

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

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## Abstract

This research looks at the focus of stylistic innovation in storytelling in digital formats via TikTok by analyzing multimodally the visual language and narrative voice. Basing discussion on multimodality theories (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) and on narratology (Genette, 1980; Fludernik, 2009), the paper discusses the ways in which creators integrate voice, text, gesture and image to create new forms of narrative to break the traditional literary rules. TikTok is a unique platform in which the combination of speech, on-screen text, supporting sounds effects and filters creates new forms of storytelling because of its algorithmic circulation and the popularity of short-form video content. The corpus includes 200 viral TikTok videos that have been created (2023–2025), and they are of the following genres: micro-fiction, personal storytelling, and political commentary. The analytic focus is on stylistic devices, such as second-person address, code-switching, and ironic voice-over, as well, to influence audience response. The way narrative voice on TikTok challenges the power of a unique narrator is given particular emphasis. As an example, the introduction of automated text-to-speech voices (“TikTok voice”) produce a detached but homely voice that reminds of Foucault’s (1969) concept of the “author function.” At the same time, visual language filters, duets, stitches and green-screen effects serve as what Barthes (1977) would call “anchorage and relay,” and, thus, take the narrative out of linguistic structures and makes it a multimodal aesthetic. Creators like @BrittanyBroski and @khaby.lame can be included in case studies because they use humor, silence, and exaggerated gesture as stylistic devices that preempt multimodal narration. The paper by incorporating the elements of style analysis and discourse-oriented approaches of the digital humanities will suggest that TikTok storytelling is a vernacular stylistics (Crystal,

2001; Page, 2018), in which narrative voice and visual language collaborate to create meaning in a manner that obscures the distinctions between the oral tradition, the literary narrative, and the digital performance. These results indicate that multimodal stylistic innovation on TikTok is both transformative of narrative practices and a broader cultural change in attention, authorship and aesthetic of brevity in the age of algorithmic media.

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

## 1. Introduction

The spread of digital platforms, in the twenty-first century, has fundamentally changed the modalities by which stories are told, disseminated and consumed. TikTok is one of these platforms that have become the central venue of digital storytelling as a result of its short-form videos, combining audio, visual, textual and performative representations. As opposed to the traditional modes of storytelling, where multimedia elements are generally used to augment the narration, TikTok combines multimodal elements, such as sound effects and background music with on-screen captions, gestures, filters, and camera movement to produce distinctive storytelling modes. The field of stylistics, which deals with the interaction of rhetoric and beauty, offers an effective perspective to examine innovative storytelling activities of TikTok creators. Basic theories of narratology (Genette, 1980; Fludernik, 2009) and multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) dictate that storytelling can never be exclusively linguistic in nature and is often a product of a semiotic resources convergence. Nevertheless, the stylistic techniques that TikTok creators use are not similar to print or cinematic traditions because they are created to be short, circulated by algorithms, and actively involve people. It is this split that gives birth to a new discipline, which, according to Crystal (2001), she refers to as vernacular digital stylistics, when the daily users of information technologies all become authors, performers and observers simultaneously.

The recent academic research has already started to discuss the concept of digital narratives in the context of social media (Page, 2018; Georgakopoulou, 2020), but there is a lack of stylistic studies devoted specifically to the topic of TikTok as a narrative tool. Although the contribution of TikTok to the influencer culture has been addressed by researchers like Abidin (2021), and the linguistic creativity of the platform has been explored by researchers, including Leppänen et al. (2022), not many studies have addressed the combination of narrative voice and visual language as a method of producing innovative narrative forms. In this regard, this paper aims at filling said gap by providing a comprehensive stylistic discussion of TikTok stories as multimodal texts.

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Although TikTok is currently rapidly gaining popularity as a narration tool, there remains a gap in the scholarly literature to understand the style-related innovations that distinguish its narratives in relation to the traditional oral, literature, and film types. Current studies on TikTok have been keen to focus on algorithmic culture, virality, or media impacts, but not on micro-level stylistic strategies that creators are using to make meaning. In particular, little research has been done on:

