

# TikTok as Digital Communication: Empowering Malaysian Users to Enhance English Public Speaking Skills

<sup>1</sup>Al Amirul Eimer Ramdzan Ali, <sup>2</sup>Ainur Maisarah Lokman, <sup>3</sup>Mohd Safwan Ramli, <sup>4</sup>Nur Nabilah Abdullah, <sup>5</sup>Ahmad Syahmi Ahmad Fadzil

<sup>1,2,4</sup>Kulliyah of Sustainable Tourism and Contemporary Languages, International Islamic University Malaysia, <sup>1</sup>Kulliyah of Economics and Management Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia, <sup>3,5</sup>Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)

Email: safwanramli@uitm.edu.my

Corresponding Author Email: dral@uitm.edu.my

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## Abstract

Social media as digital communication has revolutionized the way humans communicate and socialize. Education is also changing in which social media are transforming educational environments. TikTok has increasingly become popular as an educational tool when it comes to public speaking. From educational videos to discussions to debates, there is a wide range of topics that can be explored through the platform. Henceforth, the purpose of this study is to identify the relationship and the level of features of digital communication (informativeness, entertainment and uniqueness) on English public speaking skills among university students in Malaysia. Results from the field study involving 108 Malaysia University students across Malaysia demonstrated evidence for construct validity and reliability. Based on the multiple regression analysis, the result of the study shows that only uniqueness and entertainment were proven to have significant relationship with English Public Speaking Skills. Theoretical and practical implications were discussed to provide insights for future research in digital communication and public speaking skills.

**Keywords:** TikTok, Digital Communications, English Public Speaking Skills

## Introduction

Many universities and colleges offer an "Introduction to Public Speaking" course as a foundational subject. This course caters to students with diverse academic backgrounds and career aspirations. The ability to communicate effectively in public speaking is increasingly important in daily life, particularly in verbal communication. Developing skills in public speaking can boost individuals' self-assurance and confidence in verbal communication,

allowing them to express themselves freely and engage with others more comfortably in various situations. Effective public speaking skills are frequently required in various professional settings, particularly for managers, team leaders, counsellors, and other employees who may need to deliver speeches. (Baccarani & Bonfanti, 2015). Hence, it is crucial for young adults who aspire to enter the professional field to possess the ability to speak publicly with confidence and clarity.

The presence of technologies is expected to be able to improve TikTok users' public speaking skills especially for today's generation who grew up during World Wide Web and other digital technologies. Social media has become a source of attraction for digital communication for many university students. This is supported by research carried out on the impact of social media of student's academic performance by Amin et al (2016) and the findings showed that more than half of the respondents whose age range between 19-26 were heavy users of TikTok as it is considered as a platform where information is widely available. This is further supported by Daryus et al (2022) where TikTok is a good platform that contains a wide range of information, but it is not necessarily a platform that is primarily focused on education. It is worth noting that some educators and experts do see potential for using TikTok as a tool for learning and engagement in certain contexts.

### **Problem Statement**

Public speaking is a common experience that many people must face in their personal and professional lives. However, for some individuals, the thought of speaking in public can evoke feelings of anxiety and fear that may be overwhelming. This condition, commonly known as public speaking anxiety, can be debilitating and negatively impact a person's ability to communicate effectively. There are several reasons why some people may experience anxiety when speaking in public. One of the most common causes of public speaking anxiety is a lack of confidence in one's abilities. A study by Raja (2017) found that individuals who experienced public speaking anxiety had significantly lower levels of self-confidence than those who did not experience public speaking anxiety. The study concluded that low self-confidence and negative self-evaluation are key factors associated with public speaking anxiety. Many individuals who experience public speaking anxiety believe that they will not be able to deliver their message effectively or that they will make a mistake. There is no denying that this lack of confidence can lead to self-doubt and negative self-talk, which can exacerbate anxiety symptoms.

Digital communication platforms like TikTok can also have the potential to negatively affect the wellbeing of young adults if not used responsibly. For example, compared to platforms like YouTube, the amount of time allotted to a video is reduced. With this TikTok's short video format, it can lead to a decrease in attention span as users become more accustomed to consuming content in a shorter period. According to Cervi (2021), repeated exposure to complex visual material can enhance an individual's visual brain function, resulting in a greater inclination towards visual learning. However, this could also result in a reduced attention span. There is some debate on whether TikTok can make someone lazy or not. While the app is known for its short video content, which can lead to a shorter attention span, it's important to note that this alone does not necessarily cause laziness. This is supported with previous research carried out on the influence of TikTok on students' behaviour, which indicated that the participants do not agree on whether TikTok has the potential to cause a decrease in their productivity or work ethic by making them lazier (Nugroho et al., 2023).

