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Student Motivation Toward Learning English Through TikTok

Motivación estudiantil hacia el aprendizaje del inglés a través de TikTok

Autores:
Willian Israel Coro Roldán
Unidad Educativa Atahualpa, Riobamba, Ecuador
williancoro777@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5233-0000

Rosario Guadalupe Pardo Taday
Escuela de Educación General Básica Zoila Alvarado de Jaramillo, Loja, Ecuador
lupitapardo71@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0009-0007-9844-4388

Gilson Arnol Vargas López
Unidad Educativa Fiscal Ciudad de Huaquillas, Huaquillas, Ecuador
gilson_1996_@hotmail.com
https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5825-9935

Mary Laura Mendoza Figueroa
Unidad Educativa Fiscal Pedro Bouguer, Quito, Ecuador
mary-lauram@hotmail.com
https://orcid.org/0009-0003-2809-1821

Sandra Patricia Caiza Olapincha
Unidad Educativa Fiscal Pedro Bouguer, Quito, Ecuador
avatarpachuka72@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0009-0003-0673-7679

Autor de correspondencia: *Willian Israel Coro Roldán*, williancoro777@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze the influence of TikTok as an educational tool on students' motivation to learn English as a foreign language, considering its contributions to engagement, participation, and language skill development. A narrative literature review with a qualitative and descriptive-analytical approach was conducted within a temporal framework covering 2020–2026. The documentary corpus comprised 15 scientific publications published between 2022 and 2026.

The documentary analysis was organized into five thematic categories: student motivation (4 publications), English language skill development (4 publications), digital engagement and perceived learning support (3 publications), pedagogical implementation (2 publications), and educational opportunities and limitations (2 publications). The reviewed studies examined the use of short-form audiovisual content, interactive learning activities, vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation practice, oral communication, and student perceptions of digital learning environments. The findings identified opportunities to enhance learning interest, encourage classroom participation, support speaking skills, and facilitate access to supplementary English language resources. However, differences in research methodologies, educational contexts, instructional strategies, and assessment procedures prevented the establishment of consistent effects across the studies. It was concluded that TikTok represents a potentially valuable complementary educational tool when integrated through structured pedagogical strategies, clearly defined learning objectives, and appropriate assessment procedures. Further research is recommended to evaluate its long-term effects on student motivation, language proficiency, autonomous learning, and educational engagement.

Keywords: TikTok; student motivation; English language learning; educational technology; student engagement.

RESUMEN

La presente investigación tuvo como objetivo analizar la influencia de TikTok como herramienta educativa en la motivación de los estudiantes para aprender inglés como lengua extranjera, considerando sus aportes al compromiso, la participación y el desarrollo de habilidades lingüísticas. Se desarrolló una revisión bibliográfica narrativa, con enfoque cualitativo y alcance descriptivo-analítico, enmarcada en el intervalo temporal 2020–2026. El corpus documental estuvo conformado por 15 publicaciones científicas correspondientes al período 2022–2026. El análisis documental se organizó en cinco categorías temáticas: motivación estudiantil (4 publicaciones), desarrollo de habilidades lingüísticas en inglés (4 publicaciones), compromiso digital y apoyo percibido al aprendizaje (3 publicaciones), implementación pedagógica (2 publicaciones), y oportunidades y limitaciones educativas (2 publicaciones).

Los hallazgos identificaron oportunidades para incrementar el interés por aprender, fomentar la participación en clase, fortalecer las habilidades de expresión oral y facilitar el acceso a recursos complementarios para el aprendizaje del inglés. Sin embargo, las diferencias metodológicas, los contextos educativos, las estrategias de enseñanza y los procedimientos de evaluación impidieron establecer efectos uniformes entre las investigaciones. Se concluyó que TikTok constituye una herramienta educativa complementaria con potencial para favorecer el aprendizaje del inglés cuando se integra mediante estrategias pedagógicas estructuradas, objetivos claramente definidos y procedimientos adecuados de evaluación. Se recomienda desarrollar nuevas investigaciones que permitan evaluar sus efectos a largo plazo sobre la motivación estudiantil, el dominio del inglés, el aprendizaje autónomo y el compromiso educativo.

Palabras clave: TikTok; motivación estudiantil; aprendizaje del inglés; tecnología educativa; compromiso estudiantil.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technologies and social media platforms has significantly transformed educational practices, creating new opportunities for students to access information, interact with learning materials, and develop linguistic competencies beyond traditional classroom environments. In this context, TikTok has emerged as a digital platform with potential applications in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), particularly because its short audiovisual content combines visual explanations, authentic communication, and interactive learning experiences. Canani and Zulli (2022) examined the integration of TikTok into English language teaching and highlighted its potential for supporting vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, and classroom participation. Similarly, Hu and Du (2022) investigated TikTok within mobile-assisted language learning and identified the need to examine its effects on students' motivation and communicative development. Gao et al. (2023) also explored the use of TikTok as an instructional resource, providing evidence of its potential contribution to learning motivation and oral proficiency.

