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Qualitative Insights into the Impact of TikTok on EFL Pronunciation: Exploring User Experiences and Engagement

Forough Amirjalili*

English Language and Literature Department, Language and Literature Faculty, Yazd University, Yazd, Iran; f.amirjalili@yazd.ac.ir

Abstract

As social media platforms proliferate, their potential in educational methodologies, especially in language learning, is gaining increasingly significance. TikTok, with its short-form video contents, offers unique opportunities to language learners to improve their skills in an engaging and informal environment. However, the specific impact of TikTok on EFL pronunciation improvement remains underexplored. This study investigated the effectiveness of a short video platform, focusing on TikTok, as a novel and engaging tool for improving English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pronunciation. Utilizing a mixed research design through combining qualitative methods such as thematic analysis with quantitative metrics, the study examines user engagement patterns, content preferences, and the thematic landscape of EFL pronunciation contents on TikTok. To this end, the study explores the correlations among these metrics and derives their implications to understand the platform's effectiveness in facilitating language learning. The findings highlight that TikTok contributes to EFL pronunciation improvement by creating an engaging, informal, and supportive learning environment. The observed correlations emphasize the importance of creating the contents that not only attract a broad audience but also encourage prolonged engagement. The findings also offer valuable insights for educators and language learners who seek innovative and engaging approaches to EFL pronunciation improvement.

Keywords: EFL learners, Pronunciation, Short video platform, Social media, TikTok.

I | INTRODUCTION

In an era dominated by digital innovation, the integration of technology into education has become instrumental in transforming traditional learning methods. Among the myriad of platforms that have emerged, TikTok, a globally recognized short video-sharing application, has taken a central position, especially among Millennials and Generation Z. While TikTok is primarily known for its entertaining and engaging content, its potential as an educational tool, particularly for the learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), is gaining attention (Firamadhina & Krisnani, 2020).

The advent of the Internet and social media has paved the way for diverse learning opportunities, transcending geographical boundaries. The millennial generation and Generation Z are the most prevalent in this situation (Ramadhan, 2020). TikTok, a social media sharing app, was introduced by ByteDance, a Chinese Internet startup, in 2017. It is a swiftly growing social media site, with a user base of more than 100 million in a brief period. It enables its users to produce concise 15-second

videos that can integrate music, filters, and a wide array of other creative elements. TikTok has emerged as one of the most prosperous non-gaming applications globally. It garnered over 315 million installations during the initial quarter of 2020. The viral video site has accumulated more than two billion downloads from the App Store and Google Play combined. Its success is attributed not only to its dynamic content creation but also to the incorporation of cutting-edge technologies, such as human body key recognition and artificial intelligence (AI), essential for achieving correct interface poses and algorithmic support (Xu et al., 2019).

TikTok is perceived not just as an entertainment site but also as an educational tool. Its ability to engage learners and foster self-expression through educational content creation demonstrates the convergence of entertainment and education (Warini et al., 2021). Although TikTok has gained popularity as an instructional tool, there is a notable lack of research that particularly assesses its efficacy in enhancing EFL learners' pronunciation. Although research has explored the impact of TikTok on student engagement and English speaking confidence, there is a dearth of empirical evidence and thorough examination of the direct effect of TikTok contents on pronunciation abilities. This discrepancy highlights the necessity for focused research to evaluate the tangible results of utilizing TikTok so as to enhance pronunciation in EFL settings. This article aims to delve into the potential of TikTok as a tool for improving English pronunciation skills among EFL learners. The text underscores TikTok's popularity, diverse content categories, and features conducive to distance learning (Stringer & Aragón, 2020), making it an intriguing subject to evaluate its educational impact.

TikTok is currently the most rapidly expanding social media network globally (Brach, 2020a). It is accessible in 154 nations and has garnered over 1.5 billion downloads globally. With a global user base over a billion, this platform boasts over 800 million users. Ahlquist (2020) states that TikTok's objective is to stimulate creativity and provide delight to its users and viewership. It allows users to produce brief music videos featuring lip-syncing and music, ranging from three to fifteen seconds in length.

Additionally, users can create short looping films that last from three to sixty seconds. Videos can be accelerated, decelerated, and modified using filters and musical backgrounds from different music genres or songs. Interactions are facilitated via comments and messaging. TikTok features videos with a duration ranging from 15 to 60 seconds. This can be due to the research findings that suggest individuals from Generation Z, who are the primary audience of TikTok, have a restricted attention span. According to the findings of a study conducted in 2019, the Z generation has an average attention span of only 8 seconds. TikTok has the ability to offer a valuable insight into the lives of the young (Literat, 2021).

TikTok's unique format of short 15-second videos, coupled with its emphasis on music and creativity, provides a novel approach to language learning. In addition, its features support distance learning, including recording voice, video, and collaborative duets (Wayne, 2020; Riaz et al., 2019; Verica & Zlatko, 2020).

The following sections delve into the technological aspects of TikTok, its content creation dynamics, and the role of influencers within the platform. The aim is to evaluate how TikTok can contribute to the enhancement of EFL pronunciation skills. As digital platforms continue to redefine the boundaries of education, understanding the potential impact of TikTok on language learning becomes a crucial endeavor for educators, researchers, and learners alike. Therefore, the research questions to answer in this regard are as follows:

1. How does TikTok contribute to EFL pronunciation improvement, as perceived by its users?
2. What is the relationship between quantitative metrics on TikTok pronunciation videos and the measurable improvement in EFL learners' pronunciation?
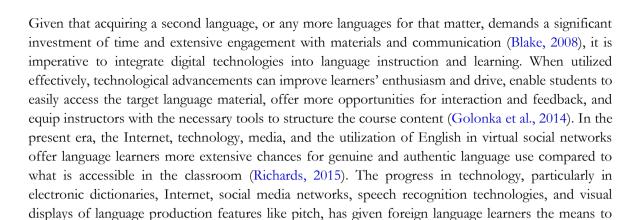
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In recent years, the advent of digital platforms has significantly impacted the field of education, providing new avenues for learning and skill development. A Chinese Internet company introduced a new social media-based sharing app called TikTok. In 2018, ByteDance bought Musical.ly, which had a substantial US-based audience, and merged it with TikTok, which is gaining a presence among Americans (Singh & Diamond, 2020, p. 252). TikTok made its official debut overseas when it combined with Musical.ly in 2018 (Smith, 2020). Among these platforms, TikTok, a short video-sharing application (Verica & Zlatko, 2020, p.33), has gained prominence not only as an entertainment hub but also as a potential tool for educational purposes, including EFL pronunciation improvement. This literature review explores the existing research and insights related to the effectiveness of TikTok in enhancing EFL pronunciation skills, drawing upon the provided texts and additional citations.

