

Exploring University Students' Perceptions of TikTok for English Language Learning: Usefulness, Engagement, and Accessibility

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ABSTRACT

Digital media has become an integral part of students' daily lives and has created new opportunities for English language learning beyond the classroom. Among various social media platforms, TikTok has attracted considerable attention because it offers short, engaging, and easily accessible educational content. This study aims to explore university students' perceptions of TikTok as a medium for English language learning by focusing on three dimensions: usefulness, engagement, and accessibility. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed to investigate the perceptions of 21 university students majoring in English Education who had experience accessing English-learning content on TikTok. Data were collected through a 20-item close-ended questionnaire using a four-point Likert scale. The questionnaire responses were summarized using percentages and interpreted descriptively according to the three dimensions of the study. The findings revealed that students generally held positive perceptions of TikTok as a medium for learning English. Participants believed that TikTok helped them improve their English vocabulary, listening skills, and understanding of everyday English expressions. They also perceived the platform as enjoyable, motivating, and easily accessible for independent learning. Overall, the study suggests that TikTok has the potential to support English language learning by providing meaningful learning resources, increasing learner engagement, and offering flexible access to educational content.

Keywords: *accessibility, English language learning, engagement, TikTok, university students, usefulness*

INTRODUCTION

Digital technology has transformed many aspects of education, particularly in higher education, by providing more flexible and accessible learning opportunities. Today, university students increasingly rely on digital platforms to access information, communicate, collaborate, and support their learning both inside and outside the classroom. The rapid growth of educational technology has enabled students to interact with learning materials through various multimedia formats, including videos, images, audio, and interactive content, making the learning process more engaging and meaningful (Mayer, 2021; Wang & Kabilan, 2024). Multimedia-based learning also encourages active participation and improves students' understanding because information is presented through multiple forms of representation (Mayer, 2021). Furthermore, the increasing use of digital media has encouraged educators and learners to utilize social media

as an alternative learning resource, creating new opportunities for English language learning in both formal and informal contexts (Escamilla-Fajardo et al., 2021). Consequently, social media platforms have become an important part of contemporary language learning among university students.

Among the various social media platforms available today, TikTok has become one of the most widely used applications by young people, including university students. Recent studies also indicate that TikTok has gradually developed into a learning platform that supports English language development through interactive short-video content (Salazar-Rosas et al., 2023). Although the platform was initially designed for entertainment purposes, it has gradually evolved into a medium that facilitates educational content across different disciplines. In English language learning, TikTok provides short educational videos that combine visual, textual, and audio elements, enabling learners to understand learning materials more effectively while maintaining their interest (Escamilla-Fajardo et al., 2021). Through mobile devices, students can conveniently access English-learning content anytime and anywhere, allowing them to learn beyond the limitations of classroom instruction. In addition, TikTok offers a wide range of English-learning materials, including vocabulary explanations, pronunciation practice, grammar tips, speaking activities, and expressions commonly used in daily communication (Rita & Subekti, 2024; Suciani et al., 2023). These characteristics indicate that TikTok has considerable potential to support independent English language learning while enriching students' learning experiences in the digital era.

Previous studies have reported positive findings regarding the educational use of TikTok in English language learning. Rita and Subekti (2024) found that students perceived TikTok as an effective platform for learning English vocabulary because its content was engaging, practical, and easily accessible. Likewise, Nasrudin et al. (2024) reported that undergraduate students considered TikTok beneficial for improving their English speaking skills through exposure to authentic language use. Simbolon et al. (2026) also revealed that TikTok supported students in learning English pronunciation while increasing their motivation to improve their language skills. Similarly, Fauziah and Pratolo (2025) found that university students viewed TikTok as a valuable English language learning resource because it provides flexible access to educational content and encourages independent learning. Recent research has also shown that TikTok exposure is positively related to university students' English vocabulary acquisition, highlighting its potential to support English language learning in higher education (Amanda, 2026).

Despite the growing body of research, several gaps remain in the existing literature. Most previous studies have primarily focused on examining the effectiveness of TikTok in improving specific English language skills, such as vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, and speaking ability (Rita & Subekti, 2024; Nasrudin et al., 2024; Simbolon et al., 2026). Although these studies provide valuable evidence regarding the educational benefits of TikTok, relatively few have specifically explored university students' perceptions of TikTok as a medium for English language learning. In particular, the dimensions of usefulness, engagement, and accessibility have rarely been examined simultaneously within a single study. Furthermore, existing studies tend to emphasize learning outcomes rather than students' perspectives and experiences while using TikTok as a learning medium. Therefore, further research is needed to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how university students perceive TikTok in supporting their English language learning.

