

---

## | RESEARCH ARTICLE

### **Exploring the Impact of TikTok on Second-Language Vocabulary Acquisition: Benefits, Challenges, and Learner Perceptions**

**Dr. Fatema Alharthy**

Assistant Professor, Department of English and Literature, University of Bisha, Bisha, Saudi Arabia

**Corresponding Author:** Dr. Fatema Alharthy, **E-mail:** [fharthey@ub.edu.sa](mailto:fharthey@ub.edu.sa)

---

## | ABSTRACT

While recent studies have explored the effectiveness of TikTok in second-language (L2) vocabulary acquisition in Western contexts, there remains a significant gap in research on its impact within higher education settings in the Middle East. Addressing this gap, the present study examines the role of TikTok in L2 vocabulary acquisition at the University of Bisha, a higher education institution in Saudi Arabia. This research investigates TikTok's effectiveness as a vocabulary-learning tool, focusing on its influence on learners' ability to acquire new words, improve spelling and pronunciation, and develop practical language skills. Findings indicate that students who engage with TikTok daily or are regularly exposed to English-language content acquire vocabulary more effectively than those relying on traditional learning methods. Furthermore, learners who watch TikTok videos in English or with subtitles exhibit accelerated vocabulary acquisition while simultaneously enhancing their pronunciation and spelling skills. The study highlights TikTok's role in providing exposure to authentic language, including slang, idiomatic expressions, and conversational English, which enhances the relevance of vocabulary learning to real-world communication. Quantitative data reveal that 99% of students reported significant improvements in vocabulary acquisition through TikTok, while only 1% reported minimal learning gains. Despite its pedagogical advantages, challenges such as distractions, misinformation, and overexposure to informal language were identified. However, TikTok's multimodal and interactive features, such as short-form videos, personalized recommendations, and contextual reinforcement, support vocabulary retention. While concerns regarding content accuracy and structured learning persist, the findings suggest that TikTok serves as a valuable supplementary tool for incidental vocabulary learning. Future research should explore its long-term effects, compare its effectiveness with other digital learning platforms, and develop strategies for integrating it into formal language instruction while mitigating its challenges.

## | KEYWORDS

TikTok, vocabulary acquisition, second-language learning, incidental learning, effectiveness, benefits, and challenges

## | ARTICLE INFORMATION

**ACCEPTED:** 19 February 2025

**PUBLISHED:** 07 March 2025

**DOI:** 10.32996/jhsss.2025.7.3.2

---

### 1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has significantly transformed language learning, with social media platforms playing an increasingly prominent role in *second-language acquisition* (SLA). Among these platforms, TikTok, a short-form video-sharing application launched in 2016, has gained immense popularity worldwide, particularly among younger audiences. TikTok allows users to create, share, and interact with videos that typically last between 15 seconds to three minutes, covering a diverse range of content, including education, entertainment, and lifestyle. Due to its interactive, multimodal, and highly engaging nature, TikTok has emerged as a potential tool for language learning, particularly in the area of incidental vocabulary acquisition. *Second-language vocabulary acquisition* (L2 vocabulary learning) is a crucial component of *Second Language Acquisition*, as vocabulary knowledge

**Copyright:** © 2025 the Author(s). This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) 4.0 license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). Published by Al-Kindi Centre for Research and Development, London, United Kingdom.

directly impacts reading comprehension, listening proficiency, and overall communication skills. Traditionally, vocabulary learning has been approached through explicit methods such as word lists, flashcards, and rote memorization. However, research suggests that incidental vocabulary learning—where learners acquire new words unconsciously through exposure to meaningful language input—is often more effective for long-term retention (Schmitt, 2008). Digital platforms like TikTok provide continuous and contextualized language exposure, making them valuable for this type of learning.

While some previous research has broadly examined incidental vocabulary learning through TikTok videos, there remains a paucity of studies specifically addressing this topic within higher education settings. This gap leaves critical questions unanswered regarding the practical challenges and benefits experienced by university students and educators when incorporating TikTok as a language-learning tool. To bridge this gap, the current study aims to explore students' perceptions of using TikTok for English vocabulary acquisition. This research is guided by the following central question: *What are the perceptions of students at the University of Bisha regarding the use of TikTok in learning English vocabulary?* By investigating students' experiences, challenges, and insights, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of TikTok's effectiveness in vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, it aims to uncover the pedagogical implications of integrating social media into formal language instruction. By delving into these perceptions, this research contributes valuable insights to the existing literature, offering practical recommendations for enhancing language-learning strategies in higher education. The findings may inform educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers on the potential of TikTok as a supplementary learning tool, particularly in the context of English language acquisition.