The rapid rise of TikTok as a global social media phenomenon is evident in its extensive reach across 154 countries, with over 1.5 billion downloads worldwide (Brach, 2020a). With more than 1 billion users and 800 million monthly active users, TikTok has become a dynamic space for content creation and interaction (Ahlquist, 2020). The unique features of the platform allow users to create short videos with music and engage in interactions through comments and messages, thus setting the stage for its potential in language learning (Quesenberry, 2020). TikTok's success is notably attributed to its consistence with Generation Z, the lives of younger generations known for its limited attention span (Literat, 2021). The content format of the platform, featuring short videos of 15 to 60 seconds, aligns with research indicating an 8-second attention span among Generation Z (Ramadhan, 2020). This adaptability to shorter attention spans introduces TikTok as a viable platform for innovative and focused language learning experiences.

Undoubtedly, the majority of TikTok users currently comprise young individuals, namely those belonging to Generation Z. The surge in TikTok users can be attributed to the epidemic, which has led to widespread social restrictions and compelled people to spend more time at home engaging in activities and staying indoors for extended periods. Due to their early exposure to cellphones from birth, children develop a discerning taste for contents. The surge in TikTok users can be attributed to an epidemic which has led to widespread social restrictions and compelled people to spend more time at home engaging in various activities.

The transformative potential of TikTok extends beyond entertainment, making it a versatile learning medium. Fitria (2022) categorizes TikTok as a mobile learning-based medium, highlighting its accessibility on Android and iOS devices. This accessibility enables learners to engage with educational contents anytime and anywhere, catering to the evolving needs of digital-native students. The literature review reveals a growing body of research emphasizing TikTok's applicability in language learning. Aji & Setiyadi (2020) conducted a study which suggests that the TikTok application can serve as an effective and engaging tool for learning the Indonesian language. The TikTok program can be utilized for learning the Indonesian language owing to its diverse features and user-friendly interface. Taubah (2020) conducted a second study which suggests that the TikTok application, when combined with appropriate methods and techniques, has the potential to be utilized as an interactive educational tool specifically designed for learning Arabic, with a focus on spoken Arabic. TikTok's diverse features and user-friendly interface make it suitable for incorporating into Arabic language instruction.

Aji & Setiyadi (2020) and Taubah (2020) assert that TikTok can effectively facilitate learning Indonesian and Arabic languages, respectively. Luisandrith & Yanuartuti (2020) explore the use of TikTok in dance learning, demonstrating its adaptability in various educational contexts. In this educational procedure, there are multiple stages referred to as cycles. The first cycle involves the instructor's delivering the subject content utilizing an interdisciplinary approach. In the second cycle, the instructor facilitates an appreciating process by distributing instructional video media to students through WhatsApp. The three students were tasked with reinterpreting the movie they had watched, drawing upon their own thoughts, conceptions, and creativity.

Given that acquiring a second language, or any more languages for that matter, demands a significant investment of time and extensive engagement with materials and communication (Blake, 2008), it is imperative to integrate digital technologies into language instruction and learning. When utilized effectively, technological advancements can improve learners' enthusiasm and drive, enable students to easily access the target language material, offer more opportunities for interaction and feedback, and equip instructors with the necessary tools to structure the course content (Golonka et al., 2014). In the present era, the Internet, technology, media, and the utilization of English in virtual social networks offer language learners more extensive chances for genuine and authentic language use compared to what is accessible in the classroom (Richards, 2015). The progress in technology, particularly in electronic dictionaries, Internet, social media networks, speech recognition technologies, and visual displays of language production features like pitch, has given foreign language learners the means to independently practice and enhance their pronunciation outside of the classroom.

Pronunciation, sometimes called the "Cinderella" of foreign language education, involves the creation and understanding of individual sounds, emphasized and non-emphasized syllables, and intonation (Seidlhofer, 2001). In recent years, the teaching of pronunciation has evolved and moved away from the traditional method of audiolingualism, which focused on repetitive exercises and strict error correction. This change occurred as behaviorism and structural linguistics declined and communicative language teaching (CLT) gained popularity. Nowadays, there is a greater emphasis on the specific sounds and patterns of speech, both at the individual sound level (segmental features) and the overall rhythm and intonation (supra-segmental features), within the context of meaningful communication. This shift in approach is supported by scholars such as Hardison (2009), Murphy (2003), and Seidlhofer (2001). Recently, the significance of pronunciation has been increasing in language teaching due to its crucial functions in speech recognition, voice perception, and speaker identity (Levis, 2007).

Specific to EFL pronunciation improvement, various studies provide valuable insights. Nabilah et al. (2021) note the positive impact of TikTok on students' motivation and engagement in learning to write descriptive texts. It adds positively to the learning process and may help students become more motivated. It encourages them to pay attention and actively engage in the learning process. Zaitun et al. (2021) found that utilizing TikTok for communication can benefit students' confidence in speaking English and help them with expressing themselves on the TikTok. Pratiwi et al. (2021) found a positive attitude toward TikTok for English language learning, and they used it as an English language learning tool to improve literacy and speaking skills. TikTok has evolved into a hub for English language learning, with content creators offering diverse educational materials (Warini et al., 2021). Popular hashtags such as #learnenglishdaily, #englishlessonfun, and #tiktokenglish show the platform's vibrant English learning community (Ostrowski, 2020; Wilson, 2020). The contents span various skills, including reading, listening, speaking, writing, grammar, and vocabulary (Dakhi & Fitria, 2019).

