

EXPLORING THE PEDAGOGICAL EFFICACY OF TIKTOK APPLICATION IN ENHANCING ENGLISH VOCABULARY: INSIGHTS FROM EFL STUDENTS

Fransiskus Jemadi^{1*} & Yulian Juita Ekalia²

¹⁻²Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng
ikinjemadi@gmail.com, enuyulian@gmail.com

*Corresponding author

Abstract: The objective underpinned the present study is to explore students' perception of the pedagogical efficacy of the TikTok application in enhancing their vocabulary. This study applied a survey method to gather students' perceptions using a questionnaire to measure their pedagogical efficacy of TikTok in enhancing vocabulary. The participants (N=109) were English study program students at a private university, in Eastern Indonesia. The results of the study are as follows. TikTok's greatest perceived benefit in language learning is its ability to improve vocabulary, with 50% agreeing. However, an equal proportion of students disagreed, demonstrating a disparity in students' experiences and opinions. While 59% of students believe TikTok is less effective at illustrating how vocabulary is used in real-life circumstances and 58% of students disagree that re-watching TikTok videos is an effective learning approach. Despite TikTok's reputation as an entertaining site, 58% of students disputed that it is fun and pleasing for learning, indicating a gap between entertainment and education value and 58% of students disagree that TikTok helps with memorization. Henceforth, while TikTok may provide certain benefits, such as vocabulary enhancement, students have serious doubts about its overall effectiveness as a language learning tool.

Keywords: *Pedagogical efficacy, Vocabulary, TikTok, Students' perception*

INTRODUCTION

A solid understanding of vocabulary is essential for EFL students. It significantly impacts their reading comprehension and overall language proficiency (Karakoç & Köse, 2017; Laraba, 2007). Reading comprehension, in particular, is an effective way to develop vocabulary, as it exposes students to new words and their meanings (Kamal, 2019; Kezhen, 2015). The crucial role of vocabulary in learning a language cannot be overstated, as vocabulary knowledge is essential for effective written production (Viera, 2017) and speaking proficiency (Khan et al., 2018) and it serves as the foundation for all four language learning skills (Zakeri & Khatibi, 2014). In addition, highly adept in various languages is beneficial only when learning vocabulary at a higher proficiency level (Šifrar Kalan et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important for educators to find ways to engage students in vocabulary development, such as through reading and direct instruction.

While students may recognize the importance of vocabulary, a variety of research findings have revealed various challenges that students admit when it comes to learning vocabulary and usage, including issues with pronunciation, spelling, understanding word meanings, and applying words in context (Machfudi, 2022; Rohmatillah, 2017; Salam & Nurnisa, 2021; Susanto, 2021). The variables attributed to these challenges comprise a great deal of words to learn, variations in oral and written English, and the complexity of word knowledge (Rohmatillah, 2017; Susanto, 2021). Additionally, students' unwillingness to utilize dictionaries and their lack of motivation in learning English can also impede vocabulary mastery (Machfudi, 2022). Moreover, EFL students confronted with a variety of obstacles, such as poor pronunciation, a lack of vocabulary, and low self-esteem (Fachrunnisa & Nuraeni,

2022; Noprival, 2017; Patahuddin et al., 2017) and they may not always demonstrate a strong interest in developing it (Tran, 2020). Prospective EFL teachers also have difficulty placing verb stress, frequently misplacing or tripling it (Utami & Yulia, 2022). Furthermore, lexical diversity and sophistication differ amongst EFL students with lower and higher proficiency levels (Failasofah & Alkhrisheh, 2018). These findings illustrate the importance of focused interventions to promote EFL vocabulary learning and usage in Indonesia.

In recent years, various studies have reported effective strategies in teaching vocabulary to students. For instance, Flip-a-Chip, Word Ladders, and The Ripple Effect, have been found to be effective in teaching vocabulary to EFL students (Sutrisna, 2021). Technology-assisted vocabulary learning, particularly through mobile devices and on-the-move learning, has been shown to enhance long-term vocabulary retention (Hao, 2021). The use of games, such as The Sims and Semantic Boggle, has been found to make vocabulary lessons enjoyable, reduce anxiety, and aid in vocabulary recall (Bin-Hady, 2021). Additionally, the use of Quizlet and spaced repetition techniques has been found to improve EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition (Chaikovska & Zbaravska, 2020). These findings suggest that incorporating technology-assisted vocabulary learning methods, such as mobile devices and gamified applications, has the potential and the need for effective teaching strategies to improve vocabulary acquisition among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students.

