CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In the current era of globalization, technology is growing rapidly, leading to the development of various social media platforms. These platforms provide opportunities, especially for students, to enhance their skills and make connections in a wider global scope. Social networking sites (SNS) are online platforms that connect users and support interaction through sharing, commenting, and multimedia content, and platforms like TikTok have emerged as significant spaces for informal learning beyond traditional educational settings. (Salam et al., 2025; Muharrifah et al., 2024). Recent research highlights TikTok's role not just as entertainment but as an informal educational resource where learners build communities and engage with content that supports learning motivations and peer interaction (Muharrifah et al., 2024; Meidina, 2025). Among various SNS, TikTok has emerged as one of the most engaging platforms due to its interactive features and accessibility.

One of a social media platform that is increasingly populartoday is TikTok (Ibrahim et al., 2023). TikTok is a social media site that can be used to create a video with a duration of 15-60 seconds with various other features such as music, filters and video stitches (Rahardaya & Irwansyah, 2021). According to the latest data from CNBC Indonesia, Indonesia has the largest number of TikTok users in the world, totaling 157.6 million. Many young people use the TikTok application to seek information and knowledge through TikTok content (Rakhmayanti, 2024).

Beyond entertainment, TikTok has the potential to be a powerful tool for English learning. Its global reach allows users to watch native speakers, improve their listening skills and expand their vocabulary naturally. Users can also create videos to practice their speaking skills, receiving feedback through the comment section (Ibrahim et al., 2023). This aligns with previous research emphasizing the educational potential of SNS, as they support collaborative learning, engagement, and motivation (Zainuddin & Yunus, 2022). However, the effectiveness of TikTok as a language learning tool is not solely determined by its content but also by the interactions that occur within its community, particularly in the comment sections. Understanding interaction patterns in TikTok's comment sections is crucial for language learning because social interaction plays a key role in reinforcing comprehension and language acquisition.

Recent research grounded in Vygotsky's social constructivist perspective highlights that learning is fundamentally a socially mediated process, where learners construct understanding through interaction and collaboration, language learning is most effective when it occurs in a social context, where learners can interact, ask questions, and receive feedback (Dewi, Yusuf, & Subagya, 2025). Digital platforms such as TikTok offer such environments, particularly through their comment sections, which allow users to seek clarification, exchange ideas, and engage in peer interaction. To better understand how these interactions support learning, it is essential to identify and categorize the types of engagement that occur.

Besides that, to analyze the types of engagement in TikTok comment sections, this study draws on a social media engagement typology proposed by Jensen, Taylor, and Williamson (2023), which, although originally developed for

Twitter, is applicable to other platforms such as TikTok. Their framework identifies four main engagement types: Change, Cheer, Comment, and Conversation. *Change* engagement reflect attempts to influence opinions or inspire action, often through suggestions or corrections. *Cheer* comments convey support or encouragement, which can sustain learners' motivation. *Comment* engagement provides direct responses or evaluations of content, indicating active cognitive engagement. Meanwhile, *Conversation* engagement involves ongoing discussions, fostering collaboration and deeper understanding (Jensen et al., 2023).

Although developed in the context of Twitter, this typology is highly relevant for TikTok due to the similar nature of user engagement on both platforms. TikTok users can publicly respond to content, reply to each other's comments, and participate in threaded discussions—features that mirror those of Twitter. Both platforms encourage quick, informal, and socially driven communication, making them suitable for engagement analysis. Therefore, applying Jensen et al.'s typology to TikTok comment sections provides a structured lens through which digital engagement in language learning can be examined and better understood.

Based on previous research conducted by Fitria (2023), TikTok has been found to be an effective platform for learning English, particularly in pronunciation. The study also highlighted the relationship between user-generated content by analyzing metrics such as likes, shares and comments to attract the attention of millennials or students on the TikTok application (Fitria, 2023). Many students have positive responses to the use of TikTok as an English learning media tool. Other studies state that students feel happy and comfortable and feel the effectiveness of learning to use English vocabulary through TikTok (Alshreef &

Khadawardi, 2023). Students believe that using TikTok effectively enhances their knowledge. TikTok is recommended as a language learning strategy. The language aspects such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation are the categories of topics that are frequently covered and presented in an engaging manner in TikTok English learning videos (Rajan & Ismail, 2022).

Short videos using effects and emoji features have a positive impact on the process of understanding the material presented (Bahri et al., 2022). While this study provides valuable insight into content-based learning, it does not sufficiently address the role of interaction in enhancing comprehension and retention. Previous research has explored various aspects of user interaction in digital platforms. For example, Tur Viñes and Castelló Martínez (2019), through a content and quantitative analysis of YouTube comments, found that user interaction tends to be peer-to-peer, with minimal direct engagement from creators. Similarly, Hamat and Abu Hassan (2019) conducted a large-scale survey revealing that Malaysian university students often rely on social media for learning vocabulary, writing, and communication informally, although grammar is less frequently acquired this way. In a more recent study, Ha Nguyen (2023) analyzed educational TikTok videos and concluded that knowledge construction frequently happens through interactive features such as clarification, peer dialogue, and collaborative meaning-making in the comment sections. These findings suggest that interaction plays a vital role in informal learning settings, reinforcing the need for further investigation into how engagement unfolds specifically within comment sections on platforms like TikTok.

To address this gap, this study will explore different types of engagement in

TikTok's comment sections and analyze their influence on language comprehension and engagement. This research extends beyond skill acquisition by analysing the role of engagement in fostering learning. In contrast to previous studies that assessed how TikTok videos improve grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation, this study investigates how engagement in the comment section influences comprehension and retention. By doing so, it provides a broader perspective on the importance of engagement in digital learning environments.