Despite the growing interest in TikTok as an educational tool, a significant gap exists in research specifically evaluating its effectiveness in EFL pronunciation improvement. While studies have addressed TikTok's role in engaging students and enhancing their confidence in speaking English, there is a lack of empirical data and in-depth analysis on how TikTok contents directly influence pronunciation skills. This gap indicates a need for targeted research to assess the practical outcomes of using TikTok for pronunciation improvement in EFL contexts. While the existing literature provides valuable insights into the multifaceted roles of TikTok in language learning, there is a noticeable gap in research specifically evaluating the effectiveness of TikTok in EFL pronunciation improvement. This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing the engagement and impact of TikTok, particularly focusing on popular content creators and their contributions to English pronunciation enhancement among millennials and Gen-Z.

III. AIM OF THE STUDY

To summarize, the literature indicates that TikTok, with its worldwide influence, distinctive content structure, and varied instructional resources, has the capacity to serve as a groundbreaking and efficient tool for enhancing EFL pronunciation. The first question seeks to explore the subjective experiences and perceptions of EFL learners who use TikTok for pronunciation practice. It aims to understand the perceived benefits, challenges, and overall effectiveness of TikTok as a tool to improve pronunciation from the learners' perspective. The second question aims to analyze the correlation between the quantitative metrics (such as likes, shares, views, and comments) on TikTok pronunciation videos and the actual improvements in learners' pronunciation skills. This will help to determine whether popular or highly engaged contents on TikTok have tangible impacts on EFL pronunciation improvement.

IV. METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

The researcher used a mixed research design that combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to comprehensively evaluate TikTok's effectiveness in EFL pronunciation improvement. Through this comprehensive methodology, the research seeks to contribute valuable insights into the evolving landscape of digital language learning, specifically evaluating TikTok's role in EFL pronunciation improvement. The qualitative aspect of the research aims to understand the subjective experiences and perceptions of TikTok users regarding its impact on EFL pronunciation. Drawing upon Lapan et al.'s (2011) assertion that qualitative research delves into the phenomena from the perspective of insiders, this phase focuses on user-generated contents, comments, and testimonials on TikTok. The quantitative segment of the research focuses on utilizing TikTok analytical tools to gather numerical data on engagement metrics. This approach aligns with the goal of understanding the quantitative impact of TikTok contents on EFL pronunciation improvement. The findings from both the qualitative and quantitative components will be integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of TikTok's impact on EFL pronunciation improvement. By triangulating user perceptions with quantitative engagement metrics, the research aims to offer nuanced insights into the multifaceted role that TikTok plays in the language learning journey.

2. Participants

2.1. Primary Participants

The study involved participants in the age range of 18 to 35, encompassing individuals from the millennial and Generation Z demographics. To capture a comprehensive range of language proficiency levels, the participants were purposely chosen to represent diverse linguistic abilities. The selection process involved random sampling from the pool of active TikTok users who engaged with EFL pronunciation content. To ensure a well-rounded and diverse sample, stratification was implemented based on age, language proficiency, and geographical location. This approach aimed to encompass a wide array of perspectives and experiences within the chosen demographics. Both consistent and sporadic users were included in the sample to provide a varied outlook on how individuals engage with EFL pronunciation contents on TikTok. The final goal was to have a diverse sample size of 60 active TikTok users, offering a robust representation of the target age groups and language proficiency levels. This strategic approach to sampling enhances the ability of the study to draw meaningful insights from a varied and representative participant pool.

2.2. Secondary Participants

In the realm of EFL pronunciation contents on TikTok, a diverse group of educators and content creators stands out. Within the age range of 25 to 50, a cohort of language educators and content creators with notable expertise has emerged. These individuals bring a wealth of experience in both language teaching and content creation, catering to a diverse audience. For purposeful sampling within the domain of TikTok, a deliberate selection has been made of content creators and educators boasting substantial followings. These individuals, carefully chosen for their influence and impact, contribute significantly to the TikTok community. This diverse selection represents a comprehensive spectrum of both experienced educators and emerging content creators within the EFL pronunciation niche on TikTok.

3. Data Collection Procedure

In this study, digital documentation, such as videos, was used to gather the data. The five top content creators on TikTok are featured in the videos. Conducting in-depth interviews with active EFL learners who utilize TikTok as a language-learning tool provides valuable insights into their experiences and preferences. Exploring their motivations, challenges, and success stories enhances our understanding of the efficacy of TikTok in EFL pronunciation improvement. Simultaneously, a thorough analysis of comments and discussions on TikTok videos related to EFL pronunciation improvement offers qualitative data. By delving into the user-generated contents and interactions, we gain a nuanced understanding of the community dynamics, common difficulties faced by learners, and the effectiveness of the contents. To complement the qualitative findings, it is essential to use TikTok analytical tools like Exolyt (http://exolyt.com).

This allows for the collection of quantitative data, including metrics such as likes, shares, comments, and views, for selected EFL-related content creators. These quantitative insights provide a comprehensive overview of the reach and impact of specific contents, aiding in the identification of trends and popular strategies for EFL learners on TikTok. To help influencers, advertisers, and content creators maximize the potential of their social media profiles and boost engagement, Exolyt is a social media analytics tool and viewer for any profile or video. The five best-known TikTok content creators in the field of English language instruction were chosen through a selection process. Content creators are determined by their level of popularity, which is determined by things like how many videos, likes, followers, and contents they post. These aspects ensure representation. IELTS by IDP (@ielts), @english.with.lucy, @englishunderstood, @ Speak English with Mish, and @ Speak English with Zach are the six content creators that are the focus of the study. The video selection period, which includes the most recent and pertinent data, runs from December 2020 to August 2023. Incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies ensure a holistic approach to understanding the role of TikTok in EFL pronunciation improvement, offering valuable insights for both educators and content creators in the language-learning community.

4. Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis process involves several key stages to derive meaningful insights from the collected information. In the initial stage, the data are categorized based on the type of lessons offered by content creators. This involves identifying common themes, topics, or approaches in the EFL pronunciation improvement content. The categories may include specific pronunciation techniques, language learning hacks, cultural context integration, or interactive challenges. Following categorization, the data are analyzed based on engagement metrics such as likes, shares, and comments in TikTok videos. This step aims to identify the content that resonates the most with the audience, highlighting the effectiveness and popularity of different lesson types. In the third stage, a detailed categorization of each lesson type from every content creator is performed. This involves grouping lessons based on specific attributes, methodologies, or teaching styles. Understanding the diversity in lesson types is crucial for a

comprehensive analysis. Subsequently, the analysis focuses on identifying the engagement values for each type of lesson within each content creator.

This step aims to pinpoint which specific lessons generate the most likes, shares, and comments, providing insights into the preferences of the audience. The fourth stage involves comparing the highest engagement values across different content creators and lesson types. This comparative analysis allows for the identification of trends, successful strategies, and areas for improvement. The results can be presented in a table format, showcasing the effectiveness of each lesson type and content creator. Finally, the analysis extends to determine the attractiveness of TikTok for the millennial and Gen Z generations. This involves evaluating the overall engagement patterns, demographic data, and user feedback to assess the platform's impact on language learning within these age groups. By following these stages in the data analysis process, a comprehensive understanding of EFL pronunciation content on TikTok can be obtained, aiding educators, content creators, and researchers in optimizing the language learning experiences on the platform. MAXQDA software was used for analyzing the interviews.

5. Content Creators

This study delves into the engagement metrics category on TikTok, particularly utilizing Exolyt as the analytics tool to examine how language learners employ the platform for pronunciation learning in English. The investigation focuses on understanding the dynamics of user interaction and the impact of content creators on the language learning experience. The tools facilitate the viewing of analytics, tracking of statistics, and acquisition of engagement insights by influencers, marketers, and content creators. Pronunciation, as defined by Aboe (2018), involves the articulation and organization of fundamental language symbols, such as segmental phonemes or speech sounds, into patterns of duration, tone and loudness. In this context, pronunciation refers to both the act and the outcome of producing speech sounds, encompassing elements like intonation, articulation and emphasis.

The results of the search revealed five content creators, including IELTS by IDP (@ielts), @english with. Lucy, @englishunderstood, @ Speak English with Mish, and @ Speak English with Zach, had contents about learning English pronunciation. There are numerous videos that have been posted on TikTok by these content creators. They are particularly explained below.

Content Creator 1: IELTS by IDP (@ielts)

The TikTok account has been validated by the content creator IELTS by IDP (@ielts). On TikTok, it has 108K likes and 67.6K followers. IDP can be relied on as a trustworthy resource for IELTS test preparation as they are one of the co-owners of the test. The IELTS experts simplify difficult ideas in a matter of seconds with bite-sized educational contents that is regularly posted, making it simple to comprehend and learn different strategies to advance English language proficiency. Understanding and making sense of the learning concepts is greatly facilitated by the engaging and straightforward animated graphics. It includes beneficial subjects such as idiom tests, words of the week, frequently asked questions addressed by IELTS experts, and pertinent advice for the actual IELTS test. Furthermore, educational materials are provided, covering topics such as audio production, graphic design, and interpersonal communication for content creators. Instead of overusing filters, the creator of this content finds a more useful way to communicate the information. Some videos in this content creator focus on instructing viewers on how to pronounce the names of several popular brands, including notable names such as "Porsche, Lacoste, Adidas, and Levi's". Notably, the TikTok videos have garnered positive feedback from users and viewers. Examples of affirmative comments include expressions such as, "They're great", "You are the greatest, most helpful, and have the most amazing conversation style", or "I appreciate everything you've done for me. It has been a great learning experience". These positive responses indicate that the content is well-received by the audience, with viewers expressing gratitude, encouragement, and recognition of the video's educational value.

Content Creator 2: @english.with.lucy

The content creator @english. with.lucy has 2 million followers and 18.7 million likes. The accent of @english.with.lucy is British. Every day, this content creator uploads videos in a variety of categories that are related to learning English. This account offers a special and enjoyable way to teach English in keeping with his personal style. Furthermore, there is no trouble in understanding the core of her instruction because the material she presents is simple to understand. To help understand the content, she has included phonetic subtitles in her videos that explain how to pronounce the words. In addition, it offers a variety of entertaining English learning resources. The information includes advice, acronyms, lovely words in English, idioms, conversational English expressions, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and much more. Videos in this content creator provide guide pronouncing several words in a British accent, exemplifying correct pronunciation such as /krɪsps/ for "crisps," /'resəpi/ for "recipe," /'tʃɒklət/ for "chocolate," /keɪɒs/ for "chaos," and /'wensdəi/ for "Wednesday." Notably, the videos have garnered positive comments. Examples of these positive responses include remarks such as "English is not my first language but I pronounce and know every one of them correctly", or "I'm grateful. Chocolate and the recipe sound Malaysian, so I'm relieved that I've pronounced them correctly in my life". These positive comments reflect appreciation, success, and acknowledgment of the videos' instructional value, showcasing the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the viewers.

Content Creator 3: @englishunderstood

On TikTok, the content creator @englishunderstood has 1.9M likes and 455.7K followers. An easy-to-understand approach to learning English is provided by this account. Aside from that, it offers content that teaches the followers how to pronounce words correctly among other things. This account offers content for learning English without giving the idea that we are doing so. Additionally, this account offers a variety of English learning resources, including grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and much more. Videos in this content creator delve into the intricacies of pronouncing words in a British accent, offering guidance on specific phonetic nuances. The content creator instructs viewers on pronouncing words like "duty (d-you-ty)". Additionally, the video covers pronouncing consonants in pairs, such as "hotter-better," emphasizes the mouth shape for the expression "How are you?" and provides insights on avoiding saying 'huh' in words like "teacher, jumper, harder." Furthermore, the creator suggests pronouncing 'aaar' instead of 'ah' in words like 'grass' and 'bath.' This content creator has received positive comments from users/viewers, reflecting the diverse and appreciative audience. Examples of positive comments include expressions like "I've never heard a British accent, but I adore the British one, and I also find myself using both American and British accents". "I've heard Scottish, English, Irish, and Welsh. I've never heard one before, but I adore the accent. I sound just like you". "I'm Asian, and I think the British accent is one of the funniest but most distinctive accents". "If you want to learn more about accents, I suggest studying phonetics. It is quite beneficial". "I appreciate you teaching me and for making me aware of how much I love the British accent". These comments reflect appreciation, enthusiasm, and a sense of learning and self-improvement sparked by the educational content provided in the videos.

