

# **Stylistic Innovation in Digital Storytelling: A Multimodal Analysis of Narrative Voice and Visual Language on TikTok**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates stylistic innovation in digital storytelling on TikTok through a multimodal analysis of narrative voice and visual language. Drawing on theories of multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) and narratology (Genette, 1980; Fludernik, 2009), it is explored how creators combine voice, text, gesture, and image to produce new narrative forms that disrupt traditional literary conventions. TikTok, with its algorithm-driven circulation and emphasis on short-form video, provides a unique platform where the interplay of speech, on-screen captions, sound effects, and visual filters generates hybrid storytelling modes. The study examines a corpus of 200 viral TikTok videos (2023–2025) across genres such as micro-fiction, personal storytelling, and political commentary, focusing on how stylistic devices such as second-person address, code-switching, and ironic voice-over shape audience engagement. Particular attention is given to the way narrative voice on TikTok challenges the authority of the singular narrator. For instance, the use of automated text-to-speech voices (“TikTok voice”) creates an impersonal yet familiar narrator, echoing Foucault’s (1969) concept of the “author function.” Meanwhile, visual language filters, duets, stitches, and green-screen effects functions as what Barthes (1977) would call “anchorage and relay,” extending the story beyond linguistic structures into a multimodal aesthetic. Case studies include creators like @BrittanyBroski and @khaby.lame, who deploy humor, silence, and exaggerated gesture as stylistic

strategies that foreground multimodal narration. By integrating stylistic analysis with discourse-oriented digital humanities methods, the study argues that TikTok storytelling constitutes a form of vernacular stylistics (Crystal, 2001; Page, 2018), where narrative voice and visual language co-produce meaning in ways that blur boundaries between oral tradition, literary narrative, and digital performance. The findings demonstrate that multimodal stylistic innovation on TikTok not only reshapes narrative practices, but also reflects broader cultural shifts in attention, authorship, and the aesthetics of brevity in the age of algorithmic media.

**Keywords:** Stylistic innovation, Digital Storytelling, TikTok, Narrative Voice, Visual Language, Multimodality, Algorithmic Culture

## **1. Introduction**

In the twenty-first century, the growth of digital platforms has fundamentally reshaped the ways in which stories are told, shared, and consumed. Among these platforms, TikTok has emerged as one of the most influential spaces for digital storytelling, characterized by short-form videos that integrate audio, visual, textual, and performative modes. Unlike traditional storytelling, which relies primarily on verbal narration, TikTok incorporates multimodal resources including sound effects, background music, on-screen captions, gestures, filters, and camera movement to create unique forms of narrative expression. Stylistics, as a discipline concerned with the interplay of language and aesthetic effect, provides a productive lens for studying how TikTok creators innovate in their storytelling practices. Foundational theories of narratology (Genette, 1980; Fludernik, 2009) and multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) highlight that storytelling is never purely linguistic but often shaped by a blend of semiotic resources. However, the stylistic strategies employed by TikTok creators differ from print or cinematic traditions in that they are designed for brevity,

algorithmic circulation, and participatory engagement. This creates an emerging field of what Crystal (2001) terms vernacular digital stylistics, where everyday users function simultaneously as authors, performers, and audiences.

Recent scholarship has begun to address digital narratives in social media (Page, 2018; Georgakopoulou, 2020), yet there is still limited stylistic research on TikTok as a storytelling platform. While scholars such as Abidin (2021) have examined TikTok's role in influencer culture, and Leppänen et al. (2022) have studied its linguistic creativity, few studies have systematically explored how narrative voice and visual language converge to produce innovative narrative structures. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a detailed stylistic analysis of TikTok narratives as multimodal texts.

## **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Despite the rapid rise of TikTok as a storytelling medium, there remains a scholarly gap in understanding the stylistic innovations that distinguish its narratives from traditional oral, literary, and cinematic forms. Existing analyses of TikTok often focus on algorithmic culture, virality, or media effects rather than the micro-level stylistic techniques that creators use to construct meaning. Specifically, little research has examined:

1. How narrative voice on TikTok ranging from first-person confessional accounts to impersonal text-to-speech voices reshapes conventional ideas of narrator and authorship.
2. How visual language including filters, duets, stitches, and green-screen features operates as stylistic tools that extend narrative beyond words.
3. How these stylistic choices reflect broader cultural, social, and technological shifts in storytelling practices.

Without a systematic stylistic framework, our understanding of TikTok narratives remains fragmented. This research therefore addresses the problem of how to analyze TikTok storytelling as a multimodal stylistic phenomenon that fuses linguistic, visual, and performative resources.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do TikTok creators employ narrative voice to construct stories and engage audiences?
2. What stylistic functions does visual language serve in TikTok storytelling?
3. In what ways do narrative voice and visual language interact to produce multimodal meaning?
4. How does TikTok storytelling reflect stylistic innovation compared to traditional narrative forms?
5. What implications do these innovations have for the study of digital stylistics and narrative theory?