Student motivation represents a fundamental component of foreign language acquisition because it influences learners' willingness to participate, engage in communicative activities, and maintain consistent learning habits. Nevertheless, conventional instructional approaches may not always provide sufficient opportunities for meaningful interaction or autonomous language practice. Consequently, educators have increasingly explored digital strategies that connect academic content with students' everyday technological experiences. Mulyanah et al. (2024) investigated the application of TikTok in English instruction and reported significant differences in learning motivation between students who used the platform and those who received conventional instruction. Likewise, Sitompul and Yunita (2025) examined students' experiences with educational TikTok content and identified vocabulary explanations, pronunciation activities, and contextualized expressions as potentially motivating learning resources. However, Hu and Du (2022) reported mixed motivational outcomes, indicating that the integration of digital platforms does not automatically guarantee improvements in students' engagement or language learning.

The development of communicative competence constitutes another important dimension of TikTok-assisted English learning. Through short videos, students can encounter spoken

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English, observe pronunciation patterns, practice everyday expressions, and participate in activities that encourage oral communication. Hongsa et al. (2023) investigated the effects of TikTok on EFL students' speaking skills and reported improvements in oral performance alongside positive perceptions of the learning experience. Similarly, Annapis et al. (2024) examined the application of TikTok in language instruction and identified favorable outcomes related to vocabulary development, pronunciation, speaking confidence, and student engagement. These findings suggest that audiovisual learning activities may provide opportunities for meaningful language practice, particularly when teachers establish clear instructional objectives and encourage active student participation rather than passive content consumption.

Vocabulary acquisition and language comprehension are also essential components of English learning because they contribute to students' ability to understand messages, construct meaningful expressions, and communicate in different situations. In this regard, digital platforms provide opportunities to present linguistic content through combinations of images, subtitles, sounds, and contextualized examples. Anumanthan and Hashim (2022) explored the use of TikTok to support the learning of regular English verbs among primary school students, emphasizing the educational possibilities of short audiovisual materials. Alshreef and Khadawardi (2023) examined learners' perceptions of TikTok as a vocabulary-learning resource and highlighted its potential as a supplementary tool in EFL contexts. More recently, Xavierine et al. (2025) investigated learners' perceptions of specific TikTok video features and found that the integration of subtitles, visual elements, and narrative content was particularly relevant to perceived vocabulary-learning support. These contributions suggest that the educational value of short videos depends not only on their attractiveness but also on the linguistic relevance, organization, and pedagogical quality of their content.

Beyond linguistic development, TikTok may contribute to student participation, self-confidence, and perceived learning support by providing opportunities to create educational videos, interact with peers, and practice English in familiar digital environments. Pérez-Sabater et al. (2023) investigated the use of short-video applications in university foreign language courses and identified differences in learners' attitudes depending on language proficiency and educational context. Likewise, Hidayat and Lolita (2025) explored students' perceptions of learning English through TikTok, focusing on the relationship

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between platform use and perceived self-efficacy. From a broader pedagogical perspective, Jantan Anua Jah et al. (2024) conducted a systematic literature review examining the potential of TikTok for English language learning and identified both educational opportunities and challenges associated with its classroom implementation. These studies indicate that meaningful integration requires instructional planning, appropriate learning activities, and opportunities for learners to reflect on their linguistic progress.

Despite these possibilities, incorporating TikTok into educational environments presents challenges related to digital distractions, content reliability, unequal technological access, student privacy, and the difficulty of distinguishing entertainment-driven participation from measurable academic achievement. Consequently, positive attitudes toward a digital platform should not be interpreted as conclusive evidence of improved language proficiency. Rodas-Coloma et al. (2026), in a systematic review of educational applications of TikTok in South America, identified opportunities for engagement and collaboration while emphasizing methodological limitations and the need for stronger evidence about learning outcomes. Similarly, Cedeño Rengifo et al. (2026) examined TikTok as a visual learning approach for acquiring basic English vocabulary in higher education, contributing to the discussion of short-video strategies in language instruction. Taken together, these investigations highlight the importance of evaluating digital learning tools through pedagogical criteria that consider motivation, participation, linguistic development, accessibility, and the quality of the available evidence.

Therefore, the present article aims to analyze the influence of TikTok as a digital educational tool on students' motivation to learn English as a foreign language through a narrative review framed within the period 2020–2026. The documentary corpus comprises 15 scientific publications dated between 2022 and 2026. The analysis considers student engagement, classroom participation, vocabulary acquisition, oral communication, and perceived support for learning, as well as the principal pedagogical benefits, limitations, and ethical considerations associated with incorporating TikTok into English language teaching. Accordingly, the research addresses the following question: How does the use of TikTok as an educational tool influence students' motivation to learn English as a foreign language, and what educational implications arise from its implementation?

