

TikTok-Assisted Vocabulary Learning Among Indonesian EFL Learners: A Quasi-Experimental Study in Junior High School Context

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the potential of TikTok-assisted instruction in supporting vocabulary learning among Indonesian EFL learners in a junior high school context. Although previous studies have highlighted the usefulness of social media platforms for language learning, empirical evidence regarding the integration of TikTok-based activities into structured classroom instruction, particularly among junior high school students in Indonesia, remains limited. This study employed a quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group involving 50 ninth-grade students at *SMP Negeri 4 Palopo*, Indonesia. The participants were divided into an experimental group ($n = 25$) receiving vocabulary instruction supported by short English TikTok videos and a control group ($n = 25$) receiving conventional vocabulary instruction. Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests and analyzed using descriptive statistics, normality and homogeneity tests, paired-sample t-tests, and independent-sample t-tests. The findings indicated that both groups showed improvement after instruction; however, the experimental group demonstrated greater vocabulary gains, increasing from a mean score of 60.20 to 91.92, compared with an increase from 61.04 to 67.48 in the control group. Statistical analysis revealed a significant improvement within the experimental group ($p < 0.05$) and a significant difference between groups after the intervention ($p < 0.05$). These findings suggest that TikTok-assisted instruction may serve as a valuable supplementary approach for providing contextualized and engaging vocabulary learning experiences in EFL classrooms. The study contributes to the growing discussion on the pedagogical integration of short-form digital media in language education, particularly within Indonesian secondary school contexts.

Keywords: TikTok; Vocabulary Mastery; EFL; Digital Learning; Short English videos

INTRODUCTION

Language competency is largely dependent on vocabulary, which is the basis for all forms of efficient communication, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Chiriac, 2025). Because learners have little exposure to English outside of the classroom, vocabulary development is especially crucial in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) circumstances. As a result, teaching vocabulary becomes one of the most crucial aspects of teaching English (Ainiyyah et al., 2026). However, teaching vocabulary in EFL classrooms remains challenging due to the large number of lexical items students must acquire and the complexity of using vocabulary accurately in different communicative contexts. These challenges require teachers to adopt innovative instructional strategies that enable students not only to memorize new words but also to understand and use them appropriately in authentic situations. Recent research highlights that young EFL learners benefit from vocabulary materials that incorporate visual support and interactive activities, as these elements can facilitate vocabulary understanding and retention (Hartina et al., 2026). Therefore, instructional materials that provide contextual and multimodal learning experiences are increasingly important in EFL vocabulary development.

Learners' limited exposure to English outside of the classroom is one of the main barriers to vocabulary development in EFL contexts (Amiati et al., 2026). Since students in non-English-speaking contexts seldom come into contact with English in their everyday lives, classroom education serves as their main source of language input. Nevertheless, classroom learning alone is often insufficient to promote substantial vocabulary growth (Kim, 2020). Limited exposure also reduces opportunities for incidental vocabulary learning through meaningful activities such as reading authentic texts or listening to natural conversations. Previous research has demonstrated that digital learning environments, including online extensive reading platforms, visual learning resources, and bilingual subtitles, can effectively compensate for this lack of language exposure by providing authentic and repeated input (Tampubolon et al., 2023). Moreover, emotionally engaging digital activities and interactive learning experiences have been found to enhance vocabulary retention and learner motivation.

Despite these advancements, conventional teaching approaches that prioritize rote memorization over meaningful language usage are still widely used in vocabulary education in many EFL classrooms (Haque et al., 2024). While learning vocabulary lists by heart may aid students in identifying individual terms, it seldom helps them comprehend meanings in context or use terminology correctly in everyday speech (Nation, 2022). As a result, learners often experience difficulty recalling and using newly learned vocabulary in speaking and writing activities. Previous studies have also reported that teacher-centered vocabulary instruction frequently reduces students' motivation and limits the development of effective vocabulary learning strategies (Matsuyama et al., 2019). Therefore, vocabulary instruction should shift from mechanical memorization toward more contextualized, interactive, and learner-centered approaches.

