



Investigating EFL Students' Speaking Difficulties through Peer Feedback Comments on Tiktok Videos

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Abstract. Speaking skills are regarded as one of the most difficult skills to be acquired by EFL students, especially high school EFL students, because of language and psychological factors. This paper attempts to examine high school EFL students' speaking difficulties as identified by peer feedback in TikTok speaking activities. Qualitative descriptive design was adopted in this study by involving 15 tenth-grade students in carrying out speaking activities in the form of recording TikTok video clips and commenting on their peers' videos. The data obtained include speaking clips, peer feedback comments, and reflective statements of the participants, which were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The results found that there were four different types of speaking difficulties, namely fluency difficulties, pronunciation difficulties, organizational difficulties, and difficulties related to confidence and anxiety levels of students when conducting a speaking activity. This can be evidenced by the students' hesitation, frequent pauses, mispronunciation, disorganized speaking, and lack of confidence when speaking. Peer feedback comments play an important role in discovering this problem pattern among high school EFL students.

Keywords: EFL Students; Peer Feedback; Speaking Difficulties; TikTok; Qualitative Research.

1. INTRODUCTION

Oral communication is viewed as the most intricate skill within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. Speaking encompasses not only linguistic competence but also immediate processing and affective control, which must be performed simultaneously during communication. In the case of senior high school students, it is a consistent problem that is demonstrated throughout their oral presentation (Sun, 2021). In Indonesian EFL classes, where students lack exposure to English and where instruction tends to emphasize written assignments, opportunities to speak may be scarce. Consequently, typical issues like disfluency, wrong pronunciation, lack of idea formation, and performance anxiety have dominated speaking classes (Hamdani et al., 2024). Such challenges might obstruct the students' acquisition of communicative competence, especially in spontaneous speaking contexts that require immediate response.

It is important to note that the problems faced by the participants in relation to the development of skills in oral speech were also evident in the initial observation phase of this study. Specifically, the participants displayed hesitation, pauses, and disconnected statements while performing the task of speaking. Furthermore, a number of the participants also showed obvious signs of being nervous and anxious, such as having a weak voice projection, avoiding eye contact,

and being less expressive. There were instances in which the participants used the technique of memorizing more often than actually engaging in oral communication. This implies that speaking is not just related to linguistic problems, such as vocabulary and pronunciation, but also involves cognitive aspects, like idea formation, and even affective elements, such as anxiety and lack of confidence, as seen in the FLCAS framework.

However, solutions can come from incorporating digital platforms in language education. Digital platforms may improve learners' speaking skills as well as give information regarding learners' problems. For instance, TikTok is a popular platform used by students in their daily digital activities (Ambarwati, 2024; Chuah, 2023; Fauzi, 2025; Lin & Wang, 2022). Learners can make speaking videos on this platform, review themselves, and communicate using the comments feature. The repetitive performance will give learners awareness of their strong and weak points (Ambarwati, 2024). In this study, TikTok is considered more than just a tool that learners can use, but rather an observatory where the performances and peer communication of learners can be analyzed systematically. It is especially the comments section of TikTok where learners can naturally provide their peers with peer feedback as to how they think about their speaking ability (Fajriah et al., 2024; Hafidzin, 2024).

The use of peer feedback is already known as a useful method of teaching and learning. Peer feedback increases the learner's awareness, facilitates self-reflection, and allows the learner to recognize particular features of his or her speech performance, like fluency, pronunciation, clarity of ideas, and self-confidence. Besides, peer feedback may contribute to cooperation and mutual responsibility between peers during the learning process (Irmayani et al., 2024). Many previous studies have looked into the problems related to speaking in an EFL setting, while some researchers have focused on the influence of peer feedback in the process of acquiring language skills. However, despite all the attention that both these problems have drawn from many academics, their relationship still lacks adequate research.

It should also be noted that there are no studies investigating the ways in which speaking problems can be identified via peer evaluation processes in technology-assisted settings, especially in social networking applications like TikTok. The vast majority of existing studies focus on evaluating speaking problems either through instructor assessments, testing procedures, or classroom-based observation techniques, but they do not necessarily account for the natural way in which students would react and assess their peers' performance in terms of speaking skills.

Thus, this study will make a new contribution through combining the examination of speaking problems of students along with the peer feedback comments that they give to one another using TikTok as the medium. While most research conducted on speaking difficulties relies on teachers' assessment alone, this study will focus on peer feedback comments as a source of authentic data to determine recurring patterns in students' speaking difficulties. Through conducting an analysis of students' video recordings along with the comments of their peers, the study seeks to explore the speaking difficulties that students may experience when performing tasks related to fluency, pronunciation, idea organization, and confidence in speaking, among others.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The current research made use of the qualitative descriptive design in analyzing the speaking difficulties among high school students of English as a Foreign Language based on their peers' reactions to the TikTok videos they uploaded (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design was adopted because it aims to explore naturally occurring speaking problems that may occur in the real world and how they are described and understood by their peers through technology. As compared to using testing methods, the use of qualitative descriptive design allows the researcher to examine more deeply the speaking problems experienced by students while engaging in their activities without having to simplify these phenomena into numbers.

