



Students' Perception Toward the Utilization of Tiktok as Vocabulary Learning Media

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Abstract: TikTok videos serve as a prevalent method for augmenting vocabulary acquisition. This study aims to describe students' perceptions and motivation toward the role of TikTok in increasing vocabulary. This study employs a qualitative research method. The subjects of this study were students from SMA Sang Timur Yogyakarta during the academic years 2024 and 2025. The interview questions were adapted from interview questions developed by Anumathan & Hashim (2022). The results of the study TikTok videos are considered a good medium for increasing students' vocabulary and can be a supporting medium for teachers to teach with unique content and methods. In addition, students enjoy using TikTok as a learning medium because of its various interesting videos, features, and filters. However, students think that TikTok cannot be employed as the main media for acquiring vocabulary, other sources are still needed to increase vocabulary more rapidly. It can be summarized that students consider the utilization of TikTok can increase their vocabulary. Also, with TikTok, students agree that they have more fun exploring vocabulary both as viewers and content creators.

Keywords: English; Learning; Tiktok; Vocabulary

Introduction

In English Language Education there is an aspect that plays a fundamental role in language skills comprehension, namely vocabulary. Vocabulary is one of the most significant feature of the communication process, therefore English Language Education students must develop their vocabulary rather than using body language in communicating (Wu et al., 2015). Bintz (2011) identifies vocabulary as the collection of words necessary for efficient communication, encompassing both expressive vocabulary used in speech and receptive vocabulary utilised in listening.

Furthermore, Shutts et al. (2009) stated that vocabulary needs to be developed as an important aspect of a language. Learners need vocabulary to help them build meaningful sentences in communication because vocabulary offers sentence structure. Today,

many people want to learn English but are hesitant to learn the vocabulary, making it difficult to understand the topic. In addition, According to Harmer et al. (2002), teaching and learning activities are mostly ineffective without grammar, and entirely ineffective without vocabulary. Consequently, vocabulary is a key subject to instruct EFL pupils, as effective communication is hindered without a diverse words.

Moreover, students have certain problems in learning vocabulary. Most students are not motivated and not interested in improving their language competence (Bahous et al., 2011). Instructors should furnish engaging resources and methodologies to captivate students in the acquisition of English, including vocabulary development. Moreover, students anticipate that learning media will enhance their interest and motivation in the educational process. Conversely, the instructor exclusively employs a lecture method,

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resulting in student disengagement and suboptimal learning outcomes (Damayanti et al., 2025). Cameron (2002) argued that vocabulary is learned better when the meaning of words is shown, for example by pictures, actions, or real objects. Using audio-visual media to teach vocabulary is one approach to make it more fun for students. Teachers should be able to take advantage of technology and other social media platforms, to promote English learning by taking advantage of the rapidly growing technology and social media. Gupta et al. (2018) state that social media has four main objectives. They are for entertainment, socialization, information, and academic purposes.

In relation to this, The Head of Cooperation and Public Relations, Secretariat General, Kemendikbud Ristek Indonesia, Ristanto et al. (2016) revealed that students need a forum through a learning system that supports potential, creativity, and critical thinking skills. TikTok is one part of the digital sector forum that collaborates with the Ministry of Education and Technology Indonesia to realize the vision by 2035 to realize Indonesia to be a lifelong learner that excels and continues to grow (Mufid et al., 2022). TikTok is a short compact video-based application invented in China in 2016, which Chinese people know as Douyin. The users of this application can easily be found around us, for its advantages and broad targets for all ages, genders, and statuses. This application is believed to bring a new era to the community's social media entertainment platform with its fantastic growth (Yiqiu et al., 2020). In October 2020, TikTok occupied the highest position as an application with 2 billion downloads, reaching more than 152 countries in the world with over 400 million daily active users (Sensor, 2020). Then, with the service TikTok gives its customers to create videos with various kinds of content created with editing tools, special effects, and posts that can be seen by all users (Bernard, 2021). In addition, TikTok also provides interactive features such as chat boxes and comment fields for content creators and viewers to use (Sa'adah et al., 2022). TikTok and all kinds of its conveniences for users, also receive appropriate feedback that is stable and sustainable, especially among the younger generation. According to Sloane et al. (2019), the younger generation is the main user of the TikTok platform with a percentage of 69%, from the age range of 16 to 24 years. The young generation in that current age is also called Generation Z, which is known to be educated and always hungry for technological progress (Noordiono, 2017). The development of ideas for short videos that keep rolling endlessly like TikTok fits perfectly with the characteristics of the next generation who always want convenience.

