



From Scroll to Sound: A Conceptual Framework of Influencer-Led Pronunciation Microlearning on TikTok

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Abstract. Despite the growing popularity of TikTok in language learning, limited research has examined its role in supporting informal English pronunciation practice through microlearning. This conceptual paper addresses this gap by proposing a framework that explains how TikTok influencer content can facilitate pronunciation learning. The model is based on the microlearning theory, social learning theory, multimodal learning principles, and second language acquisition (SLA) considerations to illustrate how short-form influencer content guides learners toward better pronunciation accuracy, fluency, and confidence. It integrates important elements, including the TikTok content as the input, microlearning processes (observation, imitation, engagement), individual behaviours (practice, repetition, interaction with the content), as well as the learning outputs. Other variables regarded to explain the variability of learning effectiveness include intervening factors (e.g., motivation of learners, prior achievement) and moderating factors (e.g., clearness of content, action of feedback). This makes TikTok an open-accessible platform that promotes informal, self-guided pronunciation practice through exposure and social networking. Methodologically, it provides a structured framework that can guide future empirical research. Practically, it offers insights for educators, including strategies for evaluating credible influencer content and integrating TikTok into classroom practice. By addressing both opportunities and challenges, the framework contributes to advancing digital pedagogy in TESL.

Keywords: TikTok, Pronunciation Learning, Microlearning, Social Media in Education

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1 Introduction

In recent years, TikTok has become more than just an entertainment platform for users. In fact, TikTok is also used as a primary platform for educational microlearning. TikTok has recorded a remarkable path, growing from a hub for entertainment into a vibrant ecosystem for informal education and knowledge exchange (Omar & Dequan, 2020). The platform's algorithm, coupled with its fleeting and engaging video format, encourages users to learn in a flexible, fun, and accessible way (Kaye, Chen, & Zeng, 2021). This feature also inspires the edu-influencers to utilise the platform in delivering microlearning content and turn it into a trend. Educational hashtags like #LearnOnTikTok and #EnglishPronunciation have accumulated billions of views, indicating a high demand for accessible, on-demand language content (Deng & Yu, 2023). The niche of learning English has become very popular in this growing trend. Many studies show that students are using TikTok to practice their language skills, especially to improve their vocabulary and pronunciation ((Escamilla-Fajardo, Alguacil, & López-Carril, 2021; Sulistiani, Al-Ghazali, & Azizah, 2025).

This trend towards platform-based learning is part of a wider move away from traditional classroom settings and towards more informal, flexible digital learning spaces. Recent studies highlight those learners increasingly turn to TikTok for short, digestible lessons in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Akbari & Razavi, 2023; Alshammari, 2024). Traditional classroom-based pronunciation teaching is useful, yet it can be challenging to provide personalised feedback to each student, make sure they hear real speech on a regular basis, and ease their anxiety so they can practise (Mutiara & Rosari, 2024; Sulistiani, 2025). On the other hand, Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) allows users more freedom, flexibility, and direct access to a lot of real-world materials (Ibrahim, 2023). TikTok is a great example of this type of informal learning, where learners can learn a language without making an effort because they are genuinely interested.

The focus on pronunciation in this digital context is undeniably important because pronunciation is an essential element of being able to communicate. It is crucial for a speaker to be able to pronounce words correctly so that others can understand them. This is linked to their confidence and goes beyond just learning grammar and vocabulary. However, second language learners find it challenging to learn every nuance of English pronunciation, from segmental features like vowels and consonants to suprasegmental features like stress, rhythm, and intonation (Mutiara & Rosari, 2024). It requires regular exposure and practice, and digital platforms like TikTok are able to meet the need by giving learners a constant flow of content to watch and repeat anytime they like.

Previous research has notably focused on the platform's effectiveness in facilitating general vocabulary acquisition, enhancing learner motivation, and examining student perceptions of informal digital learning (Nguyen & Chu, 2023; Putra, 2024). Studies also show a strong link between using TikTok and general English skills, especially speaking fluency and receptive listening skills (Prativi, Chuang, and Li, 2021; Mutiara and Rosari, 2024). Nevertheless, with the increase of popularity of TikTok as a language learning opportunity, especially in terms of

pronunciation, the academic studies of such phenomenon are few. While TikTok has been proven effective to support vocabulary acquisition and learner motivation (Nguyen & Chu, 2023; Putra, 2024), its specific role in pronunciation microlearning remains underexplored. Although initial observations and personal experiences suggest positive results, systematic conceptual development of the question of how TikTok edu-influencers plan and teach pronunciation is lacking. The existing literature lacks adequate dissection of the pedagogical interventions that are the components of the short-form videos or determine the efficiency of those videos in developing pronunciation abilities in the learners. This conceptual article attempts to fill this gap as it explores the informal microlearning that happens through TikTok, the importance of the guidance provided by the influencers, and how they may affect the development of English pronunciation. With its reliance on the related theoretical knowledge and framework, including microlearning theory, social learning theory, and the principles of second language acquisition, the paper will contribute to the establishment of the basis of the future empirical studies and pedagogical creativity on digital language learning settings. Therefore, to address this gap, this study proposes a conceptual framework to understand and analyse the phenomenon of influence-led pronunciation microlearning on TikTok. The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

Research Objectives

1. To develop a conceptual model that illustrates how TikTok influencer content influences pronunciation learning.
2. To identify the theoretical foundations underlying this process.
3. To propose directions for future empirical research.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Social Media and Language Learning

Language teaching has undergone a significant "social turn," as social media platforms have transitioned from mere entertainment venues to sophisticated, informal environments for MALL. Conventional Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) commonly employ static resources; however, social media fosters a participatory culture that enables learners to interact with authentic, high-frequency linguistic input in low-stakes contexts (Ibrahim, 2023; Lee, 2025).