Another challenge lies in the instructional practices employed by teachers. Some educators may pay limited attention to explicit vocabulary instruction because of insufficient pedagogical strategies or limited access to appropriate teaching resources (Masrul & Wicaksono, 2023). Consequently, students receive inadequate vocabulary input and limited opportunities to practice newly acquired words (Teng, 2019). Effective vocabulary instruction should involve careful selection of target vocabulary, meaningful classroom activities, repeated exposure, and appropriate assessment to facilitate long-term vocabulary development (He & Godfroid, 2019). Without these essential components, students' lexical knowledge and overall English proficiency may develop slowly.

Preliminary classroom observations and informal interviews with an English teacher at *SMP Negeri 4 Palopo* indicated that ninth-grade students possessed relatively limited English vocabulary. Many students experienced difficulty recognizing common English words and lacked confidence in using them during classroom communication. These results point to the necessity for educational materials that can boost students' enthusiasm while also giving them relevant vocabulary practice and exposure.

Digital technology's quick development has revolutionized teaching methods, especially in language acquisition (Meniado, 2023). Teachers may create more dynamic, captivating, and student-centered learning environments with the use of digital platforms, which also provide students access to learning materials at any time and from any location (Saluky & Bahiyah, 2023). As members of the digital-native generation, today's students are highly familiar with smartphones, social media platforms, and online applications (Hammad, 2025). Consequently, integrating digital technology into English language instruction has become an increasingly effective strategy for improving learners' motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes (Yu et al., 2022). Rather than functioning solely as entertainment, digital media can serve as valuable educational resources when integrated appropriately into classroom instruction.

Among various social media platforms, TikTok has attracted considerable attention because of its short-form video format, which combines visual, auditory, and textual information within authentic communicative contexts (Stamenković & Mitrović, 2023). These characteristics make TikTok particularly suitable for vocabulary learning (Syarifah & Sholah, 2025). Short English videos expose learners to authentic language use while presenting vocabulary through meaningful situations, enabling students to associate words with images, sounds, and actions (Zayraey, 2025). Such multimodal input facilitates vocabulary retention more effectively than traditional memorization techniques. Furthermore, TikTok allows repeated exposure because students can replay videos multiple times, follow similar content, and engage with recurring vocabulary across different contexts (Rosa & Suhartatik, 2025). The platform also encourages active participation by enabling learners to create videos, write captions, and interact through comments using newly acquired vocabulary (Huang, 2021). Since TikTok aligns closely with

students' daily digital habits, it has the potential to increase learning motivation and reduce the perception that vocabulary learning is monotonous.

Despite these advantages, TikTok also presents several challenges. As a platform primarily designed for entertainment, it may distract students if instructional activities are not carefully planned (Hu et al., 2025). Moreover, the educational quality and linguistic accuracy of user-generated content vary considerably because uploaded videos are not subject to academic review. Without structured classroom guidance, students may become passive viewers rather than active language learners. In addition, unequal access to smartphones, internet connectivity, and technological facilities may limit the implementation of TikTok-based learning in certain educational settings.

Although previous studies have generally reported positive perceptions of TikTok and its potential to improve vocabulary learning, most of them have focused primarily on students' attitudes or general vocabulary gains (Alshreef & Khadawardi, 2023). Relatively few studies have examined how TikTok can be systematically integrated into classroom instruction, especially for junior high school pupils in Indonesian EFL settings when their exposure to English outside of the classroom is restricted. As a result, it is not possible to completely extrapolate the results of earlier studies to this educational setting.

The current study is unusual in that it uses a quasi-experimental design with experimental and control groups to include brief English TikTok videos into organized classroom instruction for ninth-grade students at *SMP Negeri 4 Palopo*. Unlike previous studies that mainly investigated students' perceptions or overall vocabulary achievement, this research evaluates vocabulary mastery through three measurable dimensions: recognizing word meanings, using vocabulary appropriately in context, and recalling target vocabulary. Furthermore, this research demonstrates how TikTok can function as a supplementary instructional medium that is systematically aligned with classroom learning objectives rather than being used merely as an entertainment platform.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary Learning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Context

Vocabulary knowledge represents a fundamental component of language proficiency because it supports learners' ability to understand and produce meaningful communication. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, vocabulary learning plays a particularly important role because learners often have limited opportunities to encounter English outside the classroom. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, learners may experience difficulties in comprehending texts, participating in conversations, and expressing their ideas effectively. Therefore, vocabulary development is considered an essential foundation for achieving broader English language competence.