With the freedom of creating good content, development, and a good target market, TikTok as an entertainment application, has turned into an application that provides benefits in various sciences and information (Miftahul, 2020). Through this platform, both teachers and non-teachers can easily share any information they want to share by only touching their mobile phone screen (Fromm et al., 2018; Kheireddine et al., 2019; Priporas et al., 2024). Furthermore, the minimum time required for a teaching session in both offline and online classes, which is one hour, can be cut quite a bit with a short 1-10 minute video of the TikTok app. The way of Learning with short videos can also reduce wasted time, irrelevant assignments, and significantly increase student interest (Szpunar et al., 2013).

One of the pieces of knowledge and information that is fairly easy to find when using TikTok is to find vocabulary that is used both verbally and in writing (Abbasova, 2016; Rizky, 2019; Ayaz et al., 2016). The vocabulary that will become group words is essential to convey the message experienced by service providers, creators, and viewers (Khan et al., 2016). Vocabulary is an inseparable element of a language. Regardless of whether it is native or not, vocabulary must be mastered for successful communication (Harmer et al., 2002).

Nowadays, there are still many learners that think learning vocabulary is not an easy thing (Irvani, 2019). The learners are needed to memorize the meaning of each word which tends to bring boredom and stress in the process (Aulia et al., 2020). Students enjoy doing useful activities that are fun for them, not static and monotonous on social media (Manggo et al., 2022). TikTok is one of the most used social media by the young generation today (Eryashta, 2021). TikTok can be accessed anywhere and anytime, and students can find vocabulary either from videos on the user's homepage or hashtags they are looking for. These videos can be repeated, downloaded, and shared. Therefore, the perspectives on TikTok as an online classroom learning medium showed positive results (Afidah et al., 2021). TikTok in the learning process will make learners absorb vocabulary knowledge more optimally (Nasiba, 2018). Hastomo et al. (2022) found in his study that on average students who use Tiktok get faster access to learn interesting information with attractive visualizations. The teacher seen by TikTok is very suitable to improve students' vocabulary skills. The gap in this research is a variable where researchers focus on increasing children's vocabulary skills with the content they specify, while this research focuses on the perceptions of heavy users who have experience using TikTok. The previous research is due to an analysis of students' vocabulary who are using TikTok application. In their

research, they found positive results that the participants who are using TikTok have a better score than those who are not using it as a vocabulary learning medium. Subsequent research brought EFL learning through TikTok, and it does have an impact on students for helping their vocabulary skills. TikTok is a contemporary trend that can serve as an effective alternative for educators to implement their teaching methods (Ining, 2021). Additionally, there exists a prior study examining junior high school students' perceptions of English videos on TikTok aimed at enhancing their vocabulary skills. Students assert that TikTok could enhance both their vocabulary and their pronunciation and speaking skills (Wardani, 2022). Nevertheless, the positive impacts on previous researchers have not explained how these students can really get impacted by TikTok. The gap in the current research is the data collection instrument. Previous research used a broader instrument with a survey method and with the content they determined to learn, while this study only used interviews with heavy users who use TikTok as part of their lifestyle.

Based on the studies above, the purpose of this study is to investigate the user of TikTok perception and motivation in SMA Sang Timur Yogyakarta in relation to their vocabulary mastery. The study's objective is to describe students' perception and motivation toward the role of TikTok in vocabulary skills improvement.

