EXPLORING THE ROLE OF TIKTOK EDUCATIONAL CONTENT IN BUILDING STUDENTS' CONFIDENCE TO SPEAK ENGLISH

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Abstract

This study explores the role of TikTok educational content in building students' confidence to speak English, with a focus on fourth semester students of the English Education Study Program at Ma'arif Nahdlatul Ulama University (UMNU) Kebumen. The objectives of this study are What types of TikTok educational content are most helpful in increasing speaking confidence? And in what ways does TikTok affect students' confidence in speaking English?. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data was collected through an open-ended questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. Thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to analyze the responses. The findings revealed four main themes: (1) lack of confidence before engaging with TikTok content, (2) the positive influence of TikTok educational videos on students' speaking confidence,
(3) active speaking practices triggered by TikTok content, and (4) limitations of the platform, such as short video duration and unclear explanations. The types of content that were most helpful in improving confidence were pronunciation tips, vocabulary development, role-playing, and motivational videos. TikTok was found to help reduce students' anxiety, model speaking, and encourage active practice. However, limitations include the absence of interviews and the lack of direct speaking skill assessment. Future research is encouraged to include more in-depth qualitative methods and objective evaluations of speaking skills. The study concludes that TikTok can be an effective informal learning tool to enhance students' confidence in speaking English when used thoughtfully.

Keywords: Educational content, speaking confidence, English language learning, qualitative research

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital era, social media is growing very rapidly and has a very significant impact on various aspects of human life, including education. Even social media platforms are now a medium for interacting and communicating in developing human abilities themselves, both in economics, religion and tourism. One that is experiencing rapid development is TikTok. According to Aji Wisnu Nugroho (2018),TikTok is a social media application that provides unique and interesting special effects that can be used by users easily to create cool, unique short videos that can attract the attention of many people for their audience. TikTok makes a big contribution in the field of education. With a very wide demographic, according data reportal TikTok attracts

many young people, because 27.5% of its users are 18 years and over. TikTok has features that are very useful and easy to use, some of these features include; creating and sharing videos, starting from creative tools such as music, and filters. Learning English is one area of schooling where the TikTok app has recently made inroads. TikTok is now also being utilized as an educational platform by various groups. The increasing use of TikTok among students as their informal learning media is a concern in itself. Students rely heavily on TikTok as their informal learning media, with a combination of visuals, a small duration and interactive features making TikTok a relaxed but still informative learning resource. One of the educational learning content that can be learned on TikTok is mastery of foreign languages such as English.

TikTok also offers a microlearning approach that suits the character of today's students. TikTok videos with short duration allow the delivery of learning concepts in a bite sized format that is easy to remember and does not burden students cognitively (Lamimi et al., 2024). The microlearning approach through tiktok has been shown to increase knowledge retention, decrease cognitive load, and allow students to learn according to their abilities and interests (David Conde-Caballero Carlos, A.Castillo-Sarmiento Inmaculada Ballesteros-Yánez Borja, Rivero-Jiménez Lorenzo, 2023). In terms of algorithms, TikTok is different from other social media platforms such as Instagram or YouTube. Because TikTok actively learns the preferences of its users and recommends content that suits the user's wishes without the need to follow a particular account. This algorithm can make users find educational content on TikTok that matches their interests without having to search for it explicitly. This makes TikTok effective as an information learning tool because users can learn just by scrolling TikTok. In addition, educational content on TikTok is delivered by creators who are relatable to today's younger generation audience, both in terms of style, language, and context in everyday life. This can make it easier for students to follow, understand and feel comfortable when learning, and can do duets or stiches as a form of interactive practice.

Although TikTok has various advantages as an informal learning medium, there are certainly some limitations and risks that need to be considered in an educational context. While TikTok offers a wide range of potential as an informal learning medium, its use also has some limitations and risks that need to be considered. One of the main challenges is the credibility of the content, given that not all creators have an adequate educational background or convey information accurately. This could potentially lead to misinformation if students do not have good digital literacy skills to filter the content. In addition, TikTok's algorithm designed to maximize user engagement may cause distraction, as students risk being distracted by entertainment content that is irrelevant to learning objectives. The very short duration of the videos may also limit the depth of material delivered, making them less suitable for topics that require in-depth explanations. On the other hand, reliance on social validation such as likes and comments can also negatively affect learning motivation if not managed wisely. Therefore, although TikTok has great potential in supporting English language learning, its use still needs to be wisely directed, accompanied and criticized so that it does not have an impact that is contrary to the purpose of education itself.

