

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This chapter contains the definition of the terms and synthesis the previous literature which related to perception, social media, English content, TikTok, and English performance.

#### **A. Perception**

Perception serves as the main theoretical framework in this study because it explains how students receive, process, and evaluate their experiences in using TikTok as a medium for developing English speaking skills. In general, perception does not only refer to what individuals see or hear, but also to how they select, organize, interpret, and respond to certain stimuli based on their knowledge, feelings, experiences, and expectations. Therefore, students' perceptions of TikTok can be understood through several interconnected dimensions, including the concept and definition of perception, positive and negative perceptions, the stages of perceptual processing, the factors that shape perception, and the cognitive, affective, and conative indicators of perception. These dimensions provide an overall framework for analyzing how students judge TikTok as useful, enjoyable, motivating, or potentially distracting in relation to their speaking skill development. Thus, the discussion of perception in this section becomes an essential basis for understanding students' responses toward TikTok as an informal digital learning medium.

##### **1. The Concept and Definition of Perception**

Perception is one of the foundational concepts in psychology that plays a central role in how individuals make sense of the world around them. In everyday life, people are

constantly exposed to various stimuli from their environment, and the way they process and interpret these stimuli forms what is known as perception. According to Robbins and Judge (2015), perception is a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment, and people's behavior is based on their perception of what reality is, not on reality itself. This definition highlights an important truth: what a person perceives can be substantially different from objective reality, since each individual constructs their own understanding based on personal values, prior experiences, and cognitive expectations.

From the perspective of cognitive psychology, Goldstein (2019) explains that perception is determined by an interaction between bottom-up processing, which starts with stimuli received through the sensory organs, and top-down processing, which involves the observer's prior knowledge, expectations, and cognitive frameworks. This two-way interaction means that perception is not merely a passive reception of data but rather an active and constructive mental process in which the individual plays an active role in shaping what they ultimately experience and understand.

Similarly, Luthans (2011) emphasizes that perception is an important mediating cognitive process through which persons make interpretations of the stimulus or situation they are faced with, where both selectivity and organization play significant roles in how incoming information is processed. This view reinforces the idea that individuals do not absorb all available information equally; instead, they selectively attend to stimuli that are most relevant or meaningful to them at a given moment, filtering out what they consider unnecessary.

In line with the above perspectives, EBSCO Research (2022) further clarifies that perceptions are human constructs created in the mind based not only on environmental

stimuli but also on context, personal experience, and expectations, meaning that perception imposes meaning that does not exist in the physical stimuli alone. In other words, two individuals exposed to the same event or object may arrive at entirely different interpretations, simply because their cognitive and experiential backgrounds differ.

Within the context of education and learning, perception takes on a particularly significant meaning. When students encounter a new learning medium or tool, their response is not neutral it is actively filtered through their existing attitudes, beliefs, and prior experiences. Slameto (2010) explains that perception is a process through which individuals receive stimuli from their environment through the sensory organs, which are then processed and interpreted by the brain to form a meaningful understanding of what is experienced. This process is both cognitive and psychological, meaning it involves not only the physical reception of stimuli but also the mental construction of meaning from those stimuli.

It is also important to distinguish perception from sensation, as the two are closely related but conceptually distinct. Sensation refers to the initial detection of physical stimuli through the sensory receptors, while perception is the higher-order cognitive process that follows, whereby the brain selects, organizes, and interprets those sensations to give them meaning (Lumen Learning, 2020). This distinction explains why students who are exposed to the same TikTok content may form different perceptions of its educational value because perception is not determined solely by the content itself, but by the cognitive and emotional framework each learner brings to the experience.

In summary, perception is a dynamic, active, and highly individualized cognitive process. It involves the selection, organization, and interpretation of information from the environment, shaped by both external stimuli and internal psychological factors such as

knowledge, motivation, and personal experience. Understanding this concept is essential as a theoretical foundation for the present study, since students' perceptions of TikTok as an informal learning medium will directly influence how they engage with the platform and how they evaluate its contribution to the development of their speaking skills.

## **2. Types of Perception: Positive and Negative**

### **a. Theoretical Foundation**

Understanding the types of perception is essential before exploring how individuals respond to any object, situation, or medium in their environment. In the field of psychology, perception is not a neutral or uniform mental event it is inherently evaluative. When a person perceives something, they simultaneously assign a value judgment to it, whether consciously or unconsciously, that shapes how they will subsequently think, feel, and behave in relation to that object. This evaluative dimension of perception has led scholars to broadly classify it into two fundamental types: positive perception and negative perception.

According to Robbins (2002), positive perception is an individual's assessment of an object or information with a positive view, in line with what is expected from the perceived object or from existing norms and standards. Conversely, negative perception refers to an individual's assessment of a particular object or information with opposing views, contrary to what is expected from the perceived object or from the prevailing norms. This distinction establishes that the same object such as a digital learning platform — can generate entirely different perceptual responses depending on how it aligns with the individual's prior expectations, experiences, and cognitive tendencies.

Complementing this view, Chukwuere (2021) asserts that positive and negative perceptions are the two fundamental categories under which individual perception can be

classified. He further notes that a misjudgment in the perceptual process can cause positive objects to be perceived negatively, or negative objects to be perceived positively, depending on the cognitive state and experiential background of the perceiver. This underlines the subjective nature of perception: it is not always an accurate reflection of reality, but rather a personal construction shaped by individual interpretation.

### **b. Positive Perception**

Positive perception arises when an individual interprets a stimulus, object, or situation in a favorable and approving manner. It reflects a state of cognitive alignment between the individual's expectations or values and what they observe or experience. According to Robbins (2002), positive perception occurs when the observed object or information meets or exceeds the individual's expectations, generating a sense of approval, satisfaction, and acceptance. This type of perception tends to motivate continued engagement, openness, and willingness to interact with the perceived object.

In the educational context, positive perception plays a particularly significant role. When students perceive a learning medium or instructional approach positively, they are more likely to engage actively, invest effort, and sustain their motivation over time. Chukwuere (2021) found in his study of first-year university students that those who held positive perceptions of social media platforms as learning tools reported that these platforms made learning easier, more engaging, and more accessible. Positive perception thus functions as a motivational driver that encourages greater participation and deeper involvement in the learning process.

Furthermore, Plys & Desrichard (2020) proposed that positive perception is influenced by three interconnected dimensions: positive affect, optimism, and goal attainability. This means that a student who approaches a digital tool with optimism and

believes that using it will help achieve their learning goals is more likely to develop and sustain a positive perception of that tool. In the context of TikTok as a learning medium, students who view the platform optimistically and believe it can genuinely support their speaking skill development are thus more likely to engage with English content purposefully and productively.

### **c. Negative Perception**

Negative perception, on the other hand, arises when an individual interprets a stimulus or object in an unfavorable, rejecting, or disapproving manner. This occurs when the perceived object fails to meet the individual's expectations, conflicts with their values, or is associated with prior negative experiences. Robbins (2002) explains that negative perception emerges from individual dissatisfaction with the perceived object, a lack of personal knowledge or familiarity with it, or the absence of prior experience that would allow a more informed judgment to be formed.

Negative perception tends to generate avoidance behavior, reduced engagement, and resistance toward the perceived object. In educational settings, students who hold negative perceptions toward a particular learning medium are less likely to use it purposefully or consistently. Chukwuere (2021) found that, from the negative perspective, students perceived social media platforms as potentially distracting, time-consuming, and conducive to procrastination, which may ultimately interfere with their academic focus and performance. These findings indicate that negative perception can significantly limit the educational potential of a platform, even if that platform possesses genuine learning value.

An important psychological phenomenon that reinforces the power of negative perception is what Baumeister et al. (2001) termed the negativity bias the tendency for

negative events, impressions, and experiences to exert a stronger and more lasting psychological influence than equally potent positive ones. Baumeister et al. (2001) reviewed extensive empirical evidence demonstrating that bad experiences are processed more thoroughly, generate quicker impression formation, and produce longer-lasting behavioral effects compared to good experiences. In a learning context, this suggests that a single negative experience with a digital platform such as encountering inappropriate content or experiencing addictive usage patterns may produce a more persistent negative perception than multiple positive experiences produce positive ones.

**d. The Relationship Between the Two Types and Their Implications for Learning**

Positive and negative perceptions do not always exist in isolation; in many cases, individuals hold a mixture of both toward the same object, particularly when that object has both advantages and drawbacks. Irwanto (2002) affirms that both positive and negative perceptions influence an individual's decision to take action, and that the way a person represents their overall knowledge of an observed object whether positively or negatively ultimately determines their behavioral response to it.

In the context of this study, understanding the distinction between positive and negative perception is crucial because students' perceptions of TikTok as a medium for developing speaking skills are expected to be multidimensional. Some students may perceive TikTok positively, viewing it as an accessible, engaging, and motivating platform that provides authentic opportunities for speaking practice. Others may hold negative perceptions, associating TikTok with distraction, informal or inaccurate language use, or passive consumption rather than active language production. Identifying the proportion and nature of both types of perception among students at UIN Syekh Wasil

Kediri will therefore provide a comprehensive picture of how TikTok is genuinely experienced and evaluated as a language learning medium.

### **3. The Stages of Perceptual Processing**

#### **a. Theoretical Foundation**

Perception is not an instantaneous or singular mental event it is a sequential and dynamic process that unfolds through a series of cognitive stages. Understanding these stages is essential because they reveal how raw sensory information from the environment is progressively transformed into a meaningful subjective experience. According to Knudsen et al. (2021), the perceptual process consists of three interconnected stages: selection, organization, and interpretation. These three stages are both cognitive and psychological in nature, meaning they are simultaneously shaped by the structure of the nervous system and by the individual's psychological state, including their expectations, prior experiences, and personal values (Knudsen et al., 2021).

Importantly, these stages do not operate in a strictly linear or one-directional manner. Rather, they form a continuous and cyclical feedback loop: selection influences organization, organization influences interpretation, and interpretation in turn shapes what an individual will select next (Knudsen et al., 2021). This cyclical nature means that perception is an ongoing and self-reinforcing process — once a person has formed an initial interpretation of a stimulus, that interpretation becomes part of their perceptual framework and will influence how they attend to and make sense of future stimuli.

OpenStax Organizational Behavior (2019) further defines perception as the process by which individuals screen, select, organize, and interpret stimuli in order to give them meaning, emphasizing that this process is fundamental to how individuals understand

both their physical and social environment. The following sections discuss each of the three stages in detail.

**b.        b. Stage 1 — Selection (Perceptual Selectivity)**

The first stage of the perceptual process is selection, also referred to as perceptual selectivity. At any given moment, the human sensory system is simultaneously exposed to an enormous volume of stimuli from the surrounding environment — sounds, sights, smells, tactile sensations, and more. Because it is cognitively impossible for the brain to process all of this incoming information equally, individuals must filter and selectively attend to certain stimuli while ignoring others. This filtering process is what constitutes perceptual selection.

According to Knudsen et al. (2021), sensory selection is the process of determining which stimulus receives an individual's attention, and this process most often occurs subconsciously and with very little deliberate effort on the individual's part. The stimuli that an individual selects are typically those that stand out as most salient, relevant, or personally meaningful at a given moment.

