



The use of TikTok as a Teaching Media to Teach Vocabulary of the Eight Grade Students at Junior High School

Lisa, Wisran, A. Musafir Rusyaidi

^{1,2,3}Universitas Islam Negeri Palopo

Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-06-07 Revised: 2026-06-21 Accepted: 2026-05-21 Keywords: <i>Artificial Intelligence; Literacy; History Learning, Motivation</i> DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i1.11135 Corresponding Author: Lisa lisalisalisa6489@gmail.com Universitas Islam Negeri Palopo	<i>This study investigates the effectiveness of the TikTok application in improving students' English vocabulary skills and examines how TikTok supports vocabulary learning at SMP Negeri 7 Palopo. The study employed a quantitative pre-experimental method using a one-group pre-test and post-test design. The sample consisted of 22 eighth-grade students selected through cluster random sampling. The research instruments included vocabulary tests and questionnaires. The pre-test and post-test were administered to measure students' vocabulary achievement before and after the treatment. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, a paired sample t-test, and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. The findings revealed a significant improvement in students' vocabulary after the implementation of TikTok-based learning. The mean score increased from 63.18 in the pre-test to 87.95 in the post-test, representing an improvement of approximately 39.2%. The paired sample t-test showed a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test score improvement, while only 2 students showed a decrease and 1 remained unchanged. The findings also indicated that TikTok supported vocabulary learning through audiovisual content, contextual examples, pronunciation, features, repetition, and interactive short videos that enhanced students' engagement and vocabulary retention. Therefore, it can be concluded that TikTok is an effective learning tool for improving students' vocabulary skills and supporting vocabulary learning in English language classrooms.</i>

1. Introduction

Vocabulary plays an essential role in language learning because it supports students' ability to communicate effectively in both spoken and written forms. Vocabulary knowledge contributes to the development of the four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Without sufficient vocabulary mastery, students may experience difficulties in understanding information and expressing ideas clearly. Therefore, vocabulary acquisition is considered one of the most important aspects in achieving language proficiency.

According to Richards et al (Richards & Renandya, 2008). Vocabulary acquisition is fundamental in all aspects of language use, including speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Vocabulary serves as the foundation of communication competence because learners need adequate vocabulary to understand messages and convey meaning effectively. For this reason, teachers are required to apply appropriate learning strategies and media that can support students in improving their vocabulary mastery.

Previous studies have demonstrated the importance of using effective learning media in vocabulary instruction. Wahibah's study (Wahibah, 2018) found that the use of pictured stories was effective in improving students' vocabulary mastery because visual media helped students understand word meanings more easily through contextual images. In addition, visual learning media can increase students' motivation and make the learning process more engaging and meaningful. These findings indicate that attractive and interactive media can support vocabulary learning more effectively.

However, based on preliminary observation at SMP Negeri 7 Palopo, students' English vocabulary remains limited. Several factors may contribute to this problem, such as low learning motivation, monotonous teaching methods, and limited use of instructional media in the classroom. Consequently, students often find it difficult to remember and use English vocabulary appropriately. Therefore, innovative and engaging learning media are needed to create a more effective vocabulary learning environment.

In the current digital era, social media has become a part of students' daily lives. Platforms such as TikTok are not only used for entertainment but also have potential to support educational activities. TikTok, as a short video-based application, provides audiovisual content that can facilitate vocabulary learning through pronunciation practice, contextual examples, subtitles, and interactive learning experiences. In Indonesia, TikTok is widely used by teenagers, making it a familiar and appealing platform for junior high school students. Its accessibility through mobile phones also supports its integration into classroom learning activities.

Several previous studies have discussed the use of TikTok in language learning; however, research specifically focusing on improving English vocabulary among Indonesian junior high school students is still limited. Most previous studies

focused on university students or other learning applications. Therefore, this study aims to explore the use of TikTok application as a learning tool to improve students' English vocabulary skills at SMP Negeri 7 Palopo. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of innovative, contextual, and technology-based English teaching strategies.

