

THE USE OF TIKTOK FOR LEARNING ENGLISH VOCABULARY

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ABSTRACT

Learning English vocabulary using TikTok as a media learning is expected to provide students with a practical, engaging, and meaningful learning experience. This research aims to determine the implementation of teaching English vocabulary to fifth-grade students of SD Laboratorium UNG through TikTok media. This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design, involving 20 fifth-grade students at SD Laboratorium UNG in the academic year 2024/2025 as research subjects. The data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, focusing on three basic types of vocabulary: nouns, verbs, and adjectives, which were taught using TikTok videos. This research showed that (1) using TikTok videos in the classroom increases students' interest, participation, and understanding of English vocabulary. This was proven by observations that have been analyzed about the implementation of TikTok videos as a medium for learning English vocabulary to fifth-grade students at SD Laboratorium UNG. (2) students showed improvement in recognizing, pronouncing, and using vocabulary in simple sentences, and felt more confident in the learning process. This is based on the results of interviews conducted with 5 students who were most active during the implementation of TikTok videos in English vocabulary learning activities. Despite challenges such as limited access to technology, TikTok proved to be an effective medium for teaching vocabulary to young EFL learners.

Keywords: Tiktok, Vocabulary, Learning Media, Young Learners.

INTRODUCTION

Learning English is a process of acquiring knowledge and skills related to the English language through study, experience, and instruction. As stated by Rahmawati et al. (2020, p. 313), learning English involves gaining competence in English skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In Indonesia, English plays a vital role, especially for elementary school students. English is not only a global language but has also become a second language in Indonesia. It is commonly used in education, communication with foreigners, and professional settings. Therefore, introducing English at the elementary level is essential to build a strong foundation for future learning.

Elementary school is considered the most suitable stage to introduce English to children. According to Woro Widiastuti (2011), the age of 6 to 12 years is an ideal period for absorbing new knowledge, as students at this age are classified as young learners. Since English is a new subject for them, it is more effective to start teaching it at this level. One of the fundamental components in learning English is vocabulary, which supports the development of other skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Vocabulary plays a central role in language learning. Widiastuti (2011) emphasized that vocabulary is a key aspect of language acquisition, while Vermeer in Schmitt and McCarthy (2015, p. 140) argued that knowing words is essential for understanding and communication. Without adequate vocabulary, students will face difficulties in expressing themselves or understanding others. Therefore, helping students improve their vocabulary mastery is crucial.

To make vocabulary learning more engaging and effective, this study employs the TikTok application as a learning medium. TikTok is known as a widely used and entertaining platform, and recent research shows its potential in educational contexts. According to Zaitun, Hadi, and Indriani (2021), TikTok enhances students' confidence in

speaking and leads to better learning outcomes. Audrey and Bernard (2021) also found that TikTok helped ESL students expand their vocabulary. Given its global popularity, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown (Omar & Dequan, 2020), TikTok has become a familiar tool among students and can be effectively integrated into learning activities. TikTok, launched in China in 2016, gained worldwide popularity during the pandemic. It offers short, dynamic videos that can be adapted for educational purposes. Roumeliotis et al. (2019) noted that TikTok increases student engagement and motivation, while Edward (2021) highlighted its ability to support communication and learning.

Based on the researcher's initial observation, many elementary students still struggle with English vocabulary. Although some can speak English fluently, they often fail to recall the meaning or spelling of newly introduced words. Moreover, teachers at the research site—SD Laboratorium UNG—have never used TikTok as a teaching medium. Therefore, this study aims to test whether TikTok video content focused on English vocabulary can help improve students' vocabulary acquisition.

In conclusion, the researcher will use TikTok videos to create an engaging classroom environment and assess their effectiveness in enhancing vocabulary learning among 5th-grade students. As Heimei (2016) stated, videos are interesting, stimulating, and effective tools for learning, making TikTok a promising medium for English vocabulary instruction.

