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The Use of TikTok to Improve Eighth-Grade Students' Speaking Skills in a Digital Class at MTsN 1 Kota Palu

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of using TikTok as an interactive learning medium to improve the English speaking skills of eighth-grade students in the digital class at MTsN 1 Kota Palu. A quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test control group design was applied. The population consisted of all eighth-grade students at MTsN 1 Kota Palu in the 2025/2026 academic year, with a sample of 63 students selected via purposive sampling. Class VIII D (31 students) was selected as the experimental group and Class VIII E (32 students) as the control group. The experimental group received short-form video learning treatment using TikTok across four meetings, while the control group received conventional digital classroom instruction. Data were collected through oral speaking tests and evaluated using an analytical rubric assessing four core components: fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. The Independent Samples T-test results revealed a statistically significant difference between the two groups ($t(61) = 4.745, p < .001$), with the experimental group's post-test mean score (72.26) being significantly higher than that of the control group (59.53). These findings indicate that short TikTok videos provide authentic phonetic models and foster active communicative speaking practice aligned with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles. Consequently, integrating short-form video media offers a practical and effective strategy for educators and schools looking to optimize digital classroom infrastructure for enhanced oral proficiency.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language learning encompasses four fundamental skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, each playing a vital role in developing overall language proficiency [1]. Among these, speaking is widely regarded as a crucial skill because it functions as the

primary medium for interpersonal communication and interaction [1], [2]. Brown [3] emphasizes that speaking enables individuals to convey ideas, thoughts, and emotions verbally across diverse contexts, making it an interactive process of producing, receiving, and processing information. Furthermore, Zebua et al. [4] note that effective speaking proficiency often reflects a learner's overall language mastery.

Despite its critical importance, mastering speaking skills remains a significant challenge for language learners globally and in Indonesia [5], [6]. Students frequently struggle with linguistic obstacles such as limited vocabulary and inadequate mastery of grammatical rules, compounded by psychological barriers like anxiety and low self-confidence that severely hinder their willingness to communicate [7], [8]. In classroom settings, traditional instructional practices relying heavily on conventional media often fail to foster active engagement, exacerbating student hesitation and low motivation [9], [10]. Consequently, scholars emphasize that the integration of interactive learning media is paramount to capture students' attention and stimulate active participation [10], [11].

To address the limitations of conventional instruction, educational institutions have increasingly turned to Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) frameworks and technology-enhanced environments [12], [13]. Integrating digital tools into speaking instruction offers flexible, interactive opportunities that lower affective filters and encourage autonomous oral production [11], [14]. Locally, MTsN 1 Kota Palu has pioneered a digital classroom initiative under the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Digital Class program, equipping classrooms with modern hardware such as laptops and televisions to reduce textbook reliance [15]. However, digital infrastructure and passive media exposure alone are insufficient if students lack structured opportunities for real, interactive practice [16]. Despite regular exposure to digital instructional videos, students at MTsN 1 Kota Palu often remain hesitant and reluctant to speak English, demonstrating that passive media consumption does not automatically translate into active communicative competence [16].

Bridging this gap requires leveraging social media platforms that naturally appeal to digital-native learners [17]. Recent literature highlights that short-form video applications, particularly TikTok, offer unique pedagogical advantages by delivering brief, high-impact content that facilitates repetitive oral practice, peer modeling, and interactive features [18], [22]. While prior studies have acknowledged TikTok's potential in improving pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and confidence [19], [20], the existing body of research predominantly employs qualitative, mixed-method, or classroom action research designs, leaving a distinct methodological and pedagogical void regarding its rigorous quantitative evaluation within formal junior high school digital classrooms.

Theoretically grounded in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles [23], this study addresses this critical gap by examining the pedagogical utility of TikTok as an interactive microlearning tool. Unlike previous investigations such as Setiowati et al. [25], who integrated TikTok into project-based learning, or Yanti and Priatmojo [26], who examined broad speaking aspects without digital classroom constraints, this research specifically isolates core productive speaking components (fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar) within a quasi-experimental digital classroom setting. By structuring video-based observation, individual oral rehearsal, and immediate teacher

feedback, this study demonstrates how familiar mobile applications can systematically transform passive digital infrastructure into active oral production.

To guide this investigation, this study addresses the following research question: "Is there a significant difference in English speaking skills between eighth-grade students taught using TikTok and those taught using conventional digital classroom media in the digital class at MTsN 1 Kota Palu?" Accordingly, the hypothesis posits that the implementation of TikTok produces a statistically significant improvement in students' speaking performance. Ultimately, this research contributes both practical insights for educators adopting mobile technologies and empirical evidence to the literature on social media-assisted language learning.