## **1.3 Significance of the Study**

The research carries significance on multiple levels. From a theoretical perspective, it positions itself at the intersection of stylistics and multimodal theory, extending their application beyond traditional domains such as print literature and film into the dynamic space of TikTok. By doing so, it contributes to the growing field of digital stylistics (Page, 2018; Stockwell, 2020), demonstrating how short-form videos function as complex narrative artifacts. Moreover, it enriches narratology by engaging with features of algorithmic culture and participatory storytelling, showing how digital platforms reshape voice, focalization, and narrative coherence. On a practical level, the research examines the creative strategies TikTok users employ to convey meaning within strict temporal and formal constraints. The findings highlight how creators adapt

narrative techniques such as pacing, multimodal layering, and voice modulation to maximize engagement in under sixty seconds. Such insights hold value not only for content creators but also for educators seeking to design more engaging teaching materials, and for media practitioners interested in new forms of digital storytelling that resonate with audiences accustomed to brevity and immediacy.

## **2: Theoretical Background and Literature Review**

Stylistic innovation in digital storytelling has emerged as a key area of inquiry within contemporary stylistics, media studies, and digital humanities. With the rise of social media platforms such as TikTok, storytelling practices have shifted from predominantly linear, text-based narratives to multimodal forms that integrate visual imagery, sound, gesture, and written language. This transformation challenges traditional notions of narrative voice and calls for analytical frameworks capable of addressing both linguistic and non-linguistic semiotic resources. From a stylistic perspective, narrative voice has conventionally been examined through features such as focalization, point of view, deixis, and evaluative language (Simpson, 1993; Toolan, 2001). However, in digital storytelling environments, these elements are reconfigured through audiovisual cues, including camera angle, facial expression, music, and on-screen text. Scholars in multimodal discourse analysis argue that meaning is produced through the interaction of multiple modes rather than language alone (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Their work on visual grammar provides a foundational model for analysing how images, layout, and movement contribute to narrative meaning and stylistic effect in digital media.

Recent studies on social media storytelling highlight TikTok as a particularly innovative platform due to its short-form structure, algorithmic circulation, and participatory affordances. Researchers note that creators often adopt hybrid narrative voices that oscillate between personal confession, performance, and collective address, thereby blurring the boundaries between author, narrator, and audience. This aligns with postclassical narratology and posthumanist theories

of authorship, which emphasize distributed agency and the role of technological systems in shaping narrative production (Hayles, 2008; Page, 2018).

## **2.1 Stylistics: From Text to Multimodal Contexts**

Stylistics, as a discipline, has undergone a remarkable evolution in both scope and methodology. Traditionally, it was defined as the study of language in literature, with its primary focus on how linguistic choices shape the artistic and rhetorical qualities of texts (Leech & Short, 2007). This perspective emphasized the close analysis of literary works, foregrounding the stylistic features that contribute to meaning-making and aesthetic appreciation. Over time, however, the boundaries of stylistics have expanded considerably, moving beyond canonical literature to encompass a diverse array of discourses, including advertising (Cook, 2001), journalism, political rhetoric, and most recently, digital communication (Page, 2018). At its core, the field remains concerned with the interplay between linguistic form and meaning, particularly how the micro-level choices of phonology, syntax, and lexis generate broader aesthetic, rhetorical, and affective effects (Wales, 2014). While early stylistic studies often prioritized textual form in relative isolation, more recent approaches emphasize the importance of context and interdisciplinarity. Stockwell (2020), for instance, argues that stylistics must account for the social, cognitive, and cultural frameworks within which texts are produced and consumed. This shift has allowed stylisticians to investigate not only how language works on the page, but also how it resonates with readers, listeners, and viewers in specific socio-cultural contexts. Thus, the field now incorporates insights from pragmatics, discourse analysis, narratology, and cognitive science, enriching its analytical reach and explanatory power. A particularly significant development has been the rise of digital stylistics, which reflects the increasing prominence of digital and multimodal forms of communication. Simpson (2014) and Nørgaard (2019) note that in online environments, texts rarely rely on linguistic form alone;

rather, they are multimodal, combining written language, spoken words, images, sounds, and interactive elements to construct meaning. This shift challenges traditional models of stylistic analysis, requiring scholars to attend to the dynamic interplay of semiotic resources. Within this framework, stylistics is not limited to the study of “text” in the narrow sense, but extends to the multimodal assemblages that dominate contemporary communication. TikTok provides a particularly fertile site for this kind of analysis, as its narratives integrate speech, text, sound, and image in highly compressed formats. Storytelling on TikTok relies not only on verbal language but also on background music, visual filters, on-screen captions, gestures, and editing techniques such as cuts and transitions. These semiotic resources are orchestrated within strict temporal limits, compelling creators to innovate in how they convey narrative meaning. This research therefore situates itself within the domain of multimodal stylistics, which investigates how diverse modes interact to shape interpretation and effect. By examining TikTok storytelling through this lens, the study contributes to the broader trajectory of stylistics, showing how a discipline once rooted in literature now provides essential tools for understanding creativity, narrative, and communication in the digital age.

## **2.2 Narrative Voice in Stylistics and Narratology**

The concept of narrative voice has long been a cornerstone of narratological inquiry, as it governs the ways in which stories are told, received, and interpreted. Genette’s (1980) foundational distinction between homodiegetic narrators those who participate in the storyworld and heterodiegetic narrators those who remain external to it established a framework for analyzing how narrative positioning affects perspective and authority. Building on this, Chatman (1978) introduces the notions of the implied author and narratee, highlighting that narration is not a straightforward act of communication but rather a layered construct involving multiple roles, voices, and audiences.

