



## TikTok for Vocabulary Learning: A Comparative Study of Perceptions Among Basic and Intermediate Proficiency EFL Students

Nur Laila Syarifah<sup>1</sup>, Hanif Maulaniam Sholah<sup>1</sup>

Universitas Al-Qolam Malang, Indonesia

Corresponding Author  [Nurlailasyarifah22@alqolam.ac.id](mailto:Nurlailasyarifah22@alqolam.ac.id)\*

### ABSTRACT

This study investigates students' perceptions of the TikTok platform as a medium for enhancing English vocabulary learning at SMP Annida Krebsenggrong Malang. The rapid growth of social media, particularly TikTok, has created new opportunities for integrating technology into language education. However, the effectiveness of TikTok for vocabulary development among learners with different proficiency levels remains underexplored. Therefore, this study aims to examine how students from basic and intermediate proficiency perceive the use of TikTok for vocabulary learning and to identify the challenges they encounter while using it as a learning medium. This study employed a qualitative descriptive. Five students were selected through purposeful sampling, consisting of three elementary-level and two intermediate-level learners who actively used TikTok for English learning. Data were collected through written proficiency tests and structured interviews. The results revealed that both basic and intermediate students generally perceived TikTok as an enjoyable and effective platform for learning new vocabulary. basic-level students emphasized that TikTok made vocabulary learning more interesting, creative, and easy to understand through short, visual, and engaging content. Intermediate students acknowledged similar benefits but also noted limitations, such as distractions from non-educational content and the short duration of videos, which hindered deeper understanding.

**Keywords:** Tiktok, Students' Perception, Vocabulary Learning, English As A Foreign Language (EFL)

### ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received Juni 29, 2025

Revised August 27, 2025

Accepted September 30, 2025

Journal Homepage

<https://ojs.staialfurqan.ac.id/IJoASER/>

This is an open access article under the CC BY SA license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, language plays a crucial role in society, particularly in interpersonal interaction (Rama et al. 2023). Human language allows people to express their wishes, thoughts, and feelings to one another by using words or vocabulary. Especially in Indonesia, English is regarded as a foreign language, and it is incorporated in schools as part of the curriculum. Therefore, Vocabulary is the first language skill component which is people who are mastering of vocabulary can form sentences that are patterned properly and correctly, and can master four other skills, such as speaking, reading, writing, and listening (Tampubolon et.al 2023). By mastering vocabulary, people can understand meanings and comprehend others' communications.

However, this is not in line with several issues in the process of learning English. In reality, many students face difficulties in involving vocabulary skills due to many factors. there are lack of motivation in learning, an uninteresting teaching method, and a lack of practicing vocabulary usage in the context. This is clarified by Tampubolon et. al (2023) argued that there are several problems facing by the students. First, the students find

difficultly to distinguish the word classes. Second, the student struggle to interpret the meaning of the word. On the other hand, a percentage of the lack of students' enthusiasm for leaning new words is large. Students' tendency to get bored and uninterested during class activity because teachers just dependent on the textbooks. Students too lazy in memorizing the strange words they read or they heard in the text (Rama et.al 2023).

With the advancement of technology, social media platforms have become integral to daily life, particularly among students. One platform that has gained massive popularity is TikTok. As on recent years, Indonesia ranks second in the world as the largest population of TikTok users, which reached 113 million users. Based on the Data Business of Apps, users TikTok are dominated by young people which is the most age of users are 18-24 years old reached until 34,9% and then 25-34 years old users recorded at 28,2% and adolescent age between 13-17 years old are 14,4% users (Santika, 2023). Furthermore, TikTok has emerged as one of the most widely used social media platforms among students, providing a space where users can easily create, share, and express their creativity through short videos. Beyond its entertainment function, TikTok has transformed into a digital environment that supports learning, social engagement, and creative communication (Astuti et.al 2022). In addition, TikTok not being a place of entertainment but it can be a place for business, news and journalism, community and social interaction, social campaign and activism, especially for education. Which is the creator creates fun material and challenges for users.

