

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENTS' EXPOSURE TO ENGLISH CONTENT ON TIKTOK AND THEIR SPEAKING CONFIDENCE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the correlation between exposure to English-language content on TikTok and the speaking confidence of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learner. In the digital age, platforms like TikTok offer abundant informal exposure to authentic English input, yet its specific impact on affective factors like speaking confidence remains underexplored. Using a quantitative correlational design, data were collected via a questionnaire from 157 undergraduate students in the English Education Department at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur. The instruments demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.91). Data analysis using Spearman's rho revealed a significant positive correlation between the frequency of watching English TikTok content and self-reported speaking confidence ($r = 0.608$, $p < 0.001$). The findings suggest that even passive, informal exposure to English on social media is associated with higher levels of speaking confidence among learners. This study concludes that TikTok can serve as a supplementary informal learning resource that positively influences the affective domain of language learning. It recommends that educators acknowledge and potentially guide students' use of such platforms to foster a more confident learning environment.

Keywords: Digital Media, English as a Foreign Language, Informal Learning, Speaking Confidence, TikTok

INTRODUCTION

Language learning has completely changed as a result of social media and technological advancements. TikTok, a popular site, provides a huge collection of short-form videos, including a substantial amount of English-language content covering daily life, education, and entertainment (Rasyid et al., 2023). This setting

gives learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) constant, unstructured exposure to real language input, which may improve vocabulary, pronunciation, and general language receptivity (Setiawan, Yusuf, Hamzani, & Agustina, 2024). Speaking confidence is a crucial emotional component in EFL learning that influences a learner's propensity to engage and communicate. Low confidence is a significant obstacle to speaking proficiency because students who lack confidence frequently avoid speaking engagements while having sufficient linguistic knowledge (Hongsa, Wathawatthana, & Yonwilad, 2023).

The abundant and interesting informal English input seen on sites like TikTok should inevitably lead to better affective results, according to the expectation or ideal condition in language learning. Theoretically, regular exposure to understandable, real English in a relaxed, enjoyable setting should lessen language anxiety, acquaint students with natural speech patterns, and ultimately boost their confidence while speaking. These easily accessible digital tools could be used by both educators and students to enhance formal education and promote more self-assured speaking skills.

However, the reality that many EFL learners—especially university students—observe paints a different image. Despite being exposed to English-language content on TikTok on a regular basis, their involvement is primarily passive and consists of viewing videos rather than producing content or using language interactively. It is still unclear and difficult to quantify how this passive intake directly affects psychological concepts like speaking confidence. Additionally, previous studies have mostly concentrated on qualitative investigations of students' motivations or perceptions of TikTok (Rasyid et al., 2023), leaving a quantitative evaluation of the relationship between exposure and tangible affective outcomes like speaking confidence unexplored.

This situation shows an obvious disparity between the empirical knowledge of TikTok's true influence on important learning variables and its potential pedagogical value as an informal learning tool. In particular, there is a dearth of quantitative research on the relationship between university-level EFL learners' self-reported speaking confidence and the frequency of exposure to English-language TikTok content. By going beyond perceptual research to empirically investigate this link, our work aims to close this gap. Based on the identified gap, this study aims to answer the following question: Is there a significant correlation between students' exposure to English content on TikTok and their speaking confidence?

The findings of this research are expected to yield both theoretical and practical benefits: theoretical Significance: By establishing a connection between exposure to digital media and affective learning outcomes, this study advances EFL research. It advances our theoretical knowledge of how students' emotional

and psychological preparedness for English communication is influenced by informal exposure (via TikTok). Then, practical Significance for Educators: This study provides instructors and educators with evidence on how TikTok might be incorporated, or at the very least taken into consideration, as an informal learning resource to promote students' speaking engagement. Teachers may be able to create tactics that make use of students' current media habits if they have a better understanding of this link. Significance for Students: this study enables students to see how their daily actions, including watching English-language TikTok videos, can have a significant impact on their language progress. Acknowledging this possibility can motivate people to watch English-language media more deliberately and transform entertainment into educational possibilities

LITERATURE REVIEW

With TikTok becoming a major source of authentic English input for EFL learners, social media platforms have developed into important venues for informal language learning. Its brief video format offers regular and interesting exposure to the target language in a variety of contexts, including everyday life, education, and entertainment (Rasyid et al., 2023). According to research, this exposure can help with speaking related supplementary skills like vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, and familiarity with native pronunciation patterns (Rasyid et al., 2023; Yulita & Hertiki, 2023). However, the bulk of existing studies has centered on learners' perceptions of TikTok's utility and motivational appeal, leaving the investigation of measurable, particularly affective, learning outcomes relatively underexplored. The specific impact of **passive exposure**—consuming content without active production—on psychological constructs like confidence remains a notable gap in the empirical literature.