The sample involved 15 tenth-grade students at a senior high school in Indonesia. These students were purposely selected because they had shown considerable involvement in speaking activities within the classroom and also because they were ready to undertake TikTok-related tasks. Before collecting any data, the participants were oriented to the task procedure, ethics, and peer constructive feedback practice. The intention was to make sure that all participants had an understanding of what the study was trying to achieve and that they provided appropriate and meaningful feedback for their peers. Furthermore, the students were directed to pay attention to certain elements of speaking performances when conducting the peer assessment process. It was important to remind students about the significance of creating a positive learning environment where peer assessment should be carried out with the objective of helping fellow learners develop, rather than criticizing them (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data was collected from three primary sources: (1) the speaking videos made by the students in TikTok, (2) feedback in the form of comments that were left in the comments section, and (3) the students' reflections. The speaking assignment required the students to make videos about certain topics and post these videos in TikTok. These were followed by watching the videos of their peers and leaving comments based on things such as fluency, pronunciation, clarity of ideas, and confidence. Reflection was included to help in understanding the difficulties, as well as how students perceive their own performances. Data triangulation was achieved through using several types of data to check the results for validity purposes. Additionally, all data were carefully arranged before analysis. The overall process of research is shown in Figure 1.

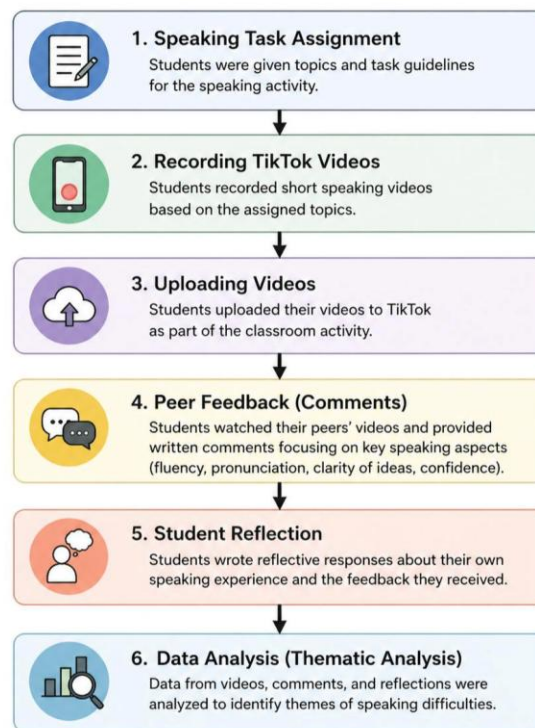


Figure 1. Research Procedure.

The process of data analysis was done using thematic analysis methodology, which included steps such as data familiarization, coding, categorization, and theme generation. In the first step, the entire data collected from students' speaking videos, peer reviews, and reflections were thoroughly analyzed to obtain a holistic perspective of the whole data set. The second step involved the coding process, where significant units of data were identified and coded in relation to the issues that arise when students speak. The next step involved coding these codes according to speaking problems that are similar.

Speaking problems served as the theoretical perspective underpinning the analysis, while the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was used to measure other affective characteristics such as anxiety and confidence. It is important to note that the use of this theoretical perspective ensured that both linguistic and psychological components were considered in the process of analysis. The technique of triangulation was utilized to improve the validity of the results by ensuring that data collected from different sources would be compared. Moreover, the triangulation approach also assisted in establishing consistency among various types of data supporting the established themes.

In this particular research, TikTok and peer feedback operated as means of observation that helped identify speaking problems. Such an approach helped to see how the speaking problems appear, become apparent to peers, and manifest themselves repeatedly throughout various student presentations. Additionally, due to analysis of naturally occurring peer interaction through TikTok, some insight was gained regarding how students judge others' speaking ability in a realistic digital environment. It enhances the ecological validity of research outcomes, as they reflect practical classroom-based activities carried out in the digital space where students communicate on a daily basis (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

According to the results of this research, the speaking problems experienced by secondary school EFL learners include fluency, pronunciation, idea organization, and confidence and anxiety, based on the peer feedback comments provided by the students on their TikTok video clips (MacIntyre et al., 2020). Such findings appear to be consistent since all four categories of difficulties could be detected among the students' speaking skills, peer feedback comments, and reflective responses, implying their regular occurrence in the speaking process (Siregar et al., 2025).