OpenStax Organizational Behavior (2019) explains that perceptual selectivity is influenced by both external and internal factors. External factors include the physical properties of the stimulus itself — such as its intensity, size, novelty, motion, contrast, and repetition all of which make certain stimuli more attention-capturing than others. Internal factors, on the other hand, include the individual's motivation, prior learning, personality, and psychological state. These internal variables mean that two individuals exposed to the same environment may select entirely different stimuli for attention simply because their internal frameworks and interests differ.

In the context of language learning through TikTok, the stage of selection is particularly relevant. A student who is motivated to improve their English speaking skills will naturally attend more carefully to English-language content that appears on their TikTok feed, filtering out content in other languages or on irrelevant topics. Their motivational state and learning goals function as internal selectivity filters, directing their perceptual attention toward stimuli that align with their educational objectives. Conversely, a student who views TikTok primarily as entertainment may selectively attend to comedic or trending content and overlook English learning content even when it appears on their screen.

**c. Stage 2 — Organization (Perceptual Organization)**

Once certain stimuli have been selected for attention, the brain moves into the second stage of the perceptual process: organization. At this stage, the raw sensory data that has been selected is arranged, grouped, and structured into coherent and meaningful patterns. Without this organizational capacity, the brain would be overwhelmed with fragmented and disconnected pieces of information that it could not effectively interpret.

According to the Social Science LibreTexts (2023), perceptual organization is the process through which the brain sorts and prioritizes sensory information so that it can be better understood, often based on recognized patterns, proximity, simplicity, and closure. One of the most influential theoretical frameworks for understanding perceptual organization is Gestalt psychology, developed by Max Wertheimer and his colleagues in the early twentieth century.

Gestalt theory proposes that the human mind naturally tends to perceive whole, organized patterns rather than merely the sum of isolated sensory parts (Wertheimer, as cited in Rookes & Willson, 2000). The Gestalt psychologists identified a set of organizing

principles that describe how individual elements are grouped into coherent wholes. As summarized by Kohler (as cited in DEDUC, 2025), the principal Gestalt principles include proximity whereby elements that are physically close to one another tend to be perceived as belonging together; similarity whereby elements that share visual features such as color, shape, or size are grouped together; closure whereby the brain tends to complete incomplete figures and perceive them as whole objects; and continuity whereby the mind prefers to perceive smooth, flowing lines rather than abrupt or jagged transitions. Together, these principles explain how the brain actively constructs meaningful and ordered representations of the environment from what might otherwise be a chaotic collection of sensory inputs.

In addition to Gestalt principles, perceptual organization also involves the use of schemas cognitive frameworks or mental templates based on prior experience that help individuals categorize and make sense of new information quickly. Unstop (2024) explains that selected stimuli are organized and categorized into meaningful patterns based on pre-existing knowledge, experiences, and cultural norms, functioning as cognitive shortcuts that allow the brain to process complex information efficiently without having to analyze each new stimulus from scratch.

Applied to the present study, the organizational stage helps explain how students mentally categorize and structure their experiences with TikTok content. A student who has prior familiarity with informal English learning content such as vocabulary tips, pronunciation guides, or conversational dialogues will apply existing cognitive schemas to quickly organize new TikTok videos into recognizable and meaningful categories. This organizational process lays the cognitive groundwork for the final stage of the perceptual process: interpretation.

**d. Stage 3 — Interpretation (Perceptual Interpretation)**

The third and final stage of the perceptual process is interpretation — the point at which the brain assigns meaning to the organized sensory information. Interpretation is the most cognitively complex and individually variable stage of the entire perceptual process, because the meaning a person assigns to a stimulus is not determined solely by the properties of that stimulus, but is heavily shaped by the perceiver's personal values, prior experiences, beliefs, expectations, and cultural background (Goldstein, 2010).

GeeksforGeeks (2024) describes interpretation as the stage at which the brain gives meaning to organized sensory data, with prior experiences, expectations, beliefs, and cultural background all exerting a significant influence on how that meaning is constructed. This perspective reinforces the fundamentally subjective nature of perception: two individuals who have selected and organized the same stimulus may arrive at entirely different interpretations simply because their internal cognitive and emotional frameworks differ.

OpenStax Organizational Behavior (2019) further illustrates this point by noting that an individual's perception of a given situation is not a photographic representation of the physical world; rather, it is a partial and personal construction in which certain elements are selectively highlighted and interpreted through the lens of the individual's own needs, desires, values, and prior experience. In organizational settings, this means that the same event or message can be interpreted in completely opposite ways by different people, depending on their cognitive predispositions and personal histories.

Unstop (2024) similarly explains that organized stimuli are interpreted or assigned meaning based on individual perceptions, attributions, and cognitive biases, and that interpretations may vary significantly depending on factors such as personality, values,

beliefs, and situational context. This variation in interpretation is not a flaw or error in the perceptual system it is an inherent and unavoidable consequence of the fact that perception is a constructive, rather than a purely receptive, mental process.

In the context of this study, the interpretation stage is arguably the most critical. After a student has selected and organized their experience of TikTok English-language content, they will ultimately assign a personal meaning and value to that experience whether they interpret it as educationally valuable, entertaining but superficial, motivating, or distracting. This final interpretive judgment constitutes the student's perception of TikTok as a medium for developing English speaking skills, and it is this perception that the present research seeks to investigate and understand.

#### **e. The Cyclical and Cumulative Nature of the Three Stages**

It is important to emphasize that while the three stages selection, organization, and interpretation are presented here as distinct analytical units for the purpose of clarity, they do not in practice operate as completely separate or sequential steps. Rather, they form a dynamic and mutually reinforcing cycle in which each stage continuously feeds back into and shapes the others (Knudsen et al., 2021).

As an individual interprets a stimulus and assigns meaning to it, that interpretation becomes incorporated into their existing cognitive schema and experiential framework. This updated framework then influences what they will select for attention in subsequent encounters, how they will organize new information, and how they will interpret it. Over time, repeated cycles of this perceptual process result in the gradual consolidation of stable perceptions including, in the context of this study, a student's overall perception of TikTok as a useful or non-useful medium for English speaking skill development.

Understanding this cyclical and cumulative character of the perceptual process is essential for interpreting the findings of the present study, since it suggests that students' perceptions of TikTok are not formed in a single instant but are built up progressively through repeated interactions with the platform across time.

#### **4. Factors that Shape Individual Perception**

##### **a. Overview**

Perception, as established in the preceding sections, is an active and constructive cognitive process. However, the way in which an individual perceives any given stimulus, object, or situation is never entirely determined by the properties of that stimulus alone. It is equally shaped by a broad range of internal and external factors that predispose the individual to perceive the world in particular ways. Understanding these factors is essential because it explains why two individuals who are exposed to the same environment or learning medium can arrive at fundamentally different perceptions of it. Scholars in the field of organizational behavior and cognitive psychology have broadly classified the factors that shape perception into two major categories, namely internal factors and external factors (OpenStax, 2019; Scribd, 2012). Each of these categories encompasses several more specific sub-factors that collectively determine the quality, direction, and intensity of an individual's perceptual experience.

##### **b. Internal Factors**

Internal factors are those that originate from within the individual. They are rooted in the individual's psychological makeup, cognitive history, and personal characteristics. Because these factors are unique to each person, they are a primary source of perceptual variability across individuals who encounter the same stimulus.

### **1) Motivation and Needs**

One of the most consistently documented internal factors is motivation. Motivation refers to the psychological drive that directs and sustains an individual's attention and behavior toward particular goals or objects. Al Goreducation (n.d.) explains that motivation can direct an individual's attention toward stimuli that are relevant to their current needs or goals, in much the same way that a person who is hungry becomes more acutely aware of food-related stimuli in their environment. In the context of language learning, a student who is highly motivated to improve their English speaking skills will naturally attend more selectively and more attentively to English language content, whether encountered in the classroom or on digital platforms such as TikTok. Conversely, a student with low motivational investment will be less likely to notice or engage meaningfully with the same content.

Robbins and Judge (2017) similarly affirm that an individual's needs and desires significantly shape what they select for attention and how they subsequently interpret it, because people tend to perceive what they want to perceive in ways that are consistent with their goals and expectations. This connection between motivation and perceptual selectivity underscores the importance of understanding students' motivational states when investigating their perceptions of TikTok as a learning tool.

### **2) Prior Experience and Learning**

Prior experience is another fundamental internal factor that shapes perception. Every individual enters a new perceptual situation carrying a repository of past experiences, memories, and learned associations that function as interpretive lenses through which new stimuli are understood. Robbins & Judge (2017) note that prior learning and experiences shape an individual's expectations and influence how they interpret new information, with

individuals who have accumulated relevant past experience being more capable of quickly recognizing patterns and assigning accurate meanings to new stimuli.

In an educational context, a student who has previously had positive experiences using digital media for learning will be more predisposed to interpret TikTok content as potentially educationally valuable, simply because their prior experience provides a cognitive schema that supports this interpretation. Conversely, a student whose past experience with social media has been predominantly negative or distraction-prone may approach TikTok with preexisting skepticism, even before directly evaluating its educational content. The role of prior experience thus confirms that perception is never formed in a cognitive vacuum; it is always built upon the accumulated weight of what an individual has previously encountered and internalized.

### **3) Personality**

Personality is a relatively stable set of psychological traits and characteristics that shape how an individual habitually thinks, feels, and responds to the world. Robbins & Judge (2017) assert that individual personality traits, such as optimism or pessimism, can significantly affect how stimuli are perceived and evaluated. An individual with an optimistic personality disposition will generally be more inclined to perceive new experiences and technologies in a favorable light, while a more pessimistic individual may be more alert to potential drawbacks, risks, or limitations.

In the context of this study, personality is particularly relevant because students with different personality profiles are likely to evaluate TikTok quite differently. A student who scores high on openness to new experiences, for instance, may perceive TikTok as an innovative and engaging platform for informal language practice, while a more conscientious and risk-averse student may perceive it as a platform that poses risks of

distraction and time mismanagement. These personality-driven differences in perception are not errors in judgment but are rather natural consequences of the way in which individual psychological traits shape cognitive orientation.

#### **4) Expectations and Perceptual Set**

Expectations refer to the anticipatory cognitive frameworks that individuals bring to new perceptual encounters. These frameworks, sometimes called perceptual sets, predispose an individual to interpret stimuli in particular ways based on what they expect to find. MIT News (2019) reports that prior beliefs exert their effect on behavior by shaping the representation of sensory events in the brain, meaning that what a person expects to perceive significantly influences what they actually perceive. When a student enters a TikTok session with the expectation that the platform will be entertaining but educationally superficial, their perceptual set is already calibrated to filter and interpret the content through that lens, making it less likely that they will recognize or retain the educational value of the material they encounter.

Feelgoodpsychology (2025) further highlights the role of confirmation bias in this process, noting that individuals tend to interpret information in ways that reinforce their pre-existing beliefs while disregarding information that contradicts those beliefs. In the learning context, this suggests that students who begin with a negative expectation of TikTok as a learning platform may unconsciously seek out confirmatory evidence of that view, while students with positive expectations may do the opposite.

