EXPLORING TIKTOK AS A MEDIUM FOR AUTONOMOUS LISTENING LEARNING: INSIGHTS FROM HIGHER EDUCATION LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates higher education students' perceptions of TikTok as a medium for autonomous English listening learning. As English is a global necessity, especially in an EFL context like Indonesia where classroom exposure is limited, learners must seek additional opportunities for practice. Autonomous learning offers a solution by enabling students to take control of their learning goals, strategies, and resources. Social media, particularly TikTok, has emerged as a motivational and accessible learning tool due to its engaging features and varied content. Using a quantitative survey method, data were collected from 50 undergraduate students through a structured questionnaire covering four aspects: the use of TikTok in learning English, its function as a learning medium, learners' feelings toward it, and its role in fostering learner autonomy. The findings revealed overwhelmingly positive responses. Students felt motivated, confident, and found TikTok to be a flexible, enjoyable, and useful platform for language learning. They appreciated the ability to choose content, learn at their own pace, and enhance their listening skills. However, some students still struggled with reflection and self-evaluation. In conclusion, TikTok shows strong potential to support learner autonomy in English listening acquisition, complementing formal education with engaging and accessible digital exposure.

Keywords: TikTok, Autonomous Learning, Listening

Penelitian ini mengkaji persepsi mahasiswa terhadap penggunaan TikTok sebagai media pembelajaran otonom dalam keterampilan menyimak bahasa Inggris. Dalam konteks EFL di Indonesia, keterbatasan waktu belajar di kelas membuat siswa perlu mencari cara belajar tambahan. Pembelajaran otonom memungkinkan siswa mengatur sendiri tujuan dan strategi belajar mereka. TikTok, sebagai media sosial yang populer, menawarkan fitur menarik dan konten beragam yang dapat dimanfaatkan untuk belajar bahasa Inggris secara mandiri. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode survei kuantitatif dengan melibatkan 50 mahasiswa. Kuesioner yang digunakan mencakup empat aspek: penggunaan TikTok, fungsinya sebagai media pembelajaran, perasaan siswa saat menggunakannya, dan dukungannya terhadap pembelajaran mandiri. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa siswa memiliki persepsi yang sangat positif. Mereka merasa termotivasi, percaya diri, dan senang belajar melalui TikTok. Meski demikian, beberapa siswa masih mengalami kesulitan dalam refleksi dan evaluasi diri. Secara keseluruhan, TikTok memiliki potensi besar sebagai alat bantu pembelajaran menyimak yang mandiri dan menyenangkan untuk melengkapi pembelajaran formal di kelas.

***Kata Kunci**: TikTok, Pembelajaran Mandiri, Menyimak*

I. INTRODUCTION

It is inevitable that English has marked its superiority as the most widely used language and learning it becomes primary necessity. English is spoken mostly in various aspects in life such as education, tourism, trades and international relations. As a result, English is clearly seen as a common need by people. In the same way, being able to communicate in English is also believed to be very prestigious. People often perceive being able to speak English gives them certain level of dignity. They can have wider opportunity to have high paid job. They can also easily have access to such as to have better job and education. They can also have easy access to more respected education. Given to this fact, learning English becomes highly required to be able to compete and to be present in a global era.

Due to the importance of learning English, it should be highlighted that there is a need of sufficient time and exposure to make learning English more effective. However, it is a fact that in Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language which the duration of teaching it is very limited. In EFL context, teaching and learning English only lasts for about ninety minutes. It means that in a month, students can only learn English for about six hours. This allocation is clearly not enough for students to learn English. Another point should be highlighted is that students often use English merely in the classroom context. They do not have opportunity to use it in real social interaction because they tend to involve in interaction using their first language once their English class has just finished. According to those two facts, this insufficiency exposure of English and the limited time to learn it can be challenges to improve students' receptive (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing) in English.

In order to deal with the aforementioned facts, students need to need to develop their autonomous learning. Autonomous learning is perceived as a learners' competence to create their own learning environment. It allows students to be independent in determining their learning goals, monitoring their learning progress, controlling their learning time, choosing their preferred learning strategies and choosing their sources of learning (Wael et al., 2023). Additionally, autonomous learning provides various benefits for students. It leads students to actively look for knowledge to respond to the various changes in life, to have good mental preparedness, and to have a drive to take learning seriously. It also helps them to be confident and motivated (Nurchalis et al., 2022).

Based on aforementioned facts above, it is clear that autonomous learning highlights learner's independence in learning. In this matter, being independent in autonomous learning does not solely refer to learners having full control over every decision in learning a target language but it also involves their ability and readiness to act independently (Ismail et al., 2023) It can be implied that there is a strong relation between autonomous learning and learner's motivation, specifically learner's intrinsic motivation. Learner's intrinsic motivation comes from their own personal interest, enjoyment, or inherent satisfaction. It is necessary for learner to have the intrinsic motivation to effectively manage their own learning and demonstrate a willingness to take responsibility for selecting appropriate learning materials.

