

Research Article

Unleashing the Potential of TikTok: Exploring the Power of Mobile in Enhancing English Speaking Skills

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ABSTRACT

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The swift advancement of social media programs has facilitated their incorporation into language teaching. This study sought to examine the impact of the TikTok application on improving English language speaking abilities and learner independence in a cohort of 15 female English language students at the University of Jeddah, Khulais branch. A qualitative research methodology was employed to ascertain the students' perceptions regarding the efficacy of utilizing the TikTok application for enhancing their English language proficiency. This study utilized data collection and interviewing approaches to get information from a sample of pupils. An online survey was conducted utilizing a mixed method approach, which included both closed- and open-ended questions. The results demonstrated a beneficial effect of using the application for educational purposes on students' speaking abilities. Moreover, most participants indicated that their vocabulary range expanded and their pronunciation improved as a result of engaging with TikTok video content. Furthermore, it was observed that the application played a role in enhancing self-assurance in English communication.

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Introduction

The growing usage of mobile technology for education makes it vital to investigate how well social networking applications support English language acquisition outside of the classroom (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018). This is especially crucial considering how quickly and astonishingly social media applications are expanding over the globe. TikTok is a very well-liked app that is used by many people worldwide, especially young people in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Users have been drawn to this program because of its remarkable capabilities. Because of this, mobile applications are becoming more and more common and are thought to be an effective tool for language acquisition. By exposing users to the target language environment more frequently, these apps promote improved practice and engagement (Burston, 2015; Habib et al., 2022). Moreover, audio-visual videos that promote engagement can be used by mobile technologies—like the TikTok app—to improve conversational English language abilities (Xiuwen & Razali, 2021).

The idea of learner autonomy is put out as a potential learning construct that is connected to mobile learning, given that the use of social media applications might improve exposure to the target language anytime, anywhere. The capacity to direct and assume accountability for one's own education is known as learner autonomy (Holec, 1981; Little, 2007). As a result, learning becomes more engaging when students take ownership of it and

promote independence and responsibility regardless of the setting or timing of the lesson. The literature has given social media applications for language learning more attention. These apps have aided in the study of how these apps affect English language acquisition since they are thought to be helpful in raising students' motivation to read in the language and their speaking abilities (AŞIKSOY, 2018; Zaitun et al., 2021). Al Arif (2019) used a survey and semi-structured interview to gather data from English language learners in order to investigate the impact of various social media applications, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, on the quality of learning English. The study discovered that social media proved to be a helpful tool in motivating learners to advance their language skills. According to a case study by Loewen et al. (2019), there is a link between the amount of time spent on Duolingo and gains in L2 knowledge. The study examined the learning experiences of individuals learning Turkish using Duolingo from a variety of L1 backgrounds. Dewi and Arifani (2021) showed how vocabulary and pronunciation can be taught using LINE video conversations via TikTok. All things considered, social media apps have proven to be useful for language acquisition, according to studies. Since many users use TikTok to improve their English language fluency—which is thought to be the main goal among language learners—a few studies have looked into the impact of this app on speaking skills, including pronunciation and vocabulary, outside of the classroom (Tergujeff, 2013). Leong and Ahmadi (2017) contend that learners

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of English are frightened of making mistakes in speech, including mispronouncing words or using the wrong terminology. Since many artists produce wonderful and helpful free English language learning videos, the accessibility of such applications can therefore increase the effectiveness of English language learning.

The advent of 5G technology has brought in a new era for short film viewing. Through short films, people may now quickly and simply understand social trends and updates at anytime, anywhere. Applications for short films offer several advantages, such as minimal entry hurdles, important social components, and simplicity of use. Iqbal's statistics indicates that 63% of TikTok users are under 30 years old. Twenty to thirty-nine-year-olds make up the largest age group of users (35% of the user population) (Iqbal, 2022). Due to their obvious ability to attract new viewers in a competitive market, short videos are the most commonly employed type of video content. Cultural education has been rejuvenated by the short film industry's exponential rise (Sun Shengnan, 2022). Quick educational films can be used to make language learning more comfortable and to downplay the importance of academic studies. Since English is one of the most widely spoken languages, the majority of people who create and watch language education films do it in this language. After hearing about this profitable economic opportunity, other educational institutions began using a range of instructional software products. Moreover, TikTok-like features have been incorporated into other video websites, like short videos that scroll vertically on the screen. The COVID-19 epidemic has led to a wider adoption of digital education, which has both advantages and disadvantages. While there may be significant differences between classroom instruction and recreational education, both can provide new insights and direction.

