

# Enhancing Speaking Skills and Vocabulary in the EAL Classroom Through TikTok: A Literature Review

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## Abstract

The widespread adoption of TikTok globally has positively impacted its application in education, particularly in language teaching and learning. English, being widely spoken as a lingua franca, is extensively used for content dissemination through TikTok worldwide. However, a preliminary search on the internet revealed a need for more research syntheses on the use of this platform in the English as an Additional Language (EAL) classroom. This scarcity prompted the research discussed in this article. The study took the form of a literature review and followed the principles of Systematic Literature Review, aiming to explore how TikTok has been used in the EAL classroom and what learning benefits it offers. An adapted version of the research protocol model developed by Sarah Visintini was employed for searching, selecting, and extracting written productions from web-based databases to compose the research sample. Eight peer-reviewed articles constituted the final sample based on retention and discard criteria. The retained texts were analyzed using the thematic analysis method proposed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke. The findings indicate that TikTok can effectively enhance speaking skills and expand the vocabulary repertoire of EAL students. Moreover, its usage can aid in maintaining student focus on classroom activities. Further comprehensive searches in online databases, using diverse mechanisms, can yield substantial corpora, facilitating broader and more in-depth analyses and discussions on the pedagogical applications and benefits of TikTok in the EAL classroom.

**Keywords:** literature review, TikTok, English teaching-learning, speaking skills, vocabulary development

## 1. Introduction

In the first quarter of the 21st century, our lives have become immersed in a digital world where social media platforms serve various purposes for people worldwide. These platforms offer opportunities for fame, income generation, sharing (mis)information, and disseminating knowledge. The educational potential of these platforms is undeniable and can be leveraged by independent teachers or those affiliated with educational institutions across different countries. Notably, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp have been used as supplementary tools for language learning by teachers and students spanning continents (Yen-Chen et al., 2015; Jafari & Chalak, 2016; Erarslan, 2019). However, since 2019, especially with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the TikTok social media platform has experienced immense popularity, particularly among Generation Z members (Note 1). One can think of various reasons for this, with user-friendliness and the ability to create and share short-duration videos on different social media platforms being just two notable factors (Monteiro, 2020).

TikTok, an evolved version of the Musical.ly application created by civil engineer Alex Zhu and Louis Yang in 2016, is the international counterpart of Douyin, primarily used within China. Both applications are owned by Byte Dance, a Chinese technology company established by software engineer Yiming Zhang in 2012 (Stokel-Walker, 2021). TikTok was initially launched on the Google Play Store in May 2017 (Stokel-Walker, 2021) and became the most popular application globally in 2019 and 2020 (Iqbal, 2023). According to Yuen (2023), the platform is projected to exceed 834 million monthly users in 2023. As of April 2023, the United States, Indonesia, and Brazil ranked highest in TikTok user numbers, with 116.49 million, 112.97 million, and 84.13 million users, respectively (Ceci, 2023).

The widespread popularity of TikTok has turned it into a significant channel for communication and the exchange of ideas, facilitating the sharing of diverse cultural fragments—if we adopt the broad concept of

culture proposed by American sociologist Edward Byron Reuter (Note 2)—among individuals from over 150 countries where the application is currently in use, as indicated by Doyle (2023). These characteristics have been capitalized upon in the field of education, where TikTok, along with similar platforms, is steadily gaining momentum (Rach, 2020; Fiallos et al., 2021; Sinaga et al., 2022; Saura, 2022). The integration of emerging technologies into the classroom has the potential to challenge educators, who must also navigate the added complexity of facilitating novel online learning paradigms through internet-based platforms and tools (Monteiro, 2020).

While TikTok holds potential as a pedagogical tool in various educational contexts, our study specifically focuses on its application within the dimensions of teaching and learning English as an additional language (EAL). This narrowing of focus ensures consistency and coherence in our investigation. Within this specific area, there remain numerous unanswered questions and emerging answers that warrant exploration. For example, how do EAL teachers integrate TikTok into their classrooms? Which specific skills do they aim to cultivate in their students through its use? What evidence exists regarding the effectiveness of TikTok applications in educational research? What benefits have been observed in school settings? These inquiries reflect the need for a deeper understanding of TikTok's potential positive outcomes and advantages as an instructional tool in language learning.

