

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of The Study

In today's digital communication era, the unstoppable integration of technology is indirectly changing the way people interact with one another. The emergence of social media platforms has revolutionized not only how people communicate and express their aspirations, emotions, and thoughts, but also how humans learn. These platforms, including Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and especially TikTok, are increasingly recognized as influential tools in the context of education, particularly in promoting language learning ¹ As the paradigm of education shifts toward a more interactive and learner-centered model, the participatory aspect of social media emerges as an accessible, engaging, and informal alternative to support language acquisition. TikTok, originally designed as an entertainment app, has now evolved into a dynamic digital ecosystem where learning and entertainment intersect. Its global popularity, driven by user-generated short-form videos, interactive features like duets, and ease of access, sets it apart from other social media platforms in supporting the development of speaking skills among second-language learners. ^{2 3}

In addition, TikTok's multimedia characteristics, which combine text, images, and sound, are in line with the principles of digital literacy and 21st-century learning models. This integration allows learners to engage in direct communication, create content collaboratively, and use authentic language. All of these elements are important for the development of communicative competence.

¹ Kim Hua Tan et al., "The Potential of TikTok's Key Features as a Pedagogical Strategy for ESL Classrooms," *Sustainability (Switzerland)* 14, no. 24 (2022): 6, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su142416876>.

² Ling Sue Zhen et al., "It Takes Two to Tango: Using TikTok Duet Challenge to Improve Conversation Skills," *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development* 11, no. 1 (2021): 6, <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarped/v11-i1/12017>.

³ Hanif Maulaniam Sholah, "The Effect of Using Duet Conversation Challenge Tiktok in Improving Students' Speaking Skill" 8, no. 1 (2024): 6.

Thus, the potential of TikTok for use in education is no longer just an idea but has been proven through data-driven research. This demonstrates that TikTok is a valuable tool for language educators and learners.⁴

In today's global society, the need for effective communication, especially in spoken English, has become an important skill in both education and the workplace. Among the four language skills, speaking is often considered the most important for enabling and supporting direct interaction and building intercultural competence.⁵ With the advent of mobile and video-based platforms, the traditional boundaries of learning have become broader, offering more engaging and free learning options. TikTok, although initially intended for entertainment, is increasingly recognized as a dynamic and powerful tool for improving students' speaking skills in an ESL/EFL context. Its user-friendly interface and multimedia-rich environment provide learners with authentic exposure to pronunciation, intonation, and vocabulary in a contextually meaningful way. Most importantly, features like the Duet function allow learners to actively participate in simulated dialogues and pronunciation exercises, creating pressure-free opportunities to develop fluency.⁶

Several studies have proven the feasibility and effectiveness of TikTok as a learning medium for improving speaking skills. For example, research by Lee Mei & Abdul Aziz⁷ states that TikTok can improve speaking skills, as students have the opportunity to communicate and interact through the videos they create. In addition, students feel more confident and motivated to speak English because they have an audience and receive responses from their viewers, such as “likes.” Similarly,

⁴ Sulistia Nurwinda and Evi Karlina Ambarwati, “Using Tiktok To Practice Speaking Skills: Experience of Indonesian University Students,” *Journal of English Educational Study (JEES)* 7, no. 1 (2024): 7, <https://doi.org/10.31932/jees.v7i1.3171>.

⁵ Parupalli Srinivas Rao, “The Importaance of Speaking Skills in English Classrooms,” *Journal of Physics A: Mathematical and Theoretical* 44, no. 8 (2019): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1088/1751-8113/44/8/085201>.

⁶ Kim Hua Tan et al., “Utilising Tiktok Features for Speech Communication,” *World Journal of English Language* 14, no. 2 (2024): 7, <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v14n2p65>.

⁷ Kueh Lee Mei and Azlina Abdul Aziz, “Students’ Perception on Using Tiktok Application as An English Learning Tool,” *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development* 11, no. 4 (2022): 7, <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarped/v11-i4/15403>.

research by Novitasari & Adinna⁸ explicitly states, based on questionnaire data, that all students feel that TikTok provides opportunities to improve their English speaking skills. In addition, implicitly, the use of TikTok, which is considered fun and flexible, and can be practiced anytime and anywhere, as stated by one of the students, supports the improvement of speaking skills because it provides opportunities for regular and interactive practice.

Although enthusiasm for digital technology in language education continues to grow, TikTok as a medium for learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia still faces scepticism and a lack of solid theoretical support. While many global studies explore social media for educational purposes, most of them primarily focus on Western contexts or developed countries, often overlooking the unique realities and cultural distinctiveness of countries like Indonesia, which frequently face cultural limitations and diversity.⁹ Critically, a significant gap remains in in-depth research that rigorously tests TikTok's compatibility with established theoretical frameworks, such as Social Learning Theory (SLT) and Communicative Competence Theory (CCT), for improving English language skills. However, TikTok's widespread popularity among Indonesian youth and its inherently interactive video features offer an ideal environment for applying SLT principles, including modelling, repeated practice, and feedback.¹⁰ To analyse speaking ability as a skill with multiple aspects comprehensively, this study also integrates the Triadic Model of Speaking Skills, which includes Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency (CAF), recognised as fundamental aspects contributing to effective speaking performance.

