most Extreme Differences	**Absolute**	.133
	Positive	.133
	Negative	-.116
Test Statistic		.096
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.195[c,d]

The p-value (0.195) from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test suggests that the data follows a normal distribution, as it exceeds the commonly used significance threshold of 0.05. This result indicates that there is no significant deviation from normality, and thus, the assumption of normality required for many parametric tests is satisfied. As a result, this finding supports using parametric statistical methods, like the paired-sample t-test, which need the data to be normal to give accurate and trustworthy results. By showing that the data is normally distributed, we can analyze the

differences in engagement levels before and after the intervention with more confidence and clearer understanding.

2) *Paired sample t-test*

Following the confirmation of normality, a paired-sample t-test was performed to compare the engagement levels before and after the TikTok intervention in learning to speak. The descriptive statistics for pre-test and post-test engagement scores are summarized in the following table.

Table 2. Mean comparison of pre-test and post-test

	Mean	**N**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**
Pre-test	72.25	124	9.08	0.815
Post-test	87.00	124	7.62	0.684

The results indicate a significant increase in mean engagement scores from the pre-test (M = 72.25, SD = 9.08) to the post-test (M = 87.00, SD = 7.62), demonstrating that TikTok-based activities contributed to higher student engagement. Additionally, the lower standard deviation in the post-test suggests reduced variability in engagement levels among students, indicating a more consistent impact across participants. To further assess the relationship between pre-test and post-test engagement levels, a correlation analysis was conducted.

Table 3. Paired samples correlations

	N	**Correlation**	**Sig.**
Pair 1 Pretest & Posttest	124	.793	.000

The strong positive correlation (r = 0.793, p < 0.001) suggests that students who were initially more engaged before the intervention continued to exhibit higher engagement levels after using TikTok for speaking practice. This indicates a consistent pattern of engagement across both time points, implying that students who were already motivated and active in their learning responded particularly well to the integration of TikTok into the learning process. This finding reinforces the notion that TikTok may serve as an effective digital tool for maintaining and even

enhancing student motivation and participation in language learning activities. Its interactive and familiar format likely contributes to sustained learner interest and encourages continued engagement. To further validate and confirm the statistical significance of the observed improvements in engagement levels, a paired-sample t-test was conducted, comparing pre- and post-intervention scores to determine whether the changes were not only consistent but also statistically meaningful.

Table 4. Paired sample t-test

Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig.
-14.75	5.55	0.131	-112.60	19	.000

The test results confirm that the improvement in engagement levels is statistically significant (t(19) = -112.60, p < 0.001), providing strong evidence that TikTok effectively enhances engagement in speaking activities among foreign language learners. To further quantify the impact of the intervention, Cohen's d was calculated as an effect size measure:

$$d = \frac{M_{\text{posttest}} - M_{\text{pretest}}}{SD_{pooled}}$$

Given the substantial mean difference and moderate standard deviation, the computed Cohen's d value indicates a large effect size, suggesting that TikTok integration had a strong and meaningful impact on student engagement in speaking activities.

b. Student perceptions of TikTok in speaking practice

Beyond the quantitative findings, qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) provided a deeper understanding of students' experiences with TikTok as a language-learning tool. Thematic analysis identified several key factors contributing to increased engagement, including interactive learning environments, peer collaboration, and exposure to authentic language use. Most students perceived TikTok as an effective and enjoyable platform for developing speaking skills, emphasizing its ability to make language learning more engaging and accessible.

However, some challenges were noted, particularly regarding technological limitations and self-confidence in video-based learning.

1) Thematic analysis

Qualitative data from interviews and FGDs were analyzed thematically, identifying several core themes related to students' engagement and experiences with TikTok in speaking practice. The following table summarizes these themes along with representative student statements.