2. METHOD

This study applied a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test control group design [28], [29]. The objective of this design was to evaluate the effectiveness of integrating TikTok as an interactive learning medium in improving students' speaking skills. Two classes participated in the study, where the experimental group received speaking instruction using TikTok videos, while the control group received instruction through conventional digital classroom media without the integration of TikTok.

The study was conducted at MTsN 1 Kota Palu, Central Sulawesi, during the 2025/2026 academic year. The research population comprised all eighth-grade students at the institution during the academic year, totaling 288 students distributed across eight classes (VIII A to VIII H), consisting of four regular classes and four digital classes. Purposive sampling was employed based on specific pedagogical criteria to ensure group comparability: academic similarity determined by equivalent prior English achievement scores (mid-term grade averages showing no statistically significant baseline variance), identical curriculum baselines, equal instructional hours per week, and instruction by the same English teacher to eliminate teacher-effect confounding variables [28]. Consequently, a sample of 63 students from two digital classes was selected: Class VIII D (31 students) as the experimental group and Class VIII E (32 students) as the control group. The independent variable (X) was the implementation of TikTok in English-speaking instruction, while the dependent variable (Y) was the students' speaking skills.

Primary data were collected directly from students' oral speaking test performances, utilizing pre-test scores as baseline measurements and post-test scores as final evaluation after treatment. The intervention was conducted across four structured instructional meetings utilizing short-form video microlearning. Although relatively brief, this four-meeting duration was pedagogically justified by the intensive microlearning nature of short-form video instruction, which delivers concentrated, high-frequency linguistic input and rapid task-rehearsal cycles suitable for focused skill acquisition without causing cognitive fatigue or violating strict school curriculum scheduling constraints [34]. At the beginning of the treatment, students in the experimental group were introduced to various educational English learning content creators on TikTok (such as @englishbyjay, @jayfujiwara, @aaronsenglish, and @yuki.english) to demonstrate how the platform can be effectively utilized for English learning. In each meeting, the teacher presented one instructional TikTok

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video aligned with the current learning topic, lasting between 1 and 2 minutes. The video was played 3 times to ensure comprehension. Following the video model, students created their own oral performance versions based on the content, practiced individually, and presented their performance one by one in front of the class to receive immediate constructive feedback from the teacher. Conversely, the control group followed conventional digital classroom instruction using standard digital presentation media without TikTok activities.

Data were collected through oral speaking tests administered as a pre-test and post-test to measure initial performance and subsequent progress. Regarding the assessment task formats, while the pre-test utilized a structured individual oral interview (inquiring about personal backgrounds, favorite subjects, and daily activities) to establish baseline controlled speaking performance under uniform prompting, the post-test employed an interactive paired conversational dialogue focused on practical language functions (e.g., recounting past activities and daily routines like "What Did We Do Yesterday?") to evaluate collaborative communicative performance aligned with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles. Although differing in interactive complexity, both assessment formats were evaluated using the exact same analytical rubric, ensuring that core productive speaking dimensions were measured consistently across both stages.

Prior to administration, the research speaking test instrument and rubric underwent rigorous content validity evaluation through expert judgment by Ruslin and Hijrah Syam, who verified contextual appropriateness, construct validity, and alignment with national curriculum standards [30], [31]. Furthermore, to ensure scoring consistency, inter-rater reliability was established by having both independent expert raters evaluate student oral performances, yielding a high inter-rater reliability coefficient ($r = 0.88, p < 0.01$).

To evaluate speaking performance, students' oral responses were scored using an analytical speaking rubric adapted from Kuvera et al. [32]. While Kuvera et al. originally evaluated five speaking components, this study selectively adapted four core components directly aligned with the research focus: fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.

Table 1. Scoring Rubric

Component	Score 5 (Excellent)	Score 4 (Good)	Score 3 (Fair)	Score 2 (Poor)	Score 1 (Very Poor)
Fluency	Speaks fluently without unnatural pauses; natural speech rate and rhythm.	Speaks fluently with occasional hesitations to select words, without disrupting communication.	Moderately fluent; frequent hesitations and brief pauses, but the main message is conveyed.	Speaks slowly and haltingly; long pauses severely disrupt listener comprehension.	Speaks with extreme hesitation; unable to complete full sentences.
Pronunciation	Pronunciation is clear, accurate, and easy to understand;	Pronunciation is clear and generally understandable; minor errors	Pronunciation is moderately clear; several phoneme/intonatio	Pronunciation is frequently incorrect and heavily native-accented;	Pronunciation is extremely unclear, making speech

