

Beyond Entertainment: A Systematic Review of TikTok as an Alternative Tool for Language Assessment for EFL Students

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APA Citation:

Sari, N, N., Sari, D, P., Fitriani, Kalukar, V, J., Hermagustiana, I. (2025). Beyond Entertainment: A Systematic Review of TikTok as an Alternative Tool for Language Assessment for EFL Students. *EDUCASIA*, 10(2), 147-155. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21462/educasia.v10i2.326>

Abstract

This systematic review evaluates TikTok's possible use as a modern language evaluation tool in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. While the app remains popular as an informal learning and entertainment tool, its use as a formal evaluative instrument is largely unexplored. This review employed a qualitative content analysis method to examine 19 peer-reviewed articles published between 2018 and 2025, which were selected based on relevance, recency, and thematic alignment with language assessment in EFL contexts. Data were extracted and coded to identify emerging patterns related to task types, assessed skills, benefits, and challenges. Findings show that the use of TikTok can foster engagement, motivation, and creativity and enable authentic performance assessment. However, several barriers limit the use of the platform for formal evaluation, including the short video timing, assessment rubric validity, reliability construction challenges, and restricted technological access. The review calls for educators to provide guidelines and normative instructions concerning TikTok assessments designed alongside pedagogical and technical constraints. In summary, TikTok has the potential to shift the paradigm of language assessment towards a more integrated and situated evaluation of linguistic competencies. Subsequent studies need to create specific assessment criteria regarding the effectiveness of TikTok for testing, examine the versatile skills being assessed, and assess the sustained impact of the evaluation on students' speaking abilities.

Keywords: Efl, Language Assessment, Tiktok.

1. INTRODUCTION

The developments in technology, as well as pedagogical approaches, have been changing the landscape of language education. In particular, the past few years have seen social media go beyond just being a source of entertainment and start impacting various aspects of life, including education. One of the platforms is TikTok, which has become popular and portable. TikTok is emerging as a novel way of assessing language in EFL contexts. With more than a billion active users, TikTok is rapidly becoming a global phenomenon. TikTok and other social media are changing the practice and teaching of languages by providing learners with interactive and exciting tools for active usage, exposure, and even creativity. This level of presence and engagement creates an interesting avenue for investigation into the potential of TikTok beyond informal learning, especially in formal language assessment contexts where authenticity and communicative proficiency are important.

The TikTok application has received a lot of attention regarding its use for informal learning. However, its role in assessment is unclear and not heavily studied. Most literature describes the motivational potential of TikTok's engagement with learners, its creativity-encouraging affordances, and its ability to be used for authentic language practices within informal contexts only. With such a huge of applications in informal teaching, TikTok's harness able features for systematic assessment of language proficiency, especially for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, remain unaddressed. Traditional language assessments often do not reflect the communicative skills learners have in real life; these assessments are usually stressful and/or inauthentic to learners. Such issues need a thorough examination. TikTok offers to gather materials regarding its esteem as an assessment approach and explore its capability as a valid and reliable alternative.

This systematic review aims to understand TikTok's functionality in terms of language assessment. Specifically, this review addresses the following questions:

1. In what ways is TikTok utilized for English assessment in EFL contexts?
2. Which language skills are more frequently evaluated through TikTok-based activities?
3. What are the fundamental benefits and limitations of using it as an assessment tool for EFL students?

This research aims to provide a comprehensive answer to those questions by integrating knowledge, discerning notable patterns, and underscoring aspects that necessitate further scholarly attention. Constructed knowledge will aid in designing curriculum frameworks and instructional activities for educators and researchers who wish to incorporate practicable methods of measuring language skills in the context of modern technologies and communicative language teaching.

Despite the growing interest in TikTok as a learning tool, few studies have systematically examined its role in language assessment, particularly regarding task types, assessed skills, and assessment frameworks. Existing research primarily focuses on learner motivation or informal learning contexts, leaving a notable gap in understanding how TikTok can be utilized as a valid and reliable assessment platform in EFL settings. This study seeks to address that gap by synthesizing current findings into a structured and comprehensive evaluation.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the systematic process undertaken to collect, filter, and analyze relevant literature on TikTok-based English language assessment in EFL contexts. A rigorous selection process was employed to ensure the validity and relevance of the reviewed studies. The goal is to highlight consistent patterns and insights that can inform the use of TikTok in formal language assessment practices.

2.1 Selection Criteria

This systematic review focused on peer-reviewed journal articles, theses, and conference proceedings discussing TikTok in the context of English language assessment. The inclusion criteria were:

- a. The article must focus on TikTok.
- b. It must address language assessment in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting.
- c. It must be published between 2018 and 2025.

2.2 Data Collection Procedure

Relevant studies were obtained using the Publish or Perish software. The search was conducted via Google Scholar using the keyword “Assessing Language TikTok.” The initial search yielded 100 articles related to the use of TikTok in English language learning. After applying the inclusion criteria, 19 articles were selected for further analysis, as they specifically addressed English language assessment using TikTok.