One well-known emotional filter that significantly affects a learner's willingness to communicate and perform well in oral tasks is speaking confidence. While students who lack confidence may refrain from participating even when they possess sufficient information, those who possess confidence are more likely to take linguistic risks and participate in speaking opportunities (Hongsa et al., 2023). Confidence has historically been viewed as the result of organized, active practice, such as speaking exercises and classroom interventions (Tauchid et al., 2024). Additionally, studies on the use of digital media in language acquisition highlight its capacity to lower anxiety and increase motivation, both of which are essential for the development of speaking abilities (Syamsudin et al., 2025). Nevertheless, these studies have not isolated **speaking confidence** as a primary variable nor examined its connection to the informal, habitual, and passive consumption of English media on platforms like TikTok.

Investigating the nexus between social media use and language acquisition, several studies have focused on TikTok's active integration into pedagogy. According to research, using TikTok for class projects or particular speaking assignments can have a good impact on learners' enthusiasm and speaking skill development (Nasrudin et al., 2024; Rohman & Ulfa, 2024). Based on qualitative findings, TikTok helps pupils feel less bored and gives them useful role models that can boost their confidence while speaking (Rohman & Ulfa, 2024). According to Asyifah et al. (2025) and Nasrudin et al. (2024), TikTok's perceived utility and simplicity of use for language learning, including pronunciation, are quantitatively confirmed by other studies. However, a recurring disadvantage of these insightful studies is their emphasis on active, task-based platform use or their dependence on perceptual data (attitudes, beliefs, self-reports on usefulness).

This body of literature collectively establishes TikTok as a perceived beneficial and engaging tool in the EFL ecosystem, potentially touching upon factors related to speaking. Yet, it stops short of quantitatively examining the relationship between the sheer frequency of students' every day, passive exposure to English content on TikTok and their resulting self-reported speaking confidence. Studies by Yulita & Hertiki (2023) and Rasyid et al. (2023), for instance, provide crucial foundational understanding of learner perceptions but do not analyze correlations with confidence levels. Therefore, while previous research illuminates the potential and perception of TikTok for learning, it leaves unaddressed the empirical question of whether a significant correlation exists between routine exposure and the affective outcome of speaking confidence. This study positions itself to address this precise gap by employing a quantitative correlational design to move beyond perceptions and measure the proposed relationship directly.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative correlational design to investigate the relationship between students' exposure to English-language content on TikTok and their speaking confidence. The research was conducted at the English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur (UMKT) in December 2025, a setting chosen due to students' active engagement with digital media for language learning.

The population comprised all 209 undergraduate students enrolled in the department. A random sampling technique was applied, yielding 157 respondents who completed the questionnaire, representing a response rate of approximately 75%. This sample size is deemed adequate for correlational analysis.

The primary data source was a self-administered questionnaire, designed based on a review of relevant literature to ensure content validity. The instrument consisted of two main scales: (1) a 10-item TikTok Exposure Scale measuring the frequency and nature of interaction with English content on the platform, and (2) a 10-item Speaking Confidence Scale assessing self-perceived confidence in various English-speaking situations. All items used a 4-point Likert-type response format, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree).

Data collection was administered directly to the sampled students. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The results indicated excellent internal consistency for both the TikTok Exposure scale ($\alpha = 0.919$) and the Speaking Confidence scale ($\alpha = 0.925$), well above the acceptable threshold of 0.70. Validity was addressed through careful item construction aligned with the study's theoretical framework and objectives.

Data analysis proceeded in two stages. First, descriptive statistics—including means, frequencies, percentages, and standard deviations—were calculated to summarize the participants' levels of exposure and confidence. Second, to answer the research question, a correlation analysis was performed. Preliminary tests for normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk) indicated that the data were not normally distributed ($p < 0.05$). Consequently, the non-parametric Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was used to determine the strength, direction, and statistical significance of the relationship between the two variables.

It is important to note the limitations of this methodological approach. The study design is correlational, which identifies associations but does not establish causality. Furthermore, reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases, such as social desirability bias. The findings are also context-specific to a single institution and measure perceived confidence rather than objective speaking performance.

FINDING

This section presents the results of the data analysis conducted to answer the research question. The findings are derived from questionnaire data collected from 157 students of the English Education Department at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur (UMKT) and analyzed using SPSS.

Reliability and Descriptive Statistics

The reliability of the two research instruments was confirmed prior to analysis. As shown in Table 1, both the TikTok Exposure Scale and the Speaking Confidence Scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values far exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Cronbach, 1951).

Table 1. Reliability of Research Instruments

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
TikTok Exposure	10	0.919
Speaking Confidence	10	0.925

Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the central tendency and dispersion of the two main variables. The results, presented in Table 2, indicate that the sample exhibited a moderate to high level of both TikTok exposure and speaking confidence, with mean scores nearing the upper half of the possible range (10-40).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Main Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TikTok Exposure	157	10	40	28.45	7.02
Speaking Confidence	157	10	40	29.00	6.50

Normality and Correlation Analysis

A prerequisite test for correlation analysis was conducted to check the distribution of the data. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests yielded significance values of $p = 0.000$ for both variables, indicating a violation of the normality assumption ($p < 0.05$). Consequently, a non-parametric correlation test, Spearman's rho, was employed.