The present investigation utilizes the Theory of Activity and (Vygotsky, 1978) established this theory in conjunction with the Cultural-History Theory. Because educational psychology relied on atomistic and functional methods of analysis, which recognized mental processes as distinct entities, Vygotsky thought that educational psychology was in crisis. In particular, he emphasized that a major shortcoming of conventional psychology was the isolation of intellect and affect when examined in isolation. Because of this defect, the mental process was seen as a separate stream of "thoughts thinking themselves," disconnected from the individual's wants, passions, inclinations, and impulses as well as life's richness. This theory employs instruments that both limit learners and assist them in modifying their knowledge and abilities (Liaw et al., 2010). Therefore, the utilization of the Activity Theory for the analysis of mobile learning has been proven to be efficacious. The activity theory focuses on the implementation of practices that are associated with the development of people and social groups. The results of this study enhance our comprehension of how social media applications can improve English language speaking skills outside of traditional classroom settings. Thus, this study posits that if learners utilize the TikTok program in a manner that specifically addresses their learning requirements, it can augment their learning process. The present study seeks to investigate the potential utilization of the TikTok application in enhancing the speaking abilities of Saudi postgraduate English learners at the University of Jeddah, Khulais branch.

Aims and objectives

The primary objective of this study is to ascertain whether postgraduate Saudi English language learners at the University of Jeddah's Khulais campus can improve their fluency in the language by utilizing the TikTok app. Finding out if TikTok affects English language learners' autonomy is one of the study's other goals. One advantage of short videos is their capacity for widespread

distribution and viewership. It's crucial to keep in mind that people who view language videos have varying cognitive processes, study styles, and language skills. This sets the video's content apart. Sincerity is really important. Given the significance of short videos, it is your responsibility as the creators of language-learning movies to make sure the content you offer is accurate. Whether they are language learners or not, short films are the main source of entertainment and enjoyment for most individuals. The amount of money that creators of videos make is also impacted by the popularity of platforms for short films. As a result, the value of using movies as a form of amusement in language learning has increased, especially when employing short videos. Additionally wants to determine whether TikTok has an impact on the autonomy of English language learners by addressing the following inquiries:

- To what extent can TikTok help learners improve their English language speaking skills (pronunciation and vocabulary)?
- How do Saudi postgraduate learners of English perceive the influence of TikTok on their communicative competence?

Beneficial Aspects of TikTok

TikTok, along with other short video services, has experienced a rapid and extensive surge in popularity. Without a question, a significant degree of convenience is provided. Tik Tok and other short video applications have a broad audience because to their extensive network coverage. Omar and Dequan did an extensive inquiry into user motivation and identified several functions that TikTok users serve, such as participants, makers, and consumers (Omar & Dequan, 2020). The video editing features and communication components are flawlessly merged. Mobile phones provide an ideal vertical screen display, which significantly minimizes restrictions on the production and consumption of information. Short video software largely facilitates the capturing and dissemination of individuals' daily experiences. The program possesses a vibrant and fascinating nature, leading to a highly satisfying experience. Artists strive to develop a comical or dramatic visual style when creating videos. Short video platforms gain popularity because of their powerful big data backend processing, which allows for user-friendly content creation tools and tailored customization. Participants in educational programs are provided with the chance to engage in a stimulating and intellectually-oriented setting, unrestricted by the typical constraints of a traditional classroom. Various sorts of anchors highlight different aspects of attaining mastery in the English language. These content creators, whose films primarily focus on different English dialects, can help language learners identify regional variations in English pronunciation and adjust their accents accordingly. These presenters will create engaging videos that showcase the English accent, attracting viewers and increasing the entertainment value of the videos. Some people will highlight the widespread use of language and provide significant insights by analyzing the subtle details and greater structure of regularly used expressions. These videos are specifically created to improve the language proficiency of learners and offer a genuine English learning opportunity. Actors often use brief comic performances or dialogues to help children understand the importance and proper use of words and sentences. In addition, numerous video designers have the ability to effectively find and organize content, while faithfully replicating the distinct speech patterns of English individuals as shown in television shows and film soundtracks. They actively participate in reading aloud to the kids and consistently practice with the specific goal of achieving flawless pronunciation.