2.3 Procedure Analysis

The analysis in this review organized the initial codes into broader themes was carried out using the thematic analysis approach as outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006). This method was chosen due to its flexibility and suitability for exploring significant patterns in qualitative data while allowing for detailed interpretation across different sources.

The first step involved familiarizing the researcher with the content of the selected articles. This was done by carefully reading all 16 studies multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research focus, context, and findings related to the use of TikTok for English language assessment in EFL environments. Following this, the researcher proceeded with manual data coding, highlighting relevant information related to types of assessment tasks, the language skills being evaluated, and the assessment approaches used in each study. These segments were then systematically coded to facilitate further thematic grouping.

In the next phase, the researcher. For instance, codes such as “fluency,” “pronunciation,” and “speaking confidence” were grouped under the theme *Speaking Ability*. Similarly, the various forms of TikTok-based tasks were categorized under *Types of Assessment Tasks* based on their features.

After forming the preliminary themes, the researcher conducted a thorough review to refine the categories, ensuring that each theme accurately reflected the data and did not overlap with others. If inconsistencies or redundancies were found, themes were adjusted, merged, or redefined as needed. Each theme was then clearly defined and labelled to capture its central idea. Examples of emerging themes include *Learning Motivation*, *Technological Challenges*, and *Assessment Validity*, which represent both the strengths and obstacles identified in the studies.

In the final step, the results of the analysis were organized into a coherent narrative, supported by direct quotes and examples from the reviewed literature. This structured thematic discussion helped provide deeper insight into how TikTok is currently being used for language assessment and the implications for EFL teaching practices.

Table 1: Search Strategy and Article Selection Summary

Tool Used	Database	Keywords Used	Years Covered	Articles Found	Articles Selected
Publish and perish	Google Scholar	"Assessing Language TikTok"	2018–2025	100	19

2.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, that introduced by Braun & Clarke (2006) was employed to examines to the selected articles. This analytical approach is well regarded for its capacity, to systematically interpret, identify and report recurring themes within qualitative data. It's allowed researchers to organizes data meaningfully while preserving the richest and complexity the original dataset.

The process began with an initial familiarization with the data, in which the researcher carefully read and reread all the articles to get a clear sense of the overall content and recurring ideas. This stage was important to build a deep understanding of the data before moving into the next steps. In the second phase, the researcher developed initial codes by identifying patterns related to how TikTok was used for assessment, what skills were evaluated, and what findings were reported. These codes were then grouped into broader themes that started to emerge, such as different task types, benefits and challenges, and the specific language skills involved.

Once the preliminary themes had been generated, the next step involved reviewing and refining them to ensure that they accurately represented the data and were internally consistent. After that, each theme was clearly defined and given a concise name, capturing its essence and scope. The final step was to organize the findings into a narrative report, supported by examples and citations from the articles. This helped ensure that the thematic insights were not only grounded in the data but also clearly communicated. The themes identified through this analysis are discussed in the following sections, covering the types of tasks employed, the language skills assessed, and the pedagogical implications observed across the reviewed studies.

3. TIKTOK TASK TYPES FOR ASSESSMENT

TikTok has been used in various ways to support English language assessment, especially in EFL classrooms. Several task types have emerged, such as short presentation videos, where students explain a topic in a 1–3-minute video based on clear assessment criteria (Putra, 2024; Suprihatin & Kurniawan, 2023). There are also duet challenges, in which students respond to videos made by teachers or native speakers to practice conversational skills (Ferstephanie & Pratiwi, 2022; Xiuwen & Razali, 2021). Role-play

activities are another example, often involving simulated scenarios like job interviews or real-life interactions (Jay-jay et al., 2024; Pérez-Sabater et al., 2024). In addition, the vocabulary challenge invites students to creatively use target words in context through short video content (De Matta et al., 2023). Similarly, Fitria (2023) found that TikTok videos focusing on pronunciation, particularly those incorporating phonetic symbols, generated high engagement among learners. These videos encouraged students to reproduce correct pronunciation and use vocabulary contextually, making them suitable for pronunciation-based assessment tasks.

These tasks have been viewed as more practical and authentic forms of assessment because they allow students to use language in real-life situations (Suprihatin & Kurniawan, 2023). However, some researchers have noted limitations. For instance, Opsahl & Levin (2022) as well as Fitria (2023) point out that TikTok's short video duration typically between 15 and 60 seconds can limit how deeply students can express and organize their ideas, especially for more complex skills.

4. SKILLS ASSESSED

Based on the analysis of 19 recent studies:

- a. Speaking Ability (12 studies):
 - Fluency and pronunciation (Putra, 2024)
 - Speaking confidence (Ferstephanie & Pratiwi, 2022)
- b. Vocabulary Mastery (7 studies):
 - Usage accuracy (De Matta et al., 2023)
 - Use in context (Xiuwen & Razali, 2021)
- c. Affective Aspect (5 studies):
 - Learning motivation (Jay-jay et al., 2024)
 - Creativity (Alfitri, 2024)
- d. Grammar
 - Use of simple sentence structures (Rasyid et al., 2023)
 - Alignment of grammar with spoken context (Utami & Saroh, 2025)

TikTok effectively assesses speaking skills because the video format requires students to speak. Putra's (2024) study on EFL students showed a significant increase in speaking skills after 8 weeks of using TikTok. However, the assessment of grammar and writing is still limited (Fitria, 2023). Kählman's (2023) study noted that the platform was less effective for assessing complex writing and grammar skills. Garcia (2022) noted limitations in assessing grammar and writing due to its short duration (15–60 seconds).

