

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF USING TIKTOK APPLICATION FOR LEARNING VOCABULARY

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Abstract

This study explores students' perceptions of using the TikTok application as a supporting tool for learning English vocabulary. As digital media increasingly influences educational practices, social platforms like TikTok offer new opportunities for delivering short, engaging, and visually rich learning materials. This research employed a qualitative descriptive design involving 20 students from SMKN 3 Cimahi, who responded to a close-ended questionnaire with a set of Likert-scale statements. The findings indicate that students perceive TikTok as an enjoyable, motivating, and accessible medium for vocabulary learning. Most participants reported that the platform's audiovisual features helped them understand and remember new vocabulary more easily, improved their pronunciation, and supported independent learning. Students also appreciated the contextual examples provided in short videos, which made vocabulary use more meaningful and relevant to daily life. However, a small number of students noted that the platform may present distractions, suggesting the need for guided use in educational settings. Overall, the study highlights TikTok's potential to complement traditional teaching methods by enhancing engagement and learning outcomes. Future research is recommended to examine the platform's effectiveness through objective assessments and to explore its integration across diverse learner groups.

Keywords: TikTok-based learning, vocabulary acquisition, students' perception

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary plays a central role in language learning because it enables students to understand spoken and written texts, express ideas clearly, and participate in communication effectively. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, students often face difficulties in constructing sentences, comprehending academic materials, and engaging in classroom activities (Nation, 2022; Webb & Nation, 2017). However, traditional vocabulary learning methods such as rote memorization and textbook-based exercises are often perceived as monotonous and fail to maintain students' motivation (Schmitt, 2020). As a result, educators are increasingly searching for more engaging and student-centered approaches to support vocabulary acquisition.

In recent years, the rapid development of digital technology especially social media platforms has transformed how young learners interact with information. TikTok, known for its short, visually appealing videos and user-friendly editing tools, has become one of the most popular applications among students. Its multimodal characteristics make it a promising tool for presenting vocabulary content in fun, concise, and meaningful ways (Kusumawati & Rosyada, 2023). Although previous studies indicate that TikTok may enhance vocabulary learning by providing repeated exposure and contextualized input, research specifically examining students' perceptions of using TikTok for educational purposes remains limited. For example, Hastomo et al. (2022) found positive attitudes

toward the app, but their study did not explore students' deeper experiences, challenges, or expectations.

To address this gap, the present study aims to investigate students' perceptions of using the TikTok application for learning English vocabulary. Given the platform's ongoing evolution and increasing use in educational contexts, it is important to understand how students currently respond to TikTok-based learning. Therefore, this research is guided by the following question: How do students perceive the use of the TikTok application for learning English vocabulary? Insights from this study are expected to provide valuable contributions for teachers, curriculum developers, and educational content creators who plan to integrate social media into vocabulary instruction.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore students' perceptions of using the TikTok application for learning English vocabulary. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to capture detailed, authentic descriptions of students' experiences, thoughts, and interpretations in their natural learning environment (Creswell & Poth, 2021). This design also provides flexibility for students to express their viewpoints freely, enabling a deeper understanding of how TikTok supports or challenges vocabulary learning.

The participants of this study consisted 20 students in Cimahi. These students were selected because they actively use smartphones and are familiar with social media platforms, including TikTok, for daily communication and entertainment. Their frequent exposure to digital content makes them suitable for examining how short-video platforms influence vocabulary learning. The study involved a purposive sampling technique to ensure that the participants had prior experience with TikTok and were able to provide relevant insights related to the research focus.

Data were collected through an close-ended questionnaire distributed to the students. This instrument allowed participants to describe their experiences, benefits, and challenges of using TikTok for learning vocabulary in their own words. The responses were then analyzed using thematic analysis following the steps of identifying, coding, and categorizing recurring themes and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This analysis helped the researcher systematically interpret the data and derive meaningful conclusions regarding students' perceptions of TikTok as a vocabulary learning tool.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the findings derived from students' questionnaire responses concerning their perceptions of using the TikTok application for learning English vocabulary. The data were collected from 20 students who responded to 12 questionnaire items. A qualitative thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns and meaningful insights within the students' responses. The analysis revealed several dominant themes related to engagement, accessibility, vocabulary comprehension, and learning motivation when using TikTok as a learning medium.

