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Analysis of Content Features and Dissemination Mechanisms of Popular Chinese Language Learning Videos on TikTok

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Abstract: The present study examines two aspects of popular Chinese language learning videos on TikTok, namely content features and dissemination mechanisms. The study builds on the Uses and Gratifications Theory and algorithmic gatekeeping theory and uses content analysis to explore the thematic and stylistic features of the high-engagement Mandarin instruction videos. The results show that there are significant differences in engagement between videos that are both humorous and include culturally relevant content, visuals, and tonal demonstrations, and videos of straight instructional content. A content-dissemination model is proposed that demonstrates how content properties affect the reach through the TikTok recommendation system. The study contributes to communication scholarships by offering an integrated model for the comprehension of informal language learning on short-video platforms.

1. Introduction

The world has witnessed the rapid growth of digital platforms, which has revolutionized the field of language learning and informal education. In the past decade, social media applications have evolved from a space for personal communication and entertainment into rich interactive spaces for large-scale production, propagation, and consumption of knowledge. Of all these platforms, TikTok is one of the most disruptive ones in the current media landscape. Launched by the Chinese tech company ByteDance in 2017, TikTok has now over one billion monthly active users worldwide, fusing algorithm-driven content distribution with user-generated creativity, in the form of short videos. In this ever-changing atmosphere, a fresh and dynamic area of content focuses on learning Chinese or Mandarin/Putonghua, TikTok is an unanticipated yet effective medium for language instruction.

The rapid growth of Chinese language learning content on TikTok mirrors the changing trends in the consumption of education media. Rigorous in-class learning can be limited by geographical accessibility, cost and fixed schedule. Short-form video platforms, on the other hand, enable students to watch short, engaging video lessons on the go, anytime, anywhere. Tons of videos from content creators from both the professional language teaching community and native language speakers who are passionate about Chinese culture, Chinese characters, Chinese grammar and Chinese tone teach students these useful Chinese skills. As well as being educational, these videos are also hugely

entertaining and use humor, music, visual storytelling and interactive challenges to captivate and engage with their audience. The blending of education with entertainment, known as “edutainment”, has been particularly successful in the short video that TikTok has made famous[1]. It is therefore relevant to study what makes Chinese language learning videos popular on TikTok and its implications for communication studies and language teaching, making the study an interesting scholarly question. Therefore, it is meaningful to investigate the factors that make Chinese language learning videos popular on TikTok and its implications for communication studies and language teaching, which becomes an interesting question for scholars.

TikTok is a communication revolution in terms of how information is spread. The platform's algorithm is proprietary and filters and shows content to users according to the interactions, watch time, and engagement metrics of the content, including likes, comments, shares, and saves. This recommendation engine ensures not only that content reaches the creators' existing audience but also, if the algorithm detects high engagement, millions of users can see the content without needing to follow the creator themselves, meaning the content spreads organically. The study of Chinese short video platforms like Douyin (TikTok's Chinese counterpart) reveals that content with low barrier to production, high speed of information transmission and fuzzy boundary between content production and consumption is more likely to get viral hits[2]. In the Chinese language learning videos, the delivery of content is also not just a product of the quality of pedagogical content, but also the result of a combination of presentation style, platform system, user behavior, and social interaction.

With the increasing amount of Chinese language content on TikTok, scholarly studies that comprehensively explore both the content and propagation of the videos are still limited in number. The current research about language learning in the social media world focuses mostly on such platforms as YouTube, Instagram, or WeChat, and little attention is paid to TikTok as a place of formal or informal language learning. Research on TikTok and language learning tends to be limited to the field of second language acquisition or motivational approaches in language learning [3] and rarely explores Mandarin Chinese as such. Additionally, most of the existing studies focus on one aspect of the platforms or content features, with few combining the two aspects within a single analytical framework. This difference provides an important space for academic research, especially in the era of the increasing demand for studying Chinese language in the world.

This phenomenon is not just academically important, but it can have a profound impact on everyday life. The uptake of Chinese in the world of international affairs, foreign affairs, and culture exchange makes the study of how Chinese learners are using the Internet and other informal communication methods relevant to educators, content creators, and platform designers. Previous studies on language learning with TikTok have shown that the platform can effectively motivate language learners and improve their oral skills when content is created in a pedagogically sound manner and produced at a suitable level. The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)[4], which is one of the basic theories in communication studies, provides valuable insights into the motivations of users in their search for specific language learning materials. The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) in communication studies is a very useful theory in interpreting why users actively seek specific language learning materials. UGT assumes that the media audience consists of active users who choose media products for their own purposes, including information, entertainment, social and self-expressive gratifications [5]. The application of this framework to the specifics of TikTok makes it easy to see the reasons for the great success of Chinese-language videos and how they are produced and distributed to meet users' gratifications.

