

EXPLORING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' USE OF TIKTOK FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

TikTok has recently emerged as a promising platform for fostering students' language development. Yet, empirical evidence regarding learners' acceptance of TikTok as an English language learning tool remains a scarcity. This study, therefore investigates undergraduate students' acceptance of TikTok for English language learning and identifies key factors influencing its actual use within a Saudi university context. A quantitative design was employed through the distribution of a 30-item questionnaire to 300 undergraduates at a public sector university using a Google Form survey. The instrument comprised six sections capturing respondents' demographic information, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitudes, behavioural intention, and actual use of TikTok for English language learning. Results indicated that mean scores for individual items and overall constructs ranged between 4.1 and 4.7 on a 5-point Likert scale, reflecting an above-average level of acceptance. Behavioural intention emerged as the strongest predictor of students' actual use of TikTok for English language learning. Participants expressed positive views toward the integration of TikTok into English language learning, underscoring its feasibility as a pedagogical resource in the EFL classroom. Overall, the findings affirm TikTok's potential to enrich English language instruction by expanding digital learning opportunities and supporting diverse pathways for language acquisition.

Keywords: *English language, Tik Tok, Saudi university, Saudi Arabia.*

Introduction

The higher education (HE) landscape has experienced profound shifts in recent years, particularly following the global outbreak of Covid-19. Institutions were compelled to transition abruptly from traditional face-to-face instruction to Online Distance Learning (ODL) or hybrid delivery modes, prompting both lecturers and learners to adapt swiftly to digitally mediated forms of engagement supported by social media platforms and other online educational tools. As noted by Mei and Aziz (2022) digital technologies most notably Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) and various forms of social media (SM) have become deeply embedded in HE settings. Yet, empirical evidence that clarifies how such tools directly facilitate students' pursuit of academic objectives remains limited. The expanding integration of social media into HE has paved the way for platforms like TikTok to position themselves as innovative digital learning resources capable of enriching instructional practices. Initially launched in China under the name Douyin and introduced globally as TikTok in 2017, the platform has rapidly gained traction, surpassing two billion downloads by April 2020 (Eleyana Abdullah et al., 2023). Its emergence as an educational space has been further underscored by the widespread uptake of the hashtag #LearnOnTikTok, which has accumulated over seven billion views (Alghameeti, 2022).

With its increasing prominence and perceived pedagogical value in HE, TikTok has attracted scholarly attention across various dimensions such as technology adoption, instructional innovation in English language education, and its potential to foster learners' linguistic development and proficiency (Song & Xiong, 2023). Nevertheless, as a social media-based application, it remains essential to examine TikTok's educational utility through the lens of

technology acceptance. Davis's (1989) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) continues to serve as one of the most influential frameworks for evaluating users' adoption of digital technologies (Sprenger & Schwaninger, 2021). Widely applied across diverse disciplines and cultural contexts, TAM offers a robust theoretical foundation for predicting user behaviour (Marikyan & Papagiannidis, 2023). Without a clear understanding of learners' attitudes and intentions to use such technologies, efforts to integrate them into educational environments may fall short, as technologies with low acceptance tend to be underutilized (Wilson & Anam, 2024).

Against this background, the present study seeks to explore the extent to which TikTok is accepted as a tool for English language learning (Adnan, Ramli & Ismail, 2021). The findings are expected to yield meaningful insights into TikTok's pedagogical relevance within the technology-driven Education 5.0 ecosystem, particularly in HE contexts. Additionally, the study aims to enhance awareness among educators and university students regarding the instructional affordances offered by TikTok. As an increasingly influential platform for youth-centred knowledge sharing, TikTok has begun to play a significant role in language learning and dissemination. Accordingly, this investigation contributes to a deeper understanding of TikTok's potential in the domain of English language education.

Building upon these discussions, further research is needed across interdisciplinary domains to enrich current understandings of TikTok's role in contemporary educational practices. Accordingly, the present study was formulated with two primary objectives:

1. to examine the extent to which undergraduate students accept TikTok as a tool for English language learning, and
2. to identify the factor that most strongly predicts students' actual use of TikTok in their learning processes.