Table 5. Themes and corresponding respondent statements

No.	Theme	Example of Respondent Statement
1.	Interactive Learning Environment	Yes, it's fun, right? It makes you want to make continuous speaking videos.
2.	Motivation and Interest	When the teacher shared about speaking and saw the TikTok videos, it seemed interesting, so I got interested.
3.	Peer Interaction and Collaboration	The one shared by the teacher is a conversation duet challenge; you can duet with foreigners.
4.	Authentic Language Use	When the teacher introduced the "conversation duet challenge", I was able to duet with native English speakers from different countries.
5.	Self-expression and Creativity	I became addicted to dueting on TikTok and learning to speak English. Even though I can't speak English yet, learning is fun.
6.	Positive Learning Experiences	It is delightful
7.	Challenges and Limitation	I don't have much experience learning to speak using TikTok
8.	Integration into Learning Routine	So, I often watch speaking videos on TikTok, then enjoy practicing

2) Interactive learning environment

This theme refers to TikTok's dynamic and engaging platform, allowing students to participate and actively interact with authentic spoken language content. By providing features like duets, TikTok creates

a space where learners can engage directly with the material in a lively and interactive manner.

> *Example: "The teacher showed us how to duet on TikTok, and then I scrolled through and stalked some videos. It turns out they are good and interesting". (Respondent 1)*

This statement highlights TikTok's role in creating an interactive learning environment where students actively explore and engage with language content. The interactive nature of TikTok, such as the duet feature, allows learners to participate in real-time language practice, making the learning process more engaging and dynamic. This contributes to the research question by demonstrating how TikTok's interactive features can enhance students' involvement and active participation in language learning.

Many students described TikTok as a highly interactive platform encouraging them to engage actively in speaking exercises. Features such as duet videos and collaborative challenges allowed students to practice speaking dynamically and engagingly, making them more willing to participate. This aligns with engagement theory (Skinner et al., 2009), which suggests that active participation in an interactive learning environment enhances student motivation and learning outcomes.

3) *Motivation and interest*

This theme captures how TikTok's engaging and entertaining format increases students' motivation and interest in speaking practice. By making learning enjoyable and fun, TikTok encourages students to engage more frequently and enthusiastically in language activities.

> *Example: "Yes, it's really fun, right? It makes me want to make speaking videos all the time". (Respondent 1)*

This excerpt indicates that TikTok's engaging and entertaining format increases students' motivation and interest in speaking practice. The platform's ability to make learning enjoyable encourages students to engage more frequently and enthusiastically in language activities. This heightened

interest and motivation are crucial for sustained engagement and improvement in speaking skills, addressing the research question by showing how TikTok can maintain and boost learners' enthusiasm for language learning.

Students reported increased motivation due to TikTok's entertaining and relatable content, making learning more enjoyable than traditional speaking exercises. Previous research (Barrot, 2020) has similarly emphasized that digital tools can enhance language learning motivation by integrating familiar and engaging formats into educational activities.

4) *Peer interaction and collaboration*

This theme underscores TikTok's ability to foster peer interaction and collaboration, enabling students to share their language learning experiences, exchange feedback, and learn from each other's content. This social learning process is integral to language acquisition.

> *Example: "Usually, I never do it, but then I often watch and imitate videos on TikTok". (Respondent 1)*

This statement illustrates how TikTok fosters peer interaction and collaboration by allowing students to watch, imitate, and learn from each other's content. This peer learning process is integral to language acquisition, allowing learners to practice speaking collaboratively.

This theme contributes to the research question by highlighting the importance of social learning and the role of peer interaction facilitated by TikTok. TikTok enabled students to interact with peers and native speakers, providing valuable opportunities for social learning and real-time feedback. This aligns with Vygotsky's social constructivist theory (Cole & Scribner, 1978), which emphasizes the importance of peer collaboration in language acquisition.

5) *Authentic language use*

This theme reflects TikTok's potential to expose learners to real-life language use and cultural contexts, enhancing their understanding of the

target language's colloquial expressions, slang, and non-verbal communication cues.

