



The Students' Perceptions in Using TikTok as Media for Learning English Vocabulary on Autonomous Learning

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Abstract

Autonomous learning fosters students' independence in managing their learning without teacher intervention. However, many students currently lack motivation for independent English vocabulary learning because of unengaging methods. The objective of this study is to determine students' perceptions regarding the use of TikTok as a medium for learning English vocabulary for autonomous learning and improving their English vocabulary. This study employed qualitative research to analyze data, focusing on 5 AP2 students from a vocational high school in Bandung, Indonesia. The students were chosen as participants because they used TikTok as a medium for English vocabulary learning in autonomous learning. Additionally, the AP2 students were selected because their study program, Hospitality accommodation, involves frequent interaction with English vocabulary, making them more likely to engage with vocabulary learning platforms like TikTok. Data were gathered through interviews and analyzed using Miles and Haberman's theory, which has three steps: reduce the data, display the data, and make a conclusion. The findings revealed that most students responded positively to using TikTok as a medium for autonomous English vocabulary learning, indicating that TikTok was effective in enhancing their vocabulary acquisition. The study concluded that TikTok is an effective and engaging medium for supporting autonomous English vocabulary learning, although potential distractions from the platform's content should be considered.

Keywords *Autonomous Learning; English Vocabulary; Students' Perception, TikTok*

INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, students must recognize and implement independent learning. Teacher assistance helps students learn, but teachers cannot always be present. This means that teachers and students can only meet face-to-face in the classroom or during effective learning sessions. This occurs in various situations, such as when teachers are on holiday, recovering temporarily from health issues, or attending important meetings that prevent them from being in the classroom. Additionally, many students lack motivation to study independently because they lack interest in the learning materials provided. Therefore, as the world of education continues to evolve, numerous innovations have been introduced to motivate students to continue their diligent study. One such innovation is autonomous learning.

Autonomous learning is a process in which individuals take full control of their own learning by setting goals, managing time and resources, and evaluating learning progress independently, without excessive dependence on direct instruction from teachers (Benson, 2011). This means that students have the initiative to learn without assistance from teachers. In addition, Çakici (2015) stated that autonomy involves the ability to detach oneself, make decisions independently, and take independent actions. In the current Industry 4.0 era, autonomous learning requires students to leverage technology. This era has significantly impacted individuals' lives, especially in education and learning. Access to information facilitates understanding and deeper insights. These changes also affect information technology users. Information and communication technology facilitates

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skill development among students and enhances people's ability to effectively use technological innovation. Cloete (2017) emphasized that ICT serves as a medium through which desired information can be easily accessible, revolutionizing access to knowledge. In autonomous learning contexts, students seeking to expand their English vocabulary can use popular social media platforms like TikTok.

TikTok has evolved into a highly popular application, particularly among teenagers and young adults. Approximately 69% of TikTok users are aged 16 to 24, indicating that the platform has significant appeal among the younger generation. One of TikTok's key features that makes it attractive for learning is its short video format, which allows users to consume content quickly. Additionally, TikTok offers various features that support interaction and learning, such as text, captions, visual effects, and audio, which can help users understand and retain vocabulary. Through videos that include examples of word usage in sentences or real-life situations, users can learn new vocabulary contextually, enhancing their memory and comprehension of those words.

TikTok provides an opportunity for learning outside the classroom, which is beneficial for autonomous learning. One of the main advantages of learning through TikTok is the flexibility in accessing content at any time and from any place. This allows students to continue learning outside class time, thus increasing their chances of acquiring new vocabulary. In addition, TikTok offers a fun and interactive way to learn English, which can increase students' motivation and interest in enriching their vocabulary.

TikTok is effective for vocabulary learning because it provides rich and varied language experiences. With videos covering a variety of aspects of the language, including the use of words in different contexts, idioms, and everyday expressions, students can develop a deeper understanding of how vocabulary is used in real life. For example, accounts like @buiramira, @Johnhiday, and @Callmechia provide content that focuses on vocabulary development, from replacing common words with more varied synonyms to teaching idioms that are often used in everyday conversation.