#### **5) Emotional and Psychological State**

The emotional and psychological state of an individual at the moment of perception also exerts a significant influence on what is perceived and how it is interpreted. Studysmarter (n.d.) notes that heightened emotional states such as anxiety and stress can

influence both the amount and nature of what is perceived, and that sad or positive feelings can affect how stimuli are interpreted. A student who is experiencing academic stress or anxiety, for instance, may perceive any additional learning responsibility as a burden, and may therefore evaluate TikTok as a source of distraction rather than a valuable supplementary learning tool. Conversely, a student who approaches learning in a relaxed and positive emotional state may be more open and receptive to the educational possibilities that TikTok offers.

### **c. External Factors**

External factors are those that originate in the properties of the perceived stimulus itself or in the surrounding situational context. Unlike internal factors, which reside within the perceiver, external factors are features of the environment that make certain stimuli more or less likely to attract attention and influence perceptual processing.

#### **1) Intensity and Size**

One of the most straightforward external factors is the physical intensity of a stimulus. Studysmarter (n.d.) explains that the more intense a stimulus is, the more likely it is to be perceived, in the same way that a loud noise attracts more attention than a quiet background sound. Similarly, larger and more visually prominent stimuli tend to be perceived more readily than smaller or less conspicuous ones. In the context of TikTok, video content that is visually stimulating, aurally engaging, and dynamically presented will naturally attract greater perceptual attention than content that is visually monotonous or audibly quiet.

#### **2) Novelty and Contrast**

Novelty refers to the quality of being new, unusual, or unexpected. Stimuli that deviate from what is familiar and expected are more likely to capture perceptual attention

because the brain allocates additional processing resources to novel inputs in order to assess their significance. Robbins & Judge (2017) note that stimuli that stand out from their surroundings through contrast or newness are among the most reliably attention-capturing in any environment. On TikTok, English learning content that is presented in a creative, humorous, or visually innovative format is more likely to attract student attention than content that replicates familiar classroom-style instruction.

### **3) Repetition**

Repetition is another important external factor. Vaia (n.d.) explains that repeated exposure to a stimulus increases an individual's sensitivity and awareness toward it over time, meaning that the more frequently a student encounters English language content on TikTok, the more attuned they become to noticing and processing it. This finding aligns with theories of input frequency in second language acquisition, which propose that repeated and consistent exposure to target language forms facilitates their internalization and retention.

### **4) Situational Context**

The situational context in which perception occurs is also a powerful external shaping factor. OpenStax Organizational Behavior (2019) emphasizes that the context in which a perceptual activity takes place plays a significant role in determining how a stimulus is interpreted, noting for example that assertiveness may be perceived as a desirable trait in one cultural context and as inappropriate in another. Applied to digital learning, a student who encounters TikTok English content in a dedicated study session context is likely to perceive it more favorably as a learning resource than a student who encounters the same content while scrolling casually for entertainment, because the situational framing conditions what purpose and value they assign to the experience.

## **5) Cultural Background**

Cultural background constitutes one of the most encompassing external factors shaping perception. An individual's cultural norms, values, and socialization experiences provide the overarching framework through which all sensory information is ultimately interpreted. As noted by ScienceDirect (2023), culture significantly influences learners' motivation, perception, and communication strategies in the context of language learning, with cultural values shaping what learners consider valuable, appropriate, and worth pursuing in an educational context. For Indonesian university students in particular, cultural attitudes toward the use of social media for learning and the perceived social acceptability of using entertainment platforms such as TikTok for academic purposes may significantly influence how students perceive and evaluate the platform's educational potential.

### **5. Aspects and Indicators of Perception**

#### **a. Theoretical Grounding**

Having established that perception is a complex cognitive process shaped by multiple stages and individual factors, it becomes equally necessary to identify how perception can be meaningfully observed and measured in a research context. In academic studies, particularly those exploring student perception toward a particular object, medium, or learning approach, perception is not treated as a single monolithic variable but rather as a multidimensional construct that encompasses several interrelated aspects. Each of these aspects captures a different dimension of how an individual engages with and evaluates the perceived object.

One of the most foundational frameworks for understanding the aspects of perception comes from Boulding (1956), who proposed that an individual's image or

perception of any object is composed of three interrelated components: what one knows and thinks about the object (cognitive), how one feels about it (affective), and how one acts or intends to act using that information (conative). This tripartite model has since been applied and elaborated by numerous scholars across different fields, including organizational behavior, consumer psychology, and educational research. Gartner (1993), for instance, built upon Boulding's framework by developing a hierarchical cause and effect model proposing that cognitive perception forms the basis from which affective perception develops, which in turn shapes conative or behavioral intention. This causal sequence implies that the way a person understands something cognitively will naturally condition how they feel about it emotionally, and both of these will ultimately determine what they choose to do about it.

In the educational context, this three-aspect framework is particularly well suited for investigating how students perceive a particular learning platform. Scholars such as those cited in Digilib UPGRI Pontianak (n.d.) affirm that perceptual aspects in the context of student learning consist of cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions. Each of these dimensions corresponds to a distinct layer of the student's engagement with the platform and can be operationalized through specific measurable indicators. The following sections elaborate each aspect and its corresponding indicators as they apply to the present study.

#### **b. The Cognitive Aspect**

The cognitive aspect of perception refers to the dimension of knowledge, understanding, and belief that an individual holds about a perceived object or phenomenon. It represents the intellectual layer of perception, capturing how much a person knows, understands, and mentally evaluates the object they are perceiving. According to Boulding (1956), the cognitive component of an image consists of an

individual's knowledge and thoughts about an object, meaning that it is grounded in information processing and rational evaluation rather than in emotional response.

In the context of organizational behavior and social psychology, the cognitive component of an attitude or perception involves what a person believes to be factually true about the perceived object, based on their accumulated knowledge, exposure, and informational processing (Simply Psychology, n.d.). This includes beliefs about the object's characteristics, functions, usefulness, and limitations. Structural Learning (2023) further explains that perception and cognition work together in the learning process, where perception refers to the interpretation of sensory information and cognition involves the mental processes through which individuals acquire knowledge and understanding of what they have perceived.

Applied to this study, the cognitive aspect of students' perception toward TikTok encompasses their level of understanding and informational awareness regarding the platform and its potential role in English language learning. Students who possess substantial knowledge about how TikTok works, what kinds of English learning content are available on it, and how such content may support speaking skill development are likely to form a more nuanced and accurate cognitive evaluation of its educational value than students who have limited informational exposure to these features.

The measurable indicators that correspond to the cognitive aspect of perception include students' awareness of the existence and availability of English learning content on TikTok, their understanding of how the platform's features such as short-form video, text overlays, and subtitles can support language input, and their beliefs about whether TikTok content is accurate, reliable, and linguistically appropriate as a source of English language exposure. These indicators collectively reflect the degree to which students have

formed an informed and knowledge-based cognitive representation of TikTok as a learning tool.

### **c. The Affective Aspect**

The affective aspect of perception refers to the emotional and evaluative responses that an individual develops toward a perceived object. While the cognitive aspect captures what a person knows and thinks, the affective aspect captures what a person feels. It reflects the subjective emotional valence that the individual attaches to the perceived object, whether that valence is positive, negative, or ambivalent.

Simply Psychology (n.d.) defines the affective component of an attitude as the emotional reactions or feelings an individual has toward an object, person, issue, or situation, encompassing emotional responses such as liking, disliking, enjoyment, anxiety, or enthusiasm. Hogg & Vaughan (2005), as cited in the *Journal of Interactive Media in Education* (2021), similarly describe the affective component as the feelings and emotions an individual experiences in relation to an attitude object, noting that attitudes consist of cognitive, affective, and behavioral components that collectively shape how individuals respond to objects in their environment.

The importance of the affective dimension lies in its motivational power. Research consistently demonstrates that emotionally positive perceptions generate approach behavior, sustained engagement, and higher willingness to invest effort, while emotionally negative perceptions tend to produce avoidance behavior and disengagement (Hogg & Vaughan, 2005). In the context of digital learning media, this means that a student who finds TikTok enjoyable, interesting, and motivating is considerably more likely to use it purposefully and consistently for English learning than a student who feels bored, uncomfortable, or anxious when engaging with its content.

Frontiers in Psychology (2022) notes that the affective component is fundamentally evaluative and that it mediates the relationship between cognitive understanding and behavioral intention, meaning that how a person feels about something plays a critical bridging role between what they know and what they ultimately choose to do. This mediating function makes the affective aspect particularly important for this study, as it helps explain why two students with similar cognitive knowledge about TikTok may nonetheless arrive at very different behavioral responses toward using it for speaking practice.

The measurable indicators of the affective aspect in the context of this study include students' emotional enjoyment of engaging with English content on TikTok, their level of comfort and confidence when using the platform for language practice, their enthusiasm and willingness to spend time on TikTok for learning purposes, and their overall emotional assessment of whether TikTok makes English learning feel more engaging and appealing compared to conventional learning methods.

#### **d. The Conative Aspect**

The conative aspect of perception refers to the behavioral dimension, encompassing an individual's intentions, behavioral tendencies, and actual actions in relation to the perceived object. It represents the culminating layer of the perceptual process, in which the cognitive understanding and emotional evaluation of an object are translated into concrete behavioral dispositions and responses. Boulding (1956) describes the conative component as how an individual acts using the cognitive and affective information they have accumulated about an object, making it the most behaviorally proximate of the three aspects.

In consumer behavior research, the conative component is often operationalized as the intention to act, such as the intention to purchase a product, to recommend it to others, or to continue using it over time (Brainly, 2020). *Frontiers in Psychology* (2022) similarly defines conative image as the behavioral intention of an individual toward an object, which in the context of digital platforms encompasses intention to revisit, continue using, or recommend the platform to peers. The conative dimension thus serves as the behavioral manifestation of the entirety of the individual's perceptual experience.

In the field of educational technology, researchers have increasingly recognized the conative dimension as a critical predictor of actual learning behavior. A study examining learners' perception and behavioral intention toward Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) found that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, which relate closely to the cognitive aspect, positively and significantly influenced learners' behavioral intention to continue using the platform (Eric, 2023). This finding underscores the sequential logic proposed by Boulding (1956) and Gartner (1993): cognitive evaluation informs emotional response, and both jointly shape behavioral intention.

Applied to this study, the conative aspect of students' perception toward TikTok captures the degree to which their cognitive and affective evaluations of the platform translate into actual or intended behavior related to using TikTok for English speaking practice. The measurable indicators of the conative aspect include the frequency with which students intentionally seek out English language content on TikTok, their willingness to actively practice speaking skills by engaging with or responding to TikTok content, their intention to continue using TikTok as a supplementary tool for English learning, and their likelihood of recommending TikTok-based English learning content to fellow students.