> *Example: "TikTok is a youth application and can be used by Gen Z to improve speaking skills by continuous practice". (Respondent 4)*

This response emphasizes TikTok's potential to expose learners to authentic language use and cultural contexts. By engaging with real-life content created by native speakers and other learners, students can improve their understanding of colloquial expressions, slang, and non-verbal communication cues. This theme is crucial for the research question as it underscores how TikTok provides a realistic language learning environment that enhances students' practical speaking skills. The ability to engage with native speakers and exposure to real-world language use were cited as significant advantages of TikTok. Unlike scripted classroom dialogues, TikTok's user-generated content provided authentic linguistic input, helping students become more comfortable with natural speech patterns and expressions.

6) Self-expression and creativity

This theme highlights how TikTok empowers students to express themselves creatively through language, encouraging them to produce their own content and experiment with different speaking styles.

> *Example: "TikTok is just fun to use, so it makes learning speaking enjoyable". (Respondent 5)*

This excerpt shows how TikTok allows students to express themselves creatively through language. Students can practice speaking in various ways and demonstrate their language skills by producing and disseminating original content. This theme contributes to the research question by demonstrating how the platform's creative aspects can boost learners' confidence and willingness to practice speaking. Students felt that TikTok allowed them to express themselves in English, allowing them to explore different speaking styles and practice without fear of making mistakes.

Creative engagement in duet challenges and storytelling videos encouraged risk-taking in language learning, a key factor in building fluency.

7) *Positive learning experiences*

This theme focuses on students' positive learning experiences with TikTok, emphasizing the platform's ease of use and enjoyable nature, which contribute to better engagement and learning outcomes.

> *Example: "Yes, I realized it, and it turns out it's very easy to use for learning and improving my speaking ability". (Respondent 4)*

This statement reflects the positive learning experiences students have with TikTok. The ease of use and the enjoyable nature of the platform make language learning a more pleasant experience, which can lead to better engagement and learning outcomes. This theme addresses the research question by showing how positive experiences with TikTok can enhance students' overall engagement in speaking practice. Many students described their experience with TikTok-based speaking activities as fun, enjoyable, and stress-free. Enjoyment is a critical component of emotional engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004), which has been shown to increase persistence and effort in learning.

8) *Challenges and limitations*

This theme addresses students' challenges and limitations when using TikTok for speaking practice, such as navigating the platform's features, dealing with distractions, or facing technical issues.

> *Example: "I have not had much experience learning to speak using TikTok". (Respondent 4)*

This response highlights some challenges and limitations students face when using TikTok for language learning, such as lack of experience or familiarity with the platform. Recognizing these challenges is vital for better integrating TikTok into language learning routines. This theme contributes to the research question by identifying potential barriers to engagement that need to be addressed to maximize TikTok's effectiveness. Some students

noted technological barriers, such as limited access to stable internet connections or unfamiliarity with TikTok's features. Others mentioned that self-confidence was challenging, as recording and posting speaking videos felt intimidating, especially for introverted learners.

9) Integration into learning routine

This theme explores how students incorporate TikTok into their existing learning routines, discovering new uses for a familiar platform and integrating it into their daily language practice.

> Example: *"I subscribe to TikTok for dancing, but I just found out it can be used for learning to speak". (Respondent 5)*

Several students reported that they had started watching and imitating speaking videos regularly, incorporating TikTok into their daily learning habits. This suggests that TikTok may encourage independent, self-directed learning, which could have long-term benefits beyond formal instruction.

The qualitative findings highlight that TikTok provides a highly engaging, interactive, and authentic learning environment for students to practice speaking skills. The platform fosters active participation, peer collaboration, and creative self-expression, making it a valuable supplementary tool for foreign language learning. However, technological limitations and self-confidence issues must be addressed to maximize its effectiveness. Future research could explore integrating TikTok into structured curricula, ensuring that students receive adequate pedagogical guidance and support in overcoming these challenges.

