

Year 6 Students' Perceptions Towards the Usage of TikTok and Its Effectiveness on Their Vocabulary Learning

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Abstract

Many students in primary schools struggle with English proficiency because of their limited vocabulary. This may be due to the lack of innovative teaching approaches that can promote their interest and motivation in learning English. Thus, this research was conducted to investigate the effects of TikTok on primary students' vocabulary learning and their perceptions. 12 Year 6 students from a government school were involved in this mixed-method research. Data were collected through pre and post-tests along with semi-structured interviews. The results indicated that all participants had a significant improvement (10% or more) in vocabulary knowledge and the mean score nearly doubled, indicating a strong positive impact. Meanwhile, the interviews revealed that many students found traditional textbooks dull compared to the short, engaging videos on TikTok. They appreciated the accessibility and ease of searching for specific videos while interactive features on TikTok further enhanced their learning experience, boosting motivation. However, concerns were raised regarding potentially unreliable information and the platform's distracting nature. Despite these drawbacks, most students agreed that they would recommend TikTok for vocabulary development due to its engaging and effective strategies.

Keywords: TikTok, English, Vocabulary, Perceptions, Effects, Primary School

Introduction

English has become a significant language in the world today, with over 1 billion speakers worldwide (Hall, 2016). Many people from different parts of the world learn English to communicate and connect with people internationally (Jositta, 2020). It is also useful for business or travelling purposes as English is a global language. On the other hand, English is often a compulsory subject for students. Despite English being the main medium of instruction in most educational institutions, many students still find it challenging to master the language due to various reasons such as their attitudes and motivation as well as the teacher's teaching methods and materials used (Le & Le, 2022). For example, some students lack interest and motivation to learn because the materials used are not engaging and are

difficult to understand. Students also find their teacher's teaching methods boring and do not see the importance of the language (Nguyen et al., 2022). Furthermore, Zhang (2023) discovered that many teachers focus solely on teaching for testing purposes and neglect other aspects. The combination of these factors leads to a lack of understanding among students and creates a negative learning experience.

In Malaysia, English is a mandatory subject for all students, and they are required to learn it from an early age. It is also the primary medium of instruction in most educational institutions. Yet, many students struggle to master the language despite learning it for years and this occurs mainly due to their limited vocabulary (Bakar et al., 2021). Without adequate vocabulary knowledge, students have difficulty comprehending written and spoken English as well as expressing themselves fluently in writing and speech (Chua & Sulaiman, 2021; Mayadi & Yamat, 2021; Misbah et al., 2017). However, many Malaysian students struggle with vocabulary mastery due to reasons such as ineffective teaching practices and negative attitudes towards learning. For example, some teachers focus too much on memorisation and this can be demotivating to students (Tahir et al., 2020). Meanwhile, some teachers ignore vocabulary teaching and only emphasise the four language skills as they assume that vocabulary is easy for students to pick up (Razali et al., 2017). On the other hand, Govindarajoo et al (2022) found that students often lack interest and motivation to learn English, which leads to poor vocabulary development.

With the rapid advancement of technology, some English teachers have adopted innovative approaches to teaching vocabulary and social media is one of them (Misman et al., 2019). This is because students these days are tech-savvy and prefer to learn online. Many of them are also visual and kinesthetic learners, who learn better through images and physical movements. Therefore, it would be beneficial for learners if English teachers adopt the use of social media platforms to teach vocabulary. For instance, it was discovered that many students achieved higher scores and show significant improvement after learning English through social media platforms (Musin & Sulaiman, 2023; Sathiyaseelan, 2021). They also enjoyed using social media features for vocabulary development and stated that it motivated them to learn new words and improve their English proficiency (Sivagnanam & Yunus, 2020). Besides that, Bayuonng et al (2019) reported that more than 90% of students agree that social media is one of the best approaches to learning English vocabulary. This is because the authentic and meaningful English materials available on social media are interesting and they enjoyed copying down useful words, phrases and sentences. Not only that, it also helped them to gain more control and confidence in learning. These studies suggested that social media has become an indispensable tool for learning English vocabulary and should not be disregarded in the classroom.

In this research, TikTok is used as an educational tool for primary students' vocabulary learning. This application allows users to upload, view and share videos but unlike other video-sharing social media applications, the length of TikTok videos is shorter. This unique feature attracted much attention, which leads to an abundance of English learning materials for teachers and students (Yang, 2020). By using TikTok, students can access a wide range of English learning materials that are effective in stimulating their interest, reducing pressure and increasing their motivation (Duan, 2023; Simanungkalit & Katemba, 2023; Yang, 2020). It also caters to students with different learning styles and they have more opportunities to

practise English, which can help improve their language proficiency (Alghameeti, 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2023). Not only that, language learning can occur outside of the classroom and this will help students to be independent learners, instead of solely relying on their teacher. However, many students are not aware of the benefits of using TikTok as an educational tool as they often use it for entertainment purposes only. There is also scarce research on TikTok as an educational tool among primary students as most studies are conducted on tertiary students or overseas. Hence, this research aims to fill the gaps by examining the following questions: (1) What are the effects of TikTok on Year 6 students' vocabulary learning? (2) How do Year 6 students perceive using TikTok for vocabulary learning?

