



## ENHANCING SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ENGLISH VOCABULARY THROUGH THE USE OF TIKTOK APPLICATION

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### Abstract

*The advent of social media has revolutionized many spheres of human endeavor. It has made learning various subjects and crafts easier. TikTok is one of the newest social media platforms which promotes education. There are various aspects of English language such as grammar, essay writing, spoken English, vocabularies and so on. This study examines the perception of secondary school students on the use of TikTok application for learning English vocabularies. Three research questions guided the study. The study is a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative research in which the researcher relied on the use of questionnaires and interviews to gather the data. 100 SS3 students of Nigerian Navy Secondary School Okura, Kogi State were used as the respondents. The students were required to answer questions in the questionnaires to ascertain their perspectives on the use of TikTok for learning English Vocabularies. Ten students who were randomly sampled through balloting were interviewed on the question "how do you learn English vocabularies through TikTok application". From the responses from the questionnaires, it was revealed that most of the students make use of TikTok for learning English vocabularies and they find it interesting and helpful. Learning English vocabularies through TikTok makes it easier for the students to master English words effortlessly. From the interview responses, it was revealed that the students have various ways in which they use TikTok to learn English vocabularies. The study concludes that TikTok application is very helpful to secondary school students in learning English vocabularies. TikTok is not just for entertainment but can be useful for learning English vocabularies by secondary school students. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others, that curriculum designers should include Tik Tok application as part of the exercises for vocabulary teaching and learning in English language*

**Key words:** Tik Tok application, English language, vocabulary learning



## Introduction

Human beings have been alive with their communication skills and words from ancient times until the present. The foundation of communication is vocabulary. Language users utilize vocabulary to communicate their thoughts, ideas, and perspectives. Vocabulary is a product of the human mind. Compared to other aspects of language, vocabulary appears to be more critical and urgent than grammatical function, at least from a linguistic viewpoint (Dakhi & Fitria, 2019). The impact of vocabulary in learning language cannot be overstated. It is a component that ties together the four language abilities of listening, speaking, reading and writing effectively in any language. Vocabulary is the foundational skill that students must master before moving on to other language skills. When it comes to learning a language, vocabulary is highly crucial.

When acquiring vocabulary, students should focus on the element of words. The most critical aspect of learning a language is words and vocabularies. Rahman (2021) believes that students' vocabulary mastery is not only expected to understand the words but also their meanings, which is especially relevant to vocabulary and sentences that are frequently used or found on social media, including TikTok. Students perform better in language when they have a more extensive vocabulary. Effective mastery of language skills involves an extensive mastery of vocabulary. Without a broad vocabulary, learners will not communicate effectively using the grammar and language functions they have acquired. It means that learning a second or foreign language requires a firm grasp of vocabulary. One will know the meaning and grasp what a person is saying if one masters the vocabulary of a given language. Without knowing the vocabulary of a language, it will be challenging to master the other competencies in the language (Rahman, 2021). On the other hand, learning vocabulary is frequently regarded as time-consuming and challenging. Therefore, learning should be designed in such a way that it will be attractive and interactive as much as possible to facilitate various activities in understanding the materials to be learnt. In this case, the teacher must organize each learning component well to achieve the learning goal. Many students learning a target language such as English have difficulties in understanding the relationship between the new vocabulary they have learned and the function of the vocabulary. As a result, they cannot apply their new vocabulary in their minds by using it in communication. Therefore, the teacher's role is to teach vocabulary to students through audio or videos.

Video is one of several types of instructional material that may help students learn more effectively because it is accessible and allows students to pause and rewatch content as needed. Yükselir & Kömür (2017) mentioned that video could be a powerful tool for communicating information in an appealing audiovisual manner. Inadvertently, poorly prepared pre-class educational videos may obstruct the learning process. When watching long duration of videos, for example, some students grow disengaged and do not watch the entire video. Others may view



videos as impersonal and a cut off from the language teacher. During the covid-19 pandemic, social media combined with short videos served educational purposes in assisting English as a Foreign language learners in improving their English communication skills, particularly among college students (Xiuwen & Razali, 2021). According to Xiuwen and Razali (2021), TikTok is one of the most widely utilized social media platforms currently.

The Chinese company, ByteDance, launched and developed the TikTok application in 2016. It is one the fastest growing apps and the seventh most downloaded app in the last decade, as well as one of the most famous apps in the world, with hundreds of millions of users, many of whom are children and high school students (Hanim, 2021). It is a popular social media software that allows users to make, watch, and share short films up to three minutes long on their smartphones. TikTok is a user-friendly interface for making, editing, and sharing short films, as well as the ability to comment on and share material with the TikTok community (Khlaif & Salha, 2021).

