TikTok Teaches Too

A qualitative study on the role of playful communication in skill-sharing videos on Tiktok

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ABSTRACT

During the previous year, while the entire world was on lockdown, many individuals took it upon themselves to share their passions and skills online, learning from other skilled individuals and sharing what they are experts in. This phenomenon is known as skill-sharing, where individuals who are particularly good at something produce instructional and informational videos online to share in their skills. The platform most of these videos were being posted to was TikTok, a relatively new social media platform that has been gaining immense popularity over the globe, even competing with instagram. TikTok is well-known for having light-hearted and fun content that can be considered as playful.

Defining and measuring "playfulness" is not as simple as it may seem, while it does seem like an easy and straightforward concept to grasp, it entails many characteristics that form the attitude. Playfulness can be integrated every aspect of life, so for this research it was interesting to study the role playful communication has on the skill-sharing videos posted on the social media platform, TikTok, with the research question of

What is the role of playful communication in skill-sharing videos on Tiktok?

In order to answer the research question, this study was approached by a qualitative perspective, 100 TikToks were analyzed to gain insight on the role playful communication holds in skill-sharing TikToks. It was found that overall, TikTok is a playful platform, and any process taken through the application will contain playful elements due to the nature of the platform. Additionally, the results showed that during the display of skills many elements of playfulness

can be pointed out such as humor. Furthermore, playful communication played a major role in the teaching process of skill sharing. Finally, playful communication was an essential factor in fostering engagement between the TikTok creators and their skill-sharing students.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

TikTok is a relatively new video-based platform taking the world of social media by storm. It is currently known for being the fastest growing social networking platform, on a global scale, surpassing the record-breaking number of active users of mega platforms such as Instagram and Twitter ("How TikTok thrived during coronavirus and will it last?", 2021).

This trending application is a video production app that was launched in the year 2016 by the Chinese company, ByteDance. During 2018 the platform gained popularity and became the most downloaded application in the United States of America and has been steadily growing ever since ("How TikTok thrived during coronavirus and will it last?", 2021). The social media platform is dominated by user-generated content, meaning that videos posted are produced and created by the users of the platform (Krumm et al., 2008). The features of the app allow for users to publish 15-60 second videos of content that ranges from genres such as comedy, dance, fashion, and education (Anderson, 2020). Trends on the app include lip-syncing to an archive of the most popular songs, creating and recreating dances, and collaborating with other content creators and users by dueting and reacting to videos they have posted.

TikTok is generally known for having fun and light-hearted content, such as videos of singing, dancing, and other creative editing, additionally to that, it has become a recent trend that individuals and/or entities are using the playful nature of TikTok videos to promote educational or teaching content, for example, photography tips, painting ideas, and cooking tutorials (Anderson, 2020). This type of information exchange is usually referred to as skill-sharing, where individuals with a particular skill set create media content that aims at spreading their knowledge on the topic. Since the majority of the audience present on TikTok is aged between 13-30, the application holds a promising standing to be used as an educational tool (Smith, 2020). A recent example of how this is being carried out is the #LearnOnTikTok initiative, by TikTok, which aims to encourage educational content on the platform during the COVID-19 pandemic. This initiative partners up with over 800 educators, creators, and real-world professional experts to provide learning content in a creative and playful way to the TikTok

audience. Videos featured under this hashtag include exercise routines, health tips, cooking recipes, photography tutorials, and much more (Smith, 2020).

The learning initiative on TikTok is relevant to the scope of this study, as it shows an example of how serious information, such as health education, can be transmitted in a playful and light-hearted online environment. Playfulness is actually a concept that is a vital notion to be understood for this paper, because it holds the main perspective on the outlook of this study, as playful communication is the means of communication that will be used and studied to analyze skill-sharing throughout this research.

Sicart (2014) views playfulness as a defining human experience, that explains all that is pleasurable and spontaneous, and teaches humans, from childhood to adult life, how to opperate in society. Put in simple terms playful is an adjective that describes lightheartedness and amusement ("Definition of Playful", 2020) and as seen through this research, playfulness is and attitude that embodies elements of play (Sicart, 2014) ; and because of its nature, Tiktok is considered to be a playful platform.

The affordances of the platform fosters the development of such playful communication as it allows users to creatively express themselves in a manner that is not serious, some of these features include possibilities for creative editing, the use of filters and funny effects, the ability to duet and react to other videos, and the jokey nature of the content that is posted, to name a few. Among the most common type of videos created on the app are tutorial videos, or as referred to in this article, skill-sharing videos. Some of these videos are created in a playful manner and allow for non-serious exchange of information.

Playfulness and playful communication have many characteristics that have been proven to enrich learning experiences, therefore this research aims to take the perspective of playful learning and playful communication, in order to understand the notion of skill-sharing content on Tiktok.

1.1 Research Question

It is interesting to take this outlook and study how elements of play are included and utilized in TikTok tutorial videos and how individuals receive information through these means, in order to teach and share creative skills, leading to the main research question presented below.

The research question aims at understanding how playful communication takes part in skill-sharing videos on the social media platform, TikTok.

What is the role of playful communication in skill-sharing videos on Tiktok?

1.2 Academic Relevance

In academia, the concept of online education on creative skills has been researched, with focuses on skill-sharing platforms (Shankle, 2017), the online learning theory (Anderson, 2008), and an interest in learning skills through Youtube tutorials (Jenkins & Dillon, 2013), there have also been numerous studies on playful learning (Pavlidis, 2015), edutainment and playful education (Resnick, 2004), seriousness and playful learning (Rodriguez, 2006). Additionally, some studies closely related to the essence of this research were conducted on fostering student retention through playfulness and gamification (Hayes et al., 2020) and fostering motivation in distance education through a playful approach (Pilkington, 2018).

However, since Tiktok is a relatively new platform, little research has been done on the skill-sharing of creative practices, and none take into consideration the playful nature of the platform. That being said, there have been a few pieces of research concerning the topic of Tiktok specifically and educational practices. Hayes et al. (2020) conducted a study to examine how undergraduate students can use TikTok as an educational tool to learn about Chemistry by surveying viewers of a TikTok account, it was found that 4 out of 5 individuals learned something new from the video, and 86% of the sample showed an increasing interest in chemistry. Another study focused on how TikTok was being used to educate the public on health issues during the pandemic (Presicce et al., 2020). This study examined elements of TikToks posted under the hashtag #publichealth and analyzed the different topics being addressed by creators. This study takes a dive into education and learning on TikTok, however, differently from the mentioned study, this research looks at TikTok learning from an understanding of playful communication. This study contributes to the discussion around education on Tiktok as it considerers how individuals learn skills through TikTok.

Some studies have investigated playful communication through mobile services (Mäyrä, 2012), and playful learning (Whitton, 2018), providing the tools to be able to conceptualize what

playfulness entails, this is important to identify for this study in order to gain a better grasp on how best to measure and recognize playfulness for further analysis.

This study additionally considers Sicart's (2014) definition of playfulness, understanding the root of the concept and using it to build a theoretical base for the foundation of this report.

However, little to no research has been done on the use of the social media platform Tiktok as an educational tool with the combination of playful communication, which is why the primary motivation behind this study is to understand further how this type of communication can aid in the market of skill-sharing and online learning. Additionally, playful communication has yet to be explored linked to online skill-sharing.

Kangas (2010) explored how students learn in a novel playful environment through quantitative research with regards to playful communication and learning. Another relevant study worth mentioning was one that centered around a creative, playful, and collaborative approach to online learning, focusing on the aspects that make online learning successful through different styles and approaches of playfulness and collaboration (Presicce et al., 2020). Cassim (2020) also conducted a study witha foucuson playful communication and learning in playful enviormnents, while other studies foucuson playful learning through mobile devices (Heljakka & Ihamäki, 2019). While playfulness has previously been studied with a link to learning, there has not been any research done on this topic through a social media platform, especially since Tiktok is a new platform and has not yet been deeply explored academically.

1.3 Social Relevance

TikTok is a video production app that was launched in the year 2016 by the Chinese company, ByteDance. In 2018 the platform gained popularity and became the most downloaded application in the USA. The application allows users to upload 15-60 second videos that they can share with the world("How TikTok thrived during coronavirus and will it last?", 2021). The platform generated 315 million downloads in the first yearly quarter of 2020 alone, making TikTok the fastest downloaded social networking platform ever("How TikTok thrived during coronavirus and will it last?", 2021). With over 1 billion active users, it is clear that this platform is an essential object of study as it reaches a vast number of the population, and results obtained from this study would be helpful in understanding how humans learn in different settings and through various means of communication.

Additionally to the entertaining content, individuals have been using the platform to learn all sorts of new skills, from languages, playing instruments, learning about business practices to photography, art, and improving their cooking skills. The engaging format of Tiktok videos allows for playful aspects to shine through. Features of the platform including challenges, games, creative editing, humorous filters, and entertaining content, which aid in distinguishing it from other video platforms, such as Youtube and Facebook, as it differentiates the platform as playful and light-hearted. While other platforms may contain playful content, what makes Tiktok stand out is the way in which the application itself is playful in nature. Not only is the content amusing, but also the way the application is structured, from scrolling on the For You page, there is always an element of surprise as the videos displayed are selected at random by the algorithm based on themes a user has previously interacted with, rather than only showing content from pages the user follows. This creates a playful atmosphere, as with every scroll, there is an element of discovery and intrigue.

On a different note, many challenges are facing educational processes right now, with the COVID-19 virus affecting how individuals meet, and classroom education has become nearly impossible. Therefore, a large portion of education and learning is being done online; this is interesting to mention as this study researches learning through social media platforms and can be developed to aid educators in understanding the best methods to teach in a digital realm.

This research aims to explore the playful nature of skill-sharing videos on Tiktok, and this study could also provide insights for educators in how to gain the attention of students effectively and for individuals that have specific skills they can share or help someone improve on what they already know.

1.4 Outline

The following research explores playful communication, Tiktok as a platform, and the use of skill-sharing or tutorial videos. The main aim of this study is to further understand how playful communication holds a role in tutorial or skill-sharing videos on the social media platform, Tiktok. The report firstly poses the research question of; What is the role of playful communication in skill-sharing videos on Tiktok?

Then further moves on to explain why it is relevant to study these concepts in this particular context, taking a social and academic outlook on this. The following chapter takes a look at existing theories and definitions for the introduced concepts, and a framework is laid out for furthering the analysis. Then the method used to carry out this study and obtain results for analysis is discussed and justified. The methodological standpoint is determined as qualitative, and the methodology to be content analysis, analyzing specific Tik-Tok videos to understand the role of playful communication. Additionally, a sampling method, purposive sampling, and criteria are put forth, and the operationalization for how the data will be collected is made clear, and it is highlighted how the data will be analyzed through thematic analysis. Moving on to describing the data set and reporting the results of the investigation throughout the concentrate study that was conducted, and finally

revealing and discussing the results concluded from the analysis coming to an answer to the proposed research question.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

In order to obtain a concrete understanding of the role of playful communication in skill-sharing videos on Tiktok, it is pivotal to set a conceptualization on the certain theoretical notions related to these concepts. To begin with, there will be a discussion in section 2.1 on what exactly skill-sharing is and how it is conducted; this will mainly be studied through the lens of tutorial learning and social learning to understand better how skill-sharing is conducted through tutorial-based video on social media. This section focuses on defining skill sharing and understanding previous knowledge and demonstration-based training theories through videos (Bandura, 1986). Following will be section 2.2 concentrate study on social media education, how individuals learn through social media and utilize the affordances of platforms to learn new things. Moving on, a definition of play will be explored through the research of three leading figures, Johan Huizinga (1955), Lev VVygotsky (1978), and Kenneth Rubin (1983). Then a section 2.3 on play and playfulness, where Scicart's (2014) characterizations of play will be looked into, and a distinction between the terms play and playfulness will be highlighted, this will help identify playful characteristics for the analysis. Playful communication is also investigated as a concept to illustrate the role it plays in connecting with audiences. Section 2.4 to follow will introduce the PLEX framework, which uses 22 experiences to characterize playful communication; this characterization is vital to the contents of this study as it allows for a scale or measure to be able to contextualize precisely what is meant by playful communication. Next is a different section to explain the role of playfulness in learning, this will provide a theoretical link between the discussed concepts, skill-sharing, and playfulness and allow for the research to

come to an understanding of which elements of playfulness are successful while teaching, providing further insights on what the role of playful communication is in TikTok videos. Additionally, the theoretical framework will discuss social media, identifying essential platforms, and distinguishing playful interactions and communication on popular social networking platforms. The understanding of the combination of theoretical outlooks will provide for a concrete foundation to arrive to an answer for the presented research question:
What is the role of playful communication in skill-sharing videos on Tiktok?