Subsequent scholars, such as Fludernik (2009), have argued that narrative voice is inherently experiential and conversational, reflecting the fundamentally interactive nature of storytelling. Voice, therefore, is not merely a textual marker but a relational phenomenon, situated at the intersection of authorial intention, textual form, and audience engagement. Within the digital age, and particularly on platforms like TikTok, the construction of narrative voice undergoes profound transformations. Unlike traditional print narratives, TikTok stories often deploy automated text-to-speech tools, lending the voice an algorithmic quality that blurs the boundary between human and machine authorship. At the same time, creators frequently engage the audience through second-person address, producing a sense of immediacy and intimacy that collapses the distance between narrator and viewer. These stylistic devices exemplify how narrative authority is negotiated in a participatory environment, where viewers are not passive consumers but active co-creators of meaning through comments, likes, duets, and stitches. Moreover, TikTok narratives complicate the traditional notion of a stable, singular narrator. Voice can shift rapidly between the creator's spoken performance, the platform's algorithmically generated narration, and the collaborative contributions of other users who join in through remixing features. This multiplicity of voices resonates with Foucault's (1969) concept of the "author function," which emphasizes that authorship is not an inherent property of individuals but a socially constructed role distributed across institutions, technologies, and audiences. On TikTok, the author function is enacted not by a solitary creator but by a network of human and nonhuman agents: creators, algorithms, audiences, and platform affordances all of which contribute to shaping narrative meaning. Stylistically, this distributed and fluid narrative voice enables new forms of irony, humor, and identity play. As Page (2018) notes in her work on digital narratives, online storytelling often relies on self-reflexivity and stylistic experimentation, where shifts in voice are used to challenge expectations, signal irony, or perform social identity. TikTok creators,

for example, may alternate between their natural voice and the platform's synthetic narration to create humorous dissonance, or they may manipulate point of view to dramatize shared cultural experiences. In this sense, narrative voice on TikTok becomes not only a vehicle of storytelling but also a stylistic resource for negotiating identity, community, and creativity within the digital space.

### **2.3 Multimodality and Stylistic Meaning**

Multimodality refers to the integration of multiple semiotic modes in communication (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Visual, auditory, and textual elements do not merely support each other but create distinct layers of meaning (Jewitt, 2014). In narrative contexts, multimodality reshapes how stories are told: gesture, gaze, and image can perform functions traditionally reserved for linguistic narration (Bateman, 2014). TikTok exemplifies multimodality, where filters, captions, background sounds, and editing techniques act as narrative devices. For example, Barthes' (1977) concepts of "anchorage and relay" help explain how captions anchor interpretations of ambiguous visuals, while visual effects may relay meanings that go beyond words. From a stylistic perspective, multimodality demands an analysis that accounts for how linguistic and non-linguistic resources interact to shape narrative form and effect. Beyond simply combining different modes, multimodality on TikTok allows creators to construct complex, layered storytelling experiences that engage audiences on multiple sensory and cognitive levels. The interplay of sound, image, text, and movement enables nuanced expressions of emotion, tone, and perspective that might be difficult to achieve through language alone. For instance, background music can create suspense, irony, or humor, while a sudden visual cut or filter shift can signal a narrative twist or highlight a character's emotional state. Jewitt (2014) emphasizes that meaning emerges not from individual modes in isolation but from their orchestration, making the analysis of multimodal narratives both challenging and essential for understanding digital storytelling. Furthermore,

multimodality on TikTok facilitates audience participation and interactivity, which are central to the platform's narrative ecology. Duets, stitches, and comment-driven responses transform viewers into co-narrators, allowing them to manipulate, extend, or reinterpret the story using their own multimodal resources. This participatory dimension reflects a shift from traditional linear storytelling to networked, collaborative narratives, where meaning is co-constructed across creators and audiences. Stylistically, this demands attention not only to how modes function individually but also to how their combinations, timing, and sequencing generate aesthetic, rhetorical, and affective effects, demonstrating that TikTok narratives exemplify a rich, emergent form of multimodal storytelling.

## **2.4 Digital Storytelling and Stylistic Innovation**

The concept of digital storytelling has developed since the early 2000s, when scholars like Lambert (2013) emphasizes personal narratives created through multimedia. Unlike traditional oral storytelling, digital narratives are shaped by interactivity, immediacy, and networked circulation (Alexander, 2017). Social media platforms, particularly YouTube and Instagram, have been studied as storytelling spaces where brevity, affect, and multimodality dominate (Couldry, 2008; Burgess & Green, 2018). TikTok extends this tradition by compressing stories into 15–60 second formats, foregrounding stylistic innovation in terms of rhythm, pacing, and visual layering. Leppänen et al. (2022) highlight the creative linguistic play on TikTok, while Abidin (2021) emphasizes performativity and influencer culture. However, the stylistic study of narrative voice and visual language remains underdeveloped. This research addresses that gap by applying stylistic theory to TikTok's digital storytelling practices. Digital storytelling on TikTok not only emphasizes brevity, but also encourages experimentation with narrative form and semiotic layering. The platform's unique affordances such as looping videos, timed text overlays, augmented