Recent study finds that TikTok's brief, multimodal format significantly facilitates the learning of phonology. Prativi, Chuang, and Li (2021) observed that the platform's brief length gets people to listen more actively. Recent research by Mutiara and Rosari (2024) and Sajonia (2024) confirm the idea that TikTok's customised algorithm facilitates people learning languages by continually providing these individuals with content that coincides with their level of skill and interests.

The platform's unique technical features, including "Duet" and "React," also assist individuals learn in a "spatial" way, where they may work together to duplicate

sounds and get immediate visual feedback (Lee, 2023; 2025). This "bite-sized" way of teaching helps students learn by letting them focus on difficult suprasegmental parts like stress and intonation without getting exhausted from too much traditional training (Kaur and Sulaiman, 2023; Chikhi and Guetaf, 2023). This is why TikTok ties what you learn in school to what you do and see in real life. This means that the "scroll" is a good way to improve your language skills (Ocampo, 2024).

2.2 TikTok as a Microlearning Platform

TikTok content creators are suggested by TikTok to apply these practices which are, get to know the audience, post high-quality content, use TikTok monetization tools, and collaborate with other creators. TikTok also provides information to assist the content creators to maximise their potential in introducing their contents for the viewers to watch not only in the application but also from the official website.

2.3 Role of Content Creators as Informal Educators

Overall, the work of TikTok content creator is to create possible, creative and frequently viral content customized to the platform in the form of a short video. The content creators on Tik Tok not only contribute to the digital marketing and social and entertainment influence, but also education. Hayes (2020) explains that introducing Tik Tok in the realm of education, in this case, to the creativity of students, it may be problematic and challenging, as it encourages the freedom of creativity and Tik Tok may become a gateway into learning that can be helpful in encouraging students to exercise their learning capacities, including their creativity (Escamilla-Fajardo, 2021). Several famous Tik Tok informal teachers particularly in the language and pronunciation field include @englishwithgeorgie (Georgie) of the United Kingdom and @yourenglishteacher_(Amy) of the United States. The following are some of the major areas of their role to understand the interest of the viewers in their contents:

1. Offering Pronunciation Model Accessibility.

The emergence of Tik Tok as a learning platform has transformed the phonetic learning market by offering easy-access pronunciation patterns that transcend the threshold of the conventional pedagogy. Besides passive setting of a traditional textbook, the creators of the TikTok show how to pronounce something correctly in short videos, helping the viewers to imitate sounds and intonation (Godwin-Jones, 2022). With its ability to isolate complex phonemes into simple, repeated loops, the platform encourages a type of micro-drilling that allows filling in the gap between perception and oral production; whereby compared to normal classrooms, Tik Tok allows an endless repetition and visualized specialization (Lee, 2023). These aids include:

- Exaggerated Articulation: A close up shot that focuses on the exact movements of the mouth, denture location, and labial position.
- Orthographic Reinforcement: The visual representation of sounds being produced by making use of on-screen text, either

as phonetic spelling or the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

- Synchronized Feedback: The possibility of users to use so-called Duet or Stitch features to compare their output with the model in the real-time.

2. Shaping Trends in Educational Content.

With the adoption of the cultural vernacular platform, language educators have turned into content creators capable of influencing the trends of viruses to ensure maximum student attention and retention through the application of viral sounds, challenges, and duets to teach pronunciation (e.g., 00 Learn English TikTok, 00 French Pronunciation) (Zhao and Zhou, 2021). According to the latest findings, in particular, the student confidence has increased because of the Duet Challenge as through it they are able to practice orally in a low-pressure environment in contrast with the usual classroom (Zhen, Zainuddin, Mohd Zin, & Md Yunus, 2021).

Popular music played backward or a comic song might help content creators to shine keen attention on minimal pairs, words that have a single phonological feature in common. It offers multimodal scaffolding, a combination of visual, auditory, and text-based scaffolding, which is especially efficient in terms of this kind of phonetic training (Jerasa and Boffone, 2021).

- Vowel Contrast: An artist can employ a trending, rhythmic audio file to compare similar-sounding words, like "ship" vs. sheep).
- Contextual Anchoring: By matching these sounds to particular visual skits, the creator gives the learner a semantic anchor, which allows the learner to differentiate between the two sounds in a manner that is impossible with a list of words on a whiteboard.
- The Duet Feature as a Virtual Lab: The duet feature enables the students to record themselves together with the creator so that they can self-correct instantly and make a phonetic comparison. Research has revealed that the given collaborative characteristic enhances dialog skills and the accuracy of pronunciations, in general (Xiuwen & Razali, 2021).

3. Correcting Common Mistakes

A large number of creators base their work on the correction of common mistakes made by learners that are particularly hard to learn without the assistance of sound (e.g., "th" in English, nasal vowels in French) (Klimanova & Hellmich, 2021). The content creators can deliver collective tutoring by offering focused corrective feedback within a public context when breaking a pain point sound, the content creator does not only help a single student; he or she offers a scalable solution to thousands of students with the same first-language (L1) interference patterns. There are also a number of

content creators who reinforce lessons with humour or memes. The content creators foster a safe psychological environment of learning by embracing the relatability of what goes wrong. Here are the strategies:

- **Subversion of Mistakes:** As an instance, there is the How NOT to pronounce... in viral videos. trope (e.g., How NOT to pronounce 'croissant'), in which the content authors play up mispronunciations common to people in order to emphasize the acoustic difference between the incorrect word pronunciation and the target word pronunciation.
- **Affective Filter:** This comic style considerably reduces the affective filter the emotional factors such as anxiety and lack of self-confidence that may hinder the effective acquisition of language (Krashen, 1982; cited in that context as well by contemporary researchers).
- **Mnemonic Power:** Memetic material is a highly effective form of mnemonic; a student is much more likely to recall the correct pronunciation of a new challenging word when it is presented as a part of a humorous sketch or a viral video of a fail than when it is given as an entry in a bland list of academic information.