### **e. The Interconnected Nature of the Three Aspects**

A key insight from the theoretical framework established by Boulding (1956) and elaborated by Gartner (1993) is that the three aspects of perception are not independent of one another but are deeply interconnected in a hierarchical and sequential manner. *Frontiers in Psychology* (2022) confirms that cognitive image functions as the foundational layer upon which affective image is built, and that affective image in turn mediates and shapes conative intention. This means that the quality and accuracy of a student's cognitive understanding of TikTok as a learning medium will directly influence the emotional tone of their affective response, and that both of these will collectively determine the strength and direction of their conative behavioral intentions.

This interconnected structure has important methodological implications for the present study. By measuring all three aspects simultaneously through a structured questionnaire instrument, the study is able to capture not only the surface-level behavioral tendencies of students toward TikTok but also the deeper cognitive and emotional foundations that underlie those tendencies. This multi-aspect approach ensures a more comprehensive and theoretically grounded understanding of student perception than would be possible if only a single dimension were examined.

Furthermore, understanding the interrelationship among the three aspects enables the study to identify potential mismatches between dimensions. For instance, a student may demonstrate strong cognitive awareness of TikTok's educational features but hold persistently negative affective responses toward the platform, resulting in low conative intention to use it for learning. Conversely, a student may feel emotionally engaged with TikTok content yet hold limited cognitive understanding of its language learning potential, producing a form of unstructured and unreflective engagement that does not

translate into systematic language practice. Identifying such mismatches provides valuable insights into how educational interventions might be designed to align all three perceptual aspects in a way that maximizes the platform's educational utility.

## **6. Student Perception toward Digital Learning Media**

### **a. The Rise of Digital Learning Media in Contemporary Higher Education**

The landscape of higher education has undergone a profound transformation over the past decade, driven by the accelerating integration of digital technologies into teaching and learning environments. Platforms, applications, and online tools that were once considered peripheral to formal education have now become central components of how students access information, practice skills, and construct knowledge beyond the boundaries of the physical classroom. According to *Frontiers in Psychology* (2022), digital platforms for learning have a measurable impact on university students' motivations and study behaviors, with educational apps and online tools increasingly being recognized not merely as supplementary aids but as primary sources of learning experience for contemporary learners.

This shift has been accompanied by a corresponding evolution in how students perceive and evaluate the digital tools they encounter. Keane et al. (2023) affirms that students' attitudes toward digital technologies significantly affect how they approach their learning, including how they develop their own specific knowledge base and how they set and adjust their unique learning strategies to achieve their learning goals. This means that how students feel and think about a particular digital platform is not a trivial matter; it directly conditions whether they will use that platform productively, superficially, or not at all. Understanding student perception toward digital learning media is therefore not

merely an academic exercise but a practically significant concern for educators seeking to design effective technology-enhanced learning environments.

Yuan et al. (2025) further emphasizes that in a digital learning atmosphere, college students are more likely to develop a positive perception of digital learning when they possess a clear understanding of learning objectives, actively engage in the learning process, and hold positive expectations about the educational value of the digital tools available to them. This finding underscores the centrality of perception as a mediating construct between technology availability and actual learning behavior, reinforcing the relevance of the theoretical framework laid out in the preceding sub-sections of this chapter.

#### **b. How Student Perception toward Digital Media Takes Shape**

The formation of student perception toward digital learning media follows the same cognitive sequence outlined in the perceptual process discussed in A.3, passing through the stages of selection, organization, and interpretation. However, when the perceived object is a digital platform rather than a simple physical stimulus, the process is considerably more complex because the student is simultaneously responding to the platform's visual interface, its content quality, its usability, and its perceived alignment with their academic goals.

PMC (2022) notes that students' own prior experiences with digital technologies play a vital role in shaping their perceptions and expectations of such technologies in advanced educational settings, with what occurs during their initial encounters with a platform functioning as a critical determinant of the attitudes they subsequently develop toward it. A student who encounters a digital platform for the first time with little prior exposure to similar tools will approach it with a relatively open and unformed perceptual set, while a

student who has accumulated extensive prior experience with comparable platforms will bring pre-existing schemas and expectations that immediately color their initial perceptual response.

Furthermore, the social context in which students encounter digital learning media also plays a significant shaping role. Peers' recommendations, instructors' endorsements, and institutional norms regarding technology use all function as external factors that pre-condition how students begin to perceive a new tool before they have even had direct personal experience with it. Al-Khalidi & Khouni (2021), as cited in PMC (2022), found that when examining the effectiveness of social media platforms in English language teaching and learning from EFL students' perspectives, social endorsement and shared community use of a platform contributed significantly to students forming favorable initial perceptions of it.

### **c. Student Perception toward Social Media as a Language Learning Tool**

Among the digital media that have attracted growing scholarly attention in the context of language learning, social media platforms occupy a particularly prominent position. Research across multiple national contexts has consistently demonstrated that students hold a range of perceptions toward the use of social media for language learning, with the balance between positive and negative perceptions varying according to individual, contextual, and platform-specific factors.

Novitasari & Addinna (2022), in a study conducted at Universitas Negeri Padang involving students of the English Language Education program, found that students hold a generally positive perception toward using TikTok to study English, describing the experience as enjoyable and relatively stress-free compared to conventional classroom-

based instruction. Importantly, students in that study reported that TikTok enabled them to practice and remember vocabulary more effectively than traditional studying, and that the platform particularly supported the development of their listening and speaking skills through exposure to authentic English speech produced by native and proficient speakers.

A high school study by the *Teaching English as a Foreign Language Journal* (2023) similarly found that students generally hold a positive attitude toward using social media to learn English, with participants identifying the accessibility, variety, and engagement potential of social media content as key contributors to their favorable perceptions. The study noted that both listening and reading skills can be significantly improved through consistent exposure to social media content in the target language, provided that students approach such exposure with deliberate learning intentions rather than passive entertainment-oriented scrolling.

Research by Bermudez et al. (2016), as cited in Researchgate (2022), drawing on 164 participants across developing countries, found that students perceive social media platforms as practically useful for English learning, with exposure to and engagement with new media platforms correlating positively with students' confidence in their language skills. This confidence-boosting effect of social media engagement is particularly significant in the context of speaking skill development, where self-confidence is widely recognized as one of the most critical determinants of a learner's willingness to produce and practice spoken output.

However, research also reveals that student perceptions of social media for language learning are not uniformly positive. Novitasari & Addinna (2022) documented several sources of negative perception among students, including concerns about unreliable internet connectivity, the financial cost of data access, the potential for off-topic content

to divert attention from learning goals, and the inability to obtain immediate feedback or clarification from content creators when students have linguistic questions. These negative perceptual dimensions are consistent with the findings from Safitri (2021), who identified poor internet connections and the presence of inappropriate content as two of the most commonly cited challenges students encounter when attempting to use social media for English learning.

This coexistence of positive and negative perceptual dimensions among students of social media as a language learning tool reflects the multidimensional nature of perception outlined in the theoretical framework of this chapter. Students' perceptions are not simply favorable or unfavorable in a blanket sense; rather, they involve nuanced cognitive evaluations, affective responses, and conative intentions that may vary across different dimensions of the same platform's use.

#### **d. Student Perception toward TikTok as an English Learning Medium**

Among the variety of social media platforms available to contemporary students, TikTok has emerged as one of the most rapidly growing and extensively studied in the context of English language learning. Its unique format of short-form video content, combined with powerful algorithmic content delivery, has made it a platform that many students encounter not only for entertainment but increasingly as a source of informal language input and practice opportunity.

Manggo, Liando, & Wungow (2022) investigated student perception toward TikTok as a medium for improving speaking ability and found that students generally perceive TikTok positively in this regard, viewing its short-video format as a convenient and engaging vehicle for exposure to spoken English in authentic contexts. Students in that study reported that TikTok content produced by English-speaking creators gave them

access to natural speech patterns, colloquial expressions, and real-world pronunciation models that are often absent from formal textbook-based instruction.

Nasichah (2023), in a study conducted at UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto specifically examining students' perceptions of TikTok as a tool for enhancing speaking skills, found that students perceived TikTok as capable of contributing meaningfully to the development of their speaking competence, particularly in terms of building pronunciation awareness, expanding vocabulary relevant to spoken discourse, and increasing their confidence and motivation to practice English speaking in informal settings. Adnan & Morat (2022), in a preliminary study at a Malaysian university, similarly found that university students hold broadly favorable perceptions of TikTok as a supplementary educational tool, with the platform's accessibility, visual appeal, and content variety being cited as the primary sources of its perceived learning value.

Paz-Dominguez et al. (2023) further reported that students hold positive perceptions toward using TikTok specifically as a tool for improving English pronunciation, noting that the platform's rich audiovisual content provides students with opportunities to hear and imitate a wide variety of English accents and speech styles, a feature that is particularly relevant for students whose speaking development is constrained by limited access to native-speaking interlocutors in their daily academic environment.

At the same time, several studies document perceptual concerns that temper the overall positivity of student responses. Addan & Morat (2022) found that some students expressed reservations about the reliability and accuracy of English content on TikTok, noting that because anyone can create and upload content on the platform without any formal qualification or peer review process, there is no guarantee that the language

modeled in TikTok videos is grammatically accurate, phonologically standard, or pedagogically appropriate. This concern about content credibility constitutes a significant source of negative perceptual dimension within the cognitive aspect of student perception toward TikTok, as it introduces doubt about the platform's reliability as an informational and linguistic reference.

Pebrimireni & Fauziya (2024), as cited in Researchgate (2025), identified distraction as another prominently perceived challenge, finding that students who use TikTok for English learning frequently report difficulty maintaining focus on language-learning content within the platform's algorithmically driven feed, which continuously serves entertainment content alongside educational material. This challenge of sustained attentional focus highlights the tension between TikTok's design as an entertainment platform and students' need for structured, goal-directed engagement with learning content.

#### **e. Positioning Student Perception as the Core Construct of This Study**

Having reviewed the theoretical and empirical landscape of student perception toward digital learning media, it becomes evident that student perception is not merely a background variable or a secondary concern in language learning research. Rather, it is a foundational construct that mediates the relationship between the availability of a digital learning tool and the actual learning outcomes that tool produces. A platform may possess significant educational potential in theory, but if students perceive it negatively across the cognitive, affective, or conative dimensions outlined in the preceding sub-section, that potential will remain largely unrealized.

In the context of this study, the preceding theoretical review establishes that student perception toward TikTok as a medium for developing English speaking skills is expected

to be a multidimensional, individually variable, and contextually shaped construct. Some students at UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri may bring to their encounter with TikTok a strong cognitive awareness of its educational functions, a high degree of affective enjoyment in using it, and a robust behavioral intention to employ it as a regular speaking practice tool. Others may hold limited cognitive knowledge of its learning potential, mixed emotional responses shaped by concerns about distraction and content reliability, and consequently a more tentative or inconsistent behavioral disposition toward using it for language development purposes.

The present study thus positions itself at the intersection of perception theory and technology-enhanced language learning research, seeking to provide empirical evidence on how students at a specific Indonesian university context cognitively understand, affectively experience, and behaviorally respond to TikTok as an informal medium for English speaking skill development. The theoretical framework established across subsections A.1 through A.6 provides the conceptual scaffolding necessary to interpret these findings in a psychologically grounded and educationally meaningful way.