The absence of comprehensive syntheses capable of addressing these questions served as the impetus for our literature review. Our goal was to comprehend how the TikTok application functions as a pedagogical tool in contexts where English is taught as an additional language and to determine the learning advantages tied to its implementation in such educational settings. The justification for undertaking this review is supported by Barros' (2005) five dimensions: relevance of the topic, scientific and academic relevance, social relevance, originality, and feasibility.

Regarding topic relevance, we observe a gap in the literature, namely the need for a comprehensive synthesis of knowledge regarding the relationship between social media phenomena, particularly TikTok, and English language education, specifically concerning the questions mentioned earlier. While our research results make only a modest contribution, they begin to address this gap. From an academic and scientific standpoint, this work is relevant for advancing research in teaching English as an additional language, as it provides researchers with an updated, albeit limited, framework of knowledge in this area.

Regarding social relevance, we believe our review contributes to a better understanding of the TikTok phenomenon by shedding light on the significance individuals place on its attributes. As to its originality, it lies in describing the current landscape of TikTok's role in EAL teaching and learning, alongside the subsequent discussions it may stimulate. This understanding forms a basis for comprehensive and extensive dialogues within academic and other spheres interested in this phenomenon. Lastly, despite the limited number of publications retained for our research corpus, the viability of our study was ensured, a notion further underscored by the culmination of this text.

## 2. Method

We employed aggregative and configurative systematic review approaches to conducting our review. The aggregative approach involved considering all publications that met our inclusion criteria during the text selection phase, forming the basis of the research sample. Conversely, the configurative approach guided the organization and analysis of the extracted data from the selected articles, shaping this review's findings and discussion section.

Following the definition proposed by Gough et al. (2012), we understand systematic review as a comprehensive examination of research literature employing systematic and explicit methods. These methods allow for the meticulous gathering and analysis of data while upholding accountability and transparency. By adhering to these rigorous and transparent processes, our objective was to ensure the reliability and replicability of our review. Such adherence allows for scrutiny and verification by fellow researchers, facilitating a thorough examination of the research literature against our research questions and findings.

To select the publications that formed the research sample, we followed the seven steps outlined by Petticrew and Roberts (2006) for conducting a systematic literature review (Note 3). The first step involved establishing the research questions that guided our review:

- (1) How has the TikTok application been used in the context of EAL classrooms?
- (2) What are the learning benefits associated with its incorporation in these classrooms?

We then created a research protocol following the initial stage of composing the research sample. The protocol

was adapted from the one developed by Visintini (2017) and served as a guide for our study. A crucial aspect of the protocol was the formulation of specific inclusion and exclusion criteria, which were employed to determine the composition of the research sample. A summary of these criteria is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Article eligibility criteria

Include articles that:	Exclude articles that:
a) were published between the years 2020 and April 2023;	a) were published before 2020 or after April 2023;
b) are written in either Portuguese or English;	b) are written in languages other than Portuguese or English;
c) focus on participants who are learning English as an additional language;	c) primarily involve participants whose first language is English;
d) explore the use of the TikTok application in activities led by the teacher;	d) solely describe activities recommended by the teacher for EAL instruction through alternative applications;
e) clearly state the intended learning objectives of the activity using the tool;	e) focus on activities initiated by students using TikTok for EAL instruction;
f) provide evidence of the learning benefits derived from the activities;	f) describe activities using other applications for teaching languages other than English proposed by the teacher;
g) are complete in terms of content;	g) describe activities using the TikTok application for purposes other than EAL instruction;
h) underwent a peer-review process to ensure academic rigor.	h) lack evidence of learning benefits;
	i) are not peer-reviewed; or
	j) consist only of abstracts without complete research articles.