4. Encouraging Practice Through Engagement.

The interactive aspect of the platform, including Duets and Stitches, offer an entire system through which users can train their target language and get feedback (indirectly or directly) (Duffy, 2022). These tools serve as a virtual connection between the student and the instructor forming a virtual language lab which is available 24-7.

- **The Duet Feature:** This will enable a learner to have his or her video alongside a model. This physical closeness has been important in mirroring phonetics because the learner is able to make visual and auditory comparisons between the lips and pitch lines of the creator in one frame.
- **The Stitch Feature:** A learner can choose to provide an answer to a certain prompt or question that is set by a creator of the content by stitching the video. This helps stimulate the spontaneous speech production to go beyond mere repetition all the way up to functional communication (Vazquez-Cano et al., 2023).

5. Democracy in Learning Language.

The emergence of TikTok has completely changed the balance of power in the field of linguistic education and has left it at the mercy of a worldwide community. The transition is a massive democratization of the language learning process where the most important barriers to entry such as cost, place, and strict adherence to norms of standard are being systematically broken down.

5.1 Eradicating Socioeconomic obstructers.

TikTok also contributes to eliminating most of the barriers to language education by providing free, on-demand lessons that are freely available to anyone with a smartphone and an internet connection (Wong, 2023). In the classical setting, phonetic coaching of high quality is frequently limited by the costly tuition or by the geographical location of the native speakers. TikTok circumvents these challenges whereby, through just-in-time learning, it becomes a part of the daily life of the users. Pikhart (2022) also argues that this accessibility is especially dynamic to learners in under-resourced regions with no access to formal language laboratories or updated textbooks.

5.2 Modelling Linguistic Diversity and Natural Dialects.

In addition to accessibility, the platform is an important repository of authentic linguistic representation. The inclusion of traditional curricula commonly revolves around prestige dialects (including Received Pronunciation in English, or Castilian Spanish) and thus results in a learner who is not well equipped to deal with interactions in the real world. On TikTok, the creators of various language groups can provide real accents and dialects that are often overlooked in academic environments (Jenkins, 2022).

5.3 Regional and Social Varieties

Visitors are able to talk to the creators who teach African American Vernacular English (AAVE), dialects of the Spanish language (e.g., Caribbean and Andean), or accents of the French language (e.g., provincial). The exposure aids learners in building up so-called sociolinguistic competence the ability to comprehend language as it is being used in different social situations.

5.4 Cultural Contextualisation

Since most of these creators are filming in their usual surroundings, they are delivering language with cultural undertones. It has been shown that this authentic input plays a vital role in the de-developing of a holistic perception of a language because it links phonetics with identity and community (Cunningham, 2023).

5.5 Threatening the Native Speaker Ideal.

TikTok also breaks the bias towards native speakers that has permeated language teaching in the past by amplifying the voices of a great variety of

people. It enables one to celebrate the idea of multicompetence, in which themselves successful second-language learners give their tips, that renders more relatable and attainable models to their followers (Escobar Fandino & Silva Velandia, 2022). Such pluralistic approach will make sure that the learning of languages is not simply the mimicry of an elite standard, but the attainment of effective, respectful and diverse communication.

2.4 Learner Engagement Strategies

In order to create the content on pronunciation and vocabulary learning more engaging and effective, TikTok language content creators apply various creative strategies for that. One of the strategies utilised is chunking and repetition, a method used to break down words/phrases into smaller, repeatable segments. Godwin-Jones (2022) stated, a creator says a word slowly, then speeds up, encouraging users to repeat. This method contributes effectively to mimic natural language acquisition by focusing on high-frequency chunks (Ellis, 2021). Next, Visual Phonetics (Mouth Movements & Subtitles) is a method that aims to show close-up videos of mouth shapes and phonetic spellings. For example, @speaklikeaargentine shows tongue placement for Spanish "rr" sounds (Lee, 2023). According to Klimanova and Hellmich (2021), visual cues improve retention by 30% compared to audio-only. Other than that, Minimal Pair Challenges is the method of contrasting similar sounds. For example, a side-by-side comparison video posted by @englishwithantonio, comparing the word "ship" vs "sheep" (Zhao and Zhou, 2021). It helps to correct fossilised errors through immediate practice (Jenkins, 2022).

Another instructional method entails interactive Question and Answer (Q&A) sessions combined with live corrections, frequently supported by polls or "comment your attempt" prompts that facilitate immediate feedback. For example, @frenchbymila organizes weekly pronunciation "roasts" of follower submissions (Chen et al., 2021). According to Abidin (2021), this method contributes to building community and accountability and form mutual consent between viewers and content creators. Cultural Context Embedding is also one of the methods used to teach words or phrases with cultural anecdotes, such as the Japanese phrase "itadakimasu" (let's eat) added up with bowing gesture clip. Research indicates that applying such cultural context significantly enhances long-term retention and phonetic awareness by situating the language within a lived experience (Mutiara & Rosari, 2024). These are the strategies utilised by TikTok content creators especially those with language learning contents. It is crucial for the content creators to apply these accordingly not only to gauge viewers' attention but also to meet their needs as they engage with the content.

2.5 Pronunciation Microlearning Practices

In the context of influencer leading learning on platforms such as TikTok, pronunciation microlearning utilises brief, engaging, and multimodal content to improve learners' awareness of phonological features and enhance their spoken language skills. These microlearning practices commonly incorporate focused strategies such as phonetic modelling, repetition and mimicry, and the use of both

visual and auditory cues. Together, these strategies support the internalisation of pronunciation elements, including intonation, rhythm, and stress.