Component	Score 5 (Excellent)	Score 4 (Good)	Score 3 (Fair)	Score 2 (Poor)	Score 1 (Very Poor)
	natural intonation and stress.	that do not alter meaning.	n errors require concentration.	difficult to understand.	completely unintelligible.
Vocabulary	Uses a broad, contextually appropriate range of vocabulary with rich meaning.	Accurate and varied word choices; minor usage errors that do not alter meaning.	Limited vocabulary but adequate for basic ideas; occasionally uses inappropriate words.	Very limited vocabulary; excessive word repetition due to difficulty selecting terms.	Extremely minimal vocabulary; insufficient for basic communication .
Grammar	Highly accurate grammar; correctly utilizes both simple and complex sentence structures.	Generally accurate grammar; minor errors in complex structures without obscuring meaning	Good control of simple sentence structures; frequent errors in complex structures.	Frequent grammatical errors even in simple structures; significantly impedes comprehension .	No mastery of basic grammar; sentence patterns are completely unstructured.

Each component was rated on a 1–5 scale, yielding a total raw score ranging from a minimum of 4 to a maximum of 20. To convert the total raw score into a standard 100-point scale, the following conversion formula was utilized:

$$\text{Final Score} = \left(\frac{\text{Obtained Raw Score}}{\text{Maximum Score}}\right) \times 100$$

The converted final scores were then classified into five performance levels: Very Poor (<40), Poor (40–54), Fair (55–69), Good (70–84), and Excellent (85–100).

The pre-test and post-test scores were quantitatively analyzed using SPSS Version 26 through descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. To account more directly for baseline performance variations alongside independent samples t-tests, gain-score analysis (calculating score differentials between post-test and pre-test) was incorporated. Prior to testing research hypotheses, parametric assumption tests were performed: the Shapiro-Wilk normality test ($p > 0.05$ indicating a normal distribution) and Levene's test of homogeneity ($p > 0.05$ confirming equal variances). Hypothesis testing was carried out using the Independent Samples T-test at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. Furthermore, to measure the practical magnitude of the intervention's impact, effect size was explicitly calculated and reported using Cohen's d ($d = 1.20$, indicating a very large effect size). A two-tailed significance value ($p < 0.05$) resulted in the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0) and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H_a).

Finally, ethical considerations were strictly maintained throughout the research process. The study was conducted with official institutional permission from MTsN 1 Kota Palu. Informed assent and consent were obtained from participating students and school authorities, ensuring data confidentiality, voluntary participation, and instructional equity across both experimental and control classes.

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3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the empirical findings obtained from the data analysis, including sample baseline profiles, descriptive statistics, parametric assumption test results, and hypothesis testing outcomes, followed by a comprehensive discussion interpreting these findings within relevant pedagogical frameworks.

3.1. Pre- and Post-test Results

The study examined a total sample of 63 eighth-grade students at MTsN 1 Kota Palu distributed into two learning conditions: Class VIII D (31 students) as the experimental group receiving TikTok-based microlearning instruction, and Class VIII E (32 students) as the control group receiving conventional digital classroom instruction. Prior to the instructional intervention, a pre-test was administered to evaluate the baseline English speaking skills of students in both classes. The experimental group obtained a mean score of $M = 50.48$ ($SD = 8.694$), while the control group obtained a mean score of $M = 49.69$ ($SD = 11.566$). As detailed in Table 2, the minimal mean difference of 0.79 points indicates that students in both learning conditions possessed comparable baseline speaking abilities prior to the integration of TikTok.

Table 2. Pre-test Scores of Experimental and Control Class

Class	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test Experimental	31	30	70	50.48	8.694
Pre-test Control	32	25	70	49.69	11.566

Following four treatment sessions, a post-test was conducted to measure changes in speaking performance resulting from the respective teaching media. As presented in Table 3, the experimental group taught using TikTok achieved a post-test mean score of $M = 72.26$ ($SD = 10.555$, with scores ranging from 50 to 95). In contrast, the control group taught using conventional digital classroom media achieved a lower post-test mean score of $M = 59.53$ ($SD = 10.728$, with scores ranging from 40 to 80). Comparison of the post-test scores reveals a mean difference of 12.73 points favoring the experimental class, demonstrating a notable descriptive enhancement in speaking achievement among students who learned through short-form TikTok videos. Furthermore, a granular evaluation across the four individual speaking components assessed by the analytical rubric, namely fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, revealed that the experimental group demonstrated substantial score gains across all dimensions, with pronunciation and fluency exhibiting the most prominent improvements due to repetitive listening and imitation of authentic phonetic models.

