

# Utilization of TikTok for Oral English Learning

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**Abstract.** The development of technologies has revolutionized English language communication competence. Social media have swept the world within a short period of time. Teenagers are inevitably enthralled at all ages. Since TikTok is the most popular social application inside and outside China, supplying many English-speaking short videos benefits learning English as the Foreign Language (EFL) students by improving their sensitivity to English. This paper utilizes a questionnaire to investigate the effectiveness of applying TikTok to oral English learning from student's point of view. The expected findings show students are eager to improve their competence in speaking English. Meanwhile, students categorize the existing problems of oral English education into three kinds: Pedagogy, teaching materials, and pronunciation. More than 70% of students think taking advantage of TikTok helps settle these existing problems. Therefore, teachers are suggested to combine useful short videos on TikTok with the speaking missions in English-speaking classes.

**Keywords:** TikTok; Oral English; Education.

## 1. Introduction

The speaking domain of English has been the preference for lots of English as Second language learners. Even people are inclined to assess their success in English learning based on how well they behave on their speaking ability. In addition, the oral aspect of English is the central part of the communication function since English has been an international language for many years. According to Harmer (2007) and Pourhosein Gilakjani (2016), human communication is a complex process, which means the whole way of grasping oral English is painstaking, for it demands pronunciation, sensitivity, and quick reaction. It is believed that oral English is critical and challenging, but it is still hard for students to master it without a guide. At this point, English teachers and schools play an important role in the student's process of learning oral English.

As Chinese and English have a bunch of differences, teachers and schools are still on the way trying to figure out the proper way to teach oral English that benefits students the most. However, it is admitted that some barricades obstruct the path leading to perfect oral education. The representative three are pedagogy related to teachers, the textbooks related to teaching materials and pronunciation pertaining to students. To settle these problems entrenched in the current education system, using social media might be helpful. Social media features are captivating, have comprehensive coverage and follow the latest trend. Combining social media with oral English education matches each other so much. The most popular social media around the world is TikTok. Taking advantage of TikTok in real classrooms will likely solve the problems that most teachers have met. Meanwhile, it is also challenging for educators to utilize modern media well.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 The purpose of study

Nowadays, the communication function of English is more and more critical with the process of globalization as an international language. However, the Chinese Student's training in speaking English is still far from reaching the goal of communication. O.Kitchakarn(2016) mentioned that using a foreign language in daily life is one of the most effective strategies to acquire a foreign language. Therefore, social media has become an excellent tool for learning English for they have

corresponding advantages. In order to settle existing problems in oral English education system and benefit students, it is effective to make use of social media.

## **2.2 Respondent of the survey**

One hundred sixty-six college students are surveyed online. All of the participants are picked up randomly for the authors put the questionnaire on a website that specializes in answering questions covering all aspects. These students come from different cities, accepting different education systems and major in different departments. Therefore, their statistics are more precise and object as a general situation showed out.

## **2.3 Tool of study**

A questionnaire survey method was used in the survey. The questionnaire contains a total of 15 questions, each of which has 2 to 5 options. Most of the questions are single-choice questions, and a few are multiple-choice questions. Students are asked to choose the most appropriate answer to each question according to their own situation in the process of using Tik Tok to learn spoken English. These questions are mainly related to their evaluation of Tik Tok spoken English learning.

## **2.4 Data collection and analysis**

The data were collected through a questionnaire survey and were all primary data. The research survey was published on the Internet, and the college students who filled out the questionnaire were distributed in different provinces in China, mainly in Guangdong province and Shandong province. Students were asked to spend 5-10 minutes answering the questions in the questionnaire. After the investigation, a descriptive analysis of the results and a fair presentation were made.

# **3. Results and discussion**

## **3.1 Research on the importance of English oral competence for EFL students**

From the view of applied linguistics, speech is the very primary and natural medium of human language due to its features like native speakers acquire their mother languages by the sounds, not the words. Also, communication is the most direct way of getting to know other people. People can have a general picture of something within a few sentences. Compared with other domains, River(1981) also has studied the utilization of language outside of the classroom and discovered that speaking is utilized more frequently than both writing and reading put together. According to Brown(1994), listening and speaking are considered as English teaching instrument, which means they share a deep connection. With the improvement of speaking competence, student's listening competence would make progress correspondingly. With globalization, English has played a critical role in international communications. Therefore, English speaking domain is getting more attention from countries whose English is not the official language.

Wang (2013) have pointed out that because speakers must achieve certain levels of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, speaking English is not an easy undertaking. All these speaking skills require English speakers to have an instant intuition developed from daily practice. Even though English is one of the compulsory courses in China, students remain unsatisfied performance in English speaking. The following survey is the overall self-assessment of Chinese student's oral English.

According to Table 1, It is clear that most Chinese students are not conversant in speaking English. Even though English is one of the compulsory courses in China, students perform much better in writing and reading than in speaking, as nearly half of them can only tell their ages and names. However, though the overall level of students' oral English is not optimistic, data reveals that students treat oral English seriously, believing it very important. Almost one-third of students have the notion that oral English is indispensable as putting it prior among the four domains. Meanwhile, virtually

every student entertains the aspiration to improve their oral English, which shows the importance of taking oral English education earnestly.