TikTok not only presents videos that teach vocabulary but also provides opportunities for interaction with other learning communities through comments. This helps students improve their language skills actively. According to several studies, TikTok can help students easily memorize the new English vocabulary. In addition, TikTok videos can also be used as an English learning approach outside the classroom (Hastomo et al., 2022). Another study showed that TikTok can affect pupils' English proficiency can positively affect (Fata et al., 2023). Furthermore, another study stated that TikTok can be considered an effective tool in supporting language learning, especially the four English skills. They also admitted that TikTok helped them expand their vocabulary and understand grammatical structures contextually (Laili, 2023).

Therefore, there were already existing studies regarding students' perception of TikTok as English learning, the English language consisting of four skills, and grammar. However, there is no research specifically about English vocabulary in autonomous learning. Consequently, the researcher decided to investigate the students' perception of using TikTok to learn English vocabulary in autonomous learning at one vocational high school in Bandung, West Java. The study's findings are intended to provide students with information, suggestions, and enthusiasm for learning English. At the same time, English has become a proficiency ability for students' career prospects, and they may use TikTok to acquire English vocabulary even outside the classroom. This study sought to answer the following research questions: What are the students' perceptions of using TikTok as media for learning English vocabulary in autonomous learning and what are students' perceptions of using TikTok as media for improving English vocabulary?

LITERATURE REVIEW

TikTok as a Learning Media

TikTok, a short-video sharing platform, has become a global phenomenon in recent years. Originally recognized as an entertainment medium, TikTok is increasingly used in educational contexts, particularly in language learning. Several previous studies have shown that TikTok can support vocabulary learning in an interactive and enjoyable manner. For example, engaging in short videos can help students introduce new vocabulary in a visual context that is easier to remember (Alghameeti, 2022). Erwani et al. (2021) added that TikTok contains many entertaining features, ensuring that students do not become bored with learning English, especially vocabulary acquisition. Due to these benefits, students use this application as a learning tool in English classrooms and agree that TikTok can enhance their vocabulary skills.

However, it is important to note that the use of TikTok in learning should be approached appropriately to maximize its benefits. TikTok provides students with the opportunity to access various videos containing vocabulary in real-life contexts, such as dialogs in videos or language usage in viral challenges and trends (Bernard, 2021). This process supports contextual vocabulary learning, which is more effective than traditional learning methods (Tirtayasa et al., 2024). Therefore, understanding how TikTok helps students introduce vocabulary in engaging contexts is crucial for this study.

Vocabulary Learning Through TikTok

Vocabulary learning through TikTok focuses on implementing vocabulary in more realistic and engaging situations (Cahyono & Perdhani, 2023). TikTok provides students with the opportunity to observe the use of words in various contexts, including viral trends that can introduce new vocabulary in a more enjoyable way (Dwipa et al., 2024). Abidah (2024) demonstrated that the use of social media, including TikTok, can enhance students' vocabulary comprehension because students can associate words with visuals and contexts that are easier to remember.

However, despite many studies highlighting the benefits of TikTok in language learning, not all studies have clearly discussed how TikTok specifically facilitates vocabulary learning. Some studies have noted that social media platforms, such as TikTok, help improve language skills without explaining how this process occurs (Tan et al., 2022). Based on this gap, the current study aims to fill this gap by providing a deeper explanation of how TikTok can influence students' vocabulary acquisition through their perceptions of this medium.

Autonomous Language Learning

Autonomous learning is a learning system in which students take initiative, are motivated, and assume responsibility for their learning in ways they choose (Boud, 2012). In the context of language learning, this involves the use of various learning resources that students can independently access, one of which is social media platforms like TikTok. According to Basilan and Berber (2024), autonomous learning allows students to learn in a more flexible and personalized manner, which is crucial for language skill development.

The use of TikTok in vocabulary learning creates opportunities for students to engage in more independent learning (Hadijah et al., 2023). Through TikTok, students can select videos that fit their learning needs. This approach allows students to learn vocabulary in a more individualized way, based on their personal interests (Budiarta & Akmar, 2024). Therefore, this study explores how TikTok contributes to independent vocabulary learning based on students' perceptions of its effectiveness.

