


Educational Tiktok Supporting English Vocabulary Mastery: a Case Study at MA Muhammadiyah Limpung

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A B S T R A C T

This study explores the use of educational TikTok content to support English vocabulary mastery in a non-formal learning context, addressing the limited research on vocabulary learning processes in extracurricular English Clubs. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through pretest–posttest, semi-structured interviews, and observations involving English Club students at MA Muhammadiyah Limpung. Descriptive analysis of test scores showed an increase in students' average vocabulary scores from 56.4 to 78.9. Qualitative findings revealed that TikTok supported vocabulary learning by providing contextual meaning, pronunciation models through imitation, and opportunities for simple vocabulary use in communication. Students also perceived TikTok as an engaging and accessible medium that reduced learning anxiety and increased participation. However, distractions from non-educational content and variations in content quality emerged as challenges requiring pedagogical guidance. This study concludes that TikTok can function as a supportive medium for vocabulary learning in non-formal contexts when used selectively and integrated with language practice activities

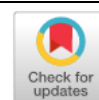
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INTRODUCTION

English has a strategic role as a global language in the fields of education, technology, and international communication. One of the fundamental elements in mastering English is vocabulary, because vocabulary is the main foundation in understanding and producing language, both orally and in writing. Without adequate vocabulary mastery, learners will have difficulty reading texts, understanding speech, writing ideas, and communicating effectively (Nation, 2001). A number of studies show that vocabulary limitations are one of the main obstacles in text comprehension and fluency in student communication in English learning (Alshreef & Khadawardi, 2023).

Although vocabulary plays a very important role, the reality of English learning in Indonesia shows that the vocabulary mastery of secondary school students is still relatively low. The vocabulary learning process tends to focus on memorizing words without contextual application in real communication. As a result, students often recognize the meaning of words separately but have difficulty using the vocabulary in appropriate sentences or situations. Low motivation to learn and lack of exposure to English outside the classroom also reinforce this problem (Rajayi & Maleki, 2023). Mustafa (2019) reports that high school graduates in Indonesia only master about 72% of basic vocabulary and less than 50% of intermediate level vocabulary, which is still below the expected competency standard. These findings are in line with research by Ikhsan et al (2023) and Fadana et al (2021), which indicates that most students have not achieved minimal vocabulary mastery.

On the other hand, the development of digital technology has changed the way students interact with information and language. Teenagers today spend a considerable amount of time on social media, particularly short video-based platforms like TikTok. However, the use of

social media is generally still dominated by entertainment content and has not been optimally utilized as a means of language learning. This condition creates a gap between the high intensity of digital media use and the low use of these media to support English vocabulary learning.

In fact, social media has great potential as a source of language learning. TikTok provides a variety of educational content in the form of short videos that contain everyday vocabulary, common expressions, idioms, and pronunciation that are packaged visually, audio, and textually. The short video format makes the content easier to understand, in accordance with the characteristics of the digital generation, who tend to favor visual and fast learning (Zein et al., 2024). The use of TikTok as a learning medium is also in line with the concept of edutainment, which is a combination of entertainment and educational elements to increase student motivation and learning engagement (Wilson & Anam, 2024).

Theoretically, the use of TikTok in vocabulary learning can be explained through Input Hypothesis submitted by Krashen (1982) that emphasises the importance of meaningful language display (comprehensible input) in language acquisition. English-language TikTok videos allow students to acquire language input naturally and contextually without the pressure of formal learning. In addition, Social Learning Theory from Bandura (1977) explained that learning can occur through the process of observation and imitation, which is relevant to the characteristics of TikTok as a creator-based platform. The edutainment element also plays a role in lowering students' affective barriers so that the vocabulary acquisition process becomes more effective (Kuswandi, 2023).

Previous studies have shown that TikTok and similar social media have the potential to support increased English vocabulary mastery. Rita & Subekti (2023) found that students had a positive attitude towards using TikTok as a vocabulary learning medium because short videos and translated text helped with faster word comprehension. Other research has also shown that repeated exposure through visual and textual content can strengthen vocabulary memory, despite the challenges of distraction from non-educational content (Fauziah et al, 2024; Susanto, 2024). However, most of the research still focuses on learning outcomes in general and has not explored much of the learning process and experience of students in depth, especially in the context of non-formal activities such as English Clubs.

