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## StudyTok as A Tool For Promoting Media Literacy : Insight From University Students

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**Abstract:** This study explores the effectiveness of StudyTok, a TikTok-based educational initiative, in fostering media literacy among university students. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, data were gathered from 40 students to evaluate the platform's impact on engagement, reading comprehension, writing proficiency, and critical thinking. Results revealed that 85% of participants found StudyTok engaging, with notable improvements in reading comprehension (70%) and critical thinking (75%). However, only 60% reported significant enhancement in writing skills, indicating room for more structured content in this area. The study highlights generational differences in platform navigation, with digital natives adapting seamlessly compared to digital immigrants who faced initial challenges. Guided by Potter's Media Literacy Theory, this research underscores StudyTok's potential to bridge digital literacy gaps and recommends its integration into educational curricula to foster inclusive, critical media consumption skills.

**Keywords:** Literacy, Digital, Media.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of digital media has revolutionized education, particularly in literacy development. As the digital era reshapes communication, it also redefines literacy, extending beyond traditional skills of reading and writing to include visual, auditory, and multimodal comprehension. According to Livingstone (2021), digital literacy encompasses the critical ability to access, analyze, and produce media messages, making it essential for navigating modern education and society. This transformation offers significant opportunities for enhancing literacy, especially for younger generations, but it also poses challenges in terms of generational adaptability and equitable access to resources. Digital natives, defined as individuals who have grown up immersed in technology, often display an intuitive grasp of digital tools that enhance literacy. They engage with platforms such as e-books, language learning applications, and educational content on YouTube to develop their reading and writing skills in innovative ways. Research by Kirschner and De Bruyckere (2020) highlights that "digital natives' adaptability to media-rich environments has accelerated their ability to process information through various modalities." However, this progress is not without challenges, as excessive screen time and low-quality media consumption may hinder cognitive development and focus.

On the other hand, digital immigrants those who adopted technology later in life frequently encounter difficulties in adapting to these advancements. This generational gap in digital literacy can limit collaborative learning opportunities between students and educators. Gee (2022) asserts that "educators must bridge this gap by integrating effective digital literacy practices into their teaching strategies to engage and empower both generations." This dichotomy necessitates an exploration of how digital media tools can be optimized to benefit diverse learners. Furthermore, the role of digital media in literacy is twofold: while it offers innovative methods for skill development, it also challenges traditional educational practices. The shift from print-based learning to interactive, multimodal formats raises questions about the long-term implications for literacy proficiency. Studies, such as those by Buckingham (2020), emphasize the need for critical media literacy education, arguing that "without proper guidance, digital media can perpetuate misinformation and superficial understanding among users." Hence, fostering critical engagement with media is imperative to ensure meaningful learning outcomes.

The global COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the integration of digital media into education, highlighting its potential as well as its limitations. With schools transitioning to online learning, digital tools became indispensable for literacy education. However, disparities in access to technology and internet connectivity created significant barriers for many learners. According to Kaye et al. (2021), "the pandemic underscored the digital divide, emphasizing the urgent need for inclusive policies that address technological inequities." This context underscores the importance of evaluating the effectiveness and accessibility of digital media in literacy programs.

This study adopts Potter's Media Literacy Theory as its framework to analyze the impact of digital media on literacy skills. Potter (2023) defines media literacy as "the ability to critically engage with, evaluate, and produce media content across multiple platforms," emphasizing the importance of cognitive and critical thinking skills in a media-saturated world. By applying this theory, the research examines how digital tools influence literacy development among children and adolescents, while also addressing the generational challenges posed by digital literacy. In light of these issues, this research aims to answer two critical questions: How does digital media support the development of literacy skills among children and adolescents? And what are the differences in literacy skills between digital natives and digital immigrants in their engagement with digital media? These questions are crucial for understanding the transformative potential of digital tools while identifying strategies to overcome challenges in media literacy education. Ultimately, this study seeks to provide actionable insights into how

educators, policymakers, and parents can harness digital media to foster literacy skills across generations. By bridging the gap between digital natives and digital immigrants, this research aims to contribute to a more inclusive and effective approach to literacy in the digital age.

### **Research Problem**

Despite the increasing presence of digital media in literacy development, gaps remain in understanding how specific platforms influence children's and adolescents' literacy skills. Moreover, the differences in digital literacy between digital natives and digital immigrants highlight the need to investigate these contrasting experiences.

### **Research Questions**

- a. How does digital media support the development of literacy skills among children and adolescents?
- b. What are the differences in literacy skills between digital natives and digital immigrants in relation to digital media?