Unfortunately, developing students' autonomous learning is not easy. Managing one's own learning requires full responsibility and motivation. In other words, to have control of their own learning, students need to picture their own motivation so that they can keep on being autonomous learners. They need to strongly possess eagerness to learn that comes from within which is shown from how they formulate their learning goals, design the learning activities, and decide learning assessment (Nurchalis et al., 2022). In short, students required to have intrinsic motivational sources to acquire more engagement and exposure to learn English.

One of sources that students can use to have intrinsic motivational is using social media in their learning. Social media become a hot topic

nowadays. They become exceptionally popular among students and they can be used as learning tools. Through social media, students can access various platforms and applications which provide varied videos or audios. This drives students to be more motivated and interested in learning English using social media and to have more engaging learning process.

Among different platforms and application, TikTok is one of the well-known and preferred application. TikTok is an application launched and develop by a Chinese company ByteDance in September 2016 (Rininggayuh et al., 2024). It has been growing so fast and it has reached hundreds of million users. The statistics showed that TikTok has more than 800 million active users (Hadijah et al., 2023). These users of TikTok uses it for different purposes. To exemplify, as an application, TikTok is used for entertainment. Users can watch short videos, comedy, short movies, dancing tutorials, or live streaming contents (Utami, 2022). In addition, it is also used as a promotional platform for many businesses and organizations.

TikTok is also popular because it has many features which attract students to use it. To exemplify, using TikTok allows students to be more creative by using variety of video effects, adding music to their videos, changing video or picture filters, watching live features or trying beauty filters. These features are very attractive and engaging more to their learning. Secondly, it also provides videos with 1 to 5 minutes length. The videos on TikTok are varied, such as a traveling vlog, a product review, a makeup tutorial, or learning language videos. As a consequence, student can obtain numerous exposures of English and they can re-watch them over and over again. At this point, TikTok also gives opportunity to students to be exposed by diverse accents of English. Additionally, TikTok offers features like automatic captions and subtitle options which can support students in expanding their vocabulary. Therefore, many features offered by TikTok make it more appealing for students to use it in their independent learning.

In the context of education, TikTok also shows great potentials in language learning, especially English. First of all, TikTok's design integrates visual and auditory input, which benefits vocabulary learning. Tools like auto-captions, subtitles, and live streaming help users connect spoken words with written forms. These multimodal elements enhance understanding and encourage better retention and confidence (Hastomo, Marcela, Ramadhanti, & Viana, 2022). As a result, learners are exposed to vocabulary in authentic and meaningful contexts, making the learning process more effective. Secondly, TikTok encourages independent learning by giving users control over their content choices. Learners have the flexibility to decide what videos to engage with, when to view them, and how frequently to review them. This level of freedom helps students customize their learning experience based on their own interests and objectives, which in turn boosts their motivation and engagement. (Alamsyah et al., 2025)Compared to traditional methods, this flexibility makes learning English more personalized and enjoyable. Moreover, TikTok provides context-rich content. Many videos use real-life scenarios, humor, or storytelling to demonstrate language use, helping learners grasp the practical application of new words. In the same way, those various videos will be great tools for developing learners' listening comprehension since the learners will be exposed to different variety accents of English.

The positive attitude of TikTok has attracted scholars to conduct studies regarding how TikTok can be used as tools of learning English. In the context of learning vocabulary, studies reported that TikTok effectively enhances vocabulary development and the students perceived it positively (Alfitri, 2025; Annapis, 2024). Additionally, TikTok promoted students' speaking skill, including pronunciation and and fluency (Annapis, 2024; Gunawan et al., 2023; Li, 2024; Setiawan et al., 2024). Other studies also revealed that TikTok can boost students' confidence and motivation in learning English (Efivania et al., 2025; Oktavena et al., 2025). According to the studies mentioned, it can be

seen those studies explored more on how TikTok use in classroom contexts. Unfortunately, there is still limited investigation of how TikTok use as an autonomous learning source, especially in listening context. Therefore, this study attempted to picture how students perceive TikTok as an autonomous learning source in learning listening.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design using a survey method to explore how higher education learners perceive TikTok as a medium for autonomous listening learning. The primary data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire, which was developed based on the study of Venalinda and Armanda (2023) and Kresnayoga (2024) which are relevant literature on autonomous learning and social media use in language education The questionnaire consisted 38 questions and were divided into 4 categories, namely using TikTok in learning English, TikTok as a learning medium, students' feeling when using TikTok, and students' autonomous learning. It was distributed to undergraduate students enrolled in English-related programs at two selected private university. A purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that participants had prior experience using TikTok for educational or language learning purposes. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine general trend in learner attitudes of using TikTok as a medium of autonomous listening learning. The results provide empirical insights into how digital platforms like TikTok can support self-directed language learning in higher education settings.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the questionnaire distributed to 50 higher education students related to their perceptions on TikTok as a tool for learning English and allowing students to be autonomous learners. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics focusing on the mean and standard deviation (SD) each item. The questionnaire consisted of four sections:

(1) Using TikTok in Learning English, (2) TikTok as a Learning Medium, (3) Students' Feelings When Using TikTok, and (4) Students' Autonomous Learning. The following sub-sections explain the results in detail.

