



## Business English News 53 – TikTok

It seems like every week there's news of another attempt to **ban TikTok**. Indeed, the **federal government** and half the states in the U.S. have **outlawed** use of the app on government-owned **devices**. Never before has there been such a reaction to an app's sudden popularity. So just how did the app reach one billion downloads and 150 million **active users** in the U.S.? According to the Guardian:

TikTok **owes** its **phenomenal** success to a **host of canny** choices. They feature easy-to-use video, with creation tools that **blur the line** between **creator** and consumer. Their **vast** library of **licensed** music allows teens to **soundtrack** their **clips** without fear of **copyright strikes**. And a billion-dollar advertising **campaign** on Facebook **brought in** new users as quickly as Zuckerberg's company could send them over.

Clearly, there have been some **savvy** decisions on the business **front**. Since its **founding** in 2012, TikTok's **parent company**, ByteDance, has been **gobbling up** other start-ups and technologies. They've grown into an international company with 150,000 employees and \$80 billion in **annual revenue**. This massive success is **built on** a unique technical feature, as the National Interest explains:

The importance of the recommendation **algorithm** over a "**friends**" **network** means that everyone is guaranteed to get at least a few **views**, even on their first tiktok. On Twitter you might **log on** and tweet dozens of times before you get any "likes" due to the importance of "follower" networks in determining what people see. TikTok's "For You Page" **varies** between showing the users extremely popular tiktoks and tiktoks with only a **handful** of views. This **promotes** greater equality than on traditional social networks.

This greater equality has attracted younger audiences **in droves**. And while some people may still think it's all about short dance videos, the content is highly **varied**. There's been an **explosion of content creators**, many **making good coin** with little more than a phone in their basement. But all this content and user data is **flowing** to a foreign-owned company, and that **raises alarm bells**. The Guardian **outlines** these security concerns:

First is the **misuse** of personal data **gleaned** from the app, which could be used to **profile** users who, for instance, work for foreign governments. Secondly is the risk of using the app to **infect** a user's device. And thirdly, the Chinese Communist party could use the app's **compelling** algorithm to **manipulate** the For You feed and, thus, **public opinion**.

While politicians are busy **debating**, creators keep busy creating. People with **niche** interests are connecting across the globe, creating new online communities. However, despite the highly social aspect of TikTok, ByteDance doesn't call the app a social network like Facebook. Instead, they say they're an entertainment company. And **you can bet** the **traditional** entertainment industry is worried. Just consider how TikTok has **disrupted** the music business. According to CNN:

Artists used to hope for a record company to notice their music. Now they **pray** instead for their **tracks** to **go viral** on the app. Olivia Rodrigo's hit song "Drivers License" is a perfect example of how far this phenomenon can go. The song first **garnered traction** on the app back in 2021, when a video of someone **parodying** Rodrigo's video went viral. Soon, thousands of people were **posting** their own **versions** of the video.

It's **significant** that those people are located around the world, using an app that wasn't born in Silicon Valley. TikTok is truly a global phenomenon, in which a creator in Brazil may develop a **following** in Singapore. It's an international **sensation**, that naturally resists attempts at national or local **regulation**. Perhaps this is a sign of things to come, as the Harvard Business Review notes:

Despite **regulatory** and other challenges, ByteDance is building an **empire** of apps for a new generation. And they're **challenging** the **borders** drawn around traditional digital content. What happens if ByteDance can continue to fulfill its mission of becoming a **borderless** company with **game-changing** technology? It may lead to the creation of other borderless companies and will influence other tech innovators from **emerging markets** to **venture out** too.

## **Vocabulary**

**To ban:** To officially prohibit something, often by a government or regulatory authority. "The government has decided to ban the import of certain products to protect local industries."

**TikTok:** A social media app that allows users to create and share short videos. "Our marketing team is going to run a TikTok campaign to reach a younger audience."

**Federal government:** The national government of a country. "The federal government has announced a new economic package to help deal with inflation."

**To outlaw:** To make something illegal, often by a government or regulatory authority. "Several countries have outlawed the use of single-use plastics to reduce environmental pollution."

**Device:** A piece of hardware or electronic equipment such as a smartphone or computer. "Make sure you have the latest software update installed on your device to avoid any security vulnerabilities."

**Active users:** The number of people who have used a particular app or service within a specified period, such as daily or monthly. "The app has over 100 million active users worldwide."

**To owe:** To have a debt or obligation to something. "We owe our success to the hard work and dedication of our employees."

**Phenomenal:** Extremely successful or remarkable. "The launch of our new product was a phenomenal success, exceeding all our expectations."

**Host of:** A large number. "We offer a host of services to help businesses improve their online presence."

**Canny:** Shrewd and perceptive. "Our CEO is known for her canny business sense and ability to identify emerging trends."