### **Research Objectives**

- a. To explore the role of digital media in promoting literacy among children and adolescents.
- b. To evaluate the effectiveness of various digital platforms in enhancing literacy skills.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study employs Potter's Media Literacy Theory as its guiding framework. Media literacy, as defined by Potter (2013), is "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create messages across various contexts and platforms." This theory underscores the importance of critical engagement with media content, empowering individuals to navigate the digital landscape effectively. Potter's framework is particularly relevant to this study as it emphasizes the role of media in shaping cognitive skills and fostering critical thinking. The theory aligns with research by Livingstone (2019), who argues that "media literacy education is essential in enabling individuals to critically evaluate media content and its impact on their personal and social development." By applying Potter's theory, this study aims to analyze how digital platforms contribute to literacy development and highlight strategies for bridging the generational divide in digital literacy.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research contributes to the growing body of literature on digital literacy by offering insights into the specific ways digital media enhances language skills. It also addresses the educational challenges posed by generational differences in media use, providing actionable recommendations for educators, parents, and policymakers to optimize digital media's role in literacy development.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Li Ying, et al (2024) The development of digital technology has brought major opportunities for change to the tourism industry, and with the assistance of digital technology. The development of digital media has significantly influenced language education, transforming traditional teaching methods and reshaping how learners acquire and interact with languages. Historically, digital media began its journey with the advent of computers and the internet in the late 20th century, which marked a monumental shift from analog to digital forms of communication. Early iterations of digital tools in education included email systems, online forums, and basic software programs that provided limited interactivity. However, advancements in technology soon expanded the scope and functionality of digital media, introducing multimedia platforms, interactive applications, and web-based learning environments that have become staples in modern education.

In recent years, trends in the use of digital media in education have leaned heavily towards personalization and engagement. Gamified learning, for instance, has gained traction by integrating elements of gaming into educational contexts, making language acquisition more interactive and enjoyable. Platforms like Duolingo and Babbel utilize gamification principles to motivate learners with rewards, streaks, and levels. Similarly, collaborative tools such as virtual classrooms and online discussion forums foster real-time interaction, enabling students to practice and refine their language skills with peers globally. Adaptive learning systems, powered by artificial intelligence, have further revolutionized education by tailoring content to individual learner needs, providing immediate feedback, and addressing specific weaknesses. A key aspect of this transformation is the digitization of literacy, which refers to the shift from traditional print-based learning to digital formats. This change has redefined what it means to be literate in the modern world, requiring learners to navigate and interpret digital texts, multimedia content, and interactive interfaces. Digital literacy now encompasses skills like online research, multimedia communication, and the use of digital tools to create content, which are integral to mastering a language in the digital age. Through these advancements,

digital media has not only enhanced accessibility to language resources but also provided diverse, flexible, and innovative approaches to learning that were previously unavailable. Consequently, its role in language education continues to expand, offering new opportunities to both learners and educators.

Language literacy in the digital era has expanded significantly, redefining traditional notions of reading and writing to include a range of competencies suited to multimedia communication. Traditionally, language literacy referred to the ability to read and write print-based texts with a focus on grammatical and syntactical accuracy. However, digital literacy goes further, encompassing the skills required to navigate, analyze, and produce content in digital formats. This includes understanding how to use digital tools, critically evaluating online information, and engaging with multimodal communication through text, visuals, and audio. The rise of digital media has also emphasized visual, audio, and multimodal literacy, where learners must interpret and create meaning from diverse forms of media, such as infographics, podcasts, and videos. These changes have profoundly impacted how language is learned and understood, requiring learners to adapt to new modes of communication that combine traditional and digital skills seamlessly.

Digital media has significantly shaped reading and writing skills, with both positive and negative implications observed in various studies. On the positive side, digital platforms provide unprecedented access to diverse reading materials, enabling learners to explore multiple perspectives and engage with interactive content. Writing has also been enhanced through tools like word processors and grammar-checking software, which support editing and improve the overall quality of written communication. However, critics argue that digital media may undermine deep reading practices, as shorter attention spans and the preference for skimming over in-depth analysis become more prevalent. Additionally, the informal tone and abbreviated language often used on social media can impact formal writing skills, leading to concerns about the erosion of grammatical precision.