Design

To provide a more thorough comprehension of the data, this study used a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative techniques. In modern research, the integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches has gained significance as it permits a comprehensive and multidimensional comprehension of the study topics (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). The TikTok app was used to measure how much trainees' autonomy and speaking skills improved using an online poll. There were both closed-ended and open-ended survey questions. Open-ended questions were used to collect qualitative data, whereas closed-ended questions were used to collect quantitative data. Data was collected from a small number of people. Convenience sampling is the process of choosing a sample based on its accessibility. Selecting those who are closest to you and most approachable is known as convenience sampling (Grinnell, 2001).

Participants

This study involved a group of 15 female Saudi postgraduate students at level 3 from the University of Jeddah, Khulais branch. All participants indicated their familiarity with the TikTok application and confirmed that they often used the platform. It is noteworthy that certain people used TikTok without a subscription. Moreover, the participants employed TikTok for several objectives, such as amusement, acquiring proficiency in the English language, tracking comedic content makers, and studying English people to improve their linguistic abilities. All participants answered the closed-ended questions, however only 9 of them gave responses to the open-ended ones.

Findings

Regarding the first research question, which focuses on the extent to which TikTok can aid learners in improving their English language speaking skills, participants were asked about their confidence in TikTok's ability to enhance their English language proficiency. Figure 1 demonstrates that 71% of participants responded positively, affirming that TikTok has indeed helped them improve their English language skills.

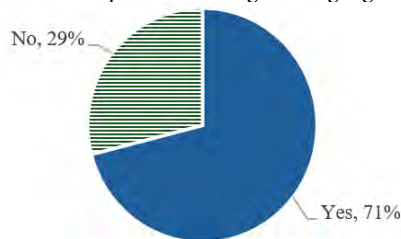


Figure 1. Does the TikTok application help you in improving your English language level?

Furthermore, Figure 2 highlights the specific areas in which TikTok has proved beneficial. Approximately 47% of students reported learning new vocabulary through the application, while 38% noticed an improvement in their pronunciation. Additionally, 15% expressed an increase in self-confidence while speaking.

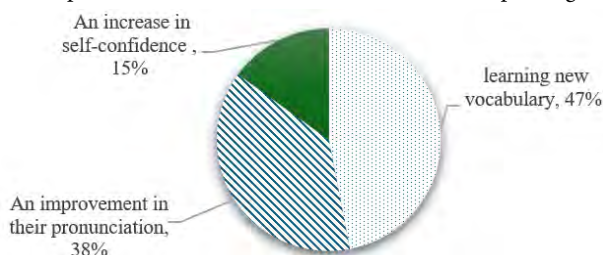


Figure 2. In which area the TikTok application helped you?

Moving on to the second research question, which explores how Saudi postgraduate learners of English perceive the influence of TikTok on their English learning, participants were asked about the benefits they derived from the TikTok application. Table 1 displays the responses, revealing that the majority of benefits mentioned were directly related to English language learning.

Table 1. What are the benefits of the TikTok application for you?

Pseudonym	Responses
Participant 1	Learning and entertainment
Participant 2	Amusing app and easy to use
Participant 3	To learn English
Participant 4	Entertainment
Participant 5	I only use it for entertainment but maybe it has helped expanding my vocabulary
Participant 6	It is beneficial in being exposed to other languages
Participant 7	It gives me brief and authentic sources of the target language.
Participant 8	Interesting and learn new things
Participant 9	Entertainment and getting used to the English native speakers

Table 2 depicts the reasons why students chose to use the TikTok application for improving their English language skills. Most students expressed their motivation to expose themselves to more English context in order to enhance their English language proficiency.