Based on these research gaps, the present study aims to explore university students' perceptions of TikTok as a medium for English language learning by focusing on three dimensions: usefulness, engagement, and accessibility. The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to describe students' perceptions based on data collected through a structured questionnaire. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing discussion of digital media in English language learning and provide useful insights for educators who intend to integrate social media into language-learning activities. Furthermore, the results are expected to support the development of more relevant, engaging, and flexible English language learning practices in the digital era.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore university students' perceptions of TikTok as a medium for English language learning. The study focused on three dimensions: usefulness, engagement, and accessibility. According to Aspers and Corte (2021), qualitative research aims to understand a particular phenomenon by exploring participants' perspectives and experiences. Similarly, Doyle et al. (2020) stated that descriptive qualitative research is appropriate for providing clear and straightforward descriptions of participants' views regarding a specific phenomenon. Therefore, this research design was considered suitable for describing how university students perceive TikTok as a medium for English language learning.

The participants of this study were 21 university students majoring in English Education at IKIP Siliwangi. All participants had experience using TikTok and had accessed English-learning content through the platform. The participants were selected because they were familiar with TikTok and had sufficient experience using it for English language learning. Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed using Google Forms. Before completing the questionnaire, all participants were informed about the purpose of the study and participated voluntarily.

The research instrument consisted of two sections. The first section collected participants' demographic information, including their study program and experience using TikTok for English language learning. The second section consisted of 20 close-ended statements measured using a four-point Likert scale, namely Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), and Strongly Agree (4). According to Taherdoost (2021), questionnaires are effective instruments for collecting data related to participants' opinions, attitudes, and perceptions. The questionnaire items were developed based on the three dimensions investigated in this study. Statements 1–10 measured usefulness, statements 11–15 measured engagement, and statements 16–20 measured accessibility.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis to describe students' perceptions of TikTok as a medium for English language learning. The questionnaire responses were organized and summarized using percentages to present the distribution of participants' responses for each statement. The findings were then interpreted according to the three dimensions of the study, namely usefulness, engagement, and accessibility. Finally, the results were discussed by relating the findings to previous studies in order to answer the research question and achieve the objective of the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

The data of the university students' perceptions toward the use of TikTok as a learning platform for English were obtained through a close-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 20 statements measured using four-point Likert scale. The statements were categorized into three aspects: Usefulness (statements 1-10), Engagement (11-15), and Accessibility (16-20). The distribution of university students' responses across 20 questionnaire statements is presented in the following table.

Table 1. Distribution of University Students' Responses to the Questionnaire

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	TikTok helps me learn new English vocabulary.	28,6%	61,9%	9,5%	-
2	TikTok helps me improve my English listening skills.	28,6%	57,1%	14,3%	-
3	TikTok helps me understand English expressions used in daily communication.	38,1%	52,4%	9,5%	-
4	TikTok provides useful content for learning English.	28,6%	61,9%	9,5%	-
5	TikTok supports my English learning outside the classroom.	33,3%	61,9%	4,8%	-
6	TikTok motivates me to learn English more frequently.	14,3%	52,4%	33,3%	-
7	TikTok encourages me to improve my English skills.	28,6%	52,4%	19%	-
8	TikTok increases my confidence in learning English.	38,1%	47,6%	14,3%	-
9	TikTok inspires me to practice English independently.	47,6%	42,9%	9,5%	-
10	TikTok increases my interest in learning English.	28,6%	52,4%	19%	-
11	Learning English through TikTok is enjoyable.	38,1%	57,1%	4,8%	-
12	TikTok keeps me interested in learning English.	23,8%	61,9%	14,3%	-
13	I pay attention to English-learning content on TikTok.	28,6%	57,1%	14,3%	-
14	TikTok makes English learning more engaging than traditional learning materials.	23,8%	57,1%	19%	-
15	The short-video format of TikTok encourages me to continue learning English.	33,3%	52,4%	14,3%	-

16	TikTok is easy to access whenever I want to learn English.	42,9%	52,4%	4,8%	-
17	It is easy to find English-learning content on TikTok.	52,4%	42,9%	4,8%	-
18	TikTok allows me to learn English at my own pace.	28,6%	61,9%	9,5%	-
19	TikTok provides English-learning content that suits my learning needs.	23,8%	66,7%	9,5%	-
20	TikTok is a convenient platform for learning English.	23,8%	61,9%	9,5%	4,8%

DISCUSSION

The data from Table 1 show that university students have positive perceptions of TikTok in Learning English. The most university students agree that TikTok is usefulness, engagement, and accessibility for supporting their English language learning. The questionnaire responses were analyzed was based on three aspects: (1) the usefulness of TikTok as a medium for learning English, (2) Students' Engagment in Learning English through TikTok, and (3) the accessibility of TikTok as a medium for learning English. There aspects were explained below.

1. The Usefulness of TikTok as a Medium for Learning English

Based on the findings presented in Table 1, most participants perceived TikTok as a useful medium for English language learning. Approximately 90.5% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that TikTok helped them learn new English vocabulary. Likewise, 85.7% believed that the platform improved their listening skills, while 90.5% stated that TikTok enhanced their understanding of English expressions used in everyday communication. Furthermore, 95.2% of the participants agreed that TikTok supported their English learning outside the classroom. Although a smaller proportion of participants (66.7%) reported that TikTok motivated them to learn English more frequently, the majority still viewed the platform as beneficial for improving their English skills, increasing their confidence, encouraging independent learning, and strengthening their interest in learning English.