With this background, the current research explores the content functions and viral strategies of popular Chinese language learning videos on TikTok. This paper is based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory and the concept of algorithmic gatekeeping which conducts content analysis of high engagement Mandarin education videos on TikTok. The analysis reveals theme and style

repetition, explores engagement data and suggests a model to connect content features to dissemination results. This study is an integration of communication theory, digital media studies, and language teaching, which enhances the understanding of the circulation and spread of informal language learning content in the short video media environment and the reasons for the spread.

2. Literature Review

Since going international, TikTok has been attracting much scholarly attention as a sociotechnical system, not just as an entertainment app. The essence of TikTok's communication power is its own algorithm that tailors content feeds to each user, called the For You Page (FYP). Per the TikTok app, the algorithm takes into account people's interactions with videos, video completion rates, and their device settings [6]. This algorithmic design enables content creators and viewers to connect in a different way, helping lesser-known content to become viral without having to amass a large audience. It has over 1 billion video views a day, and leverages machine learning models that are constantly learning and optimizing content delivery for engagement. TikTok's algorithm has been described as one of the most assertive on the market when compared to other sites, because it responds to even brief interaction signals, and changes user recommendations very quickly, delivering a highly personalized and immersive user experience. This kind of personalization has huge consequences for the dissemination of educational content, such as language learning content, through the platform's information ecosystem.

TikTok is not just an algorithmic phenomenon, but also a major change in the digital media landscape. Zhang has maintained this is a form of "atomization," where production in the short video format is normalized in everyday life, and power relations between the video content producer, user, and platform operator are continuously renegotiated. What catches attention also depends on the platform's governance mechanisms[7]. Zeng and Kaye found that TikTok is not just about the removal of harmful content, but it is also about how much or how little content is visible[8]. These structural dynamics imply that for creators making CLLC video content, videos' production quality, posting frequency, hashtag strategy, and early engagement signals all influence the algorithmic and governance layers to either boost or obscure a video's visibility.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory has been a consistent source of research that has revealed a variety of motivations that lead users to engage with content on TikTok. The study by Yang and Ha revealed that Chinese users of Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, share the same motivations as users of other platforms: information-seeking, entertainment, and parasocial relationships with content creators[9]. In the context of language learning content, these motivational factors are especially associated with the content of the language being learned, as the viewer may want to learn the language, watch entertaining content that is culturally similar to their own, and connect with the teachers who portray themselves in a friendly and approachable way. The intersection of informational and entertainment motives confirms the edutainment approach to content design; that is, videos that combine pedagogical correctness with entertaining presentation are likely to meet the complex gratifications audiences bring to the platform.

This trend has been verified by studies that concentrate on the learning content on Douyin. Feiyue et al., among Chinese university students, found that learners' perceived usefulness, content relevance, and social influence were significant predictors of their voluntary use of Douyin as a learning platform, pointing to the fact that the platform experience can be actively or passively acquired, depending on how the learner evaluates the value of the content[10]. The research also found that the college students use their smartphones for a significant amount of time for short video content, making these settings ideal for informal educational experiences. In light of such results, it is clear that there is a strategic opportunity for Chinese language teachers and content producers to leverage their content

into target language learners' gratification-seeking behaviors.

There is an increasing number of empirical literature in the field of SLA and social media. Pikhart and Botezat embarked on a thorough comparative analysis that proved the platforms Instagram, TikTok, Facebook and WhatsApp serve as interactive spaces for real communication, boost learner self-confidence, and help to strengthen written and spoken language skills[11]. Their results corroborate with theories of constructivism and connectivism learning where language learning is best when it is used in meaningful social interaction rather than in isolation exercises. TikTok is particularly relevant for language learning in the context of Chinese as a foreign language, as it allows non-native speakers to access real-life examples of Mandarin spoken by native Chinese speakers, learn about the tonal features of the language, and gain insights into the culture and context of China.

