Integration of TikTok in Language Learning: Perceptions of ESL Learners

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ABSTRACT
This paper explores the potential of TikTok as a supplementary tool for English language learning among 110 diploma students at a Malaysian public university. The research combined an online survey and interview data to assess the perceived benefits and effectiveness of incorporating TikTok in the ESL classroom. Findings revealed that TikTok offers various advantages but caution is advised against its pervasive use. Although students acknowledge its user-friendly interface and engaging content, recognizing its full potential and risks is also necessary as it is not highly recommended in formal use for language learning. Despite its flexibility of use in terms of time and place, only a limited number of respondents opt for access to real-life language learning resources through this platform. The study suggests that TikTok plays a role in sustaining continuous language learning outside the classroom but falls short of complementing traditional teaching methods due to its emphasis on quick-hit learning rather than in-depth exploration. Instructors are advised to carefully consider the strengths and weaknesses of TikTok before incorporating it into their teaching. Identifying beneficial videos that align with specific learning objectives is crucial, and recognizing TikTok in reinforcing ongoing knowledge, rather than a direct complement to classroom instruction is necessary.

INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, the growth of the Internet is in tandem with the growth of the new media, also known as social media. TikTok is currently acknowledged as one of the most popular social media applications (apps) among children, teenagers, as well as adults. In 2019, it recorded one billion downloads, with four million users solely from Malaysia, majority of whom were below the age of 30 (Ting, 2021). As such, TikTok has overtaken other social media platforms as the most popular social networking app, particularly among teens. In this digital era, social media influence is far reaching and pervasive, especially among Generation Z, for reasons of sorts. For instance, Syed Shaharuddin et al. (2023) found that students do not completely concur if online platforms such as Google Meet bear a significant impact on their academic life positively. This implies that online platforms such as Google Meet have not been able to effectively engage, educate, and stimulate students about learning in general, and that social networking apps reign supreme in the minds and hearts of many learners of today. In light of this, teenagers have been revealed to spend a good deal of time online watching and creating content on TikTok. The broad and diverse selection of content offered by TikTok makes it appealing to its users as a source of entertainment and recreational pastime.

Since open and distance learning (ODL) is here to stay (Kaur & Bhatt, 2020), after this learning mode was integrated during the outbreak of COVID-19, Abidin et al. (2023) have advised language instructors to consider language teaching strategies that can boost learner enthusiasm and understanding when learning English virtually, especially by taking advantage of other social media platforms such as TikTok. TikTok has become an educational platform, as can be seen through the hashtag "#LearnOnTikTok," which has reached over 855.4 billion views (West, 2024). In a broader sense, the educational content of TikTok is popular because it fits into the microlearning trend (Leslie, 2021). Microlearning is suitable and recommended for Gen Z as microlearning helps in 80% memory retention compared to traditional learning methods (Rohith, 2021). Content creators have devised creative ways to make beneficial content, including using TikTok as a medium for English language teaching and learning, hence, helping ESL learners enhance their English language learning experience in a fun way. In 2019, language-learning videos were reported to be the second most popular knowledge-sharing videos available on TikTok (Pratiwi et al., 2021). Besides English language learning-focused videos, various types of content by native speakers is also available on TikTok. Exposure to these forms of content can help students improve their English language skills. One of the most popular content creators for English language learning is "Speak English with Zack", whose videos include quizzes, challenges, speaking practices, and grammar.

Several studies have proven the efficacy of TikTok in enhancing language learning. Pratiwi et al. (2021) studied how students from Suryakancana University majoring in English education used TikTok to learn and improve English pronunciation. In addition, research by Fahdin (2020) revealed that high school students found watching TikTok videos to have a positive impact on their English language vocabulary.

Despite the positive reviews on the use of TikTok in the modern digital English language teaching and learning contexts, there are some issues English language researchers and educators need to be aware of. Given its remarkable popularity among Generation Z and its global accessibility via the Internet, it is surprising that English language specialists, educators, and researchers have not investigated these short videos in greater detail or used

them in a wider range of academic contexts (Xiuwen & Razali, 2021). Even though previous researchers had explored and investigated the use of TikTok as a platform to learn English, these studies focussed primarily on EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESL (English as a Second Language) learners at primary and secondary school levels. There appears to be a dearth of studies on the use of TikTok for English language learning from the perspective of ESL learners at the tertiary level in Malaysia, specifically students majoring in English. Furthermore, prior research also examined one language skill, namely speaking skill, instead of finding out learners' perspectives and beliefs on the most beneficial skill(s) for learning with TikTok. For instance, a descriptive qualitative study by Zaitun et al. (2021) explored the use of TikTok as a medium to enhance speaking skills among 36 EFL students from SMP Negeri 164 in Jakarta. Another study by Fahdin (2020) investigated students' perceptions of the use of TikTok to learn English vocabulary. As can be seen, these two studies were designed and conducted with the aim of addressing and highlighting only speaking and vocabulary skills.