## 2. Literature Review

Incidental vocabulary learning is a fundamental process in second-language acquisition (SLA). Unlike explicit learning, which involves direct instruction and intentional memorization, incidental learning occurs when learners acquire new vocabulary through exposure to meaningful context, such as reading, listening, or engaging with multimedia content (Schmitt, 2008). This form of learning is particularly effective because it mirrors natural language acquisition, wherein learners absorb words and phrases from their environment without deliberate effort.

With the rise of digital media and social platforms, researchers have increasingly explored the role of technology in supporting incidental vocabulary acquisition. Traditional methods, such as reading books or watching television, have been studied extensively for their contributions to vocabulary growth (Nation, 2013). However, social media applications, particularly short-video platforms like TikTok, offer a novel avenue for language learners to engage with authentic language in an interactive and multimodal environment. TikTok's short-video format, real-time engagement, and algorithm-driven content delivery make it an appealing tool for language learners. Unlike conventional learning materials, TikTok provides exposure to contemporary, conversational, and even slang vocabulary in an engaging and visually stimulating manner. Given the increasing popularity of TikTok among young learners, understanding its impact on vocabulary acquisition is essential for both educators and researchers.

### 2.1 Theoretical Frameworks in Incidental Vocabulary Learning

Several theoretical perspectives underpin the study of incidental vocabulary learning through digital media. These include:

- **Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982)**

Krashen's Input Hypothesis suggests that language learners acquire vocabulary when they are exposed to comprehensible input—language that is slightly beyond their current level of proficiency. TikTok, with its personalized content recommendations, provides learners with an optimal balance of familiar and unfamiliar language structures. This balance aligns with Krashen's hypothesis by ensuring that learners are neither overwhelmed nor under-stimulated by the vocabulary they encounter.

- **Dual Coding Theory (Paivio, 1986)**

Dual Coding Theory posits that individuals process and retain information more effectively when it is presented in both verbal and visual formats. TikTok's multimodal nature—combining video, text, and audio—enhances vocabulary retention by engaging multiple cognitive processes. Learners can see words in captions, hear them pronounced, and observe their use in context, which strengthens their ability to remember and use new vocabulary.

- **Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990)**

Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis states that conscious awareness of linguistic forms is essential for language acquisition. TikTok encourages learners to notice and process new vocabulary through repeated exposure and interactive features, such as captions, comments, and challenges. Studies suggest that learners who actively engage with content—such as liking, commenting, or creating their own videos—are more likely to retain newly acquired vocabulary (Lee, 2024).

## **2.2 Social Media and Language Learning**

Social media has transformed the landscape of language learning by providing learners with real-world exposure to authentic linguistic input. Unlike traditional classroom settings, where vocabulary learning is often structured and sequential, social media platforms offer an informal and immersive learning environment. Studies have highlighted the role of various social media platforms in vocabulary learning:

- **YouTube:** Provides long-form instructional videos, often accompanied by subtitles, making it a valuable resource for learners seeking in-depth explanations.
- **Instagram:** Uses image-based content with short captions, which can be effective for vocabulary exposure but lacks extensive contextual depth.
- **TikTok:** Offers highly engaging, short-form videos that combine auditory, textual, and visual elements, creating an optimal environment for incidental vocabulary acquisition (Karjalainen, 2023).

### **2.2.1 TikTok as a Tool for Incidental Vocabulary Learning**

TikTok's combination of video, text, and audio enhances the effectiveness of vocabulary learning. Research suggests that multimodal exposure leads to better retention and recall of vocabulary compared to single-mode learning environments (Lee, 2024). Unlike textbooks, which often present language in a structured but artificial manner, TikTok exposes learners to real-world language usage, including idioms, slang, and cultural references. Studies have shown that students who frequently engage with TikTok videos develop a more natural understanding of conversational English and colloquial expressions (Hadil & Namira, 2024). One of the key advantages of TikTok is its ability to sustain learners' motivation. Traditional vocabulary learning methods, such as rote memorization, can be tedious and discouraging. In contrast, TikTok's entertaining and dynamic content encourages consistent engagement. Shanthi, Paramasivam,, Ling, & Tong (2025) found that learners who used TikTok as a supplementary language-learning tool reported higher motivation levels and more positive attitudes toward vocabulary learning.

### **2.2.2 Empirical Studies on TikTok and Incidental Vocabulary Learning**

Empirical research on TikTok's role in incidental vocabulary learning has increased significantly in recent years. As scholars attempt to understand the efficacy of social media in second-language acquisition, multiple studies have examined the cognitive, motivational, and practical aspects of using TikTok as a language-learning tool. This section reviews key studies that explore vocabulary retention, the role of short-form videos, the acquisition of word form and meaning, and learner perceptions of TikTok as an educational tool.

