Is TikTok an Effective Technology Tool in English Vocabulary Expansion?

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Abstract

In recent years, technology has had a huge impact on learning and teaching processes. TikTok is a technology tool that is prominently used by young adults. Vocabulary is the most essential component of a language, and learners can improve their vocabulary via this attractive tool. This paper investigates the attitudes of Saudi secondary school learners towards using TikTok videos in English vocabulary learning and how TikTok videos contribute to expanding English language vocabulary in Saudi secondary school learners. The study uses a quantitative method to collect data using a survey questionnaire. The participants consist of 50 secondary school students. The outcomes illustrate that students have a positive attitude towards using TikTok in learning English vocabulary. Moreover, students note that TikTok offers various features and options that assist in expanding English vocabulary.

Keywords: expanding, TikTok, vocabulary

1. Introduction

Vocabulary is one of the foremost imperative components in improving language. It is the essential building block that makes up English sentences, and it is a critical component for second-language students, as limited second-language vocabulary hinders fruitful integration (Alqahtani, 2015). Vocabulary is defined as the linguistic elements that connect the four language aptitudes of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in foreign language learning (Huyen & Nga, 2003). Learning English vocabulary requires learners to be independent, demonstrate effectiveness in communication, use correct words and phrases, and use strategies that assist them in using vocabulary accurately (Bai, 2018). Learning new second-language vocabulary and expanding one's linguistic achievements effectively improve other second-language skills.

In daily life, students have recently discovered new vocabulary through various online tools, the main tool being social media. The use of social media can help increase learners' English proficiency because most social media content is in English. Al Arif (2019) noted that foreign-language learners show a positive attitude towards using social media when learning English. This helps to improve their motivation and to learn and acquire English. Thus, technology integration has a huge impact on learners' learning styles and acquisition of novel skills. Using applications for educational purposes can increase learners' impulses, self-study habits, and confidence in novel language learning; apps are also beneficial for learners in new vocabulary acquisition (Wang, 2017).

An English word-learning application allows students to learn self-regulation through the mechanism of the app (Chang, Chen, & Yang, 2018). TikTok is a recent app that has spread around the world and is frequently used in Saudi Arabia. TikTok launched in September 2016 and has established itself as the most downloaded application (Yang, 2020). According to Hayes, Stott, Lamb, and Hurst (2020), TikTok is a social media application recognized around the world as a platform that permits users to generate their own 15- to 60-second videos. According to Rahman (2021), TikTok offers several types of video content. Users can not only watch and imitate but also generate their own videos effortlessly. TikTok is considered an easy-to-use application where users can comment, edit, and share content via various social media platforms (Khlaif & Salha, 2021). According to Khlaif and Salha (2021), TikTok videos have revolutionised the education and mastery of skills among people with similar attributes, enabling novel ways of communicating via visually compelling materials. Sari, Hayati, and Suganda (2019) stated that social media communications can help learners improve their vocabulary and literacy abilities by providing them with opportunities to be exposed to the language. Rahman (2021) noted that learners' mastery of vocabulary is not only about understanding words but also about understanding their meaning, which is

particularly related to commonly used vocabulary and phrases on social media, especially on TikTok. Short videos on TikTok that are comprised of English content assist participants to improve their English vocabulary (Anumanthan & Hashim, 2022). These videos attract learners, as most of the creators are native speakers that use simple ways to introduce the content, which often includes images.

The main goal of this study was to explore how TikTok videos can assist in expanding the English vocabulary of Saudi people. This study answered the following questions:

1) What is the attitude of English language learners towards using TikTok videos in vocabulary learning?

2) How do TikTok videos contribute to expanding English language vocabulary in Saudi secondary school learners?

2. Methods

A quantitative method was used to determine the attitudes and perceptions of Saudi secondary school learners in using TikTok to expand their English vocabulary and to determine how the videos of TikTok assist in expanding English vocabulary. This approach allowed us to gain a better understanding of and clarification in answering the questions of the study. An online survey was created using Google Forms, and the link was sent via WhatsApp. The sample for this study consisted of 50 Saudi secondary school learners. Data collection took nearly three weeks. The questionnaire had 25 questions, with 21 questions using a 5-point Likert scale (from strongly agree: 5 to strongly disagree: 1). Questions were adopted from prior research (Binti Mistar & Embi, 2016; Khan, Radzuan, Farooqi, Shahbaz, & Khan, 2021) and translated from English to Arabic with adjustments to suit this current study. The data were quantitatively examined to identify the participants' perceptions and attitudes towards using TikTok in learning English vocabulary and how this tool contributes to expanding English language vocabulary in Saudi learners.

3. Findings and Discussion

The participants of this study were 50 Saudi secondary school learners between 18 and 20 years old: 17 males and 33 females. Most of them had a TikTok account and had been using TikTok for 2 to 3 years; approximately 76% of the participants accessed TikTok more than 4 times a day.