Method

This study used a case study design. Case study design is an empirical investigation of hidden and revealing of a phenomenon in real life Yin, (1981a, 2009). A qualitative approach is an approach that is intended to understand a social phenomenon and the individual perspective studied. The researcher finds the phenomenon about the amount students use Tiktok daily as their trendsetter media is interesting. The case study design was chosen by the researcher because of the appropriate characteristics to achieve the final results, namely: (1) focusing on one or several cases, occurring and studied in a real-life context; (2) explaining the causal relationship; (3) theory development in the research design phase; (4) depending on various sources of evidence; and (5) generalizing theory.

The research participants of this study are heavy users of TikTok in SMA Sang Timur Yogyakarta in the academic years 2024 and 2025. There are three measurements of the participants selected by the researcher. First, they are TikTok users who not only use the application for entertainment but also for other activities in life such as learning and discovering new

things, fulfilling shopping needs, and generating income from TikTok. Second, these participants also tend to share knowledge either in the form of their own work or from other creators. Third, they also consume time from internet data and use the device battery longer on TikTok than most social media applications.

The participants of this study were SMA Sang Timur Yogyakarta in the academic years 2024 and 2025. These students actively use Tiktok social media at the level of information users. Constantinides (2014) says that there are three segments of the use of social media sought by users, namely 1) ordinary users (29.5%) have the lowest level of social activity and online information 2) social users (40.7%) they are at the level high in involvement with social activities and medium in conducting information search 3) information users (29.8%) have a high level of social activity and information seeking. Then determined the number of participants is approximately 3 people, who are in the third segment (information users). Segment 3 as a high-level social media and information search category, maintains multiple social media website profiles, and logs in at least once a day, compared to half of the basic users.

The researcher collected the data using an interview, and documentation in order to specify the educational English learning TikTok, the videos that represent the case are such as @johnhiday, @antonioparlati, and @eranitri content. The researcher's instrument is the interview with semi-structured questions adapted from Anumanthan and Hashim with their study which was carried out in 2022. The interview questions were divided into 4 sections with 11 open-ended questions which were appropriate according to the subject of the participant. The four sections are usefulness, enjoyment, difficulties, and motivation to use TikTok (Anumathan & Hashim, 2022). The researcher adjusted some questions from the interview with the latest research on vocabulary without changing the meaning and essence of the interview itself. The researcher validated the data by triangulation and checking it through a questionnaire.

Data was collected through interviews with participants one by one, collected, and analyzed. Based on the results obtained, the researcher has drawn conclusions from this study. The researcher has a series of procedures for data collection. The researcher prepared interview questions to ensure that they are relevant; and easy for participants to understand. Next, the researcher distributed by directly interviewing the participants which was held on October 22, 2024. Participants answered the questions given clearly with their experience of using TikTok as a medium for learning vocabulary. Interview time was grouped into

three sessions, one interview took 20 minutes to one hour depending on the completeness of the answers required by the researcher. Data analysis was carried out until November 8, 2024. The researcher has recorded the interview process and recorded the dialogue script with each participant. Data analysis as defined by Sugiyono (2019) is the process of sequentially looking for and gathering data obtained through interviews by arranging it into classifications, conveying them into elements, synthesizing, putting together onto patterns, selecting the ones tend to be essential and which will be learned, and interpreting the results. The researcher employed the Miles & Huberman qualitative analysis method to examine the data. According to Miles et al. (1994), data analysis must be carried out directly, interactively, and thoroughly.