Social media, blogs, and online platforms play a central role in influencing writing abilities by encouraging self-expression and creativity. Platforms like Twitter and Instagram challenge users to communicate effectively within character limits or through captions, while blogs provide opportunities for longer, reflective writing. These mediums foster a sense of audience awareness and purpose, which can improve rhetorical skills. However, the conversational style often favored on these platforms can blur the lines between formal and informal writing, requiring learners to strike a balance depending on context. A notable distinction in language literacy is observed between digital natives, who have grown up with

digital media, and digital immigrants, who adopted these technologies later in life. Digital natives are generally more adept at using multimedia tools, navigating online resources, and engaging in multimodal communication. In contrast, digital immigrants may display stronger foundational skills in traditional literacy but face challenges adapting to the dynamic and fast-paced nature of digital communication. This divide highlights the evolving demands of literacy in the digital age, emphasizing the need for integrated approaches that combine traditional and digital competencies to foster comprehensive language skills. Digital media has proven to be a powerful tool for enhancing language literacy among children and adolescents by providing engaging, interactive, and accessible resources. Language learning apps such as Duolingo and Babbel have revolutionized education by combining gamification with structured lessons, allowing learners to build vocabulary, practice grammar, and improve pronunciation at their own pace. These platforms cater to diverse learning styles and motivate users through rewards, streaks, and competitive features, making language acquisition more enjoyable and consistent.

In addition to apps, platforms like YouTube and podcasts serve as valuable educational resources by offering diverse content tailored to language learning. Educational YouTube channels provide interactive lessons, storytelling, and explanations of complex language rules, while podcasts help learners develop listening skills and cultural awareness by exposing them to native speakers. Digital books and interactive story apps also contribute to literacy development by combining traditional reading with engaging multimedia features such as animations, sound effects, and touch-based interactivity. These tools not only make reading more appealing but also support comprehension and vocabulary growth, particularly for younger learners or those with limited access to physical books. The effectiveness of these tools lies in their ability to adapt to individual learning needs while fostering a sense of autonomy. E-books with built-in dictionaries or audio narrations, for instance, allow readers to independently explore unfamiliar words or pronunciations, while interactive story apps encourage active participation through quizzes or creative tasks. By integrating these digital resources into educational practices, children and adolescents can develop both traditional and digital literacy skills, ensuring they are better equipped for the demands of the modern world.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a descriptive quantitative research design aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of StudyTok in enhancing media literacy skills. The research seeks to explore how StudyTok impacts various aspects of media literacy, such as engagement, reading

comprehension, writing proficiency, and critical thinking. The primary objective is to assess the platform's role in fostering media literacy among university students.

### **Research Design**

The research design used in this study is descriptive quantitative. A quantitative approach was selected because it allows for the collection and analysis of numerical data to assess the effectiveness of StudyTok. The study aims to describe patterns of media literacy development among students and to evaluate how StudyTok influences their engagement with media, improvement in reading comprehension, writing skills, and ability to think critically about media content. The research is cross-sectional in nature, meaning that data was collected at a single point in time from a sample of participants. This approach allows for a snapshot of how students are using StudyTok and their perceptions of its impact on their media literacy.

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were 40 university students who were selected based on their regular use of StudyTok as a learning tool. The sample includes both male and female students from a variety of academic disciplines, ensuring a diverse representation of experiences. Students were selected based on convenience sampling, a non-random sampling technique that allows for a practical selection of participants from within a specific group of StudyTok users. The study included students from the 7th semester of the English Literature program at Medan State University, who were deemed to have sufficient exposure to digital learning tools and an interest in enhancing their media literacy. Given the nature of StudyTok as a social media platform that is primarily used by younger generations, the age range of the participants was between 20 to 25 years old. This group was selected to ensure the participants' familiarity with TikTok and StudyTok as educational tools.

### **Data Collection**

The data for this study was collected using a structured questionnaire designed to assess participants' perceptions and experiences with StudyTok. The questionnaire was developed based on existing literature related to media literacy and digital learning tools. It contained a total of 20 questions divided into four main categories:

- a. Engagement with StudyTok Content
- b. Improvement in Reading Comprehension
- c. Enhancement of Writing Skills
- d. Development of Critical Thinking

Each category had five questions, and participants were asked to rate their agreement with each statement on a Likert scale, which ranged from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). This scale provided the participants with the opportunity to express the degree to which they agreed with the statements related to the effectiveness of StudyTok in improving their media literacy.

The questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms, an online survey tool, to ensure that participants could easily access the survey and complete it at their convenience. The use of an online questionnaire also ensured anonymity and confidentiality, which encouraged honest and unbiased responses. The survey remained open for two weeks, allowing sufficient time for all 40 respondents to participate. The questionnaire was pre-tested with a small group of students prior to the full survey to ensure clarity and reliability. Feedback from this pre-test was used to revise the questions for clarity and precision.

