

Enhancing students' vocabulary through TikTok: students' perception

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Abstract. Nowadays, the demand to master English and digital literacy is crucial, especially for students. TikTok, as a popular form of digital content, provides a great opportunity to be used as an English language learning tool. This study aims to investigate students' perceptions of using TikTok to improve their vocabulary mastery. Using a descriptive mixed-methods design, data were collected from 65 students through questionnaires and interviews. The results showed that students (97%) had a positive perception of TikTok for developing their vocabulary mastery. They also expressed a positive perception of the benefits of TikTok for improving vocabulary in learning English skills. Students as research participants acknowledged the benefits of TikTok as a learning tool for enhancing their vocabulary. According to students' responses in interviews, TikTok helps them speak fluently in class. Through TikTok, they improve grammar. TikTok also helps them learn to listen more easily. Their responses reinforce TikTok's significant support in helping them learn English. TikTok is widely used in the teaching and learning process because it allows students to expand their language and cultural knowledge, making it useful as a primary learning aid and resource.

Keywords: Vocabulary, TikTok, Students, Teachers, Perception

1. Introduction

Learning English allows people to communicate with foreigners without barriers (Sudiran et al., 2025). Mastering English as a global language should be prioritized (Maria & Sujarwati, 2025; Ilyosovna, 2020) because it is a communication tool in various aspects, such as business, education, economics, arts, and culture. In Indonesia, English is taught from elementary school to university as a foreign language (Kirkpatrick, 2020). English is determined as one of the core subjects in formal education (Ambarwati & Zuraida, 2025). Many students know the importance of learning English as a skill necessary to pass school exams and compete in the workplace.

An important component in improving English skills is learning vocabulary (Enayati & Gilakjani, 2020). Vocabulary is a crucial element in English learning (Alhadijah, 2020; Agazzi, 2022). Vocabulary mastery helps students learn all English skills, such as listening, reading (Sudiran, 2022), speaking, and writing (Cahyono & Widiati, 2008). Through vocabulary mastery, students communicate effectively. In addition to vocabulary mastery,

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other factors determine students' English language skills, namely the teaching techniques, methods, strategies, media, and materials used by teachers (Sudiran & Vieira, 2017). Vocabulary teaching that only emphasizes vocabulary recognition and memorization results in students being unable to absorb English learning. The lack of teachers' ability to integrate interesting media into the learning process causes students to experience difficulties in learning English vocabulary. Furthermore, the use of monotonous learning techniques and methods makes students bored (Erwani et al., 2022). Therefore, teachers need to apply various interactive media (Sudiran & Prasetyowati, 2014) in teaching English that help students improve their mastery of English vocabulary.

Social media platforms play a crucial role in English teaching (Alharthy, 2025). It is one of many new learning media that can be utilized in vocabulary learning (Nguyen, 2022) because it contributes to promoting students' vocabulary mastery (Domingo & Aguillon, 2021). Interactive learning media increases students' engagement in learning English because visual symbols in learning media attract students' attention. Visual symbols enable students to learn English vocabulary effectively (Milosavljevic & Reynolds, 2024).

Social media such as TikTok is useful to enhance students' English vocabulary (Sudiran, 2025). The use of TikTok in the teaching process has become very popular. TikTok has a positive impact on improving students' vocabulary mastery. It is considered an effective and engaging digital media platform that supports increasing students' vocabulary (Dorasa et al., 2025). It is not only an entertainment medium, but it is also an educational medium. TikTok is a social media application that provides videos with networking services. It is used to display various short videos of various types, such as entertainment, information, and education, with a duration of between 10 and 60 seconds (Daryus et al., 2022).

TikTok is an engaging medium used to teach vocabulary (Budiartha & Akmar, 2024). It contains videos that help students improve their vocabulary and motivation in learning English. Students learn vocabulary more easily through the images and sounds in TikTok videos. These videos allow students to increase their English vocabulary. Through TikTok videos, learning can occur outside the classroom (Hastomo et al., 2022; Pratiwi et al., 2021) because they are easily accessible without time and place constraints. Thus, TikTok videos enable students to learn English vocabulary because they provide varied content.