## **B. Social Media as an Informal Language Learning Environment**

### **1. The Role of Social Media in Modern Education**

#### **a. Defining Social Media in the Educational Context**

Before examining the specific role of social media in education, it is necessary to establish a clear and academically grounded understanding of what social media is and what distinguishes it from other forms of digital communication. The most widely cited and foundational definition of social media in scholarly literature comes from Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), who define social media as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the

creation and exchange of user-generated content. This definition captures two essential characteristics that make social media fundamentally different from earlier forms of online communication. The first is its technical foundation in Web 2.0, which refers to a generation of internet infrastructure that enables collaborative, participatory, and interactive use of web-based platforms rather than mere one-way consumption of static content. The second is its emphasis on user-generated content, meaning that the value and substance of social media platforms are produced not by a single authoritative source but by the aggregate contributions of ordinary users who create, share, respond to, and remix content according to their own interests, knowledge, and creative capacities.

Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) further classify social media into several categories based on their structural characteristics, including collaborative projects such as wikis, blogs and microblogs, content communities such as YouTube, social networking sites such as Facebook and Instagram, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds. This classification is particularly relevant for educational research because different categories of social media afford different kinds of learning opportunities. Content communities and social networking sites, for instance, are especially well suited for language learning because they provide learners with authentic, varied, and abundantly available examples of language use produced by real people across a wide range of communicative contexts.

Springer Nature (2016) notes that social media platforms introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities, and individuals, with these changes being driven by the interactive and participatory affordances of Web 2.0 technology. In the educational domain, these changes have been particularly profound, as they have disrupted the traditional model in which knowledge flows unidirectionally from a credentialed teacher to a passive student, replacing it with

a more distributed and dialogic model in which learners actively seek, produce, and negotiate knowledge through networked social interactions.

**b. The Transformation of Educational Communication through Social Media**

The integration of social media into educational environments has fundamentally altered the way students and educators communicate, collaborate, and access knowledge. *Frontiers in Psychology* (2023) affirms that education is undergoing tremendous modifications across academic disciplines, owing mainly to the integration of social media and web-based platforms, with an increasing number of teachers and students using social media for both personal and educational purposes in higher education contexts. This convergence of personal and academic use is particularly significant because it blurs the boundary between formal and informal learning, creating opportunities for learning to occur beyond the constraints of scheduled class sessions and institutionally prescribed curricula.

*Advance HE* (2024) reports that research indicates that 83 percent of young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 use social media for learning purposes, and that studies have shown significant improvements in areas such as language acquisition as a result of social media engagement. This figure underscores the scale at which social media has already become embedded in the learning practices of contemporary university students, making its educational potential not merely a theoretical possibility but an empirically documented reality.

*Frontiers in Education* (2022) notes that social media platforms enable connected synchronous and asynchronous learning environments for students, with characteristics of digitality, interactivity, hypertextuality, virtuality, networking, and simulation

collectively constituting an educational environment that is simultaneously more flexible, more personalized, and more contextually rich than the traditional classroom. In educational environments, students may use social media for a variety of purposes, including knowledge finding, collaboration, and social interaction, all of which contribute to a more active and engaged approach to learning than passive reception of information in a lecture-based setting.

Researchgate (2024) further identifies several specific functions that social media serves in modern education. These include fostering connection, comfort, and a sense of belonging among learners, providing a robust support network that facilitates healthy academic and social interactions, and enabling flexible interactions that can enhance learning when utilized effectively. This social dimension of learning is particularly important in the context of language acquisition, where interaction with other speakers of the target language, whether native speakers or proficient non-native users, is widely recognized as a critical driver of language development.

## **2. Informal Learning Theory and Social Media**

### **a. Understanding Informal Learning**

The relationship between social media and language learning is most coherently understood through the lens of informal learning theory, which provides the conceptual framework for explaining how meaningful learning can occur outside the boundaries of formal educational instruction. Marsick & Watkins (2001) defined informal learning as involving intentional but not highly structured learning activities such as task accomplishments, interpersonal interactions, sensing the organizational or social culture, and trial-and-error experimentation. They distinguished informal learning from formal learning primarily on the basis of structure, noting that while formal learning is

institutionally organized, scheduled, and evaluated, informal learning is largely self-directed, experiential, and embedded in the everyday activities of the learner's social and cultural environment.

Marsick & Watkins (2001) also introduced the related concept of incidental learning, which refers to learning that occurs as a byproduct of other activities not primarily intended for educational purposes. Incidental learning is particularly relevant to the use of social media for language development because many students encounter English language input on platforms such as TikTok not as the primary purpose of their activity but as a byproduct of entertainment, social communication, or content exploration. Over time, however, repeated incidental encounters with the target language can accumulate into meaningful language learning outcomes, particularly when students begin to consciously attend to the linguistic features of the content they encounter.

Watkins (2018) further developed the Marsick and Watkins framework by emphasizing the nonlinear and socially embedded nature of informal learning, noting that informal learning often occurs through social interactions and that its outcomes are significantly shaped by the context in which those interactions take place. In the digital environment of social media, this contextual embeddedness is particularly salient, as the learning that occurs is not merely a function of the content encountered but is also shaped by the social dynamics of the platform itself, including who creates content, how content is algorithmically distributed, and what kinds of interactions the platform's design features encourage.

## **b. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Peer Learning through Social Media**

One of the most influential theoretical frameworks for understanding the social dimensions of learning is Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which posits that learning is fundamentally a social process that occurs through interaction with more knowledgeable members of a cultural community. Central to Vygotsky's framework is the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, which refers to the range of tasks that a learner cannot yet complete independently but can accomplish with appropriate guidance and support from a more capable peer or mentor (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Simply Psychology, 2025).

According to Vygotsky (1978), learning is most effective within the Zone of Proximal Development when appropriate support and scaffolding are provided. In the context of social media-based language learning, this scaffolding does not need to come from a formal teacher or institutional instructor; it can come from the naturally occurring interaction between a language learner and the more proficient speakers whose content they encounter on the platform. When a student watches a TikTok video produced by a native or advanced English speaker and attempts to imitate the pronunciation, replicate the vocabulary, or understand the grammatical structures used, they are effectively engaging in a self-directed scaffolding process that aligns closely with the Vygotskian model of learning through social interaction with a more knowledgeable other.

PMC (2021) notes that over half a century after Vygotsky proposed his framework for understanding cultural development of human higher mental functions, his ideas remain profoundly relevant to understanding how digital technologies mediate learning. In the digital social media environment, the traditional distinction between teacher as

expert and student as novice is considerably flattened, with the platform functioning as a space in which learners can access varying degrees of linguistic expertise from a globally distributed community of content creators. This accessibility to a wide range of proficient English language models is one of the most significant educational affordances of platforms such as TikTok, as it extends the learner's Zone of Proximal Development far beyond what would be available in a typical Indonesian university classroom.

Further notes that Vygotsky's sociocultural theory encourages learning approaches that emphasize coaching, team collaboration, and feedback loops rather than one-way presentations, and that in many contexts learning takes place informally through participation rather than through formal instruction. Social media platforms embody precisely this participatory, interaction-oriented model of learning, as their affordances naturally encourage users to engage not merely as passive consumers of content but as active participants in a broader communicative community.

### **c. Krashen's Input Hypothesis and the Role of Social Media in Language Acquisition**

Perhaps the most directly applicable theoretical framework for understanding why social media environments can be effective for language learning is Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis, first formally articulated in his 1985 work. Krashen (1985) proposed that language acquisition occurs not through formal instruction or conscious memorization of rules but through exposure to comprehensible input, which he defined as authentic language input that is slightly above the learner's current level of competence. Using the formula  $i+1$ , where  $i$  represents the learner's current competence level and 1 represents the additional complexity contained in the input, Krashen argued that when

learners are consistently exposed to language that challenges but does not overwhelm their existing competence, acquisition proceeds naturally and inevitably.

The central implication of the input hypothesis for language pedagogy is that the primary task of language instruction and language learning environments should be to maximize learners' exposure to meaningful, contextually embedded, and appropriately leveled input in the target language. Krashen (1985) further specified that acquisition is most likely to occur when the learner's affective filter is low, meaning when the learner feels relaxed, motivated, and free from anxiety in their encounter with the target language. This specification is particularly relevant to social media environments such as TikTok, where content is encountered in a low-stakes, self-directed, and intrinsically motivating context that is likely to produce a low affective filter in most students, thereby maximizing the conditions under which natural acquisition can occur.

ERIC (2015) notes that Krashen's hypothesis triggered numerous studies investigating the role of language input in second language acquisition, and that the importance of comprehensible input for language development has been consistently affirmed across a wide range of research contexts even among scholars who have critiqued other aspects of Krashen's broader theoretical framework. The key contribution of Krashen's work for the present study is its theoretical grounding of the claim that informal, self-directed exposure to authentic English language content on platforms such as TikTok can constitute a genuine and productive form of language acquisition experience, provided that the content encountered is appropriately comprehensible and that the learner engages with it in an attentive and meaning-focused manner.

It is important to note, however, that subsequent scholars have identified important limitations in Krashen's exclusive focus on input. Swain (1985), as cited in Phamho

(2024), argued that comprehensible output, meaning the language that learners themselves produce rather than merely receive, plays an equally critical role in language acquisition because producing language pushes learners to test what they know, recognize gaps in their competence, and process linguistic forms more deeply than comprehension alone may require. In the context of TikTok as a language learning medium, this suggests that the platform's educational value is maximized not merely when students consume English language content passively but also when they engage in active language production, whether by repeating, imitating, or responding to the content they encounter. Some of TikTok's interactive features, such as the Duet and Stitch functions, which allow users to respond to and build upon existing videos, provide precisely this kind of productive engagement with the target language.

#### **d. The Convergence of Informal Learning Frameworks and Social Media**

The three theoretical frameworks discussed in this section, namely Marsick and Watkins' informal learning theory, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, and Krashen's Input Hypothesis, converge in their shared recognition of the fundamental educational importance of learning that occurs outside the formally structured classroom environment. Each framework, in its own way, highlights the critical role of social interaction, authentic language exposure, and experiential engagement in driving meaningful and durable learning outcomes.

Social media platforms such as TikTok represent a contemporary digital environment that embodies all three of these theoretical emphases simultaneously. They provide learners with an informal and largely self-directed learning space in which incidental encounters with the target language accumulate over time into meaningful acquisition

outcomes, consistent with the Marsick and Watkins framework. They create opportunities for learners to interact with more linguistically proficient speakers and content creators, enabling the kind of socially scaffolded development described by Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development. And they generate a continuous flow of authentic, contextually varied, and motivationally engaging English language input that aligns closely with the conditions Krashen identified as most conducive to natural language acquisition.

Understanding this theoretical convergence is essential for situating the present study within the broader scholarly conversation on technology-enhanced language learning. By grounding the investigation of student perception toward TikTok in the frameworks of informal learning theory, sociocultural learning theory, and second language acquisition theory, the study is able to move beyond a superficial description of how students feel about the platform and offer a theoretically substantive account of why those perceptions matter for understanding and improving informal English language learning in the contemporary Indonesian university context.