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 having a formal approach to stylistic analysis, the existing understanding of TikTok stories is incomplete. This research, therefore, aims to explore the methodological issues that define the process of breaking down the TikTok storytelling phenomenon 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 is of significant importance. In theory, it lies on the crossroad of stylistics and multimodal theory, with its implementation to the dynamic space of TikTok rather than print literature and film. By doing that, it fits the growing discipline of digital stylistics (Page, 2018; Stockwell, 2020) by showing how short-form videos function as complex narrative artifacts. In addition to this it will strengthen the narratologic enquiry by exploring aspects of algorithmic culture and participatory storytelling, and in the process how digital spaces redefine concepts of voice, focalisation and narrative coherence. In practice, the study is a critical examination of the methodologies of creativity used by the TikTok users to make sense on the limited basis of strict temporal and formal constraints. The results explain the narrative techniques, including pacing, multimodal layering, and voice modulation, applied by producers to attain a maximum engagement in a sixty-second frame. The insights are also useful to content creators as well as to educators interested in creating more interactive teaching content and to the media practitioners who might want to adopt new digital storytelling tactics that need to be succinct and rely on a quick delivery of messages to satisfy the audience who are used to succinct and fast delivered stories.

## 2. Theoretical Background and Literature Review

Digital storytelling has become one of the most important funding sources of inquiry in modern stylistics, media studies, and digital humanities because of stylistic innovation. Due to the growing prominence of social media, in particular TikTok, storytelling has moved beyond mainly linear, text-based narratives, toward more multimedia storytelling, which combines visual imagery, audio, gesture and text. This shift questions the conventional beliefs in the voice of narrative and demands analytical models to be able to consider linguistic and non-linguistic semiotic resources. Stylistically, narrative voice has traditionally been explored with the aid of such features as focalization, point of view, deixis, and evaluative language (Simpson, 1993; Toolan, 2001). Nonetheless, the restructuring of these elements in digital storytelling space is restructured with the help of the audiovisual elements, such as camera angle, facial expression, music, and on-screen text. Researchers of the multimodal discourse analysis believe that meaning is constructed by interaction of a combination of modes and not language (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Their visual grammar research gives a base model to analyse how images, layout, and motion bring in meaning and style to narrative in the digital media.

According to recent investigations into social media storytelling, TikTok is one especially innovative platform since it has a short-form format, an algorithmic flow, and participatory affordances. According to researchers, the use of hybrid narrative voices which alternate personal confession, performance and collective address is common among creators thus eroding the lines between author, narrator and audience. This coincides with postclassical narratology and posthumanist theories of agency as distributed and technological systems in the production of narratives (Hayles, 2008; Page, 2018).

### 2.1 Stylistics: From Text to Multimodal Contexts

As a science, stylistics has experienced an impressive development in the breadth of its focus and approach. Conventionally, it was characterized as any study of language in literature but its main point of focus was how linguistic decisions

influence the aesthetic and rhetorical attributes of literature (Leech & Short, 2007). This school of thought focused on the detailed examination of literary works, and it preannounced the stylistic aspects that add to the meaning-making and appreciation of the aesthetics. Stylistics however have over the years, expanded its boundaries which no longer remain within the realms of canon literature, but have made strides into a wide range of discourses such as advertising (Cook, 2001), journalism, political rhetoric, and most recently, digital communication (Page, 2018). In essence, the field is still focused on the relationship between linguistic form and meaning and the specific ways the micro-levels of phonology, syntax, and lexis have extended aesthetic, rhetorical, and affective outcomes (Wales, 2014). Whereas the early stylistic studies tended to focus on the textual form in relative autonomy, the more recent tendencies underscore the role of context and interdisciplinarity. An example is Stockwell (2020), who claims that stylistics should take into consideration social, cognitive, and cultural structures of production and consumption of texts. This movement has enabled the stylistician to not only study the way language functions on the page, but also how it affects the readers, listeners, and the viewers in particular socio-cultural contexts. The field has therefore evolved to take cognizance of the contributions of pragmatics, discourse analysis, narratology and cognitive science which enhances its analytical breadth and explanatory capacity. One of the most important developments has been the emergence of digital stylistics, a phenomenon which is an indication of the growing importance of digital and multimodal modes of communication. According to Simpson (2014) and Nørgaard (2019), in the context of the Internet, texts are rarely based on the linguistic form as they are multimodal and are produced via the combination of written words, spoken words, images, sounds, and interactive components to create the meaning. The trend seems to disregard conventional concepts of stylistic analysis, where scholars must pay attention to the active interaction of semiotic resources. In this context, stylistics does not concern itself with the analysis of the “text”, but the multimodal assemblages which predominate contemporary communication. TikTok offers a rather fruitful object of such analysis since its stories combine speech, text, sound, and image in the most compressed forms. Discourse on TikTok does not solely depend on spoken words but incorporates background music, visual filters, captions displayed on screen, body language and editing features like cuts and transitions. These semiotic means are brought into play under strong time constraints and they force

creators to be innovative in the way they present narrative meaning. This study then locates itself in the field of multimodal stylistics which examines the interaction of various modes to bring about a sense of interpretation and impact. Through such a lens, TikTok storytelling is analyzed in the study as it uncovers the wider history of stylistics by demonstrating that a field traditionally attached to literature offers key to the comprehension of creativity, narrative, and communication in the digital era.