The research was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, we retrieved the articles to form the research sample using Google Scholar and CAPES Journal Portal (Note 4) to access relevant databases with these keywords, as outlined in the research protocol: Tiktok, EFL, ESOL, SL, second language, additional language, Mídias, learning, English, *redes sociais*, tool, *aprendizagem*, *inglês*, *língua estrangeira*, *segunda língua e língua adicional*. To refine the searches, we combined them using the Boolean operators AND and OR. The summary of the search results is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Composition of the research sample

Primary and Final Analyses	
Search engine	CAPES Journal Portal and Google Scholar
Temporal range	2020–April 2023
Analyzed part	Title and abstract
Articles found	617
Duplicate articles	0
Discarded articles	580
Retained articles for final analysis	37
Discarded articles after final analysis	29
Research sample	Eight articles

In the second stage of the investigation, we conducted a thematic analysis of the eight articles that comprised the research sample. Following the method proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and considering suggestions from Popenoe et al. (2021), we focused on identifying TikTok activities proposed by EAL teachers and their corresponding objectives or learning outcomes.

Using categories from the data, we also sought to describe the learning benefits supported by evidence from the activities conducted with the TikTok application. Additionally, we gathered specific information about the participants and the places where the studies were conducted, organizing them under the category of Demographic Data and Research Settings, along with relevant subcategories, as discussed in the following section.

It is essential to acknowledge the significant reduction in the number of articles that composed the research sample compared to the initial volume of publications identified in internet-based databases, as shown in Table 2. This reduction resulted from applying our retention and exclusion criteria outlined in Table 1, and we recognize that this limitation restricts our ability to draw firm conclusions or provide an extensive and in-depth discussion of the review results.

### 3. Results and Discussion

The review findings are systematically presented in four tables to ensure a concise overview. Table 3 encompasses details about the participants and the research settings. In Table 4, the methodological procedures of the investigations are presented, categorized into (a) Research Design, (b) Data Collection Method (s), (c) Data Analysis Method (s), and (d) Research Timeframe. Table 5 summarizes the objectives and benefits for the participants of the pedagogical interventions using TikTok. Lastly, Table 6 synthesizes the activities conducted with TikTok in the EAL classrooms involved in the studies. These boxes serve as the basis for our subsequent discussion of the results.

Table 3. Demographic data and research settings

Authors	Participants					Research settings
	N	M	F	AR	SL	
Anumanthan & Hashim (2022)	45	20	25	11 years	ES	A national school in Klang located in a suburban area in Bangi, Malaysia
Zaitun et al. (2021)	36	NS	NS	NS	JHS	SMP Negeri 164, Jakarta, Indonesia
Sinta (2022)	6	NS	NS	NS	HS	SMA Swasta Cerdas Murni, Indonesia
Pasaribu et al. (2022)	20	NS	NS	NS	HS	SMA Swasta GKPI Padang Bulan, Indonesia
Asio et al. (2023)	113	45	68	NS	HS	Science High School, Olongapo, Filipinas
Herlisya & Wiratno (2022)	20	NS	NS	NS	HE	STKIP PGRI Bandar Lampung, Indonesia
Ining (2021)	8	NS	NS	NS	HE	Kolej Vokasional Keningau, Keningau, Malaysia
Pratiwi et al. (2021)	8	2	6	NS	HE	Suryakencana University, Cianjur, Indonesia

*Note.* N=Number; M=Male; F=Female; AR=Age range; EL=School level; NS=Not specified; ES=Elementary School; JHS=Junior High School; HS=High School; HE=Higher Education.

Based on the information presented in Table 3, the average number of participants in the studies was 32 students, varying from six students (Sinta, 2022) to 113 students (Asio et al., 2023). In most of them, the gender differentiation of participants was not specified (Ining, 2021; Zaitun et al., 2021; Herlisya & Wiratno, 2022; Pasaribu et al., 2022; Sinta, 2022). Only one article provided information about the age range of participants (Anumanthan & Hashim, 2022).

The studies included students from various educational levels, from elementary to college students. Out of the eight articles analyzed, three studies were conducted in higher education institutions (Ining, 2021; Pratiwi et al., 2021; Herlisya & Wiratno, 2022), with two involving students pursuing their English teaching qualifications (Pratiwi et al., 2021; Herlisya & Wiratno, 2022). One investigation took place in a junior high school (Zaitun et al., 2021), another in an elementary school with 5th graders (Anumanthan & Hashim, 2022), and the remaining three studies were conducted in high schools (Pasaribu et al., 2022; Sinta, 2022; Asio et al., 2023).