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Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research approach to investigate the use of TikTok as a medium for learning English vocabulary among fifth-grade students. As Creswell (2018) defines, qualitative research aims to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups assign to a social or human issue, emphasizing data collection in natural settings. This method is suitable for the study as it does not seek to measure statistical outcomes but to explore students' learning experiences and engagement with TikTok as a digital learning tool. In line with Miles et al. (2018), qualitative inquiry focuses on understanding human behavior within its natural context, prioritizing depth over numerical analysis. The research aims to capture how students interact with TikTok content, engage in vocabulary learning, and perceive the effectiveness of digital platforms in language acquisition. By observing classroom practices and interpreting students' responses, the study seeks to uncover meaningful insights into the implementation of TikTok in teaching English vocabulary at Lab UNG in the 2024/2025 academic year.

Subject of The Research

This research focuses on one class of fifth-grade students at SD Laboratorium UNG. In the 2024/2025th academic year, there are about 20 students, about 12 male and about eight Female. These students are considered young learners, typically aged 10-11. The fifth grade was chosen because this class suits to do the implemented of TikTok to check their skill in learning English vocabulary.

Technique of Collecting Data

This research is used two instruments as the main of technique of collecting the data, namely observation checklist and interview by using three section which are preparation, implementation, and evaluation. Observation checklist was conducted to all fifth grade students during English learning activities, while Interviews were conducted only to five students who were active during learning activities by applying TikTok as learning media.

Observation

Observation, as a qualitative research technique, involves systematically watching activities and interactions in a natural setting to gain deeper insight into teaching and

learning processes (Creswell, 2018). In this study, an observation checklist was employed to examine the use of TikTok as a learning medium, student behavior and responses, and levels of engagement. Field notes were also taken to document spontaneous reactions and the overall classroom atmosphere. The observation focused on three main indicators: preparation, implementation, and evaluation, with instruments partially adapted from Novitasari et al. (2022).

1) Preparation Section

No.	Statement	Observed (✓/✗)	Notes
1.	TikTok Videos that are aligned with the subject matter (focus on nouns, verbs, and adjectives)		
2.	Videos included visual aids (pictures, actions, examples)		
3.	Videos are short and engaging for 5th-grade students.		
4.	Devices functioned properly (audio-visual quality)		
5.	Students are informed of the learning objectives.		

2) Implementation Section

No.	Statement	Observed (✓/✗)	Notes
1.	Can students be visibly engaged and interested in the TikTok videos?		
2.	Did students participate actively in related discussions or activities		
3.	Do students show motivation to learn vocabulary via TikTok format?		
4.	Are students be using new vocabulary in sentences?		
5.	Can students be encouraged to ask questions or share ideas?		

3) Evaluation Section

No.	Statement	Observed (✓/✗)	Notes
1.	Did students understand the vocabulary or sentences in the TikTok video they watched during the learning activity?		
2.	Can students identify nouns, verbs, and adjectives in context?		
3.	Did students be provided feedback on the TikTok videos? (e.g., what they like or did not like)		
4.	Did students be able to reflect on what they learned from the lesson?		
5.	Can learning English using TikTok be fun for students?		

Interview

Interviews serve as a vital qualitative research tool for obtaining in-depth insights through direct, face-to-face interaction (Creswell, 2018). This study utilized semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to explore students' experiences in learning English vocabulary via TikTok and their perceptions of its effectiveness and engagement. As noted by Alijoyo (2020), semi-structured interviews provide detailed responses while maintaining a guided structure. To encourage open expression, interviews were conducted in Indonesian. An interview guide was used to ensure consistency, with several questions adapted from Novitasari et al. (2022) and Rama et al. (2023) to align with the research aims.

1) Preparation Section

These questions aim to explore students' initial experiences before and during the introduction of TikTok media in English language learning.

1. Have you ever learned English using videos or TikTok in class?
2. What do you think about TikTok videos as English learning media in the classroom?

2) Implementation Section

In this stage, the interviews are focused on how students experience and respond to the implementation of TikTok videos during the learning process in the class.