## 2.2 Narrative Voice in Stylistics and Narratology

The idea of narrative voice has been part of the foundations of narratology, as it has been used to explain the processes involved in the expression, reception and interpretation of stories. The first dichotomy that Genette's (1980) introduced between homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrators laid the foundation of theoretical study of the impact of the positioning of narratives on the perspective and power. To expand on this, Chatman (1978) suggested the implied author and implied narratee, when he claimed that narration is not a straightforward act of communication and a one-way process, but a complex process that entails the creation of multiple roles, voices, and audiences. Later researchers, including Fludernik (2009), have argued that the voice of narration is inherently experiential and conversational hence, it is always interactive. Voice is not simply textual signifier; voice is a relational phenomenon that takes place at the junction of authorial intent, textual form and the interaction with the audience. This has been triggered by the advent of the digital era and specifically by the popularity of apps like TikTok which have brought about a massive reorganization of narrative voice. Unlike in conventional print-based storytelling, automated text-to-speech devices are extensively used in TikTok works, giving the voice an artificial sound, which tends to blur the line between human and machine authorship. At the same time, content creators often directly address the audience with the second-person address, which creates the effect of immediacy and closeness that weakens the audience-narrator barrier. These stylistic techniques are a testimony to the negotiation of narrative authority within a participatory environment, i.e. the viewers do not only passively consume but also actively produce meaning through comments, likes, duets, and stitches. Additionally, the TikTok stories challenge the classical concept of a consistent and single narrator. Voice is able to transition

quickly between the spoken performance by the creator, the algorithmically generated narration of the platform, and the joint effort of other users who participate by remixing through the features. Such a myriad of voices can be heard to echo Foucault's (1969) concept of the "author function," since it stresses that authorship is not a natural quality to be possessed by a person but a socially created role that is shared by institutions, technologies and audiences. The role of author is acted out in TikTok, however, by a group of human and nonhuman agents creators, algorithms, audiences, and platform affordances all which work to make the narrative meaning. Online narrative, according to the work of Page (2018) on digital narratives, can be based on self-reflexivity and the exploration of styles, where the voice change can be employed to disorient the expectations, indicate irony, or make some social identification. TikTok creators, such as those who transform their own voices into the artificial voice of the platform to produce a comic effect of dissonance between their own and synthetic voice, or those who manipulate the point of view to dramatize cultural experience. In this respect, the narrative voice on TikTok not only can be considered a means of narration, but also a stylistic tool of negotiating identity, community, and creativity in the digital environment.

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

Multimodality means a combination of various modes of semiotics in communication (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). The visual, auditory, and textual components do not only supplement each other but form different layers of meaning (Jewitt, 2014). Multimodality is redefined in narrative situations: gesture, gaze, image can take on a role that is traditionally played by linguistic narration (Bateman, 2014). TikTok is an example of multimodality, filters, captions, background sounds, and editing tools are narrative devices. As an illustration, the ideas of Barthes' (1977) of "anchorage and relay" could be used to understand the process of captions anchoring the interpretation of unintelligible images, whereas visual effects can be used to convey connotation that transcends lexicon. Stylistically, multimodality requires an analysis that takes into consideration the interaction of linguistic and non-linguistic resources to form and influence narrative. In addition to being a standard combination of modes, multimodality on Tik Tok allows creators to design compound and layers storytelling experiences,

which captivate audiences at a variety of sensory and cognitive levels. Combination of sound, image, text and movement: This allows sensitive articulation of emotion, tone and viewpoint which may be hard to do using language alone. As an example, background music may build suspense, irony or humor, and a abrupt visual change or change of filter may indicate a narrative switch or emphasize the emotional state of a character. Jewitt (2014) points out that the meaning of individual modes does not occur in a vacuum but rather arises out of its orchestration and as such, studying the multimodal narratives is both difficult and vital in learning about digital storytelling. Moreover, multimodality in the context of TikTok helps to make audiences more active and engaged, which is the main feature of the narrative ecology of the platform. Duets, stitches, and comment-driven responses enable the viewers to become co-narrators and give them the opportunity to manipulate, extend or remix the story with their own multimodal assets. This participatory aspect signifies a transition of the traditional linear storytelling to the networked, collaborative stories, in which the meaning is co-created between the creators and the audience. Stylistically this requires focusing not just on the operation of modes as singular but also on the combination, time and sequencing of the modes produce aesthetic, rhetorical, and affective effects, showing that TikTok stories represent a rich, emergent mode of multimodal storytelling.