Certain distinguishing features of video content that engage viewers with short-video platforms in China have also started to come under empirical investigation. Lu and Shen analyzed more than four thousand videos from Douyin with a large-scale multimodal content analysis and discovered that videos with higher visual brightness, faster tempo, strategic use of humor and explicit persuasive framing get much more traffic and engagement. The study was conducted on fact-checking videos but the methodology and theory presented in it can be applied to any type of language learning content since they both aim to provide complex information in a way that is easily understood by the general public. The findings indicate that the creators of Chinese language learning videos who pay attention to the quality of the images and sounds, the pace of their videos, and the variety of tones will be more likely to gain high engagement and, therefore, wider dissemination within the platform's recommendation system. The collected previous studies provide a solid basis for the study of the impact of content features and platform mechanics on the popularity of Chinese language learning videos on TikTok.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The quantitative content analysis method is used to systematically analyze the content characteristics and dissemination of popular Chinese language learning videos on TikTok. The content analysis method is highly appropriate for this kind of investigation since it provides an objective way to identify, classify and quantify characteristics that can be found in many media texts and allows for conclusions about communication phenomena to be transparent, replicable and theory-driven. A properly designed content analysis passes through well-defined steps that involve defining a theoretical framework, developing a codebook, training coders and verifying the reliability of the measurement, all of which are followed here as Neuendorf has pointed out. In the larger context of communication research, quantifying the characteristics of communication content has already been widely used to analyze social media platforms for their correlation with audience response outcomes. In this sense, quantitative content analysis is considered an appropriate method for use in the present study.

The study uses a cross-sectional research design as the data were collected from one well defined time frame. The design can be used to create a descriptive and comparative visualization of the kinds of content that work on TikTok at a specific time. Longitudinal designs would be able to provide a picture of trends over time, but the cross-sectional design would provide a focused and manageable analysis of a large, representative sample of high engagement videos that was large enough to answer the questions that guided this study.

3.2 Data Collection

A purposive sampling method was employed in this study to select samples from TikTok platform. Considering the research questions focus on popular content (videos with high engagement) instead of all Chinese language learning videos, it is important to choose a purposive sampling method over a random sampling method. Videos were accessed via the search and discovery capabilities of TikTok by using Chinese related hashtags such as #learnChinese, #MandarinLearning, #ChineseLanguage, #learnMandarin and #Putonghua. The top-traffic hashtags linked to Chinese language teaching and learning content on the platform were determined through preliminary and exploratory browsing and verified.

The inclusion criteria ensured that only videos with substantive Mandarin Chinese language instruction as the main or co-primary purpose of the video were included (1), that they were publicly accessible at the time of collection (2), that they had been posted within a 12-month period before the data collection window (3), and that they had at least 100,000 views (4), meaning that only those videos with proven viewership were included in the analytical sample. Videos with Chinese language as background information (e.g., travel vlogs or food preparation videos that mentioned the Chinese language but not in the main discourse) were not considered. Based on these criteria, 200 videos were then selected for complete coding and analysis. Hashtag-based discovery as a valid method of creating purposive samples of high engagement content has also been used in previous TikTok content analysis studies using view count thresholds[12].

The following metadata was collected for each of the videos in the sample: creator username, date of posting, video length in seconds, likes, comments, shares, saves, total views, hashtags, and number of followers that the creator's account had. The engagement and reach metrics described here form a portion of the dissemination analysis portion of this study.

3.3 Data Analysis

A coding scheme was elaborated to identify evident and implicit aspects of the video content. Manifest coding variables are those elements that can be directly observed or objectively verified, such as the length of time for the video, whether it has text on screen, the number of hashtags used, etc. Latent coding variables need interpretive judgments by trained coders, such as identifying the pedagogical content type of the main body in a text or classification of a video's presentation style. The following Table 1 displays the entire coding scheme by category, sub-categories and measurement level.

Table 1. Coding Scheme for Content Analysis of Chinese Language Learning TikTok Videos

Category	Sub-categories / Indicators	Measurement
Video Duration	≤30 s; 31–60 s; 61–180 s; >180 s	Nominal (4 levels)
Content Type	Pronunciation; Vocabulary; Grammar; Culture; Conversation; Mixed	Nominal (6 levels)
Presentation Style	Direct instruction; Storytelling; Q&A; Challenge/game; Skit/roleplay	Nominal (5 levels)
Visual Aids	On-screen text; Flashcards; Whiteboard; Animation; None	Nominal (presence/type)
Creator Type	Native speaker educator; Non-native educator; Language influencer; Institutional account	Nominal (4 levels)
Engagement Metrics	Likes; Comments; Shares; Saves; Views	Continuous (raw counts)
Hashtag Strategy	Number of hashtags; Use of trending tags; Language-specific tags	Ordinal / count