2.5.1 Phonetic Modeling

Phonetic modelling is one of the core strategies in pronunciation microlearning. It involves learners observing the accurate articulation of specific sounds, which helps them understand how to produce these sounds themselves. On TikTok, influencers often present speech in a clear and deliberate manner, providing native-like or near-native pronunciation models. These presentations combine both visual and auditory input, allowing learners to link what they hear with what they see, particularly by focusing on the movement of the mouth and other articulatory features. This combination of sound and visual cues helps learners better perceive and reproduce target sounds. Research by Adityo and Novitasari (2023) found that learners significantly improved their pronunciation accuracy after repeated exposure to TikTok videos that provided clear modelling of authentic speech. Similarly, Meiliasari, Irnawati, and Manik (2024) highlighted the effectiveness of TikTok in delivering focused and creative phonetic lessons that capture and sustain learners' attention.

2.5.2 Repetition and Mimicry

Repetition and mimicry are fundamental to language learning, especially for developing accurate pronunciation. The short and accessible format of TikTok videos makes it easy for learners to watch and repeat content multiple times. Many learners participate in interactive features such as voice challenges or duet videos, where they imitate the pronunciation and speaking style of influencers. This repeated exposure to spoken language helps reinforce correct pronunciation and supports the internalisation of common sound patterns. Chuah and Ch'ng (2023) observed that learners who engaged with voice-over challenges on TikTok not only improved their pronunciation but also demonstrated greater fluency and prosodic awareness. Furthermore, Nasruddin, Abdul Aziz, and Ismail (2025) emphasised that the expressive facial gestures and vocal intonation present in TikTok content played a significant role in capturing learners' attention and supporting their pronunciation development within the ESL context.

2.5.3 Use of Visual and Auditory Cues

Learning pronunciation effectively depends on the integration of visual and auditory input. TikTok videos often feature close-up views of the speaker's mouth, synchronised captions, and gestures that support spoken language. These visual elements help learners form connections between sounds, spelling, and articulation. According to Rumapea (2024), such videos not only engage learners but also stimulate cognitive processing, enhancing their understanding and retention of pronunciation features. Nasruddin, Abdul

Aziz, and Ismail (2025) also found that the expressive visuals and intonation used in TikTok videos were especially helpful for sustaining learners' focus and facilitating pronunciation improvement in the classroom.

2.5.4 Intonation, Rhythm, and Stress Patterns (Suprasegmentals)

The mastery of suprasegmental features like intonation, rhythm, and stress helps make speech sound more natural and easier to understand. Influencers on TikTok often speak with exaggerated intonation and varied rhythm in order to entertain and engage their audiences. Although these speech patterns are primarily expressive, they simultaneously serve as effective models of natural English prosody for learners. This makes it easier to experiment and slowly speak more like native speakers. Chuah and Ch'ng (2023) reported that learners who practiced pronunciation using TikTok-based voice-over activities showed marked improvement in their use of stress and intonation, resulting in more fluent and expressive communication. Similarly, Nasruddin and colleagues (2025) emphasised that the dynamic tone and varied pacing present in TikTok videos offer effective representations of suprasegmental features. These features are often absent in traditional learning materials, making TikTok a valuable supplementary tool for pronunciation microlearning.

2.6 Theoretical Foundations

This article is underpinned by four major theories, namely, Microlearning Theory, Social Learning Theory (SLT), Multimodal Learning Principles, and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories on pronunciation. These theories offer a robust foundation for examining how TikTok has gained traction as a tool for enhancing English pronunciation. Understanding the key insights into the processes involved in acquiring accurate pronunciation is important to understand the platform's potential in supporting pronunciation development, and second language learning in general.

Microlearning is defined as an approach that delivers content in small chunks at a time. The process of breaking down content into smaller, easily consumable units is believed to facilitate the learning process and student engagement (Alias & Razak, 2023; Sozmen, 2022, as cited in Silva et. al, 2025). Microlearning theory asserts that presenting small portions of content that can be absorbed in short periods fosters engagement, reduces cognitive load, and enhances retention compared to longer lessons (Khlaif & Salha, 2021). Theoretical framing from the same study classifies TikTok clips (<60s) as microlearning that can be optimised for lessons with a focused learning outcome. Pronunciation learning is made easier with the mechanisms at play. The short duration allows for high repeatability, making it easier to focus on a single feature, such as a specific phoneme and stress pattern. The visual and audio cues reinforce correct pronunciation, while the voice-over and duet features promote self-monitoring as learners get to record and compare their pronunciation against the models.

Social Learning Theory, proposed by Albert Bandura, suggests that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modelling. Bandura (1977) identified four key components involved in observational learning, namely attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. TikTok is a practical application of Social Learning Theory for pronunciation, as learners observe social models and adopt their pronunciation. The information that they retain, like on-screen texts, phonetic guides, and mouth close-ups allows them to reproduce the behaviour, as they imitate the pronunciation through features like Duet or Stitch, or instant mimicry, supporting Bandura's argument that people learn not only from their own experiences but also from actions of others. Additionally, the communal nature of the platform promotes vicarious and participatory learning through rich multimedia and peer interactions. The likes, shares, and comments received serve as a form of reinforcement that helps boost learners' motivation and persistence. All these stages highlight the role of cognitive ability and social influences in shaping behaviour.

