


The Use of TikTok in Learning English Vocabulary at Junior High School

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A B S T R A C T

This research aimed to investigate how students use TikTok in learning English vocabulary and identify the TikTok features that support vocabulary learning at seventh-grade students of junior high school. The research design used in this research was a descriptive qualitative. The research data were collected from 30 seventh-grade students through close-ended questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaire and interview data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis to identify students' perceptions and experiences in learning vocabulary through TikTok. The findings showed that TikTok helped students learn English vocabulary more effectively. Students preferred practical and contextual vocabulary that could be applied in daily communication. In addition, TikTok provided students with frequent exposure to English words and expressions through short and engaging videos. The findings also revealed that students used several strategies to understand and remember new vocabulary, such as replaying videos, writing down unfamiliar words, searching for meanings, and practicing vocabulary in conversations. This research concluded that TikTok was a useful tool for supporting English vocabulary learning at seventh-grade students.

Keywords: *TikTok, English Vocabulary, Students' Perceptions, Vocabulary Learning, Junior High School*

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INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is one of the most important components because students need vocabulary to communicate, understand texts, and express ideas. Without enough vocabulary knowledge, students may have difficulties in speaking, reading, listening, and writing (Armelia et al., 2024). In addition, Waruwu et al. (2023) states that students cannot communicate their ideas effectively without vocabulary. Vocabulary learning is not only about memorizing word meanings, but also about understanding how words are used in context and communication. According to Nation (2001) as cited in Ain & Kalisa (2026), vocabulary knowledge involves understanding word form, meaning, and use, including how words are pronounced, spelled, and used in sentences. This means that vocabulary learning is not only about memorizing meanings but also about understanding how words are used in communication. In vocabulary learning, students also need repeated exposure to words to help them remember and use vocabulary effectively. However, many students still had experienced difficulties in learning vocabulary because they often felt bored with traditional learning methods. Vocabulary mastery remains a challenge for students who learn English as a foreign language, especially for Indonesian students Marselina et al. (2024). As a result, students often had limited vocabulary mastery and low confidence in using English. Therefore, teachers should use engaging and interactive learning media to help students learn vocabulary. Using technology can improve students' learning skills, problem-solving abilities, and participation in class. In language learning, technology offers many ways to develop vocabulary through interactive apps, game-based platforms, and Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL). These tools can increase learners' engagement and support vocabulary retention (Nur et al., 2025). As one of the widely used mobile-based social media platforms, TikTok offers features that may

facilitate vocabulary learning through short, engaging, and interactive content. In the digital era, technology and social media can offer alternative methods for students to learn English vocabulary more effectively and enjoyably.

Social media has become an important part of daily life for many students, particularly teenagers. According to Handayani et al. (2024) social media is an online platform where people can interact with others and show themselves in different ways. It can be seen as an effective digital tool that enables fast communication and content sharing. When used properly, it has strong potential to support learning and improve students' language skills. TikTok is one of the most widely used social media platforms among students. TikTok provides short videos combined with audio, subtitles, visual effects, and interactive features that can support vocabulary learning (Fitria, 2023). Besides being used for entertainment, TikTok is also commonly used as a platform for learning English vocabulary. Many content creators share videos on topic such as daily conversations, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Since the videos are usually short, interesting, and easy to understand, they can make learning more enjoyable and motivate students to learn vocabulary. Indah & Suhartatik (2025) explain that TikTok helps students learn vocabulary in context and increases their motivation to learn English outside the classroom. According to Fadila et al. (2025), digital media positively influences students' interest and enthusiasm in learning English. In addition, Matyadi et al. (2024) explained that TikTok can support students' independent learning through its audio-visual and interactive features. Unlike other social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube, TikTok provides features that can help students learn English vocabulary. Its short-video format combines audio, visual elements, captions, and contextualized language use, helping learners understand and remember new vocabulary. In addition, TikTok's interactive features and personalized algorithm provide repeated exposure to English words and expressions based on users' interests. These characteristics suggest that TikTok has considerable potential to support English vocabulary development (Alleid et al., 2025).

A number of previous studies have shown that TikTok has a positive effect on English vocabulary learning. Cantika (2023) found that TikTok improved students' vocabulary mastery and increased students' motivation in learning vocabulary. In addition, Dwipa et al. (2024) Students had positive views toward using TikTok because the platform makes vocabulary easier to understand and memorize. Another study conducted by Abidah (2024) showed that TikTok helps students learn new vocabulary in a faster and more enjoyable way. Although many previous studies have discussed TikTok in English learning, most studies focused on senior high school students or university students. Besides, some previous studies mostly focused on the effectiveness of TikTok as a learning tool without deeply exploring students' perceptions and experiences. Therefore, there is still limited research focusing on junior high school students, particularly in terms of how students use TikTok features to learn English vocabulary and how they view TikTok as a learning tool. This gap indicates the need for further research related to students' experiences and perceptions toward the use of TikTok in vocabulary learning.