While previous research has acknowledged the potential of TikTok as a medium for enhancing English language learning and teaching, there remains a significant gap in understanding its efficacy and benefits among ESL learners at the tertiary level in Malaysia. Specifically, there is a lack of comprehensive investigation into ESL learners' perceptions regarding the use of TikTok for English language learning across multiple language skills. Consequently, this study aims to address this gap by exploring ESL learners' perceptions of the benefits and effectiveness, as well as the perceived need for incorporating TikTok into ESL classrooms, thus providing valuable insights for educators and researchers in the field of English language teaching and learning. Hence, this brings the researchers of the current study to investigate and demonstrate these three aspects of learner perceptions on effectiveness, benefits, as well as the need to introduce TikTok in ESL classrooms for the language skills gained by utilizing TikTok as a medium to enhance English language learning and acquisition. The research questions of the study are as follows:

1. What are ESL learners' perceptions of the **effectiveness** of using TikTok for English language learning?
2. What are ESL learners' perceptions of the **benefits** of using TikTok for English language learning?
3. What are ESL learners' perceptions of **the need for introducing** TikTok in ESL classrooms?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ever since TikTok gained recognition as a powerful educational tool, users have explored and utilized it extensively for language learning. In this day and age, the integration of social networking applications such as TikTok plays an indispensable role in language learning, as students have been found to hold positive attitudes towards the utilization of these applications (Dewi & Arifani, 2021). In 2019, language-learning videos on TikTok were ranked as the second most popular in the category of knowledge-sharing videos (Hanim, 2021). Another study by Koniah et al. (2021) claimed that TikTok videos contribute positively to students' engagement with both entertainment content and language learning process, with a focus on piquing student interest and keeping them motivated with points of reference or specific stimuli. TikTok has been reviewed as being frequently used by youngsters and young adults for ESL learning purposes. It has been noted that the use of TikTok can boost ESL learners' competency and proficiency in multiple language skills, such as writing, reading, and speaking, as suggested by the findings of various published studies. Based on a study conducted by

Syaifuddin et al. (2021), it was found that Tiktok increases students' interest in learning how to write descriptive texts. The findings of this study also revealed that videos posted on TikTok are useful in teaching students how to write descriptive texts since students have a favourable impression of these videos. From this, it can be deduced that TikTok has been used as a strategy or approach for ESL teaching and learning. This was also demonstrated by another study by Md. Yunus et al. (2019), which suggested that students identified social media platforms like TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram, as useful for ESL writing. Therefore, the utilization of TikTok has been found to enhance ESL skills among writers, readers, and speakers (Iswahyuni, 2021).

Based on the support of various studies on the use of TikTok in the ESL classroom, Sherin and Dyer (2017) highlighted that the support of videos in learning is quite effective in offering students' perceived experience in a linguistic context. TikTok videos have made it easier for ESL students to understand and digest the content, consequently, enhancing learners' English language skills and proficiency. Sherin and Dyer (2017) further stress that TikTok videos in context-based ESL learning enhance learners' language proficiency. To further investigate this claim, it was suggested that students actively participate in learning English solely by watching TikTok videos since the relevant content and linguistic context is able to spark learner enthusiasm (Koniah et al., 2021). Due to its benefit of enabling students to practise English independently and at their own pace, TikTok has emerged as a practical tool to support ESL learning. This is approximately equivalent to the research results by Kuimova et al. (2018), who reported that media learning effectively facilitates independent language learning. Through TikTok, language learners are able to practise using English and enhance their language skills. The social media challenge in TikTok, according to Ipan et al. (2020; as cited in Zhen et al., 2022), has shown a positive result in which ESL learners improved their ability to communicate in English. It has been further proven that through video creation on TikTok, ESL learners are able to elaborate on topics presented in English, hence, an important method in augmenting conversational skills. A study conducted by Zaitun et al. (2021) revealed that students create storytelling videos on TikTok with the goal of improving their English language speaking skills. The students collectively agreed that TikTok can improve their speaking skills as they found the app to be fun, and is able to make them feel motivated and confident in speaking and writing. As a result, the study concluded that the application can be used as an interactive teaching tool to enhance students' speaking and writing skills by using the right approaches and strategies. Since the TikTok app offers many features, it can be used for English language learning in a variety of ways, allowing educators and students' effective use of the application (Zaitun et al., 2021). To ensure that ESL learners can continuously practise their speaking skills outside classroom setting, learners can create videos on TikTok where they may choose to create their own dialogues, lip-sync, or even sing along, to foster creativity and stretch their full potential (Ahmad Tarmizi et al., 2021).