Juliana, Tambunan, & Pane (2024) conducted a comparative study on the effectiveness of TikTok versus YouTube in fostering vocabulary retention among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The study aimed to determine whether the short-form, highly engaging nature of TikTok videos leads to better vocabulary recall compared to traditional long-form educational videos on YouTube. The study included 120 participants divided into two groups: one group used TikTok for vocabulary learning, while the other used YouTube. After a four-week intervention, the results showed that students who engaged with educational TikTok videos demonstrated a 25% improvement in vocabulary recall compared to those who relied on YouTube-based learning materials. The researchers attributed this success to TikTok's interactive and immersive format, which allows for repeated exposure to vocabulary in an engaging and contextually rich environment. Additionally, the study found that the TikTok group reported higher motivation levels and a greater willingness to engage with language-learning content outside formal educational settings. The researchers concluded that TikTok's algorithm-driven personalization, visually engaging content, and multimodal approach contribute to its effectiveness as a tool for vocabulary acquisition.

Tran (2023) examined the impact of TikTok on English vocabulary learning among university students. The research found that incorporating TikTok videos into language instruction significantly enhanced students' vocabulary retention and overall language skills. Students reported positive attitudes toward using TikTok as a learning tool, noting its engaging and interactive features. The study suggests that TikTok can be an effective supplementary resource for vocabulary acquisition when integrated thoughtfully into educational contexts.

Subekti (2023) investigated the attitudes of Indonesian English department students toward using TikTok for vocabulary learning. The research involved 116 students from 26 universities across 10 provinces, utilizing an online survey to gather data. Findings indicated that participants generally held positive attitudes toward employing TikTok as a tool for vocabulary acquisition. However, there was ambivalence regarding its effectiveness, possibly due to TikTok's primary function as a social media platform rather than

an educational medium. The study suggests that educators consider integrating TikTok into skill-based and vocabulary-building courses, particularly in the early stages of English department curricula, to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

Choo & Khalid (2024) explored the perceptions of Year 6 students regarding the use of TikTok for vocabulary learning and its effectiveness as a learning tool. The study examined how students engaged with TikTok-based educational content and whether it contributed to their vocabulary development. Findings revealed that students generally had positive attitudes toward using TikTok for learning, citing its engaging and visually appealing format as beneficial for retention and motivation. The study also highlighted that short-form videos helped reinforce new words through repetition and contextual usage. However, challenges such as distractions and the need for content moderation were noted. Overall, the research suggested that TikTok can be an effective supplementary tool for vocabulary acquisition when integrated appropriately into the learning process.

Despite some challenges, the overall findings suggest *that students view TikTok as a valuable supplementary tool* that enhances engagement and motivation in language learning. Several additional studies in 2024 have further examined TikTok's impact on language learning:

- Lee (2024) explored how TikTok fosters multimodal vocabulary learning. The study found that learners who engaged with TikTok videos that included gestures, on-screen text, and auditory cues developed stronger vocabulary retention and recall abilities.
- Tran (2023) focused on the interactive nature of TikTok and how learners benefit from engaging with comments, challenges, and language-learning influencers. Their research emphasized that active participation (e.g., creating videos, responding to comments) led to better long-term vocabulary retention than passive viewing.
- Aldossari (2024) explored the effectiveness of TikTok as a tool for enhancing English-speaking skills among young Saudi learners. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the research involved a survey of 120 secondary and university students, complemented by interviews with three experienced English teachers. Findings revealed that a significant portion of learners—38.3% agreed and 37.5% strongly agreed—perceived TikTok as a beneficial platform for improving their speaking abilities. Additionally, 43.3% of respondents strongly agreed that using TikTok is effective in enhancing their speaking skills. Teachers corroborated these perceptions, noting that TikTok provides an engaging environment that motivates students and facilitates better communication skills. However, some educators cautioned that while TikTok is advantageous for developing communicative competencies, it may not sufficiently address formal or academic language needs. Overall, the study suggests that integrating TikTok into language learning can positively impact learners' speaking proficiency, provided it is used alongside traditional educational methods to ensure comprehensive language development.

### 2.3 Challenges and Limitations

Despite its potential as an effective tool for incidental vocabulary learning, TikTok presents several challenges and limitations that must be addressed to optimize its educational value. One primary concern is *content accuracy and quality*, as TikTok is a user-generated platform where linguistic correctness is not always guaranteed. Many videos contain grammatical errors, incorrect word usage, or informal slang that may not be suitable for academic or formal language learning (Xoliqnazarova & Elmurodov 2024). The lack of content moderation or verification means that learners might unknowingly acquire inaccurate or inappropriate vocabulary, which could hinder their language proficiency in structured or professional settings.