The researcher conducted inductive and manual coding/analysis of the code described in Straus et al. (1990). The researcher was collecting initial data, and writing and reviewing line by line. Categories or labels are created next to or below paragraphs, and the list grows. Labels have been reviewed, and more abstract categories are associated with several observations. Labels could be entered into qualitative data cards. In looking for the consequences the researcher followed the term as a result of or because of. The coding used the formula (group of questions)/ number of questions/ how many participants/ name of respondent. The researcher divided the questions into 2 groups, group A and B, group A containing 8 questions, and group B containing 3 questions. If participant A answers question number 1 from group A, it will be coded as A/1/1/A.H.

The data analysis procedures outlined in Miles et al. (1994) book encompass data codification, data presentation, and verification/conclusion. The analysis of this study was conducted through four primary components: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and data verification/ withdrawal. Data collection is a methodical and systematic process for acquiring data. The researcher employed an interview to gather data in this study. After the data collected is presented in the form of interview transcripts and documentation. The researcher employed descriptive codes that are more interpretative in nature. Data reduction is the phase designed to refine, categorize, streamline, and eliminate superfluous data while organizing it. The presentation of data constitutes a compilation of facts from which conclusions may be derived or pursued. By presenting data the researcher can more easily know what to do. The drawing of this data can use charts, brief descriptions, charts, or tables. Then, conclusion drawing/verification, namely the researcher made conclusions from data that has been

reduced and presented with strong evidence. The conclusion drawn is the answer to the formulation of the problem that was revealed by the researcher at the beginning.

Result and Discussion

To address the research questions, the interview content was transcribed, encoded, and organized into four distinct themes based on observed patterns; (i) usefulness, (ii) enjoyment, (iii) difficulties, (iv) and motivation. The outcome of the field study is interpreted, based on the research question. After presenting the results in sentence form, the findings are discussed and linked to the literature and previous research that addresses the research topic.

Usefulness

Students argue that the tools and filters on TikTok greatly facilitate learning vocabulary compared to other social media. Students think that the ease of the user interface and user experience on TikTok is very helpful for them in watching videos and also making learning videos on TikTok. When watching videos students can also learn many words through the text and subtitles provided.

... TikTok has interesting filters and features, and making a video or creating a video in TikTok is easier, and more interesting. (A/3/5/R.S)

Yes, it is really enjoyable. I don't feel like I am learning right now because we can use TikTok anytime, anywhere. (A/2/6/S.F).

From these captions and subtitles students can learn the use and pronunciation of words in an unfamiliar language. This platform is flexible to use anywhere and the content creation is not bound by certain rules in teaching vocabulary. This application adapts the content to the user so that all age ranges can be reached. Zainuddin (2016) stated that the level of students' attention in learning was higher, and they learned better when visuals were added to vocabulary instruction. According to Nation (1990), Blonskyte (2014), the meaning of vocabulary can be taught to students effectively through demonstrations or pictures (using objects, using still images, using gestures, appearances and actions, photos, diagrams or charts, and pictures from books) and communicated by oral explanations (analytic definitions, adding new contextual words and translations to other languages). In the interview, whenever students find a new word, they apply it in their daily life because of most of the contexts they often encounter. Students become more confident because of their increased vocabulary in

communication and presentation. The 'save' and 'share' features are also of concern to students because of their convenience. Students can save and share videos that they feel need to be studied again. The constant viewing of the videos significantly enhanced students vocabulary acquisition, especially in refining their pronunciation abilities. Silverman et al. (2009) assert that repeated viewing of videos is crucial for enhancing language acquisition. All participants concurred that they preferred the videos to be concise, straightforward, yet effective. Due to the brevity of most TikTok videos, they are readily available, as the application demands minimal Internet connection use.

Enjoyment

The Researcher also found that students felt they were helped by adding vocabulary and understanding in its application to the uniqueness of TikTok content and its authenticity. There are various ways to learn vocabulary, starting from short scenarios, and reviewing works, to vocabulary issues that many people don't know about.