Despite a thorough understanding of the importance of vocabulary for EFL students and a plethora of effective teaching strategies identified in existing literature, there is a significant research gap in the investigation of the pedagogical efficacy of the TikTok application in advancing English vocabulary among EFL students, particularly in the Indonesian context. While earlier research has shown that vocabulary plays an important role in

reading comprehension, language competency, and general language skill development, it has mostly focused on traditional methods and technology-assisted approaches other than TikTok. Furthermore, previous research has recognized many hurdles experienced by EFL students in vocabulary acquisition and usage, such as pronunciation difficulties, comprehension issues, and motivational barriers, but has not directly explored how TikTok may address or increase these challenges. As a result, the purpose of this study is to bridge this gap by looking into Indonesian EFL university students' perceptions of the pedagogical efficacy of the TikTok application in improving their English vocabulary learning, thereby contributing to a better understanding of innovative pedagogical approaches in EFL vocabulary instruction.

METHOD

The design of this study was survey research, employing quantitative methodology to investigate the vocabulary learning of English study program students at a private university in Eastern Indonesia. According to (Cohen et al., 2002) and (Creswell, 2012), survey research design is a quantitative research approach in which researchers distribute a survey to a sample or the entire population in order to understand the attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, or attributes common to the population. In the current study, a quantitative survey research design was used to investigate students' perspectives of using TikTok as a means of learning and expanding their English vocabulary.

The participants were carefully selected, considering their enrollment in a vocabulary subject, resulting in a final sample size of 109 students. Moreover, the participants for the study were selected using convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method where data is collected from an

easily accessible and available group of people. The detailed information about the participants of this study is shown in table 1.

Tabel 1. Demographic information

Gender	F	%	Semester	F	%
Male	38	35	1	16	15
Female	71	65	3	34	31
			5	53	49
			7	6	6
Total	109	100		109	100

The Tabel 1 shows a gender distribution of respondents, with 38 (35%) identifying as male and 71 (71%) as female out of 109 respondents in the study. This gender split shows a higher proportion of female respondents than the males who participated in the survey. In addition, the data supplied shows the distribution of the participants across academic semesters. 16 of the 109 participants surveyed were in their first semester, accounting for approximately 15% of the entire sample. A bigger proportion of participants, 34 participants, or roughly 31% of the entire sample, were in their third semester. Furthermore, the majority of participants, 53 in total, or roughly 49% of the total sample, were in their fifth semester. A smaller fraction of participants, particularly six people, or roughly 6% of the total sample, were recognized as being in their seventh semester. Overall, such results reflect a wide representation of students at various levels of their academic growth throughout the program.

The instrument utilized for data collection was a questionnaire, adapted from previous research (Alshreef & Khadawardi, 2023), consisting of 10 items. The questionnaire was modified to explore learners' perceptions of the pedagogical efficacy of the TikTok application for boosting English vocabulary. In order

to efficiently distribute the questionnaire to the targeted participants, the instrument was disseminated via Google Forms. This online format facilitated data collection while ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants' responses.

Data analysis was conducted quantitatively, entailing a thorough examination of the frequency and percentage of responses to each item of the questionnaire. By considering both the frequency and percentage of responses, the study provided robust insights into the students' vocabulary learning. To ensure the results of the analysis, the researchers applied descriptive analysis by utilizing the JASP Application.

RESULT

A descriptive analysis was conducted using the JASP program to investigate learners' perceptions of the pedagogical efficacy of the TikTok application for boosting English vocabulary. The goal of this analysis was to determine the frequency and percentage distribution of responses to each item on the questionnaire. The results of this analysis are reported in Table 2.