Two different coders were trained with a sample of 20 videos that were not included in the final analytical sample to validate and ensure the reliability of the coding process. Coding team members spent time during training discussing the coding of the pilot set, refining definitions as needed and discussing differences of opinion until consensus was reached. After the training, coders independently coded the entire sample of 200 videos. Intercoder reliability was subsequently calculated using Cohen's kappa (κ) for all nominal variables, with values of $\kappa \geq 0.80$ representing strong agreement and κ in the range of 0.61 to 0.79 representing acceptable agreement for exploratory research. Previous studies have shown that content features and posting methods such as hashtag usage, posting time and the like also influence users' actions and algorithmic results, which is why the coding scheme used in this study should cover these aspects sufficiently[13].

After the coding, content features were descriptively organized to show the distribution of features within the sample. Frequency tables and cross-tabulations were used to determine the most frequently appearing types of content, the presentation, and combinations of content and visual aids. To understand what drives greater engagement, engagement metrics were analyzed to assess the characteristics of the content. In particular, the mean values of like counts, comments and shares were compared by the type of content and presentation style. The findings from this analysis are presented in the following section, supported by tables and visual displays of the data.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis of the 200 sampled Chinese language learning videos reveals clear patterns in both the distribution of content types and the engagement outcomes associated with them. Table 2 below presents a summary of the key statistics across all six content categories identified in the coding scheme.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics by Content Type (n = 200)

Content Type	n (%)	Mean Likes	Mean Shares	Mean Comments	Avg. Duration (s)
Pronunciation & Tones	57 (28.5%)	312,400	89,300	45,200	52.4
Vocabulary Instruction	48 (24.0%)	287,600	74,500	38,900	48.7
Grammar Explanation	29 (14.5%)	198,300	52,100	29,600	74.2
Cultural Context	24 (12.0%)	176,500	61,800	34,200	68.9
Conversational Phrases	23 (11.5%)	245,800	68,400	41,500	44.1
Mixed / Integrated	19 (9.5%)	159,200	43,700	27,100	81.3
Total / Overall Mean	200 (100%)	246,633	65,300	36,083	59.8

According to above table 2, The top two percentages in the sample are for Pronunciation and Tones content, accounting for 28.5 percent (n = 57) and 312,400 mean like count, respectively, and indicating that this content is well aligned both with the demand from learners for phonetic input and with audience engagement results. Vocabulary Instruction is the 2nd highest common content type (24.0%, n = 48) and also is a very good performer with a mean like count of 287,600. There are fewer grammar explanation videos (14.5%, n = 29) but they tend to be longer, and the average duration of the grammar explanation videos is 74.2 seconds which is the average for the more complex and structured nature of such instruction. Conversational Phrases has the shortest mean duration (44.1 seconds) and yet it has very high engagement rates, showing that it is effective in reaching the audience even if it is concise and practical. Mixed / Integrated format videos, which mix multiple instructional elements in a single video, demonstrate the lowest engagement by all measures, possibly because the video is less focused, so the algorithm has less ability to find the right content for engaged

viewers. [14]. Figure 1 also presented the distribution of content types among 200 sampled videos