Besides speaking and writing skills, TikTok has been proven to help students enrich their English vocabulary too. A study by Bernard (2021) revealed that TikTok is able to contribute to the vocabulary growth of ESL students by exposing them to new words and phrases through the various subjects and themes of the videos on the platform. As TikTok offers plentiful supply of videos with engaging, diversified content of various genres, ranging from comedic and religious to educational, students become more engaged in learning (Bernard, 2021). Furthermore, thanks to the practical features of TikTok, which include substantial audio, images, subtitles, and its "Save" function, as well as the authenticity of the videos, students are able to learn a lot of new vocabulary items through its broad-based content. The findings of this study are in line with the results obtained by Fahdin (2020), which found

students to give positive feedback on the usage of TikTok as a language learning tool. This is mainly because the English language content videos are simple to grasp and contain various vocabulary items found in films, such as vocabulary for verbs, nouns, and other topics. As a consequence of her investigation, Fahdin (2020) reached the conclusion that TikTok is a feasible alternative today for language learning and vocabulary acquisition.

Conceptual Framework
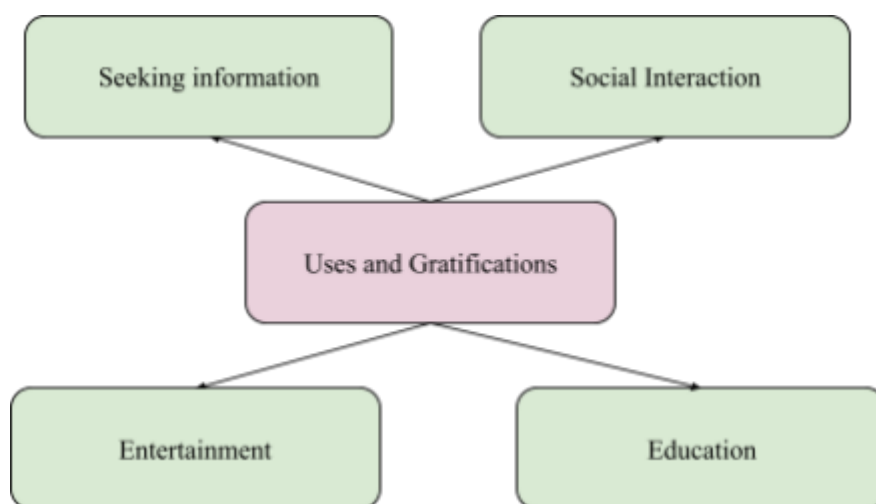
Figure 1: The Uses and Gratifications Theory

According to the Uses and Gratifications Theory (see Figure 1), people utilize media as a tool to fulfill specific needs and wants (Vinney, 2019). This theory has its roots in 1974 and is often credited to the work conducted by Jay Blumler and Elihu Katz (Vinney, 2019). The Uses and Gratifications Theory regards users as active agents that have control over their media consumption, in contrast to several media theories that portray media users as passive (Vinney, 2019). According to Hossain (2019), the primary objective of the Uses and Gratifications Theory is to describe why users engage with a certain medium as well as to establish the reasons behind individuals' media preferences in order to better comprehend both societal and personal gratifications. Understanding the difference between user motivations for specific social media platforms and how consumers behave on these platforms is crucial for marketers in attempting to develop a social media strategy in demonstrating effective content on the platform (Lawrence, 2020). Multiple studies have employed the framework of the Uses and Gratifications Theory, for example, researchers such as Omar and Dequan (2020), Bossen and Kottasz (2020), and Nuzuli (2022) have utilised this theory to investigate the motivations of TikTok users. According to research conducted by Nuzuli (2022), respondents used TikTok for four primary purposes, that is, information, personal identity, social integration and interaction, and entertainment. Another study was conducted by Omar and Dequan (2020) to examine TikTok usage in terms of consumption, participation, and production. Omar and Dequan (2020) reported that social media users consume or watch TikTok for the benefits of escape, social interaction, and archiving. Thus, it can be concluded that TikTok users are motivated to use this application because they want to express themselves, interact with others, and escape the pressures of everyday life. In addition, the motivation to create TikTok videos is driven by a desire to satisfy their self-expression and archiving requirements.

Drawing from this theoretical framework, this study aims to explore how ESL learners utilize TikTok as a supplementary tool to enhance their English language learning experience. To

relate this theory to the current study, instead of using TikTok as a medium or platform to communicate or to socialise these ESL learners to the use of TikTok as a supplementary tool, it is also important in enhancing English language learning experience. In this context, their need is English language learning. By applying this framework, the researchers intend to explore how ESL learners use the TikTok app to fulfill their English language learning needs. According to Yaqi et al. (2021), several studies have found it useful to adopt this theory to understand users' motivations and concerns for using various types of media. While previous research has predominantly focused on the social aspects of TikTok, this study seeks to examine its educational potential within the context of language learning. By adopting the Uses and Gratifications Theory, this research endeavours to uncover ESL learners' motivation and needs concerning TikTok usage for language learning. Therefore, using this framework is expected to be helpful for the researchers of the current study to fulfill the objectives of the study.