Table 2. The frequency and percentage of students’ responses

Statements	Students Perceptions		
	Scale	F	%
1. Learning English vocabulary	SD	20	18
	D	40	37
	A	32	29
	SA	17	16
Total		109	100
2. Accessibility and usage.	SD	12	11

	D	47	43
	A	32	29
	SA	18	17
Total		109	100
3. Self-independent learning	SD	14	13
	D	46	42
	A	35	32
	SA	14	13
Total		109	100
4. Effectiveness and re-watching	SD	22	20
	D	42	39
	A	29	27
	SA	16	15
Total		109	100
5. Vocabulary enhancement	SD	10	9
	D	45	41
	A	37	34
	SA	17	16
Total		109	100
6. Understanding real-life usage	SD	14	13
	D	51	47
	A	27	25
	SA	17	16
Total		109	100
7. Customization and subject selection.	SD	9	8
	D	52	48
	A	36	33
	SA	12	11
Total		109	100
8. Ease of use	SD	17	16
	D	45	41
	A	33	30
	SA	14	13

Total		109	100
9. Fun and pleasing	SD	17	16
	D	47	43
	A	30	28
	SA	15	14
Total		109	100
10. Memorization	SD	13	12
	D	50	46
	A	31	28
	SA	15	14
Total		109	100

As shown in Tabel 2, the result of the present research indicates a widespread perception of doubt toward TikTok as a learning resource. In every category, the combined proportion of disagreement (Disagree + Strongly Disagree) exceeds the combined percentage of agreement (Agree + Strongly Agree). This suggests that the majority of students are unconvinced about TikTok's efficacy in many elements of language learning.

Vocabulary Enhancement has the highest amount of agreement (Agree + Strongly Agree), at 50%. This shows that TikTok's most significant perceived benefit in language acquisition is its ability to increase vocabulary. However, an equal number of students disagreed, demonstrating a disparity in individual experiences and opinions. On the other hand, the category with the highest level of disagreement (Disagree + Strongly Disagree) is Understanding Real-Life Usage, with 59%. This shows that the students believe TikTok is less effective at displaying how vocabulary is utilized in real-world circumstances. This could be attributed to the nature of TikTok's content, which is more entertainment-oriented than instructional.

Interestingly, the categories of Effectiveness and Re-Watching, Fun and Pleasing, and Memorization all have a significant degree of disagreement (58%). This suggests that students do not consider re-watching TikTok videos to be an effective learning approach, do not find the platform enjoyable or appealing for learning, and do not believe it aids in remembering. These elements are critical for a happy and effective learning experience, and the high level of disagreement indicates opportunities for growth for TikTok as a learning tool.

To summarize, while TikTok may provide certain benefits, such as vocabulary enhancement, the research indicates that students have substantial doubts about its overall usefulness as a language learning tool. To better serve individuals who want to use the site for educational reasons, it may need to address these concerns, such as showcasing real-life language usage and improving the learning experience.

DISCUSSION

A number of studies have looked into the students' perceptions of TikTok as a tool for vocabulary learning, with mostly favorable results. Despite a few doubts regarding its efficacy, the result of the present study revealed that the students perceive TikTok as a benefit in language acquisition, especially its ability to increase vocabulary. This result seems to be in line with some previous studies. For instance, Indonesian students showed positive sentiments toward TikTok for vocabulary learning (Rita & Subekti, 2023). Similarly, junior and senior high school students said TikTok helped them enhance their English vocabulary (Fahdin, 2020). TikTok was also seen well by Saudi university students as a tool for acquiring language (Alshreef & Khadawardi, 2023). In Vietnam, English majors at Thu Dau Mot University discovered TikTok to be an effective aid for learning English vocabulary (Tran, 2023). These

studies collectively indicate that students see TikTok as a useful platform for vocabulary learning.

In relation to the research, TikTok videos have shown successful in improving ESL students' vocabulary learning by introducing them to a wide variety of specific terms and phrases across video topics and themes. This exposure has been demonstrated to boost students' attention, engagement, and comprehension in the classroom (Bernard, 2021). Furthermore, using TikTok as a platform for vocabulary learning has been shown to greatly contribute to the expansion and enhancement of learners' English vocabulary, while also providing a time-efficient and diversified strategy to teaching vocabulary content (Alghameeti, 2022). However, the result of the present study revealed that the categories of Effectiveness and Re-Watching, Fun and Pleasing, and Memorization all have a significant degree of disagreement (58%). This implies that students do not think re-watching TikTok videos is an effective learning strategy, do not find TikTok fun or engaging for learning, and do not believe it helps them remember the vocabulary. These qualities are essential for a positive and effective learning experience, and the high level of disagreement suggests TikTok's potential for improvement as a learning tool.