2.1 Skill sharing

The following section will discuss skill sharing; through the ideas of tutorial learning and social learning, it is crucial to gain a clear perspective of what these concepts entail in order to pinpoint what elements are affected by playful communication and how playfulness plays a role in the success of these tutorial based videos.

The first concept to be explored is the notion of skill-sharing. Skill-sharing is the idea that individuals with a particular skill or talent share their knowledge of it with individuals interested in learning that particular skill (Shankle, 2017). This research will concentrate on skill-sharing videos in particular, which are recorded videos in which an individual takes on a teacher role to demonstrate the steps needed to learn a skill (Shankle, 2017).
There exist multiple skill-sharing platforms and services such as SkillShare and Classify. These platforms are online databases that act as an online classroom for people to learn specific skills for a monthly or annual subscription fee (Shankle, 2017). Skill-sharing videos vary significantly in content, and there are tutorial videos that cover just about any topic. Examples may include tutorials on starting a business, sharing communication skills, passing on spiritual or psychological knowledge, and teaching a new language. However, the main focus behind this study is on skill-sharing videos that share creative skills such as photography, painting, and playing an instrument, to name a few. This section additionally discusses tutorial learning and its link to skill sharing videos in 2.1.1 and gives an overview of what social learning entails in 2.1.2.

2.1.1 Tutorial learning

An important theoretical foundation for the creation of skill-sharing videos through out this research, Braun and Clarke's (2006) social cognitive theory and a discussion on his point of

view regarding observational learning. According to his presented ideology, a large portion of a people's knowledge is gained from the direct observation of others. In simpler terms, individuals learn through observing a task performance model. However, standing on its own, a task performance would not be enough for individuals to grasp and obtain the relevant knowledge for learning.

Due to that, Demonstration-Based Training (DBT) emerged, this process works to develop skills, specific knowledge, and altitudes by the structured design and the utilization of interdependent instructional features (Rosen,et al., 2010), for example, a voice-over on a skill-sharing video that explains what is going on throughout the process while the demonstration is being carried out. Learning through tutorial-based videos on social media platforms, such as TikTok, is an excellent example of DBT, where users can acquire skills or knowledge by watching a qualified creator pass on the skill through the video. There are a few elements to point out which may be influenced by the level of playfulness in the tutorial style skill-sharing videos on TikTok. Firstly is the attentional processes. The first step taken in observational learning is related to the attentional processes. Attention alludes to the process of selectively observing and attending to specific details of the actions depending on their relevance, accessibility, and complexity (Bandura, 1986).

These processes affect motivation, production, and retention. While accomplishing a task, attention must be given to the most critical parts since humans hold a limited cognitive capacity for working memory. Irrelevant information usually is overlooked (Grossman et al. 2013). In this sense, playfulness is a significant factor that would keep audiences engaged and open to learn the skill, maintaining their attention throughout the entire skill-sharing process by utilizing different elements of play as when an audience is engaged and invested, they are more likely to pay greater attention and retain more information.

Another aspect that playful elements can influence is the narration style of the video. *Narration* is defined as the spoken text that accompanies the dynamic display of the user's actions on the software (i.e., Microsoft Word version 2007). The video tutorials' narration helps the student understand the demonstration by explaining the procedure and providing background information that helps the learners make sense of the demonstrated performance. Dual coding theory and multimedia learning theory both support the role of narration in enhancing understanding and learning (Mäyrä, 2012; Pavlidis, 2015). Here the style of narration is

essential, whether it engages enough with audiences and can maintain being playful while still relaying the vital information necessary for the skill to be learned. TikTok as a platform makes the narration process easy, as video editing tools are not difficult to navigate; users can choose to create a voice-over, use animated voices, write subtitles as texts or directly speak to the audience.

On another note, it is important to mention user control, meaning that learners have the option to influence how a video is being displayed (Van der Meij and Van der Meij, 2013). On the TikTok platform, individuals can start, pause, stop, restart and turn backward or forward the video. The control enables learners to adjust their viewing to their attentional processes. Additionally, users can choose the speed at which they want to watch their videos. Tabbers and de Koeijer (2010) found that user-controlled to significantly better transfer performances but not more retention.

Moreover, the effectiveness of user control is influenced by the characteristics of learners and the tutorial. Boucheix and Schneider (2009) discovered that user control improved only the learning of low ability learners. In addition, they showed that user control only had a positive effect on relatively complex rather than simple tasks.

Finally, the video length matters when studying how these videos are produced; this means the duration of an instructional video. A study on YouTube videos showed that the average skill-sharing video length is 3.17 minutes; It was additionally found that videos of under 3 minutes yielded the highest engagement (Guo, Kim& Rubin, 2014). Since TikTok has a limit of 1-minute videos as the maximum length, it would assume that engagement with these skill-sharing videos are high as they are direct and to the point, however, they can still hold playful elements.

2.1.2 Social Learning

Lev Vgotsky (1978) identified the concept of social learning as the process through which learners interact with their environment, what is in the environment, and their peers. During that period of time, the concept of social learning was used to refer to face-to-face communication or dialogue in which individuals joined together in order to learn through the experience which they share. With the technological advancements around online communication, this kind of learning community has been enabled with new means of connection and new platforms to learn online (Saba, 2013).
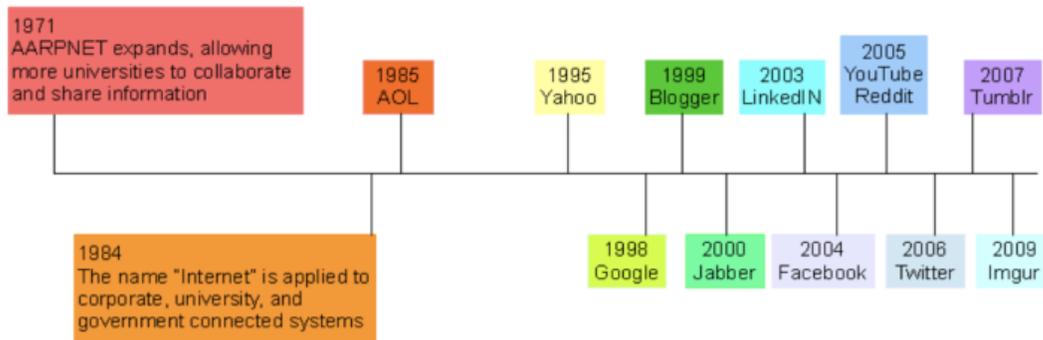
Figure 2.1 A brief timeline of Social Media evolution (Saba, 2013)

Social media technologies have provided access to multiple platforms that allow their users to instantly interconnect in real-time through global social networks. Social media technologies have become a great source of communication between individuals and organizations that want to increase their knowledge performance (Saba, 2013).

Users are then looking to create specific online learning communities where they can share experience and information on some creative platforms for collaborations and innovation. This sharing is performed through a virtual, online platform, and it allows users to capture data and analyze information in more efficient ways. Social learning is then conducted through a social media environment, which transforms collaborative knowledge to interactive learning and sharing environments with sociocultural interaction, which underlies the generation and customization of new ideas (Saba, 2013).

With regards to this research, the notion of skill-sharing is conducted through a process of social learning, as individuals transmit knowledge on skills or attempt to teach something to others through the means of the social platform Tik-Tok. Therefore understanding what social learning is and how it is conducted is crucial in furthering the understanding of how skill-sharing videos work.

Paroutis and Al Saleh (2009) held a study that focused on the factors influencing information exchange on Web 2.0, this study mainly identifies three crucial factors that could be obstacles or reinforcement for the use of social media as a means of sharing knowledge. The three factors include expectation, trust, and traditional communication. To begin with, expectations, if

expectations that information will be correctly transmitted to others and viewers will be beneficial are positive, then that will encourage users to share skills, and vice versa if expectations are negative or skeptical,they prevent them from sharing their skill with someone. Secondly, trust: It is important to note that integrity and quality are among the most valuable aspects of knowledge sharing. If learners suspect that the information they are gaining is unreliable or comes from a weak source, they will be hesitant to trust it, and therefore less likely to provide a contribution to said knowledge sharing system. Individuals who have no trust for the resource are doubtful to share what they know with others. Finally, the third determinant found a generational influence. The research found that members from older generations were more skeptical and unwilling to adapt to social media knowledge sharing and rather preferred traditional communication. However, younger generations showed keenness to adapting and learning on social media through the advancements and present tools.

  This research allows for an understanding of the motivators and differences for individuals to participate in the skill-sharing video culture, which would push creators to make videos on TikTok to share their skills with others.

2.2 Playfulness

2.2.1 Defining play

  In order to better grasp the concept of playfulness, an understanding of what the word "play" entails is necessary. Play is not defined as one inherent item or characteristic. However, it involves an array of attributes connecting to observed behavior. There are three notable examples of academics who have attempted to categorize play; Johan Huizinga, a famous Dutch cultural historian, followed by Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, and finally by Kenneth Rubin and his colleagues.

       Johan Huizinga (1955) p55 gave an in-depth definition of play in his renowned book, *HomoLudens*: "Play is a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious,' but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner." Huizinga states that play as a concept is one of the oldest experiences in history, arguing even

that it is older than culture and is ingrained in all aspects of it. He studies play by connecting with culture as play is viewed as a psychological response beyond just the biological action. His view on play is that it surpasses the boundaries of space and time, being able to set individuals who experience this phenomenon free, providing a feeling of enthusiasm and festivity. Play is found in the arts, in law, and all aspects of society. However, Huizinga receives criticism for this definition as it is described as being too broad and not specific enough to capture the essence of the play in its entirety. Additionally, his view on play is criticized in the sense that he presents paradoxical ideas, for example, arguing that play is a sense of freedom but also a captivating experience. He also argues that play is present in all aspects of culture, however, he points to it being exclusive to non-serious material.

Following that, in 1978, Lev Vygotsky attempted to provide a categorization of play as being "desired," requiring imagination, and finally, involving rules (Vygotsky, 1978). This definition, however, caters more to children's play, and some of these categorizations may not apply. Another well-known example, also regarding children's play, is the article by Kenneth Rubin et al. (1983) in the Handbook of child psychology. The article assumes that play is defined as intrinsically driven, focused on the process rather than the result, differentiated from investigative behavior, and actively engaging.

These three definitions provide a base of comprehension for the concept of play; this is important to understand for this study, as it clarifies the theoretical basis of playful communication, which is a key notion in the essence of this research.