1. Do you enjoy using TikTok to learn new English words? Why or why not?
2. Was it difficult or easy to understand the difference between nouns, verbs and adjectives through the TikTok video? Please explain.
3. Can you tell me about one noun, verb or adjective vocabulary word that you have learned?
4. Do you feel more confident using or expressing the vocabulary in English after learning and watching the TikTok video? Why?
5. How do you practice using nouns, verbs and adjectives after learning with TikTok videos?

3) Evaluation Section

In this part, the questions evaluate students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using TikTok videos as a medium for learning English vocabulary.

1. After learning to use TikTok videos, which medium do you like best, TikTok videos or books? Why or why not?
2. Can TikTok videos make learning English more fun? Please explain.
3. Would you like your teacher to teach English using TikTok videos in the future?

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The researcher presented the data that was collecting by observation checklist and interview with the fifth grade students of SD Laboratorium UNG.

Observation

In this section, the researcher conducted observations for three meetings to see the development of students' vocabulary knowledge when applying TikTok videos in learning activities related to three types of vocabulary, as explained in chapter two. There are three types of vocabulary that researchers observe in students: nouns, verbs, and adjectives by adjusting student learning topics contained in the teaching module. Each meeting has a specific theme, as follows:

- First meeting: What is your favourite place for a holiday?
- Second meeting: Where did you go last weekend?
- Third meeting: What did you do last holiday?

1. Preparation Section

No.	Statement	Observed (✓/✗)		
		Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3
1.	Tiktok Videos that are aligned with the subject matter (focus on nouns, verbs, and adjectives)	✓	✓	✓
2.	Videos included visual aids (pictures, actions, examples)	✓	✓	✓
3.	Videos are short and engaging for 5th-grade students.	✓	✓	✓

4.	Devices functioned properly (audio-visual quality)	✓	✓	✓
5.	Students are informed of the learning objectives.	✓	✓	✓

During the initial meeting, which focused on noun vocabulary under the theme “What is your favourite place for holiday?”, the researcher observed that all instructional tools, including the LCD and speakers, functioned effectively. The teacher clearly outlined the learning objectives and introduced TikTok as a new digital learning medium. A 1.5-minute animated video depicted a conversation between two characters discussing their holiday destinations. Although many students were initially unfamiliar with this learning method and appeared somewhat confused, their facial expressions reflected curiosity and interest.

In the second meeting, centered on verbs with the topic “Where did you go last weekend?”, students demonstrated greater enthusiasm and preparedness. The TikTok video featured dynamic visuals of past actions such as playing, eating, and walking. With the teacher once again articulating clear learning objectives, students were more focused and engaged. All media tools continued to operate smoothly.

By the third session, which explored adjectives through the topic “What did you do last holiday?”, student engagement had significantly increased. The video illustrated emotional expressions like “fun,” “boring,” and “relaxing,” effectively resonating with students' own holiday experiences.

Overall, the observations suggest that the integration of TikTok videos effectively captured students’ attention, enhanced engagement, and supported contextual English vocabulary learning in a positive classroom atmosphere.

2. Implementation Section

No.	Statement	Observed (✓/✗)		
		Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3
1.	Can students be visibly engaged and interested in the TikTok videos?	✓	✓	✓
2.	Did students participate actively in related discussions or activities	✓	✓	✓
3.	Do students show motivation to learn vocabulary via TikTok format?	✓	✓	✓
4.	Are students be using new vocabulary in sentences?	✓	✓	✓
5.	Can students be encouraged to ask questions or share ideas?	✓	✓	✓

In the first meeting, the researcher observed that students began to show interest in the TikTok video content, although their active participation was still limited. Only a few students, such as two who answered questions like “What is your favourite place?”, responded with simple phrases like “My favourite place is the zoo.” While some could mention other vacation spots, many were hesitant to speak and faced difficulties understanding or pronouncing new vocabulary such as “oasis” and “beach.” Nevertheless, the students appeared to enjoy the engaging learning experience.

