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## Analysis of The Effectiveness and Challenges of Using TikTok to Improve EFL Students' Listening

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### Abstract

The extensive utilization of social media in educational settings has heightened academic interest in its instructional potential, especially within the domain of English as a foreign Language (EFL). TikTok has garnered attention for its short form video format, which is thought to offer genuine language input and captivating listening exposure. Nevertheless, current research frequently highlights favorable results without adequate critical assesment. This study seeks to investigate the conditional efficacy of TikTok in enhancing EFL students listening abilities, while also analyzing learners perspective and the problems they face. A sequintal explanatory mixed-methods design was utilized. Quantitative data were collected via questionnaires administered to 57 undergraduate EFL students to ascertain broad trends in perceptions and experiences. To augment these findings, qualitative data were gathered via semi-structured interviews with a select group of participants, facilitating a more profound examination of individual perspectives. The data were examined utilizing descriptive statistic and thematic analysis. The findings indicate that students predominantly possess fairly favorable views of TikTok, especially regarding exposure to diverse English dialects, enhanced learning motivation, and adaptable access to auditory resources. Nevertheless, other questionnaire items exhibited indiffernt replies, signifying that students learning experiences were not consistenly favorable.

**Keywords:** EFL listening; Learner perceptions ; Social media; TikTok

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## 1. Introduction

The accelerated expansion of social media platforms has revolutionized methodologies for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition, especially in informal and technology driven environments. TikTok has garnered attention for its short-form video format, providing learners with authentic language input through entertaining and readily



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available content. Numerous studies indicate that TikTok can improve EFL learners' listening comprehension through frequent exposure to authentic speech, various accents, and practical language application (Alfitri, 2024; Kresnayoga Susanto, 2024; Alolayan, 2025). TikTok facilitates a flexible and intuitive processing of material for learners through elements like subtitles, images, and brief replayable segments, enhancing the interactive listening experience.

Listening comprehension, meanwhile, persists as one of the most formidable skills for EFL learners because to its demand for the concurrent decoding of sounds, vocabulary, and contextual significance. Restricted vocabulary knowledge frequently impedes understanding when learners face unfamiliar terms (Jyoti, 2020; Apriyanti et al., 2024).

TikTok's multimodal features, including contextual graphics and in video captions, may assist learners in deducing meaning and consolidating new language found in auditory sources. TikTok can facilitate incidental vocabulary acquisition that enhances listening skills by consistently presenting learners with brief, contextually rich videos.

Not with-standing these benefits, a significant portion of the current research has prioritized motivational factors above quantifiable learning outcomes. Limited research has rigorously investigated the correlation between TikTok's linguistic and visual features and vocabulary acquisition and listening comprehension, as well as the potential problems in classroom integration.

Consequently, this study aims to address the subsequent research inquiries:

1. What is the efficacy of TikTok in improving the listening comprehension of EFL students?
2. What obstacles do learners have while utilizing TikTok as a listening educational resource?



## 2. Method

This research utilized a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach to investigate the efficacy and obstacles of employing TikTok for English as a Foreign Language listening enhancement. Quantitative data were initially gathered to discern overarching tendencies in students' perspectives, subsequently complemented by qualitative interviews to offer explanatory depth and contextual interpretation. The Mixed Methods technique is particularly suitable for educational research focused on understanding both the outcomes and the underlying experiences of learners in digital learning environments (Bai, 2024; Nguyen & Tran, 2024).

A total of 57 undergraduate EFL students from Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur engaged in the quantitative phase. Participants were chosen using purposive sampling, as the study explicitly aimed at students with previous experience with TikTok for instructional or recreational objectives. This method guaranteed that participants were acquainted with the platform's capabilities, in accordance with the research aim of investigating its educational potential.

Five students from this group were selected for semi-structured interviews to gain deeper insights into their learning experiences. Despite the low representativeness due to the short sample size, data saturation was deemed achieved when recurring themes such as motivation, distraction, and word exposure consistently developed among participants.

### 2.1 Research Instrument

The questionnaire was derived from Laili et al. (2023) and Setiawan et al. (2024), altered to highlight listening-related aspects such as exposure to authentic input, content diversity, and engagement. The instrument comprised 11 items evaluated on a four-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree). The reliability analysis employing Cronbach's alpha demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency ( $\alpha = .912$ ). No pilot study was performed nonetheless, the adaption procedure guaranteed content relevancy and linguistic precision. The covered of the questionnaire were 1) Exposure to and Understanding of Genuine



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English Input 2) Diversity of Content and Accessibility of Learning 3) Incentive and Involvement in Auditory Exercises 4) Endorsement and Focus 5) Perceived Enhancement in Listening Skills and Overall Effect.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted to enhance comprehension of students' viewpoints and their motivations for utilizing TikTok as a listening tool, as referenced in (Laili et al., 2023). Each interview will be conducted in either Indonesian or English, contingent upon the participants' comfort level, and will run between 20 to 30 minutes. The covered of the interviews were 1) Utilization frequency of TikTok as a technique for English language acquisition 2) Rationale for Utilizing TikTok as a Medium for English Language Acquisition 3) Advantages of TikTok compared to traditional techniques 4) Obstacles and limitations in utilizing TikTok Strategies 5) Suggestions derived from experience.