## 2.4 Digital Storytelling and Stylistic Innovation

Digital storytelling has evolved since the beginning of the 21st century when scholars such as Lambert (2013) highlights personal accounts of the multimedia productions. Digital narratives are influenced by interactivity, immediacy, and networked circulation unlike the traditional oral storytelling (Alexander, 2017). The research has focused on social media platforms and especially YouTube and Instagram, where brevity, affect, and multimodality prevail as storytelling spaces (Couldry, 2008; Burgess & Green, 2018). TikTok builds upon this legacy and condenses stories into formats of 15–60 seconds, which predicts a style-innovation in the rhythm, pacing, and visual overlay. Leppänen et al. (2022) discuss the artistic wordplay in the linguistic environment of TikTok, whereas Abidin (2021) focuses on performativity and the culture of influencers. Nevertheless, the narrative voice and visual language stylistic analysis is insufficiently developed.

This study bridges this gap by using the stylistic theory to the digital storytelling activities of TikTok. On TikTok, digital storytelling has not only focused on brevity, but also provoked the experiment of narrative structuring and semiotic stratification. Combined with the platform features of looping videos, text overlays with timing effects, augmented reality filters, and algorithmically curated soundtracks, the creators are able to produce very small but emotionally powerful stories. This multimodal compression involves very specific stylistic decisions, where every visual detail, sound bite or text bit all adds to sense-making. As Burgess & Green (2018) explain, the engagement, retention, and affect dynamic is a regular element of social media storytelling, so the stylistic innovation is fundamental to the level of engagement. Through the analysis of these strategies, this study identifies such ways in which TikTok stories are challenging the traditional ideas of the structure of a story, time, and ways of reception among audiences. Furthermore, TikTok practices digital storytelling that prefigures participation, remix, and intertextuality where the relationship between creator, content and the viewer is altered. The features of duets, stitches, and hashtag challenges enable people to add onto the story of their collaborators, and this creates a networked storytelling experience (Abidin, 2021). The model of participation restructures the traditional conceptualizations of authorship, which resonate with posthumanist beliefs where meaning is created through human and technology actors in a co-constructive manner. Stylistically, these dynamics can transform TikTok into a great platform to study the intersection of narrative voice, visual language, and multimodal media in order to create affective, humorous, and culturally resonant stories and thus broaden the field of digital stylistics to the sphere of short-form narratives in social media.

## 2.5 TikTok as a Storytelling Platform

TikTok has become a new platform of creativity in the world, especially among the youth. The combination of its special affordances algorithmic recommendation, duet/stitch features, and text-to-speech features form a particular narrative construction unlike other platforms. Researchers have started examining TikTok with reference to identity performance (Zeng & Abidin, 2021), algorithmic culture (Bishop, 2020), and memetic circulation (Shifman, 2014). Stylistically, it allows to experiment with brevity of narrative, fragmented voice, and multimodal overlay on

the platform. Indicatively, the silent performance by Khaby Lame shows how gesture and facial expression can be used as a narrative tool, and how exaggerated speech and intertextual references are used by Brittany Broski to pre-empt the stylistic play of voice and irony. Thus, TikTok storytelling illustrates what Nørgaard (2019) calls “multimodal stylistic innovation”. The circulation and meaning of stories and their spreading in Tik Tok have been also enabled by the global platform and the culture of participation. TikTok content is dynamic and iterative in nature, unlike traditional media, which tend to be largely fixed once published, so that it is constantly reformed as part of the audience interaction, duets, stitches and comments. This circulation is what cultivates a hybrid type of authorship whereby the original creator, the viewers, and algorithm all impact narration interpretation and style impact. Stylistically, this setting prompts creators to use terse visual indications, fast-moving, and rhythmic editing to draw attention and make the most of it, as shown that platform limitations can cause creative breakthrough in the narrative structure. Moreover, TikTok is a vibrant ground of cultural and social commentary, which is frequently carried out through humor, parody, and irony and aimed at reaching audiences by negotiating identity and community standards. According to Zeng & Abidin (2021), the platform enables creators to carry out various aspects of personal identity, prominently, collective and even fictionalized, in brief stories. Moments of exaggerated gestures, metaphors of appearance, and algorithmically mediated soundtracks become instruments of both speech and criticism, with the creators being able to express and convey complex ideas within a few seconds. Analysing these multimodal and stylistic inventions, the study can be used to comprehend the re-definition of narrative voice, aesthetics and the performativity of identity that digital storytelling on TikTok imparts in the context of modern social media.