Based on the gap in previous research, this research examines how TikTok is used in English vocabulary learning by seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Pekalongan. This research is important because junior high school students are active users of social media and are still developing their English vocabulary skills. Understanding students' perceptions and experiences can help teachers identify whether TikTok can support vocabulary learning effectively. In addition, this research is expected to provide new insights into how TikTok features such as subtitles, replay, save, and comment sections help students learn vocabulary. Unlike previous studies that mainly focused on effectiveness or general language learning, this study explores students' real experiences, learning activities, and opinions regarding TikTok as a vocabulary learning medium. Based on this, the objective of this research is to describe how students use TikTok to learn vocabulary in English, identify TikTok features that facilitate vocabulary learning, and explore students' opinions regarding the usage of TikTok to learn language at SMP Negeri 4 Pekalongan.

METHOD

This research applied a descriptive qualitative design to describe students' experiences using TikTok as a tool for learning English vocabulary. According to Sugiyono (2019), qualitative research is used to examine natural conditions and understand phenomena experienced by participants in depth. Aspers & Corte (2021) also claim that in order to better comprehend a phenomenon, qualitative research implies a detailed analysis of a subject. In this research, the researcher focused on how students use TikTok features for vocabulary learning and examined their perceptions of TikTok in supporting English learning. Therefore, a descriptive qualitative was considered to be suitable because it allows the researcher to describe a situation naturally without manipulating variables or influencing the learning environment. Furidha & Sidoarjo (2023) explain that descriptive qualitative research methods examine phenomena in real conditions to produce factual and accurate descriptions. In addition, descriptive qualitative research focuses on real situations and students' experiences without changing any variables (Siedlecki, 2020; Villamin et al., 2025).

Respondents

This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 4 Pekalongan. The school was selected because many students were familiar with social media platforms, especially TikTok, and had experience accessing English learning content through the application. Students in the seventh grade who actively used TikTok and had access to English vocabulary or English learning materials were the research's participants. The research applied purposive sampling to choose participants according to specific criteria that aligned with the research objectives. Sugiyono (2019) states that purposive sampling refers to the selection of participants according to specific criteria that support the objectives of the study. The selected students were those who actively used TikTok and had experience using the application to watch English learning content or vocabulary-related videos. The class involved in the research was chosen based on the English teacher's recommendation because the students were considered familiar with the topic being studied. In total, 30 students participated in the questionnaire, while 15 students were selected for interview process to provide a deeper understanding of their experiences with using TikTok for English vocabulary learning. Those who participated in the interview were selected because they were willing to take part and could provide information related to the research objectives.

Instruments

The data in this research consisted of students' opinions, experiences, and perceptions related to learning English vocabulary through TikTok. The main research instruments employed by the researcher to gather the data were closed-ended surveys and interviews. The interview consisted of 18 questions aimed at obtaining in-depth information about students' experiences in using TikTok for vocabulary learning. Sugiyono (2017) explains that interviews are applied to get participants' detailed information. In addition, the questionnaire consisted of 10 Likert-scale statement, with choices for opinion responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. It was formed to find out how students experienced about using TikTok to learn new English vocabulary. According to Sugiyono (2017), a questionnaire is a data collection method that involves presenting questions or statements to respondents.

Procedures

The researcher first determined the participants based on the teacher's recommendation and students' familiarity with TikTok. After selecting the participants, the researcher distributed questionnaires to 30 students to obtain general information regarding the objectives of the study. Furthermore, interviews were conducted with 15 selected students to gain deeper information regarding their learning experiences, learning strategies, and opinions. During the interview process, the researcher asked several semi-structured

questions related to students' use of TikTok, the types of videos they watched, and the difficulties they experienced while learning vocabulary through TikTok.

Data Analysis

Data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion were used to analyse obtained information. The researcher first selected important information related to the research objectives and categorized the data into several themes. After that, the data were presented descriptively to explain students' experiences and perceptions. Lastly, the researcher drew conclusions based on the results of the data interpretation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The interview data in this research were obtained from 15 seventh-grade students who use TikTok for learning English vocabulary. The interviews were conducted to gain deeper understanding of students' experiences, perceptions, and practices in using TikTok for vocabulary learning. Based on the interview data, the findings were grouped into three main themes: students' way of using TikTok in learning vocabulary, TikTok features that supported their vocabulary learning, and their perceptions regarding the use of TikTok in learning English vocabulary.

Students' Ways of Using TikTok in Learning Vocabulary

Most students stated that they frequently watched English learning videos on TikTok, especially daily conversation content, because the videos were easier to understand and useful for everyday communication. One student explained,

"I like watching daily conversation videos because they are easier to understand and the vocabulary can be used in daily conversations."