In line with these aims, the study sought to address the following research questions:

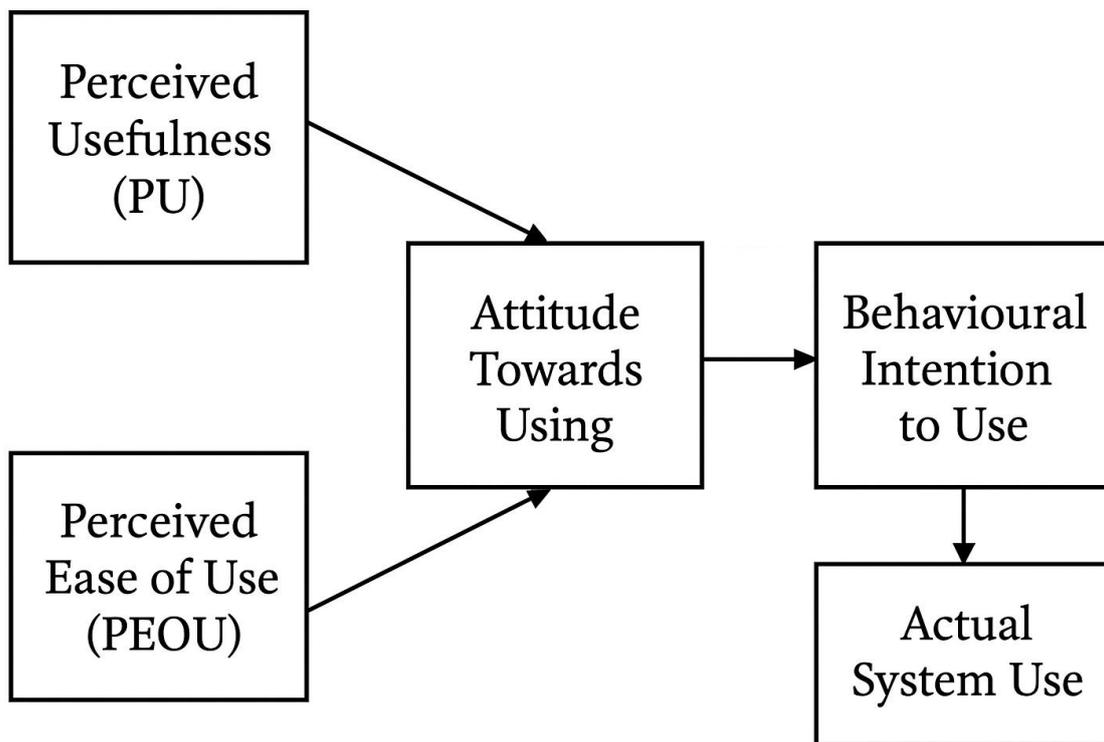
1. What is the level of acceptance of TikTok as an instructional tool for English language learning among undergraduate students?
2. Which factor exerts the strongest influence on the actual use of TikTok?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), proposed by Davis (1989), is grounded in the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) in the domain of social psychology. TRA posits that an individual's behaviour is largely determined by behavioural intention, which itself is shaped by one's attitudes toward the behaviour and the subjective norms surrounding it (Ali et al., 2025). TAM extends this framework to the context of technology adoption, suggesting that users' acceptance of a technological system is predominantly influenced by two key constructs: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Ali, 2024). As these constructs shape users' overall attitudes toward technology, TAM further proposes that behavioural intention is affected by these attitudes, thereby influencing the actual use of the system (Davis, 1989).

Figure 1 illustrates the five core components of Davis's original 1989 TAM model.



The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is composed of five foundational constructs, as shown in the preceding figure. Davis (1989) conceptualised *perceived usefulness* as the extent to which individuals believe that employing a particular technological system would improve their task performance. In contrast, *perceived ease of use* denotes the degree to which users expect that interacting with the system would require minimal effort (Davis, 1989, p. 320). Although ease of use is theorised to shape both perceived usefulness and users' attitudes toward technology, these constructs remain analytically distinct, each contributing uniquely to the development of users' evaluative judgments (Maslin, 2007). Consequently, an individual's disposition toward adopting a technology directly influences their behavioural intention to engage with it.

Behavioural intention is described by Warshaw and Davis (1985, p. 214) as the extent to which an individual formulates conscious plans to carry out or refrain from specific actions in the future. As noted by Ramayah and Ignatius (2005), this construct has proven a reliable predictor of actual technology usage. Empirical work within the social-media domain similarly demonstrates that behavioural intention has meaningful consequences for genuine system engagement (Ali, 2022).

Chen (2022, p. 1141) emphasises, successful online learning environments depend on understanding the determinants of users' intentions to adopt such platforms. Without this insight, technology integration may impede rather than enhance learning. As argued by Taherdoost (2019, p. 2), even the most sophisticated system cannot succeed if users choose not to engage with it, rendering user acceptance indispensable for effective technological deployment.