Literature Review

Social Media in Edutainment

Social media can be defined as a group of platforms that are available online such as websites, applications and digital communication tools (Ibrahim et al., 2023). These platforms enable users to create and edit textual, visual and audio content. They also facilitate the sharing of various kinds of content such as texts, images, videos and links. Furthermore, users can use these platforms to connect, communicate and interact with others through activities such as liking, sharing, commenting, messaging or live streaming (Boateng & Amankwaa, 2016). During the present age, social media has a significant impact on people's lives as it has changed the way people communicate and connect. It has also become a source of information and learning. There are many social media platforms available but the five most popular ones in Malaysia are Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok and Twitter (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2023). Although social media is primarily used for entertainment, it now offers many learning materials that can be used for educational purposes.

With technology advancing rapidly, it is becoming increasingly convenient and flexible for teachers to incorporate social media in the classroom. As a result, some English teachers have already started using social media in their classrooms and have experienced various benefits. For example, studies found that social media helps students learn more vocabulary, improve their spelling and pronunciation (Al-Saggaf et al., 2021; Arulchelvan et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2019). Students also appreciate the access to a variety of authentic and meaningful English learning materials, which keeps them motivated (Zainal & Rahmat, 2020). Additionally, many students find the learning process more enjoyable and less stressful as they perceive the content on social media to be interesting (Al-Jarrah et al., 2019). Social media is also a versatile learning tool that can accommodate learners with diverse learning styles as information is presented in a variety of formats including visuals and audio. In addition, the majority of students who use social media for learning have demonstrated significant improvements in their academic performance (Al-Jarrah et al., 2019). These studies suggest that social media has become an indispensable tool in language learning and should not be disregarded in the classroom.

TikTok as an Educational Tool

TikTok is a social media platform that was launched in China in 2016 under the name Douyin (Wu, 2021). The developers later launched the platform globally by renaming it as TikTok as they believed that Douyin is not well-known outside of China. Owned by a Chinese company called ByteDance, it is primarily aimed at young audiences. Users can access TikTok through

their mobile phones or laptops and they can create short videos up to one minute in length (Ining, 2021). To enhance their videos, users can use filters, music, animation, camera effects or other interesting features offered by TikTok. Users can also view, share, comment or interact with other users through private chats or livestreams. Personalised video recommendations based on users' past activities and preferences is another unique feature that keeps them engaged with the platform.

In Malaysia, TikTok is one of the most popular social media platforms, with almost 400 million users in 2022 (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2023). A large percentage of its users are from the younger generation, who enjoy using technology in their daily lives. Alongside entertainment-based videos, English educational videos that are created by native speakers or English teachers have increased in popularity over time (Simanungkalit & Katemba, 2023). Teachers use TikTok to create their own videos to share instructions for various tasks, explain grammar rules, share tips, illustrate complex concepts, provide quizzes and more. These videos can be easily downloaded and shared by students, making them beneficial and accessible to students at any time and from anywhere. However, there is scarce research on TikTok as an educational tool among primary students so this research aims to bridge the gap.

There are three types of English videos available on TikTok to help learners improve their proficiency: authenticity-centred videos, demand-centred videos and exam-oriented videos (Yang, 2020). Firstly, authenticity-centred videos aim to provide authentic content to English learners. These videos help learners to familiarise themselves with natural language, enabling them to listen to the intonation and pronunciation of native speakers (Iskhokovna & Erkinovna, 2021). Learners can also encounter words that are not commonly used in their daily conversations and learn how certain words are used in specific contexts. Furthermore, learners will have exposure to common idioms and collocations that they can incorporate into their conversations or writing. In a study by Sinyashina (2020), the researcher found that captioned authentic videos help learners recognise the form and meaning of words while Aidinlou and Moradinejad (2016) found that authentic videos encourage long-term retention of vocabulary compared to traditional teaching methods. Similarly, Marpaung and Situmeang (2020) discovered that the group of students who learn vocabulary through authentic videos outperformed the group that did not. In this case, TikTok offers various types of authentic English videos such as American and British movies with subtitles, music clips, speeches, interviews, explanations of certain words and more. These short videos will be beneficial for English teachers and learners.