Based on previous research, students use TikTok to enrich English language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary (Susanto & Suparmi, 2024). TikTok videos enable students to improve their English vocabulary (Marini, 2019). It also has a positive influence on student learning outcomes (Cahyani et al., 2020), and can be used as media to teach English. A study states that TikTok has the potential for language learning, both mother tongue and English (Hidayati, 2022). The results of the study proved that TikTok has a positive influence, such as increasing creativity and students' vocabulary mastery in English. Another study by Pratiwi et al. (2021) found that the TikTok application can be used as teaching media to develop students' vocabulary. In addition, the study showed that respondents had a positive attitude towards the TikTok application as a tool to enhance English vocabulary.

Meanwhile, a study observed that TikTok content creators use new vocabulary displayed in their videos. This vocabulary can be classified as a register that helps viewers expand their vocabulary. The increase in viewers' vocabulary leads to significant changes and improvements in society's vocabulary (Lisdawati, 2021). A study also demonstrated that TikTok can improve and develop students' vocabulary (Sala et al., 2023).

A study conducted by Erwani et al. (2022) and Sinta & Zulfitri (2022) found that TikTok influences students' vocabulary development and their experience in learning adjectives. The study concluded that TikTok videos enable students to memorize adjectives. TikTok videos help students learn English because they facilitate learning. Therefore, students use TikTok to enhance their vocabulary.

Another research on students' perceptions of using TikTok to learn English vocabulary was conducted by Hastomo et al. (2022). The research revealed that the majority of respondents enjoyed using TikTok to learn English vocabulary. The finding is supported by statistical results showing that 72% of respondents had a positive perception. According to respondents, TikTok enabled them to improve their English vocabulary mastery and helped them choose vocabulary topics according to their interests.

Based on previous research, researchers focused on observing students' positive perceptions of TikTok in learning English, and they observed its influence on improving students' vocabulary. Researchers have not yet examined their perceptions of TikTok's use as teaching media using both a questionnaire and an interview as a data collection technique.

It can be identified that most previous research still focuses on the effectiveness of TikTok's use in improving students' English skills, particularly vocabulary, speaking, and learning motivation. Several studies emphasize students' positive perceptions of TikTok's use as a learning medium, as well as its impact on quantitatively improving learning outcomes. However, these studies tend to be partial because they only observed the perspective of students using the questionnaire technique, without involving other data collection techniques that play a strategic role in integrating digital media into the curriculum and classroom learning practices.

Furthermore, previous research has emphasized more on the influence or effectiveness of TikTok on a single skill through experimental designs or perception surveys. Very limited research has used a mixed methods approach to comprehensively explore students' perceptions simultaneously, thus failing to provide a holistic picture of pedagogical readiness, implementation challenges, and the implications of systematically integrating TikTok into vocabulary learning.

Meanwhile, this research examines students' perceptions of the use of TikTok in improving their vocabulary by using quantitative and qualitative approaches. This research is important because there is still limited research examining students' perceptions of TikTok as a medium for learning English vocabulary that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. The research problem developed in this study is: "How are students' perceptions of TikTok as media for learning English vocabulary?"

This study investigates students' perceptions of TikTok's potential for improving students' vocabulary mastery. Therefore, this study will contribute to the knowledge on the implementation of TikTok to help students promote their English vocabulary.

Therefore, the research gap lies in the absence of studies that simultaneously and comparatively explore students' perceptions of using TikTok to improve their English vocabulary using the data collection technique of questionnaires and interviews. However, the success of digital media integration is determined not only by students' acceptance but also by teachers' beliefs, readiness, and pedagogical strategies.

The novelty of this research lies in: (1) the use of a descriptive mixed methods design to produce complementary quantitative and qualitative data; and (2) the emphasis on the systematic integration of TikTok as a medium for vocabulary learning, not just as an educational entertainment medium. This novelty provides theoretical and practical contributions to the development of a more contextual and sustainable social media-based learning model.

2. Method

2.1 Design

This study used quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore the perceptions and experiences of students regarding TikTok as educational media for English learning in schools.

2.2 Participant

The study involved 65 students of English language Education Department, The University of Muhammadiyah Malang, Malang City who were selected purposively. This selection aimed to understand the participants' proficiency levels, experiences, motivations, and perceptions regarding using TikTok to enhance English vocabulary mastery.