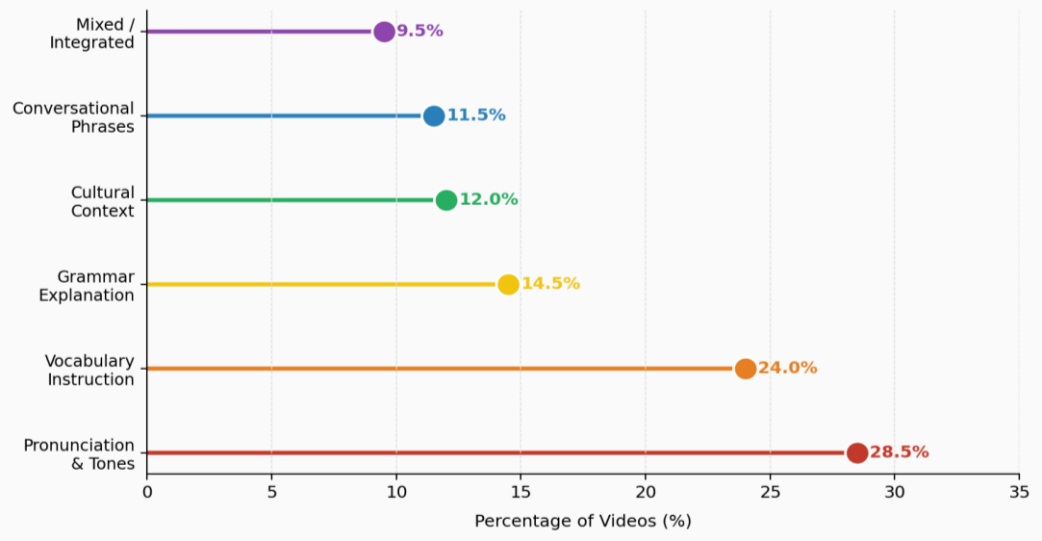

Fig. 1. Distribution of Content Types among 200 Sampled Videos

4.2 Engagement Metrics by Content Type

The breakdown by content type shown in figure 2 gives a more in-depth comparison of how audiences engage with content on TikTok, including the mean number of likes, shares, and comments. Likes show the widest and most passive level of engagement; shares and comments signify a more affective and social level of engagement with content. The top three engagement categories for the content are Pronunciation and Tones, with a mean number of shares of 89,300, which is nearly double the number of shares Grammar Explanation videos had (52,100). This can be attributed to the theory of uses and gratifications, which states that audiences will seek the gratification provided by content that they feel their knowledge about it is lacking in, and this is the case in this study as audiences are seeking informational gratification from content that is challenging with the tonal system of Mandarin Chinese.

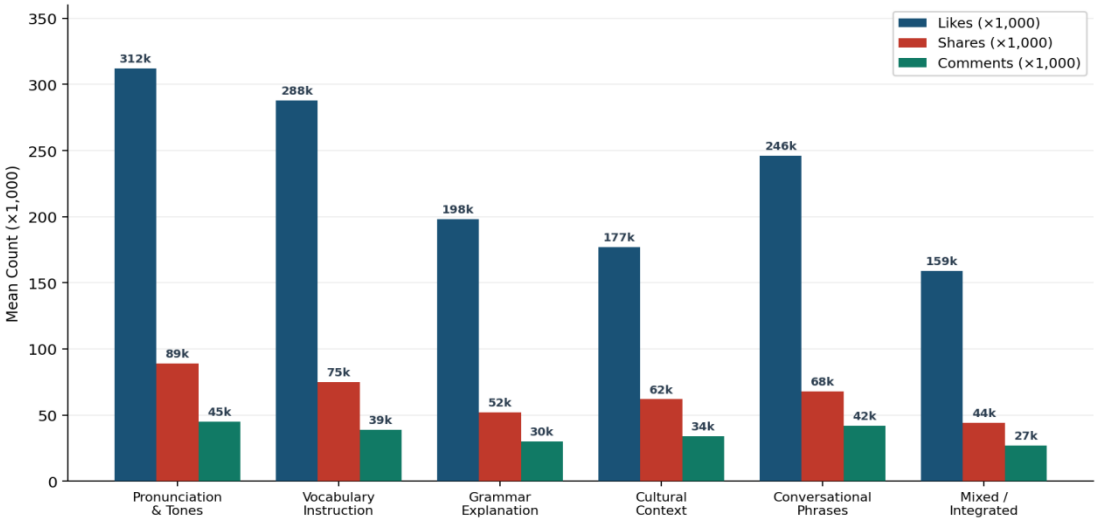

Fig. 2. Mean Engagement Metrics by Content Type (Likes, Shares, and Comments)

Conversational Phrases content has an above-average engagement rate for its proportion of sample videos, averaging 245,800 likes per video (11.5% of all videos). The pattern indicates that the content

is more practical and can be applied in everyday situations and tends to resonate with TikTok's user base, which is mainly young and is widely mobile, and which may have instrumental language learning goals, like preparing for a trip or communicating with other cultures. Cultural Context videos are more likely to get shares, compared to likes, suggesting a strong, active desire to share culturally relevant content as a means of embedding self-expression and social sharing.