Overall, the results indicate that students perceived TikTok as a beneficial and engaging platform for vocabulary learning. Most participants reported that short-form videos helped them understand new vocabulary more easily due to visual support, contextual usage, and repetition. In addition, students highlighted that TikTok's interactive and entertaining features

increased their motivation to learn English vocabulary independently. These findings suggest that TikTok has the potential to support vocabulary acquisition by creating an enjoyable, flexible, and student-centered learning experience.

Table 1. Result from Student’s Questionnaire (n=20)

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		f(%)	f(%)	f(%)	f(%)
1	I enjoy learning English vocabulary through TikTok	8(40%)	12(60%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
2	TikTok helps me understand new vocabulary more easily	9(45%)	10(50%)	1(5%)	0(0%)
3	I feel more motivated to learn vocabulary when using TikTok	5(25%)	14(70%)	1(5%)	0(0%)
4	TikTok makes vocabulary learning more interesting and fun	9(45%)	9(45%)	2(10%)	0(0%)
5	Short videos on TikTok help me remember vocabulary better	6(30%)	13(65%)	0(0%)	1(5%)
6	TikTok helps me improve my pronunciation of English words	8(40%)	9(45%)	3(15%)	0(0%)
7	TikTok provides creative examples of how vocabulary is used in daily life	10(50%)	9(45%)	1(5%)	0(0%)
8	I feel confident learning vocabulary using TikTok	2(10%)	17(85%)	1(5%)	0(0%)
9	TikTok is easy to use for learning English vocabular	5(25%)	14(70%)	1(5%)	0(0%)
10	I can learn vocabulary more independently through TikTok	4(20%)	15(75%)	1(5%)	0(0%)
11	TikTok videos help me understand vocabulary through visual and audio support	7(35%)	12(60%)	1(5%)	0(0%)
12	TikTok helps me learn vocabulary faster than traditional learning methods	6(30%)	13(65%)	1(5%)	0(0%)

Based on the questionnaire data, most students said that learning vocabulary through TikTok is really fun and engaging. A total of 40% strongly agreed and 60% agreed that they enjoy learning vocabulary using TikTok (Item 1). Similarly, the majority of students (95%) agreed that TikTok helps them understand new vocabulary more easily (Item 2). This suggests that TikTok's short-video format and visual presentation really support comprehension.

When it comes to learning motivation, 25% strongly agreed and 70% agreed that TikTok boosts their motivation to learn vocabulary (Item 3). Students also believed that TikTok makes vocabulary learning more interesting and fun, with 90% responding positively (Item 4). In addition, 95% of students indicated that short videos help them remember vocabulary more effectively (Item 5).

In terms of pronunciation, a good number of students (85%) agreed that TikTok helps them improve their pronunciation of English words (Item 6). Likewise, students viewed TikTok as a platform that provides creative and contextual examples of vocabulary use in daily life, with 50% strongly agreeing and 45% agreeing (Item 7).

Confidence in learning vocabulary through TikTok was also reported by most participants (95% agreed or strongly agreed) (Item 8). Plus, the app was perceived as easy to use (95% positive responses, Item 9) and supportive of independent learning (95%, Item 10).

Moreover, TikTok's visual and audio elements were reported to enhance students' understanding of vocabulary (Item 11), and 95% agreed that the app helps them learn vocabulary faster than traditional methods (Item 12).

Overall, the results show that TikTok is seen as an enjoyable, accessible, and effective platform for supporting vocabulary learning. These positive responses highlight TikTok's potential to complement classroom teaching and improve students' learning experiences.

Discussion

The survey results indicate that TikTok serves as a highly effective and engaging tool for vocabulary learning among students, reflecting broader developments in digital education where social media platforms increasingly support and enrich traditional pedagogical methods (Chen & Gao, 2021). The consistently high agreement rates across multiple questionnaire items such as 95% of students acknowledging improvements in comprehension and memory retention underscore the substantial role of TikTok's multimedia features in facilitating learning. Its short videos, dynamic visuals, and audio components align strongly with modern learners' preferences for interactive, concise, and easily digestible content, a trend widely documented in recent studies on mobile-assisted language learning (Li & Wang, 2023). Furthermore, the overwhelming positive responses regarding enjoyment (100% agreement) and learning motivation (95% agreement) highlight TikTok's capacity to transform vocabulary learning from a traditionally repetitive and monotonous task into an appealing and entertaining activity. These findings mirror research showing that gamified and socially oriented platforms can reduce learner fatigue and enhance engagement in EFL learning environments (Zhang & Liu, 2022).