### 3. Methodology

The research design that is applied in this study is an embedded mixed-methods approach based on the combination of quantitative and qualitative analytical paradigms. The study quantitatively determines and outlines common stylistic tools in a collection of TikTok stories and specifically the use of latest trends of narratives found on the site. The qualitative analysis is a descriptive and interpretative analysis of the interaction between narrative voice and the use of

visual language to create meaning and style innovation. Creating a synthesis of numerical patterning with close multimodal interpretation, the work can provide a thorough, but nevertheless subtle, account of the currently existing digital storytelling practices.

### **3.1 Research Design**

The study is envisaged as a unitary quantitative-qualitative descriptive-interpretative study. In contrast to quantitative methods, which use numbers as their basis, a qualitative study allows one to analyze the stylistic features in detail, both on a micro- and macro-levels. This format is quite appropriate to examine the narrative voice, visual language in TikTok videos, where meanings are created by language selections, and the combination of various forms of semiotics. The interpretative aspect of the design is related to the area of stylistics that deals mainly with the investigation of the meaning and effect creation of form (Simpson, 2014; Nørgaard, 2019). At the same time, the descriptive orientation will help to systematically document the strategies of style throughout the corpus.

### **3.2 Data Collection**

The videos were taken on TikTok, published between (2023) and (2025), according to the latest trends of the platform in the creation of narratives. The choices were based on a purposive sampling criterion, i.e. 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 ultimate data will be (200) TikTok videos, which will be a mix of several genres, such as micro-fiction, personal narratives, and political analysis. To contextualise the stylistic decisions, videos were viewed via the public interface of TikTok and metadata (captions, hashtags, and engagement metrics (likes, comments, shares)) were noted.

### 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.

Such a genre-based classification provides the representativeness of various storytelling techniques implemented by TikTok and allows one to make comparative analysis of the stylistic strategies in different narrative types.

### 3.4. Analytical Framework

The discussion of the present paper is based on three complementary models that cover one of the major aspects of TikTok storytelling. The former is Narrative Voice Analysis, which is based on the narratological models of Genette's (1980) and Fludernik's (2009) to investigate the action of voice in short-form digital narratives. The creators on TikTok use a variety of strategies, including first-person self-narration, second-person direct address, and third-person commentary, which often are combined in a single video. Stylistic complexity is also added through automated text-to-speech tools, code-switching, and the playful change of tone. Specific focus is given to the way in which these voices of narration build narrators and implied audiences, thus informing intimacy, control, or distance in a manner specific to the affordances of the platform in question.

The second theory is the Visual Language Analysis that adheres to the theory of multimodality by Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001). This element considers the semiotic assets the creators of TikTok mobilise in a visual format, including camera angles, gaze direction, gestures, visual filters, and editing patterns. As an example, authority could be built with low-angle shots, whereas we could find humour and rhythm with rapid cuts or jump edits. The notions of anchorage and relay by Barthes' (1977) can be applied to this situation especially in the sense that

the visual ambiguity is usually anchored by way of captions and on-screen text, whereas the visual effects and gestures can be seen as the tools of relay, as they add a new layer of meaning. Using this lens, the paper will explore the effect of TikTok visual grammar on the narrative experience.

Lastly, Multimodal Stylistics (Nørgaard, 2019; Page, 2018) is a framework that incorporates both the visual and verbal component into a single analysis. TikTok stories are seldom based on text, but rather a result of the orchestration of text, speech, sound, image, and movement being put into action. The multimodal stylistics would allow the study to consider the interaction between these modes to create stylistic effects that include irony, humour, intimacy or authority. As an illustration, the contrast of serious captions and light background music can be an ironic effect, but synchronised gestures and sound effects will bring in the sense of urgency and humour. These frameworks allow a comprehensive look at the process of TikTok storytelling as a multimodal practice in stylistics. The analysis of narrative voice, visual language, and semiotic interaction of the two modes of meaning unveils not only how meaning is made in short-term digital narratives, but also allows the study to make a contribution to the theoretical discussions in stylistics, narratology, and studies of digital media in general.

### 3.5 Tools and Procedures

Various tools and procedures were used in the study so as to make the analysis systematic and rich in the interpretation. The methodology basis was a word-to-word transcription of all verbal data, with an exception of detailed recording of on-screen text, captions and hashtags. This process made it possible to analyze the language preferences, code-switching, as well as the stylistic use of deixis, tone, and perspective in a comprehensive way. Since the TikTok narration frequently depends on an overlap of both vocal and text overlay, the transcription approachology ensured the interdependence of the oral and written modalities, at that no tongue-specific element was excluded.

