




Research Article


Let's *TikTok* to learn to speak English


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
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Abstract: *The spread of English as the world language has resulted in the need for people in many countries to be well-versed in that language and this includes Malaysia. While there have been many efforts to enhance English oral communication skills among Malaysian learners at all educational levels, their English performance in recent years remains unsatisfactory. Thus, inspired by Dwight Atkinson's sociocognitive theory which views human mind, body, and socially mediated world as integrally intertwined in a rich and complex system of L2 learning, this study suggests that the social media TikTok can become an effective tool to mediate learners' cognitive activities while learning to speak in English. The capacity of TikTok to provide a wide range of resources can become great scaffolding to accommodate the different needs of the learners. This can provide alternative pedagogical practices to improve oral communication skills among Malaysian learners.*

Keywords: *e-learning; speaking; sociocognitive.*

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.8115392



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1. INTRODUCTION

The expansion of English language use globally has rapidly increased the need to improve literacy among its speakers around the world, and Malaysia is no exception. Despite numerous attempts made by the government to improve the standard of English among Malaysian ESL (English as a Second Language) learners, the issue of low oral performance, particularly among the university graduates, still, to a certain degree, remains unresolved (Ganeson, 2018; Khamis & Wahi, 2021). Many local employers complained that English competency is the most meagre among Malaysian graduates (Azmi, Hashim & Yusoff, 2018) where they found to be lacking in confidence and over-anxious, especially when they have to communicate in the English language (Rusli, Yunus & Hashim, 2018). The lack of English competency and poor oral communication skills among the Malaysian graduates have been found to correlate significantly with the rate of youth unemployment (Rusli, Yunus & Hashim, 2018). Thus, driven by the sociocognitive perspective, this present study aims to give pedagogical recommendations using the social media *TikTok*, to enhance oral communication skills among Malaysian graduates.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was based on a dynamic theoretical approach of sociocognitive theory by Dwight Atkinson. According to this theory, learner cognition is extended and embodied in the learning environments. Language learners depend partly on the external/social stimuli to help them thrive in the complex second language (L2) ecosystem. Atkinson (2002, 2010) presented this concept of sociocognition in humans in relation to second language learning (SLL) in terms of three different principles as follows:

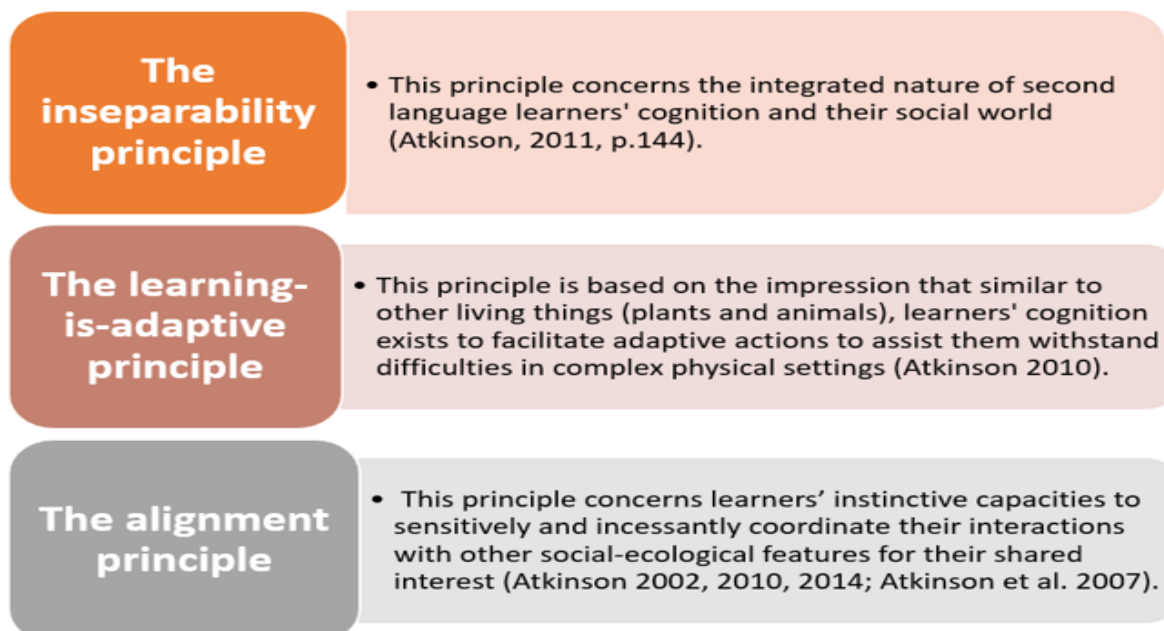


Figure 1: Three key principles of sociocognitive theory

3. METHOD & MATERIAL

This qualitative case study took place at a local university in Malaysia. It involved a mixed-gender group of 6 undergraduate students with various cultural backgrounds (Malay, Chinese and Indian). Their age ranged from 20 to 23 years. Their proficiency levels varied according to their results in the Malaysian University English Test (MUET), a high-stake test run by the Malaysian Examinations Council for university admissions. All these participants were selected based on the fact that they had the experience of using social media *TikTok* in an English communication classroom, and also their willingness to spend some of their valuable time to be interviewed. The interviews were conducted individually to get the students' opinions about their personal experiences using the *TikTok* platform to enhance their speaking performance.