Table 3. Post-test Scores of Experimental and Control Class

Class	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Post-test Experimental	31	50	95	72.26	10.555
Post-test Control	32	40	80	59.53	10.728

3.2. Tests of Normality

Prior to conducting parametric hypothesis testing, assumption tests were performed. A normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk test verified whether the datasets from both groups were normally distributed.

Table 4. Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test

No	Class	Statistic	df	Sig.	Interpretation
1	Pre-test Experimental	.964	31	.369	Normal distribution
2	Post-test Experimental	.979	31	.788	Normal distribution
3	Pre-test Control	.961	32	.288	Normal distribution
4	Post-test Control	.967	32	.409	Normal distribution

Based on the Shapiro-Wilk test presented in Table 4, the significance values (p-values) for the TikTok experimental group were .369 for the pre-test and .788 for the post-test, while for the control group, the values were .288 for the pre-test and .409 for the post-test. Because all significance values exceeded the 0.05 threshold ($p > 0.05$), the speaking performance data for both groups met the normal distribution assumption required for parametric analysis.

3.3. Test of Homogeneity

A homogeneity test was executed using Levene's Test for Equality of Variances to determine whether score variances between the groups were equal.

Table 5. Test of Homogeneity of Variances

No	Variable	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.	Interpretation
1	Pre-test	3.243	1	61	.077	Homogeneous
2	Post-test	0.21	1	61	.886	Homogeneous

As shown in Table 5, Levene's test yielded a significance value of $p = .077$ ($F = 3.243$) for the pre-test and $p = .886$ ($F = 0.210$) for the post-test. Since both significance values were greater than 0.05, the variance in speaking performance between the two groups was confirmed to be homogeneous, satisfying the equal variance assumption.

3.4. Independent Samples Test

To empirically determine whether the integration of TikTok produced a statistically significant improvement in students' speaking skills compared to conventional digital classroom media, an Independent Samples T-test was conducted on the post-test scores.

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Table 6. Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Speaking Skills of the 8th Grade Students	Equal variances assumed	.021	.886	4.745	61	.001	12.727	2.682	7.363	18.090
	Equal variances not assumed			4.746	60.985	.001	12.727	2.681	7.365	18.089

As detailed in Table 6, under the condition of equal variances assumed, the Independent Samples T-test results are reported in standard format: $t(61) = 4.745, p < .001$, mean difference $= 12.73$, 95% CI [7.36,18.09]. The analysis demonstrated a statistically significant performance gap favoring the experimental group.

Furthermore, to evaluate the practical magnitude of the intervention, the effect size was calculated using Cohen's d, yielding $d = 1.20$. This value substantially exceeds the conventional threshold for a large effect ($d > 0.80$), confirming that the instructional treatment produced a profound practical impact on students' speaking capabilities.

Because the significance value ($p < .001$) was substantially lower than the standard alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted. This statistical decision confirms that utilizing TikTok as an interactive learning medium produces a statistically significant and large-magnitude improvement in eighth-grade students' English speaking skills compared to conventional digital classroom instruction.

3.5 Discussion

The statistical findings of this study demonstrate that integrating TikTok as an interactive learning medium significantly improves the English speaking skills of eighth-grade students in the digital class at MTsN 1 Kota Palu. Prior to the intervention, both the experimental and control groups exhibited comparable baseline abilities, as evidenced by pre-test mean scores of 50.48 and 49.69, respectively. However, following four treatment sessions, the experimental group achieved a post-test mean score of 72.26, substantially outperforming the control group's post-test mean score of 59.53. The Independent Samples T-test results ($t(61) = 4.745, p < .001$, mean difference = 12.73) confirmed a statistically significant performance gap favoring the experimental group, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0) and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H_a).

To explain why TikTok produced superior results compared to the control condition, the instructional differences between the two groups must be considered. While the control group followed conventional digital classroom instruction using standard digital presentation media (such as static slides) without interactive oral tasks, the experimental group engaged in a structured microlearning procedure [34]. Specifically, the TikTok treatment utilized short (1 to 2 minutes) authentic video clips played three times per session, followed by individual oral rehearsal and immediate teacher feedback. This structured repetition provided students in the experimental group with focused phonetic input and active communicative practice, whereas the control group relied primarily on conventional, less interactive media exposure.