The use of TikTok in language learning is also supported by several learning theories. One of these is the Multimedia Learning Theory proposed by Mayer (2009), which states that students learn more effectively when information is presented through a combination of text, images, audio, and video rather than through a single form of presentation. TikTok provides these multimedia elements, thereby helping students better understand and remember vocabulary. Furthermore, the use of TikTok is also in line with the concept of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), which is language learning that utilizes mobile devices to support the learning process anytime and anywhere (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008). Through MALL, students can access learning materials flexibly, providing them with more opportunities to practice and enrich their vocabulary.

Several recent studies indicate that TikTok has positive potential for English language learning. Hastomo, Nurhayati, and Fadhilah (2022) found that college students have a positive perception of using TikTok for learning English vocabulary. Additionally, Ibrahim, Shafie, and Rahim (2023) reported that TikTok can increase student engagement, learning motivation, and opportunities for more authentic language exposure. However, most previous studies were conducted with college students or focused on students' perceptions of using TikTok in language learning.

Based on this review, there are still that require further investigation. First, research on the use of TikTok to improve vocabulary mastery among junior high school students in Indonesia remains relatively limited. Second, most previous studies have focused more on students' perceptions of TikTok use rather than directly measuring improvements in vocabulary skills following the use of the app. Third, no research has been conducted previously in the context of SMP Negeri 7 Palopo. Therefore, this study aims to fill these gaps by examining the effectiveness of using the TikTok app as a learning medium to improve the vocabulary mastery of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 7 Palopo.

This study aims to determine whether the use of the TikTok app can improve the English vocabulary proficiency of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 7 Palopo. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of innovative, contextual, and digital technology-based English learning strategies, particularly in vocabulary instruction.

2. Method

This study employed a quantitative pre-experimental design using a one-group pre-test and post-test design. The study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the TikTok application in improving students' English vocabulary skills. In this design, students were given a pre-test before the treatment and a post-test after the treatment to measure their vocabulary improvement after learning through TikTok-based materials. The research design can be illustrated as follows: $O_1 X O_2$, where O_1 refers to the pre-test, X refers to the treatment, and O_2 refers to the post-test.

This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 7 Palopo from November 2025 to January 2026. The population of this study consisted of all eighth-grade students in the academic year 2025/2026, with a total of 57 students divided into two classes. The sample was selected using a cluster random sampling technique, and class VIII A, consisting of 26 students, was chosen as the sample of the research. However, only 22 students participated in the entire research process, from the pre-test through the treatment phase to the post-test. Four students were excluded from the data analysis because they did not participate in one of the research phases, resulting in incomplete data. The study was conducted after obtaining permission from the principal of SMP Negeri 7 Palopo. All participants were briefed on the purpose of the study, and the data collected was kept confidential and used solely for research purposes.

The instruments used in this study were vocabulary tests and questionnaires. The vocabulary tests consisted of a pre-test and a post-test designed to measure students' vocabulary mastery before and after the treatment. The test items included multiple-choice questions and word classification tasks adjusted to the students' proficiency level and focused on daily English vocabulary.

The intervention was conducted over six sessions. In each session, students accessed vocabulary learning videos through the TikTok app. The videos featured English vocabulary related to everyday topics such as daily activities, school activities, describing people, and describing objects. The videos were presented in an audiovisual format that combined text, images, pronunciation, and examples of word usage in simple sentences.

After watching the videos, students discussed the meanings of the vocabulary words, practiced pronunciation, completed vocabulary exercises, and used the words in simple sentences.

In addition, a questionnaire was administered to identify students' perceptions toward the use of TikTok as a learning medium. The questionnaire used a Likert scale consisting of five response categories, namely Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire focused on several aspects, including students' interest, motivation, ease of understanding vocabulary, and perceptions of the effectiveness of TikTok in vocabulary learning.

3. Result

The research data were analyzed using SPSS to provide a statistical explanation of the research findings. The analysis included students' pre-test and post-test scores, the distribution of score categories, descriptive statistics, and inferential tests to determine the effect of using the TikTok app on students' vocabulary mastery.