2.2. Social Media and Language Learning

Social media continues to reshape numerous dimensions of human activity, influencing communication practices, information dissemination, knowledge exchange, commercial engagement, and educational processes (Wang, bin Ahmad & Liu, 2024). In the realm of language education, the emergence of digital technologies has significantly reconfigured pedagogical trajectories worldwide (Haque, 2023). Although social networking platforms dedicated specifically to language learning constitute only one segment of broader social media services, they are intentionally designed to foster linguistic development. Yadav (2021) notes that the widespread availability of digital devices including smartphones, computers, tablets, and laptops has allowed EFL and ESL learners to engage flexibly with social media tools for language acquisition.

The integration of social media with learning theories is supported by research combining Task-Technology Fit (TTF) and TAM frameworks. Al-Maatouk et al. (2020) posited that TTF, when applied to learning through social media, shapes technological, task-related, and social characteristics that subsequently enhance learners' satisfaction and academic achievement. Their findings confirmed significant relationships among these constructs, indicating that social media, when properly aligned with learning needs, can meaningfully improve performance and learner experience. This underscores social media's increasing relevance as a pedagogical resource, particularly in the teaching and learning of languages.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Design

A quantitative research design, implemented through a survey method, was adopted for this study to systematically gather numerical data and evaluate TikTok's effectiveness as a language learning tool. As emphasised by Pandey (2025) quantitative approaches prioritise objectivity and are particularly appropriate when variables can be measured numerically and generalised from representative samples. Such designs support the collection of data in a structured and unbiased manner. Furthermore, survey-based research is widely utilised in the social sciences due to its efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and accessibility to broad respondent groups (Gürbüz, 2017).

3.2. Participants

The study involved 300 undergraduate students enrolled at Prince Sattam bin Abdul Aziz University. Participants represented three academic clusters: Science and Technology, Business and Administration, and Social Sciences and Humanities. A random sampling strategy was employed to ensure that each member of the population had an equal probability of selection.

3.3. Research Instruments

Data were collected using an online questionnaire comprising two sections. The first section contained five demographic items addressing gender, academic field, average time spent on TikTok, MUET achievement, and residence type. The second section consisted of 27 items assessing students' acceptance of TikTok for English language learning. These items were adapted from Davis's (1989) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and measured constructs including perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitude toward use, behavioural intention, and actual use. Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree."

3.4. Research Procedures

The survey was administered via Google Forms and distributed to participants through a shared online link. Upon completion, all responses were exported and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 28. Descriptive statistics were generated to summarise central tendencies, while inferential analyses were carried out using stepwise multiple regression. Reliability analysis showed a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.961 for the

questionnaire, indicating exceptionally strong internal consistency among items; values exceeding 0.88 are considered to reflect excellent reliability.

Data Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistical procedures were applied. Descriptive statistics (mean scores) were used to evaluate students' acceptance of TikTok as an English language learning tool across the TAM dimensions: usefulness, ease of use, attitude, behavioural intention, and actual use. Stepwise multiple regression was then employed to determine which TAM construct contributed most significantly to predicting actual system use. All analyses were conducted using SPSS Version 28, with the significance threshold set at $p < 0.05$.

Table 1

Perceived Usefulness of TikTok for English Language Learning

Item No.	Paraphrased Usefulness Statements	Mean
U3	Using TikTok helps me expand my knowledge of the English language.	4.03
U4	TikTok supports the improvement of my English language proficiency.	4.19
U5	I consider TikTok to be a beneficial tool for learning English.	4.70
U1	TikTok allows me to learn English more haphazard.	1.70
U2	Using TikTok contributes to strengthening my overall English skills.	3.77
Overall Mean Perceived Usefulness of TikTok		4.15

Table 1 indicates Means are based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Table 2

Perceived Ease of Using TikTok for English Language Learning

Item No.	Paraphrased Ease-of-Use Statements	Mean
E1	English-learning content on TikTok is easy for me to follow and stay focused on.	4.07
E4	TikTok allows me to learn English conveniently at any time and from any place.	4.03
E2	Accessing English-learning materials on TikTok is simple for me.	4.02
E6	I find it TikTok as a difficult platform for learning English.	1.17
E3	The English content I learn through TikTok is clear and easy to understand.	4.22
E5	I can easily develop the skills needed to use TikTok for learning English.	4.18
Overall Mean	Perceived Ease of Using TikTok	3.94

Table 2 shows the mean score based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). It can be seen that the mean score is 3.94 on average.