English Club, as an extracurricular activity, has different characteristics from learning English in formal classes. In the context of the English Club, learning takes place more flexibly, is not bound by a strict curriculum and academic assessments, and provides a wider space for students to explore and practice using English more naturally. This non-formal environment allows students to learn with lower pressure and more active engagement, especially in vocabulary mastery and communication practice. However, non-formal learning contexts such as English Club are still relatively rarely studied in depth, as previous research has generally focused on formal classrooms and curriculum-based outcomes. In addition, studies on the use of TikTok for vocabulary learning still often emphasize quantitative results, while changes in students' abilities, learning experiences, and supporting and inhibiting factors in non-formal contexts have not been widely explored. Therefore, this study views the English Club as a relevant context to understand the role of TikTok more comprehensively in supporting students' vocabulary mastery.

Despite the increasing emphasis on vocabulary mastery in EFL learning, many Indonesian students still struggle to use vocabulary meaningfully in communication. Vocabulary instruction often focuses on memorization rather than contextualized use, resulting in limited retention and low communicative confidence. While digital platforms such as TikTok are widely used by students, their pedagogical potential for vocabulary development—particularly in non-formal learning environments—remains underexplored. Most existing studies emphasize quantitative outcomes in formal classrooms, leaving a gap in understanding how social media supports vocabulary learning processes, learner experiences, and engagement in extracurricular contexts such as English Clubs.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to explore the use of TikTok content with educational value in supporting the mastery of English vocabulary of students who are

members of the English Club at MA Muhammadiyah Limpung. This research focuses on how students use TikTok as a vocabulary learning resource, the factors that support and hinder its utilization, and its contribution to improving English vocabulary mastery.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the process, experience, and change in students' ability to master English vocabulary through the use of educational TikTok content in English Club activities. The main focus of the research is not on statistical effectiveness testing, but on the exploration of vocabulary learning phenomena in non-formal contexts.

Participants

The research was carried out at MA Muhammadiyah Limpung, Batang Regency, in the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. The subjects of the study are students who are members of the English Club activities. The participants of this study were 15 students who were active members of the English Club at MA Muhammadiyah Limpung, aged between 15–17 years. The selection of subjects was carried out using purposive sampling techniques with the following criteria: (1) students are active members of the English Club, (2) participate in learning activities regularly, and (3) use TikTok in daily life.

Procedures

Research data was collected through tests, interviews, and observations (Hardani et al., 2020). Tests in the form of pretest and post-test were used to obtain an overview of changes in students' vocabulary mastery before and after the use of educational TikTok content. The test instruments include common vocabulary that is often used in daily communication and is adapted to the material discussed in the English Club activities. Test data are not used for inferential analysis, but rather as descriptive supporting data.

The TikTok content used in this study was not randomly selected. The researcher guided students to access English-learning TikTok videos that focused on daily vocabulary, pronunciation, and contextual usage. The selected content met the following criteria: (1) use of clear English pronunciation, (2) inclusion of vocabulary explanations or examples in context, (3) relevance to students' communicative needs, and (4) short duration suitable for repeated viewing. This selection aimed to minimize exposure to irrelevant content and ensure pedagogical relevance.

Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner with 12 students who were selected purposively based on the variation in ability (high, medium, and low), as well as 1 English Club coach as a key informant. The interviews focused on students' experiences in using TikTok as a vocabulary learning resource, perceptions of social media-based vocabulary learning, and changes in abilities felt while participating in English Club activities.

Observations were made during the English Club activity process. The focus of observation included students' participation in activities, the courage to speak in English, the use of new vocabulary in interaction, and students' responses to the use of TikTok in learning. Observation aims to capture changes in students' behaviour and abilities directly that cannot be fully revealed through tests and interviews.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data were analysed using interactive analysis techniques, which included the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and the conclusion drawn. Quantitative data from the pretest and post-test were analysed descriptively to support and corroborate the qualitative findings. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques, namely by comparing test results, interviews, and observations to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon being studied.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**Findings on Vocabulary Mastery Changes**

The findings from the pretest and post-test show an improvement in students' English vocabulary mastery after the use of educational TikTok content in English Club activities. The average pretest score of the students was 56.4, while the post-test average increased to 78.9.