As an international language, English plays an important role in education. Today, many Indonesians are learning English to communicate with others. Learning English as a foreign language helps people to communicate with other individuals (Maru et al., 2020). According to data from the English Proficiency Index (EFI) 2024, Indonesia is ranked 80th out of 116 countries. The low level of English proficiency is due to a lack of self-

confidence. Lauster (2008) defines self-confidence as an attitude or belief in one's own abilities, which allows a person to act without excessive anxiety, feel free to do what one wants, and take responsibility for one's actions. Free to act in accordance with their wishes, responsible for their actions, polite in interacting with others, and satisfied with their achievements. The factor of students' lack of confidence can come from internal factors. Internal factors such as fear of making mistakes, anxiety about the judgment of others, lack of practice are the main factors of low confidence in speaking English. On the other hand, educational content on TikTok is often packaged in an interesting, interactive, and easy-to-understand manner, and is delivered by creators who use approaches that are relatable to teenagers' lives. This kind of content has the potential to have a positive impact on increasing students' learning motivation and self-confidence. Through the comments, duets and stitch features, students can also interact directly with the content and practice their speaking skills in a more relaxed and informal setting.

The subjects of this research are fourth semester students of UMNU Kebumen's English Language Education study program. Researchers have made initial observations and informal conversations with several 4th semester students who show an increase in student self-confidence after seeing content education on Tiktok. Some of the types of content they see are vocabulary building, pronunciation and motivational content to increase self-confidence when speaking English. This shows that there is a significant influence on students' self-confidence in speaking by viewing Tiktok's educational content. So that this topic can be relevant and important for further research.

To explain this phenomenon, the two main theories used in this study are Social Learning Theory and Self-Efficacy, both developed by Albert Bandura. Both theories help understand how students can improve their speaking confidence through informal interactions with educational content on TikTok. Bandura explains that in Social Learning Theory, learning through observational learning occurs when individuals see the behaviour of others, imitate it, and then adjust it to themselves. The process consists of four components, namely attention, retention, reproduction, motivation.(Bandura albert, 1986). In the use of TikTok, this theory explains how students can learn to speak by imitating and observing the educational content provided. The concept of self-efficacy according to Albert Bandura is a person's belief in the ability to perform an action to achieve the desired results (Bandura albert, 1997). Self-efficacy is influenced by four main sources:

1. Mastery experiences are direct experiences of successfully performing tasks that increase confidence, such as when students successfully create their own English speaking videos.

2. Vicarious experiences i.e. seeing other people (e.g. TikTok creators) perform successfully gives rise to the belief that oneself can also follow suit.

3. Verbal persuasion i.e. encouragement and positive comments from the audience such as likes or comments strengthen self-belief.

4. Physiological & emotional states, namely emotional conditions such as feeling comfortable, relaxed, or enthusiastic when following educational content have a positive effect on self-efficacy.

TikTok is an informal learning environment where these four factors can occur simultaneously. For example, students watch English speaking challenges from relatable

creators (vicarious experience), try to imitate them (mastery experience), get positive responses (verbal persuasion), and feel a pleasant atmosphere without pressure (positive emotional state). This combination effectively increases English speaking confidence, in line with the principle of reciprocal determinism where behavior, personal beliefs, and the environment influence each other dynamically.

Previous relevant research has been conducted by a number of researchers. One of them is research by Ayu Putri Ani Sagala, Jefri Mando Sinurat, Kammer Tuahman Sipayung, Cristian Neni Purba, and Dumaris Silalahi entitled "Increasing Students' Self Confidence in English Speaking Skill by Zach on the TikTok Application at XI Grade of SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan". This study aims to increase students' confidence in speaking English by applying Zach's speaking techniques through the TikTok platform. Furthermore, research by Baothongchan Wachirakiat entitled "The Role of TikTok in Enhancing University Students' Confidence and Self-Esteem" aims to explore the role of TikTok in increasing students' confidence and self-esteem, as well as its relationship with English learning. Another study was conducted by Vriska E. Kansil, Jim R. Tuna, and Nihta V. F. Liando with the title "Analysis of the Effect of Students' Self-Confidence on Speaking Skill", which focused on the relationship between self-confidence and speaking skill. This study used a correlational qualitative approach, with data collected through questionnaires and public speaking scores of students majoring in English education class of 2017. The study by Fahrizal Dadang and Faisol Hadi entitled "Students' Motivation in Speaking English Using TikTok" focuses more on how TikTok affects students' motivation in learning speaking skills.