Table 3. Learners' Perceptions of TikTok for Language Learning

Item No	Perception towards TikTok	Mean
D4	Using TikTok makes learning English a distraction.	1.11
D1	Utilizing TikTok is a beneficial method for learning English.	3.82
D5	I enjoy employing TikTok as a tool for English language learning.	3.81
D3	I feel demotivated to use TikTok to further enhance my English skills.	1.73

Item No	Perception towards TikTok	Mean
D2	Learning English through TikTok is a sensible approach.	3.71
Overall Mean		3.11

Table 3 shows the mean score based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). It can be seen that the mean score is 3.11 on average.

Table 4. Learners' Behavioural Intentions towards Using TikTok for English Language Learning

Item No	Behavioural Intention	Mean
E4	I don't recommend TikTok to peers as a resource for learning English.	1.53
E3	I intend to incorporate TikTok as one of my tools for learning English.	3.51
E1	I plan to use TikTok regularly to support my English learning.	3.32
E2	I aim to dedicate more time on TikTok for English learning purposes.	3.28
E5	I intend to prioritize TikTok as my primary platform for learning English.	3.20
Overall Mean		3.17

As shown in Table Four, Table 2 shows the mean score based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). It can be seen that the mean score is 3.17 on average.

Table 5. Actual Use of TikTok for English Language Learning

Item No	Actual Use	Mean
F3	I use TikTok as one of the tools to support my English learning.	3.39
F4	I don't want to recommend TikTok to friends for learning English.	1.36
F1	I use TikTok frequently for learning English.	3.21
F5	TikTok serves as my primary platform for learning English.	3.11
F2	I dedicate more time on TikTok to improve my English skills.	3.10
Overall Mean		3.03

In Table 5, Table 1 indicates scores of items ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The mean score here is 3.03

Discussion

This research explored undergraduate students' acceptance of TikTok as a tool for learning English and examined which factor most strongly influences its actual use. The results indicated that students demonstrated a relatively high level of acceptance toward TikTok as a learning medium. Across the different dimensions assessed, mean scores for individual items and overall aspects ranged between 1.0 and 4.7 on a 5-point Likert scale. Among the factors evaluated, *Perceived Ease of Use* recorded the highest mean and *Perceived Usefulness* shows high means which reflects these aspects as key determinants in shaping students' acceptance of TikTok for language learning.

These findings align with the study by Yadav (2021), which reported that both perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use exert a significant positive influence on users' intention to adopt TikTok. Similarly, the results support the conclusions of Al-Marouf et al. (2021), who identified these two dimensions as immediate predictors of behavioural intention when

engaging with video-based platforms such as YouTube and TikTok. According to their study, technologies perceived as user-friendly and beneficial are more readily accepted (p. 207). This underscores the direct relationship between perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and students' behavioural intention to utilize TikTok for English learning.

The study also highlighted that *behavioural intention* is the most influential factor affecting the actual use of TikTok in English language learning. Previous research indicates that the actual use of social media tools in educational contexts is closely and significantly determined by the intention to use them (Al-Maatouk et al., 2020). Consistent with these findings, this study supports Al-Maatouk et al. (2020), demonstrating that behavioural intention within higher education settings is shaped by multiple interconnected factors, in line with Ali et al. (2025), perceived usefulness plays a critical role in motivating students to engage with technological tools for language learning, as it directly influences their intention to adopt new educational technologies. Consequently, this study confirms that behavioural intention positively impacts students' acceptance and use of social media platforms like TikTok.

Overall, the results indicate that students' acceptance of TikTok was above average, suggesting that most participants recognized the platform as a valuable resource for English language learning. These outcomes are consistent with Chen (2022), who reported that higher education students perceive TikTok as an innovative approach that enhances engagement, promotes active learning, and supports understanding. Similarly, Mei and Aziz (2022) found that students favoured TikTok for language learning due to its novel and engaging features. Additionally, Ali (2023) observed that technology is an influential as a learning tool when it was leveraged for online education, communication skills enhancement, and technological skill development. Echoing these studies, the present research identified a positive association between students' use of TikTok and their language learning outcomes. Collectively, the evidence suggests that students provide predominantly positive feedback regarding TikTok's role in facilitating English language learning.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that both perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of TikTok significantly influence students' intention to adopt the platform for language learning. These perceptions, in turn, shape learners' behavioural intentions and overall acceptance of TikTok as an educational tool. Given its widespread popularity, engaging features, and intuitive interface, TikTok offers a dynamic means of supporting language education, enhancing both teaching and learning processes by providing students with diverse opportunities to develop their language skills. Consequently, TikTok holds potential as an effective supplementary tool in English language classrooms.

Nonetheless, this study examined language learning in a general context. Future research should consider exploring students' acceptance of TikTok for the development of specific language competencies, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing, to gain a more nuanced understanding of its educational impact.

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