Although TikTok's comment sections get a lot of activity, little is known about how different types of engagement contribute to the process of constructing specific knowledge (Vocabulary, Pronunciation and Grammar) in the English learning comments section on TikTok. Certain interactions, such as clarification questions and language corrections, may support factual and procedural knowledge development, while other types of engagement, including humor-based or off-topic comments, may contribute minimally to knowledge construction process. Therefore, understanding the nature of this engagement and their effects on users' learning experiences is essential to optimizing TikTok as an informal educational tool. This study seeks to fill that gap by analyzing engagement types and users' understanding in TikTok English learning videos from five educational accounts, namely @dewirusmiati889, @nofreeadi10, @brozalll, @dianaerlin, and @belajarbahasainggris4.

The interaction between users and content creator in the comment sections of English learning videos on TikTok can manifest in various forms of engagement. Nasrullah et al. (2020) argue that interaction patterns on social media are shaped by the platform's features, such as comments, likes, and video-based functions.

TikTok, with its advanced algorithm and interactive features, fosters active, community-based interactions among users, making it a unique space for engagement (Zulli & Zulli, 2020). Interactions in the comment sections of English learning videos on TikTok take various types, each playing a role in language acquisition.

This study aims to investigate the types of engagement occurring in the comment sections of English learning videos on TikTok and investigate how these engagements show users' understanding of the content. This study focuses on the role of user interactions in fostering engagement and language learning. Specifically, it examines how different engagement types, such as Change, Cheer, Comment, and Conversation, function within TikTok English learning video comment sections. By exploring this engagement, this research seeks to provide insights into how digital learning can be improved through social engagement on social media platforms.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background above, the researcher formulated the problem as follows:

1. What types of engagement occur between users & content creator in the comment sections of English language learning videos on TikTok?

2. How do interactions in the comments section of TikTok videos contribute to the knowledge construction process of English educational content in the TikTok videos?

1.3 Research Purposes

The purpose of this study is to examine the types of engagement between

content creator and users in TikTok comment sections on English language learning accounts. This includes identifying types of engagements, such as Change, Cheer, Comment, and Conversation. Accordingly, this study also examines how each type of engagement in the comment section contributes to different dimensions of knowledge construction process (knowledge–factual, knowledge–conceptual, knowledge–procedural, knowledge–meta-cognitive, and social engagement).

1.4 Limitation of Research

As this study focuses on types of engagement in English educational content on social media, TikTok was selected as the research platform due to its widespread use and the increasing popularity of short-form educational videos. However, limiting the analysis to TikTok means that the findings reflect engagement types specific to this platform and cannot be generalized to other social media platforms with different content formats and interaction features. Furthermore, this study is limited to the analysis of 25 English learning videos from five TikTok accounts. This research only focuses on TikTok as a platform for English learning engagement, particularly in the comment section of English learning accounts: @dewirusmiati889, @nofreeadi10, @brozalll, @dianaerlin, and @belajarbahasainggris4. Other social media platforms or learning tools are beyond the scope of this study. Additionally, this study does not analyze the effectiveness of the content itself but rather examines how engagement in the comment sections contributes to users' understanding of English language aspects, particularly grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

The samples consist of selected videos from TikTok accounts dedicated to English learning, chosen based on their relevance to English language teaching and

the presence of visible user interactions, with a minimum of three interactions in the comment section. Nonetheless, choosing content based on significant user involvement may lead to sampling bias. This study focuses on text-based comments that display observable engagement types, such as cheer, change, comment, and conversational exchanges. As a result, the findings may primarily represent the perspectives of users who actively participate by posting comments, potentially excluding users who engage passively through viewing or liking without contributing textual responses. This limitation should be considered when generalizing the results to the wider TikTok user base.

1.5 Significance of Study

This research contributes both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it is based on the concept of informal language learning in digital contexts, especially on platforms such as TikTok. Its goal is to enhance our understanding of how language learning takes place through user interaction with educational content. By examining engagement types between users and content creator, this study aids in the ongoing development of theories concerning informal language acquisition and digital engagement in educational settings. It extends existing frameworks by investigating how various type of engagement influence users' comprehension. As a result, this theoretical exploration lays the groundwork for addressing practical implications. The study provides practical insights for content creators and educators seeking to enhance English learning content on social media. For content creators, they can develop to design more creative and engaging content that encourages users to actively participate and remain motivated to learn, even within an informal online platform. For educators, this study offers a guide on how to

utilize the comments section as interactive learning spaces, thereby increasing their confidence to participate in discussions, ask questions, and provide clarifications through direct engagement with learners.

1.6 State of the Arts

Recent studies on social networking sites (SNS) have highlighted their role as informal learning environments that support language learning through authentic input and social interaction. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok enable learners to engage with educational content voluntarily, encouraging motivation and independence in learning (Zainuddin & Yunus, 2022). In the context of English language learning, TikTok has been widely examined for its effectiveness in delivering short, engaging instructional videos related to vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. However, much of the existing research has focused on content delivery and users' perceptions, with limited attention given to engagement types within the comment sections.

Other studies have emphasized the importance of online engagement and social interaction in knowledge construction, drawing on Social Constructivist perspectives that view learning as a collaborative process mediated through dialogue (Jensen et al., 2023; Ma'mun et al., 2024). Despite this, few studies have systematically analyzed how different types of engagement in TikTok comment sections—such as Cheer, Change, Comment, and Conversation—contribute to users' understanding. Addressing this gap, the present study examines engagement types and knowledge construction process in TikTok English learning comments, positioning TikTok not only as a content-sharing platform but also as a site of informal social learning.