Several previous studies have examined the use of TikTok as a medium for English vocabulary learning and have shown positive results. A study by Alshreef and Khadawardi (2023) conducted a quantitative survey of 115 students at King Abdulaziz University. The findings revealed that TikTok helps learners understand vocabulary through engaging visual and audio contexts, thus improving the retention of new words (Alshreef & Khadawardi, 2023). Similarly, Usman et al. (2024) employed a quasi-experimental design with junior high school students. The experimental group, which learned vocabulary using TikTok videos, showed a significant improvement in vocabulary test scores compared to the control group that used conventional learning methods (Usman et al., 2024). Furthermore, Simanungkalit and Katemba (2023) conducted a descriptive qualitative study using online questionnaires with university students. Their results indicated that TikTok helps expand vocabulary, especially through content relevant to daily life, although the short video duration was perceived as a limitation.

Although previous studies have demonstrated TikTok effectiveness in enhancing English vocabulary acquisition, most of them focused on general student populations without differentiating learners' language proficiency levels (e.g., elementary vs. intermediate). The present study seeks to fill this gap by comparing the perceptions of learners at different proficiency levels toward TikTok role in vocabulary learning. The gap of this study lies on the focus of the research to the TikTok perception from various different proficiency levels meaning that researcher compared the elementary to intermediate students' proficiency level. This approach is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how TikTok can be optimized according to learners' needs and characteristics at varying proficiency stages.

This study aims to explore the perceptions of students at SMP Annida Krebetsenggrong Malang regarding the influence of TikTok on their English vocabulary development. The research focusing on two different proficiency levels: elementary and intermediate. Specifically, this research seeks to explore how students from both levels perceive the role of TikTok in supporting their vocabulary learning and what challenges they encounter while using the platform. By examining these two aspects, the study intends to provide a deeper understanding of TikTok's effectiveness and potential limitations as a digital learning tool for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, while also providing insights for educators and content creators to optimize the use of TikTok for English language learning at the junior high school level.

Thus, based on the elaboration of the background above, the research questions is how is the students' perception toward TikTok for their learning from the perspective of elementary level and intermediate level?

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research to explore and describe the perceptions of students at SMP Annida Krebetsenggrong, Malang, regarding the influence of English-language TikTok content on their vocabulary skills. A qualitative descriptive approach was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to present participants' perspectives in a straightforward and detailed manner without extensive interpretation, making it particularly suitable for studies aiming to capture opinions and experiences as they are expressed. The participants were selected using purposeful sampling, focusing on students who actively use TikTok not only for entertainment but also as a learning medium for English. A total of five students participated in this study: three were classified at the elementary level and two at the intermediate level of English proficiency. The classification process followed three sequential stages. In the first stage, the researcher identified one by one of students who used TikTok as part of their English learning process. This was followed by the second stage, in which participants took a short-written test to assess their language proficiency.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Theme 1: TikTok as an effective medium

TikTok can be an effective medium for learning English, especially for students who like to learn in a non-boring way. On TikTok, there are many educational videos. As a student stated:

*"There is a lot of educational content that teaches English in a non-boring way. I like to watch short videos about grammar tips, idioms, or daily vocabulary that are often used in conversation. From there, I learn many new things in a fun way." (student A)*

In addition, the short duration videos on TikTok can help students learn something new every day in a short time with many videos.

*"Because of the short duration, I can watch many videos in a short time and still learn something new every day." (student B)*

Another student said that they learn new words and how to read correctly, or even short conversations. TikTok made students feel learning without being forced. As student C mentioned

*"There are many videos that teach new words, how to read correctly, or even short conversations that can be imitated. I often watch it before going to bed, and it feels like I'm learning without being forced." (student C)*

Based on elementary student response, TikTok have a potential as an effective and enjoyable medium for learning english, which are short duration, easily accessible and attractively packaged but able to present a material such as vocabulary, grammar tips, until daily conversation in a light and interesting way. Students feel more motivated for lesson because the process feels natural and not forced.

While elementary students emphasized enjoyment and ease of learning through TikTok, intermediate students also shared their perspectives on TikTok as an effective learning medium, but with more attention to its practicality and learning efficiency.

Students perceive TikTok as an effective and accessible platform for learning English, particularly because of its short-form videos that are engaging and easy to understand. Unlike traditional learning methods that may feel formal or stressful, TikTok allows students to learn in a casual, enjoyable way. The content often includes explanations of grammar, vocabulary, idioms, and pronunciation, making it a flexible and diverse resource for language acquisition.