The findings from Xu et al (2019) research indicated that TikTok has helped provide a platform for sharing knowledge and educating people with innovative teaching modes, enhancing students' learning motivation and interests via a short video. According to Zaitun et al (2021), TikTok can be an interactive learning medium to boost students' confidence in studying English. The study by Pratiwi et al (2021) also agreed that TikTok application is very influential because the application is practical, provides benefits, and makes learning easy and fun. It may be argued that TikTok has various features to help students learn English. According to (Khlaif & Salha, 2021), short TikTok videos are revolutionizing how skills are taught and mastered among people with comparable characteristics, allowing for new kinds of communication through visually engaging materials. Teachers at primary, secondary schools and higher education institutions must be familiar with TikTok's current popularity and future potential. They should consider how to include TikTok videos into teaching techniques. Above all, incorporating TikTok into teaching and learning processes stimulates the creation of innovative content that follows instructional design principles. As a result, short instructional movies created for teaching can be customized to meet learning objectives and aid students' learning. This strategy may aid learners in comprehending complicated topics and acquiring new creative abilities and knowledge. It is in line with this that this study explores the students' view on the use of TikTok application for learning English vocabularies among secondary school students.

Learning a second language entails picking up new terms commonly referred to as vocabulary (Omachonu, 2023). The term vocabulary, therefore, encompasses a vast array of words and their meanings (Omachonu & Onoja, 2024). It plays a pivotal role in language learning. Omachonu and Onoja (2024) avers that vocabulary serves as the bridge that connects the abstract structure of a language to its practical use in everyday life. Words are the building blocks of language, and vocabulary knowledge is thus a crucial part of language learning (Omachonu, 2023). The



mastery of the vocabulary of any language is therefore crucial for its effective learning. This is because the use of vocabulary enhances one's spoken and written communication, hence this study sets out to investigate the use of TikTok application for learning English vocabulary.

The use of Tik Tok for language learning has been the focus of research lately (Rajan & Ismail, 2022; Venalinda & Armanda, 2024). Rajan and Ismail (2022) conducted a quasi-experimental study to explore the use of TikTok as a strategy to improve knowledge acquisition and engagement in learning literature among 150 students from Malaysian secondary schools. The study's findings demonstrated that integrating TikTok into literature teaching resulted in high levels of student engagement and positive knowledge acquisition. Students displayed a strong interest and active participation when using TikTok for literature assignments, showcasing its potential as an effective tool for enhancing students' engagement and learning outcomes in literature.

Venalinda and Armanda (2024) conducted a study the role of Tik Tok Application on learning English vocabulary on student teachers. The study's findings reveal that participants had a positive attitude towards using TikTok as a video aid for language learning. They viewed TikTok as a helpful platform that enhanced their literacy and speaking skills, expressing a desire to use it for understanding basic English content. The research highlights the potential of TikTok as a valuable tool for language learning and its effectiveness in engaging participants for educational purposes. The study conducted by Huning and Yang (2020) focuses on exploring the perspectives of secondary-school students regarding the utilization of TikTok for English learning both within and beyond the EFL classroom. Involving 187 students from China, the research reveals that students displayed positive attitudes towards incorporating TikTok as a video aid in EFL classroom teaching. Furthermore, students expressed a strong desire for guidance and support from their teachers in effectively using TikTok for English learning. The study underscores the significance of integrating TikTok into English language education to enhance engagement and improve learning outcomes within and beyond the traditional classroom setting.

Hartanto (2023) also conducted a study on the effectiveness of TikTok in enhancing English pronunciation among university students through a mixed-method involving interviews, pre-tests, and post-tests. The participants of the study consist of university students, providing valuable insights into the specific experiences and perceptions of this particular demography.

The current research focuses on investigating the effectiveness of TikTok in enhancing English vocabulary among secondary school students, utilizing a mixed-method involving the use of questionnaire and interviews. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study.



These are:

1. What is the use of Tik Tok application among secondary school students?
2. What is students' perception about the use of TikTok application?
3. How do students learn new vocabularies through the use of Tik Tok application?

**Methods**

The study is a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative research in which the researcher relied on the use of questionnaire and interviews to gather the data. 100 SS3 students of Nigerian Navy Secondary School Okura, Kogi State were used as the respondents. The students were required to answer questions in the questionnaire to ascertain their perspectives on the use of TikTok for learning English vocabularies. The questionnaires were administered to the students after which ten students were selected at random and interviewed on the question, " how do you use TikTok to learn English vocabularies?" The questionnaire was analysed using frequency and percentage while the interview was analysed based on the responses of the students.