In alignment with the conceptual framework of the Uses and Gratifications Theory, Section C of the survey delves into ESL learners' perceptions regarding language learning through TikTok. Specifically, participants were prompted to articulate their motivations for engaging with TikTok content to enhance various English language skills. The questionnaire items encompassed areas such as listening, speaking, reading, and vocabulary enrichment to improve writing proficiency. Through this inquiry, the study sought to elucidate how ESL learners utilize TikTok as a means to fulfill their language learning needs. The survey responses revealed a noteworthy trend wherein participants exhibited a deliberate intent to harness TikTok as a tool for language acquisition. By selecting specific items indicating their desire to enhance particular language skills, participants demonstrated a proactive engagement with TikTok content tailored towards their individual learning objectives. This attests to the premise of the theory that users actively seek out media to gratify specific needs and desires.

Moreover, the findings underscore the applicability of the Uses and Gratifications Theory in understanding ESL learners' motivations for consuming TikTok content within the context of language learning. By elucidating the specific language skills targeted by participants through TikTok engagement, the study provides empirical evidence of the relevance of the theory in explaining user behaviours and preferences in the digital learning landscape. In essence, the survey outcomes corroborate the theoretical framework posited by the Uses and Gratifications Theory, shedding light on ESL learners' deliberate utilization of TikTok as a medium to satisfy their language learning needs.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants of this study were 110 diploma students from a public university in Malaysia, aged between 18 to 23 years old. From this purposive sampling procedure, 96 were females and 14 were males. During the semester, 32 students were registered for Part 1 English language course, 21 for Part 2 English language course while 57 were pursuing Part 3 English language course at the university.

Research Design and Instrument

A mixed-methods approach was employed in this study. An online questionnaire consisting of questions relevant to the objectives of the study was used. The 13 items included as survey questions were adapted from various past studies to ensure the reliability and validity of the current research. Items were adapted from Yang (2020) and Komariyah et al. (2022). These items used five-point Likert scale responses of "strongly disagree" (1), "disagree" (2), "neutral" (3), "agree" (4), and "strongly agree" (5). Please refer to Appendix 1 for the items of the questionnaire. Reliability test yielded Cronbach's alpha score of .967, indicating high reliability of the instrument.

Apart from that, the focus group discussion (FGD), in an online platform was also conducted to provide more flexibility for both participants and researchers. With the aim of addressing the research objectives, the construction of the semi-structured interview questions was derived with the purpose of fully answering the research questions. The purpose of this interview was to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perceptions of the TikTok content that has most helped and facilitated them in developing the skills necessary for learning English language, as well as to assess the effectiveness of TikTok as a supplementary tool for English language learning. The semi structured online interview took two hours to complete. The interview questions can be found in Appendix 2.

Data Collection

Quantitative data was collected from an online questionnaire distributed to 110 respondents from a local university after the sample size was determined using a sample determination table as proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970, as cited in Bukhari, 2021). The survey for the online questionnaire was constructed using a Google Form, and the link was distributed via WhatsApp.

As for the interview, it was a focus group discussion (FGD), held online through the Google Meet platform. FGD is a common qualitative method that draws in-depth understanding from purposely selected individuals (O. Nyumba et al., 2018, as cited in Kaur & Chowdhury, 2022). These five participants were selected based on selection criteria of obtaining the highest score on the online questionnaire. The highest score on the online questionnaire showed that they are considered to be frequent users of TikTok regardless of the purpose of their application usage, whether academic (seeking information and education) or non-academic (social interaction and entertainment). The five participants were identified based on the classification of TikTok usage frequency as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1
TikTok usage frequency

TikTok Usage Frequency	Questionnaire Scores
Low	15-35
Medium	36-55
High	56-75

There were two males and three females, from diploma level programmes. A total of five respondents for FGD is deemed an acceptable number in line with postulation by Creswell (2015) to maintain between four to six interview participants. The online FGD was conducted to provide more flexibility for both researchers and participants. This method was also necessary in ensuring interviewee privacy and to enable sharing of knowledge on the topic without any distractions that may affect or influence responses.

Data Analysis

The analysis for the items in the questionnaire was analysed using descriptive analysis of percentage scores. As for qualitative data, the audio recording during the online focus group interview was transcribed and a thematic cross-case analysis was performed. Braun and Clarke (2021; as cited in Kaur & Chowdhury, 2022) state that when attempting to determine a range of experiences, thoughts, or behaviours present throughout data collection, thematic analysis is a suitable and effective technique to apply. Thematic analysis, according to Kiger and Varpio (2020), is a method of categorising and labeling data that involves interpretation in the process of choosing particular codes and constructing themes. Since the qualitative findings were gathered from interview sessions with the selected participants, the recorded audio was then transformed and translated into written form. After the transcription process was completed, the researchers proceeded with thematic and cross-case analysis. Emerging themes were generated and created from the appearance of repeated words and the similarity of the interviewees' responses. The frequency of the positive and negative emerging themes was analysed to represent the perspectives of ESL learners in using TikTok as a supplementary tool to enhance English language learning. Performing thematic and cross-case analysis enabled the researchers to categorise the findings into several themes, which were then presented in a clear and organised manner.

FINDINGS

ESL Learners' Overall Perceptions of Using TikTok

In the online questionnaire, the researcher divided questions on perceptions of using TikTok for English language learning into three themes or categories: effectiveness of TikTok as a supplementary tool for English language learning, benefits of using TikTok for English language learning, and the need for introducing TikTok in the ESL classroom.