In the second meeting, noticeable improvement in student participation was observed. More students engaged in discussions, correctly pronouncing verb vocabulary from the video and forming basic past tense sentences such as “I went to the beach” and “I played with my cousin.” This suggests that TikTok videos supported comprehension of contextual verb use and encouraged oral sentence construction.

By the third meeting, focused on adjectives, students showed enhanced descriptive abilities. Several expressed their holiday experiences using terms like “fun” or “boring,”

supported by the emotional visuals in the TikTok videos. Overall, the observations indicate that TikTok videos positively influence student motivation, participation, and vocabulary acquisition in English language learning.

3. Evaluation Section

No.	Statement	Observed (✓/✗)		
		Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3
1.	Did students understand the vocabulary or sentences in the Tiktok video they watched during the learning activity?	✓	✓	✓
2.	Can students identify nouns, verbs, and adjectives in context?	✓	✓	✓
3.	Did students be provided feedback on the TikTok videos? (e.g., what they like or did not like)	✓	✓	✓
4.	Did students be able to reflect on what they learned from the lesson?	✓	✓	✓
5.	Can learning English using TikTok be fun for students?	✓	✓	✓

In the first meeting, the researcher observed that most students showed greater enjoyment when learning through TikTok videos compared to traditional textbooks. However, only a few students, such as two who identified nouns like “zoo” and “school,” were able to recognize vocabulary accurately, while many still struggled to differentiate word types. Despite this, TikTok videos positively impacted engagement and comprehension.

In the second session, students demonstrated improved understanding of verb vocabulary. When prompted with the word “play,” approximately five students responded enthusiastically. Students also expressed content preferences, and some began distinguishing between nouns and verbs, applying them in simple spoken interactions, which indicated contextual vocabulary development.

By the third meeting, students showed further improvement in using adjectives to express personal experiences. Five students confidently used sentences like “My holiday was exciting,” reflecting their growing expressive abilities. Students reported a preference for TikTok videos over textbooks, citing engaging visuals and animations.

Overall, at the evaluation stage, the integration of TikTok into English lessons enhanced vocabulary comprehension, contextual usage, and student motivation, creating a more enjoyable learning experience.

Interview

In this section, the researcher conducted interviews with five students who were active during the learning activities using TikTok videos as media in learning English vocabulary. The interviews were semi-structured to obtain in-depth data on students' learning experiences, perceptions of the media, and the effectiveness of using TikTok in improving English vocabulary. Similar to the observation results, the interview results were also categorized into three main indicators: preparation, implementation, and evaluation.

Preparation Section

Q1: Have you ever learned English vocabulary using videos or TikTok in class?

From the interview results, three out of five participants stated that they had never learned English vocabulary using TikTok videos before, either at school or independently. While the other two participants said they had seen English learning videos on TikTok by accident while scrolling, but not in the context of formal learning in class. This finding supports the observation in the first meeting, where students seemed interested but still not

familiar with TikTok media in the learning process.

Q2: What do you think about TikTok videos as English learning media in class?

In this interview question, five participants agreed that learning by using TikTok videos is a fun and interesting method. Another participant added that they felt less bored and more enthusiastic about the lesson when using the media. This finding corroborates the observation that since the second and third meetings, students have shown higher readiness and showed positive expressions when learning using TikTok.

2. Implementation Section

Q1: Do you enjoy using TikTok to learn new English words? Why or why not?

From the results of this interview, all participants revealed that they really enjoyed learning with TikTok videos. They found it easier to understand the vocabulary because of the visual illustrations and examples of word usage. This is in accordance with the observation results which showed that students were more active in responding and more enthusiastic in participating in learning activities in the second and third meetings.

Q2: Do you think it is difficult or easy to understand the difference between nouns, verbs, and adjectives through TikTok videos? Please explain.

In this question, three participants stated that TikTok videos really helped them understand the difference in vocabulary types because the explanations were accompanied by pictures and examples. Meanwhile, the other two participants still felt confused, especially in distinguishing between verbs and adjectives, but they felt helped after the teacher explained again slowly. This shows that TikTok videos are effective but still need to be accompanied by teacher explanation as seen in the observation.