Table 2. Why do you use the TikTok application for improving English language learning?

Pseudonym	Responses
Participant 1	Improving pronunciation
Participant 2	Extend the time of exposure to English language
Participant 3	It enables me to be involved in the natural use of the language
Participant 4	The videos are short and fun. It also includes many contexts.
Participant 5	Because I need to be in the target language environment
Participant 6	Spending time
Participant 7	This is not the main reason; I actually use it for fun, but the learning is a side effect after exposing to English speakers

Overall, these findings shed light on the positive impact of TikTok in improving speaking skills and learner autonomy among the participants in this study.

Discussion

According to the study's findings, teaching English language learners through the TikTok app can help them enhance their language skills on a variety of fronts, especially when it comes to watching English-language content providers. The amazing features of the TikTok app captivate users and significantly quicken their acquisition of the English language. The results of the study show that using the TikTok app to learn English is a very creative and efficient approach for students to increase their vocabulary, get better at pronouncing words correctly, and develop confidence when speaking the language. It is evident from the earlier examination of the benefits and drawbacks of Tik Tok's

influence on English education that live media is a cutting-edge teaching technology that is gaining popularity. However, there are a few shortcomings with regard to the scholarly components. By integrating technology into standard educational materials or tasks, teachers can pique students' curiosity and give them a sense of agency. It can also offer a variety of pedagogical techniques and help with language learning obstacles. Students sometimes find it difficult to communicate effectively in an on-campus course because of their limited language and lack of experience. As a result, they become disinterested and lose motivation to acquire fluency in English (Herlisya & Wiratno, 2022). The abundance of media resources will enable educators, linguists, and education researchers to explore cutting-edge teaching strategies. These approaches will better reflect the social and cognitive development of a new class of language learners.

The TikTok app's user-friendly characteristics make it possible to see how it might support students in feeling more independent as learners. One user described the tool as "easy to use," while another said the films are "short and enjoyable." English language learners actively seek for resources that have features of usefulness and practicality. More instructional materials will be produced as a result of the media's rapid development. Since visual language understanding helps with language acquisition, TikTok's English video teaching resources enable students to regularly practice and reinforce their learning. Many language learners today overlook the ideal time to study a language or lack the time for formal language instruction. As a result, it is imperative to make the most of the limited time allocated for completing academic assignments. Additionally, media—live and recorded—can create new economic value. Adopting efficient marketing strategies for "short video plus language education" will lead to the enhancement of language instruction and the growth of business opportunities (Sun, Shengnan, 2022).

Limitations

There are limitations on the sample size as well as the individual characteristics. The results may not have been as broadly applicable because the study's focus was restricted to a particular student cohort. Subsequent research endeavors have to endeavor to encompass a more extensive spectrum of persons to attain comprehensive and precise outcomes. Lack of control over the learning environment is another limitation. As a social media platform, TikTok exposes users to a wide variety of content, including opportunities for language learning. This could cause children to embrace inappropriate language usage or take them away from their language learning goals. Future study should put more emphasis on creating clear instructions or incorporating targeted language acquisition exercises into the platform to get around this restriction and create a controlled learning environment.

Conclusion

The study demonstrated the efficacy of mobile technology, specifically social media applications such as TikTok, in enhancing English speaking skills and pronunciation. The article highlighted the significance of student autonomy and provided guidance on utilizing these platforms for self-directed language learning. The results illustrate that individual learning a language can improve their speaking skills through the use of TikTok, particularly in regards to expanding their vocabulary and refining their pronunciation. According to research, a growing number of instructors following footsteps of TikTok at colleges and universities are using short films as a creative and well-liked method of teaching foreign languages. Its ability to communicate

has allowed it to reach a larger audience and obtain more instructional resources. Short movies make it easy for viewers to study in their own time by covering important cultural and educational themes in a condensed amount of time. The combination of education and short films creates new ideas about where education should go in the future. However, it is essential to acknowledge the constraints of the previous research since they can provide vital insights for future investigations.

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