Research Gap

Although some studies have discussed the use of TikTok in educational contexts, most have focused more on the general use of TikTok in education or on the learning of other skills, such as speaking and listening. Research specifically dedicated to vocabulary learning through TikTok is still limited, and even fewer studies have explored in depth how students' perceptions of TikTok influence its effectiveness in vocabulary learning. Furthermore, while there is research highlighting the benefits of social media in language learning, most of these studies do not sufficiently explore autonomous learning in the context of TikTok use. Therefore, this study identified a gap in the existing literature: a lack of understanding of how TikTok can be used as a medium for English vocabulary learning to realize autonomous learning.

Based on the literature review above, we conclude that although TikTok has great potential as a medium for vocabulary learning, many aspects still need to be understood more deeply, particularly regarding how students' perceptions of TikTok influence their learning. This study aims to fill this gap by focusing on students' perceptions of using TikTok as a medium for autonomous English vocabulary learning. The results of this study are expected to provide further insights into how TikTok can be effectively utilized in the context of English language learning, as well as its contribution to autonomous learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

In this study, the researcher uses a qualitative research design, specifically descriptive qualitative research, to understand students' perceptions of using TikTok as a medium for learning English vocabulary and autonomous learning. Descriptive qualitative research was chosen because this approach allows the researcher to gain in-depth insights into the phenomenon from the participants' perspective, in this case, students who use TikTok as a learning medium for English. According to [Bogdan and Biklen \(1998\)](#), descriptive qualitative research is used to present data in narrative form, which is more suitable for this study's objective, which focuses on the participants' experiences and subjective views.

This approach is highly relevant because the study aims to understand students' perceptions of using TikTok as a learning medium, which cannot be fully understood through numerical data. Based on [Ary et al. \(2010\)](#), descriptive qualitative research is very effective in understanding complex processes or phenomena, such as the experience of independent learning through social media platforms, which involve personal perceptions and interpretations from students. By using this approach, the researcher can gain insights into students' perceptions of using TikTok as a medium for learning English vocabulary and autonomous learning.

Site and Participants

This study involves 5 students from class XI APA 2 (Hospitality Accommodation) who were selected because they use TikTok as a medium for English vocabulary learning in autonomous learning. These students were selected purposively because they were considered relevant to provide the necessary information for this study ([Ary et al., 2010](#)).

The small sample size (5 students) was chosen because qualitative research focuses on gaining an in-depth understanding of individual perceptions and experiences rather than generalizing findings to a larger population. In this context, a smaller sample size allows the researcher to collect more detailed data on how students perceive the use of TikTok as a medium for English vocabulary learning and autonomous learning.

In addition, this study was conducted in one of the vocational high schools in Bandung City, West Java Province, which provided the researcher with the opportunity to obtain relevant and

specific information from a similar group of students in a more limited context but still provided meaningful insights into the use of TikTok in independent learning. Thus, despite this limited sample, the quality and depth of data obtained from purposefully selected participants ensure that the results of the study will provide meaningful insights into students' perceptions of the use of TikTok as a medium for learning English vocabulary.

Instrument of the Study

The instrument used in this study is an interview, specifically a semi-structured interview, designed to explore students' perceptions of using TikTok as a medium for learning English vocabulary through autonomous learning. Conducted online, each interview lasted approximately 10 minutes and focused on students' perspectives regarding TikTok's role in facilitating independent vocabulary acquisition.

Data analysis techniques

In this study, interview data were analyzed using the theory proposed by [Miles and Huberman \(1994\)](#), which consists of data collection, data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. After collecting the data, data reduction was performed to select appropriate data for the study. After data reduction, data display was the next stage to categorize the appropriate data for the given needs. Finally, drawing conclusions was the last step to verify the research data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section explains the findings related to the research question regarding students' perceptions of using the TikTok application as a medium for English vocabulary on autonomous learning. After the interviews were conducted, the student statements were quoted verbatim to substantiate the research findings, as presented below.

