

LEARNING VOCABULARY THROUGH TIKTOK: STUDENTS' VIEWING HABITS AND VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE

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Abstract

Social media may expose students to English vocabulary outside instruction, yet exposure alone may not correspond to vocabulary mastery. This study examined the relationship between the habit of watching English TikTok videos and vocabulary mastery among eighth grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Sungai Pinang, Ogan Ilir. A quantitative correlational design involved 92 students selected through purposive sampling. Watching habits were measured using a questionnaire, while vocabulary mastery was assessed using a test. Data were analysed with Pearson product moment correlation in SPSS version 24. The analysis showed a negative correlation between watching habits and vocabulary mastery. Thus, students with frequent viewing did not demonstrate higher vocabulary mastery. Watching English TikTok videos should not be assumed to strengthen vocabulary mastery by itself. The findings underscore the need to examine how students engage with video content and whether their viewing is supported by vocabulary learning activities.

Keywords: *EFL students; TikTok; vocabulary mastery; watching habit*

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Introduction

Digital platforms have expanded opportunities for English language exposure beyond formal instruction. Through smartphones and social media, students can encounter English words in short videos that combine speech, images, and on-screen text. TikTok is one such platform: English content may introduce vocabulary in familiar situations, but encountering a word does not necessarily mean that a learner understands or retains it. Research on captioned and subtitled videos indicates that viewing can support vocabulary learning, although learning conditions and the way learners attend to the content matter (Reynolds et al., 2022).

Vocabulary knowledge is essential to understanding and using English. For learners in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, the question is whether exposure outside the classroom is associated with the vocabulary they can demonstrate on a test. TikTok offers accessible English content, yet students may watch videos primarily for entertainment rather than vocabulary

study. Consequently, the frequency of watching English videos should be examined separately from vocabulary mastery.

Previous studies provide reasons to investigate this relationship, but they do not establish that watching more videos always corresponds to stronger vocabulary knowledge. Alshreef and Khadawardi (2023) reported positive perceptions of TikTok as a vocabulary learning tool among university students; their study measured perceptions rather than vocabulary test performance. Maria and Sujarwati (2025) found improved vocabulary scores when TikTok videos were used in a quasi-experimental instructional setting with twelfth-grade students. In a different design, Ambarwati and Zuraida (2025) examined habits of watching English TikTok content and vocabulary enhancement among university English Education students. These studies address different forms of TikTok use and different learner groups, making their findings insufficient to determine the relationship between informal

viewing habits and tested vocabulary mastery among eighth-grade students.

The research gap addressed in this study is therefore specific: evidence about TikTok-based instruction or university students' viewing habits cannot be assumed to describe younger students' everyday viewing. The novelty of the present study lies in examining self-reported habits of watching English TikTok videos alongside independently tested vocabulary mastery among eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Sungai Pinang, Ogan Ilir. This focus distinguishes informal exposure from a planned TikTok lesson and allows the assumed positive relationship between frequent viewing and vocabulary mastery to be tested rather than taken for granted.

This study investigates the direction, strength, and statistical significance of the correlation between students' habits of watching English TikTok videos and their vocabulary mastery. Its correlational design can establish whether the two measured variables are associated in this sample; it cannot determine whether watching TikTok causes vocabulary development.

Research Method

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between students' habit of watching TikTok English videos and their vocabulary mastery. Correlational research aims to determine the degree and direction of the relationship between variables without manipulation (MacDonald, Wong, & Dionne, 2015). The independent variable (X) in this study was students' habit of watching TikTok English videos, while the dependent variable (Y) was students' vocabulary mastery. The population consisted of eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Sungai Pinang Ogan Ilir in the academic year 2025/2026, totaling

155 students, with a sample of 92 students selected through purposive sampling from three classes (VIII.1, VIII.2, and VIII.3) based on similar English proficiency levels.

Data were collected using two instruments: a questionnaire and a vocabulary test. The questionnaire, adapted from Adhim (2023) based on Darnton's (2011) habit theory, initially consisted of 35 items but was reduced to 26 valid items after validity testing ($r > 0.344$). It used a five-point Likert scale to measure students' frequency, attitude, automaticity, and engagement in watching TikTok English videos. The vocabulary mastery test initially consisted of 50 items, constructed based on the Grade VIII syllabus, and was reduced to 29 valid items after try-out testing ($r > 0.279$). Both instruments were tested for validity using the Corrected Item-Total Correlation (CITC) and for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding coefficients of 0.770 (acceptable) for the questionnaire and 0.817 (good) for the test, indicating that both instruments were valid and reliable.

The data were analyzed using SPSS version 24 through several statistical procedures. First, the normality test was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to ensure that the data were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$). Next, the Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis was used to determine the strength and significance of the relationship between the two variables (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015). Finally, regression analysis was applied to measure the contribution of students' habit of watching TikTok English videos to their vocabulary mastery by examining the coefficient of determination (R^2) and significance level. However, regression analysis was only conducted if a significant correlation between variables was found (Heinze et al., 2024).