Some students also preferred pronunciation and grammar videos to improve their speaking skills and sentence structure understanding. For example, one student said, "I choose pronunciation content because I want to learn how to pronounce English words correctly". Another students commented,

"I like watching grammar videos because I am interested in English and want to be able to make correct sentences."

These findings indicate that students tend to prefer practical and contextual vocabulary learning that can be directly applied in real-life communication. In addition, the short and engaging format of TikTok videos helps students maintain their interest and attention during the learning process.

What are TikTok Features Used by Students to Support English Vocabulary Learning?

The results also showed that students actively used several strategies to understand and remember new vocabulary obtained from TikTok videos. Students used several TikTok features to help them learn English vocabulary. Most students read subtitles or captions because they helped them understand vocabulary and pronunciation more easily. Two students said,

"The subtitles and captions help me understand the meaning of the words and the content of the video."

"I read the subtitles because it helps me understand the meaning of words I don't know."

Many students also saved videos to watch again later and used replay feature to remember vocabulary better. They explained that revisiting the videos allowed them to review vocabulary whenever they forgot it or did not have enough time to study. One student stated,

"I usually review the vocabulary I've learned if I forget it or if I don't have time to study, so I save it for later."

Another student said,

"Because I can hear and see the vocabulary over and over again until I understand it."

Some students read the comment section to find new vocabulary, especially slang words and informal expressions. One student expressed,

"I've come across modern vocabulary that foreigners usually use. Sometimes when I'm reading, I come across new words. People in the comments often use slang, so that helps expand my vocabulary."

In addition, several students used the slow-motion feature to hear pronunciation more clearly. A student mentioned,

"I use the slow-motion feature so I can hear the pronunciation clearly, and when I practice, the person I'm talking to can understand me."

Most students also shared useful English videos with their friends. However, most students did not make duet or stitch videos because they felt shy and lacked confidence in speaking English publicly. One student said,

"I usually share it with my classmates so we can study together because they also like English. However, we have never made a video together because we are too shy and afraid of making mistakes when speaking English."

These findings indicate that students use various TikTok features to support their English vocabulary learning, particularly subtitles, captions, save and replay features, comment sections, and slow-motion playback. These features help students understand meanings, improve pronunciation, and remember new vocabulary more effectively. However, most students avoid using duet and stitch features because they feel shy and lack confidence in speaking English publicly.

Students' Perceptions toward the Use of TikTok in Learning English Vocabulary

The majority of students believed that TikTok was a helpful tool for learning English words. Most of them preferred learning through TikTok rather than books because TikTok was more interesting, enjoyable, and easier to understand. A student mentioned,

"I prefer learning through TikTok because the videos are short and not boring."

Students also mentioned that TikTok contributed to their daily vocabulary learning and increased their motivation and confidence in learning English. One student said,

"Watching educational videos on TikTok has made me more motivated to try learning English."

However, students still experienced some difficulties, such as fast pronunciation, unfamiliar slang words, missing subtitles, and distracting entertainment content. One of them expressed,

"Yes, sometimes I have trouble, like speaking too fast or using words that are hard to understand."

Another student mentioned,

"I sometimes have difficulty understanding videos that use modern English conversations because the language can be unfamiliar."

In addition, most students agreed that TikTok can be used by teachers in the classroom because it makes learning more interactive and less boring, although some students worried that TikTok might distract them if it is used too often. One of the student who agreed stated,

"I agree because TikTok can make learning more interesting and less monotonous."

Meanwhile, a student who disagreed said,

"I do not agree because it is better to use books in the classroom."

These findings indicate that students generally find TikTok to be an engaging, enjoyable, and motivating platform for learning English vocabulary. Although students face some challenges, such as fast pronunciation, unfamiliar slang, and distracting content, Many students believe that TikTok serves as a supportive tool for English vocabulary learning and can be applied in the classroom to enhance interactivity. However, some students still prefer traditional learning materials such as books.

Findings from Questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed to 30 seventh-grade students to obtain information about students' experiences and perceptions. The questionnaire included 10 statements focusing on students' use of TikTok, their vocabulary learning activities, and the TikTok features that support learning. The findings were presented and discussed in the following section.