... when the user often watches the vocabulary video, the vocabulary word can be familiar because the user often hears it, they memorize vocabulary words faster and easier and making a video or creating a video in TikTok is easier. (A/3/2/R.S)

All participants said they enjoyed the educational content on TikTok, which continues to grow, featuring subjects and featuring new vocabulary learning techniques. Jacobson et al. (2009) was argue that "authentic action is to be found when individuals freely act in such a way that they endeavor to support the growth and development of each other's being," In line with that, Cranton (2001) defines authenticity as "the human form of embedding identity within himself in groups, communities, and society" (p. 113). Learning from authentic materials makes learners feel more connected to the target country. Eventually, authentic materials in the context of audio-visual arts not only add depth and realism to the learning environment but also provide teachers with the tools students need to integrate the formal learning environment, artificial with the outside world (Duran et al., 2008).

I can find new friends like in the comment, we can chit chat with strangers even abroad, and then become friends like that in real life, stuff like that. So we can improve our English also. (A/2/5/S.F)

According to Zarpetea (2002), and Rosdiana (2009), using videos to improve students' vocabulary recognition and understanding helps expose language

learners to real-world contexts and information, which helps them develop their language skills. With the convenience offered by TikTok, students can learn vocabulary through native speakers. This helps students to pronounce words and pronounce phrases better by imitating native speakers. Students also use this to build relationships and meet new friends from all over the world through the 'comment column' and 'chat'. One student admitted that one of the reasons he liked this platform was because he got new vocabulary and conversational phrases with friends on TikTok.

Difficulties

The findings showed that TikTok positively helps students' vocabulary development by providing short videos that contain content on certain topics and discussion of specific word meanings. Students become more active in participating in vocabulary learning by enjoying entertaining videos on TikTok such as fashion, nationality, and education, to cases that are currently viral.

... depends on the content we are watching, if you watch many content of English I think your "FYP" page will be full of vocabulary lessons (A/2/9/S.F)

They can remember phrases and terms easily without neglecting their interests and other knowledge. These vocabulary learning videos can be searched for in the search bar, and related content will appear on the home page (FYP) of TikTok users as they often watch vocabulary learning videos. By watching these videos students think that they get a variety of vocabulary about cooking ingredients, tools, and verbs when cooking.

The explanation are clear, some videos give me example how to use the vocabulary word so I can automatically use the vocabulary word (A/3/4/R.S)

The diversity of themes and their ever-new developments continue to provide students with unfamiliar vocabulary. Lialikhova (2014) argues that the video is practical because it provides examples of the application of using phrases in certain situations and contexts, rather than providing a list of vocabulary during pre-teaching without any context. They also tend to use TikTok more to practice their English skills through the TikTok application with an increased vocabulary. The findings are in line with Zacharias (2004). He stated that material other than the videos indirectly helped students improve their English proficiency. From these findings, they not only learn words or phrases from videos but also various global

and social issues in the world. These new words are useful for expanding the components of their English speaking and writing skills.

... watching whatever you get is easy to understand, but looking for certain words is difficult I think because not all creators will make what you want but some creators will make a video based on the request comment box (A/1/3/A.I)

On the other hand, students think users may find it difficult to learn more vocabulary because the phrase or word they want to search for is not always available. Content creators create videos for such a large scope that the user's individual vocabulary needs cannot depend solely on TikTok.

I think it's because the videos on TikTok is just about a brief explanation like really short, but sometimes the videos are too short like without any explanation (A/2/3/S.F)

I think for intermediate or b2 b1 TikTok is effective media, but the very beginner is difficult because they don't have many vocabularies yet (A/1/3/A.I)

Based on information from other students, TikTok is also not fully efficient for all students, because the explanations contained in the videos can be too short. Students argue that learning through videos with a short duration is considered not a problem for intermediate classes or those who already have enough vocabulary knowledge. However, students feel beginners will have difficulty with incomplete material and in-depth discussions.

Motivation

The findings also revealed that all the students interviewed admitted that the motivation for the TikTok application as a tool for vocabulary acquisition came from themselves (Intrinsic motivation).