Multimodal Learning Theory proposes that learners process and retain information more effectively when multiple modes are used simultaneously (Al-Jarf, 2024). TikTok uses multimodal techniques that seamlessly integrate audio, visuals, text, and movement to keep the viewers engaged and convey meaning effectively (Shanthi et al., 2024). The integration of these elements in TikTok contents supports diverse learning and allows learners to establish stronger mental connections, leading to better comprehension and retention. Multimodal Learning Theory is integral to pronunciation learning because learners see, hear, and mimic the sound rather than just reading about it, which reinforces correct articulation.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories add an important dimension to this framework as they help explain why and how learners can improve their pronunciation using TikTok videos. Most videos on TikTok provide clear, slow, and authentic pronunciation of words or phrases, alongside gestures and subtitles that make the input more comprehensible. Krashen's input hypothesis (1982) highlights the importance of comprehensible input – language input that is slightly more advanced than the learner's current level. The repeatable contents in bite-sized chunks make it easier for learners to revisit until they fully understand and mimic the pronunciation. The interactive features of TikTok like Duets and voiceovers, which enable learners to engage with the language and not just consume it passively underscores another prominent theory, Long's Interaction Hypothesis. Long (1983) argues that interaction and negotiation of meaning are crucial for second language acquisition. The socially driven nature of TikTok allows learners to negotiate meaning when they encounter difficulties in understanding. Learners benefit from observing, imitating pronunciation in an authentic environment, and self-correcting through practice and feedback.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

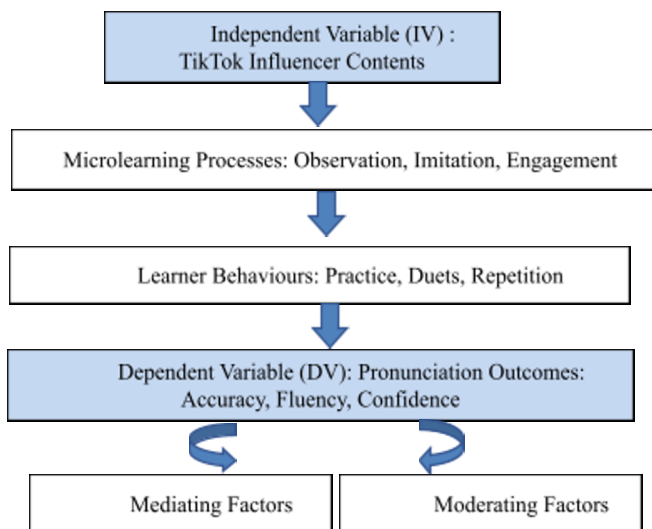


Fig.1: A Conceptual Model of Pronunciation Microlearning on TikTok

The proposed framework examines the relevance of the TikTok influencer as Independent Variable (IV), a source of informal pronunciation acquisition in English language learners (ELLs) that would utilise the theoretical rationale of microlearning and social learning. As one of the fastest-growing platforms among youths and language learners, TikTok presents a platform of its own, as the short and entertaining videos that are produced by so-called influencers maintain interest while at the same time acting as a scaffold to improve and develop pronunciation (Sun & Zhang, 2022; Zhu & He, 2023). The videos can be used in microlearning which involves short concentrated learning experiences aimed at facilitating gradual learning. They can be less than a minute long, possess a high visual design aesthetic and are very repetitive (Ifenthaler & Yau, 2020). Having a wide range of audio-visual features such as lip-syncing, delayed speech, visual cues, subtitles, and repetition, users can develop their phonetic awareness and discrimination of sound distinctions in both segmental (such as individual vowels and consonants) and suprasegmental (such as intonation, stress, and rhythm) aspects through TikTok.

The framework is based on the social learning theory by Bandura (1977) which highlights the benefits of learning in the social context modelling, imitating and observing, as well as microlearning. TikTok users often observe speakers of fluent or native English and can imitate their pronunciation both in isolation and in front of the camera through such tools as duets, stitching, voice-overs, and editing comments with corrections. The processes described by these techniques indicate the social mediation

of learning as students imitate sounds and turn inwards for feedback from broader online community, friends, and influencers. This corroborates the results of Zhu and He (2023) who found that Chinese university students who viewed English pronunciation contents on TikTok were more active and involved in the acquisition of English pronunciation in the real world.

The framework also includes the element of learning outcomes, which implies that the repetitive effect of exposure to the models of pronunciation along with participatory behaviour brings a measurable change. The framework establishes English Pronunciation Mastery as the Dependent Variable (DV). They can result in an improved segmental accuracy (e.g. proper articulation of /θ/ or /v/), suprasegmental control (e.g. using rising intonation on questions), fluency, and the increased confidence in oral communication (Sulistiani, 2025; H. Li, 2024). But the effect of these learning processes is not the same for all learners. Mediating variables, like individual motivation, content preference, and exposure to the intended pronunciation material, have a huge influence on the understanding and permanency of the learning benefits (Yenkimaleki & van Heuven, 2020). On the same note, moderating variables, including the accuracy of words by influencer, the clarity in audio-visual delivery, and feedback availability, define the level of learning and pronunciation accuracy that the learners can achieve in terms of pronunciation (Blin & Appel, 2021). A case in point, when a content creator fails to pronounce a certain word or accent that is not standard, learners may follow wrong models unless they are supported by corrective information delivered through comments of peers or comparison videos.

The combination of these dimensions makes the model a broad theory-driven guide to how digital platforms such as TikTok may facilitate informal, self-directed and social pronunciation training. In contrast to the traditional classroom learning, TikTok employs audience agency, social construction and algorithmic exposure to shape language exposure in a culturally and personally relevant manner, exposing the language learner to practices that are specifically useful and salient to a given user and the surrounding culture they belong to. This not only makes TikTok a promising platform of social interaction but also an exciting piece of technology in the greater picture of technology-enabled language learning (TELL).