Student D pointed out that TikTok can be a powerful learning tool when used wisely. They appreciated how English topics are delivered clearly and concisely by various content

creators, making complex language points easier to grasp:

*"I think TikTok can be an effective medium for learning English if used wisely. Nowadays, many content creators on TikTok share educational videos on English topics, such as grammar, vocabulary, idioms, and pronunciation. Since the duration of the videos is short, usually between 15-60 seconds, the learning doesn't feel heavy and is easier to digest." (student D)*

Student E emphasized the educational potential of TikTok, despite its reputation as a platform for entertainment. They found particular value in videos that clarify commonly confused words and provide quick grammar tips. For them, the short and focused nature of the content makes learning more enjoyable and far from boring:

*"TikTok can be a very helpful medium in the process of learning English. Although TikTok is usually known as an entertainment app, there is also a lot of educational content in it, especially for learning English. I personally like videos that discuss words that are often confused or quick tips on learning grammar. The videos are short, but the content is solid, so I can learn English in a fun and non-boring way." (student E)*

These student reflections show that TikTok's format and content variety make it a suitable medium for informal language learning. The ease of access, combined with the engaging nature of short educational videos, supports a more relaxed and motivating learning experience for English learners.

## **Theme 2: English learning content on TikTok compared to other learning media**

English learning content on TikTok displays learning visually and directly, often with funny expressions or a relaxed delivery style. It makes it easier for the students to understand and less boring. As student A stated

*"Because TikTok displays learning visually and directly, usually with funny expressions or a relaxed delivery style. For example, some creators act out two characters to explain a conversational situation. It makes it easier for me to understand and less boring." (students A)*

Further, student C explained that the use of animation, funny scenarios, and some comparison of British and American styles makes learning more interesting than textbooks or learning through questions. As student C mentioned

*"TikTok has many creators from different countries who teach English in their own style. Some use animations, some use funny scenarios, and some compare British and American English. I think this method is much more interesting than textbooks or learning through questions." (student C)*

The English content on TikTok are presented by visual, directly, and often with a relaxed and funny expression style. Therefore, easily to understand and not boring for students. In addition, the usage of animation, funny scenario, and comparison of British and American style make the material more interesting than traditional method such as text book or practice question.

In addition to elementary students' views on TikTok's visual and creative presentation, intermediate students also compared TikTok with other learning media, particularly textbooks and learning applications, based on their learning needs and preferences.

Compared to traditional learning tools such as textbooks or formal learning apps, TikTok offers a more engaging and relatable approach to learning English. Its visual and entertaining format, often enhanced with music, humor, or real-life scenarios, makes educational content feel more dynamic and accessible. Students feel more motivated to learn

when the material is delivered in a fun and personalized way.

Student D highlighted how TikTok stands out from books and standard learning apps by combining entertainment with education. They appreciated being able to choose content that matches their interests, making the learning process more enjoyable and motivating:

*"Learning content on TikTok is much more interesting than learning from books or even regular learning apps. TikTok makes learning feel lighter because there are elements of entertainment, visuals, and sometimes accompanied by music or funny expressions. I can also choose my own topics of interest, such as English for daily conversation or vocabulary tips. This makes me more interested and more motivated compared to reading material from textbooks, which sometimes feels boring."*

Student E echoed this sentiment, pointing out that the modern and casual presentation style used by creators helps them stay engaged. The use of humor, everyday language, and realistic scenarios made it easier for them to understand and relate to the content:

*"Because the delivery is more modern and relaxed. Many creators use the language of young people, with examples in the form of funny scenarios or real-life conversations. This makes it easier for me to be interested and understand the material. Compared to books or lesson modules, TikTok is definitely more fun because we can also scroll through other content as a distraction." (student E)*

These perspectives reveal that the appeal of TikTok lies in its ability to blend entertainment with learning, creating an experience that feels less like studying and more like exploration. For students accustomed to fast-paced and visually engaging content, TikTok provides a more stimulating alternative to conventional media.

### **Theme 3: Easier to remember the English vocabulary compared taught in class**

Mostly, the teachers teaching English in class are used traditional way, such as explaining the material, written on the board, and memorizing. It can be the students only memorizing but not understanding how the usage of vocabulary in the context.

*"At school, I usually just memorize the vocabulary list without knowing how it's used in real conversations. On TikTok, I immediately know how to use it in sentences." (student A)*

Different way on TikTok, creators taught by giving vocabulary and showing how to use the word in the context, so the students easier to remember and understand the vocabulary.