2. METHODOLOGY

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a) Research Design

This study was developed as a narrative literature review with a qualitative approach and a descriptive-analytical scope. Its purpose was to examine the educational applications of TikTok and their relationship with students' motivation to learn English as a foreign language (EFL), considering the findings, contributions, and limitations reported in previously published scientific literature.

The research employed a documentary approach based on the qualitative examination, thematic organization, and comparative interpretation of academic publications. Unlike experimental or field-based investigations, the study did not involve direct interventions, surveys, interviews, or the collection of primary data from students or teachers. Instead, the analysis focused on interpreting existing scientific contributions concerning student motivation, English language development, educational engagement, and the pedagogical implementation of TikTok.

The review was narrative rather than systematic: it did not claim exhaustive identification, systematic screening, or formal study-quality assessment. Details about the traceability of the corpus selection are specified below.

b) Documentary Corpus

The narrative literature review was framed within the period 2020–2026. The documentary corpus analyzed in the present study consisted of 15 scientific publications dated between 2022 and 2026. Therefore, the temporal framework considered for the review is distinguished from the actual publication period of the documents included in the analysis. The corpus comprised empirical investigations, studies of student perceptions, pedagogical analyses, and literature reviews addressing the educational use of TikTok and short-form audiovisual resources in English language education. Of these publications, 14 directly addressed TikTok-assisted English language learning, while Rodas-Coloma et al. (2026) was retained exclusively as a contextual reference on broader educational applications. This contextual source was not interpreted as direct evidence of improvements in English proficiency.

The publications were examined in relation to their contributions to understanding student motivation, vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, speaking skills, educational participation, perceived support for learning, and the opportunities and limitations associated with integrating TikTok into teaching practices.

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The corpus was purposively organized according to thematic relevance, educational contribution, and identifiable bibliographic information. The available records do not reconstruct the original discovery sequence, databases, search strings, dates, or screening counts; therefore, the initial identification procedure cannot be reproduced and corpus representativeness cannot be established. No numerical methodological-quality score or formal risk-of-bias assessment was performed.

The publications included in the documentary corpus are presented in Table 1, together with their principal research areas and analytical contributions.

Table 1.

Characterization of the Documentary Corpus According to Research Area and Analytical Focus

No.	Author(s) and year	Research area	Main analytical focus
1	Canani & Zulli (2022)	English language teaching	Integration of TikTok into classroom practices
2	Hu & Du (2022)	Mobile-assisted language learning	TikTok and English learning motivation
3	Gao et al. (2023)	Language learning	Motivation and oral proficiency
4	Mulyanah et al. (2024)	Educational motivation	TikTok and EFL learning motivation
5	Sitompul & Yunita (2025)	Student motivation	Educational content and motivation
6	Hongsa et al. (2023)	Speaking skills	English oral communication
7	Annapis et al. (2024)	Communicative competence	Speaking skills and digital learning
8	Anumanthan & Hashim (2022)	English grammar	Learning regular verbs through TikTok

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9	Alshreef & Khadawardi (2023)	Vocabulary acquisition	TikTok as a vocabulary-learning resource
10	Xavierine et al. (2025)	Vocabulary learning	Student perceptions of short-video features
11	Pérez-Sabater et al. (2023)	Higher education	Short-video applications in foreign language learning
12	Hidayat & Lolita (2025)	Learning self-efficacy	Student perceptions and English learning
13	Jantan Anua Jah et al. (2024)	Educational methodology	Literature review of TikTok in English learning
14	Rodas-Coloma et al. (2026)	Educational technology	Contextual reference: broader educational applications of TikTok in South America
15	Cedeño Rengifo et al. (2026)	English vocabulary	Visual learning and vocabulary acquisition

Note. The publications are organized according to their principal research topics and contributions to the article's objective. This thematic characterization does not establish equivalence between empirical investigations, literature reviews, and pedagogical analyses.

c) Criteria for Documentary Inclusion

The relevance of the 15 publications was examined in relation to the research objective and the educational dimensions addressed in the review.

The documentary analysis considered the following characteristics:

1. Thematic relevance: Relationship between TikTok, short-form audiovisual resources, and English language teaching or learning.
2. Educational contribution: Examination of student motivation, engagement, participation, perceived learning support, or English language skills.
3. Scientific identification: Availability of bibliographic information allowing the publication and its academic source to be identified.
4. Methodological characteristics: Identification of the research approach, educational context, and type of evidence presented, whenever such information was available.

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5. Contribution to the research objective: Relevance of the reported findings, interpretations, or limitations to understanding the educational applications of TikTok.

These criteria describe how the available documents were analyzed; they do not retrospectively establish an undocumented systematic eligibility or screening process.

