CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Technological advances help English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students interact with the language outside the usual classroom environment. Social media has become an important aspect of MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) Soft MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) applications. One of these Soft MALL applications is TikTok. (2023) Muflihah, Tarihoran, and Rahmawati; (2022) Nguyen and Tran TikTok is one of the leading platforms for youth engagement. It enables informal, unstructured, and self-directed MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning). TikTok has a unique video-making and viewing system that allows for personalized interactive short videos and streaming and provides a wide variety of real-world English language input. TikTok may be especially appealing to learners of Generation Z due to its many modalities (2023) Nguyen and Mai; and various studies (2023) Juliana et al. add to Muflihah and TikTok supports the youth for vocabulary acquisition, speaking/elocution fluency, and modeling pronunciation. English students learn more about pseudo, verbal parodies, and other humorous narrative voiceovers, thus improving retention and contextual comprehension of trends. (2023) Suwanda, Harmanto, and Maghfiroh Moreover, verbal rehearsal with inflection and speech of native English speakers TikTok provides channels for its users to create and distribute videos that contain their speech, and to give others a chance to "sing along." TikTok's impact on students' motivation and self-assurance is remarkable.

Herdiana, Rohayati, and Faridah (2023) note that learners often experience higher levels of self-assuredness and autonomy when utilizing a particular platform. Moreover, learners can enhance and refine their verbal competencies (Ferstephanie & Pratiwi, 2023) by creating and distributing content in English.

While utilizing Tik Tok for educational purposes has a number of positive aspects, the applications entertainment-oriented features impose a number of pedagogical constraints. Pianasari and Faruk (2023) suggest that the absence of learning goals and instructional designer guidance can result in a lack of engagement with the material in a way that fosters the culminating cognitive skills of speaking and writing. In addition, learners do not always possess the requisite digital skills to analyze the language content (Dewi, 2023). Time constraints, the appropriateness and relevance of content, and the disparity of access to instructional technologies are also challenges that teachers face (Hulu, Sipayung, & Pasaribu, 2023).

This study, then, seeks to evaluate the ways in which EFL learners move from scroll to skill, i.e. how learners use Tik Tok for language learning, the vocabulary, pronunciation, and speaking skills that learners perceive they improve, and the challenges that learners face when using the platform for instructional purposes.

1.2 Problem Identification

The use of TikTok by EFL students is a double-edge sword. On one end, it gives students a plethora of opportunity to engage with the English language. On the other end, because students are mostly passive users, they provide little to no focus on how they can actively use the language to improve their skills at (Dewi, 2023).

Students engage with the platform in a way where the language of the content is, more often than not, treated superficially. For example, students can recognize and understand lexical items, but when it comes to orally or written articulate expressions, they tend to struggle (Pianasari & Faruk, 2023). Also, because of the absence of a structure that is provided by the platform, students are also not able to work on certain problem areas, such as their grammar and discourse, that often require feedback and scaffolding from a teacher.

Most students struggle with the skills that are crucial to the use of technology. Most students do not possess the skills to evaluate content reliability, identify standard language usage, and align their consumption with the learning objectives (Ferstephanie & Pratiwi, 2023). Teachers also encounter barriers while attempting to incorporate TikTok in their teaching. They have to find the right content, create interesting tasks, and keep everything aligned with the learning outcomes of the curriculum.

All of this takes time, tech skills, and materials, which are not available to everyone (Hulu et al., 2023; Lee, 2023).\ These barriers inform why it is essential to focus on the various ways students use TikTok to improve their vocabulary, pronunciation, and speaking skills, as well as the obstacles they face while doing so and the activities they implement to overcome these obstacles.

1.3 Research Problems

This study aims to explore the potential and limitations of TikTok in supporting EFL learners' development in vocabulary, pronunciation, and speaking. The research is guided by the following questions:

1. How do EFL learners perceive the use of TikTok content as a medium to enhance their English speaking skills?
2. What challenges and opportunities do learners encounter when using TikTok as a tool for developing their English speaking skills?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to examine how TikTok functions as an informal learning tool for English language development. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. To explore learners' perceptions of using TikTok content as a medium for enhancing English speaking skills.
2. To identify the challenges and opportunities learners encounter when utilizing TikTok as a tool for developing their English speaking skills.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study enhances various fields:

1. Theoretical Significance: This study enhances the literature on mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) by investigating the impact of informal platforms such as TikTok on language development, specifically through the framework of "scrolling behaviour to skill development."
2. Practical Significance: This study elucidates the process of converting informal interaction with digital content into deliberate language acquisition, particularly for Generation Z learners. The results can help students learn how to use good tactics for practicing their vocabulary and speaking.
3. Pedagogical Importance: The study offers educators and curriculum developers valuable insights for the appropriate integration of TikTok into instructional settings. It emphasises the significance of scaffolding, digital literacy, and critical involvement in utilising social media for language acquisition.

1.6 Literature Review

Integrating new vocabulary is not the main goal of Tik Tok; however, authentic exposure and speaking practice close the gap between the speech and vocabulary of the learners. Nguyen and Tran (2023) stated that Vietnamese learners used new vocabulary from Tik Tok videos during speaking practice which, at that time, enhanced the spontaneity of their English speaking.

According to Juliana and others (2023), enhanced speech vocabulary is the result of rapid video formats. However, Muflihah et al. (2023) stated that without active practice, learners may not use new vocabulary when speaking and, instead, may rely on passive recognition of the vocabulary.

Tik Tok fosters the learners' willingness to speak. Providing a familiar ambience which is entertainment-based lowers the speaking anxiety and increases the speaking frequency. Herdiana et al. (2023) stated that learners were more participative, and more willing to speak when English activities were integrated with Tik Tok. Ferstephanie and Pratiwi (2023) stated that the active promotion of peer Tik Tok video creation enhanced self reflection, and, in turn, strengthened the positive speaking self statement. Lee (2023) stated that Tik Tok is one of the best apps for intercultural communication which provides authentic English speaking practice, because learners can communicate with and among different countries. Tik Tok activities also have some disadvantages. Juliana et al.

There are studies indicating that social media platforms could assist learners in developing their language skills, although some educators have expressed concerns. As Hu et al. (2023) mentioned, learners can become more engrossed in the social media platforms' entertainment features, reducing the potential for deeper engagement. Dewi (2023) cautioned that reliance on TikTok, for example, could result in students practicing language skills at a very surface level, without developing their grammatical and discourse organizational structures. Furthermore, Hu et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of digital literacy and pedagogical innovation for educators in order to TikTok-related activities and integrate to social media target instructional and speaking objectives.

1.7 Novelty of the Research

This study offers several innovative contributions. First, it adopts a comprehensive view of language development by simultaneously addressing vocabulary, pronunciation, and speaking skills. Second, it introduces the concept of "scrolling behavior to skill development," linking digital habits to language learning outcomes. Third, it emphasizes learner-centered, real-world usage of TikTok outside formal classroom settings. Lastly, it focuses on the Indonesian EFL context, contributing to localized insights in a relatively underexplored setting. Together, these elements provide new perspectives on informal language learning in the digital age