*"I find it easier to remember the vocabulary I learn from TikTok because it is delivered in the form of videos and directly shown its use in sentences. So it is easier to remember and understand." (student B)*

In addition, when the students are still confused about the material, they usually repeat the content until they understand. As student C said

*"Because on TikTok they usually give examples directly in sentences. So the words are not only memorized, but also understood. Sometimes I repeat the video if I am still confused." (student C)*

Students prefer learning vocabulary by english content on TikTok compared taught in class. In TikTok, creators are presented the material with giving the example in conversation too. So, the students feel easier to remember and understanding about the vocabulary compared taught by their teacher in class

Similar to elementary students, intermediate students also reflected on how TikTok

helps them remember vocabulary more effectively than traditional classroom learning, especially through contextual and situational examples.

Students find that vocabulary presented through real-life situations in TikTok videos is easier to understand and remember than words taught through definitions alone. The use of visual elements, acting, and relatable scenarios helps reinforce meaning and makes new vocabulary stick. Instead of simply memorizing abstract definitions, students are able to connect words with situations, making the learning more intuitive and long-lasting.

Student D noted that seeing vocabulary used in clear, situational contexts made a big difference in their ability to grasp and retain the meaning. They recalled a specific example where a video demonstrated the difference between “confused” and “confusing,” which helped clarify both the usage and the nuance:

*“Because the words are usually conveyed through videos with a clear context. For example, I saw a video that demonstrated how to use the words “confused” and “confusing”. Because I saw a live example of the situation, I understood better and could differentiate the usage. Meanwhile, in class, sometimes we just give definitions or translations without real examples, so I forget quickly.” (student D)*

Student B shared a similar experience. They explained that watching TikTok videos allowed them to see how vocabulary is applied in real conversations or scenarios. This contextual learning helped them remember the difference between words that are often misunderstood:

*“Because it usually shows me how to use it. For example, when I watch a video that explains the difference between “nervous” and “anxious”, I know when to use each word. In class, sometimes the teacher just explains the meaning without giving examples in a real context, so I get confused. But on TikTok, I see the examples directly, so it’s easier to remember” (Student E)*

These student reflections suggest that context-rich learning, especially when delivered visually, makes vocabulary more meaningful and memorable. By showing how words function in everyday situations, TikTok helps bridge the gap between passive understanding and active use.

#### **Theme 4: TikTok content gives a wider variety of vocabulary**

TikTok gives students access to words that are not usually taught in school, especially words that native speakers use in everyday conversations. This helps students learn real language that they can use in real situations.

*“ I find many new words that have not been taught at school, such as slang words that are often used by native speakers. For example, I learned the meaning of “lit”, “no cap” and “on fleek” from TikTok. So I feel that my vocabulary has expanded, including informal language which is also important to learn.” (student A)*

Beyond slang, TikTok also introduces a mix of everyday phrases and idiomatic expressions that are useful in daily conversation. This variety challenges students to engage more deeply with the language and seek out the meaning of unfamiliar terms.

*“ I learn many new words and phrases, such as “procrastinate”, “spill the tea”, “it’s up to you”, and many more. Sometimes I even have to look up the meaning first because it has never been taught at school.” (student B)*

Besides learning new words, TikTok also helps students remember words they already know by showing them again and again.

Students often see the same words in different videos, which helps them remember them better.

*"I know words like "subscribe", "update", 'bored', and also "excited". Those words are used a lot in TikTok videos, so I memorized them over time." (student C)*

In short, the students' experiences show that TikTok helps them build their vocabulary by exposing them to a wide variety of English words, both formal and informal. Through different types of content and repeated exposure, students not only learn new words but also improve their understanding and ability to remember them. Plus, the platform encourages students to be curious and take charge of their learning, making vocabulary learning more interesting and meaningful outside of school.

Beyond elementary students' experiences in learning new and informal vocabulary, intermediate students likewise reported that TikTok exposed them to a broader range of authentic expressions and everyday language.

TikTok introduces a wide range of English vocabulary beyond what is typically taught in the classroom. Slang, idioms, and everyday expressions used by native speakers frequently appear in videos, giving learners exposure to language that feels more natural and authentic. These words and phrases often don't appear in textbooks but are essential for effective communication in informal settings.