3 Methodology

3.1 Conceptual Synthesis Design

This paper uses a conceptual synthesis design, which is a systematic process of identification, analysis, and synthesis of the already existing literature to build the proposed framework. Since this is a conceptual paper, the research design will be the combination of theoretical lenses, namely, Social Learning Theory and Microlearning Theory, to fill the identified gap in the influencer-oriented pronunciation pedagogy.

3.2 Search Strategy and Data Sources

To achieve high methodological rigor, institutional libraries portals, namely EZaccess (Universiti Teknologi MARA - UiTM) and the University Poly-Tech Malaysia (UPTM) Library portal, were used to search articles using multiple databases. These gateways gave access to main global academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), and ProQuest Central. The choice of these platforms is because of their high standards of peer-review and their high indexing influence in the education and linguistics sphere.

3.3 Search Protocol and Keywords

The search strategy involved the use of Boolean operators to combine keywords used to answer the research questions. The main search terms were: TikTok and pronunciation and microlearning with minor variants being influencer-led pedagogy and Social Media Assisted Language Learning (SMALL). Only the English language articles were searched so as to have a clear synthesis of the discussed pedagogical strategies.

3.4 Inclusion Criteria and Purposive Sampling

This study employed purposive sampling as opposed to general survey of the social media because it included literature that directly addresses the framework proposed in the study. The screening of the articles was performed using three main factors:

Recency: It is important to focus on the works that were published not earlier than 2020, as the algorithm and functionality of Tik Tok change very fast.

Thematic Relevance: The technical affordances of short-form video (e.g. Duet, Looping) and their use in phonological development.

Theoretical Alignment: The research findings that yielded arguments that supported the overlap of influencer credibility and learner engagement.

This was done until theoretical saturation was achieved so that all elements of the independent and dependent variables in the proposed framework were well supported using the existing scholarly evidence.

4 Findings

4.1 Finding 1: The IV as a Multimodal Scaffold.

The synthesis concludes that the Independent Variable (IV) is TikTok Influencer Content which serves as a high-frequency pedagogic scaffold. In contrast to the conventional materials, the IV takes advantage of platform affordances (e.g. Looping and Duets) to deliver persistent, bite-size phonetic models. This multimodal delivery can afford:

Segmental Discrimination: Obvious visual feedback (lip-syncing/subtitles) lets the learners see how a particular vowel and consonant is pronounced.

Suprasegmental Acquisition: The repetition of the algorithm makes sure that there is exposure to natural rhythm, stress and intonation patterns.

4.2 Finding 2: The Pronunciation Behavioural Mediation.

The result shows that social behaviours mediate the shift of the IV (Content) to the Dependent Variable (DV) (Pronunciation Mastery).

Observational Learning: under the influence of social modelling, Learners have an advantage in observational learning, in which the influencer is a familiar figure instead of an authoritative one, reducing the affective filter.

Imitative Practice: Platform tools such as 'Duets' provide an opportunity to compare the model and the output of the learner immediately, providing a self-correcting feedback loop.

4.3 Finding 3: The Mediating and Moderating Influences.

The researcher concludes that exposure does not ensure the quality of the Dependent Variable (DV).

Mediating Factors: The motivation of individual learners and their preference of the content will dictate the degree of engagement with the content of the influencer.

Moderating Factors: The clearance of the audio-visual presentation and the phonetic quality of the influencer are what determine the maximum of the performance of the learner. The IV might also include non-standard models that can cause one to pick up the wrong phonetics pattern unless countered by peer comments or corrective feedback.

5 Discussion

The research study is conceptual and was driven by three core research objectives: (1) to develop a conceptual model that illustrates how TikTok influencer content influences pronunciation learning; (2) to identify the theoretical foundations that explain this process; and (3) to propose directions for future empirical research.

5.1 Conceptual Synthesis of TikTok-Led Pedagogy

The first objective has been successfully achieved in the proposed conceptual framework since it traces the flow of TikTok influencer content in pronunciation results by using microlearning activities that are well defined observation, imitation and engagement. The short video length, duet features, and feedback visual interface are affordances of the platform that support the processes. These interactions in turn lead to behaviours of repetition, mimicry, and user generated engagement of learners.

5.2 Theoretical Underpinnings of Digital Pronunciation

In addressing the second objective, the theory rests on four theoretical foundations: microlearning theory, social learning theory, multimodal learning theory, and the second language acquisition (SLA) views. The theory of micro learning demonstrates the process of phonological retention through repetitive exposure, i.e. short form. The modelling and imitation of pronunciation accounting any negligence on observation of the influencers falls in the social learning theory. The multimodal learning theory helps to emphasise the use of audio-visual functionality of TikTok to improve understanding and internalising pronunciation. Lastly, the learning of pronunciation is confirmed through SLA theory and the contributions made by Krashen with his input hypothesis, and Long with his interaction hypothesis.

5.3 Roadmap for Empirical Inquiry and Future Directions

The third objective has been addressed by proposing this structure as the basis of prospective empirical research. Possible future research directions are the measurement of the impact of the certain TikTok tools on the pronunciation skills and investigation of the factors of the learners, like motivation, digital literacy, and the long-term memorisation and transferability of the pronunciation skills to the real-life conditions of communication. This way, the current conceptual model is instrumental not only as an integration of theoretical points of view, but also as a guideline to a formal inquiry into the pedagogical potential of TikTok in informal language learning contexts.