**To blur the line:** To make distinctions between things less clear or apparent. "The rise of e-commerce has blurred the line between online and offline retail experiences."

**Creator:** A person who produces something, often in a social media context. "We work with a network of creators to produce engaging content for our social media channels."

**Vast:** Extremely large or extensive. "The internet is a vast network of interconnected devices and information."

**Licensed:** Officially authorized use, often for payment. "We are licensed by the copyright holder to use their music in our advertisements."

**To soundtrack:** To add music or sound effects to a video. "Our video production team will soundtrack the final edit to enhance the viewer's experience."

**Clip:** A short segment of video or audio content. "We will create a series of short clips to promote our new product on social media."

**Copyright:** The legal protection of original creative works, such as music, art, or writing. "We need to make sure that our marketing materials do not infringe on any copyright laws."

**Strike:** A claim or complaint against unauthorized use. "We issued a strike against the company for using our content without permission."

**Campaign:** A series of coordinated efforts or actions aimed at achieving a particular goal or objective. "Our marketing team has launched a new campaign to increase brand awareness."

**To bring in:** To generate or attract revenue or customers. "The new marketing strategy is expected to bring in more customers and increase sales."

**Savvy:** Smart or wise. "Our sales team is comprised of savvy negotiators who are skilled at closing deals."

**Front:** Aspect or situation. "The new regulations will have a significant impact on the business front."

**Founding:** The establishment or creation of a company or organization. "We are celebrating the founding of our company with a special event for our employees."

**Parent company:** A larger company that owns or controls one or more smaller subsidiaries or brands. "Our parent company has several subsidiaries that specialize in different industries."

**ByteDance:** The Chinese technology company that owns TikTok. "ByteDance is one of the fastest-growing technology companies in the world."

**To gobble up:** To acquire or purchase something quickly and aggressively. "The limited edition sneakers were gobbled up by fans within minutes of their release."

**Annual revenue:** The total amount of money earned by a company in a year. "The company's annual revenue has steadily increased over the past five years."

**Built on:** Based on or founded upon a particular idea or concept. "Our company culture is built on the principle of innovation and creativity."

**Algorithm:** A set of rules or instructions used to perform a particular calculation or operation, often used in artificial intelligence. "The algorithm used in the recommendation system is designed to personalize the content for each user."

**Friends network:** A social network consisting of people who are connected to each other through personal relationships or mutual acquaintances. "Through her friends network, she was able to find a new job quickly."

**Views:** The number of times a particular piece of content has been seen or watched by users. "The video has already received more than a million views on YouTube."

**To log on:** To access a digital service or platform by entering login credentials. "You need to log on to the website to access your account information."

**To vary:** To change or differ in some way. "The flavors of the ice cream vary depending on the season."

**Handful:** A small number or amount. "Only a handful of people were able to attend the exclusive event."

**To promote:** To advertise or endorse a product or service. "The company hired a famous celebrity to promote their new line of products."

**In droves:** In large numbers or quantities. "Customers came to the store in droves as soon as they released their new phone."

**Varied:** Diverse or different in some way. "The restaurant's menu has a varied selection of international dishes."

**Explosion:** A sudden and rapid increase or growth. "The app experienced an explosion in popularity after being featured in the app store."

**Content creator:** A person who produces or creates digital content, such as videos or blog posts. "The content creator's YouTube channel has millions of subscribers."

**To make good coin:** To earn a significant amount of money. "She was able to make good coin from her investments."

**To flow:** To move or progress smoothly or freely. "The conversation between the two friends flowed easily and naturally."

**To raise alarm bells:** To cause concern or signal a potential problem. "The sudden drop in sales numbers raised alarm bells for the company's executives."

**To outline:** To provide a general overview or summary of something. "During the meeting, the CEO outlined the company's plans for the upcoming year."

**Misuse:** The inappropriate or unauthorized use of something. "The employee was fired for the misuse of company funds."

**To glean:** To extract information or insights from various sources. "We were able to glean valuable insights from the survey results."

**To profile:** To create a detailed description or analysis of a person, group, or entity, often for the purpose of targeting or marketing. "The company used data profiling to target specific customers with personalized advertisements."

**To infect:** To cause harm or damage to a system through the introduction of a virus or malicious software. "The computer was infected with a virus after clicking a link."

**Compelling:** Something that is interesting, engaging, or persuasive. "The compelling story caught the attention of many viewers."

**To manipulate:** To influence or control something. "People are concerned fake news can be used to manipulate the public."

**Public opinion:** The prevailing attitudes or beliefs of a particular group or society. "Public opinion on social issues can change over time."

**To debate:** To engage in a discussion or formal argument. "The politicians debated healthcare policy all week but nothing was decided."

**Niche:** A specialized area of interest or focus within a larger market or field. "The company decided to focus on a niche market of eco-friendly products to differentiate themselves from competitors."