Another significant limitation is *passive learning*, which occurs when users consume content without actively engaging in cognitive processing. While TikTok provides extensive exposure to new vocabulary, research suggests that simply watching videos without interaction leads to *lower retention and recall rates* compared to active learning methods, such as writing down new words, practicing pronunciation, or engaging in discussions (Ibrahim, Shafie & Rahim 2023). Active participation—such as commenting on videos, responding to prompts, or even creating language-learning content—has been shown to enhance vocabulary retention and deepen understanding. Without intentional engagement, learners may struggle to integrate new vocabulary into their active language use. Additionally, *TikTok's algorithmic bias and limited exposure* present challenges to effective vocabulary learning. The platform's content recommendation system tailors videos to user preferences, often reinforcing familiar topics rather than introducing diverse linguistic input.

The research by Zhou (2024) concludes that TikTok's hybrid use of collaborative and content-based filtering personalizes content delivery, thereby enhancing user engagement and democratizing content visibility. However, it also raises concerns about content homogeneity and the reinforcement of echo chambers. The lack of algorithmic transparency emerges as a critical issue, affecting user trust and prompting calls for more clarity and user control over content preferences. As a result, learners may develop an

imbalanced vocabulary that lacks the breadth needed for comprehensive language proficiency. To maximize the educational potential of TikTok, these challenges must be addressed through content curation, active learning strategies, and algorithmic diversification. Educators and learners should be mindful of content selection, seek out verified language-learning accounts, and supplement TikTok exposure with structured language exercises. Future research should explore ways to integrate TikTok into formal learning environments while mitigating its limitations, ensuring that it serves as a valuable complement rather than a standalone language-learning tool.

To broaden the scope of research on this topic, the current study aims to examine the impact and effectiveness of TikTok as a tool for second-language (L2) vocabulary acquisition. Given TikTok's growing popularity and its potential to facilitate incidental learning through engaging, multimodal content, it is essential to evaluate its practical benefits and limitations within an educational context. Therefore, this study was conducted to assess TikTok's role in enhancing vocabulary retention, comprehension, and learner engagement, while also identifying the challenges and opportunities associated with its integration into language learning.

### **3. Materials and Methodologies**

This study employs a **mixed-methods research design**, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of TikTok in vocabulary acquisition. A total of 30 English language students participated in the study, with data collected through multiple methods to ensure a well-rounded exploration of the topic.

#### **a) Data Collection Methods**

1. *Semi-Structured Interviews* – In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather detailed insights into students' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes toward using TikTok for vocabulary learning. These interviews allowed participants to elaborate on the benefits, challenges, and strategies they found most effective in acquiring new vocabulary through TikTok.
2. *Classroom Interactions and Discussions* – Discussions were conducted in both face-to-face classroom settings and Blackboard-based online learning environments to capture students' real-time reflections on TikTok's role in vocabulary acquisition. These interactions provided additional context on how TikTok is integrated into their General English Course and its perceived effectiveness compared to traditional learning methods.
3. *Quantitative Data Collection* – To complement the qualitative findings, a survey questionnaire was administered to quantify students' perceptions of TikTok's effectiveness in vocabulary learning. The survey included Likert-scale questions measuring engagement levels, perceived vocabulary retention, and the impact of TikTok on pronunciation and spelling.

#### **b) Data Analysis**

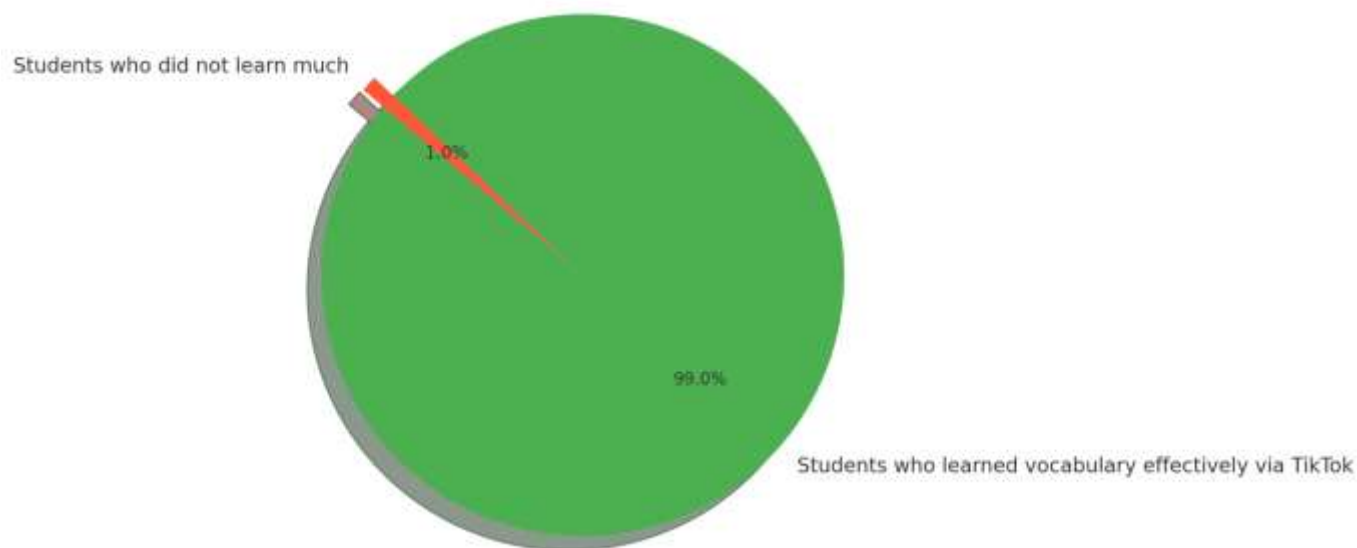
- *Qualitative Analysis* – Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes in students' responses. This approach provided deeper insights into TikTok's advantages, challenges, and practical implications for language learning.
- *Quantitative Analysis* – Descriptive statistics were used to analyze survey responses, allowing for a numerical representation of students' perceptions and experiences with TikTok as a vocabulary-learning tool.

By integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches, this study provides a comprehensive and data-driven perspective on TikTok's role in vocabulary acquisition. The findings contribute to a growing body of research on digital media in language education, offering practical insights for educators and learners seeking innovative methods for vocabulary development.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

The research findings indicate that students who engage with TikTok daily or are regularly exposed to English-language content acquire new vocabulary more effectively than those who rely on traditional learning methods. Furthermore, students who watch TikTok videos in English or with English subtitles tend to learn new vocabulary at a faster rate while also improving their spelling and pronunciation. Additionally, the study found that students who consume short-form videos gain not only new vocabulary but also practical skills. TikTok provides a platform for users to create, share, and interact with videos lasting between 15 seconds and three minutes, covering a diverse range of topics, including education, entertainment, and lifestyle. In percentage terms, an impressive 99% of students indicated that TikTok effectively enhanced their vocabulary learning, whereas only 1% reported minimal improvement. See the pie chart below for a visual representation.

## Effectiveness of TikTok for Vocabulary Learning Among Students



**Figure 1: The Effectiveness of TikTok in Vocabulary Acquisition Among Student Users**

In conclusion, TikTok's interactive, multimodal, and highly engaging nature makes it a valuable tool for language learning, particularly in facilitating incidental vocabulary acquisition. Based on the views shared by students who frequently use TikTok, it was found that the platform is an effective and engaging way to learn vocabulary. It helps them acquire new words easily, quickly, and with minimal effort. However, they also encountered certain challenges while using it. Below are the benefits and challenges they identified:

### **4.1 Benefits of Using TikTok as a Learning Tool for Vocabulary Acquisition**

TikTok has emerged as a powerful and engaging platform for language learning, particularly in vocabulary acquisition. With its short-form video format, interactive features, and diverse content, TikTok provides learners with an immersive and enjoyable way to expand their vocabulary. Here are some key benefits of using TikTok as a learning tool for acquiring new words and phrases:

**1. Exposure to Authentic Language:** TikTok offers real-life language usage through native speakers, influencers, and educators. Learners are exposed to conversational English, slang, idioms, and everyday expressions, making their vocabulary acquisition more natural and relevant to real-world communication.

**2. Multisensory Learning (Visual & Auditory Support):** Unlike traditional vocabulary learning methods, TikTok combines visual and auditory elements, reinforcing word retention. Seeing words in subtitles while hearing them spoken enhances comprehension, pronunciation, and spelling skills.

**3. Engaging and Interactive Content:** TikTok's highly engaging nature makes learning enjoyable and less overwhelming. The platform offers interactive content such as challenges, quizzes, and duet videos, encouraging active participation and deeper learning.

**4. Contextual Learning:** Words and phrases are learned in meaningful contexts rather than through rote memorization. Learners can see vocabulary used in specific situations, such as travel, cooking, storytelling, or education, which improves retention and understanding.

**5. Repetition and Reinforcement:** TikTok's algorithm frequently recommends similar content based on user interactions. This repetition helps reinforce newly learned vocabulary, making it easier for learners to remember and use new words effectively.

**6. Accessibility and Convenience:** With TikTok being a mobile-friendly platform, learners can acquire new vocabulary anytime and anywhere. This flexibility makes it easy for students to integrate language learning into their daily routines.

**7. Encourages Creativity and Active Usage:** Learners can create their own TikTok videos to practice and demonstrate their vocabulary skills. By engaging in content creation, they actively use new words, which enhances long-term retention and boosts confidence in language use.

**8. Community and Peer Learning:** TikTok fosters a global learning community where users can engage with language learners and educators. Comment sections, discussions, and collaborative videos allow learners to interact, practice, and get feedback, further strengthening their vocabulary development.