In order to make sense of the students' responses to the questionnaire items, a 5-point Likert scale was used to calculate the mean scores for each statement. To interpret the scores more clearly, a standard interval classification system was used. It is to divide the total range of possible scores (from 1 to 5) into five equal categories. Each category covers an interval of 0.80. The interpretation scale is presented below:

Mean Range	Interpretation
1.00 – 1.80	Very Negative
1.81 – 2.60	Negative
2.61 – 3.40	Moderately Positive
3.41 – 4.20	Positive
4.21 – 5.00	Very Positive

The first section of the questionnaire included ten questions related to the use of TikTok in learning English. The overall responses indicated a positive perception. As shown in the table 4.1, most items received a high mean score, with values ranging from 3.82 to 4.46. The highest mean score (M = 4.46, SD = 0.61) was recorded for the statement "I am interested in using TikTok to learn English," which means that the majority of students showed a strong interest in using this platform as a learning tool. Similarly, statements such as "TikTok helps me in learning English" (M = 4.32), and "TikTok can motivate me in leaning English" (M = 4.40) proved that the platform's positive influence on learner engagement and motivation. On the other hand, slightly lower mean scores were found in items relating to reading (M = 3.92) and writing (M = 3.82), which indicate that students might perceive TikTok as more beneficial for oral skills such as listening and speaking than for literacy-focused skills.

Learner autonomy. Although it cannot replace formal learning in the classroom, it can be a helpful and enjoyable additional resource.

With the right support from teachers, TikTok could become more than just entertainment, it can be part of a meaningful and autonomous learning experience.

Table 1. Using TikTok in Learning English (10 items)

Item	Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	I am interested in using TikTok to learn English	4.46	0.61	Very Positive
2.	TikTok helps me in learning English	4.32	0.68	Very Positive
3.	TikTok video allows me to understand how certain words and expressions are used in real life	4.38	0.62	Very Positive
4.	TikTok videos can increase my listening comprehension	4.38	0.65	Very Positive
5.	TikTok videos improves my pronunciation practice more accurately	4.30	0.66	Very Positive
6.	TikTok videos improve my speaking abilities and grammar mastery	4.14	0.73	Positive
7.	TikTok videos help me improve my reading abilities	3.92	0.77	Positive
8.	TikTok videos help my English writing gets better when I interact with other users on TikTok	3.82	0.84	Moderately Positive
9.	I find using TikTok can motivate me in learning English	4.40	0.72	Very Positive
10	Learning English through TikTok make me more confident to speak English	4.26	0.70	Very Positive

The next section explored students' experiences using TikTok as a flexible and engaging platform not only for entertainment but also for learning. The results reaffirm students' positive attitude with several items scoring above 4.00. The highest response was for the statement "I can rewatch videos in TikTok which help me to learn how to pronounce words in English" (M = 4.48, SD = 0.58), showing that students valued the ability to replay the TikTok content as a learning feature. Moreover, the items "I can use TikTok anytime and anywhere to learn English" (M = 4.46) and "Learning English using TikTok is fun and pleasing" (M = 4.30) indicate TikTok's flexibility and entertainment value. Two items got relatively lower means: "Learning English by using TikTok is not fun and I feel bored" (M = 2.80) and "I found bad content and bad words in English on TikTok videos" (M = 2.72). The results suggest that the contents have good quality and appropriateness and the are no concerns that can affect the perception of TikTok as a learning tool.

Table 2. TikTok as A Learning Medium (11 items)

Item	Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	I can use TikTok anytime and anywhere to learn English	4.46	0.60	Very Positive
2.	I can rewatch videos in TikTok which help me to learn how to pronounce words in English	4.48	0.58	Very Positive
3.	Learning English using TikTok is fun and pleasing	4.30	0.70	Very Positive
4.	TikTok can be used as a learning tool in English class	4.18	0.72	Positive
5.	I can choose TikTok videos on which topics I want to learn	4.36	0.64	Very Positive

6.	I find TikTok is user-friendly and easy to use for learning English	4.34	0.67	Very Positive
7.	I find TikTok content make it accessible for all English levels of the learners.	4.12	0.73	Positive
8.	I find interactive features of TikTok allow me to practice in real-life communication	4.14	0.71	Positive
9.	TikTok has many exciting features that students will not be bored in learning English	4.20	0.68	Positive
10	Learning English by using TikTok is not fun and I feel bored	2.80	0.92	Negative
11.	I found bad content and bad words in English on TikTok videos	2.72	0.88	Slight Concern

