DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS FOR NON-ENGLISH MAJORS USING TIKTOK PLATFORM IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

In the current era, a large number of apps and software are used by a variety of language learners and they bring plenty of benefits to the learners in improving their language knowledge and as well as skills. TikTok is one of the apps that is widely used by most of the youth. Therefore, it is a popular app that students get familiar with and feel excited about using it to support their learning. By adopting a quantitative method with experimental design, this study aims to determine whether the use of TikTok in English language teaching should be used to enhance non-English majors' speaking proficiency. Twenty non-English majors freshmen from a university in Vietnam participated in the study. The analysis of pre-test and post-test data reveals a statistically significant difference, with a p-value (Sig 2-Tailed) of $<.001$, indicating a significant improvement in speaking proficiency among students. Therefore, it can be understood that the TikTok platform can enhance students' speaking proficiency. Furthermore, survey data on the students' opinions about the use of TikTok in teaching and learning speaking shows the positive effect of the use of TikTok for improving speaking skills. The students' satisfaction and enthusiasm with the use of TikTok was determined to contribute to the effectiveness of the TikTok app which should be used widely in teaching and learning English speaking skills.

Keywords: Speaking Skills; Speaking Proficiency, Tiktok; Non-english Major Freshmen.

1. INTRODUCTION

English is a global language that transcends national boundaries and connects people from all corners of the world. Worldwide, English is a language that is taught at various levels from kindergarten to university in several nations. Most prestigious universities in the world have programs taught in English, which underscores the need for individuals to acquire at least a basic proficiency in English to thrive in our interconnected global society. At the same time, the demand for English proficiency standardization in non-English speaking countries is increasing.

In order to assess students' English competencies, many types of examinations designed to meet the above-mentioned demand are becoming more and more popular and diversified, such as IELTS, TOEIC, TOEFL, etc., attracting a large number of candidates. In line with that trend, Vietnam has also organized its own English proficiency test called VSTEP. VSTEP stands for Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency, which is considered to be the first English Proficiency certificate in Vietnam. Its exams include four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. VSTEP is designed to evaluate Vietnamese people's English proficiency in three levels from B1 to C1 according to the 6 levels of the European Foreign Language Competency

Framework (CEFR). Thai Nguyen University non-English majors need to achieve level B1 of their English competencies to graduate.

Regarding learning English, it is not easy for everyone to get the required level depending on the regions where one lives, access to education, learning environments and personal competencies. For example, in big cities, where universities and international schools are concentrated and where many foreign teachers are invited to teach, students have access to an international environment and this creates suitable conditions for children to develop English skills. On the contrary, in areas with more difficult conditions, due to the lower level of technological development and fewer opportunities to interact with foreigners, students are limited in developing skills, especially listening and speaking. With the progress of information technology, the constantly developing society has made breakthroughs in the process of learners speaking English.

In the current 4.0 era, social platforms are gradually developing and are no longer strange to everyone, especially among the young generations. Most social networks are not difficult to get acquainted with. Besides being served as a means of recreation, virtual social platforms also provide knowledge to their users. Using TikTok is an innovative and unconventional approach to language learning and communication development. Via TikTok, users are allowed to make short videos based on their content that are distinctive in style. Instead of using the inflexible and conventional old approach, users now can make their own decision about which learning method is the most beneficial for themselves by accessing a variety of teaching methods. Therefore, learners can find it easier to improve their language skills especially speaking. (Heryani, W., ., S., & Nur'Aini, S. (2024); Putri, Syifa. (2022); Titik, Komariyah et.al. (2022); Xi, Chen., Haiying, Kang. (2023).

Nowadays, learning languages via a platform is not a new idea. Many people from children to adults choose to use a piece of software that is friendly to support their learning of foreign languages. TikTok is now a selected tool for many learners to help them learn, especially to improve their language abilities. It helps learners gain more diversity and initiative during the learning process, allowing them to learn anytime and anywhere when the time spent learning a language in the classroom seems to be not enough. Meanwhile, the Duet - a feature on TikTok that allows users to interact and create videos to test their English-speaking skills. Therefore, learners' spoken language is easier, more interesting, and more diverse than ever before.