Student D mentioned discovering many useful expressions through TikTok, especially casual terms that are common in daily conversations. Words like "awkward," "literally," and "no worries" stood out, along with slang frequently used on social media, which added depth to their vocabulary:

*"I discovered a lot of new vocabulary from TikTok, especially terms used in daily life by native speakers. Some of the words I learned from TikTok are: "awkward", 'literally', "I'm down", "no worries", and others. I also learned slang words that are often used on social media. These words are usually not taught in class formally, so I think it adds to my knowledge." (student D)*

Student E shared how TikTok exposed them to informal words and idiomatic expressions rarely covered in school lessons. Learning phrases like "you nailed it" and "break a leg" helped boost their confidence when chatting with friends or writing in English:

*"I often pick up new words from TikTok, especially those that are commonly used by native speakers. For example, I learned the meaning of "savage", 'vibe', "hang out", and "clueless". I also learned expressions like "you nailed it" or "break a leg" that were rarely explained in school. These words made me more confident when chatting with friends or writing English texts." (student E)*

By offering vocabulary that reflects real-life usage, TikTok complements formal learning and helps learners sound more fluent and comfortable in everyday conversations.

### **Theme 5: Vocabulary Stimulation**

TikTok also plays a role in reinforcing words that students have previously learned but may have forgotten. Through engaging and contextual presentations, TikTok allows students to recall past lessons in a more natural and stress-free way.

Student A explained that they often come across words or phrases on TikTok that had been taught in class but were forgotten. The interesting way these words are presented helps them remember more easily:

*"Sometimes I see videos that discuss words or phrases that I have learned in class, but I had forgotten. Because they reappear on TikTok in an interesting way, it's easier for me to remember them. It feels like being reminded without feeling like I'm studying seriously." (student A)*

Similarly, Student B shared that when they encounter a word they've forgotten, TikTok helps them remember and even understand it better especially when the explanation is supported with examples

*"I see a word that I've learned but forgot the meaning. When I see it on TikTok, I remember it again and even understand it better because the explanation is accompanied by an example." (student B)*

Student C also noted that TikTok serves as a reminder for vocabulary previously taught at school, helping them recall forgotten words

*"Sometimes there are words that have been taught at school, but I forgot. Then when I see it on TikTok, I remember it again." (student C)*

Students' responses indicate that TikTok is not only effective for learning new vocabulary but also valuable for reinforcing previously acquired language. Its frequent repetition, contextual use, and engaging delivery allow students to recall forgotten vocabulary more naturally, bridging formal classroom instruction with informal, everyday exposure.

Not only elementary students, but intermediate students also experienced vocabulary re-stimulation through TikTok, where previously learned words were recalled through repeated exposure and visual explanation.

TikTok often serves as a helpful reminder for vocabulary that students may have learned before but have started to forget. The combination of visuals and contextual examples triggers memories and strengthens understanding, making it easier to recall words when needed.

Student D shared how TikTok brought back words they had learned long ago but hadn't fully remembered until seeing them used in videos. For example, the word "embarrassed" became clearer after watching a TikTok that explained its meaning with real-life situations:

*"TikTok really helps me to recall the vocabulary that I have learned, especially those that I have learned for a long time but have started to forget. For example, I learned the word "embarrassed" in 7th grade, but only really remembered and understood its use after seeing a TikTok video that explained the expression and example situations. So, I think TikTok can be an effective visual reminder." (student D)*

Student E also mentioned that TikTok videos reviewing familiar words helped refresh their memory. They recalled how a video demonstrating the word "confident" through acting and context made the meaning clearer and easier to remember:

*"Sometimes I see videos that review words that I've already encountered in class, and it makes me remember them again. For example, I had forgotten the meaning and usage of the word "confident", but after seeing a TikTok video that explained the*

International Journal on Advanced Science, Education, and Religion (IJoASER)  
*meaning while mimicking the situation, I remembered again and understood even more." (student E)*

These examples highlight how TikTok's visual and contextual approach supports vocabulary retention by making forgotten words easier to recall and use.

### **Theme 6: Increasing students' motivation to learn vocabulary**

TikTok increases students' interest in learning vocabulary by presenting content in a fun and informal way. Unlike traditional methods that rely on memorization, TikTok makes learning feel like entertainment, which helps maintain student engagement.