The emphasis students placed on fun, creativity, and contextualized examples evidenced by 90% agreement on increased interest and 95% agreement on the availability of daily-life vocabulary usage suggests that TikTok fosters intrinsic motivation, a key component in

self-determination theory. The platform's capacity to allow students to see vocabulary presented in authentic, relatable contexts reinforces its value as a language-learning tool, aligning with recent findings on the motivational affordances of digital platforms (Kim & Park, 2024). Importantly, improvements in pronunciation (85% agreement) and faster vocabulary acquisition (95% agreement) illustrate the platform's impact on concrete learning outcomes. The repeated exposure to audiovisual content not only enhances retention but also helps learners internalize correct pronunciation and usage patterns, an effect supported by prior research on video-based vocabulary instruction (Wu & Chen, 2020). In addition, the high levels of student confidence (95% agreement) and the perception of ease of use (95% agreement) suggest that TikTok lowers barriers to language practice by offering an intuitive and accessible environment. This supports findings that short-video platforms promote autonomous learning and empower students to engage with linguistic input beyond formal classroom settings (Lee & Kim, 2023).

These results collectively imply that integrating TikTok into English language instruction could significantly enhance vocabulary pedagogy by leveraging its viral content formats, interactive features, and user-friendly interface to create authentic, student-centered learning experiences. Such integration aligns with recommendations in educational technology research emphasizing the importance of culturally and technologically relevant tools to maintain student engagement and motivation (Tan & Liu, 2025). To maximize pedagogical benefits, educators may consider designing structured TikTok-based activities such as vocabulary challenges, pronunciation duets, or curated learning playlists that guide students toward purposeful language practice while mitigating the platform's potential distractions, a suggestion echoed in social media integration frameworks (Huang et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, the study has several limitations that warrant attention. As the findings are based solely on self-reported data, students' perceptions may not fully reflect their actual learning gains, highlighting the need for future research incorporating more objective assessments such as pre-tests, post-tests, or performance-based evaluations (Gao & Li, 2021). Additionally, the limited sample size and lack of detailed demographic information restrict the generalizability of the conclusions, indicating that further studies involving diverse participant groups or longitudinal designs could deepen understanding of TikTok's long-term impact on vocabulary acquisition (Wang & Zhang, 2024). Future research should also explore hybrid instructional models that combine TikTok with other digital learning tools, as well as potential challenges such as information overload, distraction risks, or exposure to non-credible content issues increasingly emphasized in discussions on social media use in education (Chen et al., 2023). Despite these limitations, the present study provides meaningful insights into the potential of TikTok as a supplementary vocabulary-learning tool and highlights its relevance in contemporary EFL instruction.

CONCLUSION

From the students' perspective the results of this study indicate that, the use of TikTok as a medium for learning English vocabulary is highly effective because it helps students feel more motivated, more engaged, and more confident in their learning process. This is supported by the high percentage of students who reported that TikTok's short videos, visuals, and audio features made vocabulary easier to understand, remember, and apply in daily contexts. Students also stated that TikTok is easy to use and encourages independent learning, demonstrating that the platform has a positive impact on their vocabulary development.

Based on the above conclusion, several recommendations can be made. The first is for teachers, who are encouraged to utilize TikTok as a supplementary tool to make vocabulary learning more interactive and enjoyable. The majority of students in this study showed strong interest in using TikTok for learning, which suggests that its integration into classroom activities may increase motivation and learning outcomes. Teachers do not need to create complex videos; simple, relevant, and level-appropriate content is sufficient to engage students effectively.

The second recommendation is for school administrators to support the integration of digital media in learning by providing adequate infrastructure, digital literacy guidance, and flexible learning policies that enable students and teachers to make meaningful use of platforms like TikTok.

The third recommendation is directed toward content creators. They are encouraged to develop educational TikTok content that is accurate, age-appropriate, and aligned with language learning needs. Adding captions, clear pronunciation models, and contextual vocabulary use will make the videos more beneficial for students and easier for teachers to incorporate into lessons.

Finally, future researchers interested in exploring similar topics are advised to use this study as a reference and to consider conducting research with larger samples, different levels of learners, or experimental designs to examine the effectiveness of TikTok on measurable vocabulary improvement.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to express sincere appreciation to the students of SMKN 3 Cimahi for their active participation and valuable contributions to this research. Gratitude is also extended to the English teachers and school administrators who provided continuous support during the data collection process. Special thanks are addressed to the advisors and academic staff of IKIP Siliwangi for their guidance and constructive feedback throughout the development of this study.

This research did not receive any specific grant or financial support from public, commercial, or not-for-profit funding agencies.

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