We find the geographic distribution of the studies noteworthy, as the articles meeting the inclusion criteria originate predominantly from Asian countries, including Indonesia (five articles), Malaysia (two articles), and the Philippines (one article). This observation raises the possibility that there may be a need for peer-reviewed publications reporting research conducted in Brazil and other countries regarding the use of TikTok in EAL classrooms from 2020 to April 2023. However, it is vital to acknowledge the limitations of our searches, as they were confined to using the Google Scholar and CAPES Journal Portal search engines.

The research designs employed in the studies, as presented in Table 4, were labeled by the authors as: qualitative case study (Pasaribu et al., 2022), mixed-method research (Anumanthan & Hashim, 2022), classroom action research (Herlisya & Wiratno, 2022; Zaitun et al., 2021), qualitative research (Pratiwi et al., 2021; Sinta, 2022), and descriptive-comparative research (Asio et al., 2023). Following Crotty (1998) (Note 5), we categorized the data analysis methods as qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods.

Table 4. Methodological procedures of the studies

Author(s)	Research Design	Data Collection Method (s)	Data Analysis Method (s)	Categorization of Research Based on Data Analysis Methods	Research Timeframe
Pasaribu et al. (2022)	Qualitative case study	- TikTok Duet feature - Observation spreadsheet - Questionnaire - Oral test	- TikTok platform (no explanation on how the analysis was conducted)	Qualitative	Two sessions
Anumanthan & Hashim (2022)	Mix-method research	- Pre- and post-test (for quantitative data collection) - Semi-structured interview - a partial adaptation of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (for qualitative data collection) (Alfadda & Mahdi, 2021)	- Triangulation of data using statistical analysis and thematic analysis	Mix method	Two days
Herlisya & Wiratno (2022)	Classroom action research	- Observation - Field notes - Test	- Statistical analysis - Criteria for learning outcomes based on Aqib (2009)	Quantitative	Two cycles of four sessions each
Zaitun et al. (2021)	Classroom action research	- Observation - One pre-test and two post-tests - Questionnaire	- Statistical analysis - Interpretation of data generated using a 5-point Likert scale	Mix method	Not specified
Ining (2021)	Qualitative research	- Semi-structured interview with open-ended questions - Focus group	- Thematic analysis	Qualitative	Not specified
Pratiwi et al. (2021)	Qualitative research	- Observation - A questionnaire containing closed and open-ended questions - Pronunciation challenge using TikTok Duet feature	- Interactive Model of Analysis of Data (Miles & Huberman, 1994)	Qualitative	Not specified
Sinta (2022)	Qualitative research	- Interview - Observation	- Triangulation of data	Qualitative	Not specified
Asio et al. (2023)	Descriptive-comparative research	- Tool to establish participant profiles - Self-assessment tool (pre- and post-test) - Teacher observation tool (pre- and post-test)	- Triangulation of data - Statistical analysis using the Jamovi software	Mix method	Five days

Six articles employed questionnaires (Note 6) and interviews, including open and closed-ended questions, as data generation methods. In these investigations, observation and documentation instruments such as field notes and spreadsheets were used to establish participant profiles. Tests were used in five studies (Zaitun et al., 2021; Herlisya & Wiratno, 2022; Pasaribu et al., 2022; Anumanthan & Hashim, 2022; Asio et al., 2023), with three of these studies applying pre- and post-tests (Zaitun et al., 2021; Anumanthan & Hashim, 2022; Asio et al., 2023). Furthermore, four studies used tools available within the TikTok application, such as the Duet feature. This feature allows users to post their videos alongside others created by someone else, resulting in a split-screen display (Dueto, 2023).

The researchers predominantly employed data triangulation, combining statistical analysis and thematic analysis, as the primary method for data analysis. Pratiwi et al. (2021) also used the Interactive Model of Data Analysis proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). In contrast, Pasaribu et al. (2022) used the TikTok program for analysis without explicitly detailing their approach. These instances highlight that, even after undergoing review,

some articles may still have significant gaps that could compromise the reliability of the studies.