### **3. English-Language Content on Digital Platforms**

The availability of English-language content across digital platforms has grown exponentially over the past decade, creating an unprecedented informal learning environment for EFL learners worldwide. JOLLT (2025), in a systematic review of more than 1,500 journal articles examining the integration of social media into EFL education between 2018 and 2023, found that platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and WhatsApp have been widely used as sources of English language content and as vehicles for diverse learning activities including media consumption, content creation, peer discussion, and vocabulary practice. YouTube emerged as the most frequently examined platform in terms of English language learning content, yet TikTok

has rapidly grown as one of the most prominent sources of short-form English-language educational material among younger learners.

The types of English-language content available on these platforms are highly varied in format, register, and pedagogical intent. Springer (2023) found that of the three main categories of English learning videos available on Instagram and TikTok, students most preferred authenticity-centered videos, meaning videos that present English in genuinely communicative and real-life contexts rather than structured lesson formats. This preference for authentic content reflects the theoretical principles discussed in B.2, particularly Krashen's argument that natural, contextually embedded input is more conducive to acquisition than artificially simplified instructional language.

Within the specific context of TikTok, Researchgate (2024) documents that the platform features diverse categories of English-learning content, including pronunciation tutorials, vocabulary explanations, grammar tips, conversational English demonstrations, dialect exposure videos, and native-speaker interaction clips. Mukhlif & Challob (2021), as cited in Researchgate (2024), found that TikTok helps students learn a variety of English dialects across formal and informal settings, enriching their sociolinguistic competence beyond what formal classroom instruction typically offers. MICJO (2026) further documents that TikTok serves as a significant platform for informal digital language learning, particularly for microlearning approaches in which short, focused content episodes deliver concentrated language input that is easier to process and retain than extended lectures or reading passages.

Chen & Zhang (2021), as cited in IDEAS Journal (2025), note the importance of evaluating the quality of English-language content on TikTok from a digital literacy perspective, acknowledging that while the volume and variety of such content is

considerable, its pedagogical quality varies significantly across creators. This observation reinforces the importance of students developing critical digital literacy skills that enable them to distinguish high-quality, linguistically accurate English content from informal, unreliable, or misleading material. Understanding the landscape of English-language content on digital platforms is therefore a prerequisite for students to engage with these resources as deliberate and informed language learners rather than as uncritical consumers of whatever content the platform serves them.

### **C. TikTok as a Medium for English Speaking Practice**

#### **1. Overview and Development of TikTok as a Global Platform**

##### **a. Origins and Early Development**

TikTok's origins can be traced to September 2016, when Beijing-based technology company ByteDance, founded by Zhang Yiming, launched a short-form video application called Douyin specifically for the Chinese domestic market. TechBullion (2025) documents that Douyin was initially available only within China and quickly gained a massive user base, attracting 100 million users within its first year of operation and generating more than one billion daily video views. The platform was developed in approximately 200 days and was designed around a simple yet powerful concept: enabling ordinary users to create, edit, and share short videos set to music and audio clips, removing the technical barriers that had previously limited video content creation to professional producers and studios.

Recognizing the global potential of its short-form video model, ByteDance launched the international version of the application under the name TikTok in September 2017. A strategic turning point came in 2018 when ByteDance acquired Musical.ly, a popular lip-sync video platform that had already established a substantial user community across

North America and Europe. GRIN (2025) explains that this acquisition was pivotal, as it enabled ByteDance to merge Musical.ly's existing community with TikTok's algorithmically advanced platform infrastructure, instantly expanding TikTok's reach across Western markets and providing the company with a ready-made international user base upon which to build further growth.

#### **b. Global Growth and Expansion**

Following the Musical.ly merger, TikTok entered a period of explosive global growth that distinguished it from virtually every other social media platform in the history of the industry. The World Data (2026) documents that by 2018, TikTok had already reached 500 million global users; by 2019, it had surpassed 1.2 billion total downloads and ranked among the top five most downloaded applications worldwide. The platform's growth accelerated dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, as global lockdowns drove unprecedented numbers of users toward digital entertainment and social connection. Shopify (2025) records that TikTok reached a peak of approximately 313.5 million downloads in the first quarter of 2020 alone, a figure that reflected the platform's extraordinary resonance with populations confined to their homes and seeking new forms of entertainment, creative expression, and social engagement.

A landmark milestone was reached in September 2021 when TikTok announced that it had surpassed one billion monthly active users, achieving this threshold faster than any other social media application in history (GRIN, 2025). This achievement validated ByteDance's vision of creating a borderless, culturally transcendent platform and cemented TikTok's position as one of the most significant digital communication platforms of the twenty-first century. By 2022, the platform's global user base had grown to an estimated 1.72 billion, and BrandHistories (2025) reports that the platform has

continued to refine its algorithmic systems and expand its feature set, successfully serving over 1.5 billion monthly active users as of 2025, with an average global usage time of 95 minutes per day.

Springer (2025) confirms that TikTok has rapidly become a mainstream social media platform, particularly influential among younger populations and significantly shaping the media consumption habits of Generation Z. Advanced Autism Services (2025) notes that as of 2025, more than 55 percent of TikTok's global user base is under 30 years of age, with the 18 to 24 age group constituting the largest single demographic cohort on the platform. This overwhelmingly young user demographic is directly relevant to the present study, as it confirms that TikTok's primary audience precisely coincides with the age range of university students who constitute the research participants.

### **c. TikTok in the Indonesian Context**

The significance of TikTok is particularly pronounced in Indonesia, where the platform has achieved the largest national user base of any country in the world. Celebian (2024) reports that as of July 2024, Indonesia ranked first globally in TikTok users, with approximately 157.6 million active users, a figure that substantially exceeds the platform's user numbers in the United States, Brazil, and all other national markets. World Population Review (2026) similarly estimates that approximately 127 million Indonesians use TikTok regularly, reflecting the platform's deep penetration into Indonesian digital culture across urban and rural demographics alike.

This extraordinary scale of TikTok adoption in Indonesia has significant implications for the present study. The fact that Indonesian university students are among the most active TikTok users in the world means that the platform constitutes a genuinely central component of their daily digital experience, rather than a peripheral or occasional

application. For English language learners at Indonesian universities, TikTok represents not merely an additional platform to explore for language learning purposes but a pervasive environmental feature of their everyday digital lives that inevitably shapes the linguistic input and cultural models to which they are routinely exposed.

The Indonesian TikTok market is also characterized by particularly high levels of engagement with content creation and commerce. TikTok Statistics (2025) notes that Indonesia emerged as the leading market for TikTok Shop in 2023, with 20 percent of all TikTok Shop registrations based in Indonesia, reflecting the depth of Indonesian users' active and commercially engaged participation in the platform's ecosystem. This high level of active rather than purely passive engagement suggests that Indonesian TikTok users, including the university students who form the target population of this study, are habituated to interacting with the platform not merely as consumers of content but as active participants who engage, respond, and create within its community structures.

#### **d. TikTok's Emergence as an Educational Platform**

Although TikTok was originally conceived as an entertainment platform centered on music, dance, and creative self-expression, it has evolved substantially beyond these origins to encompass a wide and growing range of educational, informational, and professional content. Researchgate (2021) documents that the LearnOnTikTok initiative, launched by ByteDance during the COVID-19 pandemic, accumulated over 72 billion views in its first year alone, demonstrating the extraordinary appetite among TikTok's user base for educational content delivered in the platform's characteristic short, engaging video format.

Tandfonline (2025), in a systematic review of 83 studies examining TikTok's applications in higher education published between 2020 and 2025, found that the volume

of educational research on TikTok has grown substantially, with 74.7 percent of all relevant studies published since 2023, reflecting accelerating scholarly and institutional interest in TikTok's educational potential. Among the disciplines examined, language learning accounted for the largest single category of disciplinary applications, confirming TikTok's particular relevance as a medium for linguistic development among university students.

Springer (2025) further confirms that TikTok's educational potential is recognized not merely in informal self-directed contexts but also in formal institutional settings, with studies examining TikTok's integration into university courses across physical education, medical education, language learning, and professional development. Khlaif and Salha (2021), as cited in Researchgate (2024), have argued that TikTok's short video format aligns closely with the principles of microlearning and nano-learning, pedagogical approaches that condense complex content into compact, easily digestible units designed to optimize attention, retention, and cognitive engagement. This alignment between TikTok's native format and established microlearning pedagogy provides a strong theoretical rationale for treating TikTok not merely as an informal learning environment but as a platform whose design characteristics are genuinely conducive to structured and intentional language learning.

Escamilla-Fajardo et al. (2021), as cited in Springer (2025), found through an educational intervention integrating TikTok into university sport management classes that students demonstrated statistically significant positive changes in their perceptions of TikTok's usefulness as a teaching tool, its contribution to professional development, and its potential for knowledge sharing, confirming that even students who initially regard TikTok primarily as an entertainment platform can develop sophisticated educational

perceptions of the platform when they are guided to engage with it in pedagogically purposeful ways.

**e. TikTok's Defining Characteristics as a Platform**

What distinguishes TikTok from other social media platforms and makes it uniquely well-suited for informal language learning is the convergence of several defining characteristics that collectively produce an unusually engaging and content-rich user experience. Springer (2023) identifies TikTok as distinguished by its engaging, spontaneous, and authentic style, often infused with humor and creative originality, that sets it apart from the more curated and polished aesthetic of platforms such as Instagram. This authenticity-first character is particularly significant for language learning, as it means that the English speech students encounter on TikTok is more likely to reflect genuinely naturalistic communicative behavior than the controlled, simplified, or artificially formal language typically presented in instructional materials.

MICJO (2026) concludes on the basis of content analysis that TikTok serves as a significant platform for informal digital language learning, particularly for microlearning and confidence-building, and suggests that formal educators can adopt the platform's engaging, bite-sized content delivery techniques as a model for designing more motivationally effective language instruction. BrandHistories (2025) further describes TikTok's core innovation as the replacement of the social graph, which determines content by mapping who a user follows, with the interest graph, which determines content by mapping what a user has shown interest in through their behavioral data. This interest-graph model is the foundation of TikTok's extraordinarily effective algorithmic personalization, which enables the platform to serve each user an endlessly refreshed stream of content that is uniquely calibrated to their individual preferences and behaviors.

In summary, TikTok's trajectory from a Chinese domestic music video application in 2016 to the world's most widely used short-form video platform by the mid-2020s represents one of the most remarkable stories of digital platform growth in the history of social media. Its particular dominance in Indonesia, its overwhelmingly young user demographic, its rapidly growing body of educational applications, and its algorithmically personalized content environment collectively make it one of the most relevant and contextually significant platforms for investigating informal English language learning among Indonesian university students. The theoretical and empirical relevance of TikTok as the platform of focus in this study is therefore firmly grounded in both the quantitative reality of its global and national reach and the growing scholarly evidence of its genuine educational potential in the domain of language learning.