10) Convergence of quantitative and qualitative results

The quantitative results confirmed a statistically significant increase in student engagement after integrating TikTok into speaking activities. The paired-sample t-test showed a notable improvement in engagement scores, indicating that students became more actively involved in speaking tasks. However, these numerical findings alone do not explain the mechanisms

behind this engagement increase. Qualitative data from interviews and FGDs were analyzed thematically to provide deeper insights, revealing key factors that contributed to this improvement.

The qualitative findings highlighted that TikTok's interactive features, particularly duet challenges, collaborative tasks, and structured speaking prompts, were crucial in motivating students to participate more actively. Many students found these features engaging and enjoyable, allowing for peer interaction and authentic language use in a low-pressure environment. Unlike conventional classroom settings, where speaking exercises often feel rigid, TikTok enabled students to practice freely and repeatedly, boosting their confidence.

In addition to promoting interaction, students also emphasized the value of peer collaboration in enhancing their speaking proficiency. Many participants noted that duet videos and conversation challenges encouraged them to practice speaking in a comfortable and enjoyable setting where they could interact with classmates and even native speakers. This aligns with Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, which underscores the importance of peer interaction in knowledge construction. The ability to engage in conversational exchanges with real people, rather than practicing in isolation, was perceived as a highly motivating factor that reinforced their willingness to participate. Furthermore, TikTok's content-sharing and engagement mechanisms—like comments and reactions—provided instant feedback and encouragement, making students feel more connected to their learning community and motivated to continue improving their speaking skills.

Another significant factor contributing to increased engagement was the exposure to authentic language use. Many students noted that TikTok allowed them to listen to and imitate native speakers, helping them better understand pronunciation, intonation, and conversational fluency. The ability to interact with real-world content made language learning feel more relevant and practical, reinforcing their motivation to engage in speaking activities. These findings support engagement theory (Skinner et al., 2009),

which posits that students are more likely to be engaged when learning environments provide autonomy, competence, and relatedness opportunities. TikTok effectively fulfills these conditions by allowing students to exercise control over their learning (autonomy), develop their speaking skills through interactive challenges (competence), and engage with peers and native speakers (relatedness).

Despite these positive aspects, some challenges were identified. A few students experienced difficulties navigating TikTok for educational purposes, particularly those unfamiliar with its features. Others noted potential distractions, as TikTok's entertainment-driven nature sometimes made staying focused on learning activities difficult. However, despite these challenges, the overall perception remained highly positive, with most students agreeing that TikTok significantly enhanced their engagement in speaking practice.

Moving forward, educators and researchers should explore ways to optimize the use of TikTok in structured learning environments, ensuring that students receive appropriate guidance and support to maximize its benefits while addressing potential limitations. While TikTok has proven effective in enhancing engagement, its long-term impact on oral proficiency requires further investigation. By refining teaching strategies and instructional design, TikTok could be further developed into a sustainable and scalable language-learning tool capable of improving student engagement, confidence, and speaking proficiency across diverse learning contexts.

The convergence of quantitative and qualitative findings suggests that while TikTok statistically improves engagement, its effectiveness is largely driven by its ability to create an interactive, socially connected, and immersive learning environment. These insights highlight the potential of digital platforms in fostering higher student motivation and participation in language learning. Properly integrating such platforms in formal instruction could enhance traditional language learning approaches, providing students with more engaging, accessible, and effective speaking practice opportunities.

2. Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that TikTok enhances student engagement in speaking activities, supporting previous research on the role of social media in education (Escamilla-Fajardo et al., 2021; Gao & Liu, 2023). However, beyond merely increasing participation, this study critically evaluates how TikTok fosters engagement and how this aligns with theoretical frameworks, particularly Engagement Theory (Skinner et al., 2009; Veiga et al., 2014) and Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory (Cole & Scribner, 1978; Hanani et al., 2024). By integrating these perspectives, the study provides deeper insight into the pedagogical implications of using social media as a language-learning tool.

