

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Speaking ability is a primary skill in language acquisition that enables individuals to convey meaning actively and contextually. According to Ork and Chin (2024), speaking is the active use of language that allows young learners to discover, understand, and master a new language. This is reinforced by Houn and Em (2022), who state that speaking involves the process of constructing and sharing meaning through verbal and nonverbal symbols. In the context of English, speaking ability serves as a key indicator of communicative competence. Aziz and Kashinathan (2021) emphasize that speaking is the most prestigious quality because it requires quick and accurate responses. Therefore, speaking becomes a crucial foundation for successful English language learning.

Strong speaking ability has a significant impact on students' confidence, learning satisfaction, and social engagement (Alrajafi et al., 2023; Escandallo & Baradillo, 2024). Students who are active in speaking are more likely to participate in discussions and build positive social interactions. Conversely, students with low speaking ability face various challenges such as anxiety, lack of self-confidence, and limited classroom participation (Pontillas & Talaue, 2021; Inayah,

2024). Such conditions can potentially hinder their overall language development. Kashinathan and Abdul Aziz (2021) assert that low speaking proficiency negatively affects the learning process. Therefore, improving speaking ability should be a primary priority in English language teaching.

Research on the speaking ability of non-native speakers shows that psychological factors, motivation, and learning environment play vital roles in mastering speaking skills. Tam and Duc (2024), Chau et al. (2022), and Amoah and Yeboah (2021) reveal that lack of confidence, anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and the influence of teaching methods significantly affect the speaking performance of EFL students. These factors are not only internal, such as emotions and motivation, but also external, such as academic programs and classroom environments. These findings conclude that a holistic teaching approach should be considered to effectively address these challenges.

Recent studies highlight the effectiveness of teaching strategies such as flipped classrooms and the use of bilingual methods in improving students' speaking skills. Sirikit, Paengkamhag, and Pansa (2024), Alam et al. (2025), and Demir and Mirzaie (2023) demonstrate that the flipped classroom approach enhances fluency and accuracy in speaking because students become more active, confident, and prepared during discussions. On the other hand, the bilingual

method helps students better understand communication contexts. In general, strategies that facilitate self-directed learning, active interaction, and a stress-free environment play a major role in developing more effective and sustainable oral communication skills.

Speaking skills in English have a significant impact on students' social engagement and academic achievement. Research by Escandallo and Baradillo (2024) indicates that speaking ability mediates the relationship between social literacy and student engagement. Aizawa et al. (2023) add that speaking ability influences how students cope with challenges in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) programs. Both studies affirm the importance of speaking as a determinant of students' academic success and social integration. In conclusion, improving speaking skills not only strengthens academic performance but also broadens students' social and professional interaction scope.

Although speaking skills have been recognized as central in English language acquisition, many previous studies have not comprehensively integrated internal and external factors influencing speaking ability, effective teaching strategies, and their combined impact on students' academic and social achievement. Existing research tends to focus on one aspect separately and has yet to holistically examine the

interrelationship between causal factors, teaching approaches, and the consequences of speaking skills.

Several recent studies have highlighted the importance of psychological and environmental factors in influencing speaking ability (Tam & Duc, 2024; Chau et al., 2022; Amoah & Yeboah, 2021), as well as the effectiveness of flipped classrooms and bilingual methods in teaching (Sirikit, Paengkamhag & Pansa, 2024; Alam et al., 2025; Demir & Mirzaie, 2023). In addition, speaking ability has been proven to enhance social literacy and academic engagement (Escandallo & Baradillo, 2024; Aizawa et al., 2023).

Considering the importance of speaking as an indicator of communicative competence in English language learning, and its broad influence on affective, academic, and social aspects, a more comprehensive study is essential. Such an investigation is necessary to design more effective pedagogical interventions to overcome learning barriers and sustainably improve speaking performance

B. Identification of the Problem

Based on the background of the study and preliminary observations regarding students' speaking skills, several problems can be identified as follows:

1. Students possess a strong internal drive and motivation to master English speaking skills, yet they frequently experience a significant mismatch between their

willingness to learn and their actual performance in oral communication.