**9. Convenience and Accessibility:** Learning can take place anywhere and anytime using a smartphone.

#### **4.2 Challenges of Using TikTok for Vocabulary Learning**

While TikTok has emerged as an engaging and innovative platform for vocabulary learning, it also presents several challenges that can hinder effective language acquisition. Below are some key difficulties learners and educators must consider when using TikTok for vocabulary development:

**1. Distractions and Lack of Focus:** TikTok's algorithm is designed to promote continuous engagement, often leading to excessive scrolling and distractions. This makes it difficult for learners to concentrate on educational content, reducing active learning and leading to passive consumption of information.

**2. Misinformation and Inconsistent Language Use:** Since TikTok allows anyone to create content, there is a risk of encountering videos with inaccurate vocabulary, incorrect pronunciation, or improper grammar. Without proper fact-checking, learners may unknowingly absorb incorrect language usage, which can negatively impact their vocabulary acquisition.

**3. Absence of Structured Learning:** Unlike formal language-learning platforms, TikTok does not follow a structured curriculum or provide systematic vocabulary instruction. Learning is incidental, and students may not be exposed to essential vocabulary in an organized manner, leading to gaps in their understanding and retention.

**4. Limitations of Short-Form Videos:** TikTok videos are typically between 15 seconds and three minutes long, which can restrict the depth of learning. Complex vocabulary topics require detailed explanations and practice, which are difficult to achieve within such a short time frame. As a result, learners may receive fragmented information that lacks sufficient context.

**5. Overexposure to Informal Language and Slang:** Many TikTok videos feature casual language, internet slang, and regional dialects, which may not align with academic or professional English. Learners might struggle to differentiate between formal and informal vocabulary, leading to inappropriate word choices in different contexts.

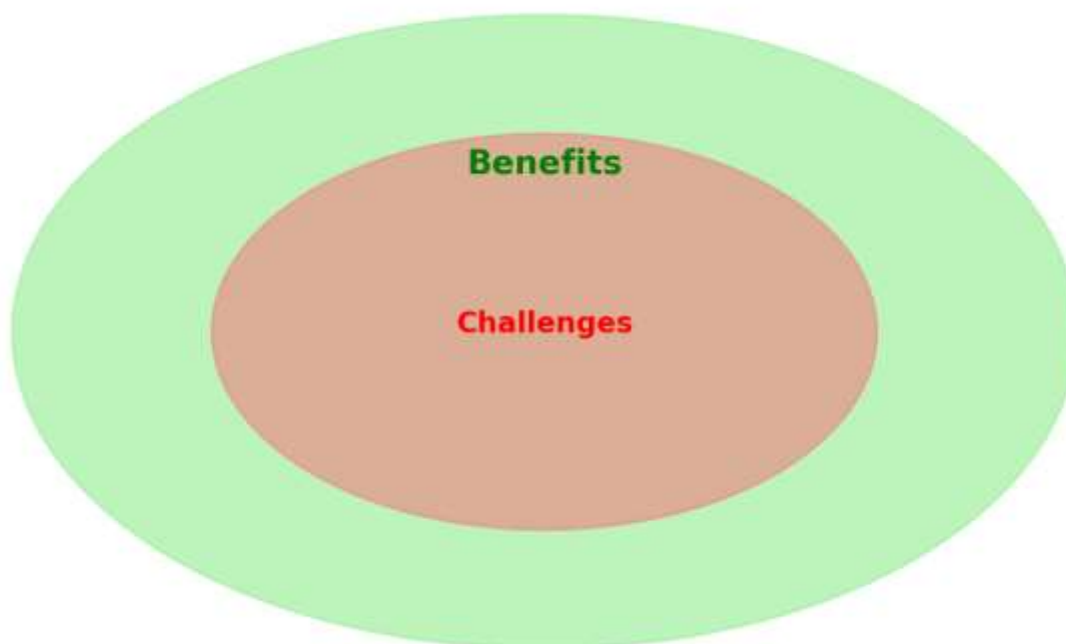
**6. Privacy and Safety Concerns:** TikTok collects user data, and concerns have been raised about its security policies. Younger learners may also be exposed to inappropriate content, cyberbullying, or misleading language trends. Without proper guidance and supervision, students may face risks while using the platform for learning.

**7. Dependence on Internet Access and Digital Devices:** TikTok requires a stable internet connection and a smartphone, which may not be accessible to all learners. In areas with limited internet access or for individuals with restrictions on screen time, relying on TikTok for vocabulary learning can be challenging.

**8. Lack of Personalized Learning and Feedback:** Unlike traditional learning platforms that provide personalized lessons and corrective feedback, TikTok does not offer structured progress tracking. Learners may struggle to assess their improvement or correct mistakes without guidance from educators or language experts, limiting their ability to refine their vocabulary skills effectively.