Vocabulary knowledge involves more than simply memorizing word meanings. Nation (2022) explains that vocabulary knowledge consists of both receptive and productive dimensions. Receptive vocabulary refers to learners' ability to recognize and understand words when they encounter them in reading or listening activities, whereas productive vocabulary refers to the ability to use lexical items appropriately in speaking and writing. This distinction indicates that effective vocabulary instruction should not only focus on word recognition but also provide opportunities for learners to understand vocabulary in meaningful contexts and apply it appropriately.

However, vocabulary learning remains challenging for many EFL learners because vocabulary development requires continuous exposure, contextual understanding, and repeated practice. Learners who primarily depend on memorization of isolated word lists may recognize individual words but often experience difficulties in applying them in authentic communication contexts. Previous studies have emphasized that vocabulary instruction should provide meaningful input, repeated exposure, and opportunities for active language use to facilitate long-term vocabulary retention (He & Godfroid, 2019; Teng, 2019).

In traditional EFL classrooms, vocabulary teaching frequently relies on teacher explanations and textbook-based activities. Although these approaches can support basic vocabulary recognition, they may provide limited exposure to authentic language use and reduce opportunities for students to encounter vocabulary in various contexts. Consequently, researchers have increasingly explored digital learning environments as alternative resources that can provide richer linguistic input and more engaging learning experiences (Meniado, 2023; Yu et al., 2022).

Theoretical Perspective of Digital-Assisted Vocabulary Learning

The use of digital media in vocabulary learning can be understood through theories of multimedia learning and second language acquisition. Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning explains that learners process information through interconnected verbal and visual channels. Learning becomes more effective when linguistic information is presented together with meaningful visual representations because learners can establish stronger connections between new information and existing knowledge. In vocabulary learning, the combination of words, images, sounds, and contextual examples may facilitate learners' understanding and retention of unfamiliar lexical items.

This theoretical perspective is particularly relevant to short-form video platforms such as TikTok. Unlike traditional vocabulary materials that frequently present words in isolation, short-form videos provide multimodal input through spoken language, written captions, visual illustrations, and situational contexts. These elements may help learners associate vocabulary with meaning, pronunciation, and usage. Therefore, TikTok-assisted vocabulary learning can be viewed as a form of

multimedia-based instruction that provides learners with multiple representations of lexical information.

In addition to multimedia learning theory, Krashen's Input Hypothesis provides another theoretical explanation for the potential contribution of digital video-based learning. According to Krashen, language acquisition occurs when learners receive comprehensible input that is slightly beyond their current level of competence. For EFL learners who have limited opportunities to interact with English outside the classroom, digital platforms may provide additional exposure to authentic language input.

Short-form English videos can provide comprehensible input through visual support, subtitles, and contextual information. Furthermore, the possibility of replaying videos allows learners to encounter target vocabulary repeatedly, which may strengthen vocabulary recognition and retention. Thus, the theoretical relationship between TikTok-assisted instruction and vocabulary learning lies in its ability to provide meaningful, multimodal, and repeated language exposure.

TikTok-Assisted Learning in EFL Education

The increasing integration of digital technology has transformed the way learners access and engage with educational resources. Social media platforms, which were initially developed for communication and entertainment purposes, have increasingly been explored as potential learning environments. In language education, social media provides opportunities for learners to interact with authentic materials, participate in digital communication, and extend learning beyond classroom boundaries (Meniado, 2023; Yu et al., 2022).

Among various social media platforms, TikTok has attracted attention due to its short-form video format and multimodal characteristics. TikTok combines several forms of information, including audio, visual content, text captions, and user interaction. These features distinguish TikTok from conventional learning media because vocabulary can be presented through authentic situations rather than isolated definitions. Learners can observe how words are pronounced, used, and interpreted within particular contexts.

Several studies have indicated the potential value of TikTok for English language learning. Alshreef and Khadawardi (2023) reported that learners perceived TikTok as a useful medium for vocabulary learning because of its accessibility and engaging characteristics. Similarly, Alghameeti (2022) found that secondary school learners viewed TikTok positively as a resource for expanding English vocabulary knowledge. These findings suggest that TikTok may support vocabulary development by increasing learner exposure and motivation.