In short, the use of TikTok to enhance speaking skills represents a dynamic and contemporary approach to language learning, blending technology, social interaction, and authentic communication. The above reasons encouraged us to carry out the research to evaluate the effectiveness of Tik Tok on improving English speaking skills for non-majors at the Thai Nguyen University of Education - Vietnam and explore the students' attitudes toward using Tik Tok in learning speaking skills.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1. Speaking
Speaking, as a fundamental aspect of human communication, involves expressing thoughts and ideas through verbal communication, and conveying messages, opinions, and emotions using language in various social settings. It is considered one of the four language competencies, crucial for effective communication. Scholars such as Fattah (2006), Jatti (2016), and Thornbury (2005) have emphasized its significance, describing speaking as the ability to effectively use verbal language across diverse contexts. Moreover, speaking skills, as described by Rivers (1994), Nunan

(1991), and Thornbury (2005), encompass the capacity to communicate effectively using verbal language, employing language for various purposes and adapting spoken language appropriately across different social contexts. Thus, speaking skills are essential for clear, coherent, and engaging verbal expression, involving not only the production of sounds but also the effective use of language in communication.

Standards for evaluating English speaking skills.

Based on previous research and practical application, there are many criteria to evaluate a person's English-speaking ability. To evaluate most accurately, the following criteria must be met: (1) Fluency; (2) Accuracy; (3) Pronunciation; (4) Lexical range; (5) Communication Strategy; (6) Cohesion and Coherence; (7) Interactive Strategies.

Fluency: According to Rivers, fluency is the capacity to express oneself clearly, effortlessly, and without excessive thought or searching. The smoothness, syllables, words, and phrases that are connected when speaking rapidly is referred to as fluency in speech and language pathology. Fluency is meant to let you talk and then provide you with feedback on how you performed and suggestions for improvement. Paul Nation (2007) highlights the importance of evaluating students' speaking proficiency based on their fluency, or their capacity to communicate without making a lot of stops or breaks.

Accuracy: Diane Larsen-Freeman and Marti Anderson (2011) highlight the crucial factors of accuracy in language use, including grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Allowing students to concentrate on the phonological, grammatical, and discourse components in their spoken output helps to attain accuracy to a certain extent.

Pronunciation: Certain studies concentrate exclusively on pronunciation. Gilbert (1993) outlines several requirements in this regard, including vowels, consonants, sentence-final intonation, and stress.

Lexical Range: The variety and adaptability of language used in speech are addressed by Horst (2005) and Schmitt (2008).

Communication Strategies: Canale and Swain (1980) discuss the usage of communication strategies, which is the capacity to use various channels to express one's views and ideas when confronted with challenges.

Cohesion and Coherence: When assessing speaking abilities, researchers frequently look at the capacity to construct a coherent discourse with logical transitions between ideas.

Interaction Techniques: Scholars such as Michael Long (1983) and Rebecca Oxford (1990) have examined the techniques that students employ to communicate with native speakers and in groups.

2.2. TikTok

TikTok, introduced in 2016, has rapidly achieved widespread acclaim and become hugely popular, especially among younger age groups, boasting over one billion monthly users worldwide. Its array of features allows for the creation and sharing of short videos, ranging from 15 to 60 seconds. Social media platforms like TikTok have emerged as effective educational tools, enhancing students' interest in learning English by offering engaging opportunities for language practice, exposure to authentic language use, and improved digital literacy. Scholars, including Clement (2020), recognize TikTok's potential to augment language learning through its visually appealing content and interactive features like the "Duet" function, fostering collaboration and creativity among users. As an innovative educational tool, TikTok provides a dynamic environment conducive to enhancing language proficiency and facilitating collaborative learning experiences.