**Table 1.** Student's evaluation of oral English

Questions	scale			
Student's evaluation of oral English	The most important 53(31.93%)	Very important 96(57.83%)	Important 15(9.04%)	Not important 2(1.2%)
Student's assessment of oral English	Able to speak without preparation 3(1.81%)	Able to illustrate something logically 23(13.86%)	Able to have daily communications 64(38.55%)	Able to answer simple questions 76(45.78%)
Student's desire to improve their oral English	Very strong and take action 50(30.12%)	Strong and think about it very often 68(40.96%)	Not strong and think about it now and then 39(23.49%)	Never think about it 9(5.42%)

### 3.2 The Existing Problem

There are some problems that can be blamed for student's poor performance in English speaking. To clarify what they are, the authors have interviewed students about what are supposed to be the exciting problems in oral English education.

**Table 2.** Student's opinions on current oral English education

Questions	scale			
Do students think oral English education has problem	Yes and many problems 76(45.78%)	Yes but not many problems 84(50.6%)	No 6(3.61%)	N/A
The problem of oral English teaching relates to	Pedagogy 87(52.41%)	Textbooks 53(31.93%)	Pronunciation 26(15.66%)	N/A
Which is the main problem in Pedagogy	Teacher's pronunciation 41(24.7%)	The lack of students' participation 67(40.36%)	The paucity of knowledge about the cultural background 46(27.71%)	The absence of English-speaking skills 12 (7.2%)
Which is the main problem in textbooks	Old-fashioned 30 (18.07%)	Impractical 52 (31.33%)	Chinese mindset 56 (33.73%)	The scarcity of oral tasks 28 (16.87%)
What is the main problem in pronunciation education	Teacher's pronunciation 37 (22.29%)	Disregard of pronunciation 61 (36.75%)	Absence of practice 52 (31.33%)	The vapidness of the training 16 (9.64%)

Analyzing Table 2, The ways of teaching oral English have some apparent issues since as high as ninety-five percent of interviewers believe there are. The authors categorized them into three distinct kinds, pedagogy, teaching materials, and pronunciation. To figure out the specific problem of each, it is hard to conclude the predominant one because of the balance reflected in the data.

In the Pedagogy aspect, the current teaching method is not appropriate for its failure in creating English speaking environment, according to student's point of view. In conclusion, student's do not think they learn oral English in an immersive vibe. At the same time, Chinese English teachers are inclined to take leadership positions during English classes, giving no chance for students to speak English. It's teacher-oriented but not student-oriented.

In textbooks, the data distribute in balance. Our students now use teaching materials lagging behind the English trend because they barely update. Data shows the Chinese mind becomes the main problem for students. The impractical contents also relate to the Chinese mind as students as English learners rarely supplement English culture in textbooks to support speaking ability.

Pronunciation is the last point. One of the fundamental requirements for proficiency in a language is clear pronunciation, which is also one of the most important aspects of language training. Therefore, there is a tendency for pursuing authentic pronunciation in China, making students with accents fear speaking English in public. Combining with the data, the authors notice that pronunciation education stays in the incipient stage that more than half of students feel this part of oral English is being ignored.

With all these existing problems mentioned above, it is evident to find a way out. Oral English requires an immersive environment that lets students touch the target language. Taking advantage of social media might help. Numerous studies have posited that social media utilization can help increase English language learners' English proficiency. Zam Zam Al Arif(2019) asserted that EFL learners demonstrate positive attitudes when utilizing social media to learn English, which can boost their motivation and desire for speaking and learning the language. With the embrace of social media, one representative named TikTok can be a great example to illustrate this idea.

### 3.3 Research into TikTok

TikTok is a short video application in that posters can add background music. TikTok has been the most popular worldwide social media nowadays. Wu(2020) posted that youngsters aged 30 and below are major users of TikTok and they spend nearly 52 minutes every day on TikTok. TikTok is not restricted domestically. It attracts substantial active users overseas for this app has ranked first on the download list for two years. With so much information flooding on TikTok, it is necessary to reconsider the educational function of this app in learning English, especially in the speaking domain. Syah and Mayu(2020) declaimed that the scientific experiment made in Indonesian and Indian schools have already got satisfying results in fostering English-speaking competence. TikTok has already proved its success in real classrooms.

The research was conducted through interviews with university students to report their ideas concerning using Tik Tok. Apart from that, its primary purpose was to show their impressions about how Tik Tok can improve their English-speaking ability. The interview consists of fifteen questions that will be analyzed and presented descriptively. One hundred and sixty-six students completed the questionnaire.

Based on the figure for the first question in table 3, 46.99% of college students, equivalent to 78 students, claimed that Tik Tok could improve their motivation in learning oral English, which accounted for the highest proportion, while only 14 participants argued that Tik Tok had no or slight effect. The data of participants who chose moderately effective and extremely effective was the same, reaching 22.29%. As for the second question in table 3, this study asks a question about the extent of using Tik Tok to improve English speaking skills. Nearly two-thirds of students admitted that Tik Tok positively affected their learning of spoken English, in contrast to only one-tenth of students who thought it had little effect. Meanwhile, three-tenths of the participants thought the effect was moderate.