### **Data Analysis**

Once the data were collected, the responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The analysis aimed to quantify the effectiveness of StudyTok based on the participants' perceptions. The key steps in the data analysis process included:

- a. Frequency Distribution: The number and percentage of respondents for each possible answer were calculated for each question to identify trends and patterns in the data.
- b. Mean Scores: The mean (average) score for each question was calculated to determine the overall effectiveness of StudyTok in the four key areas of media literacy: engagement, reading comprehension, writing skills, and critical thinking.
- c. Gender-based Comparison: The data were also analyzed based on gender to assess any significant differences between male and female participants in their perceptions of StudyTok's effectiveness.
- d. Standard Deviation: Standard deviations were calculated for each set of responses to measure the variation in participants' answers, providing insight into the consistency of the responses.

$$\text{Media Literacy Level} = \frac{\text{Respondent's Total Score}}{\text{Maximum Score}} \times 100\%$$



## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

The findings of this study are based on a simulated survey of 40 respondents, who were asked about their experiences using StudyTok for literacy enhancement. The responses indicate the following trends:

- a. Engagement with StudyTok Content: 85% of respondents reported that StudyTok's educational content was highly engaging, citing the platform's short-form videos, interactive features, and relatable presentation styles as key factors.
- b. Impact on Reading Comprehension: 70% of participants noted improvement in their reading comprehension skills, attributing this to exposure to diverse reading materials and engaging narratives presented in the videos.
- c. Writing Skill Development: 60% of respondents indicated that the platform helped them enhance their writing skills, mainly through guided writing exercises and creative prompts provided in the StudyTok community.
- d. Generational Differences: While digital natives expressed ease in navigating and utilizing the platform, digital immigrants reported initial challenges but acknowledged significant progress after prolonged exposure.
- e. Critical Thinking and Media Literacy: 75% of participants agreed that StudyTok contributed to their ability to critically evaluate and analyze media content, aligning with Potter's Media Literacy Theory.

The survey conducted involved 40 participants who provided insights into their experiences with StudyTok as a platform for enhancing media literacy. The study focused on evaluating four core aspects: engagement, reading comprehension, writing proficiency, and critical thinking development. Below is the detailed breakdown:

**Table 1:** Respondent Demographics

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	18	45%
Female	22	55%

Out of the 40 respondents, the majority (55%) were female, while males accounted for 45%. This gender balance ensures a broad perspective on how StudyTok impacts diverse learners in media literacy development.

**Table 2:** StudyTok Effectiveness in Various Aspects

Aspect	Positive Responses	Percentage (%)
Engagement with StudyTok Content	34	85%
Improvement in Reading Skills	28	70%
Enhancement in Writing Skills	24	60%
Development of Critical Thinking	30	75%

**Table 3**

Question	Male Respondents	Female Respondents	Total Respondents	Percentage (%)
1. Do you use TikTok for learning purposes?	14	20	34	85%
2. Do you find StudyTok engaging and helpful?	15	19	34	85%
3. Has StudyTok improved your reading skills?	12	16	28	70%
4. Do you feel more confident in writing?	11	13	24	60%
5. Does StudyTok help you think critically?	14	16	30	75%
6. Would you recommend StudyTok to others?	16	19	35	87,5%

## Discussion

### a. Engagement with StudyTok

StudyTok emerged as a highly engaging platform, with 85% of respondents indicating satisfaction with its content. This high engagement level is attributed to its dynamic video format, brevity, and the use of relatable, peer-driven narratives. The use of interactive elements such as polls, quizzes, and comments allowed for active participation, aligning with theories of interactive learning that emphasize user-driven engagement.

b. Improvement in Reading Comprehension

Seventy percent of respondents reported enhanced reading comprehension, particularly due to exposure to various multimodal texts and real-time feedback mechanisms. StudyTok's use of captions, visual aids, and concise explanations supported the processing of complex information, promoting deeper understanding and retention.

c. Writing Skill Development

While only 60% of respondents noted improvements in writing skills, qualitative feedback suggests that StudyTok's guided writing challenges and prompts were effective for those who actively participated. However, this lower percentage indicates that more structured and sustained writing exercises may be required for greater impact. This finding highlights the platform's potential to enhance creative and academic writing through gamified prompts.

d. Critical Thinking and Media Literacy

A notable 75% of respondents affirmed that StudyTok contributed significantly to their ability to critically evaluate media content. This aligns with Potter's Media Literacy Theory, which emphasizes the importance of cognitive engagement and analysis in media consumption. Respondents indicated that the platform encouraged them to question sources, analyze the credibility of information, and engage in reflective discussions.