2.2.2 Play within Media

Raessens (2014) conducted a study focusing on the ludification of culture, in which he analyzed play in relation to media. He views play as a broad category under which non-games and games fall into. However, play is not only limited to that. It also includes the activities of play such as playful communication and "ludoliteracy", the capability to interact with the systems playfully one is a part of. Raessens (2014) also focuses on Huizinga's understanding of play as a base for comprehending play in media experiences, as the way individuals experience play and media have common ambiguous qualities, stated more simply, media offers a new way to experience play. However, he takes a more modernist approach than Huizinga making his definition more relatable to this paper.

His view is that media produces the opportunity for playfulness to affect non-serious as well as serious topics. This view is highly relevant to the course of this study as it essentially revolves around skill-sharing, which is a form of teaching; in general terms, teaching and education are viewed as serious matters and are dealt with as such. However, while integrating media platforms into education systems allowed room for playful education systems and playful learning.

2.2.3Play and playfulness

After considering multiple viewpoints around the notion of play and assessing existing notable definitions, this section means to demonstrate play in terms of playfulness, differentiating between the two terms, and setting the conceptualizations that are taken into consideration for the analysis throughout this study.

Finally, it is essential to discuss Sicart's (2014) ideas on the play; Scicart deferred from the typical understanding of play and proposed a much broader and extensive definition of the notion, his understanding of play is that it is a form of engagement and understanding with the surrounding world going beyond the concept of games. He characterizes play with a few key features, firstly as being contextual, as it ventures through the physical. Secondly, regarding play as carnivalesque, entailing that it inverts societal norms causing nervous laughter, meanwhile uncovering the social reality. Additionally, viewing play as appropriative, alluding to the fact that it takes after existing contexts and cannot be predetermined by such. Play is also disruptive, meaning that it obscures the appropriate contexts and assumptions. Another characteristic is that it is autotelic, meaning that it assumes its goals and purposes. Next, play is creative in the sense that it is an outlet for expression, and finally, play is personal, to where it conveys collective and individual characters (Sicart, 2014). Through this, it can be said that Sicart puts forward the expression of play as a form of expressive appropriation. Additionally, he stresses the importance of personality, as every individual will have a different experience based on their own personality and life experiences.

Similar to other researchers such as Bateson and Martin (2013) and Stenros (2015), Sicart differentiates between the concepts of play and playfulness by stating that: "play is an *activity*,

while playfulness is an *attitude*. An activity is a coherent and finite set of actions performed for certain purposes, while an attitude is a stance toward an activity — a psychological, physical, and emotional perspective we take on".

From this, it can be deduced that playfulness can come in play activities, such as gaming, as well as in the form of work that is not mainly seen as fun, or in functional contents, such as learning. Therefore in the context of this study, Sicarts definitions of play and playfulness will be relevant as they allude to learning and skill-sharing.

For the purpose of clearly identifying and conceptualizing what playful communication assumes, a framework for measure must be introduced. By exploring playful experiences, individuals go through when playing games, Costello and Edmonds (2007) put forth a framework, which was further developed by Lucero and Arrasvuori (2013). This framework consists of 22 different playful experiences in the PLEX framework; Captivation, challenge, competition, completion, control, cruelty, discovery, eroticism, exploration, expression, fantasy, fellowship, humor, nurture, relaxation, sensation, stimulation, submission, subversion, suffering, sympathy, and thrill.

The developed model is used as a guide for expert evaluation, as it provides a way to conceptualize playfulness beyond the context of games, to be used as a concept applicable to other experiences. A framework is an evaluation tool furthering the study and design of playful communication. Thus, this framework provides the perfect way to characterize playfulness and playful communication to enable the recognition of these elements in TikTok skill-sharing videos.

Experience	Description
Captivation	Forgetting one's surroundings
Challenge	Testing one's abilities in a demanding task
Competition	To contest with oneself or an opponent
Completion	Finishing a major task, a sense of closure
Control	Dominating, commanding, regulating
Cruelty	Causing mental or physical pain
Discovery	Finding something new or unknown
Eroticism	A sexually arousing experience
Exploration	Investigating an object or situation
Expression	Manifesting oneself creatively
Fantasy	An imagined experience
Fellowship	Friendship, communality, creation of intimacy
Humor	Fun, joy, amusement, for gags
Nurture	Taking care of oneself or others
Relaxation	Relief from bodily or mental work
Sensation	Excitement by stimulating senses
Stimulation	An imitation of everyday life
Submission	Being part or a larger structure
Subversion	Breaking social rules and norms

Suffering	Experience loss, frustration and/or anger
Sympathy	Sharing emotional feelings
Thrill	Excitement derived from stimulation

Table 2.1 PLEX Framework

2.3 Playful learning

In the previous sections, there were discussions on Skill-sharing, social learning, and how individuals transmit knowledge in different ways; following that was a section to provide insight and understanding into play, playfulness, and playful communication. Leading to this section, which combines both genres and analyzes the theories that consider playful learning; this is essential to understand as it provides for an overarching comprehension of the role playful communication can play within skill-sharing videos. Rice (2009) administered a study with the aim of understanding playful learning in adults. He studied by asking what the role of the playful learning approach is in architecture schools in the UK. Rice follows Huizinga's (2000) Ideology that play requires the blurring or breakage of certain boundaries in order to blend between work and play and turn them into the same activity. Playful learning is seen as introducing elements of play, such as adding interactive and fun activities, into the learning process with the aim of enhancing and improving how students absorb and apply knowledge. Additionally, this paper proposes that the knowledge exchange process demands official and set rules as well as nonofficial apprehension, which are often playful activities described as carnivalesque (Bakhtin, 1984).

The conclusions drawn up from this study revealed that including playful elements in learning generated feelings of enjoyment, excitement, and increased interest among students. Rice (2009) suggests that since playfulness fosters a creative and imaginative atmosphere, students suspended their "formal" student identity and were given the freedom to break those boundaries and play with concepts; this allows students to understand things in their own light

and creatively be critical of them. Using playful communication, the process of learning has been transformed from being institutionalized and set in schools/ universities to an everyday practice, whereby playful learning goes past academic values and is engulfed in individuals' daily lives. This showcases how skill-sharing videos can transcend the formal education process and provide space for people to learn skills playfully, quickly, and on their own terms.

Playful learning…	Description	Examples
Tools	Objects, artefacts and technologies that signify a playful environment.	Games Toys Simulations Puzzles Virtual environments
Techniques	Pedagogies and learning approaches that facilitate play.	Role play Making Performance Problems Quests
Tactics	Mechanics and attributes that engender playfulness.	Surprise Humour Chance Competition Storytelling Mystery Badges

Table 2.2 (Whitton, 2018)

Playful learning allows for a spirit of experimentation, pushing boundaries, and creatively gaining information. This framework presented by Whitton (2018) categorizes playfulness in learning through three main categories; playful tools, playful techniques, and playful tactics.

Playful techniques are learning and teaching methods that incorporate and stimulate playfulness; these methods use scenarios such as make-believe or role-play activities, storytelling

practices, and producing a final product, for example, building something or presenting a performance.

Additionally, they include the use of posing challenges to get learners to think critically of information and directly apply it to cases. These techniques create a sense of motivation for learners and raise their curiosity, thereby leading to a feeling of satisfaction when they feel as though they learned something.

On another note, playful tactics are how playfulness is integrated into different situations or contexts, showing a playful way of doing something that is considered to be mundane. For example, learning a new skill like how to bake cookies, instead of demonstrating the steps directly and plainly, a teacher could add playful elements such as including humor in the dialogue or showing the process in a creative way. The addition of surprises and having a risk associated with a task or fostering competition are also tactics used to foster playfulness in learning.

The third presented element of playful learning is playful tools; these are artifacts or technologies that promote and create a playful atmosphere. Examples could be providing a prize at the end of a competition or showing physical examples to demonstrate a concept; in terms of technologies, a great example is social media, particularly Tiktok, as the platform in itself does not only show playful content but is playful due to the features discussed previously. This is essentially a powerful tool for playful learning

Chapter 3:Methodology

The set goal of this master thesis was to further understand the notion of playful communication with regards to skill-sharing practices by studying the ways in which playful aspects hold significance and play a role in the process of online skill-sharing, following the research question of What is the role of playful communication in skill-sharing videos on Tiktok?

The following chapter delves into the explanations and discussions surrounding the choices taken to carry out this research effectively. The purpose of this discussion is not only to academically justify the decisions made but also to provide a clear step-by-step overview of how the research question was answered.

To begin with 3.1, this chapter addresses the design of the research and explains the methods used, following is the identification and justification of the sampling of the units of analysis 3.2. Further, exploration of the data collection methods and how the data was gathered is laid out 3.3. In the operationalization section, will be a discussion in which important terms for the analysis will be laid out and defined for an accurate measure 3.4, and finally, a discussion around how the reliability and validity of the research were kept up to par by the researcher 3.5.

3.1 Research design

The way in which this research is designed and structured, was based on the foundation laid out by the theoretical framework, which was guided by the initial research question.

For the success of this research, it requires an analysis of skill-sharing content that is published on the social media platform Tik-Tok, alongside an in-depth investigation and understanding on

to, what the role of playful communication is in this phenomenon, and in what ways it shapes the idea of acquiring new skills through the platform.

A qualitative approach will be most appropriate, as a qualitative standpoint of research works to forge significant links through data that is non-quantifiable (Brennen, 2017). It aims to transform and interpret one-off experiences into constructed realities that are built on the grounds of existing theoretical notions. In the case of this specific study, it is most appropriate to take this approach as it deals with individual's experiences with skill-sharing and their understanding around playful learning and how it is best conducted through the social media platform Tiktok, this approach has allowed the researcher to gain meaningful insights and come to meaningful conclusions based on the gathered results regarding the topic, and therefore provided an answer to the research question.

The method that was chosen to carry out this research was textual analysis, through systematically analysing the contents of Tik-Toks that were selected based on the sampling criterion, which will be justified further in the section, the researcher was able to come to concrete results and interesting conclusions which speak on how and in what ways playful communication plays a vital role on skill-sharing videos produced and uploaded on Tiktok.

The type of sampling used to determine which videos will be analyzed was purposive sampling, this was done to determine that the selected Tiktoks where related to skill sharing or present elements of skill sharing based tutorials.The Tiktoks that were chosen for the analysis Where posted by Tiktok influencers that are famed for posting skill-sharing style videos, 10 influencers were selected based on popularity. Each of these influencers post varying types of skill-sharing content, from make-up and fashion to photography and music, additionally to that the videos selected had to be 30-60 seconds long, to ensure that the Tik-Tok will contain a sufficient amount of elements that could be analyzed or categorized as 'playful' in order to draw out the most meaningful conclusions.

Finally, To make meaning of the gathered data from the analyzed Tik-Toks, thematic analysis was conducted, in this specific case, elements that were considered "playful" as described and defined in the operationalization of terms were determined, highlighted and recorded in order to pinpoint the role playful communication has on skill sharing videos

3.2 Sampling

The following paragraphs discuss the processes carried out regarding the units of analysis that were investigated for this research. The sampling procedure, considered criteria for sample selection and the data collection process that were set for the units of analysis will be explained in further detail.Gathering the units of analysis to be considered for interpretation is an important matter to be determined. With regards to this research, it was important to find Tiktoks that present elements of playful communication with the aim of transferring a skill through the videos, in order to determine and understand the role playful communication has on skill-sharing videos.