The quantitative and qualitative elements of the mixed methods design were represented by the two main phases of the data collection process in this study. This study aimed to comprehensively understand the advantages and challenges of employing TikTok to enhance EFL students' listening skills by gathering supplementary data at each stage.

To overcome these complications, current mixed-methods research has highlighted the integration of quantitative assessments of learner attitudes with qualitative evaluations of learning experiences. This methodology enables researchers to discern both overarching patterns and intricate viewpoints about TikTok's educational potential (Hongsa, 2023; Setiawan et al., 2024). This study employs a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative data on student motivation and engagement with qualitative insights regarding their experiences, challenges, and perceptions of TikTok as a listening learning tool (Braun, 2006; H. & D. K. Hu, 2022; Susanto, 2024).

### **3. Findings and Discussion**

This study examined students using data collected from questionnaires and interviews. The effectiveness of TikTok in improving the listening skills of EFL students was analyzed.



The results indicated a diverse array of responses, highlighting a significant tendency of marked neutrality in numerous critical areas. The outcomes obtained by computing the ratio of all student responses were displayed in Table 1. The students' responses classified the data into four scales, which were further organized based on the reported values. The subsequent categories were: strongly agree (1), agree (2), disagree (3), and strongly disagree (4).

**Table 1 Percentages of Responses to Questionnaire Items**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Question 1	57	1	4	3.35	.694
Question 2	57	1	4	3.19	.639
Question 3	57	1	4	2.96	.778
Question 4	57	1	4	3.21	.700
Question 5	57	1	4	2.86	.833
Question 6	57	1	4	3.09	.653
Question 7	57	1	4	2.96	.755
Question 8	57	1	4	2.70	.844
Question 9	57	1	4	2.81	.854
Question 10	57	1	4	2.88	.888
Question 11	57	1	4	2.93	.821

The descriptive statistics for the 11 survey questions (N = 57) reveal predominantly favorable attitudes among participants. The average values for the items span from 2.70 to 3.35 on a 4-point Likert scale, indicating that participants generally concurred with the majority of the assertions in the questionnaire. A higher mean value signifies a greater degree of agreement, whereas lower values denote more neutral or less favorable replies.

The findings for Question 7 (M = 2.96, SD = 0.755) demonstrate a moderate level of agreement, indicating that students predominantly viewed TikTok as beneficial for their listening development, while the impact varied among participants. This discovery indicates



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that TikTok's role in enhancing listening skills is contingent upon the manner in which learners choose content and manage their engagement. The platform provides regular exposure to spoken English, but its efficacy is contingent upon intentional engagement rather than passive absorption.

Conversely, Question 8 exhibited the lowest mean score ( $M = 2.70$ ,  $SD = 0.844$ ), indicating students' diminished consensus and heightened ambiguity over elements associated with focus and sustained learning. The increased variety in replies indicates that students encountered varying degrees of difficulty in sustaining concentration when utilizing TikTok. This underscores a significant drawback of short-form video platforms, wherein entertainment-oriented features may disrupt the deeper cognitive processing necessary for successful listening comprehension. The results demonstrate that the highest level of agreement was seen for Q1 ( $M = 3.35$ ,  $SD = 0.694$ ), indicating that respondents shown the most consistency in their positive evaluations related to that statement.

The standard deviations, ranging from 0.63 to 0.89, indicate a considerable degree of response variability among items. This indicates that although there was overall consensus among responders, individual perspectives varied marginally based on the item. Those exhibiting smaller standard deviations, such as Q6 ( $SD = 0.635$ ), demonstrate a stronger consensus among participants, while those with higher standard deviations, such as Q10 ( $SD = 0.888$ ), signify greater variability in responses. The standard errors, which ranged from 0.08 to 0.11, indicate that the sample means are steady and reliable representations of the population's opinions.

The findings indicate that respondents possess predominantly positive sentiments regarding the subject assessed by the study. The continually elevated averages above the middle of the scale (2.5) indicate that participants tend to choose agreement over neutrality or dissent. Despite considerable variance, the uniformity in mean scores across the 11 items underscores a consistent pattern of favorable judgments. These findings may signify satisfaction, endorsement, or concurrence with the assertions based on the survey's thematic



emphasis. The descriptive statistics indicate a moderately strong and constant favorable perception among respondents, with minor variations in the intensity of agreement across items.