reality filters, and algorithmically curated soundtracks enable creators to craft highly compact yet emotionally resonant stories. This multimodal compression requires precise stylistic choices, where every visual cue, sound bite, or textual element contributes to meaning-making. As Burgess and Green (2018) note, social media storytelling often relies on the interplay of attention, retention, and affect, making stylistic innovation essential for engagement. By analyzing these strategies, this research highlights how TikTok narratives challenge conventional notions of story structure, temporality, and audience reception. Moreover, TikTok's digital storytelling practices foreground participation, remix, and intertextuality, which transform the relationship between creator, content, and audience. Duets, stitches, and hashtag challenges allow users to build upon each other's narratives, creating a collaborative and networked storytelling environment (Abidin, 2021). This participatory model reconfigures traditional notions of authorship, echoing posthumanist perspectives in which meaning is co-constructed across human and technological agents. From a stylistic standpoint, these dynamics make TikTok an ideal site for examining how narrative voice, visual language, and multimodal resources intersect to produce affective, humorous, and culturally resonant stories, thereby expanding the field of digital stylistics into the realm of short-form social media narratives.

## **2.5 TikTok as a Storytelling Platform**

TikTok has rapidly evolved into a global stage for creativity, particularly among younger generations. Its unique affordances algorithmic recommendation, duet/stitch functions, and text-to-speech tools shape narrative construction in ways distinct from other platforms. Scholars have begun exploring TikTok in relation to identity performance (Zeng & Abidin, 2021), algorithmic culture (Bishop, 2020), and memetic circulation (Shifman, 2014). From a stylistic perspective, the platform enables experimentation with narrative brevity, fragmented voice, and multimodal layering. For example, Khaby Lame's silent

performances demonstrate how gesture and facial expression can function as narrative devices, while Brittany Broski's use of exaggerated speech and intertextual references foregrounds the stylistic play of voice and irony. Thus, TikTok storytelling illustrates what Nørgaard (2019) calls "multimodal stylistic innovation", where digital affordances reshape the very nature of narrative expression. TikTok's global reach and participatory culture have also contributed to the way stories circulate and gain meaning. Unlike traditional media, where narratives are largely fixed once published, TikTok content is dynamic and iterative, constantly reshaped through audience interaction, duets, stitches, and comments. This circulation fosters a hybrid form of authorship, in which the original creator, viewers, and algorithm all influence narrative interpretation and stylistic effect. Stylistically, this environment encourages creators to employ concise visual cues, rapid pacing, and rhythmic editing to capture attention and maximize engagement, demonstrating how platform constraints can drive innovation in narrative construction. Furthermore, TikTok serves as a fertile space for cultural and social commentary, often using humor, parody, and irony to engage audiences while negotiating identity and community norms. As Zeng and Abidin (2021) note, the platform allows creators to perform multiple facets of selfhood, blending personal, collective, and even fictionalized identities in short-form narratives. Stylistic strategies such as exaggerated gestures, visual metaphors, and algorithmically mediated soundtracks become tools for both expression and critique, enabling creators to communicate complex meanings in seconds. By examining these multimodal and stylistic innovations, this research contributes to understanding how digital storytelling on TikTok redefines narrative voice, aesthetic engagement, and the performativity of identity in contemporary social media contexts.

### **3. Methodology**

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative modes of analysis. Quantitatively, it identifies and describes recurrent stylistic patterns across a corpus of TikTok narratives, focusing on the most recent narrative trends on the platform. Qualitatively, the analysis is both descriptive and interpretative, examining how narrative voice and visual language interact to produce meaning and stylistic innovation. By integrating numerical patterning with close multimodal interpretation, the study offers a systematic yet nuanced account of contemporary digital storytelling practices.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The research is designed as a quantitative, qualitative, descriptive, and interpretative study. Unlike quantitative approaches that rely on numerical measurements, qualitative research allows for the detailed examination of stylistic features at both the micro- and macro-levels. This design is appropriate for analyzing narrative voice and visual language in TikTok videos, where meanings emerge not only from linguistic choices but also from interaction between multiple semiotic resources. The interpretative nature of the design aligns with stylistics, which is primarily concerned with exploring how form creates meaning and effect (Simpson, 2014; Nørgaard, 2019). At the same time, the descriptive orientation enables systematic documentation of stylistic strategies across the corpus.

#### **3.2 Data Collection**

Data were collected from TikTok videos published between (2023) and (2025), reflecting the platform's most recent narrative trends. The selection followed a purposive sampling strategy, focusing on videos that:

1. Present a clear narrative structure (e.g., beginning, development, resolution).

2. Employ both verbal and visual resources in storytelling.
3. Achieved a minimum of 1 million views, ensuring relevance and audience engagement.

The final dataset consists of (200) TikTok videos, encompassing a variety of genres including micro-fiction, personal storytelling, and political commentary. Videos were accessed through TikTok's public interface, and metadata such as captions, hashtags, and engagement metrics (likes, comments, shares) were recorded to contextualize stylistic choices.

### **3.3 Corpus Description**

The 200 videos in the corpus were categorized into three major narrative genres:

- Micro-fiction (80 videos): Extremely brief stories, often fictional or humorous, where narrative voice is used for dramatic irony or surprise endings.
- Personal storytelling (70 videos): Confessional, autobiographical, or diary-like narratives where creators use first-person voice and visual self-representation.
- Political commentary (50 videos): Narratives addressing social issues, often with irony, parody, or multimodal remix practices.