Besides transcription, screenshot and frame capture methods were also employed in order to capture significant visual moments. This enabled the communication to explore gestures, camera angles, filters, and visual effects in a level of detail that

would otherwise not be possible when observing them in real-time. These visual records acted as critical clues towards decoding processes of multimodal meaning-making.

This was followed by the development of a coding scheme to organise the features of style. The coding matrix included the categories of the narrative voice (e.g. perspective shifts, tone, irony, intimacy), visual language (e.g. colour palettes, framing, transitions, editing styles). This methodical practice promoted uniformity within the dataset and allowed discovering patterns and differences in the approach to narratives.

Lastly, analytic notes were drawn on the basis of repeated watching each video. This iterative process allowed the researcher to narrow the interpretations, triangulate the observations of style and place features in cultural and communicative context. The combination of transcription, visual documentation, coding, and reflective notes was a methodological synthesis that required an equal ratio of rigorous systematic categorisation and nuanced interpretation, therefore, improving the rigour and depth of analysing the TikTok narratives.

#### **4. Overview of the Corpus**

The corpus was split into three large genres: micro-fiction (80 videos), personal storytelling (70 videos) and political commentary (50 videos). Table (1) gives an overview of the use of narrative voice and visual language in genres.

As the table shows, various genres have different stylistic resources, which are privileged. Micro-fiction is very dependent on brevity, irony, and exaggerated multimodal cues; the personal narration is foregrounded by foregrounding intimacy through direct address and confessional voice, and political commentary by parody and remix strategies (often using TikTok's affordances (stitch, duet, green-screen)). Such difference presupposes that TikTok stories are genre-sensitive, and the stylistic tactics depend on the communicative purpose and the anticipations of the audience.

**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

One of the most prominent style innovations on TikTok is narrative voice. The corpus distribution of narrative voices is shown in Table (2). First-person narration is the most widespread, especially in the field of personal narration, which reflects the tendency of TikTok, oriented towards authenticity and intimacy (Abidin, 2021). On the other hand, the second-person mode is also introduced with a surprisingly frequency in micro-fiction, thus putting the viewers into the role of active participants and thus blurring the boundary between participants and the protagonist. Text-to-speech signifies a mixed authorship where human creativity unites with machine-generated voice mode that makes him resonate with Foucault's (1969) "author function." Moreover, duets/stitches result in the creation of collective voices that create a dialogic mode of narration, which supports the

idea of dialogism presented by Bakhtin’s (1981) in a digital environment. All these results prove that the narrative voice of TikTok is not fixed or static but dynamic and 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

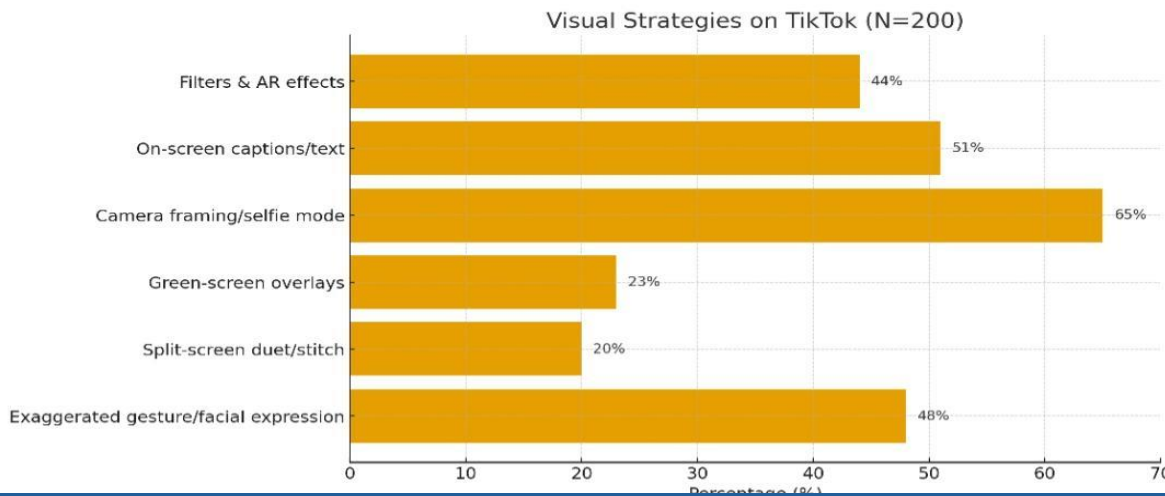
## 4.2 Visual Language and Multimodal Strategies