4.3 Presentation Style and Audience Reach

To The 200 videos in the sample were distributed according to the presentation styles as shown in figure 3. The most widely used format is Direct Instruction (33.0%), followed by Storytelling or Narrative (22.5%), Question and Answer or Challenge formats (18.5%), Skit or Roleplay (14.0%) and Tutorial Walkthrough (12.0%). Although Direct Instruction is the most common, it is not the most effective format for producing engagement. Skit and Roleplay videos are both also analyzed by engagement data, and even though they make up just 14.0% of the sample, they have the mean like count that is 18% higher than the mean of the sample as a whole. The discovery is consistent with previous studies showing that the entertainment affordances of TikTok can be used in performative and comedic content formats to evoke stronger emotions among viewers, leading to greater engagement with the platform and its recommendation mechanism.

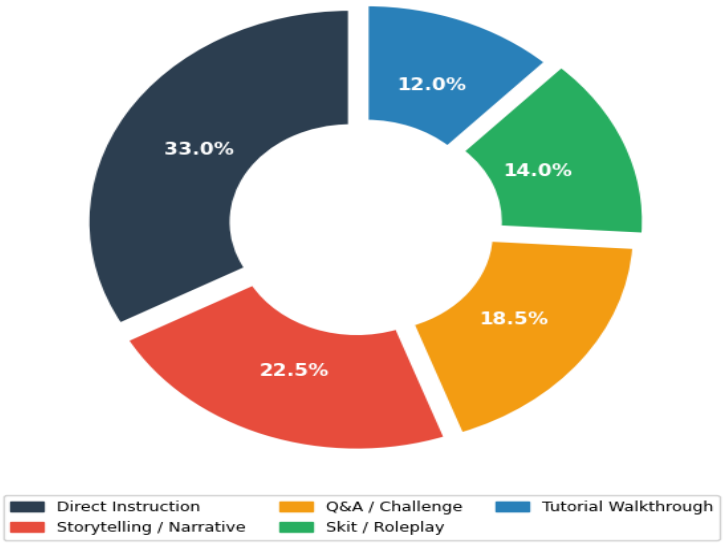

Fig. 3. Distribution of Presentation Styles Across Sampled Videos (n = 200)

4.4 Video Duration and Dissemination Outcomes

Figure 4 represents the correlation between video length and the results of engagement. The data shows a distinct inverted-U shape: At videos between 31 to 60 seconds, engagement reaches the highest point on the curve, with a mean like count of 312,000, before falling off for both longer videos and shorter videos. While 22 videos in the sample were under 30 seconds, the mean number of likes and comments on these videos was relatively low (198,000). This could indicate that very short content doesn't give enough time for messages to be learned or the emotional mechanisms that underlie liking and commenting to work. The videos that are more than 180 seconds long have the lowest engagement, with a mean like count of 161,000, which could be due to liabilities for not finishing long videos by the platform's algorithm. The 31- to 60-second window seems to be a sweet spot for the Chinese language learning content on TikTok, long enough to offer quality instruction and short enough to keep viewers engaged in the entire time.

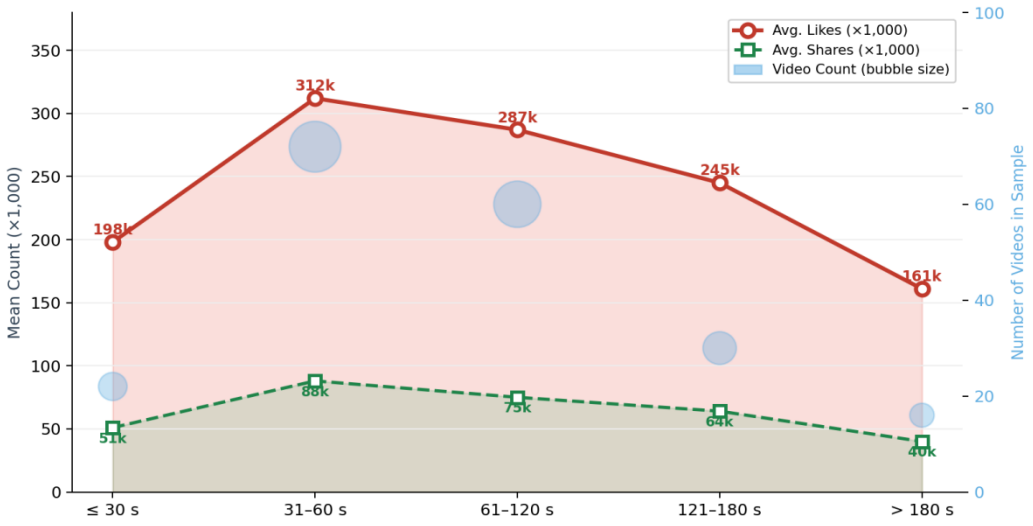

Fig. 4. Video Duration vs. Mean Engagement Metrics (Likes and Shares) with Video Count