In conclusion, although various challenges may hinder the optimal utilization of TikTok, the advantages significantly outweigh the disadvantages. The diagram below illustrates this distinction.

## TikTok: Benefits Outweigh Challenges



**Figure 2: The Benefits of TikTok in Vocabulary Acquisition Outweigh Its Challenges Among Student Users**

Recent studies strongly support the findings that TikTok plays a significant role in vocabulary acquisition, spelling, pronunciation improvement, and practical skill development. Research by Puspita and Afna (2024) conducted a quasi-experimental study in Indonesia, highlighting how TikTok significantly enhances vocabulary learning, particularly through accounts dedicated to language education. Similarly, Waluyo, Putera, and Hartomo (2024) surveyed high school students and found that TikTok fosters vocabulary acquisition, motivation, and engagement, making it a more effective tool than traditional textbook learning. The multisensory nature of TikTok also improves pronunciation, as confirmed by Tahreb, Ibrahim, and Jah (2024), who found that students who mimicked native speakers in videos improved their pronunciation skills. Furthermore, Hengyu Li (2024) demonstrated how students who followed the "learninglishnative" TikTok channel saw substantial gains in pronunciation and comprehension, reinforcing the claim that TikTok aids in auditory learning. Another key benefit of TikTok is its ability to provide contextual learning, where words are learned naturally through real-life situations rather than memorization, as seen in studies by Tran (2023) and Zein and Weny (2024), both of which concluded that vocabulary retention is improved when words are presented in practical, meaningful contexts. Beyond vocabulary, TikTok contributes to overall language proficiency and practical skills, as evidenced by research from Hu & Du (2022), who found that TikTok as a mobile-assisted language-learning tool enhances listening and real-world communication. Similarly, Chuah and Ch'ng (2023) conducted a study examining the effectiveness of TikTok voice-over challenges in enhancing English as a Second Language (ESL) students' speaking skills. Their research found that these challenges improved pronunciation, intonation, and turn-taking abilities, thereby contributing to a more holistic language learning experience beyond mere vocabulary acquisition. However, the study also highlighted challenges associated with using TikTok for language learning, such as exposure to informal slang and the necessity for structured learning approaches. In their study, Zhang, Lucas, & Pedro (2022) analyzed the multimodal design of English teaching videos on TikTok to understand how visual, textual, and auditory elements are integrated to enhance learning. They examined the top 50 most-liked videos, focusing on features such as above-the-shoulder vertical shots, strategic use of gestures, and placement of captions. The findings suggest that effective videos often employ white or yellow captions positioned below the middle of the screen, synchronized dynamically with speech. Additionally, background music and sound effects are utilized to evoke emotions and add humor, respectively. The study concludes that thoughtful integration of these multimodal elements can create engaging and effective short videos for online foreign language teaching and learning. Susanto & Suparmi (2024) found that all students recommended the use of TikTok for acquiring English language skills, despite its drawbacks. However, Szoboszlai (2024) warned that misinformation is a risk when learners follow



content from non-expert creators. Overall, these studies confirm that TikTok is an effective, engaging tool for vocabulary acquisition and language learning, but its limitations must be considered to maximize its educational potential.

## **5. Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Research**

The rise of TikTok as an educational tool has transformed vocabulary acquisition, offering students an engaging, multimodal, and interactive way to learn new words effortlessly. Research consistently highlights that students who regularly engage with English-language content on TikTok not only acquire vocabulary more effectively but also improve their pronunciation, spelling, and overall language comprehension. The platform's short-form videos provide authentic exposure to native speakers, reinforce words through visual and auditory support, and facilitate contextual learning, making vocabulary acquisition more natural and meaningful. Additionally, TikTok fosters motivation and engagement, helping learners stay consistent in their language-learning journey. In fact, a remarkable 99% of students reported that they effectively learned new vocabulary through TikTok, while only 1% felt that it contributed little to their learning. This overwhelming positive response underscores that the benefits of TikTok in language learning significantly outweigh its drawbacks. Although challenges such as distractions, misinformation, and overexposure to informal language exist, the platform's accessibility, convenience, and ability to make learning enjoyable offer students a unique way to enhance their language skills outside traditional classroom settings. However, to maximize its educational potential, further research is needed to assess its long-term impact on vocabulary retention, its effectiveness compared to other digital learning platforms, and how different content formats influence language acquisition. Additionally, structured learning plans should be integrated with TikTok to provide a balance between entertainment and education, ensuring that students engage with credible language-learning content. Educators can also leverage TikTok's interactive features, such as duets and challenges, to promote active learning and content creation, reinforcing new vocabulary in a meaningful way. By using TikTok strategically and addressing its limitations through structured guidance and digital literacy training, students can harness its full potential, making language learning more accessible, engaging, and effective in today's digital age.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