However, the educational implementation of TikTok also requires careful instructional planning. Since TikTok contains user-generated content, the linguistic

quality and educational relevance of videos may vary. Without appropriate teacher guidance, students may focus on entertainment rather than learning objectives. Therefore, the effectiveness of TikTok-assisted learning depends not only on the platform itself but also on how teachers select materials, design activities, and integrate digital resources into classroom instruction.

In the context of vocabulary learning, TikTok-assisted instruction may provide several pedagogical advantages. First, contextualized videos allow learners to understand vocabulary through real-life situations. Second, repeated viewing opportunities may increase exposure to target words. Third, multimodal presentation may support vocabulary comprehension by connecting linguistic forms with visual and auditory information. These characteristics suggest that TikTok has potential as a supplementary medium for EFL vocabulary instruction.

Previous empirical studies have provided preliminary evidence regarding the relationship between TikTok use and vocabulary learning outcomes. Studies have generally reported that TikTok-based activities can increase learner engagement, provide meaningful vocabulary exposure, and support vocabulary development. For example, Tampubolon et al. (2023) found that integrating TikTok into English instruction improved vocabulary mastery among junior high school students. Similarly, Dorasa et al. (2025) reported that students receiving TikTok-based instruction achieved higher vocabulary performance compared with those receiving conventional instruction.

Although previous findings indicate promising educational potential, several limitations remain. First, many existing studies have focused primarily on learners' perceptions, attitudes, or general experiences rather than objectively measuring vocabulary learning outcomes. Second, research contexts have frequently involved different educational levels, making it difficult to generalize findings to junior high school EFL learners. Third, limited research has examined TikTok-assisted vocabulary instruction through a quasi-experimental design comparing experimental and control groups within Indonesian secondary school settings.

Therefore, further empirical investigation is needed to understand how TikTok-assisted instruction contributes to vocabulary mastery in formal EFL classroom contexts. Addressing this gap, the present study examines the contribution of TikTok-assisted vocabulary learning among Indonesian junior high school learners using a quasi-experimental design. By comparing students receiving TikTok-assisted instruction with those receiving conventional instruction, this study aims to provide empirical evidence regarding the pedagogical potential of short-form digital media for vocabulary learning.

METHOD

Design and Samples

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design using a non-equivalent control group design to examine the contribution of TikTok-assisted vocabulary instruction to students' vocabulary learning outcomes. A quasi-experimental approach was selected because random assignment of participants was not feasible within the existing classroom structure. Therefore, intact classes were used as experimental and control groups while maintaining the natural classroom setting. The research involved two groups: an experimental group that received vocabulary instruction supported by short English TikTok videos and a control group that received conventional vocabulary instruction. Both groups completed a pre-test before the intervention and a post-test after the intervention to measure changes in students' vocabulary mastery.

The effectiveness of the instructional approach was examined by comparing vocabulary score improvements within each group and differences in learning outcomes between the experimental and control groups. This design enabled the researcher to evaluate whether TikTok-assisted instruction contributed to greater vocabulary development compared with conventional classroom instruction. The participants of this study were ninth-grade students at *SMP Negeri 4 Palopo*, Indonesia. The study population consisted of all ninth-grade students enrolled in nine classes at the school. The research site was selected because preliminary classroom observations indicated that students experienced difficulties in English vocabulary recognition and use.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select the research participants. This sampling approach was chosen because the study required groups with comparable academic characteristics and learning conditions. Based on recommendations from the English teacher and similarities in students' academic backgrounds, two classes were selected as research participants. One class was assigned as the experimental group, while the other class served as the control group. Initially, each selected class consisted of 30 students; however, only students who completed both the pre-test and post-test were included in the final analysis. Therefore, the final sample consisted of 50 students, with 25 students in the experimental group and 25 students in the control group. The experimental group received TikTok-assisted vocabulary instruction, whereas the control group received conventional vocabulary instruction using teacher explanations and textbook-based materials. The use of comparable groups allowed the researcher to examine differences in vocabulary learning outcomes following different instructional approaches.

Instrument and Procedure

The primary instrument used in this study was a vocabulary achievement test administered as a pre-test and post-test. The instrument was designed to measure students' vocabulary mastery, including their ability to recognize word meanings, understand vocabulary in contextual situations, and recall target vocabulary introduced during the instructional period. The same test format was administered to both the experimental and control groups before and after the intervention to enable comparison of students' vocabulary development. The use of pre-test and post-test measurements allowed the researcher to identify changes in students' vocabulary performance after receiving different instructional treatments.