Furthermore, incorporating TikTok into English language learning has been shown to provide several benefits for university students, including increased vocabulary, increased engagement with English language materials, and a strong desire to use TikTok as an educational tool (Simanungkalit & Katemba, 2023). However, it is worth noting that, while students have expressed interest for using TikTok to improve their English skills, writing proficiency was found to be the least likely to be increased through this medium. Additionally, students preferred watching information on native English channels over local channels for English language

acquisition (Fata et al., 2023). Nonetheless, the overall findings indicate that TikTok has significant potential to improve students' English language skills.

Research indicates that secondary school students found TikTok to be an effective tool for learning English vocabulary, increasing their motivation and acquisition of new words (Alghameeti, 2022; Rama et al., 2023). Moreover, a study concluded that TikTok is an effective teaching tool, particularly for teaching regular verbs and sentence construction (Anumanthan & Hashim, 2022). The study also suggests that TikTok videos can be used as an alternative pedagogical means to increase students' English vocabulary size (Alshreef & Khadawardi, 2023).

While there are differing views on TikTok's overall efficacy and addictiveness, it can be a valuable additional tool for improving speaking abilities and vocabulary learning (Genalo & Vigonte, 2023). However, further research is needed to determine the long-term effectiveness of TikTok videos for vocabulary learning (Alshreef & Khadawardi, 2023). Vocabulary teaching and learning, in general, have been shown to be successful ways of improving students' cognitive skills, such as recall, comprehension, and application (Atikah Mazlan et al., 2021).

There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that TikTok can be an effective tool for learning and teaching. According to multiple studies, TikTok's efficacy has been demonstrated not only in English vocabulary learning, but also in improving different areas of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) student learning. Specifically, TikTok has been shown to improve EFL students' speaking proficiency (Genalo & Vigonte, 2023; Hongsa et al., 2023; Putri, 2022; Tiwana et al., 2023). It has also been found to be effective in increasing students' interest in learning English (Cahyono & Perdhani, 2023). However, regarding the difficulties faced by EFL students in implementing TikTok for language learning, there is a lack of information provided in the contexts. Henceforth, further

research is needed to identify potential challenges faced by EFL students in using TikTok for language learning and more research is needed to establish its long-term effectiveness and to develop best practices for its use in language education.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate Indonesian EFL university students' perceptions with respect to the pedagogical efficacy of the TikTok app to foster their English vocabulary learning. The study included 109 EFL students from the English Study Program at UNIKA St. Paulus Ruteng who completed a survey.

The findings suggested that students' perceptions were varied. While some found TikTok useful for language learning, particularly vocabulary development, a larger minority raised concerns about its overall usefulness. The category with the largest amount of disagreement was understanding real-life language usage, indicating that the platform is in need of additional contextually relevant content. The study has a few limitations. First, the sample size was small and limited to students from a particular university, which may not reflect the larger community of EFL learners in Indonesia. Second, the study used self-reported data, which could be biased. Third, the study did not take into account other factors that could influence students' views such as their prior experience with TikTok or other social media platforms, their level of English proficiency, or their preferred learning strategies. Therefore, future research could overcome these limitations by increasing sample size and diversity, using objective measures of vocabulary progress, and taking into account other potential affecting factors. Furthermore, qualitative research methods, such as interviews or focus groups, could be employed to acquire a better understanding of students'

experiences and perceptions. It would also be fascinating to see how TikTok stacks up against other social media platforms as an aid for language acquisition. Finally, researchers should look into techniques for increasing TikTok's educational usefulness, such as creating pedagogically sound content or features that assist effective learning strategies. Finally, this study adds to our understanding of novel pedagogical approaches in EFL vocabulary education. While TikTok has potential as a language learning tool, there are various areas that might be improved to increase its usefulness in educational settings, particularly when learning English. As a result, these findings have significant implications for learners, teachers, and EFL instruction researchers.