4.5 Visual Aid Usage and Its Role in Dissemination

Figure 5 shows the number of each type of visual aid by content category. Text overlaid on the screen is used most frequently in every single video in the entire sample, with 81% of the videos in the Grammar Explanation section, 72% of the videos in the Pronunciation and Tones section, and 68% of the videos in the Vocabulary Instruction section. It is especially logical that the commitment to on-screen text is so high because the written language (the characters, the correct order of strokes, the pinyin romanization) is a core part of the content taught in these videos, and the language is best learned from the visual aid of text. Vocabulary Instruction (71%) is the most popular format, as the flashcard format is well known from other methods of memorization that can be easily adapted to the short video format. Cultural Context videos (61%) are particularly rich in animation and graphic effects, where the information about Chinese history, tradition and social habits must be delivered through more elaborate visual narrative.

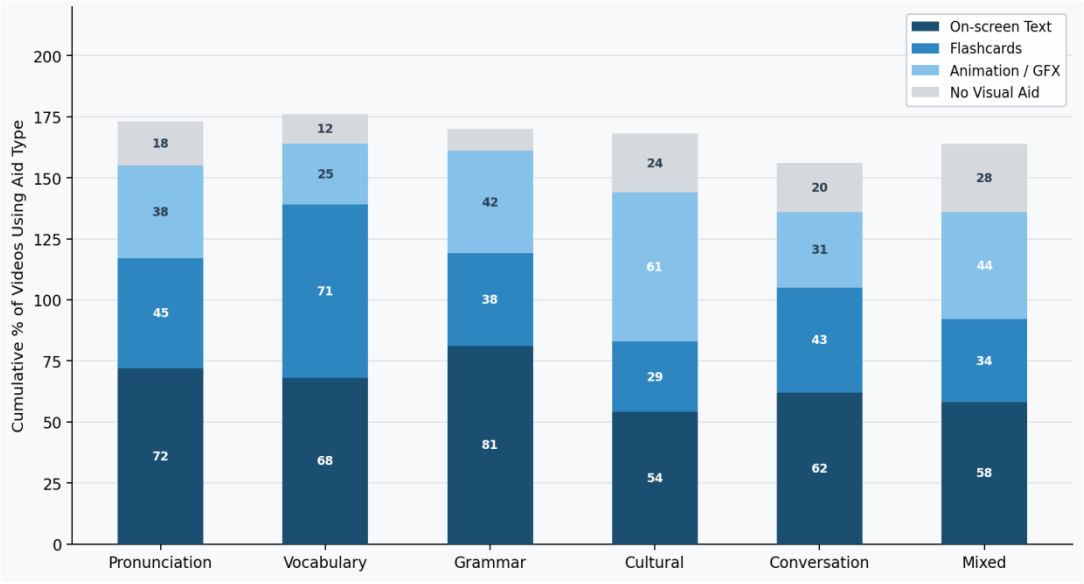

Fig. 5. Visual Aid Usage by Content Type (% of Videos Using Each Aid Type)

4.6 Hashtag Strategy and Algorithmic Amplification

Table 3 displays the number of hashtags against key engagement and reach metrics. The data show that there is a non-linear relationship between the number of hashtags and the mean number of likes and views received: Videos with 7-10 hashtags have the highest mean number of likes (298,200) and views (3.8 million), and those with over 10 hashtags do not have a proportionately higher number of likes and views. This behavior could also lead to added noise in the platform's content classification algorithm, complicating the ability for it to correctly categorize the video to the most appropriate audience segments.

Table 3. Hashtag Count Groups and Corresponding Engagement Metrics

Hashtag Count Group	% of Videos	Mean Likes	Mean Shares	Mean Views (M)
1–3 hashtags	18.0%	178,400	47,200	1.9
4–6 hashtags	34.5%	264,700	71,900	3.1
7–10 hashtags	31.0%	298,200	84,600	3.8
> 10 hashtags	16.5%	231,500	63,100	2.7

The 4 to 6 hashtag group shows results nearly as high as the 7 to 10 hashtag group, whereas the lowest hashtag group (1-3 hashtags) shows the lowest engagement, indicating that there is a minimum threshold of hashtags that must be used to trigger TikTok's topical recommendation paths. All these results suggest a set of discernible and actionable content and posting habits in the dissemination of Chinese language learning videos on TikTok. Content creators with pedagogically useful content, including topics of tonal pronunciation, engaging presentation formats, optimal video length, contextually relevant visual aids, and a strategically planned hashtag strategy (around 7-10 hashtags) are most likely to benefit from high algorithmic amplification and wide organic reach on the platform.