Differences between direct performance measures, reported perceptions, pedagogical analyses, and secondary reviews were retained throughout the comparative interpretation.

d) Documentary Analysis Procedure

To organize the documentary synthesis, the 15 publications were classified into five thematic categories according to their predominant research contributions:

1. **Student motivation (4 publications):** Studies examining learners' interest, motivation, attitudes, and willingness to participate in English learning activities.
2. **English language skill development (4 publications):** Publications addressing vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, grammatical learning, and oral communication.
3. Digital engagement and perceived learning support (3 publications): Studies examining digital participation, perceptions of audiovisual resources, reported self-efficacy, and perceived support for language learning; these indicators were not treated as demonstrated gains in self-regulated or autonomous learning.
4. **Pedagogical implementation (2 publications):** Studies examining instructional strategies, classroom applications, and the integration of TikTok into English language teaching.
5. **Educational opportunities and limitations (2 publications):** Publications addressing the educational potential, implementation challenges, accessibility considerations, and methodological limitations associated with TikTok-assisted learning.

Each publication was assigned to one principal category according to its predominant analytical contribution, although individual studies could address additional educational dimensions. This classification was used exclusively to organize the narrative synthesis and did not constitute a measure of educational effectiveness.

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The comparative interpretation focused on identifying similarities, differences, and limitations among the reported findings. Particular attention was given to distinguishing students' favorable perceptions and motivational experiences from objectively measured improvements in language performance.

Likewise, empirical investigations were differentiated from literature reviews and pedagogical analyses to avoid interpreting secondary evidence as independent experimental confirmation.

Finally, the synthesis considered how educational context, instructional strategies, learner characteristics, and methodological differences could influence the interpretation of the reported results.

This approach provided a descriptive and critical understanding of the potential educational contribution of TikTok while recognizing the limitations of the available documentary evidence and avoiding causal generalizations unsupported by the reviewed publications.

3. RESULTS

The narrative review examined 15 scientific publications dated between 2022 and 2026 within a stated temporal framework of 2020–2026. Fourteen publications directly addressed TikTok-assisted English language learning; Rodas-Coloma et al. (2026) was treated as a contextual reference. Five thematic categories were used: student motivation (4 publications), English language skill development (4), digital engagement and perceived learning support (3), pedagogical implementation (2), and educational opportunities and limitations (2). The last category comprises one directly relevant review and one contextual review.

The thematic organization revealed that TikTok has been examined from different educational perspectives, including learning motivation, vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, oral communication, classroom participation, and digital teaching practices. Studies investigating motivational factors explored students' attitudes and willingness to engage in English learning activities, whereas research focused on linguistic development examined specific language competencies. Other publications analyzed the potential of short-form audiovisual materials to support participation, perceived support for learning, and innovative instructional practices.

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Comparative Synthesis According to the Type of Scientific Evidence

The reviewed publications differed in their methodological approaches, educational populations, and assessment procedures. Therefore, the documentary synthesis distinguished studies reporting outcomes from educational interventions, investigations examining student perceptions and learning experiences, pedagogical analyses, and literature reviews.

Gao et al. (2023) examined TikTok-assisted instruction among learners preparing for professional communication in the meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) sector. The investigation reported favorable outcomes in learning motivation and oral proficiency compared with conventional instruction. However, these findings corresponded to a specific educational context.

Mulyanah et al. (2024) investigated TikTok-assisted English instruction in Indonesia using a quasi-experimental approach. The study compared motivational outcomes between students exposed to TikTok-assisted activities and those receiving conventional instruction. The reported differences concerned learning motivation and should not be interpreted as direct evidence of improved English language proficiency.

Hongsa et al. (2023) employed a mixed-methods approach with 60 students enrolled in an English-speaking course. Speaking assessments and questionnaires were administered to these students, and 13 volunteers participated in semi-structured interviews. The findings indicated favorable speaking-performance outcomes alongside positive perceptions of the experience. Assessed oral performance and reported satisfaction were interpreted as distinct forms of evidence.

Hu and Du (2022) conducted an exploratory mixed-methods investigation in a Chinese higher education context. The study examined students' perceptions and motivational responses to TikTok-assisted English learning. Although participants reported favorable experiences, the quantitative findings revealed mixed motivational outcomes, indicating that positive perceptions did not consistently correspond to increased motivation.

Other investigations focused primarily on students' attitudes, perceived usefulness, confidence, and learning experiences. These contributions were interpreted separately from studies reporting assessed learning outcomes. Likewise, Jantan Anua Jah et al. (2024) was classified as a literature review focused on English learning, whereas Rodas-Coloma et al.

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(2026) was considered a contextual reference addressing broader educational applications.

Overall, differences in research designs, populations, instruments, and educational settings limited direct comparisons among the publications. Consequently, the results were synthesized descriptively without interpreting motivational indicators or favorable perceptions as equivalent to demonstrated improvements in English proficiency.