This section included six items that intended to measure students' emotional responses about using TikTok in their learning process. All items show satisfactory, with mean values between 4.08 and 4.40. The most projecting item was "I feel motivated to learn English when using TikTok" (M = 4.40, SD = 0.66), indicating that the platform's strong motivational desire. Students also responded positively to items showing comfort and enjoyment, such as "I feel convenience to learn English when using TikTok" (M = 4.30) and "I believe that using TikTok makes learning more engaging and enjoyable" (M = 4.38). The responses later strengthen the argument that TikTok is able to improve a more engaging language learning experience.

Table 3. Students' feeling when using Tiktok (6)

Item	Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	I feel convenience to learn English when using TikTok.	4.30	0.65	Very Positive
2.	I feel motivated to learn English when using TikTok.	4.40	0.66	Very Positive
3.	I believe that TikTok can be a valuable and innovative platform for learning English.	4.32	0.60	Very Positive
4.	I believe that using TikTok makes learning more engaging and enjoyable.	4.38	0.63	Very Positive
5.	I find TikTok is user-friendly and easy to use for learning English	4.34	0.64	Very Positive
6.	I can find relevant English learning materials on TikTok easily.	4.08	0.70	Positive

The last section observed how TikTok contributes to allow students to learn autonomously. There are eleven items in total and the majority received favorable responses. The statement "I can learn English independently through TikTok videos" got the highest mean (M = 4.40, SD = 0.60), slightly different with the item "I can choose TikTok videos that are relevant with my learning" (M = 4.34) and "I can organize a time and place for my own learning" (M = 4.18).

The results suggest that students are able to learn by themselves when given accessible digital tools such as TikTok. On the other hand, slightly lower means were found in items related to reflection and evaluation such as "I can reflect on materials and strategies I have used" (M = 3.80). This shows that even when students enjoy their learning process, they still need reflective practices for further development.

Table 4. Students autonomous learning (11 items)

Item	Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	I can learn English independently through TikTok Videos	4.40	0.60	Very Positive

2.	I can choose TikTok videos that are relevant with my learning	4.34	0.63	Very Positive
3.	I am familiar with a variety of materials and resources for language learning	4.16	0.72	Positive
4.	I can structure my learning independently	4.12	0.66	Positive
5.	I can use a variety of learning materials	4.22	0.68	Positive
6.	I can organize a time and place for my own learning	4.18	0.70	Positive
7.	I can decide that TikTok videos are align with formal English learning objectives	4.06	0.76	Positive
8.	I can evaluate my learning	3.94	0.74	Moderately Positive
9.	I can reflect on my learning	3.92	0.72	Moderately Positive
10	I can reflect on materials and strategies I have used	3.80	0.78	Moderately Positive
11.	I can learn with and from others	4.16	0.66	Positive

As the conclusion, the results show that students display a positive perception of TikTok as a learning platform, especially in enhancing motivation, increasing engagement, and fostering autonomous learning. The flexibility, user-friendliness and interactive features that this platform offers were really appreciated. Despite minor concerns related to the quality of the content and reflective learning habits, TikTok appears to give significant potential as an innovative tool in English language education.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore how higher education students perceive TikTok as a tool for learning English, especially in relation to their ability to learn independently. Based on the analysis of the questionnaire completed by 50 respondents, it can be seen that most students have a positive view of using TikTok as a learning platform.

One important finding is that students feel more motivated, confident, and engaged when they use TikTok to learn English. This supports what Abdullah N.E., et al (2023) found that platforms like TikTok can help increase motivation and reduce the pressure often felt in more formal learning situations. The students in this study also appreciated how flexible TikTok is. They liked being able to watch videos anytime and anywhere, which supports what Alsawaier (2018) said about mobile learning helping students become more independent.

The students also showed that they could choose materials that matched their interests and learning goals. This relates to Little's (1991) idea of autonomous learning, where learners are responsible for choosing their own methods and resources. In this case, TikTok seems to help students take more control of their learning by giving them access to real-life English content that they may not find in textbooks or classrooms.

However, the results also showed that not all students were confident in reflecting on their learning or evaluating their own progress. This is similar to what Lai and Gu (2011) found in their research while digital tools can support independent learning, they don't always help students think deeply about their learning unless teachers provide guidance.

In conclusion, this study shows that TikTok has the potential to support English language learning, especially in terms of motivation and learner autonomy. Although it cannot replace formal learning in the classroom, it can be a helpful and enjoyable additional resource. With the right support from teachers, TikTok could become more than just entertainment, it can be part of a meaningful and autonomous learning experience.

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