When I make or watch a video I have to think what I can get and what I can share so if there are so many viewers it's a reward. It is easy to use, when you make your first video it may not be perfect, but you will improve from making many videos. So you will learn from the mistake that you learn from the previous video (A/1/5/A.I)

When interviewed, almost all of these students used TikTok for more than 2 hours per day to watch videos. An important finding in the early stages was that even though they were 'segment 3' users, half of them admitted that initially, they used TikTok as an entertainment medium and then found educational benefits in it.

It is easier to get viewers in Tiktok than other social media. Because the users of Tiktok are very many right. It's easy to gain views (B/1/9/A.I)

A student started creating content because he was motivated to measure his own English and teaching skills. With this platform, he finds it very helpful because he can see his progress through statistics on the number of times his videos appear on user pages, the number of likes and shares, and comments from the viewers. This positively motivates students to achieve their best version in English as spectators and content creators. They stated that learning vocabulary with TikTok was more fun than at school.

I think no, because there is no specific account or there is no account discussing the specific vocabulary. Their account will include like English speaking, and listening so there is no specialization in vocabulary lessons (A/1/7/A.I)

In my experience, some videos can't be saved or downloaded so I cannot watch the video again because the video is gone. I cannot review the vocabulary that I learned before (A/3/3/R.S)

However, the majority of students agree that learning on TikTok cannot be used as teaching material alone, they still need other media to learn vocabulary. This is due to the difficulties that users get when they want to specifically search for the vocabulary they want because they can only learn from what is available on the platform. There are also privacy settings for creators on TikTok to disable other people's access to save their work, causing it difficult for users to study outside the platform offline. Therefore, TikTok should be considered as a complement to the vocabulary acquisition process. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Bernard (2021) and Kamil et al. (2000), which indicates that although videos offer greater non-verbal support than books, viewing videos alone is inadequate for vocabulary acquisition; teaching word meanings remains essential, regardless of whether conventional methods or alternative tools are employed.

Conclusion

The researcher examines students' impressions of TikTok as a vocabulary learning tool across four dimensions: Usefulness, Enjoyment, Difficulties, and Motivation. First, students agree that TikTok improves vocabulary skills with various content and supporting features for vocabulary improvement. Second, students feel enjoy and comfortable in the learning that students learn, they choose the content they need to learn. Then, watch videos with authentic content that students

positively considered to improve their vocabulary skills. Third, students think that the difficulty of using TikTok is not too significant because it allows them to learn to be creators or viewers. The TikTok algorithm with changing videos that appear on the "FYP" homepage more often than other applications. However, students considered that the use of TikTok for beginner English learners was inappropriate as the main medium for increasing vocabulary because of the need for an in-depth discussion of the meaning and use of these words. Fourth, students think that the motivation they have in using TikTok tends to come from themselves by considering the benefits. Moreover, students considered that TikTok can be used by teachers as a medium to encourage student vocabulary development. Teachers can also add other elements to content such as listening and reading so that learning can be more effective and attract students' interest. Nevertheless, students consider that TikTok cannot be used as the main media, teachers still need other media or conventional learning in schools or courses to discuss vocabulary material in depth. However, this study has a limitation with limited participant coverage according to user criteria which are information users. The researcher suggests future researchers cover participants with a wider scope from various circles of users of the TikTok platform. The researcher hopes that this research may serve as a reference for other investigations into more comprehensive subjects. Moreover, it will offer further essential insights or information regarding the application of media in vocabulary instruction. This research is anticipated to be beneficial for English educators, particularly concerning vocabulary, enabling them to select appropriate media for student learning.

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Conflicts of Interest

In this study, it is essential to note that the authors sincerely and openly declare that they have no conflicts of interest that could influence the results or interpretation of this study.

Confirms that the integrity and objectivity of our research remain intact. The funders had no role in the design of the study, in the collection, analysis, interpretation of data and in the writing of the manuscript.

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