Learning speaking with the TikTok platform

The TikTok platform offers a unique and engaging environment for language learners to enhance their speaking skills through innovative methods. With its short-form video format, interactive features, and vast community of users, TikTok provides learners with opportunities to practice speaking in a dynamic and authentic context. One of the primary ways learners can utilize TikTok for speaking practice is by creating and sharing short videos in the target language (Heryani, W., ., S., & Nur'Aini, S. (2024)). By scripting and recording videos on various topics, learners can articulate their thoughts, express ideas, and engage in monologues or dialogues. This process not only allows learners to practice pronunciation, intonation, and fluency but also encourages creativity and self-expression.

By using the unique features of TikTok and incorporating it into language education practices, educators and researchers can make use of the platform's potential to create immersive and interactive learning experiences that cater to the diverse needs and preferences of contemporary learners. Through exploration, experimentation, and collaboration on TikTok, students can develop confidence, fluency, and communicative competence in the target language, paving the way for effective language acquisition and cross-cultural communication skills.

2.3. VSTEP

VSTEP stands for Vietnamese Standardized Test for English Proficiency. VSTEP certificate is issued by institutions authorized by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam. It is a modern assessment tool designed to evaluate individuals' English language skills. Unlike traditional standardized tests, which are typically administered in controlled physical settings, VSTEP offers a flexible and accessible assessment platform that can be accessed remotely via computers or mobile devices. This innovative approach leverages technology to simulate real-life communication scenarios, allowing test-takers to demonstrate their speaking proficiency, comprehension, and writing skills through interactive tasks and simulations.

In Vietnam, although different targeted groups can use one of the most suitable five VSTEP variants, the VSTEP 3-5 level seems to be the most influential as a large number of people need this certification for their study, research and job purposes. Ton Nu My Nhat (2021), N.T.N.Quynh, et.al. (2020). Examination Centre of the University of Languages & International Studies, VNU (ULIS) presented the VSTEP 3-5 levels equal to the six levels scale of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) on its website as follows:

Final scores

Table 1: VSTEP 3-5 result from scores to levels

Final scores (out of 10)	Level
0 – 3.5	None
4.0 – 5.5	3
6.0 – 8.0	4
8.5 – 10	5

VSTEP has gained popularity as a reliable measure of English proficiency, particularly among students, job seekers, and academic institutions. Its convenience, adaptability, and ability to provide instant feedback make it a preferred choice for assessing English language skills in various contexts. Moreover, the integration of VSTEP into language education programs and recruitment processes reflects the growing emphasis on practical communication skills and the demand for standardized assessments that align with global standards.

In this research, VSTEP 3-5 level is utilized as a tool for evaluating students' speaking proficiency, providing an objective measure of their language skills development. The use of VSTEP enables researchers to gather quantitative data on students' speaking abilities. Through its utilization in this study, VSTEP serves as a valuable resource for assessing and monitoring students' progress in speaking skills, contributing to the advancement of language education practices.

2.4. Previous study
2.4.1. In the world
Although TikTok was founded some years ago, plenty of research on using it for teaching and learning foreign languages was carried out throughout the world.

Research on using the TikTok app in teaching and learning for EFL learners was done widely and most of it brings benefits related to speaking. Those studies were carried out with various participants from Primary to University students. There is research on Improving the Learning of Regular Verbs through TikTok among Primary School ESL Pupils by Anumanthan S., Hashim H. (2022). The results revealed that the pupils enjoyed the lesson when TikTok was involved, and found it effective and very easy to use in making their verb videos. In addition, most of them were keen on creating educational content in the future. This study concludes that TikTok is indeed an effective teaching tool, especially when it comes to teaching regular verbs and sentence construction.

For high school students, the research on exploring the TikTok app in learning to speak using role-play activities was done by Herwanto, in 2022. This study used a qualitative research design. The results revealed that the majority of students did good and excellent in all aspects of students' speaking including language conventions, pronunciation and intonation, fluency, facial expression, and gesture. Students also increased their vocabulary knowledge, correct pronunciation, and appropriate grammar, as well as knowing how to adjust gestures, expression, and intonation in a context. However, there are some obstacles when using TikTok as a medium of speaking practice. They include doubts, lack of confidence, and confusion among students. There are also technical obstacles, such as device difficulties, inappropriate content, and video quality. This could be a consideration for us when carrying out the research.