In order to collect the units up for analysis, a sampling method must be determined. To begin with, a non-probability sampling technique will be used to guide the sample. As explained by Flick, (2018) non probability sampling is a sampling technique where the sample is collected from the population based on the judgments or criteria determined by the researcher, rather than the use of randomly selected units to be analyzed. This will ensure that the population chosen for analysis will reflect elements of playful communication in the skill-sharing videos, rather than analyzing random Tiktoks that contain content that is irrelevant to the context of this study. Since the sampling procedure for this study is based more on purpose and not on convenience, purposive sampling will be used as the chosen method. In this case, the research question is driven by a specific phenomenon that should be reflected in the data, therefore a purposive sampling method is most appropriate, as it focuses on gathering data that is particular to skill-sharing and playful communication rather than randomizing the collected content (Flick, 2018).

The most appropriate type of sampling to be used was determined to be Maximum variation. A sample collected using maximum variation consists of cases that are intentionally as distinct from one another as could be expected. This kind of testing is useful for analyzing large data sets with diverse content (Flick, 2018).
This category of non-probability purposive sampling is ideal for this study, as Tiktok is a global platform that is saturated by an enormous amount of content, and is used by individuals from all over the world, meaning that there exists a wide array of skill-sharing videos on the platform,

multiple different types that cover a variety of different topics. This makes it more interesting to conduct the study in this manner, ensuring that multiple different perspectives and styles are taken into account for this research.

Additionally, there exist a great number of influencers, who are perceived experts in different fields, that post skill-sharing content , therefore it is beneficial to consider these differences in order to further understand the role of playful communication in the content.

The sample was selected by randomly deciding on different categories of skill-sharing videos, such as make-up or music and through the TikTok for you page searching that category and having the top influencer or creator that posts in that particular category show up.

   After the sample was selected and the method was set, the process of data collection began. To begin with, the researcher found the profiles of the most popular "skill-sharing" or video tutorial influencers on Tiktok, making sure that each influencer produced content on different topics. 10 influencers were selected, and from them their most popular 10 videos were saved on a laptop and cellphone, screenshots of the different scenes were recorded ready for coding. The photos were stored and backed up through email.

	Influencer
1	@aa.vision
2	@jessthejemini
3	@carolkang
4	@sherellemartini
5	@paulsudres
6	@haveyoulearned

7	@alicekingmakeup
8	@noahcardtrick
9	@cookweights
10	@rygwav

Table 3.1 *List of influencers*

3.3 *Data Collection*

The data was collected through the researcher's own mobile phone. A separate account was created on TikTok in order to avoid any algorithm interference with the data collection. Ten random categories of skill-sharing videos were selected, and through that, the ten influencers were chosen by the app. Then the top 10 recent posts from these accounts were saved on the mobile phone, and screenshots of the content were recorded, saved, and then sent to the laptop via email. This was done to ensure that the screenshots were backed up on both devices and the email of the researcher.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis method selected for the interpretation of the collected data was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis works to uncover prominent themes that are present throughout the dataset through surveying the similarities, connections, and differences among data segments (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Because this type of analysis divides larger data sets, in this case, the collected Tiktok videos, it is the most commonly used type of analysis for qualitative studies. The notes from the visual analysis were analyzed and broken down into main themes so that conclusions about the relationship between playful communication, learning, and skill-sharing can be deduced (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A codebook was produced based on the basis of the research question and guided by the theory and can be found in the appendix.

Braun and Clarke (2006) outline six stages of thematic analysis; these stages will guide the data analysis process**.** The First step is to take a look at the notes jotted down about the videos as

a whole and pointing out any significant aspects that are immediately noticeable. Secondly, is that the most important aspects that stick out or seem to be relevant are to be labeled and assigned to codes; in this case, an example could be the explicit use of playful elements in the video.

The data is then made to be conceptualized and categorized as the patterns in them start to appear. The next step is revising and labeling the categorization. Finally, the data is reported in a written form, where conclusions can be drawn upon the relationship and role of playful communication on skill-sharing videos based on the results.

Since the method of data analysis is thematic analysis, a codebook and coding tree were created and can be found in the appendix, these highlight the codes and reasoning behind them for the analysis of the data.

3.5 *Operationalization*

The data that was collected was driven by the theoretical standpoint of this research, meaning that it is important to keep in mind the laid out definitions of concepts from the theoretical framework, such as playfulness and skill-sharing in order to collect data that will reflect reality. To determine playful aspects of communication, the five traits or categorizations laid out by Sicart (2014) will be used as a guideline; Appropriative, carnivalesque, disruptive, creative, and personal.

Appropriative entails that individuals would reach a conclusion or gain a perspective after consuming the Tiktok.

Playfulness as carnivalesque can be defined in whether societal ideas are being reinforced or dismantled in an alternate reality where humor plays a role. On another note, disruptiveness can be measured by how to present elements that can stick out and provoke thought through the use of the unexpected; however, these elements also must not be destructive, meaning that they must maintain the purpose of the video and not take over the meaning. Another characteristic of playfulness is creativity; creativity in this sense revolves around expression, how users express themselves throughout the video and use new ways to get teaching messages across. Finally, playfulness is determined by being personal.

The Playful Experiences (PLEX) framework is a categorization of playful experiences based on previous theoretical work on pleasurable experiences, game experiences, emotions, elements of

play, and reasons why people play. The framework is meant to be a conceptual tool for understanding the playful aspects of user experience.

3.6 *Validity and reliability*

This section uncovers how validity and reliability were maintained throughout the process of this research, to firstly ensure that the results are as accurate and true as possible, and also that if this research would be recreated by further researchers, they would yield similar results.

Reliability refers to the level of consistency of measurement, meaning that it stays the same every time. Reliability is maintained using standardized methods, like using a codebook to analyze the sample of the research and paying close attention to the steps of content and thematic analysis while conducting the study (Silverman, 2011).

For reliability to be maintained, there needs to be a high focus on the researcher's objectivity. This is most times difficult to sustain in qualitative research as the concepts and analysis are open to the researcher's interpretation. For this research, objectivity was maintained using the help of a thesis supervisor, who supported the researcher and monitored the progress of the paper from start to finish; the second pair of eyes kept up the objectivity(Silverman, 2011).

On another note, reliability is also maintained through transparency throughout the research. All of the steps that were taken in this research were thoroughly documented, and the reasoning behind them explained, a step by step process is available, and the researcher made clear the intentions behind the research, this makes the re-creation of this research easy for any future researcher (Silverman, 2011).

Validity is the scale on which a statement or idea is solid enough to be able to perfectly represent the reality of a situation (Silverman, 2011). An aspect that made sure validity was up kept in this research were the steps required for thematic analysis, these systematic steps create defined codes under which the data for analysis is interpreted, making sure that the codes were accurate to what goes on in the world. Additionally, discussing established and renowned theories and definitions set by previous literature in the theoretical framework and operationalization ensures that the results found from the analysis and the drawn-up conclusion have a strong theoretical base to stand on.

The final point was that it was imperative to maintain a solid ethical base to this research; other than keeping transparency in every step of the process, all of the data that was collected came from public accounts that were open to everyone and not private accounts that needed to give consent.

Chapter 4: Results

The following chapter discusses the conclusions and results that were drawn up from the conducted analysis.

Skill-sharing videos posted on the platform Tiktok are rich in playful elements, however, it was unclear what their role is and why influencers chose to include them while creating these videos. Therefore, this research aims at identifying and further explaining the role that playful communication has on skill-sharing videos on the social media platform, Tiktok.

Through the discussion of the collected data, examined through the lens of existing research and connected to previously established theories, an answer to the following stated research question will be put forth.;

What is the role of playful communication in skill-sharing videos on Tiktok?

A Total of 100 Tiktoks were coded and analyzed to bring about the results discussed in this chapter. The operationalization and discussion of previous research produced dimensions and the main themes that emerged through them, these themes were summarized and linked to the observations made in order to present the results present in this chapter. The answer to the research question will come through four themes that were developed through the carried-out analysis. The first theme is considered in section 4.1, displaying skills, this theme delves into how TikTok creators display their own skills while creating skill-sharing videos. The second presented theme 4.2, teaching skills, which discusses how playful elements play a role in the teaching process of skill-sharing videos. The third theme 4.3, fostering engagement focuses on the role playful communication has to build engaging relationships with viewers.

The answer to this research can provide ways in which researchers can explore how playful communication and elements of playfulness can be used to enhance online learning experiences.

4.1 Displaying Skills

The first theme to surface from the data dives into how playful communication is utilized in skill-sharing videos. One of the first roles that stood out was the use of playful communication by the creators of skill-sharing videos to display their own skills. In most cases showing an example of what the rest of the video aims to teach the viewer. A display of skills is an important aspect of skill-sharing videos for multiple different reasons; firstly, it is a demonstration by the creator to, in a sense, prove their expertise in that particular skill, by a creator displaying their skillset, they prove that they are qualified and capable to teach that skill.

Rice (2009) found that when individuals learn from sources they deem as experts, they are likely to pay a greater amount of attention and therefore learn in a quicker manner. In this case, this allows for viewers to decide whether or not this tutorial is lead by a figure from which they can learn something, the better the display of skills by the creator, the more likely viewers will tune into the rest of the video and attempt to master that skill.

Secondly, by displaying the skill, the video is able to communicate what skills a viewer should be able to learn if they follow the instructions provided by the creator. The display of skills also enables demonstration-based training, in which learning is enhanced by watching or listening to a demonstration produced by a credible and qualified source (Rosen,et al., 2010).

Third of all, by creators showcasing their skills, they set a standard of comparison for learners, through which the viewers of these skill-sharing videos are enabled to monitor and compare their personal progress to a set example of how a skill is masterfully carried out. And finally, that display also allows for learners to set goals, trying to reach the skill level of the creator of the video. By setting a mental challenge to reach that level of expertise, a display shows learners how far they can come in developing that skill.

Where playful communication comes into action with regards to this theme is through the manner in which creators display their skills in TikTok.

This research found that when TikTok creators are trying to showcase a specific skill in a video, they tend to use multiple different elements of playfulness and playful communication. various features of playful communication have been characterized by the PLEX framework, which has been used as a theoretical standpoint to support this finding; characteristics such as exploration, discovery, and humor all contribute to how creators playfully display skills.

Additionally, characterizations from Sicart's (2014) definition of play will be put to use and a look at Saba (2013) discussing DBT and selective attention.

This first theme highlights the ways in which playful communication is used by the creators of skill-sharing TikToks in order to showcase and display their own skills and skillset and has found that playful communication allows for skill sharing videos to be entertaining and intriguing; the following subsections dig deeper into this, and provide solid examples from the gathered data to support these claims.

4.1.1 Entertaining

A form of playfulness that is prominent while creators display their skills is that they entertain their audience, almost like a show, however in this case, the performer is a teacher, passing on the directions to obtain a skill, and the audience is students gathering information and building their skillset. This section found that through playful elements such as using humorous dialogue and engaging visuals, creators showcased the skills and knowledge they aimed to pass on to their viewers.

This sub-theme emerges from the fact that entertainment and playfulness are two closely linked concepts. Entertainment is defined as a process that brings enjoyment and amusement (McKee et al., 2014). With the concepts holding a similar essence, the qualities of playfulness can lead to entertainment. The presence of humor and visuals were two playful aspects that created a sense of entertainment while creators were showcasing their own skill.