**Tabel 2 Student Perceptions and Challenges in Using TikTok as a Learning Medium for Developing Listening Skills: Interview Transcriptions**

No	Question	Theme	Answer
1.	How frequently do students utilize TikTok as an English language learning tool?	Frequent Engagement with TikTok for English Acquisition	Daily Frequently, as I access TikTok on a daily basis. Informal Nearly every day, TikTok is mostly light content, such as simple grammar or one or two topics (R1) Since all my content is in English, it's practically every day for me (R4)

The interview results revealed that TikTok was frequently employed as an informal platform for English language learning and had become embedded in students' everyday routines. Both respondents indicated daily engagement with TikTok, demonstrating ongoing exposure to English beyond the classroom. R1 noted that the content mostly featured fundamental grammar and restricted subjects, thereby enabling microlearning via succinct and easily comprehensible information. This method fostered steady engagement without inundating learners.

R4 underscored the significance of everyday involvement, as consistent exposure to English content cultivated an immersive environment that facilitated the incidental learning of vocabulary, phrases, and pronunciation. The replies indicated that TikTok facilitated regular and informal English learning through daily interactions and functioned as an effective supplementary resource rather than a substitute for formal education



Question 2

No	Question	Theme	Answer
2.	The reason why inviting students use the TikTok app to learn English?	Inviting and Attainable Material for Simplified English	There is a lot of different and fun TikTok content on TikTok. It's also easier to learn because TikTok is easy to go to and has greater variety (R1) <hr/> It's easy to understand the content. The explanations are also short and to the point, and many content creators speak in a carefree way. It's easy to understand the language (R4)

The interview findings indicated that students regarded TikTok as an engaging and accessible platform that enhanced their understanding of English. Both respondents emphasized that the diversity and presentation of TikTok content improved understanding in an informal learning context. R1 noted that diverse and stimulating content enhanced the pleasure of learning English and diminished monotony, allowing learners to choose resources that corresponded with their interests and skill levels.

R4 highlighted that TikTok explanations were succinct and comprehensible, therefore alleviating cognitive stress. The colloquial speaking style of content providers rendered the language more genuine and less daunting. Feedback from R1 and R4 suggested that TikTok's varied, succinct, and informal material significantly improved students' English understanding as an auxiliary instructional tool.



Question 3

No	Question	Theme	Answer
3.	Students' thoughts on the benefits of learning the TikTok app opposed to conventional approaches?	Flexibility and Immediate Acces	I think TikTok is more flexible because we can get to it more easily when we need it. We may easily search for a term on TikTok if we want to know what it means (R4)

The interview results indicated that TikTok was perceived as a flexible platform for on-demand English language acquisition. R4 highlighted that TikTok is readily accessible at all times, allowing students to study without the limitations of time or place. The capacity to swiftly locate specific terms enabled just in time learning, permitting immediate comprehension of language and concepts.

This feature fostered learner autonomy by allowing students to autonomously choose information based on their needs. R4's reaction affirmed that TikTok functioned as a valuable additional resource, enhancing flexible and learner-centered English education outside the classroom.



## Question 4

No	Question	Theme	Answer
4.	Any difficulties or restrictions when use TikTok as a tool for learning English, along with solutions?	Distraction and Superficiality Content in TikTok-material is Driven by Acquisition	There are entertaining things mixed in, of which makes it easy to lose focus. The English answer is to just follow accounts that are really helpful. Choose accounts more carefully (R4)

The interview findings indicated that, notwithstanding its benefits, TikTok presented challenges associated with distraction and superficial content. R4 noted that captivating yet non educational material often coalesced with instructional content, resulting in pupils readily losing focus. Moreover, R4 observed that TikTok content lacked profundity, indicating that it was more appropriate for conveying fundamental concepts rather than fostering advanced English skills.

R4 underscored the need of interacting with reputable educational accounts as a tactic to reduce distractions. This reaction emphasized students' recognition of the necessity for self-regulation in the proficient utilization of TikTok. Despite its shortcomings, TikTok-based English learning, through meticulous content curation, served as a beneficial supplemental resource rather than a substitute for conventional training.



## Question 5

No	Question	Theme	Answer
5.	Based on the students' experiences, they advise other students to use TikTok as a tool for learning English?	Collaborative Social Learning Shared Content	andYes, for sure. I usually share things with my buddies. sharing new things we've learned with each other. Words that are new. So it's like learning new words. For example, how to utilize pronouns. I can also listen better now (R4)

The interview results revealed that TikTok enabled collaborative and social English learning via peer content sharing. R4 demonstrated a readiness to disseminate educational TikTok videos, indicating that learning transpired through social contact rather than in solitude. Content sharing facilitated students' acquisition of new vocabulary and grammatical concepts, including pronoun usage, while peer engagement promoted clarification and enhanced comprehension.