**ORCID ID:** <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9561-3388>

**Publisher's Note:** All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

## **References**

- [1] Aldossari, A. T. R. (2024). An overview of the utilization of TikTok in improving young Saudi learners' speaking skills.
- [2] Chuah, K. M., & Ch'ng, L. C. (2023). The usefulness of TikTok voice-over challenges as ESL speaking activities: A case study on Malaysian undergraduates. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 20(1).
- [3] Hadil, R., & Namira, A. (2024). Authentic language exposure through TikTok: The impact on conversational English learning. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 18(1), 55–72.
- [4] Hengyu Li. (2024). The Impact of TikTok on Pronunciation Skills: A Study of Chinese EFL Learners in Universiti Malaya. *Journal of Language Testing & Assessment*, 7, 8-15. <https://doi.org/10.23977/langta.2024.070102>.
- [5] Hu, H., & Du, K. (2022). TikTok in mobile-assisted English language learning: An exploratory study. *International Journal of Information and Education Technology*, 12(12), 1311-1320.
- [6] Ibrahim, N. H., Shafie, S. A., & Rahim, I. N. A. (2023). The use of TikTok in learning English as a second language. *Asian Journal of Research in Education and Social Sciences*, 5(2), 355-365.
- [7] Juliana, D., Tambunan, A. R. S., & Pane, I. I. I. (2024). The Use of YouTube and TikTok in Improving the Students' Vocabulary Achievement. *Journal of English for Academic and Specific Purposes (JEASP)*, 7(2).
- [8] Karjalainen, M. (2023). Incidental vocabulary learning through TikTok: A study on Finnish ninth-grade students. *University of Oulu*.
- [9] Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Pergamon Press.
- [10] Lee, Y.-J. (2024). Using TikTok for vocabulary learning: Multimodal implications. In *Theory and Practice in Vocabulary Research in Digital Environments* (pp. 230–248). Routledge.
- [11] Nation, I. S. P. (2013). *Learning vocabulary in another language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- [12] Paivio, A. (1986). *Mental representations: A dual coding approach*. Oxford University Press.
- [13] Puspita, T., & Afna, M. (2024). The Zelynafah booster: Leveraging TikTok for vocabulary acquisition with a quasi-experimental study in an Indonesian context. *Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Language Teaching*, 12(1), 51–70.
- [14] Schmidt, R. (1990). The role of consciousness in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 11(2), 129–158.
- [15] Schmitt, N. (2008). Instructed second language vocabulary learning. *Language Teaching Research*, 12(3), 329–363.
- [16] Shanthi, A., Paramasivam, S., Ling, C. G., & Tong, T. J. (2025). TikTok videos as a catalyst for vocabulary acquisition in tertiary education. *International Journal of Social Science Research*, 13(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijssr.v13i1.22287>
- [17] 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.
- [18] Susanto, A. K., & Suparmi, S. (2024). Exploring EFL Students' Perspectives: The Role of TikTok in Enhancing English Language Skills. *Journal of English for Academic and Specific Purposes (JEASP)*, 7(1).

- [19] Szoboszlai, K. G. (2024). Short-form content and English vocabulary learning: The role of TikTok in language education. *Journal of Second Language Acquisition*, 15(2), 102–121.
- [20] Tahreb, N. S., Ibrahim, Q., & Jah, N. J. A. (2024). TikTok as a pedagogical tool for English language learning: Examining pronunciation and retention benefits. *Gading Journal for Language Studies*, 8(2), 66–83.
- [21] Tran, D. T. (2023). TikTok's effect on English vocabulary learning: An empirical study of English major curriculum. *GeSec: Revista de Gestão e Secretariado*, 14(10).
- [22] Waluyo, U., Putera, L. J., & Hartomo, L. M. (2024). Students' perceived effectiveness of TikTok as a means for learning unfamiliar vocabulary at SMAN 10 Mataram. *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan*, 14(1), 112–131.
- [23] Xoliqnazarova, D., & Elmurodov, U. (2024, December). The impact of social media on language and identity. In *International Conference on Modern Development of Pedagogy and Linguistics* (Vol. 1, No. 11, pp. 79-81).
- [24] Zhang, Y., Lucas, M., & Pedro, L. (2022). The design of multimodal short videos: The case of English teaching videos in TikTok. In *INTED2022 Proceedings* (pp. 5691-5699). IATED.
- [25] Zhou, R. (2024). Understanding the impact of TikTok's recommendation algorithm on user engagement. *International Journal of Computer Science and Information Technology*, 3(2), 201-208.
- [26] Zein, M., & Weny, K. (2024). Edutainment of using TikTok in learning English vocabulary: A case study of secondary students. *Majalah Ilmiah Bahasa dan Sastra*, 10(1), 95–110.