These test results are presented descriptively to show changes in students' vocabulary performance before and after the integration of TikTok-based learning activities. The test data are used as supporting evidence alongside interview and observation findings.

Findings on Students' Perceptions and Responses to TikTok Use

Interview data indicate that students generally expressed positive perceptions toward the use of TikTok as a medium for learning English vocabulary. Students described TikTok as interesting, easy to access, and more relaxed compared to conventional learning media.

Students with higher vocabulary mastery stated that TikTok videos helped them understand vocabulary quickly because the content was short and focused. One student stated, "The video is short but straight to the point, so it is easy to understand and not boring." Students with medium vocabulary mastery reported that TikTok made learning feel less stressful. One student explained, "Learning feels more relaxed than in class, so I dare to try." Students with lower vocabulary mastery stated that TikTok helped reduce their fear of English. One student mentioned, "Usually I am afraid of English, but learning through TikTok makes me braver."

Findings on the Utilization of TikTok in the Vocabulary Learning Process

The interview results show that students used TikTok as a vocabulary learning resource in different ways based on their vocabulary score categories. Students in the high score category reported more active and targeted use of TikTok, while students in the medium and low score categories reported simpler usage patterns.

Students with high scores stated that they actively searched for TikTok accounts that focused on English vocabulary content. They reported saving videos containing unfamiliar vocabulary and replaying them to practice pronunciation. One student stated, "Usually, I look for an account that specifically discusses vocabulary. If there is a difficult word, I save the video and repeat it while imitating the way it is read."

Students in the medium score category reported that they primarily used TikTok to understand vocabulary meanings and usage contexts. They relied on visuals and example sentences presented in the videos. One student stated, "If you look at the video, you know the meaning and examples. But usually I just watch, I don't often use it right away."

Students in the low score category reported that TikTok helped them become familiar with new vocabulary. Their use was mainly limited to recognizing meanings and listening to pronunciation. One student stated, "At first I didn't understand, but after seeing the video, I knew what it meant. The pronunciation is still difficult, but at least I know what he says."

The English Club coach also described differences in students' usage patterns. The coach stated, "Students who already have good vocabulary usually look for and imitate videos actively, while students with lower vocabulary levels tend to focus on becoming familiar with the words first."

Several students also reported repeatedly imitating vocabulary pronunciation from TikTok videos. One student stated, "Usually, if I find a difficult word, I save the video and keep watching it again until I understand it."

Findings on Changes in Students' Abilities based on Learning Observations

Observation data indicate changes in students' abilities in vocabulary recognition, pronunciation, vocabulary use in simple contexts, and participation in communication during English Club activities.

Educational Tiktok Supporting English Vocabulary Mastery: a Case Study at MA Muhammadiyah Limpung Ability to Recognize and Understand the Meaning of Vocabulary

At the beginning of the learning activities, most students were able to recognize English vocabulary in a limited way and often required direct translation from the teacher to understand meanings. After the use of TikTok content, students showed the ability to identify vocabulary meanings through visual context and usage examples presented in videos. A student from the medium score category stated, "If I look at the video, I can tell what it means from the example, even though it is not explained at length."

Pronunciation Skills

Observations show that students initially hesitated when pronouncing English vocabulary and frequently produced incorrect pronunciation. After repeated exposure to TikTok videos, students began to imitate pronunciation models from the videos. A student from the high score category stated, "When it comes to pronunciation, I usually imitate the way it is spoken in videos, repeated several times until it is similar."

The English Club coach also noted changes in students' pronunciation, stating, "Their pronunciation is clearer than before, although it is not perfect."

The Ability to Use Vocabulary in a Simple Context

Before the use of TikTok, students tended to know vocabulary as isolated words and rarely used them in sentences. During subsequent learning sessions, students began attempting to use new vocabulary in simple sentences and short discussions. A student from the high score category stated, "Now I can immediately use words in sentences, even though they are still simple." Students from the low score category also reported attempting to use vocabulary in conversation. One student stated, "It's not good yet, but I dare to say it in the conversation."

Courage and Participation in Communication

Observation results show changes in students' participation during English Club activities. Initially, students were reluctant to speak English and depended heavily on teacher guidance. After the use of TikTok content, students were observed participating more actively in discussions.