Student A explained that they often feel unmotivated when learning from books, but TikTok makes vocabulary learning more enjoyable and even encourages them to practice using new words:

*" I often feel lazy to learn vocabulary from books because I have to memorize. But through TikTok, I get excited because learning feels like watching entertainment. Sometimes I'm also interested in writing down the new words I learn, then trying them out in conversation." (student A)*

Furthermore, entertaining videos reduce the pressure of studying. Seeing fluent English speakers also motivates them to improve

*"Because learning through short videos are fun and don't feel like learning. Especially when I see people who can speak English fluently, it motivates me to study harder." (student B)*

Student C added that fun or humorous content inspires them to speak English like the creators they watch

*" It really can! Especially when I see fun or funny English learning videos. I want to be able to speak like them too." (student C)*

TikTok helps boost students' motivation to learn vocabulary by turning learning into an enjoyable activity. The platform's entertaining format and inspiring content encourage students to engage more actively and consistently with the language.

In line with elementary students who felt more motivated to learn vocabulary through TikTok, intermediate students also described how the platform influenced their learning motivation, although with slightly different expectations.

TikTok brings a fresh and enjoyable twist to learning English vocabulary, making the process feel less like a chore and more like a spontaneous discovery. The entertaining and relatable content sparks students' interest, encouraging them to keep learning even when they might otherwise feel unmotivated.

One student described how TikTok videos can instantly lift their mood and motivate them to learn, especially when the content shows that English can be fun and accessible:

*"Sometimes I feel lazy to open an English textbook, but when I open TikTok and see an exciting English learning video, I immediately feel like learning again. Especially if*

*there is a video that makes me feel "wow, it turns out that learning English is not difficult and can be fun". It makes me more excited to expand my vocabulary, even if it's just from a short video. (student D)*

This shows how TikTok's engaging approach helps students stay motivated by turning learning into an enjoyable and inspiring experience.

### **Theme 7: Increases students' confidence in using vocabulary**

TikTok helps students build confidence in using English vocabulary in both speaking and writing. By repeatedly observing correct pronunciation and real-life usage, students feel more comfortable applying new words in conversations, school tasks, and even social media posts.

Student A shared that familiarity with pronunciation and context from TikTok gives them courage to use new vocabulary actively, such as writing Instagram captions or speaking in class

*"I feel more confident using the vocabulary from TikTok because I already know how to pronounce it and see how it is used. I also have more courage to try using the words when making captions on Instagram or when practicing speaking in class." (Student A)*

Student B noted that seeing multiple examples on TikTok boosts their confidence in both speaking and writing English. They also feel braver using English in casual chats and presentations

*"Because I have often seen examples of their use, so I am more confident when using them in speaking or when writing. I am also braver to use English when chatting with friends or when presenting." (student B)*

Student C expressed that exposure to many examples on TikTok has made them more willing to speak and write in English, knowing when and how to use vocabulary correctly

*"Now I am braver to use English when speaking or writing, because I have seen many examples on TikTok, so I know when and how to use it." (student C)*

Corresponding to elementary students' increased confidence, intermediate students similarly reported feeling more confident in using vocabulary learned from TikTok in both speaking and writing contexts.

Watching real-life examples and hearing correct pronunciation on TikTok helps students feel more comfortable using new vocabulary in both writing and speaking. Repeated exposure to words in natural contexts reduces fear of making mistakes and encourages active use.

Student A shared that seeing how words are pronounced and used in sentences inspired them to practice writing and even include new vocabulary in social media captions. This familiarity helped lessen their worry about using words incorrectly:

*"Because I have seen how the word is pronounced and used in sentences. Usually, after watching, I try to write it directly in my notebook or use it when making captions on social media. Sometimes I also try to use it in speaking during English lessons at school. Because I've seen the example many times on TikTok, I'm not afraid of using it wrong."*

Student B explained that knowing a word is commonly used by others on TikTok gives them confidence to include it in conversations and writing. The videos also help with correct pronunciation and intonation, making it easier to speak naturally:

"Because I know the word has been used by many people, so I'm not afraid of being wrong. For example, I have used the words "literally" and "actually" in my conversations and writing, and I feel more confident because I know the context from TikTok. Also, the way the words are presented in the video helps me with pronunciation and intonation."

These experiences show that TikTok can build students' confidence by providing clear, repeated examples that make vocabulary feel approachable and easier to use.

### Theme 8: Students' challenges

Despite TikTok's creative English learning content, some students find it less effective than other learning media due to frequent distractions. Unrelated videos and ads often divert their attention, causing them to spend more time on entertainment than actual study.