Student Motivation

Student motivation represents one of the principal dimensions identified in the reviewed literature. The investigations examined how the incorporation of TikTok into educational activities may influence learners' interest, willingness to participate, and attitudes toward English as a foreign language.

Gao et al. (2023) investigated the use of TikTok as an educational resource among students preparing for professional communication in the meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions sector. Their findings indicated that learners participating in TikTok-assisted instruction achieved improvements in learning motivation and oral proficiency compared with students following traditional instructional methods.

Mulyanah et al. (2024) investigated the influence of TikTok-assisted instruction on EFL students' learning motivation in Indonesia. The quasi-experimental study compared motivational outcomes between students participating in TikTok-supported learning activities and those receiving conventional instruction. The findings indicated differences in motivation between the groups, suggesting that the platform may contribute to motivational processes under specific instructional conditions. Nevertheless, these results concerned motivation rather than independently assessed English language proficiency.

Sitompul and Yunita (2025) conducted a descriptive qualitative investigation with quantitative supporting information among seven Indonesian junior high school students. Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and content observation addressed student motivation and preferences for English-language TikTok materials. The reported attitudes and experiences should not be interpreted as assessed gains in English proficiency.

Nevertheless, Hu and Du (2022) reported more complex findings. Although participants initially expressed favorable perceptions of TikTok-assisted language learning, subsequent quantitative evidence did not demonstrate uniformly positive motivational outcomes. The

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authors identified differences between students' expectations, reported experiences, and measured motivational dimensions.

Taken together, these investigations suggest that TikTok may support motivational processes in particular educational contexts, but its effectiveness cannot be assumed to be universal. Student motivation appears to depend on the relationship between instructional objectives, the characteristics of educational content, learning activities, and individual student experiences.

English Language Skill Development

The development of linguistic competencies constituted another relevant category within the documentary review. The selected investigations addressed vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, speaking skills, and the use of audiovisual content to facilitate English language practice.

Hongsa et al. (2023) investigated TikTok-assisted English-speaking instruction through a mixed-methods approach involving 60 students. The research combined speaking assessments with questionnaires and interviews to examine language performance and students' experiences. The findings indicated favorable results in speaking performance alongside positive perceptions of the learning activities. However, these outcomes should be interpreted separately, as students' satisfaction and perceived usefulness do not independently demonstrate improvements in oral proficiency.

Likewise, Annapis et al. (2024) used a mixed-methods approach with 50 EFL learners, incorporating pre- and post-instruction speaking assessments, video assignments, and surveys. Its speaking-performance evidence must be distinguished from participants' reported confidence, motivation, and satisfaction.

In relation to grammatical development, Anumanthan and Hashim (2022) evaluated the use of TikTok to support the learning of regular English verbs among 45 primary-school ESL pupils. Pre- and post-tests assessed sentence construction with regular verbs, while interviews documented learner responses. The reported improvements concern this specific grammatical task and do not establish gains across all dimensions of English proficiency.

Alshreef and Khadawardi (2023) conducted descriptive quantitative research with 115 female university students at King Abdulaziz University. Their questionnaire documented

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favorable perceptions of TikTok as a vocabulary-learning resource, but no independently assessed vocabulary improvement was established by that survey.

The comparison of these studies indicates that TikTok can support different aspects of language learning, depending on the instructional objectives and activities implemented. Nevertheless, vocabulary development, grammatical understanding, and oral communication represent distinct learning outcomes that require appropriate assessment procedures.

Consequently, favorable results in one linguistic dimension should not be interpreted as evidence of equivalent improvements in all areas of English proficiency.

Digital Engagement and Perceived Learning Support

Digital engagement and perceived learning support constituted another thematic dimension identified in the review. The examined studies highlighted the relationship between students' interaction with educational videos, their participation in language activities, and their perceptions of learning through digital environments.

Xavierine et al. (2025) surveyed 92 pre-intermediate learners at a Malaysian university after they viewed selected TikTok videos. A 42-item bilingual questionnaire examined perceptions of subtitles, visuals, narrative, duration, gestures, audio, and interactivity. The findings reflect learners' evaluations of video features, not measured vocabulary gains.

Pérez-Sabater et al. (2023) examined the application of short-video platforms in higher education foreign language courses. Their findings contributed to understanding the importance of learner characteristics, educational contexts, and attitudes toward digital learning activities.

Hidayat and Lolita (2025) conducted a qualitative case study with 32 eleventh-grade students at a public school in Gresik, Indonesia, over three weeks. Semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and student-produced video analysis examined perceived self-efficacy, engagement, and speaking confidence. These self-reported experiences were not interpreted as independently assessed language-proficiency gains.