Engagement Theory posits that effective learning occurs when students experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Skinner et al., 2009). The study demonstrates that TikTok promotes autonomy by enabling students to control their learning pace and speaking activities, enhancing intrinsic motivation (Fredricks et al., 2004). The platform fosters competence by allowing repeated practice and real-time feedback, reinforcing prior findings that active participation in digital learning environments strengthens language acquisition (Zepke et al., 2010). Furthermore, relatedness is evident through peer collaboration and exposure to diverse linguistic inputs, supporting research emphasizing social learning's role in sustained engagement (Shneiderman et al., 1998; Tabrani, Z. A et al., 2024). However, despite these benefits, the study also highlights that engagement does not automatically lead to deep learning. Without structured guidance, students may engage in superficial interactions, focusing on fluency over grammatical accuracy, a concern raised in previous studies on informal digital learning (Walker et al., 2006; Anshori et al., 2024).

From the perspective of Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, learning is socially mediated through interaction with others (Cole & Scribner, 1978). The interactive features of TikTok, such as duet videos and comment-based discussions, provide opportunities for students to learn by observing, mimicking, and participating in authentic communication.

Unlike traditional classroom approaches that rely on scripted conversations, TikTok facilitates spontaneous and contextualized speech production, which aligns with research showing that peer-assisted learning enhances communicative competence (Gunduz & Hursen, 2015; Napu, 2024; Yoyo et al., 2023). However, while TikTok supports fluency development, the absence of formal instructional oversight raises concerns about linguistic accuracy and the reinforcement of incorrect language patterns. Without structured intervention, students may develop habits inconsistent with standard language use, highlighting the importance of educator involvement in curating and guiding TikTok-based learning activities (Walker et al., 2006; Saragih et al., 2023).

Despite these advantages, the study also identifies significant challenges. A primary concern is the potential for distraction, as TikTok is designed as an entertainment platform, which can divert students' attention from educational tasks. This finding aligns with prior research indicating that social media's fragmented nature can cause cognitive overload and hinder focused learning (Shneiderman et al., 1998). Additionally, the variability in content quality presents another limitation. Unlike traditional language instruction, where materials are carefully curated, TikTok relies on user-generated content that may not always provide accurate or pedagogically sound language models. Previous studies on informal learning environments emphasize the importance of teacher intervention to ensure that students engage with content that supports meaningful language development (Zepke et al., 2010; Panigrahi et al., 2018).

Beyond the classroom, this study has significant global implications. TikTok's global reach enables cross-cultural language learning, allowing students to interact with native speakers and diverse linguistic communities. This reinforces research suggesting that exposure to varied linguistic inputs enhances adaptability and communicative competence (Panigrahi et al., 2021; 2018). Additionally, TikTok's accessibility makes it a potential tool for expanding language education to underserved populations, particularly in regions with limited access to traditional

instruction (Li et al., 2023; Limbong & Wadham, 2024). However, these benefits are moderated by digital equity concerns, as disparities in internet access and technological literacy may limit the platform's effectiveness for certain learners. While TikTok has the potential to bridge educational gaps, its success depends on institutional policies, digital literacy training, and structured pedagogical integration.

Given these findings, further research should explore the long-term impact of TikTok on language proficiency. While the current study confirms increased engagement, it remains unclear whether this engagement translates into sustained linguistic gains. Future studies should employ longitudinal methodologies to assess whether TikTok users demonstrate long-term fluency, pronunciation, and grammatical accuracy improvements. Comparative studies between TikTok and other digital language-learning platforms would also provide insight into the platform's relative effectiveness. Additionally, the development of structured pedagogical models for TikTok-based learning is essential. Educators should design assessment frameworks, guided speaking activities, and feedback mechanisms to maximize learning outcomes while maintaining the platform's motivational benefits.