To ensure the appropriateness of the instrument, the vocabulary test was developed based on the learning objectives and vocabulary materials taught during the intervention. The content of the instrument was aligned with the vocabulary learning outcomes targeted in the study. The intervention was conducted over four consecutive weeks. During the first week, both groups completed a pre-test to identify their initial vocabulary mastery level before the instructional treatment.

During the second and third weeks, the experimental group participated in vocabulary learning activities supported by short English TikTok videos, while the control group received conventional vocabulary instruction. The TikTok videos were selected based on their relevance to the vocabulary learning objectives and were integrated into classroom activities rather than used solely as entertainment content. The TikTok-assisted learning activities were designed to expose students to vocabulary through multimodal input, including spoken pronunciation, written captions, visual representation, and contextual examples. Students were encouraged to identify new vocabulary, interpret meanings based on context, and reinforce understanding through classroom discussions and learning activities.

Meanwhile, students in the control group learned vocabulary through conventional teaching methods involving teacher explanations and textbook-based exercises. Both groups received similar vocabulary learning objectives, while the difference was the instructional medium used during the learning process. In the fourth week, both groups completed the post-test to evaluate changes in vocabulary mastery after the intervention. The comparison between pre-test and post-test results was used to determine differences in vocabulary learning outcomes between the two instructional approaches.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. Descriptive statistics were initially conducted to summarize students' vocabulary performance, including mean scores and learning gains obtained by each group. Before conducting hypothesis testing, assumption tests were performed to determine whether the data met the requirements for parametric analysis. The

Shapiro-Wilk test was used to examine data normality, while Levene's test was conducted to assess variance homogeneity between groups.

After confirming the assumptions of normality and homogeneity, paired-sample t-tests were conducted to examine whether significant differences existed between students' pre-test and post-test scores within each group. Furthermore, an independent-sample t-test was performed to compare post-test performance between the experimental and control groups. The statistical analyses were conducted to determine whether TikTok-assisted vocabulary instruction was associated with greater improvement in students' vocabulary mastery compared with conventional instruction.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Preliminary Analysis: Normality and Homogeneity Tests

Before conducting hypothesis testing, preliminary analyses were performed to examine whether the data met the assumptions required for parametric statistical procedures. The normality of the data distribution was assessed using the Shapiro–Wilk test, while the homogeneity of variance between groups was examined using Levene's test.

Table 1
Results of Normality and Homogeneity Tests

Analysis	Test	Significance Value	Interpretation
Normality	Shapiro–Wilk (Pre-test)	0.200	Normally distributed
Normality	Shapiro–Wilk (Post-test)	0.178	Normally distributed
Homogeneity	Levene's Test (Pre-test)	0.478	Homogeneous variance
Homogeneity	Levene's Test (Post-test)	0.412	Homogeneous variance

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that the data satisfied the assumptions for parametric analysis. The Shapiro–Wilk test showed that both pre-test and post-test scores were normally distributed because the significance values were greater than 0.05. In addition, Levene's test indicated that the variance between the experimental and control groups was homogeneous. These results confirmed that parametric statistical analyses, including paired-sample and independent-sample t-tests, were appropriate for examining differences in students' vocabulary learning outcomes.

Students' Vocabulary Performance Before and After the Intervention

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to examine changes in students' vocabulary performance before and after the implementation of the instructional treatments. The comparison of students' vocabulary scores between the experimental and control groups is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of Students' Vocabulary Scores

Group	Number of Students	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Mean Gain
Experimental Group	25	60.20	91.92	31.72
Control Group	25	61.04	67.48	6.44

As shown in Table 2, both groups demonstrated similar initial vocabulary performance before the intervention. The experimental group obtained a mean pre-test score of 60.20, while the control group obtained a mean score of 61.04. The small difference between the two groups indicates that both groups had comparable levels of vocabulary knowledge prior to receiving different instructional treatments.