## **Literature Review**

### **Public Speaking Skills**

According to Simbolon (2015), speaking plays a vital role in a child's language development as they grow. Developing effective speaking skills is particularly important for English language learners, as it can help them to better integrate into the social and academic contexts of the target language. In today's era of globalization, it is essential to be able to possess English speaking skills that enable effective and efficient communication during meetings with clients, lecturers or even in class setting. English speaking skills and public speaking abilities are crucial not only in corporate settings but also in educational institutions, universities, and broader society. They play a significant role in these domains as they facilitate effective communication and expression of ideas. Proficiency in English empowers individuals to navigate various professional and academic environments, while public speaking skills enable them to convey their thoughts persuasively and engage with diverse audiences. Ultimately, these skills have widespread applicability and are highly valued in multiple facets of life. In this literature review, we will examine the different research studies that have investigated the importance of English public speaking skills.

Based on a study by Apriyanti et al (2018), public speaking skills are becoming more necessary than ever before in various aspects of life. The article noted that students who can communicate ideas effectively have a better chance of succeeding in school and future careers. It is indeed that developing strong communication skills may help students to better articulate their ideas and public speaking skills seems to be a commonly acknowledged skill that can benefit individuals in a variety of settings. Another research by Yee and Abidin (2014) also agree that public speaking can be helpful in enhancing students' speaking skills in an educational setting. Additionally, they mention that learning this skill can bring benefits to students' personal and social lives, academic progress, and career prospects.

### **Features of Digital Communication**

TikTok has revolutionized digital communication since its initiation, becoming the fastest-growing social media app in history. What started as an entertainment platform has evolved into a powerful tool for social and cultural issue, and educational contents. Online discussion forums like TED and YouTube, social media platforms like TikTok also provide opportunities for digital public speaking. This is supported by Edwards (2021) who highlighted that creating intentional messages on social or public topics in online discussions like livestreams or message boards, such as those found on TED and YouTube, is a form of public speaking. The researcher noted that these forums allow individuals to create intentional messages on social or public topics in the form of short videos that can reach a wide audience.

These videos can be seen as a form of digital public speaking, as they are intended to convey a message, showcase a talent or skill, or entertain an audience. Research by Sari et al (2022) has proved that TikTok app's features can be harnessed to great effect in educational settings and have the potential to facilitate teaching and learning activities. Hence, it could be said that with over a billion monthly active users, it's clear that TikTok is no longer just for fun and games, but a significant part of how we communicate in the digital age.

### **Informativeness**

Informativeness can be defined as the level of usefulness or value of platform content to its audience is determined by how well it provides information on various topics, ranging from entertainment and education to news and more (Daryus et al., 2022). Consider a website

or social media platform where a majority of the content is not relevant, accurate, or informative. This could lead to the viewers losing interest, and not returning to the platform in the future. On the other hand, if the content provided by the platform is informative, accurate, and relevant to the interests of the viewers, it could lead to more engagement and a larger audience. This is supported by Kadry and Khaled (2019), who opined that if a platform provides accurate and up-to-date news that is relevant to the viewers, they are more likely to visit the platform regularly to keep themselves informed.

In addition to that, social media has become a substantial and influential source of information for many people, with a wide range of topics being covered, such as local and international news, educational content, entertainment, and more (Alalwan, 2018; Hajli, 2018). This highlights that TikTok has also become a platform where people can share their opinions, ideas, and experiences, making it an excellent way to stay informed and connected because the platform offer several features, such as live streaming, hashtags, and shareable content, which allow users to reach a broader audience and make the information more accessible. Besides that, research has been carried out on how TikTok has presented a distinctive opportunity for public healthcare agencies to disseminate and proliferate knowledge regarding COVID-19 to educate and inform the general public (Li et al., 2021).

### **Entertainment**

Entertainment is best to be defined as content that is created with the primary goal of providing enjoyment, amusement, or aesthetic pleasure to the audience (Daryus et al., 2022). This content can include any form of media that evokes emotions such as humor, excitement, or surprise, and is often visually appealing or creatively produced. TikTok is like a big playground with lots of different kinds of videos to watch. From entertaining dance routines to social activism, public health information, and even celebrity videos, there is always something for every viewer on this platform (Klug et al., 2021). Watching these videos can help people feel less bored or tired and can provide a fun break from other activities (Sinta & Zulfitri, 2022).