Table 1. Students' Responses Toward The Use Of Tiktok

No	Statement	SA	A	DA	SD
1	I use TikTok in my daily life	11	13	4	2
2	I watch English videos on TikTok	4	17	6	3
3	TikTok helps me learn new vocabulary	4	19	3	4
4	Learning vocabulary through TikTok is interesting	8	14	4	4
5	TikTok makes me motivated to learn English	3	18	3	6
6	TikTok helps me understand English words easily	5	15	5	5
7	I feel motivated after watching TikTok videos	2	18	3	7
8	I find difficulties when learning through TikTok	7	15	3	5
9	I prefer learning through TikTok than textbooks	4	16	3	7
10	Teachers should use TikTok in English learning	7	9	9	5
Total		55	154	43	53

Note: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, DA = Disagree, SD =Strongly Disagree

The table presented students' responses on the use of TikTok for learning English vocabulary. The results showed that the majority of students held positive views toward using TikTok as a learning medium. In general, most students chose "agree" or "strongly agree" for the statements. This suggested that TikTok was widely used and seen as beneficial for learning.

Most students used TikTok in their daily life and spent time watching English videos on the platform. This indicated that TikTok was already part of their daily activities and provided frequent exposure to English. Because of this exposure, students had more opportunities to encounter new vocabulary. They believed that TikTok helped them learn new vocabulary, understand word meanings more easily, and made learning more interesting. The results also showed that TikTok positively influenced students' motivation. Many students felt more motivated to learn English after engaging with TikTok videos. This indicated that the visual and interactive nature of TikTok increased students' interest and encouraged them to learn. However, the data also showed that some students still faced difficulties when learning through TikTok. This might have been caused by factors such as unfamiliar words, fast speech, or difficulty focusing on the content. This finding indicated that TikTok could not fully replace other learning methods. In addition, most students preferred learning vocabulary through TikTok rather than textbooks. They also agreed that teachers should use TikTok in the learning process. This suggested that students were open to the use of digital media in the classroom and considered TikTok a useful learning tool. This showed perceived TikTok positively as a learning medium.

Discussions

The research findings indicated that TikTok supported students in learning English vocabulary. Based on the interview results, most students stated that they often used TikTok to watch English learning videos, especially daily conversation content. This finding indicates that students prefer practical and contextual vocabulary that can be applied in daily communication. In addition, TikTok provides students with frequent exposure to English words and expressions through short and engaging videos. The interview results also revealed that students used several strategies to understand and remember new vocabulary, such as repeating videos, writing down unfamiliar words, searching for meanings, and practicing vocabulary in conversations. These activities suggested that students were actively involved in learning through TikTok. Furthermore, several TikTok features, including subtitles, replay, save, and slow-motion, helped students understand pronunciation and vocabulary more

clearly. These findings answer to the research question on how students use TikTok and its features to learn English vocabulary. The results also indicate that TikTok supports independent learning by providing opportunities to review and practice vocabulary repeatedly in flexible learning situations.

Furthermore, the results revealed that the majority of students held positive views toward using TikTok for learning English vocabulary. They stated that learning through TikTok was more enjoyable, interactive, and less monotonous than learning from textbooks alone. This finding indicated that digital media like TikTok can foster a more engaging learning environment and enhance students' motivation to learn English. However, the findings also revealed several difficulties experienced by students while learning vocabulary through TikTok, including fast pronunciation, unfamiliar slang words, lack of subtitles, and distracting entertainment content. These findings indicate that although TikTok offers many advantages, students still need guidance to use the platform effectively for educational purposes. The findings are consistent with Nation's theory (2001), which states that repeated exposure to language in meaningful contexts improves vocabulary learning. Through TikTok videos, students repeatedly hear, see, and practice vocabulary in authentic communication situations, which helps them improve their vocabulary knowledge more effectively. Moreover, the questionnaire results showed that the majority of students selected "agree" and "strongly agree" when responding to statements about TikTok and vocabulary learning. This indicates that TikTok played a helpful role in improving students' understanding and retention of new vocabulary. These findings also support previous studies that found that TikTok can increase students' interest, motivation, and engagement in English learning through interactive and contextual content. However, several students gave negative responses, showing that not all students had the same experiences or preferences in using TikTok for vocabulary learning. Therefore, the findings showed that TikTok could be an effective and engaging learning medium, but its use should be guided and balanced with other learning methods to support students' vocabulary improvement more effectively.

CONCLUSIONS

This research concluded that TikTok was a useful tool for supporting English vocabulary learning among seventh-grade students. The findings indicated that social media could serve as an effective learning resource because it provided meaningful exposure to English vocabulary through engaging and easily accessible content. The study also showed that TikTok could support vocabulary development by encouraging students to learn independently and interact with language in authentic contexts beyond the classroom. Furthermore, the findings have important implications for both teachers and students. For teachers, TikTok can be used as an alternative medium to support vocabulary instruction and make learning activities more interesting, interactive, and relevant to students' daily lives. Teachers can also encourage students to use educational TikTok content as an additional learning resource outside the classroom. For students, TikTok can function as a tool for independent learning, enabling them to expand their vocabulary through content that matches their interests and preferences. Therefore, this research highlights the potential of TikTok to create a more engaging, flexible, and effective vocabulary learning experience.

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