While the timeframe of the studies is not explicitly mentioned in the research sample, it is assumed that the investigations were conducted in at least thirteen sessions based on available information, averaging to less than two sessions per study. Although the precise duration of these sessions is unknown, it seems reasonable to suggest that the comprehensive evaluation of TikTok's effectiveness as a pedagogical tool in the school settings where these inquiries took place might necessitate a more extensive intervention period.

The studies included in this review were analyzed in two stages. Initially, we sought to address the first of our research questions, which focused on investigating the use of TikTok in the language classroom. Our approach involved examining the evidence of TikTok being used as a pedagogical tool within this educational setting (Ramamuthie & Aziz, 2022; Tan et al., 2022). As illustrated in Table 5, the reviewed articles demonstrate how TikTok was utilized to enhance speaking skills in the target language and expand the vocabulary of EAL learners.

Table 5. The focus of the studies and benefits to participants

Author (s)	Focus	Benefits
Pasaribu et al. (2022)	Speaking skills development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generation of enthusiasm and interest</li> <li>- Increase in vocabulary repertoire</li> <li>- Improvement in speaking skills</li> </ul>
Herlisya & Wiratno (2022)	Speaking skills development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improvement in speaking skills</li> <li>- Increase in vocabulary repertoire</li> <li>- Enhancement of interactivity among participants</li> <li>- Pleasurable learning experience</li> <li>- Discussion of various topics</li> <li>- Boost in participants' self-confidence</li> </ul>
Asio et al. (2023)	Speaking skills development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improvement in speaking skills</li> </ul>
Anumanthan & Hashim (2022)	Vocabulary learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improvement in academic performance</li> <li>- Improvement in the quality of sentence production with regular verbs</li> <li>- Pleasurable learning experience</li> <li>- Generation of interest</li> </ul>
Sinta (2022)	Vocabulary learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effectiveness in vocabulary memorization</li> <li>- Pleasurable learning experience</li> <li>- Increase in word comprehension</li> </ul>
Ining (2021)	Vocabulary learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase in vocabulary repertoire</li> <li>- Ease of language access through multiple resources</li> <li>- Pleasurable learning experience</li> </ul>
Zaitun et al. (2021)	Development of self-confidence in speaking English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improvement in academic performance</li> <li>- Amplified improvement in speaking skills</li> <li>- Ease of obtaining information</li> <li>- Pleasurable learning experience</li> <li>- Interactive learning</li> <li>- Boost in self-confidence to speak English using TikTok</li> </ul>
Pratiwi et al. (2021)	Pronunciation enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ease of language access through multiple resources</li> <li>- Improvement in pronunciation quality of English words</li> <li>- Staying current with global events</li> </ul>

In five articles, the researchers report that the TikTok application was used to enhance speaking skills (Pratiwi et al., 2021; Zaitun et al., 2021; Herlisya & Wiratno, 2022; Pasaribu et al., 2022; Asio et al., 2023). In two of these studies, the researchers specifically employed the Duet feature on TikTok to this end (Pratiwi et al., 2021;

Pasaribu et al., 2022), as shown in Table 6. Additionally, except for the study conducted by Asio et al. (2023), all five investigations involved participants creating their videos. In one study, a particular interactive strategy was implemented, wherein participants were encouraged to watch videos on various topics and describe the content (Herlisya & Wiratno, 2022).