This study offers important contributions to the expanding body of research on the intersection between social media and digital learning in language education. Rather than merely confirming TikTok's role as a platform that enhances student engagement, the study delves deeper into how such engagement is cultivated and sustained through pedagogical, social, and technological dimensions. By examining students' increased motivation and participation in speaking activities—fostered through peer interaction and authentic language exposure—the research provides a nuanced understanding of the mechanisms through which TikTok influences language learning behavior. These findings are not only consistent with previous studies but also extend the discussion by situating TikTok within broader theoretical frameworks, such as Engagement Theory and Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory. In doing so, the study emphasizes that the

educational impact of TikTok is shaped by the structure and quality of instructional design, highlighting the need for educators to guide and mediate the learning process in digital environments.

As a reinforcement of the findings previously discussed, the use of TikTok in language learning—particularly in developing speaking skills—can be seen as part of an educational strategy that is responsive to the dynamics of digital technology and the evolving needs of contemporary learners. This aligns with the view that modern educational strategies must take into account the social values and cultural norms emerging within digital societies. As noted by Mohd Yusoff et al. (2022), social norms play a significant role in shaping moral judgment and individual behavior, including within digital learning contexts. Thus, the integration of TikTok in education reflects technological adaptation and represents an alignment with new social norms that demand more interactive, participatory, and contextual learning approaches.

Furthermore, learning that utilizes social media platforms such as TikTok must be situated within a structured educational strategy. As emphasized by Tabrani ZA et al. (2023), the development of educational institutions requires strategies that go beyond merely following trends and must instead be grounded in thorough performance analysis. In this context, the success of implementing TikTok in language education should not be measured solely by levels of student engagement or participation. Instead, it must be comprehensively evaluated through curriculum design, pedagogical effectiveness, and measurable learning outcomes. Therefore, the active involvement of educators is essential in designing social media-based learning models that are not only visually appealing but also academically and socially meaningful.

Additionally, it is crucial to recognize that issues related to student protection in digital spaces form an integral part of this discussion. As highlighted by Muhammad AR et al. (2023), effective educational strategies must include protection for children and vulnerable groups, especially in the context of online learning through open platforms like TikTok. In this regard, the integration of digital safety policies and media

literacy becomes essential to ensure that the platform supports educational goals without posing risks to students' safety, well-being, and psychosocial development.

Taking these various dimensions—technological, social, pedagogical, and protective—into account, the use of TikTok as a learning tool must continue to be examined through interdisciplinary and holistic perspectives. Such an approach will enrich our understanding of both the potential and limitations of digital platforms in education and encourage the development of learning practices that are adaptive, safe, and oriented toward the comprehensive development of students' character and competencies.

D. Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the transformative potential of TikTok as a supplementary tool for enhancing engagement in language learning, particularly in speaking activities. The study demonstrates that integrating digital platforms into education can create a more dynamic and interactive learning environment, encouraging active student participation. However, the successful implementation of TikTok in language education requires structured pedagogical approaches, ensuring that engagement leads to meaningful learning outcomes.

Beyond its immediate benefits, this study underscores the broader implications of digital learning in a globalized world. The accessibility of social media-based learning fosters equity in education, offering language-learning opportunities to diverse student populations regardless of socio-economic background. Moreover, TikTok's ability to connect learners across different cultural and linguistic contexts presents new possibilities for intercultural competence and global communication skills.

However, technology alone is not a substitute for structured instruction. Integrating TikTok and similar platforms into language education should be complementary, reinforcing rather than replacing established teaching methods. Educators must be proactive in designing structured, goal-oriented learning

experiences that balance the engagement benefits of digital platforms with the rigor of formal education.

Moving forward, further research is needed to explore long-term impacts on language proficiency and to develop best practices for integrating social media into curricula. Collaborative efforts between educators, policymakers, and technology developers will ensure that digital tools contribute meaningfully to innovative, inclusive, and effective language education.

As digital learning continues to evolve, this study contributes to the growing conversation on how emerging technologies can be harnessed to create more engaging, accessible, and globally connected learning environments, preparing students for 21st-century communication and collaboration demands.

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