Table 2
Overall descriptive statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Introducing TikTok in ESL classroom	110	1.00	5.00	3.99	0.77
Effectiveness of TikTok as a supplementary tool for English language learning	110	1.00	5.00	4.15	0.72
Benefits of using TikTok for English language learning	110	1.00	5.00	4.20	0.67

Table 2 displays the results for the ESL learners' perceptions of using TikTok for English language learning. The table shows that students' perceptions of the benefits of using TikTok for English language learning have the highest mean score (M=4.20, SD=0.67), followed by the effectiveness of TikTok as a supplementary tool for English language learning (M=4.15, SD=0.72), while the need for introducing TikTok in the ESL classroom has the lowest mean score (M=3.99, SD=0.77). It can be assumed that ESL learners perceive TikTok to offer many benefits as a supplementary tool for English language learning.

ESL Learners' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of TikTok as a Supplementary Tool

Table 3
Descriptive statistics on perceptions of effectiveness of TikTok as a supplementary tool

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
I would recommend others to use TikTok as a supplementary tool for English language learning	110	1.00	5.00	4.03	0.90
TikTok's addictive features make learning fun and engaging	110	1.00	5.00	4.13	0.78
My interest in learning English increased by watching English language TikTok videos	110	1.00	5.00	4.16	0.88
I get to access various interesting contents that help me improve my English language skills	110	1.00	5.00	4.30	0.82

Table 3 presents the results for ESL learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of TikTok as a supplementary tool for English language learning. The table shows that "I get to access various interesting contents that help me improve my English language skills" has the highest mean score (M=4.30, SD=0.82) while "I would recommend others to use TikTok as a supplementary tool for English language learning" has the lowest mean score (M=4.03, SD=0.90). Based on the results, it is likely that all students agree that TikTok is easy to use and has lots of interesting content that can help them improve their English language skills. However, despite its advantage of being accessible, it was found that the students did not really recommend using the application or platform for the purpose of learning English, as indicated by the lowest mean score obtained for "I would recommend others to use TikTok as a supplementary tool for English language learning". This finding is supported by the qualitative findings obtained from the focus group interview.

To further investigate ESL learners' quantitative perceptions of the efficacy of TikTok as a supplementary tool for English language learning, respondents were required to provide qualitative opinions on this matter. On the basis of the FGD responses, it appears that respondents had conflicting and contrasting opinions regarding the effectiveness of TikTok as a supplementary tool for learning English language. Due to the possibility of potentially

viewing inappropriate content for English language learning, Respondent 1 seemed to disagree with the effectiveness of TikTok in supporting language learners' learning. Some of the videos she found on TikTok contained offensive words or lyrics that could have a negative impact on users, thus defeating the purpose of TikTok as a viable supplement for English language learning. She said:

> … most TikTok videos are not good, especially for beginners. English language learning as TikTok audios contains lyrics with bad words and people usually memorize lyrics and learn new words, but mostly inappropriate words. So, I don't think TikTok is an effective supplementary tool for English language learning.

Respondent 2 approved TikTok for English language learning only on the basis that learners are able to evaluate the credibility of videos and content creators. Before accepting any information from TikTok, further investigation, for example, via a Google search, must be initiated. Meanwhile, Respondent 3 partially agreed with Respondent 1 and recommended the use of TikTok solely for informal learning purposes, as she acknowledged TikTok to be effective in helping her improve her English language skills. She shared:

> … I think I partially agree with TikTok being a supplementary tool for English language learning because it is not a proper platform to learn English, especially if you're a beginner. In learning English. Unless you want to, if you're a casual learner, then yes, TikTok can be another way for you to learn English.

Respondent 4 provided ambivalent views on the effectiveness of TikTok. He claimed that TikTok is an effective tool for rapid learning, but noted the risk of receiving inaccurate or unreliable information or resources from unreliable sources. Respondent 5 concluded that TikTok is an inappropriate platform for learning English because the app relies on an algorithm that could expose students to inappropriate content that would be detrimental to young learners in their quest for English language learning. However, TikTok is effective for its easy-to-understand and brief educational videos that students may benefit from. To sum up, it was found that TikTok can be perceived as an effective tool that helps supplement ESL learners' English language learning, specifically casual learning, as long as users know how to use it properly according to their needs.

ESL Learners' Perceptions of the Benefits of TikTok

Table 4
Descriptive statistics on perceptions of the benefits of TikTok

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Get access to real-life English learning resources	110	1.00	5.00	4.14	0.85
Learn English based on own needs	110	1.00	5.00	4.17	0.90
Cultivate and improve English learning interest	110	1.00	5.00	4.20	0.70
Learn without time and location limit	110	1.00	5.00	4.30	0.81

Table 4 shows the results of ESL learners' perceptions of the benefits of using TikTok for English language learning. According to the results, "Learn without time and location constraints: time efficient" has the highest mean score (M=4.31, SD=0.81), while "Get access to real-life English learning resources" has the lowest (M=4.14, SD=0.85). It was reported that TikTok is flexible for the students since they can learn without being constrained by time or location because it can be used and is accessible online with Internet connection. However, despite its flexibility in nature, only a small number of respondents agreed that they are able to access real-life English learning resources. The quantitative findings on the benefits of using TikTok for English language learning were further corroborated and supplemented by the qualitative findings of this study.