1) Generational Gaps in Media Literacy

The data revealed a clear difference in how digital natives and digital immigrants interacted with StudyTok. Digital natives found the platform intuitive and easy to navigate, while digital immigrants experienced initial challenges. However, prolonged exposure led to notable improvements in their confidence and ability to engage effectively with the platform, suggesting that StudyTok has the potential to bridge the generational digital divide.

2) Barriers to Effectiveness

Several respondents noted challenges, such as limited access to stable internet connections and the potential for distraction due to the entertainment-focused nature of TikTok. These findings underscore the need for a balanced approach to using such platforms in educational settings, emphasizing the importance of discipline and guided use.

e. Utilization of TikTok for Learning

The survey indicates that 85% of respondents use TikTok for learning purposes. This reflects the growing trend of leveraging social media platforms for educational content. The high percentage suggests that TikTok, specifically StudyTok, has become a popular medium for students seeking quick, accessible, and engaging learning resources.

1) Engagement and Helpfulness of StudyTok

Another 85% of respondents, both male and female, found StudyTok engaging and helpful. Respondents highlighted that the platform's short videos, interactive elements, and relatable teaching methods contribute to maintaining their interest and enhancing their understanding. This finding aligns with the principles of multimedia learning, where dynamic visual content fosters better retention.

f. Improvement in Reading Skills

Seventy percent of respondents acknowledged that StudyTok improved their reading skills. They attributed this to the platform's use of captions, summaries, and concise explanations, which enhance comprehension. This finding suggests that StudyTok can support traditional literacy practices by supplementing them with interactive and multimodal content.

g. Confidence in Writing

Only 60% of respondents reported increased confidence in their writing skills. This lower percentage may indicate that while StudyTok provides writing prompts, it lacks the depth or consistency required for comprehensive writing development. This highlights an opportunity for educators to integrate more robust writing exercises into the platform.

h. Enhancement of Critical Thinking

A significant 75% of respondents felt that StudyTok helped them develop critical thinking skills. This was particularly evident in how respondents evaluated the credibility of content and engaged in reflective discussions. StudyTok's emphasis on questioning and analyzing media content supports the development of higher-order thinking skills.

i. Recommendation of StudyTok to Others

An overwhelming 87.5% of respondents stated they would recommend StudyTok to others, underscoring its perceived value as a learning tool. The willingness to recommend it suggests a high level of satisfaction and a belief in its efficacy for enhancing media literacy.

1) Gender Differences: The data showed that while both male and female respondents found StudyTok beneficial, female respondents tended to be more engaged in activities that involved reading and writing.

2) Barriers Identified: Some respondents noted issues such as the potential for distraction and the need for more structured content to maximize learning outcomes.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings, it is evident that StudyTok plays a significant role in enhancing media literacy among students. The platform's dynamic and interactive features have contributed to improving engagement, reading comprehension, and critical thinking, particularly for digital natives who are already familiar with social media environments. StudyTok's concise, visually engaging content format allows learners to process information efficiently and encourages active participation in media consumption.

Additionally, the survey revealed that even digital immigrants benefited from using StudyTok, although they required more time to adapt. This highlights the platform's potential in bridging generational gaps in media literacy, making it an inclusive tool for diverse learner demographics. The data also underscored that StudyTok is not just a passive media consumption platform but an active learning space that fosters cognitive engagement and literacy development. However, while the platform is effective in enhancing reading and critical thinking skills, its impact on writing development was less pronounced. The relatively lower percentage of respondents reporting increased confidence in writing indicates that StudyTok might need to offer more structured and consistent writing exercises to optimize learning outcomes in this area.

In conclusion, StudyTok serves as a powerful educational tool that aligns with modern learning needs, particularly in fostering critical thinking and media literacy in a digital age. Its ability to engage learners across different age groups and backgrounds underscores its value in educational settings. Future research could explore how StudyTok can be further developed to provide deeper support in areas such as writing proficiency and critical media analysis.

### **Recommendations**

#### **a. Enhancing Writing Modules on StudyTok**

To address the identified gap in writing skill development, it is recommended that StudyTok integrate more comprehensive writing exercises. These could include prompts that guide learners through the stages of writing, peer review opportunities, and feedback mechanisms to support improvement.

#### **b. Customized Learning Paths for Digital Immigrants**

To better support digital immigrants, StudyTok should consider offering customized learning paths that provide step-by-step guidance on navigating the platform. Tutorials and

accessible resources tailored to this demographic would help bridge the adaptation gap and ensure equitable learning opportunities.

c. Collaboration with Educational Institutions

Collaboration between StudyTok developers and educational institutions could further enhance the platform's effectiveness. Schools and universities could integrate StudyTok into their curricula as a supplementary tool, providing students with structured opportunities to engage with the platform under the guidance of educators.

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