⁸ Novitasari. N. and A. Addinna, "Students' Perception on the Use of TikTok for Learning English," *Journal of English Language Teaching* 11, no. 4 (2022): 7, <https://doi.org/10.24036/jelt.v11i4.119484>.

⁹ Zhai Xiuwen and Abu Bakar Razali, "An Overview of the Utilization of TikTok to Improve Oral English Communication Competence among EFL Undergraduate Students," *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 9, no. 7 (2021): 1439–51, <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2021.090710>.

¹⁰ Riska S. Pratiwi, Anggi E. Uraifal, Naura N. Sopiah, "Utilizing TikTok Application a Media for Learning English Pronunciation. Proceedings International Conference on Education of Suryakencana" 3, no. 3 (2021): 372–82, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Librilianti-Kurnia-Yuki/publication/353514447_PUBLIKASI_PROCEEDING_iCONNECT2021_rev_27_Feb_21_1_/links/610125172bf3553b29175dd5/PUBLIKASI-PROCEEDING-iCONNECT2021-rev-27-Feb-21-1.pdf#page=383.

On the other hand, the educational landscape in Indonesia shows that the integration of TikTok into formal learning programmes is still unsystematic, with its application tending to stem from individual teachers' initiatives rather than being part of institutional policy. This situation creates a crucial pedagogical tension, as students naturally show a tendency to use TikTok as a means of practising speaking, but its academic integration into traditional classrooms is still very limited.¹¹ Furthermore, most studies highlighting the educational impact of social media tend to adopt a general perspective and have not delved deeply into how TikTok's unique features, such as duets, real-time feedback, and peer modelling through algorithmic content, facilitate the enhancement of speaking skills through engaging and interactive practices. Although there is anecdotal evidence and informal reports on the benefits of using TikTok, the literature that explicitly links specific activities on the platform to measurable improvements in speaking abilities, especially in the context of higher education in Indonesia, is still very limited.¹² Additionally, research related to the application of Social Learning Theory (SLT) and Connected Co-presence Theory (CCT) in the context of TikTok is largely general, without detailing how observational learning through algorithmic content and social modelling on the platform is implemented. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by utilising the Triadic Model of Speaking Skills (CAF), which emphasises complexity, accuracy, and fluency as an analytical framework to explain the contribution of TikTok features to the holistic development of speaking competencies moving beyond mere mechanical practice towards the achievement of comprehensive communicative proficiency.

At the beginning of the 2023/2024 academic year, researchers conducted a participant selection process within the English Education Department at UIN SATU Tulungagung. Through the distribution of questionnaires, 25 student respondents who used TikTok to learn English speaking skills were collected. From

¹¹ Nur Ersya Annisa Putri, *IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL BY USING "TIKTOK APPLICATION": A CASE STUDY AT ENGLISH DEPARTMENT BATCH 2021*, *Αγανη*, vol. 15, 2024.

¹² Budi Setiawan et al., "The Investigation of Undergraduate EFL Learners' Viewpoints on Employing Tiktok as a Medium in Learning Speaking and Listening Skills" 09, no. 02 (2024): 119–33.

this group, five students were selected based on pre-determined criteria for in-depth interviews. This sample selection reflects the characteristics of qualitative research based on case studies, which focus more on in-depth exploration than broad coverage. Interestingly, the participants came from backgrounds with limited access to formal English education. However, they perceived their speaking abilities to be good, a view that was also reflected in their satisfactory grades in the ‘Speaking’ course. They claimed that these abilities were mostly acquired through the use of various features on the TikTok app, such as duets, stitches, live streaming, and interaction with other users. The participants in this study demonstrate that social media platforms can serve as an alternative learning medium to overcome limitations, and their learning patterns reflect ¹³Social Learning Theory (SLT). This indicates that TikTok is a potential medium for self-directed language development and demonstrates that an informal user-based learning environment can enhance communication competencies when integrated with social-cognitive principles and peer interaction.¹⁴

To comprehensively address the theoretical gaps identified earlier and the doubts surrounding the pedagogical effectiveness of TikTok in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL) learning in Indonesia, this study is built on a solid and integrated theoretical foundation. It combines Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) and Hymes' Communicative Competence Theory (CCT), expanded by Canale and Swain, and enriches this understanding by using the Triadic Model of Speaking Skills to analyse the development of speaking abilities specifically. This synergistic combination provides a comprehensive analytical lens. SLT explains how language learning occurs through observation, imitation, and social feedback,¹⁵ which is highly relevant to TikTok's interactive features such as duets, stitches, live streams, and comment sections. At the same time, CCT offers an evaluative framework for determining the effectiveness of communication,

¹³ ALbert Bandura, “Social Learning Theory,” *College Music Symposium*, 1977, 9, <https://doi.org/10.18177/sym.2020.61.1.sr.11518>.