Moreover, these problems did not happen independently but were seen concurrently when performing the speaking activities. For example, those who had problems with speaking fluently were likely to find difficulties organizing their thoughts and gaining self-confidence in speaking as well. This proves the nature of speaking as a task requiring several skills to be used at the same

time. On top of that, from the results, it can be concluded that the students were conscious of such problems, judging by what they wrote about their peers in terms of giving feedback.

For a better understanding of the results obtained, the following table provides an illustration of the types of speaking problems and the observable signs associated with them.

Table 1. Types of Students' Speaking Problems.

No.	Speaking Problems	Signs Observed
1	Fluency	Hesitation, pause, repetition
2	Pronunciation	Mispronunciation, unclear articulation
3	Ideas Organisation	Unclear ideas, incoherence
4	Consciousness and Anxiety	Nervousness, low consciousness, restricted expressions

The problem with fluency was evidenced by the students' tendency to hesitate, pause, and repeat themselves during speaking tests. All these issues indicate that it often happens that the students have a hard time keeping their speeches fluid, which might be caused by their lack of vocabulary, as well as processing language and building coherent sentences on the go (MacIntyre et al., 2020). It seemed that most of the time, the students were thinking carefully before saying anything, which led to an even slower pace and interruptions. Hence, the speech of the students became less natural and less effective in transferring their messages. It means that fluency depends not only on language proficiency but also on the skill of accessing the acquired language competencies while communicating. For instance, one of the students mentioned that he found the person clear, but still found him too hesitant while explaining something. Thus, problems with fluency were evident and recognized by the peer group (Lin & Wang, 2022).

Problems with pronunciation were observed when there were errors in pronunciation or unclear articulation. This can be seen due to the minimal exposure of the learners to correct pronunciation, as well as the negative effects of their first language on their second language learning. Furthermore, fear of not being able to correctly pronounce new vocabulary could lead to hesitation, which results in the failure to correctly articulate the words. Students also seemed to incorporate pronunciation rules that are applied in their first languages, resulting in the same error occurring repeatedly. One example is shown in a student's comment, "Sometimes your pronunciation is not clear, particularly for some words (Siregar et al., 2025).

Regarding the structure and organization of ideas, there were instances where students would give speeches that lacked coherence. The explanation for this is that the challenge associated with organizing thoughts in an orderly way, while at the same time trying to ensure proper structure and

use of language form, was a major problem. Students would be concentrating too much on ensuring that the sentence used is grammatically correct while at the same time losing sight of what they want to communicate.

On the other hand, problems with confidence and anxiety were observed in students' nervousness, low levels of confidence, and inability to express themselves in speaking exercises. Some of the students seemed reluctant to talk and kept their eyes down, using a subdued tone in expressing their thoughts, which was a sign of being uncomfortable when using an unfamiliar language (MacIntyre et al., 2020). Other behaviors, such as stiff body movements and lack of facial expressions, indicate that these students had anxiety problems. These affective problems may significantly impact the willingness of the students to actively participate and thus inhibit their performance despite having knowledge of the language.

In summary, the results show that students' speaking problems are interconnected and related to linguistic, cognitive, and affective factors, which together influence students' speaking skills. The interplay between these factors indicates that the solution of speaking problems by focusing on one factor alone will not produce any remarkable result without taking into consideration other factors. Furthermore, the similarity of these results obtained from different sources highlights the necessity of implementing instructional approaches that facilitate language acquisition and psychological preparedness, especially in interactive learning settings (Lin & Wang, 2022; Siregar et al., 2025)

Discussion

Based on the findings above, it is clear that the oral competence of the students is a multifaceted one, with linguistic, cognitive, and affective issues affecting each other during the process of speaking. The problem with fluency seems to imply that the students face challenges related to the process of language processing in terms of vocabulary and sentence construction, while ensuring the smooth flow of communication (Ambarwati, 2024; Siregar et al., 2025). These factors cause hesitations, constant pauses, and repetition, thereby breaking the smooth flow of language and making the overall performance less efficient in terms of oral communication skills. Most of the time, it seems like students put too much effort into accurate communication, which affects the speed of speaking negatively (Chuah, 2023). The difficulty stems from the cognitive demands associated with ensuring correct language and meaning at the same time, and therefore, fluency becomes rather problematic.