#Excerpt 1

"ohh...mmm... TikTok is very helpful kak... The videos on TikTok are quite short and interesting, so I can learn a lot of understanding in a short time. In addition, the way of delivery is also creative, and some use music and pictures, which makes it easy for me to remember. (Ohh...mmm... TikTok sangat membantu kak... Video-video di TikTok cukup singkat dan menarik, jadi saya bisa mempelajari banyak kosakata dalam waktu yang singkat. Selain itu, cara penyampaianya juga kreatif kak, ada yang menggunakan musik dan gambar, yang membuat saya mudah mengingatnya)" – Student 1

Excerpt 1 shows that the use of TikTok as a learning medium can enhance students' effectiveness and memory in learning English vocabulary independently. This aligns with previous research by [Zein et al. \(2024\)](#), who found that the use of TikTok can increase students' motivation to learn, particularly in remembering English vocabulary, due to the creative and engaging content. Furthermore, [Juliana et al. \(2024\)](#) and [Putri and Rustipa \(2023\)](#) found that the visual and musical elements in TikTok videos can help students remember vocabulary more easily. [Perez et al. \(2017\)](#) added that short videos allow students to repeat the material more frequently in a short period of time, thus improving their retention and understanding of vocabulary. [Alfitri \(2024\)](#) also noted that content presented in an engaging and dynamic way, such as on TikTok, can enhance student engagement in the learning process, which in turn improves their ability to master vocabulary through autonomous learning.

#Excerpt 2

"I find TikTok good for learning vocabulary... mmmm. because the videos are short, I don't have to feel bored and can quickly learn new vocabulary. However, sometimes the vocabulary in the videos I watched is difficult to understand (Saya merasa TikTok bagus untuk belajar kosakata... mmmm. karena video-videonya singkat, saya tidak perlu merasa bosan dan bisa cepat mempelajari kosakata baru. Tapi, kadang kosakata di video yang saya tonton sulit dipahami)" – Student 2

Excerpt 2 shows that although TikTok can attract students' interest in learning vocabulary, challenges in understanding the presented vocabulary remain a barrier to the effectiveness of learning. This aligns with research by [Teng et al. \(2024\)](#), who found that TikTok as a learning medium can increase student engagement due to the short and engaging format of the videos, which makes students more motivated to learn vocabulary. However, [Alghameeti \(2022\)](#) revealed that although social media platforms like TikTok can be enjoyable learning sources, the short duration of the videos often leads to a lack of in-depth explanations, which can make it difficult for students to fully comprehend new vocabulary. [Song and Xiong \(2023\)](#) added that without additional explanations, vocabulary learned through social media can be difficult to understand and apply in real-world language use. Another study by [Wilson and Anam \(2024\)](#) also emphasized that students still require guidance in social media-based learning to ensure that the vocabulary they learn is well understood and used appropriately in communication contexts.

#Excerpt 3

"I usually use Tiktok to learn independently at home. It really makes learning English more enjoyable. I like it because its delivery style is creative, with video images and music. ... makes me more focused and easier to remember the words I just learned (Saya gunakan Tiktok untuk belajar mandiri di rumah biasanya kak. Ini benar-benar membuat belajar bahasa Indonesian jadi lebih menyenangkan. Saya suka karena gaya penyampaiannya kreatif, dengan gambar video dan musik. ... membuat saya.. lebih fokus kak dan lebih mudah mengingat kata-kata yang baru saya pelajari)" – Student 3

Excerpt 3 shows that the creative elements in TikTok, such as the use of images and music, can enhance focus and make it easier for students to remember new vocabulary during independent learning. This is consistent with research by [Aini et al. \(2024\)](#), who stated that the use of creative social media platforms like TikTok can increase student engagement in learning because the visual and audio elements help strengthen memory and improve concentration when learning English vocabulary. Furthermore, [Schuler et al. \(2024\)](#) explained in the Multimedia Learning theory that the combination of text, images, and sound can enhance memory retention because it involves multiple cognitive pathways in the learning process. [Alhazmi \(2024\)](#) also found that the use of short videos with visual and musical elements can strengthen students' memory by creating stronger associations between vocabulary and its context of use. In technology-based learning, students exhibit greater focus when instructional material is delivered interactively and engagingly, akin to the formats used on social media platforms such as TikTok ([Jacobs et al., 2022](#)).