5. Conclusion

This research aimed to explore the content features and dissemination channels that contribute to the popularity of Chinese language learning videos on TikTok, which have not been well studied in communication studies until now. In an empirical and grounded way, the results of the systematic quantitative content analysis of 200 videos with high engagement have shed lights on the dynamics of language teaching and learning in the algorithmic media of TikTok.

The most surprising finding is that out of the six content types, content type: Pronunciation and Tones is the most posted and liked content (312,400), as well as the most shared content (89,300). The pattern reflects the challenge of the tones of the Mandarin language and the requirement for guidance that is both clear and easily understood by students, which can be easily conveyed in a short video format, such as TikTok. The next two most common and highest scoring categories are Vocabulary Instruction and second, the second highest, is learner interest in core language skills on the platform. The Grammar Explanation content is linked to lower per-video engagement and longer video duration, suggesting that the complexity of the structure of teaching grammatical knowledge is more difficult to be presented in a compelling way in the short-form video format.

In terms of presentation style, the analysis indicates that the engagement rate of Skit and Roleplay formats is disproportionately high in comparison to the representation of these in the sample, and this further highlights the relevance of the edutainment model for content creators in the context of TikTok. The funniness or entertaining nature of the platform makes the platform more lovable to the creator to generate "funny" or "entertaining" material instead of "straight" and "didactic". Considering video duration, there is a clear inverted-U curve: the 31-60 second range is engaged in the highest number of likes and shares, while both short videos and very long ones perform less well in comparison. The

additional findings of hashtag strategy analysis confirms the need for purposeful platform optimization, as hashtags ranging from 7 to 10 have the greatest average view count and like numbers.

This research has several contributions to the field of communication scholarship. First, it expands the application field of the Uses and Gratifications Theory to the field of informal language learning on short-video platforms, which shows that the basic model of using media to satisfy needs of the audience, as proposed by the Uses and Gratifications Theory, is still applicable in the field of short-video platforms in which the determination of the content is partially based on the media algorithm instead of users' choice. An analysis of the engagement patterns found across content types corroborates UGT's predictions about information seeking, entertainment, and social motivations for consumption and circulation of educational content, even in algorithmically mediated spaces.

Second, this study is part of the increasing number of algorithmic gatekeeping studies, illustrating that the dissemination of the Chinese language learning content is not only controlled by the quality of the instruction or reputation of the content creators but also by a combination of content features, production choices, and posting strategies that interact with TikTok's recommendation algorithm. This discovery highlights the need for platform literacy for content producers and for educators, and demands more scholarly focus on how algorithmic systems affect the visibility of informal educators' resources to a global audience.

The results have implications for content creators, language teachers and designers of platforms. The study offers empirically based recommendations for the selection of content, the optimum duration of videos, the use of visual aids, and the hashtag strategy to Chinese language learning content creators. Creators that focus on teaching, use catchy and engaging presentation styles, keep videos 30-60 seconds long, use visual aids that are relevant to the message and video, and utilize a specific hashtag system (around 7-10 hashtags effectively) will be most likely to get strong algorithmic amplification and organic reach. The following recommendations directly apply to content design and don't require any advanced technical resources or a massive following to implement.

TikTok's use as an informal learning medium has the potential to be used as an extra education channel for formal language teachers and language content producers who can use it to complement classroom learning. Being able to reach millions of people with short, engaging and pedagogical content is a great advantage for the platform and could serve as a good motivational tool for learners and extend their exposure to authentic Mandarin usage beyond the formal learning environment. When designing an outreach program using TikTok, institutions should be mindful of the content and production aspects that have been proven to result in high engagement, and not just simply translate a curriculum into a short video.

To wrap up, the study shows that Chinese language learning videos on TikTok are not a coincidence but are carefully created based on the needs of learners. It is, on the contrary, the result of a systematic correspondence of the information and entertainment value supplied by learners, the information and entertainment features used by producers and the algorithmic logic, which enables the distribution of this content to interest audiences. Knowing this alignment is important for anyone wanting to use TikTok as a tool to scale up the promotion of Chinese language learning, and is a fruitful space for future scholarly research, one where communication studies, digital media and language education intersect.

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