5.4 Pedagogical and Theoretical Implications

The conceptual framework introduced in the present study would have great theoretical and practical implications in the areas of language learning and educational technology. Theoretically, it would add to the current landscape of informal digital learning by synthesising the various learning theories into one coherent model that seeks to explain how pronunciation can be acquired in the context

of social media. Using the combination of microlearning and social learning principles with the multimodal and SLA frameworks, the model proves how the new media platform, such as TikTok, can be redefined as legitimate learning space, instead of a pure entertainment one. This makes the framework a new addition to an expanding body of work on technology-enhanced language learning (TELL).

Pedagogically, the model provides information concerning how teachers and content designers can engage TikTok in teaching pronunciation to complement conventional lectures. Its interactive and learner-centred platform makes it possible to provide more learner autonomy, receive natural language input, and practice a variety of times, which is crucial to pronunciation learning. For educators, the platform's success highlights the need to incorporate microlearning strategies into formal instruction. Educators should also guide learners toward credible content creators, particularly those using educational hashtags, as this has been linked to higher learning gains in informal digital contexts (Chen et al., 2023). Encouraging self-directed mimicry of pronunciation models can further foster meaningful practice in self-regulated learning (Gao, 2024). Many teachers are actually doing this now in the classroom so soon enough, TikTok will definitely be used as a tool in the classroom. Educators must always encourage learners to follow credible creators that will use educational hashtags and engage in self-directed mimicry so it can lead to more meaningful pronunciation practice when they are on their own self-regulated learning. Also, multimodal features, i.e. synchronized captions, close-up visuals, exaggeration of intonation, may also be introduced deliberately into the teaching strategies of pronunciation. The participatory culture of the TikTok may also be utilised by educators to stimulate students to co-create content, provide peer-feedback and to develop confidence in using oral language. As such, the model can be both a theoretical and a teaching framework of how to incorporate social media into language learning.

To integrate influencer-led TikTok content effectively into classroom practice, educators can follow a structured series of steps. First, they curate credible content creators and select short videos that highlight specific pronunciation features. Key words or phrases from these videos are then extracted and compiled into a short practice passage. Students begin the cycle by recording their own voice reading the passage, after which they watch the selected TikTok video to compare their pronunciation with the model. This is followed by pair or group discussions to reflect on differences and challenges, before students re-record their voices to apply improvements. This systematic sequence of exposure, reflection, and practice not only enhances pronunciation accuracy but also bridges informal microlearning with formal instruction in a learner-centred manner.

When considering the credibility of TikTok creators to learn languages, a number of significant strategies could be used to guarantee credibility. To begin with, it is necessary to examine the qualifications and background of a creator, as a person, who has the Teaching English as a Second Language/Teaching English as Foreign language (TESL/TEFL) qualification, linguistic education, or teaching experience, will be more capable of offering credible advice. The evaluation of the accuracy and consistency of the content is also crucial and can be checked with the help of the cross-checking of the pronunciation models with the reputable dictionaries or corpora. Pedagogical design is also demonstrated by credible teachers in the form of the lesson

plan organized around one rule, clear examples, and repetitious or practice strategies. Also, the level of engagement is better than popularity; creators who answer questions of learners in a meaningful manner show higher educational purpose. Lastly, the multimodal support (capture, IPA transcription, and visual cues) promotes the understanding of the reading and characterizes the subjects of educational versus entertainment-based accounts.

For researchers, TikTok-based learning represents a promising but under-explored field that requires empirical validation. Future studies should explore how microlearning via platforms like TikTok can be systematically integrated into ESL curricula and assess outcomes across different learner profiles. As digital platforms continue to shape language learning landscapes, understanding and leveraging their pedagogical affordances will be essential for advancing both practice and research. For learners, the implication is a call for intentional content consumption where students must develop digital literacy to distinguish between high-quality instructional content and entertainment-focused material. They should also be responsible and be fully aware of the content that they consume online.

5.5 Advantages and Limitations

The use of TikTok in learning nowadays is not something that is alien anymore. Previously, many people would cringe at the mention of TikTok, largely due to its association with "cringy" dance videos and the assumption that most of its content was frivolous or a waste of time. Gone are the days that people have that perception. The number of TikTok users continues to grow steadily each day. What used to have negative remarks from some people has now loyal users who log in to it every day.

Students are some of the loyal users of the application. TikTok is now their best friend in helping improve their education. For ESL learners, TikTok-based pronunciation microlearning provides an extremely entertaining and easily accessible platform to enhance their pronunciation abilities in brief, digestible chunks. The structure of TikTok videos, which usually last less than a minute, is well suited to the microlearning format, which is defined by brief bursts of concentrated content. Spaced repetition, which has been demonstrated to improve language retention and learner motivation, is supported by these quick lessons (Zhang & West, 2020). Additionally, TikTok algorithm also allows personalised content delivery so it makes it easier for learners to go ahead and repeatedly meet pronunciation models that cater to their needs.

Free learning opportunities and accessibility that the application offers make it very attractive to ESL learners far and wide. For those learning ESL, TikTok-based pronunciation microlearning offers a dynamic and approachable method of language development. One of its main benefits is that learning resources are available for free and on-demand, removing financial barriers to pronunciation assistance for students from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds (Ibrahim, 2023; Sajonia, 2024). The use of TikTok, a free platform, makes it easier for these learners to always go back and use the application whenever they need to. They do not have to pay for software that will cost them their arms and legs.