Content Creator 4: @ Speak English with Mish

The content creator @Speak English with Mish has 2.2 million likes and 753.8K followers. Mish of "Speak English with Mish" launched her TikTok account to expand her audience and assist them in gaining confidence in their ability to speak English. She has 11 years of experience as a teacher. Mish's content is primarily focused on fluency, but it also covers pronunciation and conversation practice to help English language learners apply their theoretical knowledge. To help students prepare for their IELTS exam, she goes over common grammar errors, misused phrases, and words that have similar meanings and pronunciations. This content creator provides a tutorial on pronouncing various English words, exemplifying correct pronunciation such as /wɔ:r/ for "war," /wɔ:ll/ for "wall," /wɜ:d/ for "word," /wɜ:ld/ for "world," and /wʊd/ for "would." Notably, it has elicited positive comments from

users/viewers. Examples of these affirmative responses include expressions such as "Incredible, fantastic work, it has helped me with pronouncing the letter G". The positive remarks reflect the viewers' appreciation for the instructional content, with some expressing specific difficulties and seeking further guidance on pronunciation. The engagement underscores the educational value of the videos and the creator's effectiveness in aiding viewers with their pronunciation challenges.

Content Creator 5: @ Speak English with Zach

The content creator @Speak English with Zach has 6 million followers and 66.8 million likes. Speak English with Zach teaches viewers useful strategies for speaking and conversing in English. Zach's distinct approach sets him apart from other educational English language content creators, whether it be for practice with idioms, synonyms, conversation, or pronunciation. Rather than just teaching the students a concept, he incorporates an interactive element in which he poses a question, giving the audience plenty of time to answer, and then reveals the right answer. Watchers can test their knowledge and put what they know to the test in addition to having fun while learning. He covers several fascinating subjects in his videos, such as picture-word association, phrasal verbs, English slang in other countries, and word opposites. The video also encourages followers to discern the enhanced natural and fluent sound, akin to a native speaker. Additionally, the content creator advises against feeling too embarrassed and emphasizes finding the right flow as a helpful trick. Positive comments from users/viewers further affirm the videos' impact. Examples include expressions such as "I understand; I appreciate you sharing". "Fantastic advice! adore you indeed, accurate pronunciation is crucial". These positive remarks reflect appreciation for the content creator's teaching style, tips, and the perceived value of the pronunciation lessons offered in the video.
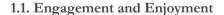
V. RESULTS

1. Findings For Research Question 1

The qualitative component of this study sought to uncover the subjective experiences and perceptions of TikTok users regarding its impact on EFL pronunciation improvement. Through in-depth interviews, analysis of comments, and examination of user-generated content, there emerged several recurring themes to shed light on the multifaceted contributions of TikTok to EFL pronunciation enhancement. Table 1 provides a structured overview of the thematic analysis, with the themes, subthemes, and descriptions for research question one.

Table 1. Thematic analysis for research question one.

Themes	Subthemes	Description
Engagement and enjoyment	Bite-sized enjoyment	Users find TikTok's content enjoyable and engaging, creating a positive learning atmosphere.
	Consistent participation	Users find TikTok's bite-sized videos enjoyable, creating a non-intimidating space for pronunciation practice. The engaging nature of the content encourages consistent participation and active learning.
Informal learning environment	Pressure-free learning	TikTok is perceived as an informal and pressure-free platform, allowing learners to practice at their own pace.
	Self-paced learning	TikTok is perceived as an informal platform that allows learners to practice pronunciation without the pressures associated with formal lessons. The relaxed setting positively influences users' confidence levels.

Diverse pronunciation models	Following diverse creators	TikTok exposes users to diverse accents and pronunciation styles through a variety of content creators.
	Exposure to linguistic diversity	The diversity of content creators on TikTok exposes users to various accents and pronunciation styles, enriching their understanding of the language and preparing them for real-world linguistic diversity.
Peer support and community engagement	Mini English club atmosphere	TikTok fosters a sense of community where users engage with each other, share tips, and provide motivation.
	Collaborative learning	The comments section emerges as a supportive community where users exchange tips, correct each other's pronunciation, and provide motivation. This collaborative environment enhances the overall learning experience.
Visual and auditory learning fusion	Reinforcement through lip movements	TikTok's combination of visual and auditory elements enhances the learning experience for pronunciation
	Multisensory learning experience	The combination of visual and auditory elements in TikTok videos is highlighted as a valuable feature. Users appreciate the reinforcement provided by witnessing lip movements alongside auditory pronunciation.
Authentic language use	Not scripted, real conversations	TikTok's portrayal of authentic language use, including real conversations and expressions, resonates with users.
	Everyday language applications	TikTok's authentic portrayal of language use, including real conversations, slang, and expressions, resonates with users. This authenticity contributes to a more immersive and meaningful language learning experience.

1.1. Engagement and Enjoyment

The participants consistently highlighted the engaging and enjoyable nature of TikTok's short video format. As an interviewee expressed, "The bite-sized videos are fun. I don't feel overwhelmed, and I find myself watching and practicing more because it's enjoyable". Another interviewee noted, "The engaging nature keeps me consistently participating. I enjoy the content, so practicing pronunciation becomes a regular activity".

Moreover, the respondents appreciated the informal learning environment fostered by TikTok. A user-generated content creator stated, "TikTok allows me to practice without the pressure of formal lessons. I learn at my own pace and in a relaxed setting, which boosts my confidence in pronunciation". Another interviewee expressed, "The informal setting lets me go at my own speed. I don't feel rushed or judged, making it easier to focus on improving my pronunciation".