Q3: Can you tell me about one noun, verb or adjective vocabulary word that you have learned?

In this question, three participants fluently mentioned and explained the vocabulary words they learned, such as “beach”, “play”, and “fun”. The other two participants took some time to remember, but eventually were able to mention one or two words that they understood. This is also based on the observation data where participants started to be able to use new vocabulary in simple contexts.

Q4: Do you feel more confident using or expressing vocabulary in English after learning and watching TikTok videos? Why?

Based on this question, four participants stated that they felt more confident using vocabulary in English after learning with TikTok. However, one participant felt less confident because she still had difficulty in pronunciation and was more comfortable learning with books. This relates to the observation that most participants started to speak actively, but some still needed further guidance.

Q5: How do you practice using nouns, verbs and adjectives after learning with TikTok videos?

In this question, the participants' answers varied. Three participants explained that they noted down new words and made their own sentences. The other two participants said they exchanged stories with their peers using the vocabulary they had learned. This reinforces the observational findings that students began to use vocabulary in simple interactions and construct meaning contextually.

3. Evaluation Section

Q1: After learning to use TikTok videos, which medium do you prefer, TikTok videos or books? Why or why not?

In this question, four participants stated that they preferred learning using TikTok over books. However, one participant disagreed because she found it difficult to follow the pronunciation in the video and preferred to read the text or learn using a book. This is

consistent with the observation that most students are more responsive to visual media, although some still need adjustment.

Q2: Do you think TikTok videos can make learning English more fun? Please explain.

In this question, all participants stated that TikTok videos make learning English fun. However, one participant still expressed a preference for books because she found them easier to read than listening to videos. This reinforces the evaluation results from the observation that TikTok can create a more dynamic and less boring learning atmosphere.

Q3: Would you like your teacher to teach English using TikTok videos in the future?

In this question, three out of five participants strongly supported teachers to continue using TikTok in learning. Meanwhile, the other two participants stated that their desire depends on the teacher and friends. This shows that although TikTok is liked by the majority of students, constraints such as access to technology and parental supervision should still be considered.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussions in the previous chapter, the researcher concludes that the use of TikTok videos as a medium for learning English vocabulary among fifth-grade students at SD Laboratorium UNG is both effective and well-received. The study focused on enhancing students' understanding of nouns, verbs, and adjectives using short, contextual, and engaging videos from TikTok.

In the preparation stage, students were initially unfamiliar with TikTok as an educational tool, but they responded with enthusiasm and curiosity. During the implementation, students became more engaged and motivated, actively participating in class discussions and demonstrating improvement in vocabulary usage by the second and third sessions. In the evaluation phase, most students expressed a preference for TikTok over traditional methods due to its interactive and visual format.

Observations and interview results confirmed that students enjoyed the learning process and retained vocabulary more effectively. While some challenges such as device availability and parental restrictions were noted, overall, TikTok proved to be a creative and impactful learning tool. With proper planning and guidance, it can enhance vocabulary learning in elementary education.

Suggestion

Digital platforms such as TikTok have been shown to significantly enhance students' interest and engagement in learning English. This study suggests that future teaching strategies could benefit from incorporating similar accessible tools to create more interactive and enjoyable classroom environments. When teachers use content that reflects students' daily experiences, learning becomes more relatable and encourages greater participation, particularly among young learners.

The findings also underscore the importance of setting clear objectives and offering meaningful explanations during lessons, especially in vocabulary instruction. Students are more motivated when they understand the real-life applications of what they are learning. Teachers should highlight how English can support future goals, including careers in global communication, tourism, or digital content creation.

Parental support is also essential in reinforcing vocabulary learning. Teachers are encouraged to collaborate with parents by providing simple suggestions during school events, such as watching educational TikTok videos, practicing new words, or using English in daily conversations. Positive reinforcement through praise or small rewards can further

boost confidence. Future studies could explore other English skills and diverse school contexts to examine the broader impact of digital media on language learning.

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