REFERENCES

- Alghameeti, A. A. (2022). Is TikTok an effective technology tool in English vocabulary expansion. *English Language Teaching*, 15(12), 1-14.
- Alshreef, N. R., & Khadawardi, H. A. (2023). Using Tiktok as A Tool for English Vocabulary Learning in the Efl Context. *English Language Teaching*, 16(10), 125.
- Anumanthan, S., & Hashim, H. (2022). Improving the learning of regular verbs through TikTok among primary school ESL pupils. *Creative Education*, 13(3), 896-912.
- Atikah Mazlan, N., Wahidah Muhammad, N., & Md Yunus, M. (2021). Tik-Tok As A Medium To Enhance Pupils' Vocabulary: A Review. *International Research Journal of Education and Sciences (IRJES)*, 5(2), 44-48.
- Bernard, A. V. (2021). Expanding ESL students' vocabulary through TikTok videos. *Lensa: Kajian Kebahasaan, Kesusastraan, Dan Budaya*, 11(2), 171-184.

Fransiskus Jemadi & Yulian Juita Ekalia. Exploring the Pedagogical Efficacy of TikTok Application in Enhancing English Vocabulary: Insights From EFL Students.

- Bin-Hady, W. R. A. (2021). The Role of Games in Enhancing EFL Students' Vocabulary Acquisition Wagdi Rashad Ali Bin-Hady. *Journal of the Faculty of Education*, 11(17), 48–58.
- Cahyono, A. O. M., & Perdhani, W. C. (2023). Using TikTok in EFL class: Students' perceptions. *Journal of English Education and Teaching*, 7(1), 59–77.
- Chaikovska, O., & Zbaravska, L. (2020). *The efficiency of Quizlet-based EFL vocabulary learning in preparing undergraduates for state English exam.*
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2002). *Research methods in education.* Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Research, educational planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research.* Pearson Education.
- Fachrunnisa, N., & Nuraeni, N. (2022). Speaking interaction problems among Indonesian EFL students. *ETERNAL (English, Teaching, Learning, and Research Journal)*, 8(1), 108–120.
- Fahdin, R. G. P. (2020). Student's perception toward the use of TikTok in learning English vocabulary. *Khazanah: Jurnal Mahasiswa*, 12(2), 12–14.
- Failasofah, F., & Alkhrisheh, H. T. D. (2018). Measuring Indonesian students' lexical diversity and lexical sophistication. *Indonesian Research Journal in Education | IRJE |*, 97–107.
- Fata, I. A., Nur, L. M., & Alya, A. R. (2023). Examining Students' Perceptions of Indonesian High School Students on the Use of TikTok in Learning English. *Vision: Journal for Language and*

Foreign Language Learning, 12(1), 17-32.

Genalo, J. C., & Vigonte, F. (2023). The Impact of the Tiktok Platform on Students' Ability to Speak on Senior High Students from Anakan National High School, Brgy. Anakan Gingoog City, Misamis Oriental. *Anakan Gingoog City, Misamis Oriental (November 5, 2023).*

Hao, T. (2021). *Technology-Assisted Vocabulary Learning for EFL Learners*. Washington State University.

Hongsa, N., Wathawatthana, P., & Yonwilad, W. (2023). The Effects of TikTok Application on the Improvement of EFL Students' English-Speaking Skills. *World Journal of English Language, 13(7).*

Kamal, S. M. (2019). Developing EFL learners vocabulary by reading English comprehension in EFL classroom. *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies, 8(1), 28-35.*

Karakoç, D., & Köse, G. D. (2017). The impact of vocabulary knowledge on reading, writing and proficiency scores of EFL learners. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 13(1), 352-378.*

Kezhen, L. I. (2015). A study of vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension on EFL Chinese learners. *Studies in Literature and Language, 10(1), 33.*

Khan, R. M. I., Radzuan, N. R. M., Shahbaz, M., Ibrahim, A. H., & Mustafa, G. (2018). The role of vocabulary knowledge in speaking development of Saudi EFL learners. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume, 9.*

Laraba, S. (2007). The Importance of Vocabulary Development In

Fransiskus Jemadi & Yulian Juita Ekalia. *Exploring the Pedagogical Efficacy of TikTok Application in Enhancing English Vocabulary: Insights From EFL Students.*

Reading Comprehension in Efl Classes. *Human Sciences Journal*, 45–56.