Together, these publications document favorable perceptions of digital engagement and perceived learning support. However, flexible access to videos, positive attitudes, and self-efficacy reports do not demonstrate improvements in autonomous learning, which would require direct measures of learners' goal setting, monitoring, strategy use, or self-regulation.

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Therefore, the reviewed literature supports the importance of distinguishing between frequent platform use, perceived engagement, and demonstrable educational achievement.

Pedagogical Implementation

The pedagogical implementation of TikTok represents an important research dimension because the educational value of a digital platform depends largely on how it is integrated into teaching and learning activities.

Canani and Zulli (2022) examined the incorporation of TikTok into English language teaching practices, considering opportunities for connecting classroom instruction with contemporary forms of digital communication.

Their contribution highlights the potential of integrating short audiovisual materials into educational activities that encourage language exposure, communication, and student participation.

Similarly, Cedeño Rengifo et al. (2026) investigated TikTok as a visual learning approach for basic English vocabulary acquisition in higher education. Their work contributes to the discussion of how digital video content may be incorporated into language instruction.

The comparison of these publications indicates that pedagogical integration should extend beyond presenting attractive digital materials. Educational activities require clearly defined objectives, appropriate content, opportunities for student interaction, and assessment procedures aligned with the intended learning outcomes.

In this regard, TikTok may function as a complementary teaching resource rather than a replacement for structured language instruction.

Educational Opportunities and Limitations

The educational opportunities and limitations associated with TikTok constituted a transversal dimension of the reviewed literature.

Jantan Anua Jah et al. (2024) conducted a systematic literature review examining TikTok as a pedagogical tool for English language learning. Their work addressed the educational potential of the platform while considering challenges associated with its implementation.

Rodas-Coloma et al. (2026) reviewed TikTok applications across educational disciplines in South America rather than focusing exclusively on English as a foreign language. In the present article, this publication serves as contextual evidence concerning pedagogical

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opportunities and implementation challenges; it is not treated as direct evidence of improved English language proficiency.

These publications highlight the importance of considering educational context, instructional planning, accessibility, and the quality of digital resources when evaluating the usefulness of TikTok in formal education.

Potential challenges include distraction caused by entertainment content, unequal access to technological resources, privacy considerations, inconsistent educational quality, and difficulties measuring long-term learning outcomes.

Furthermore, differences among the research designs, populations, and assessment procedures limit the possibility of establishing universal conclusions concerning the effectiveness of TikTok.

Consequently, its implementation requires critical evaluation and appropriate pedagogical guidance.

Table 2.

Synthesis of Findings and Limitations by Thematic Category

Analytical category	Number of publications	Main findings	Identified limitations
Student motivation	4	TikTok-assisted activities may encourage learning interest, participation, and motivation in specific educational contexts.	Motivational outcomes vary among learners and instructional settings.
English language skill development	4	Short audiovisual activities may support speaking practice, vocabulary learning, and grammatical instruction.	Improvements in individual competencies do not demonstrate general language proficiency gains.

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Analytical category	Number of publications	Main findings	Identified limitations
Digital engagement and perceived learning support	3	Video features and accessible content may encourage interaction and perceived usefulness of learning resources.	Engagement and favorable perceptions do not necessarily indicate measurable achievement.
Pedagogical implementation	2	Structured short-video activities offer opportunities to complement English instruction.	Educational effectiveness depends on objectives, content quality, and instructional design.
Educational opportunities and limitations	2	Literature reviews identify potential educational applications and implementation challenges.	Differences in research methods and educational contexts restrict generalization.
Total	**15**		

Note. Frequencies describe the thematic classification of 15 publications, including 14 directly related to TikTok-assisted English learning and one contextual reference (Rodas-Coloma et al., 2026). Each publication was allocated to one principal category. Counts do not measure educational effectiveness.

Comparison of Reported Learning Outcomes

Table 3 compares the full set of 15 publications, distinguishing assessments of language performance, motivational indicators, surveys of perceptions, qualitative accounts, pedagogical analyses, and secondary reviews. Participant counts and instruments are reported when documented; unidentified methodological details are not inferred.

Table 3.

Comparative Methodological Characteristics and Evidence Types in the 15 Selected Publications

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Study	Research design and context	Reported findings	Interpretation and limitations
Gao et al. (2023)	TikTok-assisted instruction with MICE learners.	Favorable motivation and oral proficiency outcomes.	Results reflect a specific professional education context.
Hongsa et al. (2023)	Mixed-methods study; 60 public-speaking students; speaking tests, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews with 13 volunteers.	Favorable speaking performance and positive perceptions.	Assessed speaking and perceived satisfaction are different outcomes.
Mulyanah et al. (2024)	Quantitative quasi-experimental design with senior high-school EFL students in Tangerang, Indonesia; pre- and post-tests and Mann–Whitney U comparison.	Statistically significant between-group difference in English-learning motivation.	Motivation does not independently demonstrate proficiency gains.
Hu & Du (2022)	Exploratory mixed-methods study of mobile-assisted English learning.	Mixed motivational findings despite favorable perceptions.	Positive attitudes do not guarantee improved motivation.
Jantan Anua Jah et al. (2024)	Literature review focused on TikTok in English learning.	Synthesis of pedagogical opportunities and challenges.	Secondary evidence, not an independent intervention.