Another research by three researchers Rahmawati, A., Syafei, M., & Prasetiyanto, M.A. (2023) revealed that TikTok is a useful application that not only improves speaking ability but also improves the university students' creativity, motivation, and vocabulary. Similar to Herwanto, 2022, some limitations, such as the internet connection, and short duration of a video are discovered to be taken into account for other studies.

Since TikTok has become popular, integrating it with short videos could help add entertainment value to the acquisition of English communication competence. Many English educators and language teachers view TikTok as a powerful force for change in teaching and learning practices, particularly about openness, interactivity, and sociability. (Ali Saad Al- Yaari, 2013).

2.4.2. In Vietnam

In the Vietnamese context, research on technology integration and language teaching practices offers valuable insights into the potential role of TikTok in developing speaking skills. Tran and Pham (2020) delve into the opportunities and challenges of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in Vietnamese tertiary education. Their exploration of MALL could serve as a foundation for implementing TikTok-based language learning initiatives, considering similarities in the utilization of mobile technology for language acquisition.

Furthermore, Nguyen and Nguyen (2020) provide an examination of current issues and future directions in English language teaching and learning specifically within Vietnam. Their analysis provides a contextual framework for considering innovative approaches such as TikTok integration. Understanding the existing challenges and trends in English language education can inform strategies for effectively incorporating TikTok into language teaching practices.

Additionally, Le and Dang (2020) offer insights into the broader landscape of technology integration in Vietnamese education. By exploring various aspects of technology integration beyond language learning, their research provides valuable context for understanding the environment in which TikTok-based language learning initiatives would operate. This broader perspective highlights the interconnectedness of technological advancements in education and underscores the potential impact of TikTok on language teaching and learning practices in Vietnam.

In conclusion, the above-mentioned information provides a comprehensive understanding of speaking skills and explores the potential use of TikTok as a platform for improving these skills among non-English majors. Speaking skills are crucial for effective communication, encompassing the ability to express thoughts, ideas, and information verbally with clarity and coherence. While learners face various obstacles in developing speaking proficiency, instructional methods such as immersive learning, communicative language teaching, and technology integration offer avenues for improvement. Furthermore, TikTok presents an innovative opportunity for language learning, with its short video format, interactive features, and algorithm-driven content delivery system. However, despite the growing popularity of TikTok in educational contexts, there remains a gap in research specifically examining its effectiveness for developing VSTEP speaking for non-English majors. Future studies in this area can contribute valuable insights into the potential of TikTok as a tool for language acquisition and inform the design of effective language teaching methodologies.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted using quantitative research methods. 20 first-year non-majors from class Mathematics K58 at Thai Nguyen University of Education in Vietnam were invited to take part in the study. The experiment lasted for 8 weeks. A pretest was given during the first week of the experiment to assess students' general speaking competence levels at the starting point. The pre-test lasted seven minutes per student and was divided into two parts. In part 1, they had to answer 6 questions about to 2 topics and part 2 students had to solve a situation with three options and explain their choice. The researchers were present thoroughly to supervise the class and made certain that all students took the test seriously. The goal of the test was not revealed to students. From the second to the seventh week, the researchers used TikTok to make videos about how to deal with the questions in the VSTEP speaking test. Then the researchers instructed students to study and submit their speaking practices every week. Students would utilize TikTok's duet function to submit their work. Students' workout videos would be preserved on TikTok as well as the Google Drive URL supplied by the researchers. After 6 weeks of practice, students must post 6 practice videos and 12 duets on TikTok in response to each researcher's presentation video. In the final week of the experiment, students completed a 7-minute test which had a similar format to the pre-test. Then, students were given a post-questionnaire to record their thoughts on using TikTok during speaking sessions and the benefits they obtained from utilizing it. Finally, the researchers gathered data and conducted analyses before presenting their findings and conclusions.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. The current status of the English - speaking ability of first-year non-English majors.