Student C expressed this challenge, noting difficulty maintaining focus because of TikTok's distracting content:

*"Honestly, I don't find English learning content on TikTok very effective or interesting compared to other media. Even though some videos are creative, I often get distracted by other unrelated content or advertisements. I open TikTok to learn, but after one video, I end up scrolling through funny or trending videos instead. It's hard to stay focused, and I feel like I waste more time than I actually spend learning. That's why I prefer using books or dedicated learning apps that don't have so many distractions."*  
(student C)

While TikTok offers engaging learning materials, distractions from non-educational content and advertisements can hinder students' ability to focus, making it less efficient for some learners compared to more structured and distraction-free media.

Despite the positive perceptions shared by elementary students, intermediate students also addressed several challenges in using TikTok as a learning medium, particularly related to distractions and the limited depth of content.

Although TikTok offers engaging ways to learn vocabulary, some students find it difficult to stay motivated using the platform. The short length of videos and the abundance of unrelated, entertaining content can make it hard to maintain focus and dive deeply into learning. For certain learners, more structured resources like textbooks or dedicated apps feel more effective and goal-oriented.

One student expressed that TikTok's brief videos didn't provide enough depth for real improvement, and distractions often pulled their attention away from learning:

*"I don't think TikTok really helps increase my motivation to learn vocabulary. Most of the time, the videos are too short and don't go deep enough to actually help me improve. I also get distracted easily by other non-educational content, so it's hard to stay focused. I feel more motivated when I use learning apps or study from books because they have a clearer structure and goals."* (student E)

This highlights that while TikTok can be a useful tool for some, others may benefit more from traditional and structured learning methods to stay motivated and focused.

The findings of this study indicate that both elementary and intermediate students at SMP Annida Krebetsenggrong Malang generally perceived TikTok as a supportive medium for learning English vocabulary. However, differences emerged in the way students at different proficiency levels experienced and evaluated the platform. Basic students tended to show stronger enthusiasm and more positive attitudes, while intermediate students demonstrated a more critical and reflective perspective toward TikTok's effectiveness.

basic-level students perceived TikTok as an enjoyable, creative, and accessible learning medium. The short duration of videos, visual presentation, and entertaining delivery helped reduce boredom and learning pressure. These characteristics made vocabulary learning feel more natural and less forced, which aligns with the needs of lower-level learners

who often require motivation and simple input. This finding supports previous studies suggesting that beginner learners benefit more from multimedia-based learning environments that combine entertainment and education (Hapsari & Aisyah, 2023; Rama et al., 2023).

Intermediate students, on the other hand, also acknowledged TikTok's benefits, particularly in providing contextual examples, authentic language use, and exposure to vocabulary beyond textbooks. However, they were more aware of the platform's limitations. The short video duration was perceived as insufficient for in-depth understanding, and frequent distractions from non-educational content reduced learning focus. This indicates that learners with higher proficiency levels tend to expect more structured, systematic, and comprehensive input than what TikTok commonly offers. Similar concerns were also reported by Simanungkalit and Katemba (2023), who noted that while TikTok is engaging, it may lack depth for advanced learners.

Another important finding was vocabulary re-stimulation. Both basic and intermediate students reported that TikTok helped them recall previously learned vocabulary that they had forgotten. Through repeated exposure and contextualized examples, students were able to strengthen their vocabulary retention. This supports Abidah's (2024) finding that TikTok's concise and entertaining content helps learners revisit daily expressions, idioms, and commonly used vocabulary in a meaningful way.

In terms of learning motivation, TikTok had a stronger impact on elementary students. The entertaining nature of the content increased their interest and enthusiasm for learning English vocabulary. While intermediate students also experienced motivational benefits, these were less dominant and sometimes outweighed by issues of distraction and lack of depth. This suggests that TikTok is more effective as a motivational tool for lower-level learners than for higher-level learners, who may require goal-oriented learning environments.

Regarding confidence, students from both proficiency levels reported increased confidence in using vocabulary learned from TikTok. Exposure to correct pronunciation and real-life usage helped reduce anxiety when speaking or writing in English. This finding is consistent with Tampubolon et al. (2023), who found that students exposed to TikTok-based learning showed improvement in vocabulary mastery and confidence compared to those using conventional methods.

Overall, the findings suggest that TikTok can function as an effective supplementary tool for vocabulary learning, particularly for basic-level learners who benefit from its engaging and accessible format. For intermediate learners, TikTok remains useful for reinforcement and exposure to authentic language, but should be complemented with more structured learning materials. Therefore, TikTok should not replace formal instruction but be strategically integrated to support different learning needs across proficiency levels.