1.2. Diverse Pronunciation Models

The users valued the diversity of pronunciation models provided by TikTok content creators. An interviewed participant noted, "I follow various creators with different accents. It helps me adapt and understand variations in pronunciation, which is crucial for real-world communication". Another

interviewee shared, "Having different accents in my feed broadens my understanding of how English is spoken globally. It prepares me for conversations with diverse speakers".

1.3. Peer Support and Community Engagement

The participants also reported that TikTok emerged as a significant factor. The comments and discussions revealed a supportive community where users encouraged each other. A comment read, "The comments section is like a mini-English club. We share tips, correct pronunciation, and motivate each other". Another interviewee expressed, "The sense of community is inspiring. It's like having study buddies online. We correct each other's pronunciation, and it feels like a collaborative learning journey".

1.4. Visual And Auditory Learning Fusion

Based on what the participants of this study claimed, visual and auditory elements in TikTok videos were cited as a valuable aspect. A respondent said, "Seeing the lip movements alongside hearing the pronunciation helps to reinforce the learning. It's like a visual aid for language acquisition". Another interviewee remarked, "The combination of visual and auditory elements is brilliant. It appeals to different learning styles and makes pronunciation practice more effective".

1.5. Authentic Language Use

The users appreciated the authenticity of the language used on TikTok. User-generated contents often feature everyday scenarios, allowing learners to witness real-life language applications. An interviewee remarked, "It's not scripted. TikTok captures real conversations, slang, and expressions, making it more authentic for learners". Another respondent shared, "The platform showcases everyday language use. It's not just about pronunciation; it's also about learning how English is naturally used in real-life situations".

In summary, the findings from research question 1 suggest that the participants of this study made improvements in pronunciation by creating an engaging, informal, and supportive learning environment. The platform's diverse content creators, coupled with visual and auditory learning elements, enhance the authenticity and effectiveness of language acquisition. The sense of community and enjoyment further underscore TikTok's role as a valuable tool in the language learning journey.

2. Findings For Research Question 2

These findings of the study provide a basis for selecting and evaluating quantitative metrics to measure the engagement in and the impact on TikTok for EFL pronunciation improvement. Researchers and content creators can use these metrics to assess the effectiveness of their content strategies and make data-driven decisions for optimizing language learning experiences on the platform. Table 2 shows the quantitative metrics for measurement.

Table 2. Quantitative metrics for measurement.

Metric	Description
View counts	Number of times the video has been viewed.
Likes and reactions	Count of likes and reactions received on the content.
Comments	Number of comments left by viewers.
Shares	Count of times the content has been shared by users.
Followers growth	Increase in the number of followers over a specific period.
Completion rate	Percentage of viewers who watched the entire video.
Hashtag engagement	Number of times the content is associated with relevant hashtags.
Time spent on the content	Average duration viewers spend on the pronunciation content.
Click-through rate (CTR)	Percentage of viewers who click on external links, if present.

2.1. View Counts

View counts on TikTok can serve as a fundamental metric to assess the reach of EFL pronunciation contents. Higher view counts indicate a broader audience exposure.

2.2. Likes and Reactions

Likes and reactions are the crucial indicators of audience engagement. They signify not only acknowledgment but also appreciation for the content. A higher number of likes suggests that the content resonates with viewers.

2.3. Comments and Interactions

The number of comments and interactions provides insights into the level of audience engagement and interaction. More comments may indicate active engagement, questions, or discussions related to pronunciation improvement.

2.4. Shares

The number of shares reflects the extent to which viewers find the content valuable enough to share with their network. Increased shares can amplify the reach of EFL pronunciation content.

2.5. Followers Growth

Monitoring the growth in followers over time is essential. A steady increase in followers suggests sustained interest and indicates the impact of contents on building a dedicated audience.

2.6. Completion Rates

Analyzing how many viewers watch the entire EFL pronunciation video can provide insights into content effectiveness. Higher completion rates indicate that viewers find the content compelling and worthwhile.

2.7. Hashtag Engagement

Monitoring the use and engagement with specific hashtags related to EFL pronunciation can help to gauge the impact of the contents within the TikTok community. Common use of and interaction with relevant hashtags indicate visibility and community interest.

2.8. Time Spent on The Content

Understanding the average time viewers spend on EFL pronunciation contents offers insights into content quality and viewer engagement. Longer viewing times may suggest that the content effectively holds the audience's attention.

2.9. Click-through Rates (CTR)

If external links are included in the content (e.g., links to additional learning resources), tracking click-through rates provides information on the audience's willingness to explore supplementary materials. Table 3 shows the computed quantitative metrics.

Table 3. Computed quantitative metrics.

Video ID	View counts	Likes	Comments	Shares	Followers growth	Completion rates (%)	Hashtag engagement	Time spent (sec)	CTR (%)
IELTS by IDP (@ielts)	5498	179	4	804	+ 1,000	29	#pronunciation	23	4
@english.with.lucy	77500	4595	31	2801	+ 4,000	62	#learnenglish	25	5
@englishunderstood	7044	274	5	952	+ 2,000	43	#pronunciationtips	28	6
@ Speak English with Mish	29800	628	8	1403	+ 3,000	57	#eflpronunciation	24	7
@ Speak English with Zach	119400	5672	19	3479	+ 7,000	75	#englishlearning	30	4

Table 4 reports the correlations for the Tiktok Metrics in this study.