The visual language is the fundamental element of TikTok storytelling because it is not just a background but rather an active stylistic tool. Table (3) defines the most used 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 fact that the prevalent type of framing in TikTok is selfie camera framing (65%) supports the interpretive perspective of TikTok as being inherently performative and self-focused, in the sense that narrators prefigure their corporeal presence as a part of the story-telling process. The wide use of on-screen captions (51%), is related to the idea of anchorage presented by Barthes’ (1977), thus



facilitating interpretation and making it accessible

le to a wide range of language users. TikTok stylometry foreshadows the fun and experimental aspect of the platform, which is supported by filters, green-screen effects, and AR overlays, and split-screen functions encourage dialogic interaction.

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

Interestingly, exaggerated gestures (48%) show how body language represents a voice of narration, thus allowing silent narrations to attain international scope that is not limited by lingual boundaries as in the example of Khaby Lame.

### 4.3 Interaction of Narrative Voice and Visual Language

The most inventive aspect of TikTok storytelling is the voice serves in combination with visual modalities whereby multimodal layering creates unique stylistic effects. Table (4) clarifies the main trends of interaction. As the table suggests, the TikTok creators carefully match a particular voice of narratives with a particular visual resource to bring about stylistic effects. As an example, first-person confessions are based on self-pictures and captions that reproduce the effect of face-to-face communication with the audience, thus, creating intimacy. Second-person narration mixed with filters and direct gaze, on the contrary, develops immersion, since the viewers will feel positionality in the story world. Meme templates and text-to-speech voices often create parodic effects, thus disconnecting authorship and personal identity, and instantiating a narrative into the mass digital humour. Lastly, the use of choral voices in duets/stitches, combined with green-screen commentary, creates a dialogic criticism of politics and culture, which serves as a representation of how well TikTok can become a grassroots discourse platform.

Table (4) Interaction Patterns between Voice and Visuals

Narrative Voice	Dominant Visual Pairing	Stylistic Effect
First-person confessional	Selfie framing + captions	Intimacy, authenticity
Second-person address	Filters + direct gaze	Immersion, simulation of POV
Third-person	Split-screen + background music	Irony, detachment

observational		
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)

The confessional vignettes of Brittany Broski use the first person voice, hyperbolic intonation, and captions on the screen. It is a synthesis of styles that creates humour and at the same time creates intimacy since the viewers become confidants. The story is multimodal, with the vocal aspect delivering a tone of emotion, the gestures enhancing humour and captions grounding the interpretation.

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

The videos of KhabyLame are a good example of the voice of silent storytelling combined with overdramatized gesture and facial expression. In this case, the fact that there is no speech makes the body a narrative tool thus becoming universal across the linguistic lines. His barest stylometry is the opposite of the TikTok environment of loud and fast-paced narration, and thus, it shows that style can be creative even in restraint.

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

In stitched political videos, the authors make use of the text-to-speech voice-over and the green-screen overlays of news clips. This overlay creates the narrative voice of critique which is quite mocking and at the same time reframing of mainstream media. The aesthetic revolution is the mode of reworking that institutional discourse by the idiom of single artists, thus forming a dialogic and participatory counter-discourse.

## 6. Discussion

The current work shows that TikTok storytelling is not just a seamless extension of the preexisting narrative practices, but exists as a place of style experimentation influenced by digital affordances. Among the most notable ones is the centralization of automated and AI-generated voices, especially of micro-fiction and political commentary. Robotic narration in the former creates an artificial conflict between the emotive nature of the stories and the lack of feeling of the process of delivery. In the latter AI voices are weaponised as satire, hence highlighting the artificiality of politics. These forms find an echo in the ideas spread by N. Katherine Hayles' (1999) in her book *How We Became Posthuman* that technology is not a neutral medium but has a forceful influence on authorship and voice. Combining human and machine pronunciation, TikTok creators disrupt the fixed lines between natural and artificial narration hence preempting posthumanist aesthetics.

One more striking observation is a flexibility in the stylistic means of the second-person voice that is especially high in both micro-fiction and political commentary. The use of second-person voice in personal narration is very limited, and it is usually used to provide advice or to generalise based on personal experience. However, when applied to micro-fiction, it serves as a direct call to the reader, thus making them the main character in the story (“You wake up and the world is empty”). This reminds us of what Marie-Laure Ryan's (2001) has said about the immersive methods of narration where the second-person narration heightens the identification by merging the gap between the narrator and the audience. This effect is amplified in the participatory ecosystem of TikTok in which the user is used to engaging with content as opposed to passively consuming it. As a result, the second-person voice becomes a very specific digital stylistic solution that combines narration and interactivity.