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Study	Research design and context	Reported findings	Interpretation and limitations
Annapis et al. (2024)	Mixed methods; 50 EFL learners; pre-/post-instruction speaking assessments, video assignments and surveys (as described in the reviewed corpus).	Speaking outcomes and reported confidence/motivation	Assessed performance distinct from student perceptions.
Alshreef & Khadawardi (2023)	Descriptive quantitative; 115 female university students; online questionnaire	Positive attitudes to vocabulary videos	Perceptions, not measured vocabulary improvement.
Xavierine et al. (2025)	92 Malaysian pre-intermediate learners; 42-item bilingual questionnaire after curated videos	Perceived usefulness of video features	Feature preferences, not tested vocabulary gains.
Sitompul & Yunita (2025)	Descriptive qualitative study with quantitative supporting data; seven Indonesian junior high-school students; questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and content observation.	Reported motivation, positive perceptions, and preferences for vocabulary, pronunciation, and contextualized English content.	Self-reported motivational experiences do not constitute independently measured English-proficiency gains.

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Study	Research design and context	Reported findings	Interpretation and limitations
Anumanthan & Hashim (2022)	Mixed-methods study; 45 Year 5 primary-school ESL pupils selected by convenience sampling; pre-/post-tests and semi-structured interviews with 10 pupils.	Improved performance on regular-verb sentence construction; favorable learner responses to the activities.	Pre-/post-test outcomes concern regular-verb sentence construction; interviews capture perceptions, not overall proficiency.
Canani & Zulli (2022)	Pedagogical classroom-practice analysis	Teaching applications of TikTok	No independent learning-effect estimate established.
Pérez-Sabater et al. (2023)	Higher-education classroom intervention in engineering degrees; three groups studying English B2 or Italian A2; surveys and feedback sessions.	Positive views of short-video speaking practice, alongside differences in attitudes toward TikTok and FlipGrid by group.	Interpret within institution and participant context.
Hidayat & Lolita (2025)	Qualitative case study; 32 Grade XI students in a Gresik public school, Indonesia; three weeks; semi-structured interviews, classroom	Reported increased engagement, speaking confidence, and perceived English-learning self-efficacy.	Perceived confidence and engagement are not independent measures of English proficiency.

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Study	Research design and context	Reported findings	Interpretation and limitations
	observation, and student video analysis.		
Cedeño Rengifo et al. (2026)	Quantitative higher-education study of A1 English vocabulary; 10-item survey on visual TikTok learning resources.	Self-reported ease of understanding new vocabulary and perceived support from audiovisual features.	Surveyed perceptions, not independently established vocabulary acquisition or autonomous learning.
Rodas-Coloma et al. (2026)	Systematic literature review; South American educational contexts	Broader uses and implementation challenges	Contextual secondary evidence, not direct EFL outcomes.

Note. Research designs, populations, instructional settings, and measures differ among publications. The findings should not be interpreted as directly comparable estimates of educational effectiveness.

4. DISCUSSION

The reviewed evidence suggests that the contribution of TikTok to English language learning depends on instructional design, educational context, the learning objective, and the outcome measured. Heterogeneity across investigations prevents treating the platform as uniformly effective.

Gao et al. (2023) and Mulyanah et al. (2024) reported favorable outcomes in their respective instructional contexts, whereas Hu and Du (2022) reported mixed motivational findings. This contrast shows why motivational outcomes should be examined in relation to the instructional activity and the specific dimension measured, rather than inferred from the popularity of a digital platform.

Motivation, participation, and perceived usefulness are not equivalent to verified improvements in English proficiency. Hongsa et al. (2023) addressed speaking performance as well as learner perceptions, making it important to distinguish assessed oral performance from opinions about the learning experience. The same caution applies to studies centered on confidence, satisfaction, or perceived vocabulary support.

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Language-learning activities involving short videos may provide additional opportunities to encounter vocabulary, practice pronunciation, and produce oral language. However, evidence about one language skill cannot be generalized automatically to reading, writing, or overall proficiency; educational applications should align the chosen content with explicit objectives and appropriate assessment procedures.

The evidence from reviews also requires a separate interpretation. Jantan Anua Jah et al. (2024) synthesized literature concerning English learning, while Rodas-Coloma et al. (2026) surveyed broader educational applications of TikTok. The latter contributes contextual insight into digital pedagogy and implementation constraints, but is not direct evidence about EFL achievement. Reviews may also overlap in their underlying primary sources.