Following the intervention, both groups showed improvement in vocabulary performance; however, the magnitude of improvement differed considerably. The experimental group achieved an increase of 31.72 points, with the mean score improving from 60.20 to 91.92. Meanwhile, the control group only showed an improvement of 6.44 points, increasing from 61.04 to 67.48. These findings suggest that students who received TikTok-assisted vocabulary instruction demonstrated greater improvement compared with students who received conventional vocabulary instruction. The descriptive results provide initial evidence that integrating short-form English videos into vocabulary learning activities may provide additional support for vocabulary development.

Within-Group Differences in Vocabulary Improvement

To determine whether students' vocabulary improvement within each group was statistically significant, paired-sample t-tests were conducted. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Paired-Sample t-Test Results

Group	Mean Difference	Significance Value (p)	Interpretation
Experimental Group	31.72	0.000	Significant improvement

Group	Mean Difference	Significance Value (p)	Interpretation
Control Group	6.44	0.158	Not significant

The paired-sample t-test results revealed different patterns of vocabulary improvement between the two groups. The experimental group showed a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that students who participated in TikTok-assisted vocabulary instruction experienced significant improvement after the intervention. In contrast, although the control group demonstrated an increase in vocabulary scores, the improvement was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). This finding suggests that conventional vocabulary instruction resulted in limited improvement during the research period. The difference in within-group results indicates that TikTok-assisted instruction provided additional learning support that enhanced students' vocabulary development beyond the improvement obtained through conventional instruction.

Between-Group Differences in Vocabulary Learning Outcomes

An independent-sample t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in post-test vocabulary performance between the experimental and control groups. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Independent-Sample t-Test Results

Comparison	Experimental mean	Control mean	Mean difference	p value	Interpretation
Post-test Scores	91.92	67.48	24.44	0.000	Significant difference

The results in Table 4 indicate a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups after the intervention ($p < 0.05$). The experimental group achieved a higher post-test mean score (91.92) compared with the control group (67.48), resulting in a mean difference of 24.44 points. This finding indicates that students who received TikTok-assisted vocabulary instruction achieved significantly higher vocabulary learning outcomes than students who experienced conventional instruction. Therefore, the integration of TikTok-based activities into vocabulary instruction was associated with improved vocabulary mastery among junior high school EFL learners.

The findings of this study indicate that students who received TikTok-assisted vocabulary instruction demonstrated greater improvement in vocabulary mastery compared with students who received conventional vocabulary instruction. Although both groups showed improvement after the instructional period, the experimental group achieved substantially higher learning gains. This finding

suggests that integrating short-form digital videos into vocabulary instruction may provide additional opportunities for learners to engage with English vocabulary through contextualized and meaningful learning experiences.

The improvement observed in the experimental group may be associated with the characteristics of TikTok as a multimodal learning environment. Unlike conventional vocabulary instruction that frequently presents lexical items through explanation, translation, or isolated exercises, TikTok-assisted activities expose learners to vocabulary through multiple representations, including spoken language, written captions, visual information, and contextual situations. Such multimodal exposure may help learners establish stronger connections between vocabulary forms, meanings, and usage contexts.

This interpretation is consistent with Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which proposes that meaningful learning occurs when learners actively integrate verbal and visual information rather than processing information through a single channel. In language learning contexts, multimedia materials that combine text, audio, and images may facilitate comprehension by providing learners with complementary sources of information. Previous research on technology-enhanced language learning has similarly emphasized that multimedia environments can support vocabulary development by increasing contextual understanding and learner engagement (Mayer, 2021; Stockwell, 2022). Therefore, the higher vocabulary gains observed in the experimental group may be related to the opportunity to process new lexical information through multiple modes of representation.

The findings also support principles of vocabulary learning proposed by Nation (2022), who emphasizes that vocabulary knowledge develops through repeated encounters with words across meaningful contexts. Vocabulary learning does not occur effectively through a single exposure; rather, learners require multiple opportunities to notice, understand, and use new lexical items. In the present study, TikTok videos provided repeated exposure to target vocabulary through short segments that could be reviewed multiple times during learning activities. This repeated exposure may have supported students' ability to recognize and recall vocabulary items after the intervention.

Furthermore, the findings can be interpreted through Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which highlights the importance of comprehensible input in second language development. Indonesian EFL learners often have limited opportunities to encounter authentic English outside the classroom. TikTok-assisted learning may provide additional exposure to English through short videos containing pronunciation models, contextual expressions, and visual cues that support comprehension. However, the contribution of such input depends on appropriate instructional guidance and the selection of learning materials that match students' learning objectives.