TikTok multimodal stylistic experimentation is also indicated by the visual aspect of the storytelling. face-to-camera framing is overpowering in personal storytelling, thus establishing intimacy and eye contact with the audience. This stylistic device revisits the concept of Zeng, J. and Abidin, C. , (2021) notion of “calibrated amateurism,” where creators can make the audience believe it is a chat with friends by pretending to talk in a casual manner, despite the plot being well-planned. In comparison to this, political commentary is more at ease with green-screen effects and meme remixes, style devices that self-consciously break the illusion of intimacy to satirize, ridicule, or restructure power. Such a contrast can

be used to explain how Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) define the social semiotics of multimodality, in which the visual strategies of various visual strategies encode distinct social associations between the producer and the viewer.

The method of cross-genre comparison also accentuates the fact that on-screen captions act as a collective but multipurpose stylistic device. Captioning is used as a crutch to suspend and relieve micro-fiction, and is reminiscent of the Barthes' (1977) idea that the text controls the image. Citations in personal storytelling are informative and stressful hence strengthening truthfulness and accountability. Captions used in political commentary also often take an ironic register, providing sarcastic translations of political data. Therefore, such a semiotic tool produces different stylistic effects depending on the genre and communicative goals. This observation supports this point by Mick Short's (1996) who states that the stylistic analysis needs to be sensitive to form and context because meaning cannot be understood outside of its use. In conclusion, the results prove that TikTok is not a mocking platform of broken stories but an experiment in the stylistic field. Due to its multimodal affordances, it allows creators to play with narrative voice, merge human and artificial speech, and redefine the visual storytelling through remixing, parodying, or exaggerating intimacy. These forms are beyond aestheticism, which heralds the transformations of the functioning of the narrative as a social, political, and cultural social practice in a postdigital era.

## Conclusion

This study was designed to discuss the research question concerning the stylistic innovation in digital storytelling on TikTok and specifically on the dynamics between the narrative voice and visual language. Through the analysis of 200 videos in the field of micro-fiction, personal storytelling, and political commentary, the research proves that TikTok creators use both traditional and innovative stylistic techniques to make meaning. The voice of narration is no longer limited to the human speaker, but has added automated voices, irony, and participative second person address. The visual language is also dynamic, as close as face-to-camera confessions are, as far as the satirical stratification of green-screen political parodies. The implication of these findings has two sides. First, they demonstrate that stylistics, which is traditionally used in literature texts, needs to

expand its focus to born-digital, multimedia-based narratives. The stylistic activity on TikTok shows that meaning is created as a result of the interplay between linguistic, visual, and technological modalities, and thus requires combined approaches in analysis. Second, the research highlights the importance of TikTok storytelling in terms of culture. Instead of being temporary, these stories express changing connections between reality and simulation, humanity and machine, intimacy and parody. Overall, TikTok can be seen as a strong platform to explore the modern stylistic practice in which digital creativity disrupts the canons of the narrative and enables new ways of comprehending voice, authorship, and multimodality. Future studies might answer this question by making comparison across platforms (e.g., TikTok vs. Instagram Reels) or through the use of audience reception research to describe how these stylistic breakthroughs are perceived by viewers. What cannot be doubted, though, is that TikTok storytelling represents the trend of the digital narrative that is shifting toward innovation as its primary venue.

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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 ٢٠٠١) ونظرية السرد (جينييه، ١٩٨٠؛ فلودرنك، ٢٠٠٩) 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 ٢٠٠ فيديو واسع الانتشار (٢٠٢٣-٢٠٢٥) على شكل قصص قصيرة جداً وقصص شخصي وتعليقات سياسية والتي تركز على قدرة الوسائط 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 (١٩٦٩) 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 (١٩٧٧) 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 ٢٠٠١؛ بيج ٢٠١٨) حيث الصوت السردى واللغة المرئية تنتجان معاً معنىً بطرق تؤدي إلى إذابة الحدود بين كل من الطريقة الشفوية المألوفة والسرد الأدبي والأداء الرقمي. توضح النتائج بأن الابتكارات الأسلوبية 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 أسلوبية، القص الرقمي، تيك توك، الصوت السردى، اللغة المرئية، تعدد الوسائط، الثقافة اللوغاريتمية.