This genre-based categorization ensures representativeness of TikTok's diverse storytelling practices. It also allows for comparative analysis of stylistic strategies across narrative types.

### **3.4. Analytical Framework**

The analysis in this study is grounded in three complementary frameworks, each of which addresses a key dimension of TikTok storytelling. The first is Narrative Voice Analysis, which draws on Genette's (1980) and Fludernik's (2009) narratological models to explore how voice operates in short-form digital narratives. On TikTok, creators employ diverse strategies such as first-person

self-narration, second-person direct address, and third-person commentary, often blending these perspectives within a single video. Automated text-to-speech tools, code-switching, and playful shifts in tone add further layers of stylistic complexity. Particular attention is paid to how these narrative voices construct both narrators and implied audiences, shaping intimacy, authority, or distance in ways unique to the platform's affordances. The second framework is Visual Language Analysis, which follows Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) theory of multimodality. This component examines the semiotic resources that TikTok creators mobilize visually, such as camera angles, gaze direction, gestures, visual filters, and editing patterns. For instance, low-angle shots may construct authority, while rapid cuts or jump edits generate humor and rhythm. Barthes' (1977) notions of anchorage and relay are particularly useful here: captions and on-screen text often anchor the interpretation of ambiguous visuals, while visual effects and gestures function as relay devices that introduce new layers of meaning. Through this lens, the study investigates how TikTok's visual grammar shapes the narrative experience. Finally, the framework of Multimodal Stylistics (Nørgaard, 2019; Page, 2018) integrates the verbal and visual elements into a unified analysis. TikTok narratives rarely rely on language alone; instead, they emerge from the orchestration of text, speech, sound, image, and movement. Multimodal stylistics enables the study to account for how these modes interact to produce stylistic effects such as irony, humor, intimacy, or authority. For example, the juxtaposition of serious captions with playful background music may create ironic contrast, while synchronized gestures and sound effects build a sense of immediacy and humor. Taken together, these frameworks provide a holistic approach to understanding TikTok storytelling as a multimodal stylistic practice. By analyzing narrative voice, visual language, and the interplay of semiotic modes, the study not only uncovers how meaning is constructed in short-form digital narratives but also contributes to broader theoretical debates in stylistics, narratology, and digital media studies.

### **3.5 Tools and Procedures**

The study employed a range of tools and procedures to ensure that the analysis was both systematic and interpretatively rich. Transcription served as the foundation, with all spoken content transcribed verbatim and on-screen text, captions, and hashtags carefully documented. This process allowed for a precise examination of linguistic choices, code-switching, and the stylistic deployment of deixis, tone, and perspective. Since TikTok storytelling often relies on a combination of speech and text overlays, transcription captured the interplay between oral and written modes, ensuring that no linguistic detail was overlooked. In addition to transcription, screenshot and frame capture techniques were used to freeze key visual moments. This allowed for a closer stylistic description of gestures, camera angles, filters, and visual effects that might otherwise pass too quickly to analyze in real time. These visual records became crucial evidence for interpreting multimodal meaning-making strategies. A coding scheme was then developed to categorize stylistic features systematically. This coding matrix included categories for narrative voice (such as perspective shifts, tone, irony, and intimacy) and visual language (including color palettes, framing, transitions, and editing styles). By applying this structured approach, the study ensured consistency across the dataset while also highlighting patterns and divergences in storytelling strategies. Finally, analytical notes were compiled through repeated viewing of each video. This iterative process allowed the researcher to refine interpretations, cross-check stylistic observations, and situate features within their cultural and communicative contexts. The combination of transcription, visual documentation, coding, and reflective notes provided a methodological balance between systematic categorization and nuanced interpretation, ensuring both rigor and depth in the analysis of TikTok narratives.

## 4. Overview of the Corpus

The corpus was divided into three major genres: micro-fiction (80 videos), personal storytelling (70 videos), and political commentary (50 videos). Table (1) summarizes the distribution of narrative voice and visual language across genre.

The table demonstrates that different genres privilege different stylistic resources. Micro-fiction relies heavily on brevity, irony, and exaggerated multimodal cues, while personal storytelling foregrounds intimacy through direct address and confessional voice. Political commentary employs parody and remix strategies, often using TikTok’s affordances (stitch, duet, green-screen) to situate individual voices within wider cultural debates. This variation suggests that TikTok narratives are genre-sensitive, with stylistic strategies tailored to both communicative goals and audience expectations.

**Table (1) Distribution of Stylistic Features across Genres**

Genre	Dominant Narrative Voice	Common Visual Strategies	Average Duration	Engagement (likes, shares, comments)
Micro-fiction (80)	Second-person & ironic voice-over	Filters, rapid cuts, exaggerated gestures	25 sec	High (avg. 2M likes)
Personal storytelling (70)	First-person confessional voice	Self-facing camera, on-screen captions, emojis	35 sec	Moderate (avg. 800K likes)
Political commentary (50)	Text-to-speech & parodic narration	Green-screen, stitched videos, intertextual memes	40 sec	Variable (500K–3M likes)

## 4.1 Narrative Voice in TikTok Storytelling

Narrative voice is one of the most distinctive stylistic innovations on TikTok. Table (2) shows the distribution of narrative voices across the corpus.