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistic

The descriptive statistical analysis of the questionnaire on students' habit of watching TikTok English videos involved a total of 92 respondents. The data indicated that the mean score was 64,0134, reflecting the overall tendency of students' responses. The obtained scores ranged from a minimum of 34,62 to a maximum of 86,15, which shows a considerable spread between the lowest and highest responses. Furthermore, the standard deviation was 10,74071, suggesting a moderate degree of variability among the students' habits in watching TikTok English videos. A detailed summary of the descriptive analysis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Descriptive Analysis of Students' Habit of Watching TikTok English Videos Questionnaire

Variable	N	Min imu m	Ma xim um	Mea n	Std. Devi atio n
Students' Habit of Watching TikTok English Videos Questionnaire	92	34,62	86,15	64,0134	10,74071

In the results of the vocabulary mastery test, a total of 92 students participated as respondents. The analysis revealed that the mean score was 59,1829, with a minimum score of 37,93 and a maximum score of 82,76. The standard deviation was 8,87318, indicating the extent of variation in students' vocabulary mastery. The summary of the descriptive statistics is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The Descriptive Analysis of Vocabulary Mastery Test

Variable	N	Mini mu m	Maxi mu m	Mean	Std. Deviat ion
Vocabulary Mastery Test	92	37,93	82,76	59,1829	8,87318

Normality Test

The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was employed to examine the normality of the data. According to the criteria, if the significance value is greater than 0.05, the data can be considered normally distributed. The results of the normality test are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Normality Test

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a	N
Students' Habit of Watching TikTok English Videos Questionnaire	.200*	92
Vocabulary Mastery Test	.064	92

As both significance values exceeded the threshold of 0.05, it can be concluded that the data for students' habit of watching TikTok English videos and their vocabulary mastery were normally distributed.

Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis was conducted to examine whether there was a significant relationship between students' habit of watching TikTok English videos and their vocabulary mastery among the eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Sungai Pinang Ogan Ilir.

Table 4. Correlation Analysis

Variables	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Students' Habit of Watching TikTok English Videos Questionnaire Vocabulary Mastery Test	-.007	.951	92

The result of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis showed that the correlation coefficient between students' habit of watching TikTok English videos and their vocabulary mastery was -0.007 with a significance value of 0.951 ($p > 0.05$). This finding indicates that there is no significant correlation between the two variables.

Regression Analysis

Since the correlation analysis between students' habit of watching TikTok English videos and their vocabulary mastery showed a correlation coefficient of -0.007 with a significance value of 0.951 ($p > 0.05$), it can be concluded that there is no significant relationship between the two variables. In statistical procedures, regression analysis is commonly conducted only when there is a significant correlation, as it aims to measure the predictive power of the independent variable toward the dependent variable.

Because the correlation in this study was found to be statistically insignificant, regression analysis was not performed. Conducting regression on unrelated variables would not provide meaningful results and could lead to misinterpretation. Therefore, this study limits the analysis to correlation testing, and no regression model is presented.

Discussion

Based on the findings of the study, there were some interpretations that could be shown. First, the habit of watching English TikTok videos did not influence students' vocabulary mastery. It could be seen in the data that although there were some students who obtained very good and good scores in the vocabulary mastery test, there were also students who only achieved average, poor, or even very poor categories despite having a relatively high habit of watching English TikTok videos. This indicates that students' vocabulary

mastery in this research was not consistently related to their viewing habit. It can be assumed that other learning factors, such as classroom instruction, personal study efforts, or exposure to different types of English media, might contribute more strongly to their vocabulary achievement.

Second, based on the result of the correlation analysis between habit of watching English TikTok videos and vocabulary mastery, it was found that there was a negative correlation with very low value ($r = -0.007$) and the significance level was higher than 0.05 ($\text{sig.} = 0.951$). This means that there was no significant correlation between the two variables. This result contrasts with Pamungkas (2024), who found a positive and significant correlation between students' frequency of watching English TikTok videos and their vocabulary mastery. The difference might be due to Pamungkas focusing on high school students and frequency as a single factor, while the present study examined habit, including frequency, automaticity, and routine among junior high school students, whose media engagement may differ. On the other hand, the result of this study aligns with Pahlefi (2023), who also reported no significant correlation between EFL students' habit of watching TikTok English videos and their vocabulary mastery. The similarity suggests that the way students engage with TikTok, often for entertainment purposes, may not always contribute to measurable vocabulary improvement.

Last, the regression analysis also showed that the contribution of habit in watching English TikTok videos toward vocabulary mastery was very small and not significant. In other words, students' vocabulary mastery cannot be explained solely by their TikTok viewing habit. This finding differs from Dewi and Handayani (2023), who discovered a positive and significant relationship

between students' movie-watching habits and vocabulary mastery among senior high school students. Unlike movies, which provide longer and more structured linguistic input, TikTok videos are short, fast-paced, and often focused on entertainment rather than learning, which may explain why the present study did not find a similar contribution. Therefore, while TikTok may provide incidental exposure to English vocabulary, structured learning activities, teacher guidance, and more academic-oriented practices are still necessary to strengthen junior high school students' vocabulary mastery.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, this study concluded that there was no significant correlation between students' habit of watching English TikTok videos and their vocabulary mastery at the eighth grade of SMP Negeri 1 Sungai Pinang Ogan Ilir. This is evidenced by the p-value (0.951) which exceeded 0.05, indicating that the null hypothesis was accepted and the alternative hypothesis was rejected. The correlation coefficient (-0.007) also showed a very weak negative relationship. Furthermore, regression analysis revealed that the contribution of watching TikTok English videos to students' vocabulary mastery was negligible and statistically insignificant. Therefore, vocabulary mastery cannot be attributed solely to TikTok usage, but is more likely influenced by other factors such as classroom instruction, independent learning, and broader exposure to English.

In line with these findings, students are encouraged to improve their vocabulary through more structured and varied learning strategies, while still using TikTok as a supplementary tool. Teachers are advised to design engaging and technology-integrated learning

activities to support vocabulary development, and schools should provide adequate facilities to enhance access to diverse learning resources. Future researchers are recommended to explore this topic further by involving larger samples, different educational levels, or additional variables such as motivation, learning styles, and types of digital content to gain a more comprehensive understanding of vocabulary learning in digital contexts.

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