2.3 Instrument

Researcher distributed questionnaires and conducted interviews using the methodology described by Hendar & Amalia (2024) and Sakkir et al. (2020). The questionnaire aimed to measure participants' engagement with TikTok, including frequency of use and the types of content accessed for English learning. Meanwhile, the interviews provided an opportunity for participants to share detailed experiences and the specific impact of TikTok on their teaching and learning processes.

A group of participants, consisting of eight students, was selected for further exploration through semi-structured interviews. These interviews aimed to collect qualitative data that complemented the comprehensive information gathered from the questionnaire responses, focusing on personal narratives, challenges encountered in TikTok integration, and strategies for overcoming these challenges.

2.4 Data Analysis

The questionnaire results were then statistically analyzed to describe the usage patterns and effectiveness of TikTok as an English learning tool. The statistical analysis is expected to help understand the differences and similarities in perceptions among respondents.

For the interview responses, the researchers conducted a thematic analysis. This analysis involved identifying recurring themes, analyzing variations in experiences among students, and understanding perceptions of TikTok's educational value. Particular attention was paid to the integration of TikTok content with traditional learning resources and innovative methods used to address learning difficulties.

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine percentages and overall trends in student perceptions. Meanwhile, qualitative data from the interviews were thematically analyzed to provide deeper insights into students' experiences and difficulties using TikTok.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

This study used questionnaires and interviews as data collection tools to examine students' perspectives on learning English through TikTok videos. Respondents in this study played a crucial role in responding to the questionnaire administered by the researcher during data collection. The questionnaire was designed using a model consisting of three response options for each statement: Agree, Neutral, and Disagree.

This study involved 65 students as respondents. They were asked to answer a questionnaire consisting of six statements about their perceptions of using TikTok videos as media to improve vocabulary.

The questionnaires completed by respondents were counted to measure percentages as research data. The results of the calculations were used to determine the research findings. The results of the data analysis are explained by listing the number of students and their percentages for each response option, such as Agree, Neutral, and Disagree. The results of the questionnaire analysis are seen in Table 1 below.

Questionnaire and Interview on Vocabulary Enhancement through TikTok Videos: Students' Perceptions

Table 1. Students' Perception of the Use of TikTok to Develop English Vocabulary

No	Statements	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
		F	P	F	P	F	P
1	I know the TikTok from my mobile phone.	64	98%	1	2%	-	-
2	I often watch video TikTok content.	62	95%	3	5%	-	-
3	To improve my understanding of the teaching materials taught by lecturers, I often look for additional explanations on TikTok.	64	98%	1	2%	-	-
4	TikTok is often used by lecturers to teach English Vocabulary.	64	98%	1	2%	-	-
5	TikTok helps me enhance my English.	62	95%	3	5%	-	-
6	Watching a video on TikTok helps me develop my vocabulary	64	98%	1	2%	-	-
Total		380	97%	10	3%	-	-

F: Frequency, P: Percentage

Table 1 above shows that the students studied (N=65) were familiar with TikTok on their mobile phones (98%). Students also frequently watched various content from TikToks (95%). In addition, TikToks were used as a tool to help understand the teaching material presented by lecturers (98%). Students acknowledged that TikToks were often used by lecturers to teach English Vocabulary (98%). Students considered TikToks to help them improve their English (95%). They also acknowledged that watching TikToks develops vocabulary (98%). Overall, based on the data obtained from the questionnaire results above, students had a positive perception of the use of TikToks to increase their vocabulary (97%). Students' responses indicated that TikToks helped them understand the lessons delivered by lecturers. The benefits of watching TikToks were recognized by students to develop their English vocabulary. In short, the data from the study indicate that students have a positive perception of the use of TikToks to enhance their vocabulary mastery.

After analyzing the questionnaire results, the researcher analyzed the results of interviews with 8 selected students regarding their perceptions of using TikToks as a tool to boost vocabulary. The interview results are seen in Table 2.

The explanation in Table 2 above shows 8 students' interview responses regarding their perceptions of TikTok as a medium for promoting English vocabulary. Due to the large number of responses, the data was filtered into several main categories. First, when asked about their reasons for watching TikToks, students mentioned the platform's diverse and engaging content offerings, including music, movies, entertainment, information, and education, as a key factor. They also said that TikToks enable them to record assignments given by their teachers. They then explained that TikToks can be used to practice English skills. In this regard, TikToks can be utilized as teaching media.