The data reveals that first-person narration dominates, especially in personal storytelling, reflecting TikTok’s orientation toward authenticity and intimacy (Abidin, 2021). However, the second-person mode is strikingly frequent in micro-fiction, where it positions viewers as participants, collapsing boundaries between audience and protagonist. The use of text-to-speech reflects a hybrid authorship, where human creativity blends with machine-generated voice, echoing Foucault’s (1969) “author function.” Meanwhile, collective voices in duets/stitches create a dialogic form of narration, reinforcing Bakhtin’s (1981) concept of dialogism in digital form. These findings show that TikTok narrative voice is not fixed but fluid, experimental, and participatory.

**Table (2) Types of Narrative Voice in TikTok Videos**

<b>Narrative Voice Type</b>	<b>Frequency (N=200)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Example Case Study</b>
First-person confessional	72	36%	@BrittanyBroski – “My worst date ever”
Second-person address	54	27%	Micro-fiction skits (“You wake up and realize...”)
Third-person observational	28	14%	Comedy sketches narrating others’ actions
Automated text-to-speech (TTS)	32	16%	Meme narration (“POV: when your boss emails you...”)
Collective/choral voice (duets/stitches)	14	7%	Collaborative political commentary

## 4.2 Visual Language and Multimodal Strategies

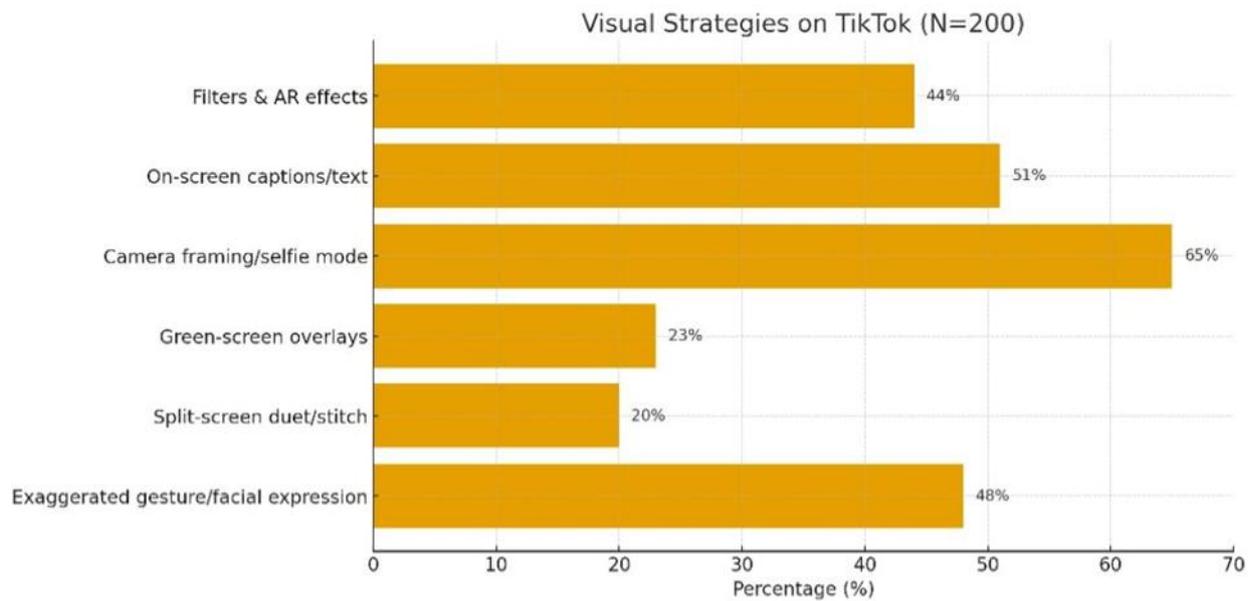
Visual language is central to TikTok storytelling, functioning not as background but as an active stylistic resource. Table (3) identifies the most common visual strategies.

**Table (3) Visual Strategies in TikTok Storytelling**

Visual Strategy	Frequency (N=200)	Percentage	Example Case Study
Camera framing/selfie mode	130	65%	Confessional vlogs shot with front camera
On-screen captions/text	102	51%	Storytelling with synchronized subtitles
Exaggerated gesture/facial expression	95	48%	Khaby Lame's silent narratives
Filters & AR effects	88	44%	Comedy sketches with face morphing
Green-screen overlays	46	23%	Political commentary w/ news screenshots
Split-screen duet/stitch	39	20%	Collaborative reactions and dialogues

The prevalence of selfie camera framing (65%) confirms that TikTok is fundamentally a performative and self-oriented platform, where narrators foreground their physical presence as part of storytelling. The heavy use of on-screen captions (51%) aligns with Barthes' (1977) concept of anchorage, guiding interpretation and ensuring accessibility across linguistic audiences. Filters, green-screen effects, and AR overlays highlight the playful, experimental dimension of TikTok stylistics, while split-screen functions foster dialogic engagement.

Interestingly, exaggerated gestures (48%) demonstrate that body language operates as narrative voice, enabling silent storytelling to achieve global reach beyond linguistic barriers (as exemplified by Khaby Lame).