Humor or Carnivalesque

The results found that TikTok creators tend to use humor while displaying their skills,

The PLEX framework characterizes humor as one of the pleasurable experiences linked to play, being joyous, fun, amusing, and for gags (Lucero & Arrasvuori, 2013). In this case, humor entails fun and amusement; humor is found within all the forms of entertainment media, whether it's through activities, jokes, or pranks. Humor enriches interactions, adding joyous elements to severe or mundane tasks; in the instance of skill-sharing videos, it was found that creators use the concept of humor throughout their videos, especially when demonstrating their skills. This kind of playful communication also lends a hand to entertain the audience as it aims to provoke a feeling of stimulation and entertainment while learning new skills. Almost all of the TikToks that

were coded in the sample displayed humorous components, revealing how important humor is in TikTok videos using playful communication. Humorous elements were present in the form of funny comments, entertaining expressions, and creative graphics

This is seen in the example displayed in Figures 4.1 and 4.2.

Figure 4.1 shows an influencer who is skilled with special effects make-up or SFX, while she takes viewers through the process of how to use special effects tools and creates looks that transform her into well-known characters; for example, here she s depicted as the genie from Aladdin, she also uses humor in imitating the character and speaking like him, making the learning process more carnivalesque and light-hearted.

In figure 4.2, there is a scene where the creator is demonstrating video editing techniques to create visual illusions, making the audience believe that she fell into a bucket of snow, creating a funny and humorous scene.
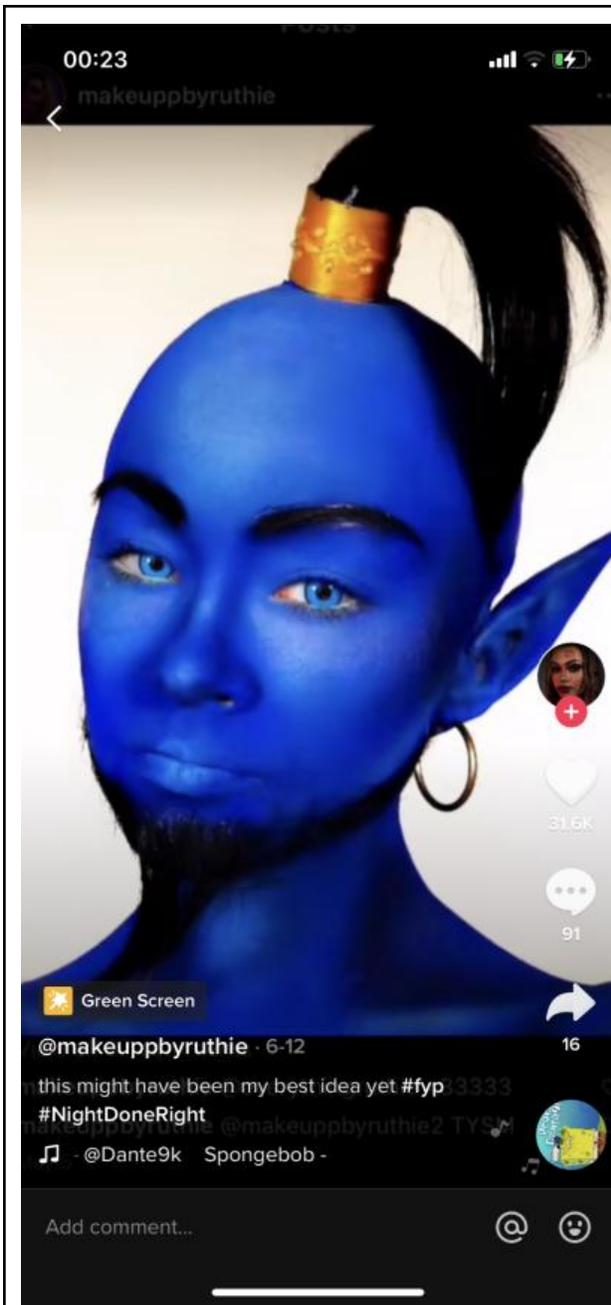
| Fig. 4.1 TikTok creator films makeup tutorial on how to achieve the genie look. | Fig 4.2 TikTok creator demonstrating how to shoot videos with illusions. |

Another way to look at this form of playful communication that was present in the data is through the lens of Sicart's (2014) characterizations of play, in particular play being seen as

carnivalesque, meaning that through humor, one can break out of the assumptions proposed by the atmosphere or dominant style (Bakhtin, 1984). This perfectly aligns with the use of humor throughout the skill-sharing tiktoks as they are meant to be educational, which often holds a serious tone, however, due to the affordances of the platform Tiktok,playful communication is integrated in the essence of the videos. Examples of the affordances that added humor to the videos are, the lipsyncing features to funny sounds, and creative editing to manipulate scenarios. This is further illustrated in figure 4.3, where the tiktok creator uses filters provided by the platform to create a funny scene of her looking at the mirror.
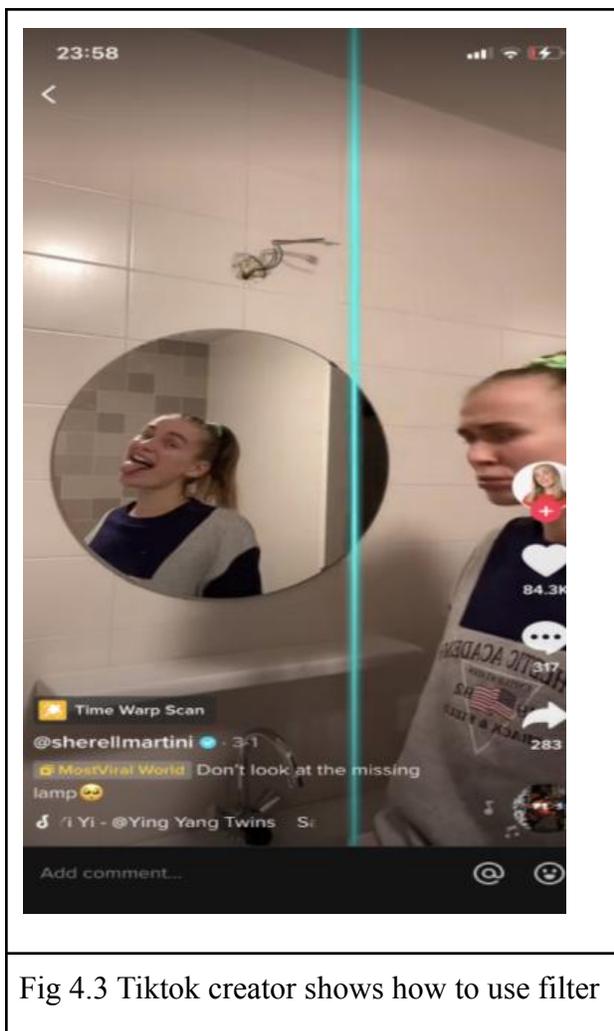
Fig 4.3 Tiktok creator shows how to use filter

4.1.2 Intrigue

Discovery through display

When it comes to intrigue, discovery is the first step. Discovery refers to uncovering or realizing aspects of something that might not have been blatantly obvious, the experience of discovery is described to be as understanding the relationship created between a given action and the produced outcome (Lucero & Arrasvuori, 2013). Viewers experience this discovery while learning about the process of how something is done through the format and content of the skill-sharing Tiktok, this playful element is understood to grab attention in the sense that audiences are interested in discovering how to develop a certain skill or learn about something new. The process of discovery requires an initial sense of curiosity, and through this case it is brought out by an intrigue that someone has towards a particular skill.

Discovery may also be about oneself, an individual may be self discovering if they have any particular talents through watching these skill-sharing Tiktoks, for example a viewer might watch a video of someone teaching how to sing and tht viewer discovers that they have talent for singing. In this way discovery lends hand to grabbing the attention of audiences as they may learn something new, which is guaranteed in skill-sharing videos.

The main finding from this section proves that playful communication is used to grab the attention of audiences of skill sharing videos.

Exploration

As discussed in the PLEX framework, exploration involves investigating an environment, object situation, or in this case learning experience. Exploration is often, but not always, linked with discovery. Discovery represents the initial interest, while exploration speaks on the process that comes after a discovery, actually delving into the process of learning the skill and stimulating action from the audience (Lucero & Arrasvuori, 2013). the display of skills provides an exploratory opportunity for individuals who have previously discovered their interest in a certain skill.

For example a tiktok user is interested in learning how to play the guitar, they come across a skill-sharing video produced by a creator that displays how to play a song, this interaction provides the opportunity for users to explore their interest in the skill.

Garneau (2012) gives an example that in games, all problems have a similar pattern, they consist of rules, a setting and a goal. It is then up to the player to find the best way for him or her to reach the goal. The same can be said for learning a skill, when an a viewer watches the

skill-sharingskill sharing video, they are taught how a process is to be carried out, they learn the rules and how to do it, they set their goals of what they want to accomplish from the Tiktok,. Finally, they determine the best way for them to put what they learned to practice, on their own time.

This is another way of looking at Exploration: it is relatively free movement within certain external bounds. So the Tiktoks provide the basic rules and step-by-step guide. However, audiences are free to implement the knowledge in whatever way they deem fit.

Exploration can often be experienced when purchasing a new product.