The participants were asked to express their opinions on the benefits of using TikTok for English language learning. It appeared that all five participants listed a variety of benefits that TikTok offers to English language learners. According to the responses, Respondent 1 stated that learning via TikTok is beneficial because it can help students improve their communication and pronunciation skills. According to Respondent 3, in addition to improving their English language skills in a casual manner, TikTok enables students to acquire both formal and informal communication skills. Furthermore, Respondent 2 noted that videos on TikTok piqued his interest and prompted him to conduct a Google search to learn more about a particular topic, indicating that TikTok is beneficial as it promotes independent or self-learning habits among students. Respondent 4 asserted that TikTok has both direct and indirect benefits. Direct benefit would be the availability of educational videos on TikTok, while the indirect benefit implies that students are able to learn the language indirectly by listening to people speak English on TikTok videos. Finally, Respondent 5 emphasized that since TikTok videos are relatively short, it is easier for individuals with a short attention span to watch the

entire video without getting distracted. Additionally, TikTok is a free application that can be accessed anywhere at any time with a stable internet connection. Furthermore, TikTok contains a search toolbar feature that students can use to find the desired videos on a specific topic. As evidenced by the wide range of responses, it can be concluded that different users may accrue different benefits from using TikTok. Benefits gained may vary, based on the individual's primary objective in using the app and the specifics of their use.

ESL Learners' Perceptions on the Need for Introducing TikTok in ESL Classrooms

Table 5
Descriptive statistics on ESL learners' perceptions on the need for introducing TikTok in ESL classrooms

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Complement classroom English teaching	110	1.00	5.00	3.95	0.88
Enhance learning motivation and interests	110	1.00	5.00	3.98	0.83
Expand knowledge and enrich classroom activities	110	1.00	5.00	4.00	0.84
Bring the classroom English knowledge closer to life	110	1.00	5.00	4.03	0.81

Table 5 depicts the results of the need for introducing TikTok in the ESL classroom. The results show that "bring the classroom English knowledge closer to life" has the highest mean score (M=4.03, SD=0.81), while "complement classroom English teaching" has the lowest mean score (M=3.95, SD=0.88). It can be inferred that the students feel TikTok does play a role in providing continuous English language knowledge and extends the learning process beyond the classroom setting, as mentioned in the preceding section on how TikTok contains various English contents and can be accessed regardless of time and location. When questioned about whether TikTok complements English classroom teaching, the results indicated the lowest mean score for this item, which could indicate that the application emphasizes quick hit learning rather than deep discovery and analysis since most of the videos are short. Therefore, it does not really complement English classroom teaching, as classroom teaching is more complex in contrast to TikTok videos that include contents that are rather simple and basic.

Previous analysis of the quantitative findings demonstrated that TikTok does not really complement English classroom teaching and had the lowest mean score. Qualitative findings

further shed light on why only a small number of ESL students found TikTok to complement their formal English instruction. Table 6 illustrates responses to an inquiry posed by the researchers "Would you recommend other ESL learners to use TikTok for English language learning?"

Table 6
Excerpts from FGD

Question	Would you recommend other ESL learners to use TikTok for English language learning? Why or why not?
Respondent 3	No, I would not recommend TikTok to English language learners because to me to learn language itself. We have to learn. With people with, you know, credibility. Credibility and with a background of teaching or learning English itself. And if we do want to learn from these TikTok content creators. We have to, I guess, really know if they do have a background of teaching and learning English. If not, then it's better to learn from a proper outlet like going to an English tuition or some sorts.
Respondent 4	I personally wouldn't really recommend it. For casual everyday conversation, maybe yes, as it does help a lot, but if it is about formal official or something related to the career. Umm, no.
Respondent 5	No TikTok is to me is it is a leisure. The FYP is untrustworthy and sometimes the algorithm suddenly. Show inappropriate content. You might think that all of since you like all the academic posts, there will only be academic posts in your FYP, but no, it depends on the popularity of the videos if the videos are popular. It may pop up in your FYP other than that random videos will turn up and sometimes it tends to go over PG18. Yeah. For casual learning, TikTok is a great place. You can see how people communicate, pronounce certain words and maybe your vocabulary would increase improve but for serious study sessions, I don't suggest TikTok.