**"You can bet":** A phrase indicating certainty or confidence in a particular outcome. "You can bet that our team will come out on top in the next game."

**Traditional:** Relating to or following long-established customs or methods. "The restaurant specializes in traditional Italian food, using family recipes."

**To disrupt:** To fundamentally change a market or system through the introduction of new ideas or technologies. "This technology has the potential to disrupt the entire industry."

**To pray:** To hope or wish for something to happen. "Investors are praying for a turnaround in the company's financial performance."

**Track:** To monitor, often for the purpose of analysis or improvement. "The company tracks user behavior on their website to identify areas for improvement."

**To go viral:** To rapidly and widely spread through social media or other online platforms. "The video of the cat playing the piano went viral on social media, getting millions of views."

**To garner:** To acquire or attract. "The startup was able to garner significant investment from venture capitalists."

**Traction:** Growing popularity. "The app is gaining traction in the market, with thousands of downloads per day."

**To parody:** To imitate or mock a particular style or work, often for humorous effect. "The comedy show often parodies popular movies and TV shows."

**To post:** To upload or share content on a website or social media platform. "The influencer regularly posts about their daily life on social media, attracting a large following."

**Version:** A particular edition or variation of something. "The software company released a new version of their product with added features."

**Significant:** Having a notable or important impact or effect. "Our decision to expand into international markets had a significant impact on our revenue growth."

**Following:** The group of people who regularly engage with and support a particular brand, individual, or product. "The celebrity has a large following on social media, with millions of fans."

**Sensation:** Something that creates a strong and positive response or reaction, often leading to widespread popularity. "The new album has become a sensation, topping the charts and receiving critical acclaim."

**Regulation:** Rules or laws imposed by a governing body or authority. "The industry is subject to strict regulations governing safety and environmental standards."

**Regulatory:** Relating to or responsible for enforcing rules or regulations in a particular industry or country. "The company hired a regulatory compliance officer to ensure they were following all applicable laws and regulations."

**Empire:** A large and powerful organization or company with significant influence. "The tech giant has become an empire, with a dominant market share and global reach."

**To challenge:** To question or contest a particular idea, belief, or practice. "As competitors in this market, we need to challenge the status quo and innovate to stay ahead."

**Borders:** Boundaries that define a particular region or area. "The pandemic has highlighted the importance of international borders and the need for effective border control."

**Borderless:** The absence or breaking down of traditional borders or barriers. "The growth of the internet and e-commerce has created a borderless marketplace that enables businesses to reach customers around the world."

**Game-changing:** Something that significantly alters or disrupts the current situation in a particular industry or market. "The introduction of electric cars was a game-changing moment for the automotive industry."

**Emerging markets:** Developing or newly industrialized economies. "Our company is focusing on expanding into emerging markets."

**To venture out:** To explore new or unfamiliar territory. "We need to venture out and expand our business into new markets to keep growing."



## Language Review

### A. Collocations

Match words from each column to make collocations found in the article.

1. Emerging	a. alarm bells	
2. To go	b. good coin	
3. To raise	c. viral	
4. Content	d. users	
5. To make	e. creator	
6. Active	f. company	
7. To blur	g. the line	
8. Parent	h. markets	

### B. Vocabulary Quiz

1. What is the type of function or set of rules that artificial intelligence relies on?
  - a. Algorithm
  - b. Traction
  - c. Version
  - d. Profile
2. On TikTok, as with other social or entertainment media, which of the following are users NOT hoping for?
  - a. To go viral
  - b. A following
  - c. Views
  - d. Copyright strike
3. Which of the following two words or expressions are closest in meaning? Select all that apply:
  - a. Flow
  - b. Misuse
  - c. Ban
  - d. Outlaw

4. If something makes differences or distinctions between things less clear, then it...
- Raises alarm bells
  - Blurs the line
  - Ventures out
  - Gobbles up
5. People who make \_\_\_\_\_ business decisions may \_\_\_\_\_.
- Handful / log on
  - Savvy / make good coin
  - Compelling / infect systems
  - Regulatory / garner traction
6. If you influence or control something, then you \_\_\_\_\_ it.
- outline
  - glean
  - manipulate
  - disrupt
7. Which of the following refers specifically to the *amount* or *number* of something, whether high or low? Select all that apply:
- handful
  - droves
  - niche
  - track
8. Another word for great, huge, or impressive is...
- phenomenal
  - soundtrack
  - parody
  - regulatory

## ***Answers***

### **A. Collocations**

**1/h, 2/c, 3/a, 4/e, 5/b, 6/d, 7/g, 8/f**

### **B. Vocabulary Quiz**

**1/a, 2/d, 3/c, d, 4/b, 5/b, 6/c, 7/a, d, 8/a**