**Results**

**Section A: Use of TikTok for learning English vocabularies among the students**

**Table 1: Distribution of the students` Based on responses on their use of TikTok application in learning English vocabularies (Sample size n=100)**

Use of TikTok application in learning English vocabularies	Frequency	Percentage
Do you use TikTok application on your phone?	90	90
Do TikTok have contents that are educational?	90	90
Do TikTok provides opportunity to learn new English vocabularies?	70	70
Do TikTok provides opportunity to master registers of different fields of human endeavor?	70	70
Do TikTok provides opportunity for you to learn how to pronounce English words and how to use them in sentences?	70	70

Source: Field survey, 2024

Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents` responses in the use of TikTok application on their phones for the purpose of learning English vocabularies. From the result, it can be seen that majority of the students 90 students which represent 90% use TikTok application on their phones, implying that only a small proportion of the students (10 persons) which represents 10% of the



respondents indicated that they do not use TikTok. This shows that TikTok application has become a very popular application among secondary students. This suggests that many of the students that have access to android phones always install TikTok application in the phones.

**Section B: The student`s Perception about the use of TikTok to Learn English Vocabularies**

**Table 2: Distribution of the Students` perception about using TikTok to Learn English Vocabularies (Sample size n=100)**

Perception about using TikTok to Learn English Vocabularies	Frequency	Percentage
TikTok is meant for entertainment alone	40	40
Learning English vocabularies through TikTok is fun	90	90
TikTok increases my motivation in learning English vocabularies	60	60
Learning English vocabularies through TikTok increases my confidence to communicate in English	90	90
TikTok provides an opportunity to study English vocabularies independently	70	70
English vocabularies contents on TikTok can be accessed anytime, anywhere	70	70

**Multiple responses, Source: Field survey, 2024**

Table 2 presents the result of the perception of the students on using TikTok application to learn English vocabularies. The responses of the students shows that small proportion of the students 40% perceived that TikTok is meant for entertainment alone. This result suggest that a larger proportion of the students perceived that TikTok have other uses aside entertainment. This knowledge is vital as it comes before using TikTok for learning English vocabularies. 90% of the students believe that learning English vocabularies through TikTok application is fun.



### Section C: Interview Responses

Ten selected students were interviewed with the question "how do you learn English vocabularies through TikTok?". The following responses were gotten from the respondents

Student One: " I follow some TikTok users who do tutorials on English vocabularies".

Student Two: " Whenever I am watching educational TikTok videos, I jot down any new word I see and then check up in the dictionary later"

Student Three: " I follow two medical doctors on TikTok. They do health talks and through their talks, I learn some vocabularies associated with medicine and health"

Student Four: " While watching entertainment videos, I do jot down any new word I encounter and then later check them up in the dictionary"

Student Five: " There is a lawyer I follow on TikTok who gives talks on human rights and political matters. I follow him because I want to learn vocabularies associated will law and politics.

Student Six: " I am always interested in TikTok videos of users who are very fluent in English language

Student Seven: " There are some intelligent comedians on TikTok who have good command of the English language; I follow them because I do learn new words from them.

Student Eight: " I follow one TikTok user who discusses five English vocabularies daily and their meanings.

Student Nine: " I follow some native speakers of English on TikTok and I learn new words from them.

Student Ten: I do search for English vocabulary videos on TikTok to watch. That's how I learn new words in English.

From the responses of the students in the interview, one can see how the students learn English vocabularies using TikTok application. Student one stated that he learns English vocabularies through TikTok by following some TikTok users who do tutorials on English vocabularies through TikTok. There are so many users on TikTok who do tutorials on how to build your English vocabularies, how to use strong English vocabularies and so on. This is therefore one of the ways through which students learn English vocabularies through TikTok.

Student Two pointed out that she learns English vocabularies through TikTok by jotting down any new words she encounters while watching educational TikTok videos. Indeed, this is one effective way through which students can learn English vocabularies through TikTok. In Educational TikTok videos, many words are used which students may not be conversant with. By jotting down those words and checking them up in the dictionary later, the students could build their English vocabularies.

Student Three stated that he has the ambition of becoming a medical doctor and so he follows some medical doctors on TikTok who give health talks and from these he learn words associated



with medicine and health. This is one way through which students can gain mastery of English registers in different fields of study. By watching TikTok videos done by professionals in different fields of study, the students can learn the vocabularies that are used in those fields of study. There are medical jargons; engineering jargons and so on. All these are exposed to the students when they watch TikTok videos by professionals in different fields of study.