The results of the pre-test

The pre-test findings show that before the TikTok platform approach was used, students' speaking skills averaged below 3.5 which is below the score for assessment and awarding certificate as shown in Table 1.

The following table provides a detailed description of participants' scores:

Table 2. The result of the pre-test

No	Students' code	Students' score (10pts)	Level	No	Students' code	Students' score (10pts)	Level
1	A1	3.0	----	11	A11	2.0	----
2	A2	3.0	----	12	A12	0.0	----
3	A3	2.5	----	13	A13	1.5	----
4	A4	3.5	----	14	A14	1.0	----
5	A5	3.0	----	15	A15	0.0	----
6	A6	2.5	----	16	A16	0.5	----
7	A7	1.5	----	17	A17	2.0	----
8	A8	2.0	----	18	A18	0.5	----
9	A9	2.5	----	19	A19	1.0	----
10	A10	1.5	----	20	A20	2.0	----

Based on the standard score table, all students were not taken into consideration for level, it is evident from table 2 that none of the students attained level B1. The researchers discovered that the students' speaking abilities were quite low. Only 4 students could get 3.0 to 3.5. The rest was below 3.0, in which 4 students got 0,5 or 0.0 for the test. The low average score indicates that the majority of students may struggle with aspects such as fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and coherence in spoken language. These weaknesses may hinder their ability to effectively communicate in English-speaking contexts, both academically and professionally.

4.2. The effectiveness of using Tik Tok to improve the speaking ability of non-English majors.
Table 3. The results of the post-test

No	Students' code	Students' score	Level	No	Students' code	Students' score	Level
1	A1	3.5	----	11	A11	3.5	----
2	A2	4.0	B1	12	A12	1.5	----
3	A3	4.0	B1	13	A13	2.5	----
4	A4	4.0	B1	14	A14	3.0	----
5	A5	3.0	----	15	A15	2.0	----
6	A6	5.0	B1	16	A16	2.5	----
7	A7	2.5	----	17	A17	4.0	B1
8	A8	3.0	----	18	A18	2.5	----
9	A9	3.0	----	19	A19	2.5	----
10	A10	4.0	B1	20	A20	2.5	----

Table 3 displays the participants' post-test findings. It demonstrates that the majority of students have improved their speaking abilities after just 6 weeks of study and practice speaking on the TikTok app. Most students saw a gain in their results, although only 6 students obtained the B1 level in the post-test. The results show that those who improved their speaking skills by using the TikTok app to learn English were able to talk more fluently. We may infer that students' speaking abilities improve as a result of utilizing the TikTok app.

The comparison of the pre- and post- test results

The comparison of the pre and post-test results of the study is provided in table 4 to demonstrate the change in students' abilities for speaking after the experiment.

Table 4. The comparison of the pre and post test results

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Score in Pre-test - Score in Post-test	-1.3500	.7273	.1626	-1.6904	-1.0096	-8.301	19	<.001

From the Mean column, it is evident that the difference is -1.3500 < 0, indicating that the Mean score in the pre-test is lower than the Mean score in the post-test. There exists a difference in scores between the two tests. Hence, we can infer that there is an improvement in students' speaking ability. The utilization of the TikTok app proves to be more efficacious compared to its absence. With a standard deviation of .7273, the data in the study holds significance. The sig (2-tailed) value is depicted in the final column, often referred to as the p-value. In this study, the Sig (2-tailed) value is found to be <.001 which is less than 0.05. Thus, it can be deduced that a statistically significant difference exists between the two scores. It can be understood that the TikTok platform can enhance students' speaking proficiency. In summary, the adoption of the TikTok app proves to be notably effective, leading to an enhancement in students' speaking abilities.