¹⁴ Tri Wintolo Apoko and Budi Waluyo, “Social Media for English Language Acquisition in Indonesian Higher Education: Constructivism and Connectivism Frameworks,” *Social Sciences and Humanities Open* 11, no. February (2025): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.101382>.

¹⁵ Bandura, “Social Learning Theory.”

assessing the ability to adapt, construct cohesive discourse, and apply appropriate communication strategies in diverse social contexts. Complementing this, the Triadic Model of Speaking Skills, which considers speaking ability as the interconnected outcome of Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency (CAF), allows for a detailed analysis of how TikTok practices contribute to holistic speaking enhancement.¹⁶ For example, features such as duets and stitches improve fluency in production, interaction with audiences, and comments sharpen accuracy, and opportunities to explore diverse vocabulary and discourse patterns enrich complexity. Thus, this combined framework not only explains the underlying learning processes on TikTok but also rigorously evaluates the multifaceted development of communication abilities facilitated by the platform.

Several recent studies provide empirical support for the integration of Social Learning Theory (SLT) and Communicative Competence Theory (CCT) in the context of digital language learning. Fan¹⁷ demonstrated that the flipped learning approach through social media successfully increased students' communication motivation and self-confidence, reflecting the principles of agency in SLT and contextual orientation in CCT. Similar findings were reported by Ibarahim,¹⁸ who documented improvements in oral communication competence through Instagram-based tasks that utilise modelling mechanisms and discourse practices, thereby strengthening the validity of both theoretical frameworks within the social media ecosystem. In the Indonesian context, Reswari¹⁹ found that ESP learning based on social-cultural participation effectively enhances communication competence, a finding consistent with both SLT and CCT. Therefore, the combination of SLT and CCT offers a solid theoretical foundation. SLT helps explain how students utilise

¹⁶ Alex Housen and Folkert Kuiken, "Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency in Second Language Acquisition," *Applied Linguistics* 30, no. 4 (2009): 461–73, <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amp048>.

¹⁷ Xiangping Fan, "The Development of EFL Learners' Willingness to Communicate and Self-Efficacy: The Role of Flipped Learning Approach with the Use of Social Media," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13, no. October (2022): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1001283>.

¹⁸ Tauhid Sekhmaulana Ibrahim et al., "Analysis of the Use of Instagram as a Platform for Learning English-Speaking Skills," 2023, 1–11.

¹⁹ Girindra Putri Ardana Reswari, "Adopting A Service-Learning Approach in Developing English for Specific Purposes Communicative Competence in Indonesia : A Sociocultural Theory-Based Mediation Study Girindra Putri Ardana Reswari A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy," no. February (2025).

TikTok features such as duets, stitches, or live broadcasts as a means of observation and imitation, while CCT provides a framework for assessing their ability to adapt their speech style and construct discourse in diverse social contexts. Furthermore, this framework is reinforced by the Triadic Model of speaking skills perspective, which helps map the internal dynamics of students' speaking skill development.²⁰ Through repeated practice, interaction with audiences, and creative exploration on TikTok, students not only learn to speak more fluently but also refine their language accuracy while enriching the variety and structure of their expressions.²¹ This approach enables this study to analyse TikTok not merely as a mechanical practice medium but as a social-digital learning space that supports the holistic development of speaking skills.

In an era where language learning increasingly relies on digital platforms, this study proposes a theoretical synthesis between SLT and CCT to examine the role of TikTok in developing the speaking abilities of Indonesian EFL students. Ironically, although the pedagogical potential of social media has long been recognised, TikTok's interactive features, such as duets, stitches, and chain feedback, have not been thoroughly researched in terms of cognitive processes and communication skills.²² This study has three main unique features. First, it focuses on the subjective experiences and perceptions of learners, revealing meaningful uses of TikTok in non-formal contexts, an aspect often overlooked in studies that position learners as passive consumers. Second, the application of a qualitative case study approach allows for in-depth documentation of digital literacy practices and learning narratives, revealing how language development occurs outside the classroom. Third, this study bridges the theoretical and practical domains by linking observational learning in SLT with performance-based competencies in CCT. To complement this analysis, the Triadic Model of speaking skills helps to understand in more detail how user interactions on TikTok can facilitate speaking development. Practices such as uploading short videos, duetting, or responding to comments not

²⁰ Housen and Kuiken, "Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency in Second Language Acquisition."