From a pedagogical perspective, the reviewed findings suggest that TikTok should be incorporated into English language teaching as a complementary instructional resource rather than as a substitute for structured learning. Teachers may use short audiovisual materials to support vocabulary presentation, pronunciation practice, oral communication, and student participation. However, these activities should be connected to clearly defined learning objectives and appropriate assessment procedures.

The methodological differences identified among the investigations highlight the importance of evaluating educational outcomes beyond students' favorable perceptions. For example, activities intended to strengthen speaking skills should incorporate appropriate oral performance assessments, while strategies designed to increase motivation should employ instruments capable of examining motivational changes. Additionally, teachers should consider students' language proficiency, access to technological resources, digital distractions, and privacy when designing TikTok-assisted learning experiences. These considerations may contribute to more purposeful and evidence-informed integration of digital resources into English language education.

The modest corpus, heterogeneity of research designs and outcomes, and limited reproducibility of the original document identification constrain the transferability of this narrative synthesis. In particular, self-reports of engagement or usefulness cannot be treated as equivalent to measured learning gains.

Future research should examine the educational effectiveness of TikTok through well-designed comparative studies that distinguish motivation, engagement, participation, and measurable language development. Investigations should also consider long-term learning outcomes, student characteristics, digital accessibility, content reliability, and ethical issues associated with social media use. The incorporation of standardized assessment

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instruments and clearly defined instructional interventions could contribute to a more precise understanding of the conditions under which TikTok supports meaningful English language learning.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The narrative literature review was framed within the period 2020–2026 and examined 15 scientific publications published between 2022 and 2026. The analysis identified different approaches to understanding the influence of TikTok on students' motivation to learn English as a foreign language. The main research dimensions included learning motivation, vocabulary acquisition, speaking skills, student participation, digital engagement, perceived learning support, and the pedagogical implementation of short-form audiovisual content. These contributions indicate that TikTok has attracted educational interest as a supplementary resource for English language instruction.

The reviewed investigations identified opportunities for improving students' learning experiences through audiovisual materials, interactive activities, and accessible digital content. Some empirical studies reported favorable outcomes in motivation and oral language performance, suggesting that TikTok-assisted instruction may contribute to specific educational objectives. Nevertheless, the available evidence does not demonstrate uniformly positive effects across all learning contexts. Differences in instructional methods, student characteristics, and assessment procedures prevent the establishment of generalized conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the platform.

The integration of TikTok into English language teaching represents a potential strategy for connecting conventional instruction with contemporary digital communication practices. Its educational contribution depends on the selection of appropriate content, the establishment of clear learning objectives, active student participation, and the implementation of suitable assessment procedures. Consequently, TikTok should be considered a complementary educational tool rather than a substitute for structured instruction or established language-learning methodologies.

Among the principal challenges identified are digital distractions, unequal access to technological resources, variations in content quality, privacy considerations, and difficulties distinguishing perceived engagement from measurable academic achievement. These

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limitations demonstrate the importance of evaluating digital teaching strategies through rigorous pedagogical and methodological criteria. The effectiveness of TikTok-assisted learning should therefore be assessed according to the specific educational context and the linguistic competencies intended to be developed.

Finally, further research is recommended to examine the relationship between TikTok-assisted instruction, student motivation, and sustained English language development through comparative and longitudinal studies. Future investigations should distinguish motivational changes from linguistic achievement, incorporate appropriate assessment instruments, and consider accessibility, ethical practices, and teacher guidance. Strengthening these research dimensions may contribute to the development of more inclusive, evidence-informed, and effective digital strategies for English language education.

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CONTRIBUCIÓN DE AUTORÍA

Conceptualización: Willian Israel Coro Roldán, Rosario Guadalupe Pardo Taday, Gilson Arnol Vargas López, Mary Laura Mendoza Figueroa y Sandra Patricia Caiza Olapincha.

Metodología: Willian Israel Coro Roldán, Rosario Guadalupe Pardo Taday, Gilson Arnol Vargas López, Mary Laura Mendoza Figueroa y Sandra Patricia Caiza Olapincha.

Investigación: Willian Israel Coro Roldán, Rosario Guadalupe Pardo Taday, Gilson Arnol Vargas López, Mary Laura Mendoza Figueroa y Sandra Patricia Caiza Olapincha.

Redacción – borrador original: Willian Israel Coro Roldán, Rosario Guadalupe Pardo Taday, Gilson Arnol Vargas López, Mary Laura Mendoza Figueroa y Sandra Patricia Caiza Olapincha.

Redacción – revisión y edición: Willian Israel Coro Roldán, Rosario Guadalupe Pardo Taday, Gilson Arnol Vargas López, Mary Laura Mendoza Figueroa y Sandra Patricia Caiza Olapincha.