Table 6. Summary of the activities through TikTok in EAL classrooms

Author (s)	Activities
Pasaribu et al. (2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Selection of three popular English songs.</li> <li>- Explanation of the meaning and pronunciation of lyrics from the selected songs.</li> <li>- Using TikTok's Duet feature to improve public speaking skills through interactive exercises.</li> </ul> <p>Activity dynamics: The TikTok content creator initiates the action by singing the first verse, and the participants follow by singing the second verse.</p>
Anumanthan & Hashim (2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants view and respond to TikTok videos created by the researcher.</li> </ul> <p>Homework assignment assigned by the researcher: Creating TikTok videos that explain a particular regular verb. The students' videos are duets with the researcher's initial TikTok videos.</p>
Herlisya & Wiratno (2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants view diverse TikTok videos encompassing education, places, dance, cooking, famous people, and the news.</li> <li>- Participants provide descriptions of the content featured in the videos that they have watched.</li> <li>- Participants create and edit their rendition of the video content based on their creativity and personal style.</li> <li>- Participants engage with videos created by their peers by asking questions or leaving comments.</li> </ul> <p>Each participant is encouraged to show appreciation for their peers' videos by liking them as a gesture of gratitude and positive feedback.</p>
Ining (2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integration of TikTok videos at the initial phase of vocabulary acquisition.</li> <li>- Utilization of videos to introduce daily topics, promoting language engagement.</li> <li>- In-depth explanation and discussion of vocabulary and content featured in the videos.</li> <li>- Application of newly acquired words in everyday conversations on TikTok.</li> <li>- Creation of simple sentences to assess participants' comprehension and practical use.</li> <li>- Some participants employ captions and hashtags while interacting with the application, watching videos repeatedly to enhance vocabulary memorization.</li> <li>- Participants deliver brief presentations, and essays serve as a means to apply and practice new words or phrases in real-life contexts.</li> </ul>
Zaitun et al. (2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The teacher conducts classroom observations to inform pedagogical interventions.</li> <li>- Drawing from the observations, the teacher creates tailored materials to support students in their current study topics.</li> </ul> <p>The activity involves participants creating TikTok videos to engage in video storytelling.</p>
Asio et al. (2023)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TikTok is a pedagogical resource in English classes to enhance participants' prosodic skills, including stress, intonation, and pronunciation.</li> </ul> <p>However, specific details regarding the activities involving the application were not provided.</p>
Pratiwi et al. (2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants are instructed to search for and participate in the Pronunciation Challenge on TikTok using the Duet feature and then share their videos with the researchers.</li> <li>- Participants are given a questionnaire that addresses their experience with using TikTok for English pronunciation learning.</li> <li>- Researchers monitor and analyze participants' TikTok accounts to observe their engagement with the Pronunciation Challenge.</li> </ul> <p>The researchers collect and analyze data from observing TikTok accounts and the questionnaire responses.</p>
Sinta (2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants are tasked with creating duets on TikTok as a means to facilitate the memorization of English adjectives.</li> </ul> <p>No explicit guidance on how to conduct the activity or the adjectives selected for memorization are given.</p>

In the remaining portion of the research sample, three articles reported using the TikTok application to expand participants' English vocabulary (Ining, 2021; Anumanthan & Hashim, 2022; Sinta, 2022) (Table 5). Among these articles, two investigations also incorporated the Duet feature (Anumanthan & Hashim, 2022; Sinta, 2022) (Table 6). Notably, only one article focused on vocabulary acquisition and mentioned using resources such as captions and hashtags. Additionally, the study proposed that participants watch related videos repeatedly as a memorization technique (Ining, 2021) (Table 6).

In the second phase of analysis of the research sample, our focus shifted to addressing our second research question, which aimed to elucidate the learning benefits attributed by researchers to the use of the TikTok

application in the EAL classroom. Out of the eight articles analyzed, six of them provide evidence of TikTok serving as a positive learning environment (Ining, 2021; Zaitun et al., 2021; Anumanthan & Hashim, 2022; Sinta, 2022; Herlisya & Wiratno, 2022); as shown in Table 5. The authors of these studies argue that participants exhibited enthusiasm and interest when implementing activities with the application in the classroom. Moreover, they observed that TikTok contributed to a more enjoyable learning environment. These findings are in line with the perspective put forth by Monteiro (2020, p. 13):

The strategic use of TikTok in learning allows students to experience transdisciplinarity closely, that is, the presentation of knowledge in a plural and creative way. “We are drawn to creative, light-hearted, wholesome and fun content—and have been inspired to see our community receive various ideas and enriching content (...).” Many concepts can transition from theory to practical demonstration by promoting the seamless integration of knowledge and entertainment.

Another benefit that has been identified is the use of TikTok as a tool for interactive learning (Zaitun et al., 2021; Herlisya & Wiratno, 2022). Furthermore, TikTok’s ability to facilitate discussions between teachers and students on various familiar topics has been seen as evidence of its efficacy in helping them acquire vocabulary related to real-life themes, as well as facilitating information acquisition for both teachers and students (Herlisya & Wiratno, 2022). This interpretation is supported by Castells (2016, cited in Monteiro, 2020, p. 7), who argues that the internet has brought unprecedented possibilities for virtual learning through the widespread adoption of Information and Communication Technologies.