The English Club coach stated, "Now they take the initiative to talk more often, even though they still make mistakes." A student from the medium score category stated, "I used to be afraid of making mistakes, but now I'm more willing to try."

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the utilization of TikTok in English Club activities was associated with observable changes in students' vocabulary learning experiences. Although the findings are presented descriptively, they reveal patterns in how students engaged with vocabulary learning through short-video content. These patterns suggest that TikTok provided repeated and contextualized exposure to vocabulary, which is considered essential in vocabulary acquisition (Nation, 2001). By encountering vocabulary within visual and situational contexts, students were able to associate word meanings with real usage rather than learning words in isolation.

The variation in how students used TikTok reflects differences in their vocabulary proficiency levels. Students with higher vocabulary mastery tended to use TikTok more strategically, such as by actively searching for specific vocabulary-focused content and repeatedly imitating pronunciation models. Meanwhile, students with lower vocabulary mastery primarily used TikTok as an introductory medium to become familiar with new vocabulary. This pattern aligns with Bandura (1977) Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes that learning occurs through observation and imitation. TikTok videos functioned as observable language models that learners could access repeatedly according to their individual learning readiness.

Students' frequent imitation of pronunciation from TikTok videos indicates that the platform contributed to pronunciation development. Pronunciation models presented through short videos served as phonological input that students could replay and practice independently. Nation (2001) argues that vocabulary mastery includes phonological knowledge in addition to meaning and usage. Similar findings have been reported in previous

studies, which found that exposure to authentic pronunciation through digital media supports learners' pronunciation accuracy and confidence (Alshreef & Khadawardi, 2023; Rita & Subekti, 2023).

The findings also indicate that students began to move from recognizing vocabulary to using it in simple communicative contexts. This shift suggests a transition from receptive to early productive vocabulary knowledge. According to Rajayi & Maleki (2023), vocabulary learning becomes more meaningful when learners are encouraged to use new words in communication, even in simple forms. The use of TikTok-supported vocabulary learning within English Club activities provided opportunities for students to attempt using new vocabulary orally, despite limited accuracy.

In addition, changes in students' participation and willingness to communicate highlight the role of affective factors in vocabulary learning. Students became more willing to speak English and participate in discussions, even when making mistakes. This condition is consistent with Krashen (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which suggests that lower anxiety and increased motivation facilitate language acquisition. The informal and engaging nature of TikTok-based learning appears to have contributed to a learning atmosphere that encouraged students to take risks in using English.

However, consistent with previous research, the findings also imply the need for pedagogical guidance when integrating TikTok into language learning. While TikTok provides accessible and engaging input, its effectiveness depends on appropriate content selection and teacher supervision to minimize distractions and ensure language accuracy (Fauziah et al, 2024); Susanto, 2024). Therefore, TikTok should be positioned as a complementary learning medium rather than a substitute for structured instruction.

Overall, the discussion suggests that TikTok can support vocabulary learning by providing contextualized input, pronunciation models, and opportunities for communicative practice when integrated into non-formal learning settings such as English Clubs. Its contribution lies not only in vocabulary exposure but also in fostering learner confidence and engagement, which are crucial elements in EFL vocabulary development.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the utilization of educational TikTok content in English Club activities contributes to observable changes in students' English vocabulary learning experiences. The findings show improvements in vocabulary recognition, pronunciation practice, simple vocabulary use in communication, and students' participation during learning activities. These changes indicate that TikTok can function as a complementary learning medium that supports vocabulary exposure and early productive use in a non-formal learning context. The discussion highlights that these changes are influenced by several supporting and inhibiting factors. Supporting factors include repeated and contextualized exposure to vocabulary through short videos, the availability of replayable pronunciation models, and positive affective conditions such as increased motivation and reduced anxiety. In contrast, inhibiting factors include students' limited application of vocabulary beyond video viewing, potential distractions from non-educational content, and variations in language quality across TikTok videos. These factors suggest that the effectiveness of TikTok in vocabulary learning depends on guided use and pedagogical supervision. Based on these findings, this study implies that teachers or English Club facilitators should carefully select TikTok content, provide learning guidance, and integrate TikTok-based activities with structured vocabulary practice. Future research is recommended to explore the long-term impact of TikTok-assisted vocabulary learning, compare its effectiveness with other digital platforms, and investigate its application in different educational contexts and proficiency levels.

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