The positive outcomes observed can be interpreted through the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) [23] and Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) [12], [13]. CLT emphasizes meaningful interaction as the core of language acquisition [23]. By utilizing educational content creators (@englishbyjay, @jayfujiwara, @aaronsenglish, and @yuki.english) as native models, students were exposed to authentic pronunciation, natural intonation, and contextual vocabulary. While psychological variables such as student anxiety, motivation, or cognitive overload were not directly quantified via psychometric testing in this study, theoretical literature suggests that bite-sized, entertaining short-form video formats may help lower perceived performance pressure compared to traditional front-of-class recitation [33], thereby encouraging more active student participation.

Regarding the specific analytical dimensions evaluated in the rubric fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar [32] score trends indicated general improvement across all assessed components following the treatment. Furthermore, no unexpected or contradictory anomalies emerged; all evaluated components displayed uniform positive progression without isolated negative shifts. The scoring rubric observations reveal that repetitive listening and imitation of video models supported students in refining phonetic clarity (pronunciation) and reducing hesitation (fluency), [19], [20], while visual context aided appropriate word choice (vocabulary) and sentence construction (grammar).

These empirical outcomes corroborate and expand upon prior literature. The findings align with Rahmawati et al. [20] and Lee and Kim [19], who noted that short-form video learning supports learners' oral proficiency development. Similarly, the results reinforce the positive engagement reported in qualitative and action research by Setiowati et al. [25] and Kusumah et al. [27]. Crucially, the primary novelty of this study lies in its methodological contribution. Unlike previous qualitative or descriptive works, this research provides robust quantitative, quasi-experimental evidence within the specific context of an Islamic junior high school digital class (smart class initiative under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, [15]), demonstrating how existing hardware infrastructure can be optimized through interactive mobile media.

Implications of the Study

From a practical perspective, the findings yield meaningful implications directly linked to the intervention procedure. For EFL teachers, incorporating short-form video

segments into classroom routines specifically through a structured cycle of short video modeling (1–2 minutes, repeated multiple times), individual oral rehearsal, and immediate constructive feedback offers a practical, low-cost method to foster active speaking practice without disrupting the core curriculum. For school administrators at MTsN 1 Kota Palu and similar institutions, these results indicate that investing in digital hardware (laptops and smart TVs) must be accompanied by interactive pedagogical media and teacher training in mobile-assisted tasks to transition away from passive digital consumption toward active communicative competence.

Limitations of the Study

While this research presents encouraging findings, several methodological limitations must be acknowledged. First, due to institutional constraints, the study utilized a quasi-experimental design with non-random sampling, which inherently carries the potential for selection bias and unaccounted confounding variables. Second, students' prior familiarity with TikTok was not strictly controlled before the intervention; students who were already frequent users of the platform off-campus might have possessed higher initial digital comfort and engagement. Third, baseline analysis revealed that the experimental group possessed a slightly higher pre-test mean score (50.48) than the control group (49.69), presenting a minor initial imbalance that could have subtly affected the post-treatment gap.

Suggestions for Future Research

To enhance academic rigor and generalizability, future research should consider employing true experimental designs with randomized participant assignment, controlling for participants' pre-existing social media usage, extending the intervention duration longitudinally across multiple schools, and investigating component-specific outcomes using multivariate statistical analyses.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to evaluate the pedagogical efficacy of integrating TikTok as an interactive learning medium to enhance the English speaking proficiency of eighth-grade students within the digital classroom environment at MTsN 1 Kota Palu. The empirical findings demonstrate that short-form TikTok video instruction significantly enhanced students' speaking performance, with the experimental group achieving a notably higher post-test mean score (72.26) compared to the control group (59.53). Directly answering the research objective, the Independent Samples T-test verified this performance gap to be statistically significant ($t(61) = 4.745, p < .001$), confirming that the implementation of TikTok successfully rejects the null hypothesis and serves as an effective tool for improving core speaking dimensions, including fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.

Theoretically, this research contributes to academic literature by demonstrating how familiar mobile applications can bridge passive media consumption and active communicative practice under a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework. Practically, the findings indicate that school investments in digital classroom hardware (such

as laptops and smart TVs) must be accompanied by dynamic interactive media and structured pedagogical guidance to foster genuine language production.

Notwithstanding these positive outcomes, the study acknowledges limitations stemming from its brief four-meeting intervention timeframe and single-institution scope. Therefore, future research should explore longitudinal retention, expand sample diversity across non-digital settings, and employ multivariate analyses to evaluate specific sub-component gains.

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