The second interview point is what students know about TikToks. They gave varied responses. Some said they contained relevant and engaging material. Others said TikToks offered easy-to-understand English content. TikToks also facilitated vocabulary learning. Some said TikToks helped them enhance their English vocabulary. In short, TikToks contained relevant and engaging material, facilitated vocabulary comprehension, and improved English skills.

The third, courses that frequently employ TikTok's content to improve English skills, as reported by students, are grammar, speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

The fourth discusses the reasons for watching video TikToks that are suitable for the lessons. Students' reasons for watching video TikToks that are relevant to lessons include: to understand the lessons; it can be watched repeatedly; it aligns with the course material, with a wide selection of interesting and relevant content. The TikTok platform enables students to

study relevant material anytime and anywhere via mobile phone or personal laptop. Thus, TikToks offer a flexible solution to overcome difficulties.

Finally, the fifth interview responses about students' experiences regarding the use of the teachers' TikToks. According to students, TikToks help them speak fluently in class. Through TikToks, they understand grammar well. TikToks also help students learn to listen more easily. The use of TikToks helps students overcome their difficulties in writing. The students' responses reinforce the significant support of TikToks to develop English vocabulary.

Table 2. Interviews Regarding Students' Perceptions of TikTok in Increasing Vocabulary

No	Questions	Answer
1	Why do you like watching video TikTok?	a) Video TikToks display interesting and varied content. b) Video TikToks display a wide variety of content, including music, films, information, entertainment, education, etc. c) Video TikToks were used to upload recordings of lecture assignments given by lecturers. d) Video TikToks were used to practice English skills.
2	What do you know about video TikToks?	Video TikToks contain various interesting materials. Video TikToks provide students with an abundance of English content. Video TikToks facilitate learning English vocabulary. Video TikToks help me develop my English skills.
3	What subjects do your teachers use TikToks to explain their lessons?	a. Speaking, pronunciation b. Listening c. Reading, vocabulary d. writing e. Grammar
4	Why do you watch TikTok related to lessons?	a. I watch the TikTok repeatedly to understand the lessons. b. The material explained in the TikTok is easy to understand. c. TikToks offer audiovisuals that are relevant to the lessons. d. TikToks contain varied content to enhance English skills.
5	Describe your experience with the Video TikToks used by your teachers to explain the lessons.	a. When I practiced speaking in the class, I didn't know how to overcome my nervousness. But after watching the teacher's suggested videos on TikTok and practicing a lot, I speak fluently in front of the class. b. I have difficulty understanding grammar, but when I watch explanations of the same topic on TikToks, I understand them better because the explanations are interesting and straightforward. c. I'm not interested in listening, but by watching videos on TikTok, I hear English vocabulary better. d. I have difficulty writing paragraphs that contain a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. After watching videos on TikTok, I understand how to write paragraphs step by step.

Based on the students' responses, as reflected in Tables 1 and 2, TikToks offer valuable teaching media for enriching their vocabulary. TikToks provide multi-functional content and are highly supportive of developing English vocabulary.

3.2 Discussion

The findings of this study provide clear evidence that students view TikTok as a valuable digital tool for enhancing vocabulary development. Quantitative results indicate very positive attitudes, with the majority of students expressing familiarity with TikTok, frequent use of TikTok content, and recognition of its usefulness for improving vocabulary, grammar, and reading. These findings align with previous research showing that TikTok contributes to

increased motivation and improved vocabulary mastery (Maria & Sujarwati, 2025). The strong response among students indicates that TikTok offers accessible and engaging media that supports vocabulary development.

Qualitative data complemented these findings by providing deeper insights into how TikTok facilitates learning. Students stated that TikTok provides diverse, entertaining, and relevant content, making English learning more enjoyable and meaningful. Many students highlighted that TikTok helped them understand the course material, such as to practice pronunciation and to observe real-life models of English vocabulary. This flexibility strengthens self-directed learning, as students can repeatedly watch content as needed. Students also reported increased confidence, particularly when preparing vocabulary-building assignments or presenting ideas. This perception is consistent with previous studies highlighting TikTok's role in enhancing self-efficacy, fostering creativity, and providing authentic contexts for vocabulary development (Ambarwati & Zuraida, 2025; Alharthy, 2025).