R4 indicated enhancements in auditory comprehension due to sustained engagement with and discourse on English material. R4's reaction emphasized TikTok's function in promoting peer supported, pleasurable, and collaborative English language acquisition.

### 3.1 Discussion

#### 3.2.1. The Effectiveness of TikTok in Enhancing EFL Students' Listening Skills

The results demonstrate that EFL students predominantly regarded TikTok as a beneficial tool for listening practice, evidenced by mean scores between 2.70 and 3.35 throughout the questionnaire items. Increased consensus was notably noticeable in items concerning exposure to various English dialects (Q1), underscoring TikTok's contribution to



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delivering authentic aural information. This discovery corroborates earlier research highlighting the significance of short-form films in acclimating learners to authentic speech patterns and diverse pronunciations (Alfitri, 2024; Tan et al., 2022).

Nonetheless, the interpretation of these average ratings necessitates caution. The concordance with questionnaire statements indicates perceived utility rather than actual enhancement in listening proficiency. Numerous factors concerning recommendation and concentration produced comparatively lower averages, signifying neutral inclinations and diverse learning experiences. This indicates that TikTok's efficacy varies among learners and circumstances. Previous research have yielded analogous mixed outcomes, indicating that although TikTok increases engagement and visibility, it does not reliably produce quantifiable improvements in listening comprehension without organized instructional assistance (Wang, 2024; Setiawan et al., 2024).

The motivational advantages noted such as heightened enjoyment and less anxiety must be differentiated from genuine listening development. Although desire may promote increased exposure, it does not inherently result in enhanced decoding skills, lexical processing, or inferential listening capabilities. Consequently, TikTok seems to function primarily as a facilitative instrument that amplifies listening possibilities rather than serving as a direct catalyst for listening proficiency.

### 3.2.2. Challenges of Using TikTok for EFL Listening Learning

The interview outcomes indicate that TikTok serves predominantly as an informal learning platform that facilitates microlearning and inadvertent language exposure. Students appreciated its accessibility and flexibility, facilitating just-in-time learning and promoting learner autonomy. However, these benefits were accompanied by considerable constraints. Distraction surfaced as a persistent issue, aligning with research indicating that short-form video platforms may diminish sustained attention and cognitive engagement (Wang, 2024; Assakhi & Fakhurriana, 2023).



TikTok is generally less effective when utilized without direction, especially for learners with lower competency levels. Shallow information, variable quality, and quick changes between films may impede profound listening processes, such as discerning significant concepts and drawing inferences. Furthermore, exposure to various dialects without instructional support may overload learners instead of aiding comprehension (Almehmadi, 2024). These findings corroborate previous studies indicating that TikTok is ineffective as a listening aid when utilized exclusively for amusement or when instructional goals are ambiguous (Nguyen & Tran, 2024; Sulistianah et al., 2025).

This study affirms that TikTok's educational usefulness is contingent. Their efficacy is contingent upon instructor-selected materials, organized auditory exercises, and well-defined educational objectives. In the absence of these factors, TikTok jeopardizes the cultivation of profound participation in favor of superficial interaction. When carefully incorporated, it can connect casual and formal learning environments and function as a supplementary resource in EFL listening training.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study suggests that TikTok may serve as a conditionally effective additional platform for enhancing EFL students' listening skills, rather than as a universally effective instructional resource. The results indicate that most students possessed somewhat positive impressions of TikTok, especially for heightened exposure to genuine English accents, improved motivation, and adaptable access to listening resources. These advantages generally pertain to learners' involvement and opportunity for casual listening practice, rather than assured enhancements in listening skill.

Nonetheless, various methodological limitations must be recognized. The study mostly utilized self-reported questionnaire and interview data, which represent students' impressions instead of objectively assessed listening improvements. The qualitative findings were derived from a small number of interview participants, hence constraining the representativeness of learner experiences. The lack of pre-test and post-test listening evaluations restricts the capacity to infer causal



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relationships regarding learning outcomes.

The findings indicate that TikTok's efficacy is significantly contingent upon contextual and instructional factors. Distraction, superficial information, and variable quality may impede sustained attention and profound listening processes when the platform is utilized without direction. Consequently, TikTok ought to be utilized as a supplementary resource to formal education, necessitating teacher curated content, organized listening activities, and explicit learning objectives.

Subsequent study ought to use more targeted methodologies, including experimental or quasi experimental designs featuring objective listening evaluations, expanded qualitative samples, and comparisons between directed and unguided TikTok usage. Examining particular listening subskills such as accent detection, inferencing, or speech rate processing would yield more definitive evidence of TikTok's educational efficacy.

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