The examples provided below capture the sense of exploration as they both take the viewer through the end result first before diving into the steps needed to achieve that skill. Figure 4.4 shows a card trick from a TikTok creator that posts about his magic skills, and he begins by demonstrating the card trick and asking the audience if they want to learn how to do that trick. This leaves room to raise the intrigue of the audience and allow them to choose if they want to explore this skill or not further. Similarly, in figure 4.5 the chef sharing his cooking skills presents a short clip of the final meal prior to detailing the steps needed to achieve this meal, also allowing for the exploration and gaining an understanding of the steps behind creating it.
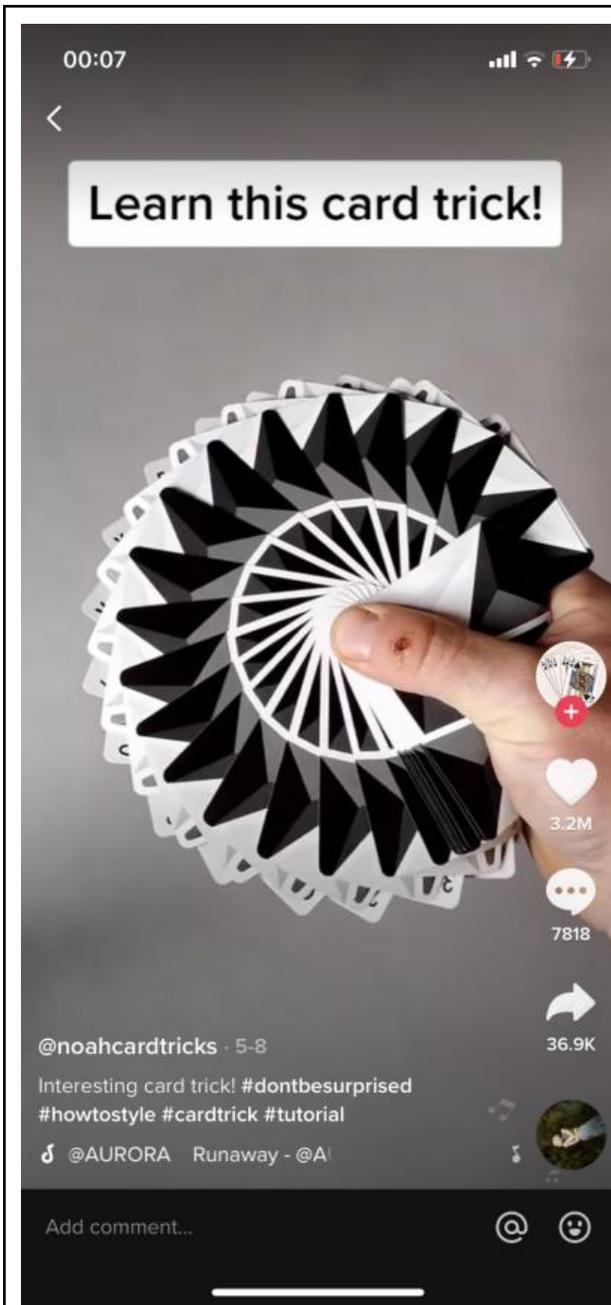
Fig 4.4 Magician exposes how he does a card trick	Fig 4.5 TikTok chef provides cooking skills class to teach how to make salmon blowls
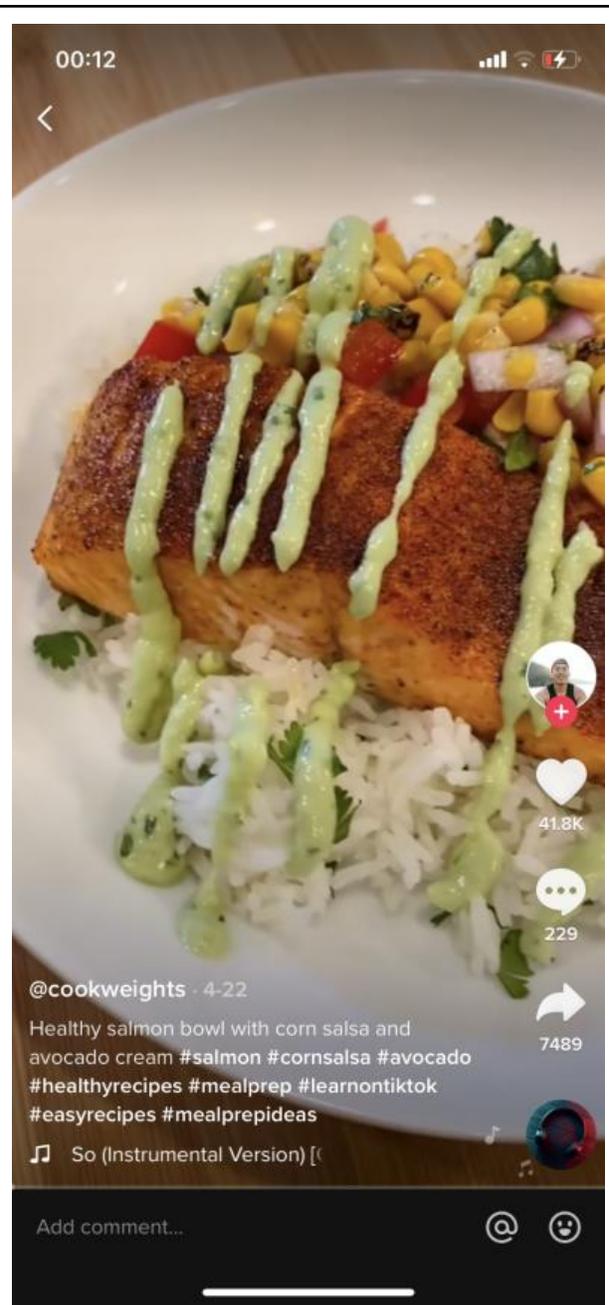
To conclude this section the main findings was that playful communication is put in use to display skills in skill sharing videos, this display is usually presented through entertainment, by

humor, being in dialogue or imagery, and allows room for intriguing the viewers, providing them the tools to discover new skills.

4.2 Teaching Skills

The second emerging theme when considering the role of playful communication in skill-sharing videos was throughout the actual teaching process. It was found that while creators teach skills in the TikTok videos, they exert playful energy. Through the gathered data, it was observed that playful communication elements appear through creativity in the teaching process and gaining the attention of the learners.

In this section, playful communication is put into use by utilizing creativity, in terms of the content of TikTok and expression, within how the creators aim to teach the actual skill.

The main aim of skill-sharing videos is to spread knowledge and provide audiences with the tools to obtain new skills; therefore, it is crucial to analyze the role that playful communication has in the teaching side of skill-sharing videos to understand the basis behind this research.

4.2.1 Creativity

Sicart (2014) identified creativity as one of the core qualities of playfulness, creativity in this sense is a form of expression, referring to how users express themselves throughout the video and use new ways to get teaching messages across. When analyzing skill-sharing videos on tiktok it was important to note that creativity would be present in many forms due to the platform's playful affordances and features that allow for creators to express themselves creatively. While discussing playful learning, the framework by Whitton (2018), whereby he categorizes playful learning methods, was crucial to look at this point. As creative in skill-sharing, TikTok provided playful learning tools, seen in the platform's format and particularities. Additionally, it was able to provide playful learning techniques through presenting performances and allowing for a final product to be produced if the user followed the instructions of the skill-sharing TikTok. Finally, it allowed for playful learning tactics, which can be noticed in the way in which steps are demonstrated throughout the skill-sharing process.

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Visuals

A prominent aspect found regarding teaching skills was the inclusion of creative visuals and visual aids in the videos. The visuals and creative editing provide a light-hearted feel and are playful tactics as they demonstrate regular steps of a learning process in a fun and different way (Whitton, 2018). Visual aids also added elements that made the skill-sharing TikToks easier to follow, such as arrows and indicators for taking the needed steps.
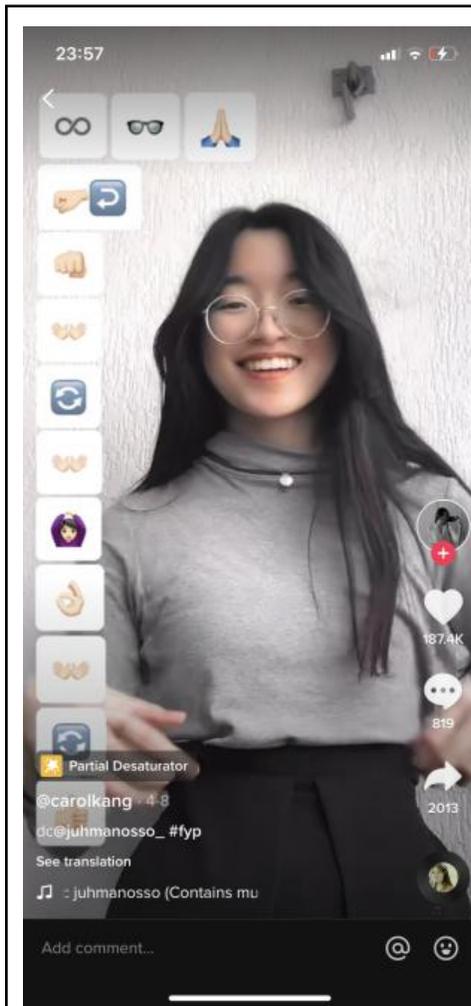
Fig 4.6 Creator shows the steps on how to perform her dance.	Fig 4.7 Football coach teaches how to move to catch the ball on the field.
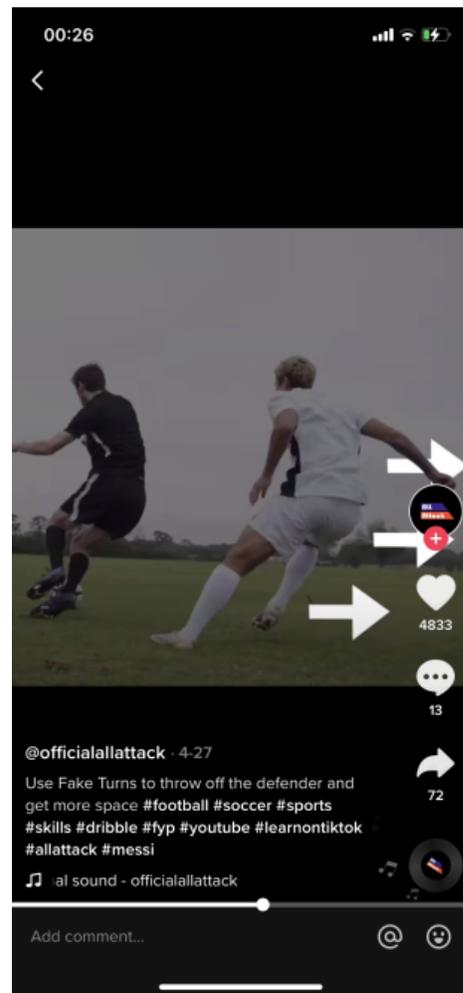
Figure 4.6 represents a skill-sharing video by a creator who produces videos teaching others how to dance; she is sharing steps to a popular dance

by creatively using emojis and symbols instead of words or adding a voice-over in order to refer to the moves of the dance. Each emoji corresponds to a movement; for example, the infinity symbol represents a hand motion where one moves their arm in the shape of the sign. This type of communication can be playful as it triggers a sense of completion; as described in the PLEX framework, completion alludes to finishing a task or attaining a feeling of closure (Lucero & Arrasvuori, 2013). This sense of completion can be achieved when a person understands these symbols and finishes the dance correctly. However, this example does present an issue as it requires the viewer to have prior background knowledge or ludoliteracy, individuals who are not familiar with TikTok dances will not understand the correspondence with the emojis and are therefore excluded from learning this dance (Raessens, 2014).

Fig 4.7 shows an example of visual aids being used to point the attention of the viewers in a specific direction. The arrows point to the direction in which a player should be moving in order to do a football trick. These arrows are playful learning tools, as they are artifacts set to mean something.

The data found that one of the most common ways to achieve a creative video was to add visuals. This playful learning tactic transforms regular processes that may otherwise be deemed as serious into playful learning interactions.

4.2.2 Commanding attention attention

The study by Rice (2009) concluded that the inclusion of playful elements in learning generates feelings of excitement, enjoyment, and increased interest among students. This is a rather important finding to note as it shows the important role that playful communication has on learning. Similarly, to explore the part of playful communication in skill-sharing videos on TikTok, it is important to understand how playfulness can gain the attention of learners.

With regards to grabbing attention, nowadays, it has become hard to gain the attention of viewers due to the fact that the "market" is highly saturated with a variety of creative elements that in order for a unit of content to grab the audience's attention, it must contain features that demand attentiveness or raise the curiosity of the viewer. The main characteristic that stood out from previous research that resulted in this section came from the PLEX framework;

Captivation.