Students Four pointed out that she learns English vocabularies through TikTok by jotting down any new words she encounters while watching entertainment videos. Even in entertainment videos on TikTok, some strong English vocabularies are used. The students can as well learn English vocabularies by keenly paying attention to the new words used in entertainment videos. Some entertainment videos come in the form of well-structured dramas with careful chosen vocabularies. The students could build their vocabularies through this means.

Student Five stated that he is keenly interested in learning English vocabularies associated with law and politics and as a result, he follows lawyers on TikTok who give talks on politics and law. The students can learn strong English vocabularies associated with the field of their interest by watching videos done by experts in those fields. A check through TikTok confirms that there are TikTok users who are legal practitioners and they usually speak about so many things concerning human rights and so on. By watching their videos, the students will be acquainted with the legal jargons which can also be used in their daily lives.

Student Six indicated that she is very interested in TikTok users who are very fluent in English language. This means that by following TikTok users who are very fluent in English language, she learns English vocabularies. This is very true considering the fact that a good orator must make use of various vocabularies to spice up his or her speeches. By watching videos by such orators one can jot down so many new words which one can later check up in the dictionary. Even by watching the videos alone, one can conjecture the meanings of the words used through the contexts of usages.

Student Seven stated that she follows some intelligent comedians on TikTok who have good command of the English language and learns English vocabularies from them. Of course, some comedians are good with deployment of English vocabularies and so students who watch their videos are likely going to find one or two new words to learn.

Student Eight pointed out that he follows one TikTok user who discusses five unfamiliar English vocabularies everyday. In this regard, the student learns English vocabularies by mastering five English vocabularies daily. A check on TikTok reveals that there are users who are dedicated to introducing English vocabularies daily which they believe many people are not familiar with. This is one very good way of using TikTok to learn English vocabularies.

Student Nine revealed that she follows some native speakers of English on TikTok and learns English vocabularies from them. Indeed, when one listens to native speakers of English on TikTok, one is likely to learn one or two words to build his or her vocabularies.





Student Ten indicated that she do search for TikTok videos on English vocabularies to watch. By doing so, she learns English vocabularies. This is another good way of learning English vocabularies through TikTok just as one can conveniently access such videos, watch them with keen attention and jot down vocabularies of interest.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The results of the study show that majority of the students are aware that TikTok has contents that are educational in nature. They know that TikTok can be used as a tool for learning different subjects. Consequently, majority of the respondents agreed that TikTok offers them the opportunity to learn new English vocabularies. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Du (2023), and Alshreef and Khadawardi (2023) who both studied the effect of Tik Tok on English vocabulary learning and found that Tik Tok is an effective application for improving the language abilities of students in English as well as their performance in the vocabulary acquisition process. TikTok assists and inspire students in acquiring English in general and vocabulary in particular (Du, 2023). There are many contents on TikTok which can enhance students' vocabulary development. TikTok provides opportunities to master registers of different fields of endeavor. TikTok provides students with the opportunity to learn how to pronounce English words and use them in sentences. This means that they do not only watch videos where some English words are explained but as well watch videos where those words are used contextually.

The finding also shows that majority of the respondents agree that learning English vocabularies through TikTok is actually fun. There is no strict rules and regulations guiding the learning just as it is in the classroom. The students are free to watch the video as many times as they wish. The body gestures of the speakers in the videos can also provide comic effect for the students while watching the videos. Learning English vocabularies through TikTok increases students' confidence to communicate in English. This means that the students who use TikTok to learn English vocabularies have more vocabularies to express themselves than students who do not make use of it. It is a known fact that students who have limited words to express themselves in English language always avoid speaking especially in the public. Students who know many English words to express themselves are always confident when they are speaking in the public. TikTok contents on English vocabularies can be accessed anytime, anywhere. What this means is that there are no restrictions to times and places where TikTok contents on English vocabularies can be accessed. All that the learner needs to have is data for browsing. The learner is free to choose any convenient time to learn through the videos. The students while learning English



vocabularies through TikTok is not under compulsion like in the classroom situation. As a result of this, students feel relaxed and learn whatever English vocabularies they want through Tik Tok.

### Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that TikTok application positively contributes to students' learning of English vocabularies. Due to the fact that many individuals and professionals use TikTok to showcase who they are, a user of TikTok has wide range of contents to choose from. Learning English vocabularies through TikTok is fun and makes the students study English vocabularies independently. It is trite to say that TikTok is a tool of distraction to students, however, TikTok, when properly utilized through thorough guidance can make students learn vocabulary faster and more efficiently.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

1. Curriculum designers should include Tik Tok application as part of the exercises for vocabulary teaching and learning in English language.
2. TikTok should be used not only for amusement but also to educate and acquire vocabulary.
3. Teachers should carefully choose videos that match their students' skills, interests, and learning styles to get the most out of Tik Tok application.

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