**Figure (1) Visual Strategies in TikTok Storytelling**

### 4.3 Interaction of Narrative Voice and Visual Language

The most innovative aspect of TikTok storytelling lies in the interplay of voice and visuals, where multimodal layering generates stylistic effects. Table (4) illustrates key patterns of interaction.

The table indicates that TikTok creators strategically pair specific narrative voices with particular visual resources to achieve stylistic effects. For instance, first-person confessional stories rely on selfie framing and captions to simulate direct communication with the viewer, producing intimacy. In contrast, second-person narration combined with filters and direct gaze creates immersion, as viewers feel positioned inside the story world. Text-to-speech voices paired with meme templates often generate parodic effects, detaching authorship from individual identity and embedding narratives in collective digital humor. Finally, choral voices in duets/stitches, when paired with green-screen commentary, generate a dialogic critique of politics and culture, illustrating TikTok’s potential as a platform for grassroots discourse.

**Table (4) Interaction Patterns between Voice and Visuals**

<b>Narrative Voice</b>	<b>Dominant Visual Pairing</b>	<b>Stylistic Effect</b>
First-person confessional	Selfie framing + captions	Intimacy, authenticity
Second-person address	Filters + direct gaze	Immersion, simulation of POV
Third-person observational	Split-screen + background music	Irony, detachment
Text-to-speech voice	Meme templates + AR overlays	Humor, parody
Collective/choral voice	Duets/stitches + green-screen	Dialogism, political critique

## **5. Case Study Highlights**

### Case Study 1: @BrittanyBroski (Personal Storytelling)

Brittany Broski’s confessional stories employ first-person voice, exaggerated intonation, and on-screen captions. The stylistic combination produces humor but also intimacy, as viewers are positioned as confidants. The narrative is multimodal: the voice provides emotional tone, the gestures exaggerate humor, and the captions anchor interpretation.

### Case Study 2: @Khaby.Lame (Micro-fiction through Silence)

Khaby Lame’s videos exemplify silent narrative voice paired with exaggerated gesture and facial expression. Here, the absence of spoken language highlights the body as narrative tool, achieving universality across linguistic borders. His minimalist stylistics subvert TikTok’s norm of noisy, fast-paced narration, demonstrating that stylistic innovation can emerge from restraint.

### Case Study 3: Political TikTok (Stitch Commentary)

In stitched political videos, creators use text-to-speech voice-over combined with green-screen overlays of news clips. This layering produces a critical

narrative voice that both mocks and reframes mainstream media. The stylistic innovation lies in how individual creators remix institutional discourse, creating a dialogic, participatory counter-narrative.

## **6. Discussion**

The findings of this study reveal that TikTok storytelling is not merely a continuation of earlier narrative practices, but also a site of stylistic innovation shaped by digital affordances. One of the most striking outcomes was the central role of automated and AI-generated voices, particularly in micro-fiction and political commentary. In micro-fiction, robotic narration produced a deliberate tension between the emotional content of stories and the mechanical detachment of the delivery. In political commentary, AI voices were weaponized as satire, underscoring the artificiality of political rhetoric. These practices resonate with N. Katherine Hayles' (1999) argument in *How We Became Posthuman* that technology is not a neutral medium but actively reshapes authorship and voice. By blending human and machine enunciation, TikTok creators destabilize traditional boundaries between natural and artificial narration, thereby foregrounding posthumanist aesthetics.

Another important finding was the stylistic flexibility of second-person voice, which was particularly prominent in micro-fiction and political commentary. In personal storytelling, second-person voice was used sparingly, usually to offer advice or generalize from personal experience. But in micro-fiction, it operated as a direct address to the viewer, transforming them into the protagonist of the story ("You wake up and the world is empty"). This recalls Marie-Laure Ryan's (2001) insights on immersive narrative techniques, where second-person narration intensifies identification by collapsing the distance between narrator and audience. In TikTok's participatory ecosystem, this effect is magnified, since users are accustomed to interacting with content rather than passively

consuming it. Thus, the second-person voice emerges as a distinctly digital stylistic strategy that integrates narration with interactivity. The visual dimension of storytelling further highlights TikTok's multimodal stylistic experimentation. Personal storytelling relied overwhelmingly on face-to-camera framing, a device that creates intimacy and eye contact with the viewer. This stylistic choice reflects Zeng, J. and Abidin, C. , (2021) notion of "calibrated amateurism," where creators project authenticity by performing as though they are speaking casually to friends, even when narratives are carefully staged. By contrast, political commentary favored green-screen effects and meme remixes, stylistic tools that deliberately break the illusion of intimacy in order to parody, mock, or reframe authority. This contrast illustrates what Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) describe as the social semiotics of multimodality different visual strategies encode different social relations between creator and audience. Cross-genre comparison also emphasizes that on-screen captions are a shared but polyvalent stylistic feature. In micro-fiction, captions served as anchorage for suspense and punchlines, echoing Barthes' (1977) idea that text directs interpretation of images. In personal storytelling, captions provided accessibility and emphasis, reinforcing authenticity and transparency. In political commentary, captions were frequently ironic, offering sarcastic translations of political discourse. The same semiotic device, therefore, produces divergent stylistic effects depending on genre and communicative goals. This finding reinforces Mick Short's (1996) argument that stylistic analysis must attend to both form and context, as meaning is inseparable from use. Ultimately, the findings demonstrate that TikTok is not a trivial platform of fragmented narratives but a laboratory of stylistic innovation. Through its multimodal affordances, it enables creators to experiment with narrative voice, blending human and artificial speech, and to reimagine visual storytelling by remixing, parodying, or intensifying intimacy. These practices extend beyond aesthetics

they signal shifts in how narratives function socially, politically, and culturally in a postdigital age.