From Table 6, it can be seen that the respondents have mutual concerns about widespread use of the application for English language learning. Despite its effectiveness in helping learners improve their English language skills, as acknowledged and mentioned in the previous sections, they repeatedly expressed concerns about the credibility of sources posted on TikTok. Some respondents were also very concerned about stumbling upon inappropriate videos while using the application, causing them to be wary of recommending the application to other ESL learners for exploring and using TikTok for English language learning. In addition, the respondents revealed that not all videos are suitable for academic contexts, which underlines the rationale why students do not fully support the notion of TikTok as a complementary or supplementary platform for English classroom teaching. They described TikTok as an application that is suitable for leisure purposes, thereby suggesting that it can only be used for casual and incidental learning.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to enquire how far TikTok can facilitate students' English language learning based on their perceptions. Research shows that generally, ESL learners view TikTok favourably as a tool for acquiring the English language. This is due to the fact that TikTok allows students to enhance their language skills, such as listening, speaking, grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. The results or findings of the present study correspond with findings by previous studies (Perangin angin et al., 2021; Pratiwi et al., 2021; Rahman, 2021) which have found TikTok to be an English language learning medium, able to assist learners in improving their English language skills. One of the major findings worth highlighting is that the interview respondents stated they use TikTok to improve their pronunciation and speaking skills. They claimed that TikTok videos helped them learn how to pronounce words correctly and improve their everyday communication skills using the English language. Participants in this study also reported they were able to learn English from non-English teaching or learning videos because the videos were produced by native English speakers; consequently, they indirectly learned to speak English and expanded their vocabulary. This is supported by the findings by Novitasari and Addina (2022), who said that many TikTok videos are created by native speakers, allowing students to improve their listening skills while also learning about English accents. Novitasari and Addina (2022) also made a point that through English conversational dialogues supplied by video creators, learning on TikTok also effectively allows learners to practise their speaking skills in English, hence providing possibilities for students to develop their speaking skills. These findings are also asserted by Herlisya and Wiratno (2021) that using TikTok as a learning tool can improve speaking skills and simplify the process for students to acquire vocabulary. There are a number of TikTok creators who discuss English grammar, allowing students to develop and reinforce their knowledge of the subject. The Uses and Gratifications Theory supported these quantitative findings in regards to the components of seeking information and education. From learners' accounts above, TikTok has been found to assist language learning in listening and speaking skills. It would be interesting if future researchers could study the implementation of TikTok in reading and writing skills and whether language tools such as TikTok can alleviate reading anxiety, especially in open and distance learning contexts (Kamaruddin & Kaur, 2023).

Despite the positive reviews of the effectiveness of TikTok in helping students to improve their English language skills, the qualitative findings of this study indicated that the students do not really recommend the usage of TikTok for English language learning. This is caused by their uncertainty about the veracity of TikTok content. Learning English through TikTok is only recommended for casual learners. If a person desires to learn the language for academic and professional purposes, they should receive formal instruction in which credibility is established. This finding parallels Shaafi et al. (2023), as their interviewed participants also stated that TikTok was typically not considered to be formal learning in the conventional sense. In addition, if TikTok is used for other purposes such as entertainment, its effectiveness as an educational platform cannot be definitely ascertained. This is supported by Hu and Kehan (2022) who revealed that, under the same broad topic of formal learning, some interviewees appeared to be wary of the role of TikTok and opposed to TikTok-assisted learning, believing that it was not as effective as anticipated for improving either general English proficiency or specific skills on a macro level. When asked for justification, some students stated that they did not see the educational value of TikTok, but rather an entertaining application, admitting their apprehensions about the efficacy of TikTok beyond classroom learning. Therefore, to fit the qualitative findings of this study into the conceptual framework proposed by Vinney (2019), it can be deduced that the participants in this study were motivated to use TikTok in

their language learning to fulfill their needs of seeking information and education. Despite their motivation, the credibility of TikTok as a learning tool is questionable as the students were skeptical about the formality aspect of the tool. This finding raises the need to identify the level of motivation among students in the four components outlined by Vinney (2019) in the framework.

As evidenced by the quantitative and qualitative results derived from this study, the Vinney (2019) framework has been able to highlight the range of motivating factors among language learners to choose TikTok as one of the language learning tools. The results of this study have provided guidance for future researchers and language instructors in understanding what drives language learners to use TikTok for language learning and take advantage of the captivating qualities of this application. Above all, before requesting students to replicate a lesson by creatively presenting it on TikTok, language instructors should offer a comprehensive explanation of the material.

CONCLUSIONS

TikTok is a platform that not only provides entertaining content for the younger generation and worldwide audience but also allows access to a new format of short educational videos that are created by knowledgeable authors. This viewpoint opens up several pathways for the sharing of knowledge in a condensed and efficient manner across a broad range of scientific disciplines. The conceptual framework applied in this study has made it possible in determining in an automated fashion, the primary English language skills learning videos hosted on the TikTok platform as well as the contents that are most valued by ESL learners.