Machfudi, M. I. (2022). Students' difficulties in vocabulary mastery. *CREW Journal*, 1(1), 1–12.

Noprival, N. (2017). Students' voice: Efl Speaking Problems On English Day Program At One Senior High School In Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmiah Universitas Batanghari Jambi*, 16(1), 77–81.

Patahuddin, P., Syawal, S., & Bin-Tahir, S. Z. (2017). Investigating Indonesian EFL learners' learning and acquiring English vocabulary. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 7(4), 128.

Putri, S. M. D. (2022). The Effectiveness Of Using Tiktok To Improve Efl Learners' Speaking Ability. *Mimesis*, 3(2), 101–110.

Rama, M. A., Hamdani, Z., & Prihatini, C. (2023). Students' Perception On The Use Of Tiktok As An Effective Learning Media In Improving Students' Vocabulary. *Journal on Education*, 5(4), 17079–17086.

Rita, R., & Subekti, A. S. (2023). TikTok and Vocabulary Learning: A Survey Study of Indonesian Students from English Departments. *Pedagogy: Journal of English Language Teaching*, 11(2), 202–216.

Rohmatillah, R. (2017). A Study On Students' difficulties In Learning Vocabulary. *English Education: Jurnal Tadris Bahasa Inggris*, 6(1), 75–93.

Salam, U., & Nurnisa, N. (2021). Students' Difficulties In Learning Vocabularies. *English Community Journal*, 5(1), 46–53.

- Šifrar Kalan, M., Muñoz-Basols, J., Robles-García, P., Strawbridge, T., & Sánchez-Gutiérrez, C. (2024). The impact of multilingualism and proficiency on L2 vocabulary knowledge: contrasting high and low multilinguals. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 1–24.
- Simanungkalit, J. R. M., & Katemba, C. V. (2023). Utilizing English Tiktok as a Media in Learning English Vocabulary: University Students' Perspective. *Eduvelop: Journal of English Education and Development*, 6(2), 137–150.
- Susanto, H. (2021). A Study On Students' Difficulties In Learning Vocabulary. *Journey: Journal of English Language and Pedagogy*, 4(2), 46–50.
- Sutrisna, G. (2021). Vocabulary Acquisition in EFL: A Literature Review of Innovative Vocabulary Teaching Strategies. *Yavana Bhasha: Journal of English Language Education*, 4(1), 8–17.
- Tiyana, E., Jaelani, S. R., Surayya, S. A., & Husnu, M. (2023). The Use Of Tiktok Application: The Impact On Efl Learners' Speaking. *Jurnal Bima: Pusat Publikasi Ilmu Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra*, 1(4), 20–29.
- Tran, D. T. (2023). Tiktok's effect on english vocabulary learning: an empirical study of English major curriculum. *GeSec: Revista de Gestao e Secretariado*, 14(10).
- Tran, T. Q. (2020). EFL Students' Attitudes towards Learner Autonomy in English Vocabulary Learning. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal*, 3(2), 86–94.
- Utami, L. N. T., & Yulia, M. F. (2022). Prospective Indonesian Efl Teachers' Problems in Placing Verb Stress. *ELTR Journal*, 6(2), 144–155.

Fransiskus Jemadi & Yulian Juita Ekalia. Exploring the Pedagogical Efficacy of TikTok Application in Enhancing English Vocabulary: Insights From EFL Students.

Viera, R. T. (2017). Vocabulary Knowledge in the Production Of Written Texts: A Case Study on EFL Language Learners. *Revista Tecnológica-ESPOL*, 30(3).

Zakeri, J., & Khatibi, M. B. (2014). A Much-needed Boost to EFL Learners' Vocabulary; the Role of Associative Learning. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 98, 1983–1990.