Table 1. Number of participants in the study

Population	Total	Percentage
Male	17	34%
Female	33	66%
Total	50	100%

Table 2. Learner's attitude and perception toward using TikTok in learning English vocabulary

NO	Item	5	4	3	2	1
1	The use of TikTok increased my language learning productively.	27 (54%)	14 (28%)	7 (14%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)
2	Using TikTok was effectively improving my language learning	27 (54%)	13 (26%)	8 (16%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)
3	Learning English language using TikTok is convenient for me	29 (58%)	16 (32%)	10 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
4	TikTok application helped my vocabulary retention and its usage	25 (50%)	15 (30%)	8 (16%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)
5	I will use TikTok in learning vocabulary in future	25 (50%)	13 (26%)	12 (24%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
6	I will not stop using TikTok for learning vocabulary	25 (50%)	15 (30%)	6 (12%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
7	I am excited to use TikTok for vocabulary learning	26 (52%)	17 (34%)	6 (12%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
8	I use TikTok to share new vocabulary with my friends	27 (54%)	15 (30%)	5 (10%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)

Strongly agree=5 Agree=4 Not certain=3 Disagree=2 strongly disagree=1

Table 2 illustrates the learners' attitudes and perceptions about using the TikTok application in English vocabulary learning. Fifty-four percent of the participants strongly agreed that using TikTok increased their language learning productivity and improved their language learning in an effective way. Moreover, 58% of the participants noted that learning English via TikTok is convenient. More than half of the participants strongly agreed that TikTok helped in vocabulary retention. In addition, 50% of the participants strongly agreed that they would use TikTok in the future to learn English vocabulary. The majority of the participants noted that they were excited about learning vocabulary through TikTok and that they share novel vocabulary with their friends.

Table 3. TikTok videos contribution to expanding English language vocabulary

NO	Item	5	4	3	2	1
1	Vocabulary learning through TikTok is a fun way of language learning	31 (62%)	15 (30%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
2	TikTok was easy to use	33 (66%)	15 (30%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
3	It was easy for me to become skilful in discovering information via TikTok.	29 (58%)	14 (28%)	7 (14%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
4	TikTok makes obstacles in learning vocabulary	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	10 (20%)	32 (64%)	5 (10%)
5	TikTok usage is waste of time for vocabulary learning	0 (0%)	2 (4.1%)	5 (10.4%)	32 (65.3%)	10 (20.4%)
6	The utilization of TikTok increased the vocabulary learning chances	30 (61.2%)	14 (28.6%)	4 (8.2%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
7	TikTok offered varied ways of vocabulary learning	32 (65.3%)	11 (22.4%)	6 (12.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
8	Vocabulary learning through TikTok makes attractive learning	29 (58%)	15 (30%)	5 (10%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
9	It takes less time to pass on the Vocabulary related information through TikTok	24 (48%)	15 (30%)	3 (6%)	7 (14%)	1 (2%)
10	Vocabulary through TikTok saves the time	25 (50%)	19 (38%)	6 (12%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
11	Difficulties level is varied in Learning vocabulary via TikTok	27 (54%)	13 (26%)	10 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
12	I found that TikTok is useful in my English language learning	28 (56%)	14 (28.6%)	7 (14%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)
13	Learning English Vocabulary through TikTok is a good idea	29 (58%)	19 (38%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Strongly agree=5 Agree=4 Not certain=3 Disagree=2 strongly disagree=1

According to Table 3, 62% of the learners strongly agreed that learning vocabulary through TikTok is a fun way to learn, while 2% disagreed. Additionally, 33 learners (66%) acknowledged that TikTok was easy to use. Significantly, 29 learners (58%) revealed that they were skilful in discovering information via TikTok; however, 7 learners (14%) were not certain about that. Furthermore, 32 learners (64%) strongly disagreed that TikTok could create obstacles in learning vocabulary and that using it was a waste of time for vocabulary learning. Regarding the statement, "The utilization of TikTok increased the vocabulary learning chances," 30 learners (61.2%) strongly agreed, 14 learners (28.6%) agreed, and 1 learner (2%) disagreed. Furthermore, 32 learners (65.3%) strongly agreed that TikTok offers varied ways of vocabulary learning, 29 learners (58%) strongly agreed that vocabulary learning through TikTok makes learning attractive, and 6 students were not certain. Twenty-four learners (48%) strongly agreed that vocabulary-related information through TikTok takes less time to pass on, while 7 learners (14%) disagreed. Six learners (12%) were not certain whether TikTok saved time when learning vocabulary, and 25 learners (50%) strongly agreed that TikTok saved time when learning vocabulary. Twenty-seven learners (54%) strongly agreed that TikTok's various difficulty levels varied in learning vocabulary, and 10 learners (20%) were not certain. Furthermore, 28 learners (56%) strongly agreed

that TikTok is useful in English language learning, and 29 learners (58%) strongly agreed that learning English vocabulary through TikTok is a good idea.