²¹ Tan et al., "The Potential of TikTok's Key Features as a Pedagogical Strategy for ESL Classrooms."

²² Tan et al.

only provide space for fluency but also trigger improvements in language accuracy and enrich the variety of discourse used.²³ Thus, the Triadic Model provides an additional analytical layer explaining how the dynamics of fluency, accuracy, and complexity intertwine within daily digital practices, complementing the SLT and CCT frameworks in understanding language learning in the contemporary era.

The urgency of this research is driven by the reality of English language learners in Indonesia, who often have limited opportunities to practice their speaking skills in real-life situations. TikTok, with its participatory culture and widespread accessibility, offers significant untapped potential for developing communicative competence, particularly for learners facing challenges.²⁴ As the role of mobile-based learning and social media becomes increasingly central to the learning experience, understanding how students utilize these platforms is crucial for designing inclusive, responsive, and culturally relevant pedagogy.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the expansion of discourse on the boundaries of educational spaces. These findings reinforce the argument that effective language development can and does occur outside of formal classrooms, through informal, interactive, and digitized contexts, provided that it is examined with a strong theoretical foundation and empirical rigor. Thus, this research has practical implications for curriculum design, teacher training, and educational policy in the digital age.

²³ Parvaneh Tavakoli et al., "Assessment of Fluency in the Test of English for Educational Purposes," *Language Testing* 40, no. 3 (2023): 607–29, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02655322231151384>.

²⁴ Nur Ersa Annisa Putri, *IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL BY USING "TIKTOK APPLICATION": A CASE STUDY AT ENGLISH DEPARTMENT BATCH 2021*; Reswari, "Adopting A Service-Learning Approach in Developing English for Specific Purposes Communicative Competence in Indonesia : A Sociocultural Theory-Based Mediatonal Study Girindra Putri Ardana Reswari A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy," 12.

B. Research Questions

Based on the background of the study that has been explained, the research question can be formulated as:

1. How do English undergraduate students use TikTok as a learning medium for enhancing their speaking skills?
2. What are the perceived impacts of using TikTok on students' English-speaking enhancement from an SLT and CCT perspective?
3. What are the challenges and limitations of using TikTok as a medium for improving speaking skills?

C. Objectives of the study

Based on the statement of a research problem, the objectives of this study are:

1. To explore how students use TikTok as a learning medium to enhance their speaking skills
2. To analyze the perceived impacts of TikTok use on English-speaking enhancement through SLT and CCT.
3. To identify the challenges and limitations students face when using TikTok to improve their English-speaking skills

D. Significance of the research

The findings of this research can contribute to the following parties:

1. Theoretically, this study aims to enrich academic understanding by showing how the synthesis between Social Learning Theory (SLT), Communicative Competence Theory (CCT), and the Triadic Model of Speaking Skills can be a comprehensive framework. Specifically, this study provides empirical evidence on how the informal learning environment on TikTok can simultaneously influence the enhancement of Accuracy, Fluency, and Complexity in speaking.
2. Practically, this study provides actionable insights for students and educators. For students, the findings may raise awareness of the importance of balancing practice between fluency and accuracy. For

educators, this study offers a perspective for designing activities that can target the development of different components of speech more purposefully, even when using informal media.

E. Scope and Limitations

This study focuses on the use of TikTok as a learning medium to support speaking skill development among undergraduate students in the English Education Program at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung. The scope of this research is limited to students who actively use TikTok for speaking-related purposes and meet the inclusion criteria defined by the researcher.

The study is further limited by its qualitative case study design, which emphasizes depth over generalizability. The findings are context-specific and may not represent the experiences of all English learners or TikTok users in different educational or cultural settings.

F. definition of key term

To avoid ambiguity and ensure conceptual clarity, the following key terms are defined as they are used in this study:

1. TikTok

A short-form video platform that allows users to create, share, and interact with multimedia content. In this study, TikTok refers specifically to its use as an informal learning tool to support English-speaking skill development.

2. Speaking Skills

The ability to produce spoken language fluently, accurately, and appropriately in various communicative contexts. This includes aspects such as pronunciation, vocabulary use, discourse organization, and confidence.

3. Social Learning Theory (SLT)

A theory developed by (Bandura 1977) posits that people learn through observing, imitating, and modeling the behaviors of others, especially in social contexts.

4. Communicative Competence

A framework introduced by Hymes (1972) and expanded by (Canale and Swain 1980) Refers to a speaker's ability to use language effectively and appropriately, including grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic components.

5. Triadic Model of Speaking Skills

A framework in second language acquisition studies, popularised by scholars such as Skehan and Thornbury, for analysing speaking performance. The model dissects speaking ability into three main interacting components: Accuracy (the ability to use language correctly according to rules), Fluency (the ability to speak fluently and naturally without unnatural pauses), and Complexity (the ability to use complex language structures and rich vocabulary).