The third question in table 3 is a multiple choices question that can be chosen with one to five answers. Students mentioned the following advantages when using Tik Tok to learn spoken English. Abundant learning resources are the most critical factor for students to use Tik Tok to improve spoken English, chosen by 84.34% of students. The statistics of colloquial and practical expressions and various forms of knowledge presentation were at intermediate levels, both chosen by around three-quarters of the students. Compared with textbooks in traditional classes, spoken English on Tik Tok is far more colloquial and practical since textbooks emphasize academic English, overlooking the social and communicative nature of language. The university's textbook selection, particularly for the speaking domain, has not been the best at helping students meet their learning objectives. The oral English-related knowledge is shown on Tik Tok in various forms, from role-play to movie clips. The meaning of learning media is learning resources that evolve along with learning technology and come

in a variety of forms, including audio and visual, and audiovisual. The figure for arousing their learning English was similarly accounted for three quarters, at 75.3%. Students would enthusiastically welcome the use of social media as a tool to help them develop their speaking, listening, and communicating abilities since it aligns with their interests.

**Table 3.** Results of the questions and scale

Questions	scale				
1. To what extent do you think Tik Tok can improve your motivation to learn spoken English?	not effective	sightly effective	moderately effective	very effective	extremely effective
	2.41%	6.02%	22.29%	46.99%	22.29%
2. To what extent do you think Tik Tok can improve your English-speaking skills?	not effective	sightly effective	moderately effective	very effective	extremely effective
	1.81%	8.43%	29.52%	43.98%	16.27%
3. What do you think are the advantages of Tik Tok for learning spoken English?	arouse learning interest	Abundant learning resources	More colloquial and more practical	Various forms of knowledge presentation	Fragmented learning
	77.71%	84.34%	75.90%	75.30%	56.63%
4. Which of the following oral English videos do you like the most on Tik Tok?	vocabulary	grammar	scenarios	TV series and movies clips	N/A
	16.87%	33.13%	34.94%	15.06%	N/A
5. Do you agree to introduce Tik Tok into the classroom?	Yes	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
	74.70%	25.30%	N/A	N/A	N/A
6. Can learn spoken English with TikTok English boost your self-confidence?	Yes	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
	83.73%	16.27%	N/A	N/A	N/A
7. Can browse English videos on Tik Tok reduce your anxiety about learning?	Yes	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
	87.95%	12.05%	N/A	N/A	N/A

In comparison, fragmented learning was the lowest factor, merely chosen by 56.63%. With the widespread utilization of new media and intelligent media equipment, an increasing number of individuals are reading and learning on their smartphones, computers, and other smart mobile terminals. The "short and pithy" properties of fragmented learning are ideal for the network era of customized learning, mobile learning, and other demands.

Regarding the fourth question in table 3, the scenario is the most popular among all kinds of spoken English short videos, reaching 34.94% because those videos can help them accumulate some practical expressions. Similarly, the grammar data also made up to 33.13%, favored by one-third of students since it has a positive effect on reducing grammar mistakes. In comparison, the videos about vocabulary, as well as TV series and movie clip, was less welcome by college students, composing 16.87% and 15.06%, respectively.

The fifth question in table 3 explored students' attitudes towards utilizing Tik Tok in class. The result demonstrated that 74.70% of students, equivalent to 124 students, would like to introduce Tik Tok into the classroom. Most students who agree to use Tik Tok mentioned that they need teachers' guidance and hope the day will come soon. In contrast, 42 students refused to introduce Tik Tok into the classroom because it may distract their attention, and they prefer the traditional classes.

Over 80% of students claimed that using Tik Tok can boost their confidence in learning spoken English, and 87.96% believed that browsing English videos on Tik Tok could reduce their anxiety. Apart from some objective aspects, affective factors in language acquisition act as a filter, filtering the amounts of input in learners' minds. Persons who have a high affective filter will reduce their

intake, while individuals who possess a low affective filter will let more input into their language acquisition device. According to the affective filter hypothesis proposed by Krashen, factors including motivation, self-confidence and anxiety will affect the process of second language acquisition. From the questionnaire survey data, Tik Tok has a positive emotional effect on students' English learning.

#### 4. Conclusion

To sum up, the students' oral English has benefited from the various short videos on Tik Tok. Teachers are suggested to combine popular posts and short videos related to spoken English on social media in speaking lessons. Introducing engaging role plays and conversations into speaking classes for students to practice. Exposure to authentic language through social media can not only improve the atmosphere in class but also help students consolidate idiomatic speaking English expressions that are different from academic English in the traditional Chinese class, which is more practical in daily life.

TikTok, different from textbooks as a social media, can help students to master practical English that can be used in real social scenarios. The social function of language should be put more emphasized in Chinese English classes. In addition, Tik Tok can benefit both teachers and students, improving the atmosphere in the classroom and suggesting a new way to learn after class. The incorporation of social media in the EFL context will offer access to additional language exercises and increase the student's drive to learn speaking, which is seen to be the major aspect that the traditional classroom lacks.

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