Due to its relative novelty in educational settings, the usefulness and effectiveness of TikTok as a pedagogical learning tool specifically for English language learning have not been thoroughly investigated due to its dynamic nature. It is clear that TikTok is gaining popularity among students, as demonstrated by the results of the present study. The study shows that students perceive TikTok to be of great benefit, and also regard it highly for its effectiveness as a supplementary tool for English language learning. Hence, it can be concluded that users who utilize the application primarily for language learning will have a greater likelihood of discovering videos that are beneficial for English language learning and skill improvement. In addition, the findings revealed that TikTok is a suitable tool that can be used to learn the English language, however, its content moderators as well as content creators need to carry the responsibility of ensuring the contents made available for viewing are safe for mainstream users and for learning purposes. This is concluded since the students in this study do not highly propagate TikTok as a viable (ultimate) tool for English language classes. Although its features do enable students to acquire and improve English language skills in a fun and casual manner outside the classroom setting, as application users, it is imperative to weigh the pros and cons before deciding to use the application for specific purposes. If the application is inherently designed for beneficial purposes, more users will be interested in exploring and using the application to meet their varied needs and wants.

Limitations of Study

Upon conducting the study, certain limitations were identified: the setting for interviews conducted, participant responses, data collection procedure and time constraint. For the interview setting, this study conducted an online interview on Google Meet. Although there

was sufficient flexibility for researchers and participants, there were inevitable problems and interference disrupting the smooth process of data collection, for instance, Internet connectivity issues which caused the researchers to constantly prompt the participants to either restate their responses or had to recontact them post Google Meet interview for more insightful feedback that could be helpful in addressing the objectives of the study. Background noise and interruptions also made online interviews challenging. All these factors made the transcription process more difficult and time-consuming, as more time was required to record accurate responses. The second limitation identified in the study was the responses of the participants. The current study aimed to investigate students' perceptions of the usefulness and efficacy of TikTok for English language learning, however, it was found that many respondents did not appear to use the application frequently for English language learning. Consequently, the reported findings were not as insightful as desired. Participant responses might have been influenced by their lack of experience in using the application for English language learning purposes. Furthermore, the method of data collection was a focus group interview, where responses could be influenced by peers. Listening to others' responses to interview questions while waiting for their turn might have unwittingly caused respondents to alter their responses due to pressure or simply owing to lack of time to formulate responses that can contribute to the findings. Finally, the implementation of data collection procedures was time-consuming. To complete a mixed-methods study, both quantitative and qualitative data had to be collected accordingly. Due to time constraints, the qualitative findings lacked insightful and detailed analysis in parts, given the lengthy and elaborate nature of the research process.

Suggestion for Future Studies

Considering the limitations identified and the findings obtained in the present studies, a few suggestions are put forward for future research or studies. In order to ensure a smooth process of data collection, physical interviews are preferred, with minimal interruptions and distractions. Face-to-face interviews allow researchers to observe verbal and non-verbal cues, hence prompting respondents when necessary. If the goal of the study is to investigate students' perceptions of TikTok usage, it is highly recommended that participants who are familiar and heavy users of the application be recruited because they have sufficient screen time experience. This would generate more detailed and insightful findings that can significantly contribute to future studies. As mixed-methods studies have many benefits, future studies may apply the same methodology with sufficient time allowance for data collection and analysis. In terms of the sample size, future studies may include a larger sample size because larger studies can provide stronger and more reliable results due to smaller margins of error and lower standards of deviation. For the scope of study, future research may want to explore the usage of TikTok among English language educators in delivering English language content through short videos. Furthermore, since the respondents in this study raised concerns about the offensive or sensitive content posted on TikTok, future studies may also investigate plans or actions by content moderators and creators to ensure that TikTok is a safe place for its users to create, share and watch videos.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire Items

No.	Item	1	2	3	4	5
1	I can learn without time and location limit with TikTok					
2	I can learn new words with TikTok					
3	I can learn English language based on my own needs with TikTok					
4	I am able to get access real-life English language resources with TikTok					
5	I am able to cultivate and improve English language interest with TikTok					
6	I would recommend others to use TikTok as a supplementary tool for English language learning					
7	Tik Tok's addictive features make learning fun and engaging					
8	My interest in learning English increased by watching English language TikTok videos					
9	I get to access various interesting contents that help me improve my English language skills					
10	TikTok is useful in improving my English language speaking skills					
11	TikTok is useful for improving English language speaking skills since it has various attractive features on its channels					
12	Tik Tok is useful in helping me learn how to pronounce words					
13	TikTok helps me to speak English fluently					

Appendix 2

Interview Questions

1. Do you use TikTok for English language learning? Why/why not?

2. How would you rate your English language proficiency before using TikTok?

3. Which English language skills would you like to improve by using TikTok?

4. Which English language skills do you believe TikTok has helped you improve? Why do you say so?

5. Do you think your English language skills have improved after using TikTok to learn English?

6. How would you rate your English language proficiency after using TikTok?

7. What types of TikTok videos do you think have helped you in learning the English language?

8. In your opinion, what are the benefits of using TikTok for English language learning?

9. Is TikTok an effective supplementary tool for English language learning? Why/why not?

10. Would you recommend other ESL learners to use TikTok for English language learning? Why or why not?

Conflict of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest reported in the course of this study.

Authors Contributions

All authors contributed equally in the preparation of this manuscript.

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