Captivation of attention

The description in the framework states that captivation is forgetting one's surroundings (Lucero & Arrasvuori, 2013) further elaborate on what is meant by cavitation as being taken out of the space therein, forgetting about their surroundings, and fully being encapsulated with the product or object they are focused on. The first step of grabbing attention in the case of skill-sharing videos is captivating the viewer, making sure that they are focused on the Tik Tok and tune out their surroundings. Usually, cavitation occurs through storytelling and/or elements taking the viewer on a journey or through an experience, especially when the product is interactive. This was found through the analyzed data as it proved to be interactive in terms of connecting with audiences; through the process of skill-sharing, the Tiktoks managed to captivate attention as they take the viewers through a process from start to finish, showing them the steps included in the particular skill being shred, similar to telling a story, or taking the user through a journey where they learn or acquire a new skill. Both Figures 4.1 and 4.22 presented below show screenshots of Tiktok skill-sharing videos in which the content was described as captivating by the analysis as they provided with openings that drew in the attention of the users through the language, explaining that they were about to take the viewer through the process of learning something new.
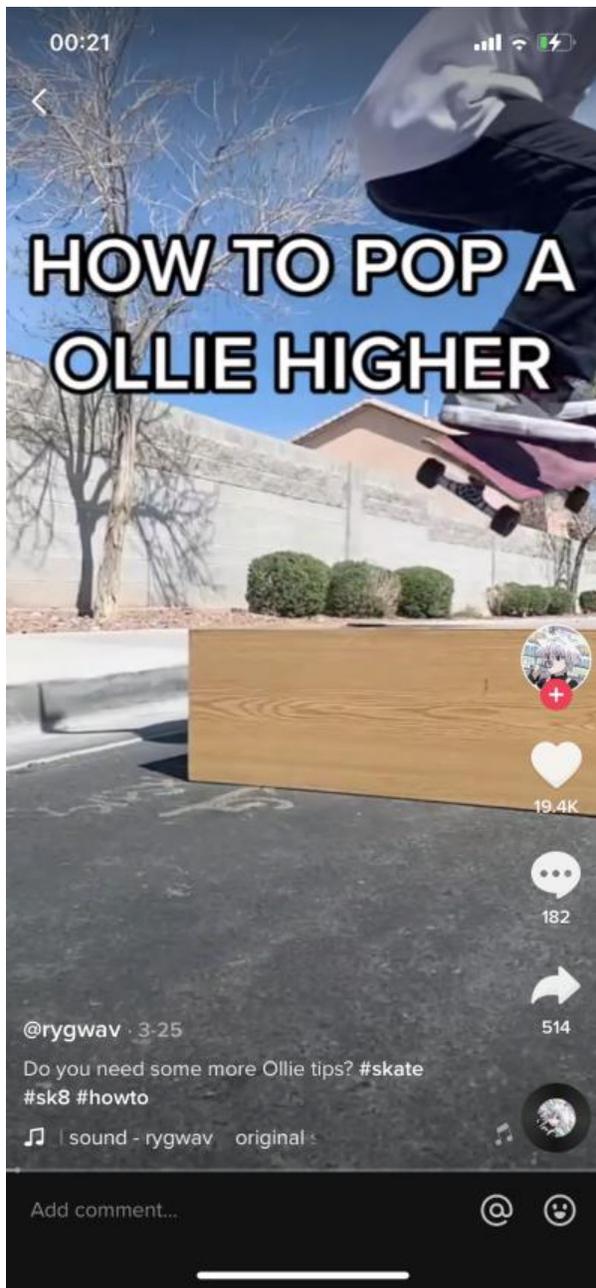
Fig 4.8 Creator shows how to perform skateboarding trick called the ollie
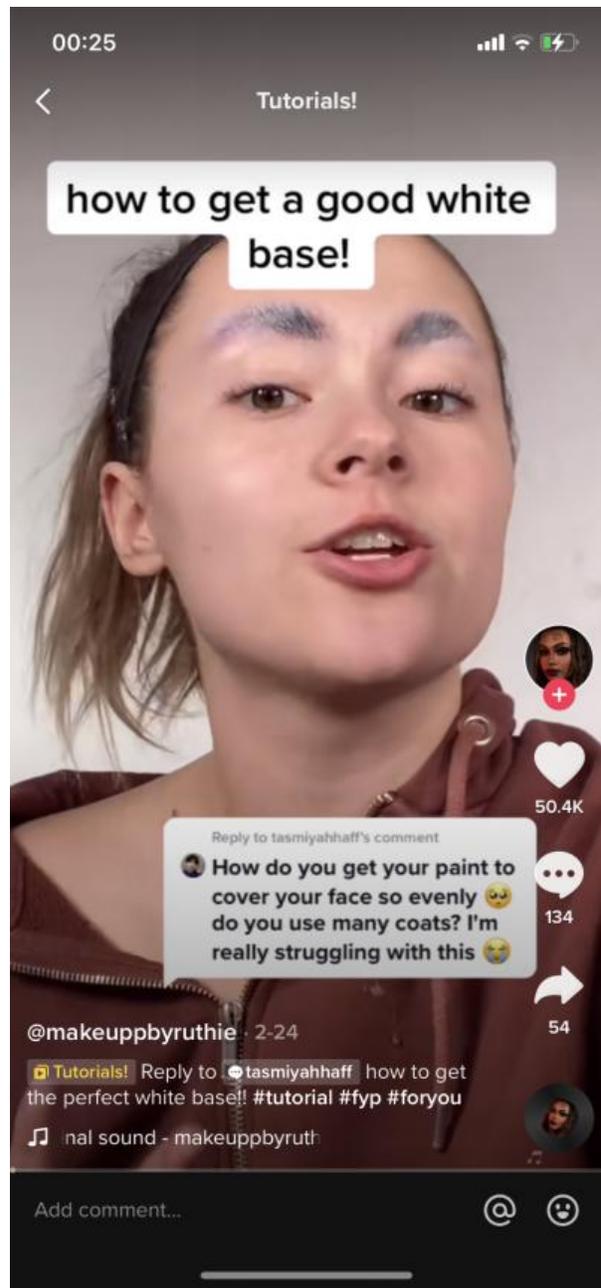
Fig 4.9 SFX TikToker explains how she gets paint to evenly cover her face

4.3 Fostering Engagement

The next overall theme that was derived from the data, illustrates that one of the roles of playful communication in skill-sharing videos is how it stimulates audience engagement. Stimulation can be understood in many different ways, for the purpose of this research and as defined in the operationalization, stimulation will be seen as the act of inciting excitement, enthusiasm, or interest (Lucero & Arrasvuori, 2013). Provoking something in order to lead to development, playful communication is used to evoke a certain reaction or stimulate a feeling or response from the viewers.

Audience Engagement was also agreed to be the transition of viewers from being a passive bystander to an active participant, due to an event that provokes something out of the audience **(**Carpentier, 2011**).**

Through the studied tiktok videos it was found that one of the roles that playful communication plays in skill-sharing videos is that it allows for the videos to stimulate engagement with audiences in multiple different ways and through multiple characteristics of playfulness. The means of stimulation that were observed were through challenges, building relationships through fellowship, and providing sensation, all of which were characteristics defined by the PLEX framework (Lucero & Arrasvuori, 2013).

4.3.1 Challenges

Challenges involve developing and exercising skills in a demanding situation. The challenge can be resolved through physical action or through mental problem solving (Lucero & Arrasvuori, 2013). Challenge may occur on an intellectual level, for example, from attempting to understand some construct.Challenge may come from the necessity of having to continuously learn while developing a skill, when seeking mastery of it, or in the process of actually applying what was learned about the skill. This result was very easily coded to all of the analyzed data, as in the skill-sharing videos, a challenge is always present in the sense that individuals are gaining new information, viewing how it's done, and being challenged to put it into practice.
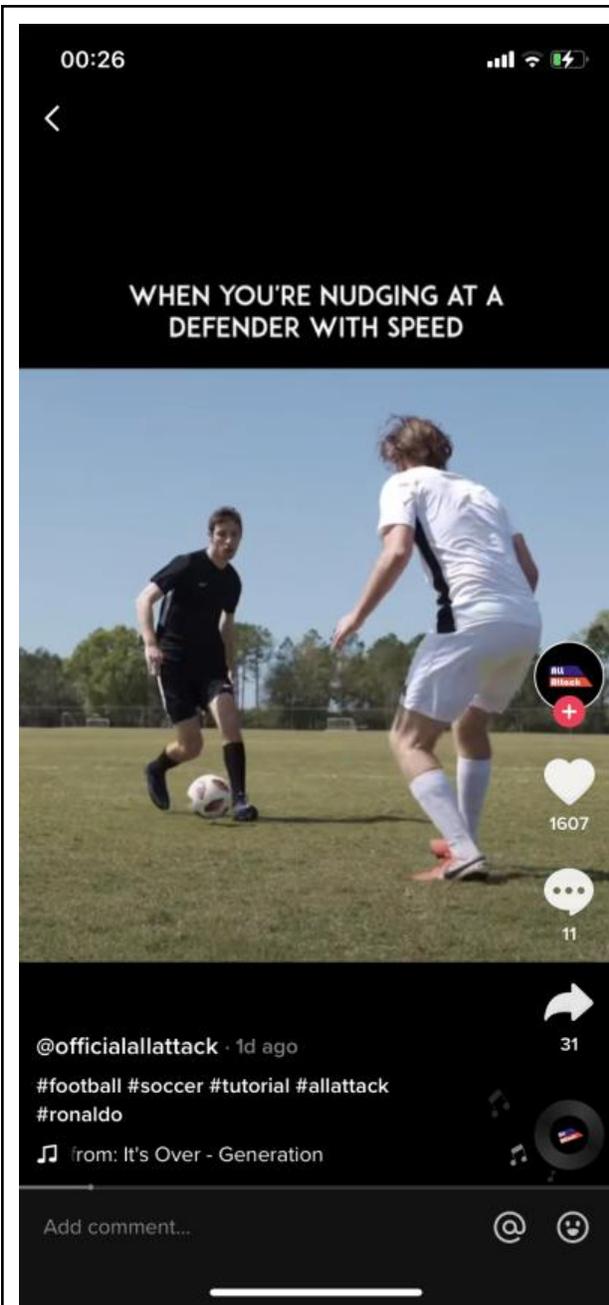
| Fig 4.10 Football coach teaches how to attack. | Fig 4.11 Skater creator explains how to call without getting hurt. |
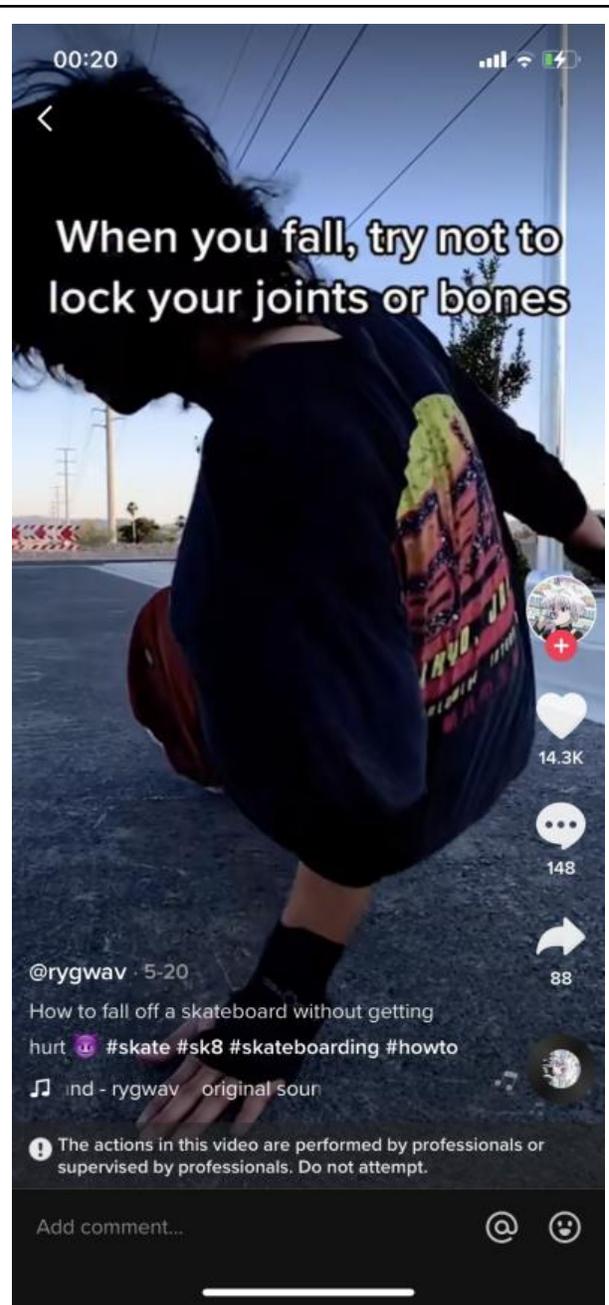
Examples shown in both figure 4.10 and 4.11 show a challenging situation and after provide the observer with the information on how to overcome that challenge.