The results of this study are consistent with previous empirical findings regarding the use of TikTok and short-form videos in language learning. Alshreef and Khadawardi (2023) reported that learners perceived TikTok as a useful medium for English vocabulary learning because of its accessibility, engaging characteristics, and ability to provide authentic language exposure. Similarly, Tampubolon et al. (2023) found that TikTok integration was associated with improved vocabulary mastery among junior high school learners. These findings support the current study by suggesting that short-form video platforms may function as supplementary resources for vocabulary development.

Recent studies have further highlighted the role of specific TikTok features in supporting language learning. Punkhoom et al. (2025), for example, reported that TikTok-enhanced learning activities contributed to vocabulary development among EFL learners, while also emphasizing the importance of combining digital content with teacher-guided classroom activities. Similarly, research examining learners' engagement with English TikTok videos has suggested that cognitive and affective engagement with short-form video content is positively associated with self-directed vocabulary learning practices. These findings reinforce the argument that the educational value of TikTok is not solely derived from the platform itself, but from how learners interact with the content and how teachers integrate it into instructional design.

The present study also extends previous research by providing evidence from a quasi-experimental classroom setting involving Indonesian junior high school EFL learners. While several previous studies have examined learners' perceptions, attitudes, or informal experiences with TikTok, this study compared TikTok-assisted instruction with conventional instruction through pre-test and post-test measurements. Therefore, the findings provide additional evidence regarding the potential contribution of short-form digital media within formal vocabulary instruction contexts.

Importantly, the findings should not be interpreted as indicating that TikTok alone determines vocabulary learning success. Digital media effectiveness is influenced by several factors, including instructional planning, teacher facilitation, learner engagement, and the quality of selected materials. As emphasized in technology-enhanced language learning research, technology functions as a learning support rather than a replacement for effective pedagogy. In this study, TikTok was implemented as a structured supplementary resource aligned with vocabulary learning objectives, which may explain why students in the experimental group demonstrated greater improvement.

From a pedagogical perspective, this study suggests that carefully designed TikTok-assisted activities may provide an alternative approach for creating engaging and contextualized vocabulary learning experiences. Teachers may consider incorporating short-form videos as supplementary materials, particularly in EFL contexts where learners have limited exposure to English outside the classroom.

Nevertheless, future research involving larger samples, longer intervention periods, and different educational contexts is needed to further examine the sustainability and broader applicability of TikTok-assisted vocabulary learning.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the contribution of TikTok-assisted vocabulary instruction to vocabulary learning outcomes among Indonesian junior high school EFL learners. Using a quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group, the study compared students who received TikTok-assisted instruction with those who received conventional vocabulary instruction. The findings indicate that both groups demonstrated improvement after the instructional period; however, students in the experimental group achieved greater vocabulary gains than students in the control group. The significant differences observed within the experimental group and between the two groups suggest that TikTok-assisted instruction may provide additional support for vocabulary learning when integrated into structured classroom activities. The potential contribution of TikTok-assisted instruction may be related to its multimodal characteristics, which allow learners to encounter vocabulary through a combination of spoken language, written captions, visual representations, and contextual examples. These features may facilitate meaningful vocabulary processing by providing learners with richer language input compared with conventional vocabulary activities that rely primarily on explanation and memorization.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on technology-enhanced language learning by providing empirical evidence regarding the integration of short-form digital videos into formal EFL classroom instruction. Unlike studies that mainly investigate learners' perceptions of TikTok, the present study examined vocabulary learning outcomes through a comparative classroom-based approach involving experimental and control groups. From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that TikTok may serve as a supplementary learning resource to support more engaging and contextualized vocabulary instruction. However, TikTok should not be considered a replacement for effective teaching practices. The educational value of the platform depends on appropriate material selection, teacher guidance, and alignment between digital content and learning objectives. Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study was conducted with a relatively small sample from a single junior high school and involved a short intervention period. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within this specific educational context and should not be generalized beyond similar settings without further investigation. Future studies are recommended to involve larger samples, longer intervention periods, and diverse educational contexts to examine the sustainability and broader applicability of TikTok-assisted vocabulary learning.

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