## **2. Categories of Content on TikTok**

### **a. The Breadth of TikTok's Content Ecosystem**

One of the defining characteristics of TikTok as a platform is the extraordinary diversity and volume of content available to its users at any given moment. Unlike platforms that were originally designed around specific content formats, such as YouTube for long-form video or Twitter for text-based microblogging, TikTok was constructed from its inception as an open-ended creative space in which virtually any subject, theme, or communicative purpose can be expressed through short-form video. This openness has produced a content ecosystem of remarkable breadth and heterogeneity, spanning entertainment, education, lifestyle, commerce, activism, art, and an ever-expanding array of niche community interests. Zuo & Wang (2019) analyzed TikTok user behavior from the perspective of popular culture and found that user motivations for content creation and consumption on the platform are organized around the construction of self-identity,

group identity, and cultural identity, three dimensions that collectively account for the wide variety of content genres that have flourished on the platform.

For EFL students encountering TikTok as a potential learning environment, understanding the range of content categories available on the platform is essential for making informed, intentional decisions about which types of content to seek out and engage with for language learning purposes. The following sections provide a systematic overview of TikTok's principal content categories, with particular attention to those most relevant to English language learning.

### **b. Entertainment Content**

Entertainment constitutes the most foundational and pervasive content category on TikTok and represents the original purpose for which the platform was designed and around which its earliest user communities formed. Creator-Hero (2024) identifies entertainment as one of the most popular TikTok categories since the application launched in 2016, encompassing a spectrum of comedic skits, parody videos, lip-syncing performances, memes, storytelling, visual illusions, and humorous commentary on current events and popular culture.

Within the broader entertainment category, comedy occupies a particularly dominant position. Recurpost (2026) reports that comedy skits with memes and social commentary generate among the highest share rates on the platform, with videos under 45 seconds featuring clear comedic punchlines performing especially well across TikTok's diverse audience segments. Dance challenges and music performance content similarly command enormous audiences, reflecting TikTok's origins as a music-centered platform in which synchronized movement and trending audio clips were the primary vehicles of creative expression and community participation.

For English language learners, entertainment content on TikTok serves a dual function. On one level, it constitutes the dominant source of exposure to informal, colloquial, and culturally embedded English usage, including slang, humor, idiomatic expressions, and sociolinguistically contextualized speech that textbooks rarely present. On another level, however, the entertainment-oriented framing of such content can make it difficult for students to approach it with the deliberate linguistic attention that effective language learning requires, since the primary cognitive orientation of entertainment consumption is pleasure and distraction rather than focused language processing.

IJASS Journal (2025) found in a study of EFL students that the majority of respondents used TikTok predominantly for watching funny, dance, or music videos, suggesting that students primarily view the platform as a source of entertainment rather than a learning tool. Alghamdi et al. (2022), as cited in IJASS Journal (2025), similarly found that EFL students in Northern Sumatra predominantly engaged with TikTok for humorous and musical entertainment rather than for educational purposes. These findings highlight the importance of intentionality in how students approach TikTok content, as the platform's entertainment content, while linguistically rich, does not automatically translate into productive language learning without conscious effort on the student's part.

### **c. Educational Content and the EduTok Movement**

In parallel with its entertainment ecosystem, TikTok has developed a substantial and rapidly growing educational content sector that represents one of the most significant evolutions in the platform's identity and usage. The emergence of what has come to be known colloquially as EduTok refers to the growing community of content creators on TikTok who produce videos with explicitly educational or informational purposes,

covering subjects ranging from science, mathematics, and history to personal finance, mental health, language learning, and professional skills development.

Researchgate (2021) documents that TikTok's formal LearnOnTikTok initiative, launched by ByteDance during the COVID-19 pandemic, accumulated over 72 billion views in its first year alone, demonstrating the extraordinary appetite among TikTok's user base for educational content delivered in the platform's short, engaging video format. Hayes et al. (2020), as cited in Researchgate (2021), demonstrated the platform's capacity to contextualize and simplify complex educational topics through short video formats, promoting active participation and improved comprehension across diverse academic disciplines.

Researchgate (2024), drawing on the analysis of TikTok as an educational platform, notes that creating and delivering learning content using TikTok aligns naturally with nano-learning principles, the condensation of complex content into small, discrete units that can be efficiently processed, retained, and built upon. This format is particularly well suited to language learning, where the complexity of linguistic content can be meaningfully decomposed into focused, digestible episodes covering specific vocabulary items, pronunciation patterns, grammatical structures, or communicative functions.

TikAdSuite (2026) notes that educational how-to videos, instructional content, and skill-based tutorials in areas such as finance, health, language, and professional development have shown some of the strongest growth in average watch time over the past two years, indicating that users are not merely viewing educational content passively but engaging with it with sufficient sustained attention to constitute genuine learning. This pattern of sustained engagement with educational content suggests that EduTok

represents a genuinely receptive learning context, not merely a superficially educational veneer applied to otherwise entertainment-oriented content.

#### **d. English Language Learning Content on TikTok**

Within the broader EduTok ecosystem, English language learning content constitutes one of the most active and extensively used content communities on the platform, with dedicated hashtags such as LearnEnglish, EnglishTok, EnglishWithMe, and VocabularyChallenge aggregating millions of videos covering virtually every dimension of English language competency. This community has grown into a vast and diverse informal learning resource that complements and in many cases substantially exceeds the breadth of English language exposure available to students through formal institutional instruction alone.

Springer (2023) found in a study examining students' engagement with English language learning videos on TikTok that of three principal content types, students preferred authenticity-centered videos most strongly, with over 68 percent of participants expressing a preference for videos presenting natural, real-world English usage over scripted lesson-format videos or challenge-based content. This preference for authenticity aligns closely with the theoretical principles discussed in the preceding chapter, particularly Krashen's emphasis on the importance of comprehensible input embedded in meaningful, naturalistic communicative contexts.

The categories of English language learning content available on TikTok can be broadly organized into several distinct types. The first type encompasses pronunciation tutorials and accent exposure videos, in which content creators demonstrate and explain specific phonological features of English, including individual sounds, stress patterns, intonation contours, and rhythm, often contrasting native-speaker models with common

non-native speaker errors. JTechLP (2025) documents that TikTok educational content focused specifically on English pronunciation has been studied as a learning medium, with researchers finding that such content provides students with accessible, visually and aurally rich models for developing their phonological awareness and articulation skills.

The second type encompasses vocabulary development content, in which creators present new vocabulary items in contextualized settings, often accompanied by visual illustrations, example sentences, and usage comparisons that facilitate retention. Bernard (2021), as cited in CPLT Journal (2024), found that TikTok familiarizes learners with different sets of vocabulary through its authentic content and promotes a positive learning environment in which students perceive language learning as entertaining and motivating rather than burdensome. English Language Teaching Journal (2023) further reports that TikTok promotes a positive learning environment for learners and serves as an entertaining and motivating method of vocabulary acquisition, attributes that are consistent across multiple national research contexts.

The third type encompasses conversational English and speaking practice content, in which creators demonstrate natural English dialogue in everyday contexts, covering topics such as ordering food, workplace communication, casual conversation with friends, and formal speech situations. Researchgate (2025) documents that TikTok videos showcasing real-life English usage in various contexts expose learners to authentic accents, slang, and colloquial expressions, with this authenticity not only enhancing listening skills but also helping students develop a more natural and intuitive grasp of the language. Klasikal Journal (n.d.) similarly notes that creators on TikTok use a wide range of vocabulary and communicative styles, and that engaging with different types of content

exposes learners to new words and phrases while repetition of short dialogues from the videos helps learners practice pronunciation, intonation, and communicative rhythm.

The fourth type encompasses grammar explanation content, in which creators present specific grammatical rules, common errors, or structural patterns in simplified, example-rich formats designed for quick comprehension and practical application. Researchgate (2024) documents that EduTok content on TikTok's EduTok community has been found effective as a learning tool for grammar, with short video explanations of grammatical structures making language rules more accessible and memorable than traditional textbook presentations.

The fifth type encompasses cultural and pragmatic content, in which creators discuss aspects of English-speaking cultural contexts, social norms, humor conventions, idiomatic expressions, and communicative etiquette that are essential for authentic communicative competence but rarely taught in formal EFL curricula. Researchgate (2024) notes that TikTok helps students learn a variety of English dialects across formal and informal settings, enriching their sociolinguistic competence by exposing them to the cultural and contextual dimensions of English communication.

#### **e. Lifestyle, Comedy, and Mixed-Function Content Relevant to Language Learning**

Beyond the explicitly educational content categories described above, TikTok hosts a broad range of lifestyle, comedy, and general-interest content produced natively in English that constitutes a significant and often underappreciated source of informal language input for EFL learners. Nuzuli (2022), as cited in CPLT Journal (2024), found that TikTok users engage with the platform for four primary purposes, namely information seeking, personal identity expression, social integration and interaction, and

entertainment, suggesting that language learners who use TikTok for purposes beyond explicit language study nonetheless receive substantial incidental English language exposure across all four of these motivational contexts.

For Indonesian students learning English, exposure to native or proficient English speakers discussing their daily lives, sharing opinions, participating in trending challenges, or creating comedic content constitutes a form of comprehensible input that is both linguistically authentic and motivationally engaging. Researchgate (2024) identifies authenticity as one of the key strengths of TikTok as a language learning tool, noting that unlike scripted dialogues or textbook exercises, TikTok videos showcase real-life language usage in various contexts, exposing learners to authentic accents, slang, and colloquial expressions that help students develop a more natural and intuitive command of the language.

TikAdSuite (2026) further notes that entertainment and relatable content generates the highest share rates on TikTok, with humor and lifestyle categories leading platform-wide engagement metrics, suggesting that content which combines entertainment value with English language exposure is particularly effective at capturing and sustaining learner attention. This combination of motivational engagement and linguistic richness makes the lifestyle and entertainment categories of TikTok content a potentially powerful, though often unconsciously utilized, resource for informal English language development among university students.

#### **f. The Significance of Content Diversity for Language Learning**

The extraordinary diversity of TikTok's content categories is itself a significant educational asset for EFL learners, as exposure to English across a wide range of contextual settings, registers, genres, and communicative purposes produces a more

complete and flexible language competence than exposure limited to a single type of content. Researchgate (2025) confirms that platforms including TikTok provide learners with access to authentic, real-world language input through diverse content such as tutorials, language challenges, storytelling, and everyday conversations, which is especially beneficial for language learners seeking to improve their communication skills and language mastery.

For the present study, an understanding of TikTok's content categories is foundational for interpreting students' perceptions of the platform as a medium for English speaking skill development. Students who engage primarily with entertainment content may develop strong informal spoken English competence and cultural familiarity but may struggle with formal register and academic language norms. Students who engage primarily with explicit language learning content may develop more structured linguistic knowledge but may lack the pragmatic fluency and cultural contextual awareness that comes from authentic entertainment-oriented exposure. The nature and variety of content categories that students choose to engage with on TikTok is therefore expected to be a meaningful variable in shaping both the content and the direction of their perceptions of the platform's educational value for speaking skill development.

### **3. Key Features of TikTok that Support Language Learning**

TikTok is equipped with a set of built-in features that, when utilized intentionally, create conditions particularly favorable for language learning. Understanding these features is important because they determine the range of learning interactions that students can engage in on the platform, extending its function from passive content consumption to active language practice.