4.3.2 Fellowship

Dialogue

Alongside the visuals and displays that come with skill-sharing videos is the dialogue that accompanies it. It was observed that most of the tiktoks featured dialogue from the creator directly to their audience. As seen in figure 4.12 and 4.13, the creator addresses the learners as if they are speaking directly to them, creating a personal connection between the two.
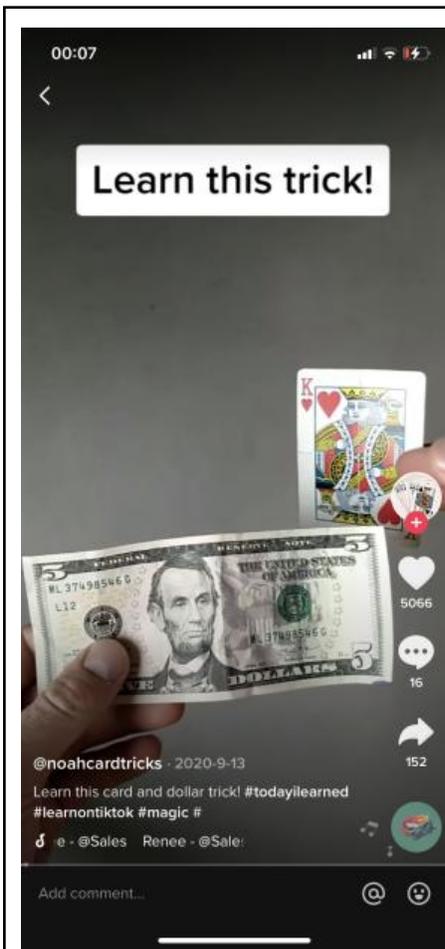
| fig 4.12 Magician revveals how to do the card trick. | Fig 4.13 Skateboarding professional teaches standing rail flip. |
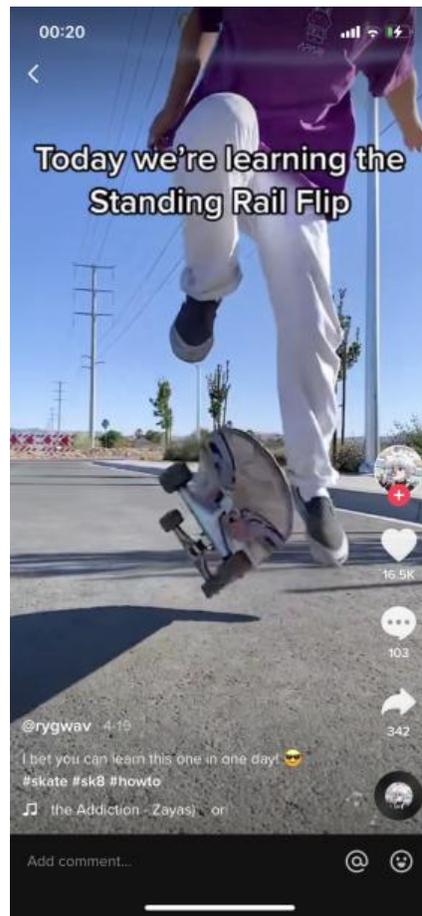
Sicart (2014) also characterized playfulness as being personal, meaning that elements could be construed as playful if they connect with an individual on a personal level On a similar note, the PLEX framework's pleasurable experience of fellowship relates as it discusses Friendship, communality and fosters a relationship of intimacy, which brings things to a personal level.
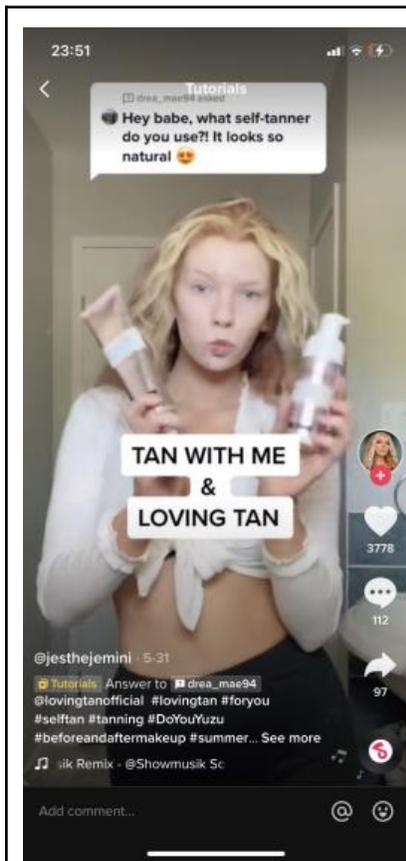
|		
Fig 4.14 Beauty creator replies to question about how to tan.	Fig 4.15 Braclet maker shows how to start off thread bracelet.	Fig 4.16 SFX makeup creator tries trick suggested by commentor.
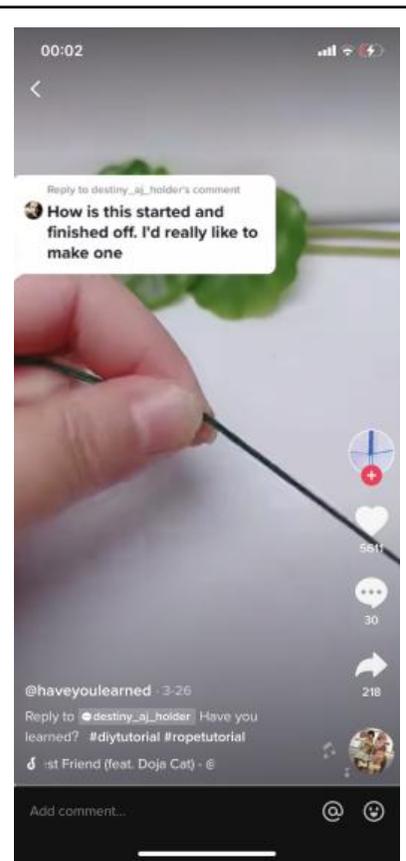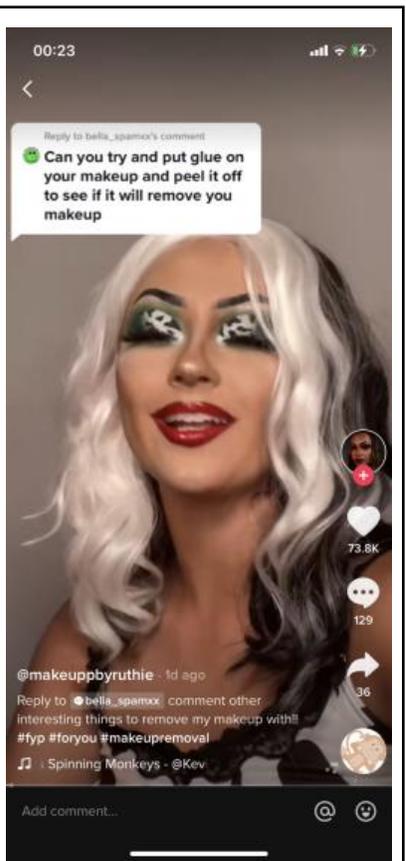
Figure 4.14, 4.15 and 4.16 all show skill-sharing creators making a video in response to a comment they previously had, addressing topics that were raised by the viewers. This action shows the role of playfulness in this regard as these creators build closer and more intimate relationships with their viewers, and are personal as they specifically respond to direct comments.

The main findings from this section showed that through challenges and the building of relationships, which are playful characteristics, creators can foster engagement with their audiences.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The main goal of this study was to gain an understanding of the role that playful communication holds in skill-sharing videos that are posted on the social media platform, TikTok. The research question that guided this study was;

What is the role of playful communication in skill-sharing videos on Tiktok?

This research came up with multiple results and implications that not only fill a gap in the literature concerning skill-sharing and learning on social media platforms but also prove to have interesting perspectives to be taken into account for further research.

To begin with, it was found that playful communication is used in skill-sharing videos to display the skills of the TikTok creator. Here, playfulness is experienced through entertainment from humor with addition to possibly raising the intrigue of learners. The better the display of skills by the creator, the more likely viewers will tune into the rest of the video and attempt to master that skill. Therefore it can be noted that one of the roles of playful communication in skill-sharing videos is that it allows for a strong display of skills.

Secondly, it was found that playfulness plays a role in the teaching process of skill-sharing videos, through the elements of creativity found in the teaching style, being able to integrate playful learning tools, techniques, and tactics, as well as, creative visuals. It was also important to note that playful elements exist in the teaching process in order to grab and retain the attention of the students viewing the video.

Another important conclusion was that through playful challenges and the creation of stimulation and fellowship between the TikTok creator and the audience, engagement was produced.

The final conclusion was more so about the platform in itself, through this study and understanding the main affordances and features provided by TikTok, it can be stated that TikTok is a playful platform.

5.1 Theoretical implications

The following section will discuss the theoretical implications that were highlighted as a result of this study. This research contributes to the current existing studies on playful communication in multiple different ways.

Firstly, this study has brought about a new use for the PLEX framework by Lucero and Arrasvuori (2013), which was intended to measure pleasurable experiences with playing games, proving that this framework is applicable to measure playful experiences across multiple different levels. Through the use of the framework, the 22 characteristics were observable in multiple different aspects and can be used to measure playfulness n different contexts. The second theoretical implication was adding to the debate on social media learning, this field is not well-researched yet and this study adds to the literature and provides the perspective regarding the social media platform TikTok. On a similar note, this research also highlights how playfulness can be found in multiple different elements of the same process, for example when looking at skill-sharing videos posted on TikTok, playfulness is found to play a role in not only the videos themselves but also in the platform the videos are found on. This highlights the fact that TikTok can be used as a standpoint for further studies on playful communication through social media. Adding on to the theoretical implications is, the contribution to understanding skill-sharing, this phenomenon is fairly new and has neither been explored on social media platforms other than YouTube nor has been discussed from an outlook with playfulness in mind.

5.2 Social implications

This research brought about three main social implications worth discussing. The first being that it uncovered and explained more about one of the most popular social media platforms today, TikTok, and since it is only growing in popularity, this study has set a base for future researchers or individuals who want to learn more about the playful nature of the platform. Secondly, this study set important findings regarding playfulness and learning, this is beneficial for individuals who want to partake in skill-sharing as it provides a deeper insight into what skill-sharing entails and how it is carried out on Tiktok.

5.3 *Limitations and Suggestions for future research.*

This section will discuss the limitations that may hinder the outcome of this study and suggestions for future researchers.

The first limitation worth mentioning was that due to a lack of previous research on the topic, many assumptions were made while achieving the results, this can be combated by having more research on the topic and further understanding skill-sharing.

A second limitation is considered in the nature of the method of analysis, being up to the interpretation of just one researcher means that there is room for bias or skewed judgments, however, precautions were taken to avoid this factor as a strong operationalization was set and the rules of thematic analysis were upheld.

Another limitation on the results to consider is that they may be constricted by the fact that the study only focused on TikTok videos, more generalizable results on skill-sharing videos could have been produced if content from more platforms were considered. A suggestion for further research would be to take a comparative outlook and compare between the role of playful communication on different platforms, maybe compare TikTok and YouTube tutorials.

Finally, the research could possibly have been limited by the varying types of content that was analyzed, skill-sharing videos from multiple different themes were looked at, it could be interesting for other researchers to focus on one specific type of skill-sharing, whether it is music, beauty content or language learning.

Additionally, It would be interesting to further study more serious education on TikTok, rather than with a focus on skills, and understand how users can gather academic knowledge on the social media platform.

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Appendix A: Coding tree