The pre-test results showed that the total score obtained by the 22 students was 1,390, with an average score of 63.18. Based on the score classification, there were 2 students (9.09%) in the Excellent category (90–100), 5 students (22.73%) in the good category (75–89), 5 students (22.73%) in the Fair category (60–74), 9 students (40.91%) in the "Poor" category (40–59), and 1 student (4.54%) in the "Very Poor" category (0–39). These results indicate that the majority of students still had relatively low vocabulary proficiency before the intervention. The fairly wide score range, from 35 to 90, also indicates significant differences in vocabulary ability among students at the initial stage of the study.

After six sessions using the TikTok app as a learning tool, the post-test results showed a significant improvement. The students' total score increased to 1,935, with an average score of 87.95. The highest score achieved by a student was 100, while the lowest was 75. Based on the score classification, 12 students (54.55%) fell into the "Excellent" category and 10 students (45.45%) fell into the "Good" category. No students remained in the "Fair," "Poor," or "Very Poor" categories. These findings indicate that the use of TikTok as a learning medium contributed to an overall improvement in students' vocabulary mastery.

The descriptive statistics table shows that the students' average score increased from 63.18 on the pre-test to 87.95 on the post-test. Thus, there was an increase of 24.77 points, or approximately 39.2%. In addition, the standard deviation decreased from 17.69 on the pre-test to 7.01 on the post-test. This decrease in standard deviation indicates that students' abilities became more evenly distributed after participating in the TikTok-based learning program. The minimum score also increased from 35 to 75, indicating that students with low initial abilities still showed improvement after the intervention.

To facilitate the interpretation of the research results, Figure 1 presents a comparison of students' average pre-test and post-test scores.

Test	Mean
Pre- Test	63,18
Post-Test	87,95

Figure 1. Comparison of Average Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

The results of the Paired Sample T-Test showed a significance value (Sig., 2-tailed) of 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. These results indicate that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. Thus, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. These findings indicate that the use of the TikTok app has a significant effect on improving students' English vocabulary proficiency.

In addition, the results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test showed that 19 students' scores improved after the intervention, 2 students' scores decreased, and 1 student scored the same on the pre-test and post-test. The number of students whose scores improved was significantly greater than the number of students whose scores decreased. These findings further reinforce the notion that using TikTok as a learning tool has a positive impact on students' vocabulary learning outcomes.

To determine the strength of the treatment's effect, the effect size must also be considered. Based on the substantial difference between the pre-test and post-test means, the use of TikTok demonstrates a strong effect on improving students' vocabulary proficiency. Thus, the improvement observed is not only statistically significant but also has practical implications for the learning process.

Although this study shows a significant improvement in overall vocabulary scores, it has not analyzed specific aspects of vocabulary such as word meaning, pronunciation, spelling, or word usage in sentence context separately. Therefore, future research is recommended to examine these aspects in greater detail to determine which vocabulary skills show the greatest improvement after using TikTok as a learning tool.

4. Discussion

Based on the research findings, it was found that the use of the TikTok app as a learning tool had a positive impact on improving students' vocabulary proficiency. This is evident from the results of the descriptive analysis, which showed that the mean score increased from 63.18 in the pre-test to 87.95 in the post-test, representing an improvement of approximately 39.2%. In addition, the standard deviation decreased from 17.69 to 7.01, indicating that students' vocabulary achievement became more consistent after the treatment.

During the implementation of the treatment, the researcher used vocabulary learning videos from TikTok as the primary learning medium. The treatment was conducted over six meetings, each lasting approximately ninety minutes.

The effectiveness of TikTok can be explained by its characteristics as an audiovisual platform that combines visual, auditory, and textual information in a single learning medium. During the learning process, students were exposed to vocabulary through short videos containing pronunciation, subtitles, images, contextual examples, and translations. This combination helped students understand the meaning of words more easily than traditional vocabulary instruction that relies mainly on memorization. When students simultaneously see images, read subtitles, and hear pronunciation, they receive multiple cues that facilitate vocabulary comprehension and learning.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research. Hastomo et al. (2022) reported that students showed positive perceptions toward the use of TikTok in learning English vocabulary. Similarly, Ibrahim et al. found that students' language achievement improved significantly after using TikTok-based learning activities. These findings suggest that TikTok has considerable potential as a language-learning platform because it increases student engagement and provides meaningful language exposure through authentic and interactive content.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of TikTok can be explained through Mayer's Multimedia Learning Theory. According to Mayer (2009) students learn more effectively when information is presented through both visual and auditory channels simultaneously. In this study, TikTok videos presented vocabulary through images, text, audio pronunciation, and contextual examples at the same time. This multimodal presentation enabled students to connect word forms, meanings, and pronunciations more effectively, resulting in better vocabulary acquisition.