## **Conclusion**

The study sets out to examine stylistic innovation in digital storytelling on TikTok, focusing specifically on the interplay between narrative voice and visual language. By analyzing 200 videos across micro-fiction, personal storytelling, and political commentary, it has been demonstrated that TikTok creators deploy both traditional and novel stylistic strategies to craft meaning. Narrative voice is no longer limited to the human speaker but incorporates automated voices, irony, and participatory second-person address. Visual language is equally dynamic, ranging from the intimate gaze of face-to-camera confessions to the satirical layering of green-screen political parodies. The implications of these findings are twofold. First, they show that stylistics, traditionally applied to literary texts, must expand its scope to include born-digital, multimodal narratives. The stylistic practices on TikTok illustrate how meaning emerges from the synergy of linguistic, visual, and technological modes, requiring integrated analytical frameworks. Second, the study underscores the cultural significance of TikTok storytelling. Far from ephemeral, these narratives articulate shifting relationships between authenticity and performance, human and machine, intimacy and parody. In conclusion, TikTok emerges as a powerful site for studying contemporary stylistic practices, where digital creativity challenges established narrative conventions and opens new horizons for understanding voice, authorship, and multimodality. Future research could expand this study by examining cross-platform comparisons (e.g., TikTok vs. Instagram Reels) or by conducting audience reception studies to explore how viewers interpret these stylistic innovations. What remains clear, however, is that TikTok storytelling exemplifies the evolving landscape of digital narrative, where style itself becomes a central arena of innovation.

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# الابتكار الأسلوبي في القصّ الرقمي: تحليل متعدد الوسائط

## للصوت السردى واللغة المرئية على منصة التيك توك

### المستخلص

تستقصي هذه الدراسة الابتكار الأسلوبي في القصّ الرقمي على منصة تيك توك من خلال تحليل متعدد الوسائط للصوت السردى واللغة المرئية. واعتماداً على نظرية تعدد الوسائط (كرس ولووين 2001) ونظرية السرد (جينيه، 1980؛ فلورنك، 2009) فإن الدراسة تبحث في كيفية قيام صانعي المحتوى بربط الصوت والنص والحركة والصورة لتكوين أشكال سردية جديدة تخالف التقاليد الأدبية التقليدية. إن منصة التيك توك بتعاملاتها الخوارزمية واعتمادها الفيديوهات القصيرة إنما توفر منصة فريدة تمزج الكلام وعناوين الصور والمؤثرات الصوتية والمرشحات المرئية فتنتج وسائط قصّ هجينة. تفحص الدراسة مجموعة مكونة من 200 فيديو واسع الانتشار (2023-2025) على شكل قصص قصيرة جداً وقصّ شخصي وتعليقات سياسية والتي تركز على قدرة الوسائل الأسلوبية مثل التوجه الخطابى لشخص آخر وتبادل الأدوار والصوت التهكمي على تشكيل تفاعل الجمهور. وأبدى البحث اهتماماً خاصاً بالطريقة التي يتحدى بها الصوت السردى على التيك توك سلطة الراوي المنفرد. فمثلاً استخدام أصوات آلية على النص (صوت التيك توك) يخلق راوياً غير شخصي لكنه مألوف عاكساً مفهوم فوكو (1969) عن "وظيفة المؤلف". إن مرشحات تحويل النص اللغوي إلى مرئي والتقسيم الثنائي للشاشة وتقنية إضافة فيديو قصير إلى فيديو أصلي تقوم بالدور الذي دعاه بارت (1977) بـ "الثبات والتناوب" فيوسع مدى القصة من مجرد تراكيب لغوية إلى جماليات متعددة الأوجه. تتضمن الدراسة صناعات المحتوى @ برتني بروسكي و @ خابي ليم الذين يستخدمون الدعابة والصمت والحركات المبالغ بها كاستراتيجيات أسلوبية تسلط الضوء على السرد المتعدد الجوانب. ومن خلال دمج التحليل الأسلوبي مع الطرق الرقمية الموجهة خطابياً للناس

يثبت البحث أن القص من خلال منصة التيك توك يشكل إسلوبيات عامية (كريستال 2001; بيچ 2018) حيث الصوت السردي واللغة المرئية تنتجان معاً معنىً بطرق تؤدي إلى إذابة الحدود بين كلٍ من الطريقة الشفوية المألوفة والسرد الأدبي والأداء الرقمي. توضح النتائج بأن الابتكارات الاسلوبية المتعددة الأوجه على منصة التيك توك لا تعيد تشكيل الممارسات السردية فقط بل تعكس تغيرات ثقافية أكبر في الاهتمام والتأليف وجماليات الاختصار في عصر الوسائط اللوغاريتمية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** ابتكارات اسلوبية، القص الرقمي، تيك توك، الصوت السردي، اللغة المرئية، تعدد الوسائط، الثقافة اللوغاريتمية.