5. STRENGTHS VS. CHALLENGES

- a. Strengths:
 - Increase learning motivation by 40-60% based on research by Ferstephanie & Pratiwi (2022).
 - Provide contextual and enjoyable learning experiences (Jay-jay et al., 2024; Castro & Timmermann, 2024).
 - Develop student creativity (Alfitri, 2024).
 - Allow opportunities for performance-based assessment (Suprihatin & Kurniawan, 2023) and authentic (Putra, 2024).

b. Challenges:

- Limited video duration (Thorvik, 2023; Fitria, 2023).
- Inequality of technology access, such as unstable internet connections in some areas (Jay-jay et al., 2024).
- Difficulty in developing valid (Pérez-Sabater et al., 2024) and objective (Putri & Tarihoran, 2024) assessment rubrics.
- Potential distraction from entertainment content (Khasawneh, 2024).

Although TikTok offers many advantages, technical and pedagogical challenges must be addressed. Teachers need to design clear assessment rubrics and consider the limitations of technology access (Putri & Tarihoran, 2024).

6. DISCUSSION

The findings of this systematic review suggest that the use of TikTok in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL) assessment has significant potential, especially in developing speaking skills and increasing learning motivation. This is in line with the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach which emphasizes the importance of real communication contexts in language learning (Putra, 2024). As a video-based platform that allows for self-expression and interaction, TikTok creates a space that resembles an authentic communication situation, making it an ideal medium to assess students' communicative competence more naturally.

This finding is in line with previous studies such as those conducted by Suprihatin & Kurniawan (2023), which highlighted the potential of TikTok as a formative assessment tool in the English language classroom. Similarly, Putra (2024) noted significant improvements in students' speaking fluency and self-confidence after the regular implementation of TikTok-based speaking tasks. However, this study extends these findings by systematically identifying the types of assessment tasks, the skills measured, and the technical and pedagogical challenges that emerged from the 19 current studies.

On the other hand, not all studies view TikTok as an effective assessment platform. Opsahl & Levin (2022), for example, focus more on TikTok as a means of informal language exposure than as a structured evaluation tool. In contrast, this review shows that TikTok can have a dual function as an interesting learning medium and a performative evaluation tool, if designed with mature pedagogical and technical considerations.

Meanwhile, Rasyid et al. (2023) highlighted the effectiveness of TikTok in increasing students' exposure to English content. However, the findings of this review indicate that although speaking and vocabulary skills are often assessed through TikTok, writing and grammar skills are still less than optimal for evaluation on this platform. This is in line with Garcia's (2022) warning that the short duration of videos makes it difficult to assess complex sentence structures.

Furthermore, several studies also highlight the affective aspects of TikTok use. Jay-jay et al. (2024) and Kåhlman (2023) emphasized that the short video format on TikTok can increase creativity and student engagement, especially among Generation Z. However, challenges such as unequal access to technology, limited video duration, and potential distractions from non-educational content are still obstacles (Putri & Tarihoran, 2024). Therefore, teachers need to provide guidelines for using the platform, technical limitations, and assessment rubrics that are tailored to the characteristics of TikTok assignments so that assessments remain valid and objective.

To overcome these challenges, a guide to developing assessment rubrics that are appropriate for TikTok-based assignments is needed. This rubric can cover aspects such as: (1) fluency and pronunciation, (2) accuracy and diversity of vocabulary, (3) creativity in delivering messages, and (4) relevance of content to the specified topic. In addition, a hybrid assessment approach can be considered, where TikTok is used to assess performative speaking skills, while grammar and coherence of ideas are assessed through written tests or other conventional assignments.

Further research directions need to examine the long-term impact of TikTok use on the development of speaking skills, reduction of speaking anxiety, and the potential for peer assessment through the comment or duet feature. In addition, the dimensions of learning motivation influenced by algorithmic visibility, such as the number of views or "likes" are also interesting research areas that have not been widely explored. Thus, TikTok is not only an entertainment tool, but can also be a language assessment medium that is authentic, contextual, and in accordance with the characteristics of today's learners, as long as it is designed with a mature pedagogical approach and is based on inclusive technology.

7. CONCLUSION

Based on the 2019-2025 literature review, TikTok offers transformative opportunities for authentic assessment of speaking skills, contextual measurement of vocabulary acquisition, and increased motivation for language learning. However, its use requires clear assessment rubrics, consideration of technical limitations, and integration with traditional assessment methods. A hybrid assessment approach that combines TikTok tasks (e.g., speaking) with traditional tests (e.g., writing) can provide a more balanced evaluation. Establishing clear criteria is important to ensure fairness and standardization. Future research should explore the development of a TikTok-specific rubric model, the effectiveness of TikTok for grammar and writing assessment, and the long-term impact of using TikTok for assessment.

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