The other benefit of TikTok lies in its multimodal format where it provides engaging content both to the users' visual and also auditory. The combination of

engaging visual, interesting auditory and textual elements within a short single video will most definitely attract an audience, especially the young ones. Learning a second language becomes easier as learners are able to combine visual input such as lip movement and facial expressions with auditory models of speech that enhances learners' ability to grasp accurate pronunciation through simultaneous visual and audio cues which is effectively facilitated by the short-form video architecture of modern social platforms (Ibrahim, 2023; Mutiara & Rosari, 2024). This multimodal integration enhances the learners' ability to grasp accurate pronunciation through simultaneous visual and audio cues, a process increasingly observed in short-form video interactions (Rininggayuh, Al-Ghazali, & Azizah, 2024). TikTok also offers the microlearning format, which supports learning in short, concentrated bursts and accommodates the shorter attention span of contemporary learners, is also in line with these short-form videos (Zhang & West, 2020). Generally speaking, learners now have a shorter attention span thanks to the advancement of technology. However, there is a silver lining in that as the microlearning format offered by TikTok can easily get the attention of these Second Language learners.

By enabling users to take charge of their language development outside of official classroom settings, TikTok promotes independent and self-paced learning. An important theory of language learning theory is learner autonomy, which is fostered by giving students the freedom to decide what, when, and how frequently to interact with pronunciation content. Unlike traditional lessons that follow a fixed syllabus, TikTok allows learners to follow creators who specialise in pronunciation tips, explore hashtags and replay short videos multiple times until they feel confident in reproducing the sounds. This flexibility promotes self-regulation, enabling learners to identify and address their own pronunciation weaknesses through personalized, self-directed interaction with the platform's algorithm (Mutiara & Rosari, 2024; Sajonia, 2024). TikTok can help the students speak by providing access to a variety of educational videos, which can teach students different pronunciations and phrases (Hadijah, 2023).

Other than that, TikTok raises learners' confidence in pronunciation through the affordances of repetition and mimicry, both of which are important to language acquisition. The platform's short, looped videos make it easy for learners to replay content multiple times, enabling them to internalise pronunciation features such as intonation, stress patterns, and segmental sounds at their own pace (Zhang & West, 2020). We are aware that repetition can help the learning process, so in acquiring the language, it is so important that these learners can do so on their own, repetitively.

When the learners gain confidence in using the language, this will result in them being exposed to many other accents and speech patterns spoken by the rest of other users in other parts of the world. Using TikTok allows learners making it a useful instrument for encouraging global intelligibility and pronunciation awareness in English language learners. Through TikTok, learners gain insights into English-speaking cultures worldwide. Exposure to diverse content helps learners understand cultural nuances, slang, and various expressions used in different settings. TikTok offers real-world content from users worldwide, in contrast to traditional educational resources that frequently emphasise a single standard accent, usually American or British English. We can only imagine the anxious feeling these learners can experience taking a listening test spoken by natives. When using TikTok, they

can train their listening skill to be familiar with other accents and pronunciation and as a result, learners are exposed to regional dialects within native-speaking nations as well as English dialects from Australia, India, Nigeria, the Philippines, and Malaysia.

While TikTok offers several benefits for pronunciation learning, it also presents users with challenges and limitations that educators and learners must consider. One of the primary concerns is the lack of formal feedback and corrective instruction, as the platform is not designed for teacher-led interaction or guided learning. Without expert input, learners may unknowingly reinforce incorrect pronunciation habits or "fossilise" phonetic errors. This risk highlights the role of the influencer's accuracy as a critical Moderating Variable; if the Independent Variable (IV) provides a non-standard model without professional intervention, the resulting Dependent Variable (DV) may be deficient, leading to the reinforcement of inaccurate phonetic habits (Kaur & Sulaiman, 2023; Mutiara & Rosari, 2024). This problem happens when we have a variety of content creators who of course, will produce variable quality of content. There will be some who provide correct and sound guidance, while others can produce contents that are not that accurate, misleading and do not have the standard pronunciation. This might happen because they want their content to have more views and likes, which in today's scenario, will always be the case for most content creators. The ultimate goal of social media is of course for engagement, so, in this case, it can overshadow educational value that leads to producing content that prioritizes virality over linguistic accuracy or depth. Asyifah (2025) stated that despite the engaging nature of the TikTok platform, students often encounter challenges when attempting to comprehend English learning videos.

Another limitation is the minimal focus on suprasegmental features, such as intonation, rhythm, and word stress, which are critical for fluency and natural speech but are often neglected in short videos. Most TikTok content emphasises individual word pronunciation or phoneme-level correction, potentially leaving learners with fragmented skills that are difficult to transfer to real-life communicative contexts. Moreover, the platform does not scaffold pronunciation practice in a progressive or systematic manner, which may hinder learners from building foundational knowledge or developing consistent improvement over time. These limitations suggest that while TikTok can be a valuable supplement for pronunciation exposure, it should be complemented with structured instruction, guided practice, and professional feedback to ensure meaningful learning outcomes.

6 Conclusion

In this conceptual paper, a theoretical basis has been suggested as to how the TikTok influencer content can be used to develop pronunciation via microlearning. The framework, resting on the theory and principles of Microlearning Theory, Social Learning Theory, Multimodal Learning Principles, and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) describes the cognitive and behavioural processes that form the basis of informal pronunciation learning through short-form videos. Analysing the processes of observation, imitation, repetition, and learner interaction through the use of TikTok can offer valuable insights into its effectiveness as a tool for engaging learners and supporting the development of pronunciation fluency, accuracy, and confidence.

The model also recognises mediating and moderating factors that affect the results of learning like learner motivation, clarity of the content, and availability of feedback. Despite the promising affordances described in the TikTok algorithm-driven, multimodal, and participatory design, it cannot be utilised blindly because of the possible shortcomings, such as the incongruence of the content and the unstructured feedback.

This framework is helping the growing discourse on technology-enhanced language learning by viewing a social networking setting, in this case, TikTok, both as a medium of participation and as a potentially rich medium for informal learning, and socially supported pronunciation acquisition. Empirical studies are needed in the future to confirm the proposed relationships and guide best practice on the use of social media in pronunciation teaching.

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