2. Speaking anxiety remains a critical and dominant psychological barrier among students, causing them to feel nervous, shy, and deeply afraid of making grammatical or pronunciation errors when speaking English in front of others.
3. Students' self-confidence fluctuates significantly depending on the audience, where they tend to feel more comfortable interacting with immediate peers but experience a sharp decline in confidence during formal public speaking or classroom presentations.
4. While digital platforms like TikTok offer vast, accessible, and high-quality audiovisual inputs for independent vocabulary enrichment and pronunciation tips, students heavily tend to become passive viewers rather than active language producers.
5. There is a lack of structured, low-anxiety classroom strategies that successfully bridge the gap between students' passive digital media consumption at home and their active, confident oral production in real-world educational environments.

C. Limitation of the problem

To ensure a focused, manageable, and in-depth investigation, the scope of this research is strictly limited to specific variables, participants, and contexts.

1. In terms of variables, this study is confined to exploring students' perceptions, independent practice strategies, and the pedagogical benefits of using TikTok, alongside the specific internal psychological drivers namely motivation, self-confidence, and speaking anxiety that influence oral performance.
2. Regarding the target language skills, the focus is strictly limited to evaluating students' speaking proficiency, specifically through their performance in a short monologue activity, without measuring other productive or receptive language skills.
3. Contextually and geographically, this research is limited to the tenth-grade students of SMAN 5 Bengkulu Utara during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. Therefore, the findings and meta-inferences generated from this study specifically reflect the unique digital practices and affective challenges within this particular secondary school environment.

D. Research Questions

This research is directed to address three main questions related to the development of EFL students' speaking ability.

The primary focus includes identifying the factors that influence speaking skills, exploring effective teaching strategies, and analyzing the impact of speaking ability on students' academic achievement and social engagement.

1. What factors influence EFL students' speaking ability when utilizing TikTok as a learning tool?
2. Is TikTok suitable as a teaching strategy and method for improving English speaking skills?
3. How does the practice of speaking skills through TikTok affect students' academic and social domains?

E. The Purposes of the Research

This study aims to examine in depth the development of EFL students' speaking ability by highlighting the influencing factors, effective teaching strategies, and its impact on academic achievement and social engagement. The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the affective and environmental factors that influence the English-speaking ability of EFL students at SMAN 5 Bengkulu Utara when utilizing TikTok.
2. Explore how students utilize TikTok as an independent digital learning strategy and method to improve their speaking performance and overcome learning barriers.
3. Analyze the impact of improving speaking skills through TikTok on students' academic achievement and their real-world social engagement.

F. The Significance of the Research

This research provides a theoretical contribution to the field of applied linguistics, particularly in the development of EFL students' speaking ability. By identifying the influencing factors and effective teaching strategies, this study enriches the theory of second language acquisition and oral communicative competence. The findings also offer new insights into the relationship between speaking ability, academic engagement, and social involvement. Thus, the results of this research are expected to support the development of a more comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding the complexity of speaking ability in the context of English as a foreign language learning.

Practically, this study offers valuable implications for educators in designing more effective learning strategies to enhance students' speaking ability. By exploring successful methods and approaches, this research can serve as a reference for curriculum development, teacher training, and the implementation of more interactive and communicative learning practices. The findings are particularly beneficial for instructors seeking to overcome challenges in teaching speaking, such as anxiety, lack of motivation, and limited opportunities for authentic speaking practice.

Moreover, this research has broad practical implications for students' academic achievement and social

engagement. Good speaking ability not only enhances classroom participation but also supports success in presentations, group discussions, and collaborative tasks. Socially, students who can communicate effectively are more likely to build relationships, establish networks, and actively engage in campus activities. This contributes to a more holistic learning experience and better preparation for professional environments that demand strong communication skills.

G. Operational Definitions of Key Terms

To avoid ambiguity in this study, the following operational definitions of key terms are provided:

1. *Students' perception* refers to students' views, evaluations, and responses toward a particular learning experience or instructional medium, based on their understanding, attitudes, and personal interpretations within an academic context.
2. *TikTok* is a short-video-based social media platform used by students as a medium for both entertainment and learning, particularly for accessing, sharing, or creating educational content related to speaking skills.
3. *Speaking skills* refer to students' ability to express ideas, opinions, and information orally in English clearly, fluently, and appropriately according to academic and social communication contexts.