On the contrary, problems with pronunciation are attributed to the limited amount of time that students have had to study correct pronunciation patterns, as well as the impact that the use of the students' first language has on the acquisition process. Problems with pronunciation can negatively impact intelligibility, leading to potential miscommunication due to the unclear pronunciation of some important words (Siregar et al., 2025). Besides, students may experience reluctance and hesitation in pronouncing certain sounds that they may find hard to produce. Students having difficulties organizing ideas mean that they find it challenging to put their thoughts together and focus more on language rather than the development of content (Huda, 2021; Teng, 2023). It results in disorganized speech, whereby thoughts that are unrelated to each other are communicated, making it difficult for the listener to understand the message. It is evident that students need to meet several requirements at once, thus reducing the level of their performance in terms of organization and clarity of ideas expressed.

Additionally, it is also important to highlight that the effect of confidence and anxiety on the speaking skills of learners is worth mentioning, as usually, learners feel insecure when speaking a foreign language (MacIntyre et al., 2020; Sahril & Butarbutar, 2022; Sun, 2021). Apart from the effect on the language itself, the issues of nervousness and insecurity can be seen in the process of delivering a speech or a message by means of eye contact and voice expression. In addition, learner anxiety can become an obstacle to risk-taking in speaking.. Thus, due to the fear of making mistakes, they would not practice using newly acquired vocabulary and structures. As a result, their communicative competence will not develop sufficiently fast

The application of peer feedback using TikTok as a platform creates a highly interactive and reflective environment that enables students to watch, critique, and learn from each other regarding their speaking (Chuah, 2023; Irmayani et al., 2024; Lin & Wang, 2022). The provision of immediate feedback by means of comments allows learners to realize their speaking weaknesses and be conscious of their performance. Indeed, it corroborates the previous research indicating the positive impact of peer feedback on enhancing learners' awareness and increasing their engagement in the learning process (Rahman & Sari, 2023; Renita & Irawan, 2024; Woo et al., 2022). Notably, feedback is not provided solely by teachers in this case but is created collectively by the peers, resulting in the formation of a participative and student-oriented learning environment.

Moreover, incorporating TikTok into teaching will help foster more authentic forms of speaking activity through the creation of a connection between classroom activities and students' everyday use of digital media (Ambarwati, 2024; Hamdani et al., 2024). Unlike usual classroom activities, in the case of TikTok, students are able to record, replay, and refine their performance prior to showing it to other learners, thus making speaking performance more practicable and reducing performance-related anxiety without compromising the significance of the performance itself. Furthermore, asynchronous peer feedback on their speaking performance will allow learners to digest feedback, reflect upon it, and reply appropriately, which will make the process of improvement more productive and more meaningful. But at the same time, it should be noted that the efficacy of peer feedback largely depends on the students' capacity to offer constructive and relevant advice. It is possible that some of the feedback might stay on the superficial level by providing merely an overall impression and no analysis of any linguistic characteristics, thus making it less beneficial for improving students' performance. Thus, the role of a teacher in guiding and helping students to offer more targeted feedback cannot be underestimated. It may be useful for the teacher to give the criteria for a good review.

From all the evidence, it can be concluded that peer feedback on TikTok helps not only to discover students' speaking problems but also functions as an instrumental means for promoting reflective learning and actively participating to help students achieve better results in speaking English. Thus, the application of such technologies should be used together with proper guidance to make the process more beneficial for the learners. It shows the opportunities presented by the combination of digital platforms and cooperation in learning processes to enhance the speaking instruction process.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results obtained in this research, EFL learners' problems in oral communication are multifaceted and include aspects like fluency, pronunciation, idea arrangement, and affective elements, including self-confidence and anxiety. All of the mentioned problems have been identified based on learners' speaking performance, peer feedback statements, and reflection related to speaking activities on TikTok. Results have demonstrated that there is a problem related to fluency, accurate pronunciation, idea arrangement, and anxiety among speaking tasks performed by the participants.

Moreover, it can be stated that using TikTok as a platform for performing peer feedback on speaking offers an environment for meaningful reflection. Through this method, learners are more aware of their speaking problems and are able to identify areas in which improvements need to be made. This means that besides being a source of information related to EFL learners' speaking problems, TikTok-based peer feedback helps to promote speaking performance among learners.

The results of this study show that the speaking problems experienced by EFL learners are multifaceted, involving fluency, pronunciation, organization of ideas, and psychological aspects such as confidence and anxiety. These problems have been detected throughout the process of students' speaking, the comments provided by peers regarding their speech, and their reflections on TikTok-based speaking tasks.

Moreover, the incorporation of TikTok-based peer feedback into language instruction offers an effective and reflective learning context for the learners to assess one another's speaking skills. Based on peer feedback comments, students develop a greater awareness of their speaking problems and become aware of aspects they need to improve upon. Hence, the implementation of TikTok-based peer feedback not only allows the detection of speaking problems but also facilitates the development of speaking awareness and proficiency among learners.

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