Additionally, some people find making TikTok videos and being creative on the app to be a fun and enjoyable activity that can also relieve stress while gain new knowledge. This can be supported by a research on using the duet song method of speaking skills for students' through the TikTok application which was carried out by (Pasaribu et al., 2022). As a result of the findings, it was found that duet methods greatly enhance students' speaking abilities because it inspires their attention and motivates them to pursue learning. The research also highlights that students may perceive relaxed, enthusiastic learning as opposed to routine or boring study technique. Thus, it could be said that TikTok is not only a fun platform for users to interact with each other, to watch funny contents but it can also be a tool for learning and education.

### **Uniqueness**

Uniqueness is what distinguishes products from their competitors, providing a competitive advantage and facilitating future development. It can be inferred that social media is a unique and important aspect of digital communication because it has enabled new forms of communication and interaction that were not previously possible, such as instantaneous and interactive communication with large audiences. It gives alternatives for users according to their needs such as to communicate ideas, messages, and brands through engaging and interactive content that can reach a large audience (Anwas et al., 2020). In this

study which mainly focuses on TikTok, the platform is often viewed as unique among social media platforms due to several factors.

Firstly, it uses artificial intelligence (AI) to personalize each user's experience by suggesting content that is likely to be of interest to them (Klug et al., 2021). This means that users do not have to spend as much time searching for content that they might like, as the app learns their preferences in real time. According to Bhandari and Bimo (2022), the result of the findings from the interviews they conducted is that most of them agree that the TikTok algorithm is what sparked their initial interest and kept them using it. One of the participants stated that, "It is such a good algorithm, I have no idea how they do it." Not only that, a research by Pratiwi et al (2021) has found that most of the respondents agree that this TikTok feature helps the students to find more educational contents. The study notes that the application provide many tips and tricks, short video tutorial and many other topics of interest to students that help them to enhance their English pronunciations. Hence, it can be inferred that TikTok's algorithm understands which kind of content the user like.

In addition, audio-visual content on Tiktok could potentially help to engage students and promote active learning, especially considering the popularity of music and audio-based content among young people. According to Liqian (2018), the participants showed that they often attracted by interesting background music of Tik Tok. This could be inferred in educational perspective, the music background can be more engaging and memorable than written or verbal instructions, making it more likely that students will retain the information.

## **Research Objectives and Hypotheses**

### **Research Objective**

**The research objectives for this study are.**

- RO1:** To identify the relationship between the features of digital communication (informativeness, entertainment and uniqueness) on English public speaking skills among Malaysian TikTok users.

### **Research Questions**

- RQ1:** What is the relationship between the features of digital communication (informativeness, entertainment and uniqueness) and English public speaking skills among Malaysian TikTok users?

Besides, researchers have also formulated several hypotheses for this study which are:

Hypotheses for research question

- H<sub>1a</sub> : There is a positive relationship between informativeness and English Public Speaking Skills
- H<sub>2b</sub> : There is a positive relationship between entertainment and English Public Speaking Skills
- H<sub>3c</sub> : There is a positive relationship between uniqueness and English Public Speaking Skills

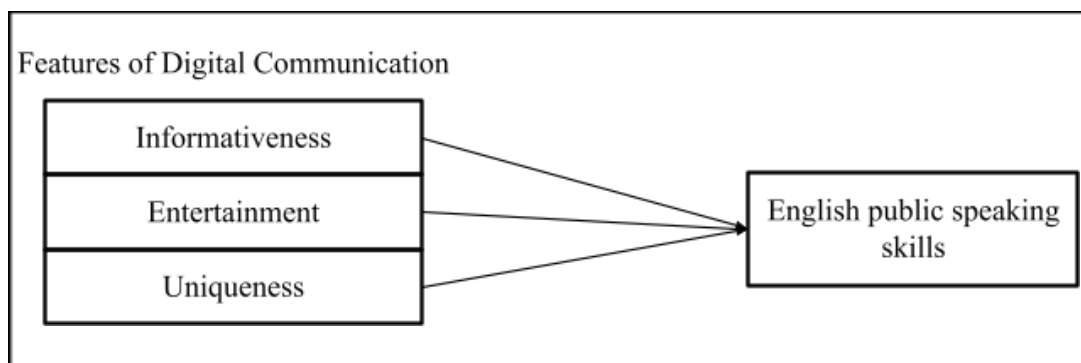


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on the relationship between Features of Digital Communication dimension (informativeness, entertainment and uniqueness) on English Public Speaking skills (Daryus et al., 2022).

## Methodology

### Research Design

The research approach used in this study is correlational research, which aims to examine the relationship between two variables (Ary et al., 2010). The dependent variable for this study is English public speaking skills, which refers to the ability of an individual to speak effectively in English in public settings. The independent variable, on the other hand, is the features of digital communication, which include informativeness, entertainment, and uniqueness.