Another important factor contributing to students' vocabulary improvement is vocabulary retention. TikTok allows students to replay videos repeatedly whenever needed. Repeated exposure to vocabulary is essential in language learning because it strengthens memory and helps learners transfer information from short-term memory to long-term memory. Through repeated viewing, students had more opportunities to encounter and review the same vocabulary items, which likely enhanced their retention and recall of newly learned words.

In addition to the characteristics of the learning media, students' motivation and interest may also have contributed to the improvement in vocabulary achievement. Most students are already familiar with TikTok as part of their daily digital activities.

Therefore, learning through a platform they frequently use may increase their enthusiasm and engagement during classroom activities. Students appeared more interested and actively participated in vocabulary learning activities when TikTok

videos were used. Higher engagement and motivation may have positively influenced the learning outcomes observed in this study.

The findings also support the view that vocabulary is a fundamental component of language learning. Wilkins (1972) argued that without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed, whereas Nation (2001) emphasized that vocabulary mastery plays a crucial role in developing learners' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Therefore, the improvement in students' vocabulary scores found in this study indicates that the use of appropriate and engaging learning media can effectively support vocabulary development.

Despite the positive findings, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study involved only 22 students from one class, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study employed a pre-experimental design without a control group. Therefore, it cannot be concluded with complete certainty that the observed improvement was caused solely by the use of TikTok, as other factors may also have influenced students' performance. Third, the duration of the treatment was relatively short and did not examine the long-term retention of vocabulary. Future studies are recommended to involve larger samples, include a control group, and investigate the long-term effects of TikTok on vocabulary retention and language learning outcomes.

5. Conclusion

The use of TikTok application affected students' vocabulary improvement at SMPN 7 Palopo, because students showed improvement in understanding, remembering, and learning new vocabulary after learning vocabulary through TikTok. This is evidenced by an increase in students' average scores from 63.18 on the pre-test to 87.95 on the post-test, representing an increase of approximately 39.2%, showing that TikTok had a positive effect on students' vocabulary.

Based on the post-test results of 22 students, 12 students were categorized as excellent (90-100) and 10 students as good (75-89), indicating that students achieved good learning outcomes after the intervention. The improvement in student performance indicates that using TikTok as a learning tool helps students understand and remember new vocabulary more effectively. In addition, the Paired t-test yielded a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores. These findings are further supported by the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test, which showed that 19 students improved, 2 students declined, and 1 student remained unchanged. Overall, these results indicate that the use of TikTok significantly supports students in learning and understanding vocabulary more effectively.

TikTok application also supported students' understanding in learning vocabulary at SMPN 7 Palopo. Through engaging audiovisual content, contextual examples, pronunciation features, and interactive learning experiences. The use of short educational videos helped students stay interested and actively participate

in the learning process. In addition, TikTok supports vocabulary learning through interactive short videos that provide contextual exposure to vocabulary in everyday situations, helping students understand word meanings more naturally. Audiovisual elements such as pronunciation, subtitles, repetition, images, and sound effects also make vocabulary easier to understand and remember, while the short-form video format allows students to replay the content for repeated exposure, which reinforces vocabulary retention.

Although this study shows positive results, it still has several limitations that need to be taken into account when presenting the findings. From an educational practice perspective, the use of technology-based learning tools such as TikTok requires effective classroom management, active student participation, and optimal learning conditions.

These, it can be concluded that the TikTok app, as a digital and audiovisual learning media, is effective in improving students' vocabulary. The use of this platform also helps create a learning process that is more engaging, interactive, and aligned with technological advancements in the digital age.

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