The Spearman's rho correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationship between students' exposure to English content on TikTok and their speaking confidence. The result, as summarized in Table 3, reveals a statistically significant positive correlation.

Table 3. Spearman's Rho Correlation Result

Variable 1	Variable 2	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value	N
TikTok Exposure	Speaking Confidence	0.608	0.000	157

The correlation coefficient of $r = 0.608$ with a **p-value of 0.000** ($p < 0.01$) signifies a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between the two variables (Cohen, 1988). This finding directly answers the research question, indicating that higher levels of exposure to English content on TikTok are associated with higher levels of self-reported speaking confidence among the students in this sample.

DISCUSSION

This study provides empirical evidence supporting a significant positive correlation between EFL learners' passive exposure to English-language content on TikTok and their self-reported speaking confidence ($r = 0.608$, $p < 0.001$). This finding validates the central hypothesis and offers a quantitative contribution to the discourse on informal digital language learning.

The result aligns with and extends the existing body of research on digital media in language acquisition. While prior studies have established TikTok's benefits for tangible skills like vocabulary and pronunciation (Rasyid et al., 2023; Yulita & Hertiki, 2023) and its role in reducing anxiety within structured, active learning tasks (Syamsudin et al., 2025; Siregar et al., 2025), this study highlights the **affective gains from passive consumption**. The correlation suggests that routine, low-pressure viewing of engaging, authentic content can foster a sense of familiarity and comfort with the language. This mechanism resonates with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, positing that such enjoyable exposure may lower the "filter" of anxiety, thereby creating a more conducive internal state for language acquisition and willingness to communicate, even without active production.

Furthermore, this finding corroborates research linking TikTok to positive psychological dispositions. Studies on motivation and self-efficacy, such as those by Hidayat & Lolita (2025) and Frans et al. (2025), which note the platform's confidence-boosting and anxiety-reducing effects, provide a plausible explanatory framework for our statistical relationship. Crucially, our study advances beyond the perceptual data dominant in earlier works (e.g., Nasrudin et al., 2024; Asyifah et al., 2025) by demonstrating a measurable statistical link between a specific online behavior (exposure frequency) and a key affective outcome (speaking confidence).

However, the moderate-to-strong correlation indicates that passive exposure is a significant, but not solitary, contributor to speaking confidence. Alternative explanations for the relationship must be considered. A reciprocal dynamic is plausible, where learners with higher initial confidence may be more inclined to seek out English content. Additionally, confounding variables not measured in this study—such as overall English proficiency, general social media

usage patterns, or personality traits like extraversion—could simultaneously influence both exposure habits and confidence levels.

The study's limitations frame the interpretation of these findings and chart a course for future inquiry. First, the correlational design precludes causal inferences; it remains undetermined whether exposure enhances confidence, confidence drives exposure, or a third variable influences both. Second, reliance on self-reported data introduces the potential for social desirability bias. Third, the use of a sample from a single English Education department limits the generalizability of the findings to other EFL contexts or learner populations with different backgrounds and motivations.

Despite these limitations, the findings carry important implications. Practically, they suggest that educators can acknowledge and potentially harness students' everyday digital habits by encouraging more conscious and purposeful viewing of English content, thereby bridging informal and formal learning spheres. Theoretically, the study underscores the significant role of affective factors in technology-mediated informal learning environments, lending empirical support to models of incidental language acquisition. Future research should employ longitudinal or experimental designs to explore causality, incorporate objective measures of speaking performance, and examine these relationships across more diverse learner demographics.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to investigate the correlation between students' exposure to English content on TikTok and their speaking confidence. The findings provide a clear answer: there is a **significant, positive, and moderate-to-strong correlation** between the two variables. This confirms that higher levels of passive exposure to English-language content on TikTok are associated with higher levels of self-reported speaking confidence among EFL learners.

The primary contribution of this research lies in its quantitative demonstration of a link between a specific, everyday digital behavior and a key affective factor in language learning. It moves beyond studies of perception and instructional use, offering empirical evidence that even passive engagement with social media can be meaningfully related to learners' psychological readiness to speak.

For practice, this implies that students' informal digital habits hold potential value for language development. Educators are encouraged to acknowledge this potential and explore ways to guide students toward more conscious engagement with such content. Theoretically, the result lends support to models emphasizing the role of low-anxiety, comprehensible input and incidental learning in language acquisition.

Despite its correlational nature, which precludes causal claims, this study firmly establishes a significant relationship worthy of further exploration. Future research should aim to establish causality and investigate the mechanisms behind this link across more diverse learning contexts.

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