These findings suggest that TikTok serves as a valuable supplementary learning medium that supports students' independent English language learning. Through its short-video format, students can access practical learning materials, observe authentic language use, and review educational content repeatedly according to their individual learning needs.

The findings are consistent with Rita and Subekti (2024), who reported that TikTok provides meaningful exposure to English vocabulary through engaging and easily accessible content. These findings are also supported by Salazar-Rosas et al. (2023), who found that TikTok-based learning activities improved students' vocabulary, grammar, and communication skills through short-video assignments. Similarly, Fauziah and Pratolo (2025) found that university students perceived TikTok as a beneficial English language learning resource because it offers practical learning

materials that can be accessed anytime. In addition, Simbolon et al. (2026) emphasized that TikTok contributes to improving students' pronunciation and motivates them to develop their English skills through authentic learning experiences. Therefore, the present study reinforces previous findings that TikTok can effectively support English language learning beyond formal classroom instruction.

2. Students' Engagement in Learning English through TikTok

The findings also demonstrate positive levels of student engagement when learning English through TikTok. A total of 95.2% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that learning English through TikTok was enjoyable. Moreover, 85.7% reported that TikTok maintained their interest in learning English, while the same percentage believed that the platform's short-video format encouraged them to continue learning. In addition, most participants stated that they paid attention to English-learning content and considered TikTok more engaging than traditional learning materials.

These findings indicate that TikTok creates an enjoyable learning environment that encourages students to participate actively in English language learning. The combination of visual, audio, and textual elements, together with concise video presentations, appears to increase students' motivation and sustain their interest during the learning process. The multimedia presentation of educational videos also reflects the principles of multimedia learning, which help reduce cognitive load and maintain students' attention during the learning process (Wijaya et al., 2023).

This finding supports Escamilla-Fajardo et al. (2021), who argued that TikTok promotes learner engagement through interactive features and visually attractive educational content. Likewise, Nasrudin et al. (2024) reported that exposure to authentic English communication through TikTok increased students' motivation and confidence in developing their speaking skills. Similarly, Simbolon et al. (2026) found that students were more motivated to improve their English because educational content on TikTok was presented in concise, interesting, and easy-to-understand formats. Therefore, the present findings suggest that TikTok not only delivers learning materials but also encourages students to become more actively engaged in English language learning. This finding indicates that integrating short-video platforms into English language learning may increase students' motivation and sustain their engagement throughout the learning process.

3. The Accessibility of TikTok as a Medium for Learning English

Regarding accessibility, the findings reveal that TikTok is perceived as an easily accessible platform for English language learning. Approximately 95.3% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that TikTok could be accessed whenever they wanted to learn English. The same percentage also stated that English-learning content was easy to find on the platform. Furthermore, 90.5% of the participants agreed that TikTok allowed them to learn at their own pace and provided learning materials that matched their learning needs. Although a small proportion of respondents expressed disagreement regarding the platform's convenience, the overall findings indicate that students considered TikTok flexible and practical for supporting independent learning.

These results suggest that the accessibility of TikTok enables students to integrate English language learning into their daily activities without being limited by time or location. As a mobile-based platform, TikTok offers learners the opportunity to access educational content whenever they need it, making English learning more flexible and convenient. These findings highlight that flexibility and convenience are among the major reasons why students perceive TikTok positively as a learning medium.

The present findings are supported by Omar and Dequan (2020), who explained that the accessibility of mobile social media platforms encourages users to access digital content more frequently because of their convenience and flexibility. These findings are also consistent with Suciani et al. (2023), who reported that students perceived TikTok as an easily accessible learning platform because educational content could be accessed anytime through mobile devices. Similarly, Fauziah and Pratolo (2025) found that TikTok provides flexible learning opportunities by allowing students to access English-learning materials through their mobile devices at any time. Furthermore, Escamilla-Fajardo et al. (2021) highlighted that the integration of social media into educational contexts enables learners to participate in learning activities beyond traditional classroom environments. Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that TikTok offers an accessible learning environment that supports students' independent and self-paced English language learning.

CONCLUSION

This study explored students' perspectives on learning English through TikTok focusing on usefulness, engagement, and accessibility. The findings revealed that students generally had positive views toward TikTok as a learning platform. In terms of usefulness, participants believed that TikTok helped them learn vocabulary, improve listening skills, understand English expressions, and support learning outside the classroom. Regarding engagement, students reported that learning English through TikTok was enjoyable and interesting, while the short video format encouraged them to continue learning. In terms of accessibility, participants considered TikTok easy to access and useful for finding English learning content that suited their learning needs. These findings suggest that TikTok can support English learning by providing useful content, increasing students' engagement, and offering flexible access to learning resources. However, this study was limited to 21 university students majoring in English education and used questionnaire data only. To obtain a deeper understanding of students' experiences with TikTok for English learning, future studies are encouraged to involve participants from different academic backgrounds and use additional data collection methods, such as interviews or open-ended questionnaire.

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