Table 4. Correlation results for TikTok metrics

	View counts	Likes	Comments	Shares	Followers growth	Completion rates
View counts	1.00	.81	.65	.74	.52	.47
Likes	.81	1.00	.73	.86	.60	.53
Comments	.65	.73	1.00	.69	.43	.35
Shares	.74	.86	.69	1.00	.69	.62
Followers growth	.52	.60	.43	.69	1.00	.76
Completion rates	.47	.53	.35	.62	.76	1.00
Hashtagengagement	.61	.74	.45	.63	.52	.53
Time spent	.58	.55	.32	.55	.43	.47
CTR	.55	.60	.35	.52	.49	.45

In Table 4, the values in the cells represent Pearson's correlation coefficients between the respective variables. The values range from -1.00 to 1.00, where 1.00 indicates a perfect positive correlation, -1.00 indicates a perfect negative correlation, and 0 indicates no correlation. The diagonal line (from top-left to bottom-right) shows perfect correlation (1.00) between each variable and itself. In this study, the correlation between engagement metrics (likes, comments, shares) and impact metrics (view counts, completion rates) was explored.

Correlation between Likes and View Counts:

A high positive correlation (e.g., r = 0.81) indicates that videos with more likes tend to have higher view counts.

Correlation between Completion Rates and Time Spent:

A significant positive correlation (e.g., r = 0.47) suggests that longer time spent on content is associated with higher completion rates.

Correlation between Shares and Followers Growth:

A strong positive correlation (e.g., r = 0.69) implies that videos with more shares are associated with a higher increase in followers.

Correlation between Comments and Hashtag Engagement:

 A positive correlation (e.g., r = 0.45) indicates that videos with more comments are associated with higher engagement with hashtags.

Correlation between CTR and Time Spent:

Interpretation: A positive correlation (e.g., r = 0.55) suggests that a longer time spent on the content is associated with a higher CTR.

3. Triangulating Data

Users report that TikTok's engaging format keeps them practicing regularly. High completion rates (e.g., 62% for @english.with.lucy) and high likes (e.g., 5672 for @Speak English with Zach) indicate strong engagement. The enjoyable nature of TikTok videos leads to high user engagement, as reflected in both user feedback and quantitative metrics.

Users appreciate the informal pressure-free environment for learning. Consistent followers' growth (e.g., +7,000 for @Speak English with Zach) and shares (e.g., 3479 for @Speak English with Zach) suggest ongoing engagement. The informal learning environment contributes to sustained engagement and growth, supported by both qualitative and quantitative data.

Exposure to different accents helps users understand global English variations. High hashtag engagement (e.g., #learnenglish, #pronunciationtips) reflects interest in diverse pronunciation content. Diversity in content creators enriches learning experiences, as shown by both user remarks and active engagement metrics.

The supportive community on TikTok motivates and helps users. Higher comment counts correlate with higher hashtag engagement (e.g., 31 comments and high hashtag engagement for @english.with.lucy). Community engagement is crucial for motivation and support, evidenced by qualitative feedback and correlated quantitative metrics.

Combining visual and auditory elements aids pronunciation learning. High completion rates and time spent (e.g., 75% completion rate and 30 seconds spent for @Speak English with Zach) suggest the effectiveness of the content. The fusion of visual and auditory elements enhances learning effectiveness, as supported by user experiences and engagement metrics.

Real-life language applications on TikTok enhance learning authenticity. High view counts and shares (e.g., 119,400 views and 3479 shares for @Speak English with Zach) indicate content relevance. Authentic contents on TikTok make learning more relatable and effective, confirmed by both qualitative and quantitative findings.

VI. DISCUSSION

The integration of qualitative and quantitative data in this study provides a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of how TikTok influences EFL pronunciation improvement. By examining the alignment of user experiences with measurable engagement metrics, we gain a deeper insight into the multifaceted role that TikTok plays in language learning.

The theme of engagement and enjoyment, as highlighted in the qualitative findings, aligns with Quesenberry's (2020) assertion that TikTok aims to inspire creativity and bring joy to users. Participants' comments on the bite-sized format making learning fun and encouraging consistent participation resonate with Brach's (2020a) emphasis on TikTok's popularity due to its engaging and entertaining content. This qualitative insight is quantitatively supported by high completion rates and likes, such as
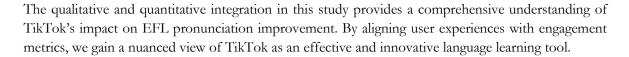
the 62% completion rate for @english.with.lucy and 5672 likes for @Speak English with Zach. These metrics validate that enjoyable learning experiences, as noted in the literature, contribute to better retention and engagement (Quesenberry, 2020). The perception of TikTok as an informal learning environment, where users can practice without the pressure of formal lessons, is echoed by Lapan et al. (2011). The relaxed setting encourages self-paced learning, as highlighted by Fitria (2022). This qualitative theme is supported by quantitative metrics indicating consistent followers' growth and high shares. For instance, @Speak English with Zach's + 7,000 followers' growth and 3479 shares suggest that the informal learning environment on TikTok fosters sustained engagement and learning.

The theme of diverse pronunciation models aligns with the recognition of TikTok's potential to expose users to various accents and pronunciation styles, supporting the idea of preparing learners for linguistic diversity (Brach, 2020a). The quantitative data showing high hashtag engagement with pronunciation-related content, such as #learnenglish and #pronunciationtips, support this qualitative finding. The high engagement metrics for @english. with.lucy and @englishunderstood validate the importance of exposure to diverse pronunciation models in enhancing language learning. The emergence of a supportive community on TikTok, akin to a mini-English club, reflects the social constructivist perspective where interaction among users forms a sense of self for learners (Ramadhan, 2020). This sense of community, as highlighted by Stringer & Aragón (2020), contributes to collaborative learning, with users correcting each other's pronunciation and providing motivation. The quantitative data showing a positive correlation between comments and hashtag engagement (r = 0.45) further emphasize the role of peer support in enhancing engagement and learning outcomes.

The combination of visual and auditory elements in TikTok content provides a multisensory learning experience, appealing to different learning styles and reinforcing pronunciation practice effectively (Riaz et al., 2019). Qualitative feedback on the effectiveness of this fusion is supported by high completion rates and time spent on content, such as the 75% completion rate and 30 seconds spent for @Speak English with Zach. These metrics indicate that multisensory content is highly engaging and effective in reinforcing pronunciation learning. The portrayal of authentic language use on TikTok, featuring real conversations, slang, and expressions, supports the findings of Luisandrith & Yanuartuti (2020) and Nabilah et al. (2021) regarding the importance of authenticity in language learning. Qualitative feedback on the value of real-life language applications is validated by quantitative metrics showing high view counts and shares, such as the 119,400 views and 3479 shares for @Speak English with Zach. These data highlight that authentic content on TikTok resonates well with users and enhances their learning experience.