4. FINDINGS AND DISUSSION

There were four themes emerged from the analysis of the data:

Table 1: Themes emerged from the interviews with the participating students

Num.	Themes	Description
1.	Fun and Interesting	The students claimed that <i>TikTok</i> had various interesting features that could become fun resources to their process of learning speaking (e.g. listening to native speakers' natural speech and accents).
2.	Autonomy	The students argued that <i>TikTok</i> allowed them to decide what to watch to help them improve their spoken English.
3.	Ubiquity	The students believed that <i>TikTok</i> was necessary in today's life; not only to learn English, but also to keep up to date with the current world events.
4.	Self-confidence	The students reported that <i>TikTok</i> gave them a sense of comfort while talking in English (as compared to in the classroom) and therefore being more confident with themselves.

Based on Table 1, it can be concluded that the interactions occurred between the students and the *TikTok* platform while learning to speak English exhibited a sociocognitive phenomenon. The fun and interesting social engineered tool of *TikTok* developed the positive feelings in the students (cognition), before they were translated into desirable embodied actions (e.g. focusing on how native pronounce words in English). The ability of *TikTok* to provide options to learners while experiencing their own learning can also promote learner autonomy or ownership as co-producers of knowledge, that is critical for their spoken English growth. Moreover, the students' reliance on *TikTok* in their daily lives may as well substantiate the connection between cognition and the sociomaterial world. As posited by Shuck, Albornoz and Winberg (2007, p.108), humans react and learn through the lens of emotionally laden experiences. Hence, when the students believed that *TikTok* was ubiquitous and significant, their strong sense of agency, or an individual's will and capacity to act (Gao 2010) might have been developed to motivate their learning performance as a whole. Apart from that, the feelings of security that the students experienced while talking in English on *TikTok* can certainly influence their self-confidence and motivation to explore the target language unreservedly.

On the whole, it appears that the social media *TikTok* has the potential to become an effective social and environmental affordance that enhances adaptive actions in learners, to align with the demanding process of learning spoken English. The learners' positive perceptions of that digital platform may not only influence their personalised motivation at large, but it can also organise and regulate their mental and physical activities in a manner that scaffolds their development of speaking skills.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Since sociocognitive theory highlights on the necessity to acknowledge the all-embracing constructs of sociocognition throughout the second language learning (Atkinson, 2014), it is imperative for second language teachers to make sure that all social agents and properties in the learning environment are supportive of learners' "higher-order" cognitive activities – alignment. As such, there are some pedagogical implications can be drawn from the present study in relation to the utilisation of the social tool *TikTok* in facilitating students' learning of speaking:

Table 2: Pedagogical implications concerning the use of *TikTok* in learning spoken English

Num.	How <i>TikTok</i> can be implemented to facilitate speaking skills	Description
1.	In classroom	<p>As learners are often scared to speak English in public (especially those who have low English proficiency and low self-confidence), asking the students to create a video using <i>TikTok</i> may not only encourage them to speak the language, but also assist them to become independent or autonomous in improving their speaking abilities.</p> <p>For example, teachers can ask learners to use <i>TikTok</i> for digital storytelling (an online form of storytelling), in which learners use their own meaning through their multifaceted life experiences to construct the assigned story based on the lesson plans.</p>
2.	Outside classroom	<p>With the rise of online learning, <i>TikTok</i> is a medium that teachers can adopt to extend learning beyond the physical classroom. However, to avoid unintended outcomes (as teachers may not be physically present to monitor learners' progress), teachers must consider a range of individual and contextual factors before integrating the technology into lesson plans (e.g. the features of the tool, learners' needs and interests, etc.).</p> <p>For example, teachers may ask learners to create an interesting video weekly on <i>TikTok</i>. Learners may choose to come up with their own dialogues, lip-sync, or even sing along, to foster their creativity and full potential. Teachers may then come up with an online feedback session to make sure that learners can meaningfully experience the speaking activities, to bring them closer to the intended learning goals.</p>

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