Based on the review of previous research, it can be seen that most studies either emphasize on improving speaking skills in general through TikTok, or focus on the use of specific techniques such as Zach's technique. The study by Baothongchan Wachirakiat also explored self-confidence, but in a broader scope including self-esteem. Meanwhile, Vriska E. Kansil and colleagues' study focused more on the relationship between self-confidence and speaking ability, without emphasizing the role of social media as a driving factor. It can be concluded that most of the previous studies highlighted more technical aspects in speaking skills such as teaching methods, specific techniques, or focus on motivation and self-esteem in general. There are not many studies that specifically discuss the relationship between TikTok's educational content and the increase of students' confidence in speaking English, especially from the psychological side and the subjective experience of students as learners.

This research offers novelty by exploring in depth how students' interactions with educational content on TikTok can shape their confidence in speaking English. The main focus is not on technical aspects such as pronunciation or grammar, but on the social, emotional, and cognitive processes that students experience when accessing, imitating, and responding to informal learning content. The idea that is expected to emerge from this research is the identification of forms of educational content that are effective in building students' self-confidence, especially in the context of non-formal learning in accordance with the characteristics of today's digital generation. Thus, this research is expected to not only provide academic contributions, but also offer practical insights in the development of social media-based English learning strategies.

Therefore, this study aims to explore two main aspects, which are :

1. What types of TikTok educational content are most helpful in improving speaking confidence?
2. In what ways has TikTok influenced students' confidence in speaking English?

This research is expected to provide practical benefits for various parties. For English language teachers, the results of this study can be a reference in choosing or recommending appropriate in tiktok educational content to support increasing students' confidence in speaking English. For tiktok educational content creators, the findings of this study can be used as a basis for designing learning content that is not only interesting and interactive, but also able to have a positive influence on the psychological aspects of students, especially in building self-confidence. For students, this research can encourage more productive utilization of social media as an informal and fun way to learn English. In addition, for non-formal curriculum developers, these results can be a consideration in integrating digital media such as tiktok as part of an alternative learning strategy that is relevant to the characteristics of today's students. In addition, this study can contribute to future research in the fields of educational technology and media psychology by offering insights into how informal digital platforms can effectively drive student engagement, motivation, and language learning outcomes.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach, as it allows for in-depth exploration of students' experiences. Referring to Sugiyono (2022), this method examines phenomena in a natural setting, with the researcher as the key instrument. It was chosen to understand how TikTok educational content influences students' confidence in speaking English. The participants were 4th semester students of the English Education Study Program at Ma'arif Nahdlatul Ulama University (UMNU) Kebumen, selected through purposive sampling, targeting those who actively use TikTok for learning English. Data were collected using open-ended questionnaires distributed via Google Forms. These semi-structured questions encouraged participants to describe their experiences and perceptions of TikTok's role in building speaking confidence. To analyse the data, the study used thematic analysis (Braun, V., & Clarke, 2006), which involved six stages: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of thematic analysis of the open-ended questionnaire data, four main themes were found that explain the relationship between TikTok's educational content and students' confidence in speaking English.

1. Lack of Confidence in Speaking Before Exposure to TikTok Educational Content

Some students who are part of this study show a lack of confidence when speaking English before knowing or actively watching educational content on TikTok. Factors that cause low self-confidence such as fear of making mistakes, fear of other people's

judgment, and lack of knowledge about good grammar and pronunciation are the main causes of students' lack of confidence.

One respondent wrote,

"Honestly, I wasn't confident at all. Takut salah ngomong, takut diketawain." (P1)

Other respondents also stated,

"Kurang percaya diri, takut salah." (P2)

This shows that there are psychological barriers before they recognize TikTok educational content. This psychological barrier is in the form of their low self-confidence in starting oral communication in English.

2. Positive Influence of TikTok Educational Content on Speaking Confidence

Pronunciation, vocabulary, roleplay, and motivational learning many of them reported an increase in confidence in speaking English. The content on TikTok uses authentic language in short videos and with language that is easy to understand and fun, so that it has a positive effect on the affective aspects of learning

A respondent explained,

"Yes, I feel more confident now. I've learned new vocabulary, better pronunciation, and feel less nervous when speaking." (P3)

While another respondent said,

"Yes, a bit! Watching TikTok helps me understand how to speak more naturally." (P4)

Among various types of TikTok educational content, students found pronunciation tips, roleplay videos, vocabulary building, and grammar explanations to be the most helpful in improving their confidence. These formats provide practical, real-life examples and speaking models that are easy to follow and imitate. This change occurs because TikTok is able to provide authentic, fun, and easy-to-understand speaking models, thus helping students to build confidence gradually.

3. Active Engagement in Speaking Practice Triggered by TikTok Content

The effect of TikTok educational content is not only limited to increasing self- confidence, but can also stimulate students to practice directly after viewing educational content on TikTok. Some respondents stated that they imitated speech from videos, recorded their own voices, and used the vocabulary learned in daily conversations. This shows that TikTok is able to bridge between passive learning and active involvement in language production.