Students also expressed very positive views regarding the integration of TikTok in the classroom. They noted that TikTok's audio-visual nature supports their comprehension and engagement, providing clearer explanations and richer examples than traditional learning materials. Many students use TikTok for multiple subjects, such as vocabulary, speaking, listening, grammar, reading, and writing, indicating that TikTok plays a significant role in English language education. They appear more motivated and satisfied when instruction is supported by TikTok content. This perception reinforces the view that TikTok can bridge the gap between conventional learning and today's students' digital learning preferences, such as fostering collaborative learning environments (Dorasa et al., 2025) and (Budiarta & Akmar, 2024).

Another important finding relates to TikTok's pedagogical role in fostering 21st-century skills. Student responses indicate that TikTok promotes digital literacy, creativity, and autonomous learning. Engaging with TikTok content or creating videos requires students to develop technological skills, organize ideas, evaluate information, and communicate effectively. These skills are crucial in modern education and demonstrate that TikTok not only supports language development but also contributes to students' skills in utilizing digital technology.

This study explains the application of TikTok to vocabulary development as an important element in English language education. Furthermore, the study analyzes TikTok's significant role as an English language teaching medium because it increases students' engagement and provides access to a variety of content to improve English vocabulary. The study also identifies challenges in integrating TikTok into formal education and provides information on effective ways to improve vocabulary.

The research on the use of TikTok provides a valuable contribution to academic research on the benefits of digital media in English language education. It emphasizes the need for educators to use digital platforms like TikTok wisely and strategically to enrich students' learning experiences in increasingly diverse learning environments.

However, despite these benefits, the study revealed several challenges. Some students noted limited access to TikTok among them, while others acknowledged that TikTok may not always align perfectly with courses. Furthermore, while students were positive, not all were equally confident about integrating TikTok into their learning. This suggests that digital competency and pedagogical readiness remain uneven, reflecting broader concerns about technology integration in English language education programs. These issues highlight the need for institutional training, support, and guidance to help students effectively select, evaluate, and implement TikTok content.

Overall, the findings emphasize that TikTok has significant pedagogical value in improving vocabulary acquisition, but its effectiveness depends on thoughtful integration and

support. The students' perspectives suggest that TikTok can transform vocabulary instruction by making it more interactive, authentic, and student-centered. However, sustainable implementation requires addressing challenges related to digital access, teacher readiness, and curriculum alignment.

The results of the study support existing knowledge by offering a multi-perspective analysis of TikTok in the context of English language learning, a dimension that remains underexplored in previous literature. By combining quantitative and qualitative data from the findings, the findings provide a more comprehensive understanding of how TikTok can be utilized in school language programs. Future studies should explore the long-term effects of TikTok-based instruction, compare it with other digital platforms, and investigate how TikTok creation assignments can further strengthen English vocabulary development.

4 Conclusion

With the advancement of digital technology, students are expected to utilize TikTok to help them master the subject matter. This is due to TikTok's unique feature, which combines textual, audio, and visual elements, creating an interactive technology. TikTok's unique features as an educational tool facilitate vocabulary learning. This study aims to describe students' perceptions of TikTok's use in improving their vocabulary. Results obtained from questionnaires and interviews with students indicate that students have positive perceptions of TikTok as an educational medium that facilitates the learning process and enriches students' learning experiences, thereby improving their English vocabulary.

In brief, this study provides empirical evidence on digital literacy development in the context of English education, highlighting the educational potential of TikTok as an accessible and motivating tool for students to improve their vocabulary development skills. By locating language learning within students' everyday digital environments, teachers can create more contextual, engaging, and effective vocabulary instruction in schools.

This study used quantitative and qualitative methods to determine students' perceptions of the use of TikTok in vocabulary learning, using questionnaires and interviews as research instruments. For future research, several points need to be paid attention to. First, experimental studies are needed to assess the sustained impact of TikTok on vocabulary acquisition skills, including critical analysis and inference. Second, comparative research with other digital platforms, such as Instagram, YouTube, and other social media platforms, could clarify the specific capabilities of each platform to foster learning. Third, future studies should expand the sample size to be larger and more diverse to develop findings. Finally, the implementation of a mixed-methods design, combining test-based data with questionnaires and interviews, provides a valuable understanding of TikTok's use to support students' vocabulary development engagement.

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