#Excerpt 4

"Tiktok has a large vocabulary of English. Therefore, I use TikTok if I study independently. For example, short stories. There is vocabulary, so I get a lot of vocabulary, kak (Tiktok menyediakan banyak kosakata bahasa inggris. jadi kalau belajar mandiri saya gunakan tiktok. misalnya cerita pendek nah. Itu kan ada kosaktanya nah dari situ banyak kosakata

yang saya dapatkan kak) – Student 4

Excerpt 4 shows that TikTok can be an effective source for students to expand their English vocabulary through short stories. This aligns with research by [Almas \(2024\)](#), who found that platforms like TikTok can enrich students' English-language vocabulary, particularly through engaging and diverse content, such as visually presented short stories. Additionally, [García-Cañarte and Ocaña \(2024\)](#) and [Pham et al. \(2023\)](#) explained that exposure to language in meaningful contexts, such as through short stories on TikTok, can help students naturally understand and absorb new vocabulary. [Fitrawati et al. \(2024\)](#) also demonstrated that story-based learning can enhance vocabulary acquisition because students find it easier to remember words linked in a narrative. [Arjmandi and Aladini \(2020\)](#) added that story-based content on social media can provide examples of vocabulary usage in real-life contexts, helping students better understand the meanings of words.

#Excerpt 5

TikTok sangat membantu saya dalam belajar kosakata bahasa inggris secara mandiri karena menyediakan banyak konten video tentang kosakata seperti kata kerja dengan tampilan menarik kak. Dari konten itu, Saya bisa belajar kosakata baru setiap hari tanpa merasa bosan.

TikTok really helps me learn English vocabulary independently because it provides a lot of video content about vocabulary like verbs with an attractive appearance. From that content, I can learn new vocabulary every day without getting bored. (Interview data: Student 5)

Excerpt 5 shows that TikTok, as a medium for independent vocabulary learning, provides engaging and diverse English vocabulary content that encourages students to continue learning without feeling bored. This is consistent with research by [Hadijah et al. \(2023\)](#), who found that using TikTok as a learning medium can increase students' motivation to learn, as the creative and varied content helps maintain their interest in independently learning English vocabulary. Additionally, [Teng \(2016\)](#) explained that repeated exposure to new words in various contexts can improve students' memory and comprehension. [Hosaini et al. \(2024\)](#) also found that using interactive videos with attractive visual displays can increase students' motivation to learn independently because they feel that the learning process becomes more enjoyable and less monotonous. [Alghameeti \(2022\)](#) added that social media platforms like TikTok can provide an exploration-based learning experience, where students can discover and learn new vocabulary every day based on their interests, ultimately increasing their autonomous learning.

From the responses of the four participants, it can be seen that there are diverse perceptions regarding the use of TikTok as a medium for independent English vocabulary learning, ranging from positive to negative perceptions. All four participants felt that TikTok helped them learn English vocabulary independently. However, there was a negative perception, as the vocabulary presented in the TikTok videos was difficult to understand.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the use of TikTok as a medium for independent English vocabulary learning has varying impacts on students. There are both positive and negative perceptions. The majority of students felt that TikTok helped them learn vocabulary in a creative, engaging, and enjoyable way, thanks to the visual and audio elements that reinforce their memory of the vocabulary learned through TikTok. However, some students also

expressed challenges in understanding the vocabulary presented in the videos, which may reduce the effectiveness of learning. Nevertheless, TikTok is still considered a valuable learning medium for learning vocabulary in autonomous learning.

LIMITATION OF RESEARCH

The limitations of this study are as follows: (1) This study only involved 5 participants from a vocational high school in Bandung. This limits the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. This limitation may affect the external validity of the research, as the perceptions of students at this school may not represent the perceptions of students at other schools or at different educational levels. (2) This study relied solely on interviews as the primary instrument for gathering students' perceptions. While interviews provide in-depth insights, this instrument is limited by the small number of participants and may not sufficiently represent the broader variety of students' perceptions. Furthermore, interviews are subjective and may be influenced by the researcher's interpretation. The use of other instruments, such as observations or surveys on a larger scale, could provide a more comprehensive picture.

In future research, a larger and more diverse study with a sample that includes students from various backgrounds and educational levels is recommended. A longitudinal study design could also provide insights into the long-term impact of using TikTok for English vocabulary learning. Additionally, a comparative study between TikTok and other learning platforms, such as YouTube and Instagram, could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of these platforms in supporting independent learning. Finally, the use of a mixed-methods approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative data allows researchers to integrate the strengths of numerical data with in-depth insights into students' perceptions and experiences.

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