The first and most foundational feature is the short-form video format itself. Xiuwen & Razali (2021), as cited in Researchgate (2025), explain that TikTok allows users to watch, create, and share short videos ranging from a few seconds to several minutes in length, with this brevity functioning as the core architectural feature around which all other learning interactions are organized. Critically, videos on TikTok can be replayed an unlimited number of times, allowing students to revisit specific segments of spoken English content as many times as needed to absorb pronunciation patterns, vocabulary, or conversational expressions that they wish to internalize (Ibrahim et al., 2023, as cited in Researchgate 2025).

The second key feature is the automatic captioning and subtitle system. Researchgate (2025) notes that many TikTok videos include subtitles or captions that students can read along with while listening, helping them associate spoken words with their written forms and improving their overall reading-listening integration. This dual-channel processing of spoken and written language simultaneously strengthens phonological awareness and supports vocabulary retention in ways that single-channel audio-only exposure does not. Researchgate (2025) further documents that TikTok's auto-caption feature is particularly beneficial for autonomous learning, providing learners with opportunities to self-control their learning time, content selection, and vocabulary-focused activities.

The third feature consists of the Duet and Stitch functions. The Duet feature enables users to record a side-by-side video response to an existing video, while the Stitch feature allows users to clip and incorporate the first segment of another video into their own new creation (SocialBee, 2025). For language learners, both of these functions are pedagogically significant because they shift the learner's role from passive spectator to active language producer. By Duetting with an English-speaking creator or Stitching a

pronunciation video with their own attempted imitation, students engage in a form of interactive spoken practice that combines authentic target language input with productive output, aligning closely with the complementary roles of input and output in second language acquisition theory as outlined in Section B.2.

The fourth feature is the For You Page algorithm, discussed in detail in Section B.6, which continuously serves users a personalized content feed based on their interaction history. For language learners who deliberately engage with English content, this algorithm progressively increases their exposure to English-language material, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of target language input that can accumulate into substantial informal acquisition over time (Researchgate 2024). Sustainability Journal (2022) specifically identifies TikTok's key features as having significant pedagogical strategy potential for EFL classrooms, noting that the combination of personalized content delivery, interactive creation tools, and multimodal audiovisual presentation makes TikTok uniquely effective as an informal language learning environment when students approach it with deliberate learning intentions.

The fifth feature is the comment and interaction system, through which students can engage directly with content creators and fellow learners by posting written responses, asking questions, and participating in community discussions. Researchgate (2024) notes that TikTok's interactive features, including comments, likes, and Duets, foster a sense of community among EFL learners, creating collaboration, feedback, and peer support opportunities that allow students to practice their English skills in a social and supportive environment, building confidence and fluency in the process.

#### **4. TikTok as a Short-Video Based Learning Medium**

The growing recognition of TikTok as a legitimate educational medium is grounded in its alignment with microlearning theory, one of the most widely discussed pedagogical frameworks in contemporary digital education. Khlaif & Salha (2021) describe microlearning as an approach that condenses complex content into small, focused units designed to be processed quickly, retained efficiently, and applied practically, and they argue that TikTok represents one of the most effective naturally occurring microlearning environments available in the contemporary digital landscape. Researchgate (2025) confirms that microlearning, represented by short and interactive content, can be a successful approach for delivering language learning materials through TikTok videos, with a content analysis of 100 TikTok videos finding that the platform covers both productive skills including speaking and reading and receptive skills including listening and writing across diverse content types.

The educational value of TikTok as a short-video based learning medium rests on several converging characteristics. First, its brevity demands that educational content be maximally efficient and focused, which in the language learning context typically results in concentrated episodes of vocabulary explanation, pronunciation modeling, or conversational demonstration that are easier for students to process and retain than extended lectures or classroom instruction. JOLLS Journal (2026) notes in a systematic review of pedagogical applications that TikTok's short-form multimodal features support vocabulary development, listening comprehension, speaking confidence, and cultural awareness across multiple language learning contexts.

Second, TikTok's multimodal format simultaneously engages visual, auditory, and sometimes textual processing channels, creating conditions for richer encoding of

language material than mono-channel input provides. Rahmawati et al. (2023), as cited in *Amelica Journal* (n.d.), found that TikTok improved university students' ability, creativity, motivation, and vocabulary in the context of higher education in Indonesia, demonstrating that the platform's multimodal short-video format generates measurable language learning outcomes even among learners who engage with it primarily in informal self-directed contexts.

Third, the accessibility and temporal flexibility of TikTok as a learning medium enables students to integrate language learning into their daily routines in ways that structured classroom instruction cannot accommodate. *EduLite Journal* (2025) documents that teachers have identified TikTok as a platform for microlearning-based assessment of students' speaking skills within the Merdeka curriculum in Indonesia, indicating that the platform is increasingly being recognized not merely as an informal supplementary tool but as a formally integrated component of language education practice.

However, the effectiveness of TikTok as a short-video learning medium is not automatic or unconditional. Researchgate (2025) cautions that TikTok's deficiencies in structured material, grammar training, and writing proficiency indicate that it ought to be utilized as an ancillary resource rather than a stand-alone primary learning medium, and that its success as a language learning environment is heavily dependent on deliberate instructional design that mitigates distractions and integrates short-form content into broader curriculum goals. This observation reinforces the conclusion of the preceding sections that TikTok's educational value is a function of how students choose to engage with it rather than an inherent property of the platform itself.

## **D. Speaking Skills**

### **1. Definition of Speaking Skill**

Speaking is one of the essential productive skills in learning English, as it enables learners to communicate their ideas, thoughts, and feelings effectively in spoken form. According to (Brown 2001), speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. This means that speaking is not only about delivering messages but also about responding appropriately in communication.

Furthermore, (Harmer 2007) states that speaking involves the ability to use language fluently and accurately in real communication situations. It requires not only knowledge of vocabulary and grammar but also the ability to organize ideas and express them clearly. Therefore, speaking skill plays a crucial role in developing students' communicative competence, especially for English education students who are expected to use English actively in both academic and professional contexts.

### **2. Components of Speaking Skill**

According to (Harris 1969), speaking skill consists of several important components that support effective communication, namely pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. These components are interrelated and must be developed simultaneously to achieve effective speaking ability. Similarly, (Brown 2001) emphasizes that successful speaking performance requires learners to integrate linguistic knowledge and communicative competence in real-life communication. Therefore, speaking skill cannot be separated from the mastery of its essential components.

**a. Fluency**

Fluency refers to the ability to speak smoothly and continuously without excessive pauses or hesitation. It reflects how well a speaker can maintain the flow of communication.

**b. Pronunciation**

Pronunciation is the ability to produce clear and understandable sounds, including stress, intonation, and rhythm. Good pronunciation helps listeners understand the speaker more easily.

**c. Vocabulary**

Vocabulary refers to the range of words used by a speaker to express ideas. A rich vocabulary allows learners to communicate more effectively and precisely.

**d. Grammar**

Grammar is the correct use of sentence structure in speaking. It ensures that the message is clear and understandable.

**e. Comprehension**

Comprehension refers to the ability to understand and respond appropriately during communication.

**3. Importance of Speaking Skill**

Speaking skill is considered one of the most important skills in language learning because it directly reflects learners' ability to communicate. Unlike other skills, speaking requires immediate interaction and real-time language production. According to David Nunan (2003), speaking is a key skill that requires active participation and continuous practice in meaningful communication.

For English education students, speaking skill is particularly important because it supports their future role as teachers who need to explain, interact, and communicate effectively in English. Therefore, improving speaking skill is not only necessary for academic success but also for professional development.

#### **E. Review of Previous Studies**

There are several research related to the topic of this research that author used to support this research:

According to Putri (2022) “The Effectiveness of Using TikTok To Improve EFL Learners’ Speaking Ability”. The purpose of this study is to determine whether the TikTok application is effective at enhancing students' speaking abilities. This research involved English study program enrolees. Twenty individuals responded to the Google form questionnaire used by the researchers to collect information. The results of the questionnaire indicated that The TikTok Application improves students' speaking abilities.

Another study has done by Rahmawati, et al. (2023) “Improving Students Speaking Skills Through TikTok Application : An Endeavours Of Utilizing Social Media In Higher Education”. The researchers stated that the study using a quasi-experimental design. In this research, 32 students from the Diploma of Midwifery Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kudus participated. This study was divided into two research groups, an experimental group and a control group design. Experimental learning is taught using TikTok to teach speaking, while control groups are instructed conventionally. This study employed a pre-test, a post-test as the instrument and using a quantitative test as data collection. It was stated that research on the use of TikTok media

can enhance students' communication skills. The research also says that TikTok not only improving students' ability but also their creativity, motivation and vocabulary.

In another study conduct by Ferstephanie and Pratiwi “The Effect Of TikTok To Develop Students’ speaking skill: A Classroom Action Research (2022). This study aimed to identify the effectiveness of using TikTok in improving students’ speaking skills. The researchers were using Pre-test and Post-test as the instrument. The researchers also observed the students’ ability through various activities such as when learning to answer several questions from the teacher or when students’ read the text that has been given. The population of this study is 25 students of grade 10 Science Class SMA Kristen Kalam Kudus Selat Panjang. The researchers were using quantitative method to collect all the data. The result of this study is proved the use of TikTok in enhancing students’ speaking skills was very interactive and effective.

Furthermore, Herlisya & Wiratno (2022) “Having Good Speaking English Through TikTok Application” This study aims to improve students’ speaking skill through TikTok application. The subjects of this research were 20 students of the third semester in English education major At STKIP PGRI Lampung. The method that researchers is descriptive quantitative method using classroom action research techniques. The result of this study show that the use of TikTok Application can improve English speaking skills of students majoring in English education at STKIP PGRI.

In addition, Nasichah (2023) “Analysing students’ Perception about the use of TikTok Application to Enhance students’ Speaking Skills at UIN Prof. K.H Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto’ The researcher stated that this study is using quantitative method and the data were collected using questionnaire that distributed to 34 Students at UIN Prof. K.H Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto. This research aim is to investigating the students’ of

UIN Prof. K.H Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto perception toward the use of TikTok Application to improve students' speaking skill. The result of this study shows that most of the students have good perception towards TikTok App and they believe that this application can help them to enhance their speaking ability. The researcher also conclude that TikTok can be on of the Effective medium to enhance students speaking skills.

Based on the previous studies above, the similarities and differences can be compared as a reference for the current research. In the previous studies, the researchers above took sample from different backgrounds. As in the first study with a total of twenty students at English Educational Study Program. The second study took a sample of 32 students from Diploma of Midwifery Program At Universitas Muhammadiyah Kudus. The study using a quasi-experimental design. The third study used 25 students of grade 10 Science Class SMA Kristen Kalam Kudus Selat Panjang as their sample. The researchers was using quantitative method to collect the data. The fourth study took a sample of 20 students of the third semester in English education major At STKIP PGRI Lampung. The researchers collect the data from Classroom action research technique. The last study with a total 34 students at UIN Prof. K.H Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto. This study is using quantitative method and the data were collected using questionnaire.

## F. Research Framework

Figure 2. 1 Conceptual Framework