In all the analyzed articles, researchers consistently stated that TikTok was beneficial for improving the targeted skills. The authors of studies that employed pre- and post-tests reported a significant increase in participants’ average scores following the incorporation of TikTok. However, it is worth noting that the study conducted by Asio et al. (2023) presented contrasting results. Their statistical analysis, based on the perceptions of participants and observers—English teachers invited by the researchers—indicated that the proposed intervention with TikTok did not impact student learning positively.

Interestingly, there appears to be a significant issue with interpreting the statistical results in Asio et al.’s (2023) study. Despite the pre-test mean scores assigned by the observers being higher than the post-test mean scores, which suggests that the intervention with TikTok had no positive effect on the participants’ learning, the authors argue the opposite. They claim that the negative difference in means implies that the proposed intervention helped improve the interviewees’ English-speaking skills, which contradicts their data. This discrepancy raises concerns regarding the accuracy and reliability of the study’s conclusions and highlights the importance of careful interpretation and analysis of statistical data from research findings.

In two articles, the researchers assert that TikTok improves speaking skills and enhances participants’ confidence and interactivity (Zaitun et al., 2021; Herlisya & Wiratno, 2022). Moreover, in one of these articles, the authors argue that the diverse learning experiences offered by TikTok contribute to participants’ sense of happiness during activities, emphasizing its positive impact on their academic performance (Zaitun et al., 2021). In another article, the authors highlight the ease of accessing the target language through the various resources available on TikTok, considering it a beneficial effect of the application as a pedagogical tool. Additionally, the application constantly updates current events, informing users about what is happening around the world (Pratiwi et al., 2021).

However, it is essential to acknowledge that the authors expressed concerns regarding certain negative aspects of incorporating TikTok in the language classroom, as discussed in five of the analyzed articles. For instance, Pasaribu et al. (2022) identified several disadvantages during their research. They observed that, due to the gratifying experience provided by TikTok, some participants became excessively absorbed in trivialities, leading to a decline in their interest in the learning process. The authors also raised concerns about the potential for children to access other resources beyond TikTok, such as games and other social media platforms, diverting their focus from educational activities. Additionally, Pasaribu et al. (2022) highlighted that using TikTok requires significant memory space on devices, which may pose practical challenges for some learners.

Another observation by Anumanthan and Hashim (2022) was that some participants experienced difficulties creating their own TikTok videos, leading to frustration. The authors attributed this to TikTok being an application with constantly updated features, which could present practical hurdles. They also highlighted concerns regarding privacy policies, including instances where students unintentionally posted other users’ personal information in their videos.

Herlisya and Wiratno (2022) emphasized the limitation that students cannot access the TikTok application without an internet connection. This issue is particularly relevant in certain countries such as Brazil where a



survey conducted by TIC Domicílios in 2022 revealed that 36 million Brazilians still lack internet access (Peres, 2023). Additionally, according to Herlysia and Wiratno (2022), the TikTok application may experience performance issues or become slow on devices that are not sufficiently compatible, hindering classroom activities.

In contrast, despite its popularity among teenage students, Asio et al. (2023) do not consider TikTok as a productive language learning tool. According to the authors, there is an apparent disparity between the perceptions of students and teachers regarding TikTok's effectiveness in improving English speaking skills. Finally, Pratiwi et al. (2021) observed in their research that using TikTok had no discernible positive effect on the pronunciation of novice application users. These findings align with results from other studies where applications are used for the first time (Alhaag et al., 2018; Chang & Kusnadi, 2018).

#### **4. Conclusions**

Acknowledging the educational potential of TikTok and the lack of comprehensive insights into its use in EAL classrooms, we embarked on a literature review to address two key research questions: (1) How has the TikTok application been used in the context of EAL classrooms? (2) What are the learning benefits associated with its incorporation in these classrooms? Following the principles of a systematic literature review, we adapted Visintini's (2017) research protocol filling it in with our keywords, retention and exclusion criteria, and other pertinent information. By searching through Google Scholar and CAPES Journal Portal, we initially identified 617 articles. Through rigorous preliminary and final analyses, we narrowed our selection to eight peer-reviewed articles that met our research criteria.