### Population

In this particular study, the population being examined consists of 100 TikTok users who are between the age of 19 and 26. The reason for targeting this specific population is that they are among the group of young adults who are known to be tech-savvy and proficient in using digital communication tools such as mobile phones and tablets (Dilon, 2020).

Moreover, TikTok has become a popular application among young adults because of its short-form, visually engaging content, and user-friendly interface (Dilon, 2020). As such, this population is highly suitable for studying the impact of the features of digital communication on English public speaking skills. The study recognizes the potential educational value of TikTok and aims to investigate how the features of digital communication, such as informativeness, entertainment, and uniqueness, influence the development of English public speaking skills among this population. The findings of this study could provide insights into how digital communication tools can be effectively used in education to improve students' communication skills.

## Results and Discussion

### Reliability Analysis

In the research study, three independent variables were examined with regards to their impact on English public speaking skills among TikTok users in Malaysia. A reliability test was conducted to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the measurements taken for each of these variables. The three variables evaluated were Informativeness, Entertainment, and Uniqueness, with reliability scores of 0.861, 0.849, and 0.762, respectively. Additionally, the dependent variable in this study was the English public speaking skills score, which had a reliability score of 0.935. Based on these reliability scores, it is evident that all variables in the

study can be deemed to have strong reliability, indicating that the measurements taken were consistent and accurate (Ramli et al., 2022)

#### Pearson-Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 1

*Correlation between features of digital communication (informativeness, entertainment and uniqueness) and English Public Speaking Skills*

No	Variables	SD	Mean	1	2	3
1	Informativeness	0.443	4.70			
2	Entertainment	0.465	4.67	0.672**		
3	Uniqueness	0.631	4.53	0.684**	0.711**	
4	English public speaking skills	0.701	4.43	0.607**	0.651**	0.755**

**Table 1** showcases the correlation between features of digital communication and English public speaking skills. The correlation between Informativeness and Entertainment is particularly noteworthy, as it exhibits a high positive relationship with a correlation coefficient of 0.672 ( $p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that when a piece of content is informative, it is likely to be entertaining as well. Similarly, the correlation between Informativeness and Uniqueness is also high, with a correlation coefficient of 0.684 ( $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that informative content tends to possess unique qualities. Moreover, the correlation between Entertainment and Uniqueness is also strong, with a correlation coefficient of 0.711 ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that content that is entertaining often stands out due to its distinctive characteristics. These findings highlight the interplay between these variables and emphasize the positive relationships they share, reinforcing the notion that informative, entertaining, and unique content tend to go hand in hand.

Table 4.4 also provides clear evidence of the relationship between the features of digital communication and the dependent variable. Notably, a strong positive correlation is observed between English public speaking skills and the variables of Informativeness, Entertainment, and Uniqueness. The correlation coefficient between English public speaking skills and Informativeness is 0.607 ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating a high positive relationship.

Similarly, the correlation between English public speaking skills and Entertainment is 0.651 ( $p < 0.01$ ), demonstrating another significant positive relationship. The same pattern is observed for the variable of Uniqueness, with a correlation coefficient of 0.755 ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating a high positive relationship. These findings highlight the strong influence of English public speaking skills on the features of digital communication, emphasizing the positive relationships they share.

Table 2  
*Multiple Regression Analysis (Positive Brand Referral)*

<b>Model</b>	<b>Standard Coefficient Beta</b>
<b>Informativeness</b>	<b>.104</b>
<b>Entertainment</b>	<b>.192*</b>
<b>Uniqueness</b>	<b>.547**</b>
<b>R</b>	<b>.775</b>
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>.601</b>
<b>Adjusted R</b>	<b>.590</b>
<b>F Change</b>	<b>52.303</b>
<b>Significant F Change</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>
<b>Durbin Watson</b>	<b>1.618</b>

Findings from the regression analysis between features of digital communication and English public speaking skills were tabulated in **Table 2**. As illustrated in the table, the F value was 52.303. The F value helps to show the details of the relationship between the regression and the residuals. The R<sup>2</sup> of 60.1% is the variance in English public speaking skills which is explained by features of digital communication. Based on the findings, only uniqueness and entertainment are significant in influencing English public speaking skills.