The outcomes of the questionnaire indicate that students have a positive attitude towards using TikTok to learn English language vocabulary. TikTok contributes significantly to improving learners' English vocabulary, as it provides different levels of vocabulary to be learned. Moreover, TikTok contributes to expanding learners' vocabulary in an effective way, as it offers many attractive features. Through TikTok's features, learners may learn multiple novel words using subtitles and captions in a video (Bernard, 2021). TikTok also allows learners to share videos with their friends, which helps to easily spread content. Most learners reported that they enjoy sharing videos on other social media platforms (Bernard, 2021), such as WhatsApp. Most learners are in favour of using TikTok, and noted that they would use it consistently in the future to learn new vocabulary. Traore and Kyei-Blankson (2011) similarly confirmed that learners develop their learning via the simultaneous utilisation of visual and audio, as they can listen to the vocabulary whilst they are visually stimulated by pictures and graphs. Because learning vocabulary using TikTok has different ways to introduce information, learners can easily learn vocabulary by watching videos and listening to the pronunciation of words. According to Ktoridou, Zarpetea, and Yiangou (2002), videos assist in improving learners' vocabulary identification and understanding, and they offer learners exposure to authentic contexts where they can effectively improve their language aptitudes. Additionally, using TikTok to learn vocabulary saves learners' time, as they can easily find vocabulary content without spending a lot of time browsing new words. This is because TikTok shows videos based on users' interests, which is determined by their likes and searches. This assists in enhancing vocabulary-learning opportunities. Using technological tools, such as TikTok, makes English vocabulary an unconscious learning procedure with the use of trendy videos that simultaneously catch learners' attention in an enjoyable way while providing valuable information. Learners confirmed that using TikTok helps in word retention and usage, as they can save TikTok videos as a favourite or like the videos, which enables them to reopen the videos and recall the new words. Because TikTok videos often include various image of a word, learners are able to easily remember novel words. Learners are able to reopen saved videos and attempt to recall words, pausing the video or muting the sound when necessary. Some TikTok videos contain English songs with lyrics or movie scenes with both original and translated subtitles, which helps to make learning new vocabulary easier through listening to pronunciation, reading the words or even mimicking the videos. This contributes to memorising new words effectively and offers the opportunity for learners to discover new words. Secondary school learners in Saudi Arabia can practice using newly learned words obtained through TikTok and even apply their new English vocabulary in online games such as PUBG or Minecraft while communicating with gamers around the world. Moreover, TikTok offers various levels of English vocabulary.

TikTok offers opportunities for people to discover various cultures and learn new skills, such as language. This is because TikTok has features that are attractive to users, especially younger ones, and that encourage them to create or watch videos focused on participating in trendy challenges that often contain conversations or songs. Most of these conversations or songs are in English. As participants try to mimic the sounds, they are able to expand their vocabulary in a fun way. According to Xiuwen and Razali (2021) TikTok, the platform boosts English language learners' interest and motivation through music and dynamic videos. Additionally, interesting topics and the way videos are presented on TikTok capture learners' attention, helping them understand and learn new words. Finally, because TikTok videos are short, learners can build their language skills in an effective and efficient way without feeling bored.

4. Conclusion, Limitations, and Recommendations

To conclude, TikTok is a technological tool that has a significant impact on various fields. Using TikTok in language learning enhances learners' desire to learn, and the use of TikTok in learning English vocabulary is effective. The results of this study indicate a positive attitude towards using this tool to improve Saudi secondary school learners' vocabulary due to the various features that TikTok provides to facilitate the learning of new vocabulary. Using TikTok contributes significantly to enhancing and attracting Saudi secondary school learners to learn novel vocabulary, as it is a fun and attractive way to learn.

Some limitations of this study should be considered. The sample size of this study (50) is small, and the outcomes may lack generalizability, which is essential in research. Moreover, using a mixed methods approach could be more effective in obtaining clear outcomes than using only a quantitative approach. A mixed methods approach permits scientists to analyse and collect data, incorporate outcomes, and apply inferences by using both qualitative and quantitative methods in one study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Thus, using surveys or tests to obtain clear and efficient results could be more accurate.

As TikTok has become the most popular technological tool, it could be an effective method for teaching English vocabulary; therefore, teachers should exploit the benefits of this platform. Teachers can create videos that present new words in a lesson, supported by photos and graphs. These videos could significantly enhance learners' vocabulary. Thus, teachers should be trained to use TikTok and integrate this tool for teaching and learning purposes. Integrating TikTok into education will engage students in learning in an attractive environment, especially when it comes to teaching and learning a foreign language.

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