The analysis of the selected corpus revealed that TikTok is being used in EAL classrooms to facilitate the development of speaking skills and expand vocabulary repertoire. The recurring benefits highlighted by the researchers included enhanced interactivity in the learning process, the pleasure experienced by participants when using TikTok for English language learning, increased self-confidence in speaking the target language, improved comprehension and vocabulary, positive effects on academic performance, opportunities for classroom discussions, effective word memorization, easy access to language resources and diverse information, enthusiasm and interest generated among participants, enhanced quality of sentence production and pronunciation, as well as improvement in English speaking skills.

It is worth noting, however, that some researchers also identified certain negative aspects associated with TikTok in the EAL classroom. Despite these concerns, we believe TikTok remains a valuable ancillary tool for language teaching and learning. Given that TikTok is a relatively recent technology, gaining prominence from 2019 onwards despite its experimental launch in 2017, we anticipate its increasing relevance in planned activities aimed at assisting EAL and other additional language students in developing their communicative skills, particularly those related to oral fluency and proficiency.

Finally, while this review provides a modest contribution to the existing bulk of knowledge on using TikTok as a pedagogical tool in the EAL classroom, we suggest that future reviews include direct searches on journal websites, particularly those specialized in disseminating research on EAL teaching and learning. Comprehensive searches involving multiple search engines can provide more robust answers to the questions raised in the introduction of this article regarding the use of TikTok in educational environments. These answers will enable broader and more in-depth discussions on various aspects, such as the practices of EAL teachers using TikTok, the targeted skills they aim to help develop, the success of research findings with this application, the benefits generated in educational settings, and the evidence presented in publications that highlight positive results from experiences with TikTok. We hypothesize that such comprehensive investigations will pave the way for more nuanced understandings of this phenomenon.

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#### **Authors contributions**

Dr. Hitotuzi was responsible for study design, supervision of data collection and analysis, and manuscript revision. Ms. Pereira was responsible for data collection and analysis, and manuscript draft. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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### Informed consent

Obtained.

### Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Canadian Center of Science and Education.

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### Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

### Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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## Notes

Note 1. According to Stillman and Stillman (2017), Generation Z, or Gen Z, refers to individuals born between 1995 and 2012. As digital natives, this generation has grown up in a technologically advanced world where smartphones, social media platforms, and instant connectivity have become commonplace. Gen Z is characterized by their proficiency in technology, inclusive and diverse mindset, entrepreneurial drive, and strong influence from social media. Members of this generation often exhibit a global perspective and demonstrate a heightened awareness of social justice issues. However, it is essential to note that there may be variations in experiences and individual characteristics within Generation Z, as each person's background and circumstances can contribute to their unique traits and perspectives.

Note 2. According to Reuter (1939, p. 140), "Everything, material and immaterial, created by man, in the process of living, comes within the concept of culture."

Note 3. These are the steps proposed by Petticrew and Roberts (2006, p. 27, cited in Wai Wai & Hitotuzi, 2021) for conducting a systematic review: (1) defining the research question or hypothesis to be tested; (2) determining the types of studies to be included in the review to address the research question; (3) conducting a comprehensive search to locate relevant studies; (4) evaluating the search results, excluding studies that do not meet the predetermined inclusion criteria and categorizing the remaining studies for further examination; (5) critically analyzing the included studies; (6) synthesizing the findings from the included studies and assess the level of heterogeneity in their results; and (7) publishing the findings of the review.

Note 4. Due to the limited time to complete the research, we did not conduct direct searches on journal websites.

Note 5. According to Crotty (1998), the terms *qualitative research* and *quantitative research* are more associated with how data are generated, collected, and analyzed than with the theoretical perspective underpinning the research design.

Note 6. Zaitun, Hadi, and Indriani (2021) utilized a questionnaire in their study, incorporating a Likert scale with five response options that may be equivalent to strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The Likert scale, initially introduced by Rensis Likert in 1932 in the article *A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes* (Batterton & Hale, 2017), was adapted for their research purposes.

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