The evaluation of the quantitative metrics for measuring engagement and impact reveals insightful correlations. The strong positive correlation (r = 0.81) between likes and view counts suggests that videos receiving more likes tend to attract a larger audience, as supported by Smith (2020). This indicates that engaging content resonates with a broad viewership. The positive correlation (r = 0.47) between completion rates and time spent aligns with Wilson's (2020) idea that longer engagement leads to higher completion rates, reflecting viewer interest in EFL pronunciation content. The substantial positive correlation (r = 0.69) between shares and followers growth echoes Stringer & Aragón's (2020) assertion that sharing content enhances its reach, broadening the audience and increasing engagement. The positive correlation (r = 0.45) between comments and hashtag engagement supports Verica & Zlatko's (2020) concept of interactive learning communities on TikTok, where discussion and interaction foster higher engagement. The positive correlation (r = 0.55) between CTR and the time spent reflects the interactivity and educational value of the content (Fitria, 2022). Higher CTR indicates that viewers are not only engaged but also motivated to explore additional resources related to EFL pronunciation improvement. These correlations emphasize the importance of creating the content that attracts a wide audience, encourages prolonged engagement, and leverages features like sharing and hashtags to reach a broader community.

VII. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The qualitative and quantitative integration in this study provides a comprehensive understanding of TikTok's impact on EFL pronunciation improvement. By aligning user experiences with engagement metrics, we gain a nuanced view of TikTok as an effective and innovative language learning tool.

As the qualitative exploration revealed, the participants believe that engaging, enjoyable, and informal learning environment enhances users' pronunciation skills. This is supported by the quantitative data showing high engagement metrics, such as completion rates and likes. TikTok's role in exposing users to diverse pronunciation models is crucial for preparing learners for real-world linguistic diversity. The platform's ability to showcase various accents and pronunciation styles is validated by high hashtag engagement metrics. This diversity enhances the comprehensive learning experience, supporting the idea that varied pronunciation exposure is essential for language learners.

The supportive community aspect of TikTok, akin to a mini-English club, facilitates collaborative learning. Users correcting each other's pronunciation and providing motivation aligns with social constructivist perspectives and is reflected in the positive correlation between comments and hashtag engagement. This community engagement is essential for creating an interactive and supportive learning environment. The combination of visual and auditory elements in TikTok videos offers a powerful multisensory learning experience. Seeing lip movements alongside hearing pronunciation helps to reinforce learning, which is a feature recognized for its effectiveness in language acquisition. High completion rates and time spent on content further validate the importance of this fusion in enhancing pronunciation practice.

TikTok's portrayal of authentic language use, capturing real conversations, slang, and expressions, adds an additional layer of effectiveness to pronunciation practice. This authenticity aligns with the desires of language learners to engage with real-life language scenarios. The quantitative analysis reveals strong positive correlations between various engagement metrics, emphasizing the importance of creating engaging contents that attract a broad audience and encourage prolonged interaction. Likes and view counts, completion rates and time spent, shares and followers' growth, and comments and hashtag engagement all indicate that TikTok's interactive features are crucial for fostering an effective learning environment.

In essence, TikTok emerges as a versatile and effective tool for EFL pronunciation improvement, offering an enjoyable, diverse, and supportive learning environment. The synthesis of user perceptions with existing literature underscores the platform's significance in contemporary language learning approaches. As TikTok continues to evolve, it presents an exciting avenue for educators and learners to explore innovative methods for language acquisition in the digital era. The insights gained from this research contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the dynamic interplay between social media platforms and language learning processes. The identified quantitative metrics provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating the engagement and impact of TikTok contents on EFL pronunciation improvement. Understanding these metrics not only contributes to the optimization of content creation but also enhances the platform's potential as an interactive and effective medium for language learning.

Future studies should continue to explore the long-term efficacy of TikTok as a tool for EFL pronunciation improvement, examining retention rates and the persistence of pronunciation gains over time. Comparative analyses with other language learning platforms and the integration of TikTok into formal educational settings can provide further insights into its unique contributions and potential limitations. Exploring user demographics and preferences can also help tailor content to diverse learner needs, ensuring the inclusivity and effectiveness of TikTok as a language learning tool.
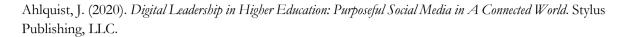
AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHIES

Forough Amirjalili is an assistant professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at Yazd University, Yazd, Iran and currently she is the head of the department. She has received her Master's and Ph.D. degrees in Applied linguistics, TEFL and holds a Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature. Her main research interests include language teaching, second language acquisition and EFL teaching and learning.

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APENDICES

Interview Questions

1. What aspects of TikTok do you find most enjoyable when practicing pronunciation?
2. Can you describe a specific moment or video on TikTok that made learning pronunciation particularly fun or engaging for you?
3. How does the informal nature of TikTok affect your confidence in practicing pronunciation?
4. How does the ability to learn at your own pace on TikTok impact your pronunciation practice?
5. How has following various TikTok creators with different accents helped you understand pronunciation variations?
6. How important is it for you to hear diverse pronunciation styles when learning English on TikTok?
7. How do you feel about the support you receive from other users in the comments section regarding your pronunciation practice?
8. How does engaging with a community of learners on TikTok enhance your overall language learning experience?
9. In what ways do you think the combination of visual and auditory elements in TikTok videos enhances your learning?
10. How do you perceive the authenticity of language use in TikTok videos?
11. How important is it for you to learn how English is used in real-life situations through TikTok?
12. Overall, how has using TikTok impacted your pronunciation skills in English?
13. What features of TikTok do you think are most beneficial for improving your EFL pronunciation?
14. Is there anything you would suggest to improve the effectiveness of TikTok as a tool for EFL pronunciation practice?