## CONCLUSION

This study explored the perceptions of basic and intermediate students at SMP Annida Krebetsenggrong Malang regarding the use of TikTok as a medium for vocabulary learning. The findings indicate that both groups generally view TikTok as a supportive tool in developing their English vocabulary, though their responses differed according to proficiency level. Basic students perceived TikTok as highly engaging, enjoyable, and effective in providing diverse vocabulary, including slang and idiomatic expressions that are not commonly taught in classrooms. Intermediate students, on the other hand, acknowledged its benefits but were more critical of its limitations, such as short video duration and distractions from non-educational content. The results also revealed that TikTok helped students recall previously learned vocabulary, enhanced their motivation, and increased their confidence in using new words in real contexts. These findings align with prior studies that highlight TikTok's potential in supporting vocabulary acquisition by providing multimedia and interactive learning experiences. However, the platform's effectiveness is constrained by

issues of distraction and lack of depth, especially for higher-level learners who may require more structured and comprehensive materials. In conclusion, TikTok can be considered an effective supplementary learning medium for vocabulary acquisition, particularly for younger or lower-level learners. It should not replace formal classroom instruction but rather be integrated strategically to enrich the learning process, increase student engagement, and support the development of both receptive and productive vocabulary skills.

Based on these findings, several suggestions can be proposed. First, for teachers, TikTok may be integrated as a complementary tool to traditional teaching methods, particularly by selecting or creating content that aligns with lesson objectives and reduces distractions. Second, for students, it is important to use TikTok purposefully as a learning aid, focusing on educational content and avoiding overexposure to entertainment that may hinder concentration. Finally, for future researchers, further studies with larger and more diverse samples are recommended to explore the long-term effects of TikTok on vocabulary mastery, as well as to investigate its impact on other language skills such as speaking, listening, and writing.

## REFERENCES

- Abidah, A. N. (2024). Students' perception on utilizing TikTok videos for vocabulary acquisition. *JEASP / EJournal UIN Malang*.
- Alshreef, A., & Khadawardi, H. (2023). TikTok as a tool for vocabulary learning among EFL university students. *English Language Teaching*, 16(12), 15–27.
- Astuti, E. P., Rachmawati, D., & Nugraha, R. (2022). The use of TikTok in EFL learning: Benefits and challenges. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 4(1), 12–21.
- Council of Europe. (2020). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume*. Council of Europe Publishing.
- Fitriyah, L. S., & Sholichah, N. I. (2023). *Improving vocabulary using TikTok application*. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 3(1), 17–24.
- Hapsari, A. D., & Aisyah, N. (2023). Short video-based learning for vocabulary enhancement: A study on TikTok integration in EFL classes. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning*, 18(5), 85–99.
- Lambert, V. A., & Lambert, C. E. (2012). Qualitative descriptive research: An acceptable design. *Pacific Rim International Journal of Nursing Research*, 16(4), 255–256.
- Putri, A., & Ardi, P. (2021). Exploring social media platforms as learning media: TikTok in English language learning. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching*, 16(2), 145–161.
- Rama, M. A., Zohri, H., & Candraning, P. (2023). Students' Perception on The Use of Tiktok As An Effective Learning Media in Improving Students' Vocabulary. *Journal on Education*, 05(04), 17079-17086.
- Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in Nursing & Health*, 23(4), 334–340.
- Santika, E. F. (2023). Kelompok anak muda jadi pengguna terbesar TikTok, usia berapa mereka? *Jurnal Sosial, Sains, dan Riset (JSSR)*, 2(1), 45–52. Kampus Akademik.
- Simanungkalit, S., & Katemba, C. (2023). Enhancing vocabulary mastery through TikTok: Students' perspectives. *Eduvelop: Journal of English Education and Development*, 7(2), 150–160.
- Tampubolon, A. R., Basar, L. S., & Anita, S. (2023). The Effect of Using Tiktok on Students' Vocabulary Mastery in Seventh Grade at SMP Negeri 9 Pematang Siantar. *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan dan Sosial*. 2(03).
- Usman, M., Zulfikar, T., & Rahmat, R. (2024). The effectiveness of TikTok videos in teaching vocabulary to junior high school students. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 11(1), 65–78.