One respondent stated:

"Yes, I practiced by repeating the sentences after the video and recording myself." (P5)

Another respondent admitted,

"*Saya ikut menirukan apa yang diucapkan di video.*" (P6)

This direct practice becomes a real form of internalization of learning, which indirectly also strengthens confidence in the use of spoken English

4. Limitations that Affect the Confidence-Building Process

Despite the many benefits, some respondents also revealed challenges in using TikTok as their learning medium. These challenges can affect the effectiveness of their confidence building.

One respondent wrote,

"*Kadang terlalu cepat, dan kurang detail penjelasannya.*" (P7)

Another respondent mentioned,

"Sometimes the videos are too short, and the explanation is not complete." (P8)

Challenges such as speed of speech, short duration, and too many confusing accents can limit their understanding and make them confused when learning, especially for beginners

Discussion

The first theme, Lack of Confidence in Speaking English Before Exposure to TikTok Content, showed that many students felt unconfident and hesitant to speak in English before they regularly watched educational content on TikTok. This is in line with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, which states that individuals with low levels of confidence tend to avoid language production activities. Fear of making mistakes, concern about being judged negatively, and lack of exposure to language are the main causes of this anxiety. This kind of emotional barrier is common among foreign language learners, especially those who rarely get the opportunity to practice speaking directly.

The second theme, The Empowering Role of TikTok's Educational Content, revealed that short, engaging and relevant videos to students' lives helped them gradually build confidence in speaking. Content such as pronunciation tips, vocabulary guides, roleplay videos, and learning motivation are practical learning resources that are easy for students to access and understand. This finding is in line with social learning theory (Bandura, 1986), which emphasizes the importance of learning through observation. By frequently watching others speak in real or simulated contexts, students begin to internalize language patterns and gain the courage to try speaking themselves.

The third theme, Active Practice in Speaking Triggered by Engagement with TikTok, showed that students were not only passive spectators, but also encouraged to actively practice speaking. Some of them mimicked sentences from the videos, recorded their own voices, and used new vocabulary in daily conversations. This transition from

passive to active learning reinforces the idea that digital media can be a bridge between input and output in second language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). It also confirms that TikTok serves not only as a source of input, but also as a trigger for productive language use.

However, the fourth theme, Limitations and Challenges in Using TikTok - indicates that TikTok is not a completely ideal medium. Some students reported that the speed of speech in the videos, the short duration, and the distraction of non-educative content can disrupt their focus and learning process. This finding is reinforced by a study of TikTok- based flipped classrooms conducted by Frontiers (Giuseppe et al., 2025), where students reported that TikTok videos often only cover material in a fragmentary manner, lacking systematicity and depth in conveying concepts - making it difficult to fully understand. Furthermore, in a systematic review by Pingdingshan University and University Pendidikan Sultan Idris, it was found that while TikTok is able to spark student engagement, the platform still has weaknesses in supporting deep learning and critical thinking-mainly due to the focus on short-form entertainment content and a format that does not reflect the full academic framework (Feiyue & Zamzuri Mohamad Ali, 2025).

This finding is relevant when students have the subjective experience that while TikTok can motivate speaking English, the too-short content is often insufficient for deep learning. Therefore, while TikTok has great potential in strengthening speaking confidence, there is a need for curation strategies and pedagogical design so that the material is not only engaging, but also structured, consistent and purposeful in building a more comprehensive understanding.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that TikTok educational content has a significant role in building students' confidence in speaking English. Based on the results of thematic analysis, it was found that the most helpful types of content are video pronunciation tips, examples of daily conversation, roleplay, vocabulary building, and motivational videos. This content is considered effective because it provides a model of using English that is authentic, easy to understand, and in accordance with the needs of students. TikTok educational content also affects student confidence in three main ways, namely reducing fear of speaking, providing interesting speaking references, and encouraging students to practice actively such as imitating and recording speech. This shows that TikTok does not only function as an entertainment media, but also as an informal learning tool that is relevant and useful for developing students' speaking skills.

However, this study has several limitations. First, the data was obtained only through open-ended questionnaires without follow-up interviews, so the depth of information obtained is still limited. Secondly, this study did not measure speaking skills directly, so the results only reflect students' perceptions. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies use a more in-depth qualitative approach, such as interviews or observations, and combine it with objective measurement of speaking skills. In addition, teachers and educational content creators are advised to take advantage of TikTok's potential by creating content that is more directed, clear, and appropriate to the learner's ability level, so that this platform can be maximized pedagogically in the context of English language learning.

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