Based on the analysis conducted, it has found that among the independent variables examined, Uniqueness, demonstrates a positive and significant impact on the dependent variable, English public speaking skills. TikTok's unique format presents a valuable opportunity for participants to enhance their communication skills through the challenge of creating engaging and concise videos within a limited time frame (Adnan et. al, 2021). This format encourages individuals to carefully craft their messages, ensuring that they effectively convey their ideas in a succinct manner. According to a study by Ferstephanie and Pratiwi (2021), TikTok's unique features, particularly the ability to add audio to content, have been found to promote creativity, which is a crucial aspect of effective public speaking. Furthermore, TikTok's algorithm promotes authenticity and creativity, empowering users to experiment with different public speaking approaches and cultivate their own unique style. This fosters confidence and skill development in communication.

Next, Entertainment was also found to have significant relationship with English public speaking skills. TikTok has emerged as a platform for political discourse, with creators using their platforms to share their opinions on current events and social issues. In a study by Pratiwi, et. al (2021), researchers found that TikTok has the potential to support informal learning and engage users in educational activities. This can be inferred that any creators have taken advantage of the platform's short-form video format to share quick lessons on topics such as history, science, and language learning. According to Liqian (2018), the majority of the participants agreed that the use of creative visual aids and engaging presentation styles can make these videos more accessible and memorable for



viewers. In addition to that, some recent studies have shed light on how TikTok's entertainment content can impact language learning outcomes, including speaking skills. However, the last variable, informativeness did not have a significant relationship with English public speaking skills as this variable is more closely associated with enhancing users' English pronunciation rather than their overall public speaking skills. According to a study conducted by Pratiwi et al (2021), participants shared their experiences of improved word pronunciation while watching TikTok. The research findings suggest that TikTok can be a valuable platform for enhancing one's ability to pronounce specific words with greater accuracy. However, it does not necessarily enable them to improve their speaking skills as they still feel nervous speaking in front of a large audience.

### **Conclusion**

The findings from the study reveal intriguing insights into the influence of the three independent variables, namely Informativeness, Entertainment, and Uniqueness, on the dependent variable. Interestingly, it is observed that only Entertainment and Uniqueness exhibits a significant impact on the dependent variable. This implies that when it comes to influencing the dependent variable, these two variables play a vital role. However, the variable of Informativeness, while being examined, appear to have a comparatively lesser significant impact. In other words, it does not hold the same level of influence as Uniqueness and Entertainment. This is because the presence of informative content on TikTok does not play a significant role in enhancing users' English public speaking skills. However, it does play a beneficial role in fostering the enhancement of pronunciation skills. To sum up, these results shed light on the varying degrees of impact that these independent variables have on the dependent variable, providing valuable insights into the relationship between them.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that future research focusing on informativeness as the variable should further investigate content creators who offer accurate information. This emphasis on fact-checking and ensuring the content's accuracy in relation to English public speaking skills is crucial. Encouraging content creators to cite reliable sources and provide references, when necessary, would contribute to the overall improvement of the platform's educational value. Next, it is recommended that future research focusing on informativeness as the variable should delve further into content creators who consistently offer accurate information. This emphasis on fact-checking and ensuring the content's accuracy in relation to English public speaking skills is crucial. Encouraging content creators to cite reliable sources and provide references, when necessary, would contribute to the overall improvement of the platform's educational value. As for uniqueness, TikTok must identify credible content creators and invite them for sharing session on how these content creators' unique approaches or techniques to enhance public speaking abilities. By showcasing practical demonstrations, such as effective body language, vocal modulation, or persuasive speech techniques, content creators can offer valuable insights and actionable tips to the audience. Lastly, future research could also investigate Trust as the moderating variable between features of digital communication and English public speaking skills

**Practical Contributions**

The researchers aim to investigate the expectations of young adults, particularly university students, regarding TikTok's influence based on its informativeness, entertainment, and creativity. This study seeks to understand how their perception of public speaking skills may be enhanced through TikTok. Additionally, it aims to provide a deeper understanding of TikTok's emergence as a prominent platform in the realm of digital communication. Furthermore, this paper aids other researchers to provide extra information for those who wish to carry out additional research on the relevant topic. On top of that, educators can improve their understanding of the students' preferences and carefully consider the needs and learning objectives of your students incorporating TikTok into your lessons.

**Theoretical Contributions**

The findings of the study are expected to support Richard Mayer's 12 Principles of Multimedia Learning. The central idea of this theory is that when students are presented with both words and pictures, they can learn more effectively because they can relate the information to one another and create meaningful associations. The use of multimedia in instructional materials enhances the learning process by allowing learners to process and retain information more easily. This study aims to expand on Mayer's principles for utilizing multimedia in e-learning by examining the potential of the TikTok application as an educational tool for university students to enhance their public speaking skills. Based on Mayer's principles for multimedia learning, one of the principles that can be applied to the research being conducted is The Temporal Contiguity Principle.

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