4.3. The students' opinions on using Tik Tok in learning speaking skills.
Out of the 20 students who took part in the study period, all students (or 100%) gave the opinion that the application had a beneficial effect on their speaking learning. And 19 (or 95%) of them would prefer their instructor to keep using TikTok to teach speaking. Their opinions are summed up in the following table.

Table 5. Students' opinions about the use of Tik Tok for enhancing their speaking competence.

Opinions on utilizing Tik Tok in speaking learning	Number of students out of 20	Percentage
The content is concise and right focused.	16	80%
I can practice and receive feedback after each video.	7	35%
I feel more interested in learning speaking skills.	12	60%
I focus more when learning speaking through videos.	10	50%
I get instructions on what I need to do in a VSTEP speaking test.	15	75%
I can easily remember the sentence patterns and structures needed in the lesson.	10	50%
I can view lectures at any time.	12	60%
I prefer using Tik Tok in my speaking lessons.	19	95%
TikTok brings me a lot of benefits in my speaking learning.	20	100%

The provided table offers a comprehensive overview of the various advantages perceived by learners in utilizing TikTok as a tool to enhance their English-speaking abilities. From 10 to 19 students agreed with the advantages that TikTok brings to their speaking lessons. They mostly found the contents were clear and they understood the instructions of the speaking tests. Furthermore, they could watch the instructional videos at any time which might help them remember the sentence patterns and structures easily. One important benefit is that they were more interested in learning

4.4. Discussion

The previous section focuses primarily on the findings of the study regarding the use of TikTok as a teaching tool for improving students' speaking proficiency. Initially, students had a speaking pre-test with a mean score of 1.775, but those who used TikTok therapy showed slight improvements with a mean scores of 3.125 after eight weeks of the experiment. Similar findings have been reported in studies in many countries in the world, indicating the potential effectiveness of TikTok-based teaching approaches in enhancing language skills.

According to Ferstephanie & Pratiwi (2021), students may utilize the TikTok app to practice speaking English, particularly through the Duet Me Challenge feature. This feature allows students to become more engaging as individuals. To enhance their speaking abilities, students may practice dueting with individuals from Vietnam or other nations by taking on this challenge. It is consistent with Syifa's (2022) assertion that using duet movies to teach English can help students' speaking abilities. (Manggo and others, 2022). We cannot ignore the fact that the TikTok application facilitates teaching and learning for both teachers and students. Ferstephanie & Pratiwi (2021), who claimed that TikTok is useful in aiding instructors and students in the classroom, provide support for it. We may conclude that TikTok helps students become more proficient speakers (Syifa, 2022; Zaitun et al, 2021; Destia & Purna, 2021).

TikTok serves as both a learning tool and a recreational platform. Utilizing TikTok helps raise student engagement and learning outcomes, especially for students with access to social

media platforms, and facilitates participation through school-provided computer facilities for those without digital devices. These findings align with research suggesting that incorporating digital tools like TikTok into the classroom can enhance student engagement and language learning outcomes when compared to traditional methods.

5. CONCLUSION

The study investigates the effectiveness of TikTok as a pedagogical tool to enhance the speaking abilities of the first-year university students non majoring in English. Utilizing a quasi-experimental design with 20 participants, pre-and post-tests were conducted to evaluate speaking proficiency levels before and after TikTok interventions. Results indicate significant improvements in speaking skills following TikTok usage, highlighting its potential as a motivating learning platform. In terms of students' opinions on the benefits of TikTok in speaking lessons, many of them agreed that they can remember sentence patterns and structures easily; lessons can be reviewed anytime; the contents are brief; and they feel more interested in learning speaking.

However, limitations such as distractions during sessions and challenges with TikTok features suggest the need for further research to explore its broader impacts and develop effective instructional strategies.

In conclusion, while TikTok shows promise as a tool for enhancing speaking skills among university students, further research is needed to fully understand its potential and address existing limitations. By expanding participant numbers, exploring broader impacts, and developing effective instructional strategies, educators can maximize TikTok's benefits and enrich the language learning experiences of students.

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