Next, demand-centred videos refer to videos created for learners based on their individual needs (Yang, 2020). In today's world, English is an important language to learn for various reasons such as professional advancement, personal growth and development, education or entertainment. Hence, TikTok creators have produced demand-centred videos in three categories: business English, academic English and general English. Learners who want to improve their academic or entertainment-based English skills can search for videos that suit their needs. For instance, if they want to learn about idioms, they simply have to search for "idioms in English" and a broad selection of videos will be displayed. Moreover, learners can select videos that showcase a teaching style they prefer as different TikTok creators have different teaching styles. Some creators present idioms and give an example while some

introduce idioms through a conversation. Others present idioms with their definition before putting up a related meme. Therefore, learners have the freedom to learn and enhance their proficiency in a flexible manner.

Meanwhile, exam-oriented videos refer to English learning materials that are specifically designed to help learners prepare for their exams (Yang, 2020). These videos aim to improve English skills that are important in exams, as well as learners' test-taking abilities. This approach is influenced by the Chinese education system, where achieving good results is the main objective of learning English. Although many researchers have found this approach to be unhelpful and stressful for learners, some teachers still use this approach in the classroom. Despite this, exam-oriented videos can be beneficial for learners as they can use them for revision purposes or to familiarise themselves with the testing format. For instance, learners who want to improve their English skills for the IELTS exam can easily search for "IELTS" and find a wide selection of helpful videos. These videos cover a range of topics including study tips for the IELTS exam, how to improve performance in the four English skills tested, vocabulary specific to the IELTS, sample test papers and more. Since English class time is often limited, learners can use their free time to search for and watch English videos related to their syllabus, which can be an effective way to self-learn.

Researchers have suggested that TikTok holds promise as a learning platform, with potential benefits for students. In a study conducted by Ining (2021), Sabahan ESL students shared their positive experiences with these educational videos. For instance, they stated that the videos capture their attention and make the class engaging. They also found the videos to be informative, improving their content knowledge. Similarly, it was discovered that Kuantan students have positive perceptions of TikTok (Ibrahim et al., 2023). For example, they found TikTok to be an interesting way to learn English as the videos contain animations and graphics. It is also an easier way as they can replay the videos at their convenience. Additionally, TikTok videos help them to improve their language skills and boost their confidence to speak English. Meanwhile, researchers who interviewed Sarawakian students found that TikTok videos interest students and motivate them to learn more (Kueh & Aziz, 2022). Moreover, the videos are helpful in improving their pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary knowledge. Students also shared that this approach makes English easier to understand compared to traditional textbook methods.

On the other hand, Anumanthan and Hashim (2022) noticed a remarkable improvement in the students of a school in Klang after incorporating TikTok. The students share that they enjoy the lesson and find it effective. They also plan to look for more educational videos on TikTok for revision and create their own videos in the future. Another study by Abdullah et al (2023) involving 200 participants revealed that TikTok is a useful educational tool with various features. Furthermore, TikTok videos promote active learning among students and help them comprehend the content. Many participants also expressed their intention to introduce TikTok as an educational tool to their friends to enhance their learning experience. These studies showed that TikTok is beneficial for students' learning.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

The research design used in this study is a mixed-method case study. It involves a detailed examination of a phenomenon in its natural setting over a period of time, allowing researchers to gather data from real-world situations (Robert, 2017). This research design is beneficial because it combines the strengths of quantitative and qualitative research methods while balancing out their limitations (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2016). This means that researchers can collect both numerical and non-numerical data, giving them a better understanding of the research topic. Additionally, it enhances the credibility and validity of the research. This method is also flexible and can involve different data collection methods based on the research questions. Researchers can compare the data collected from different methods and examine different perspectives, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Therefore, the mixed-method case study was used for this research.

Research Participants

This research involved primary students from a Chinese national primary school in Selangor, Malaysia. They are native Chinese speakers and they have been learning English as a second language since their early years. To obtain more accurate results, purposive sampling was used to select participants for an in-depth exploration. In this research, only 12 Year 6 students (12-years-old) with low to moderate English proficiency were selected to investigate the effects of TikTok on their vocabulary learning and their perceptions. The students' proficiency level was determined based on their completed English tasks and results.

Research Instruments

According to Smith (2018), triangulation is a research technique that uses multiple data sources and methods. Triangulation is important in case studies because it helps to strengthen the validity and credibility of the research findings. By using multiple data sources and methods, researchers can also reduce research biases. Hence, triangulation was used in this research to gain a comprehensive understanding. Quantitative data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests to measure the effectiveness of TikTok in improving students' vocabulary learning, aligning with Pan and Sana's (2020) view that these tests help determine the impact of an intervention. On the other hand, qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews to explore students' perceptions of TikTok for vocabulary learning. This aligns with Ruslin et al.'s (2022) view that such interviews provide valuable in-depth information on research topics. By combining these quantitative and qualitative methods (triangulation), this research aims to provide a more robust picture of how TikTok influences students' vocabulary learning and their perceptions of it as an educational tool.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS. A paired-sample t-test was used to compare the mean scores before and after students watched English videos on TikTok. This was done to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in their vocabulary knowledge. Additionally, the thematic analysis method was used to analyse qualitative data. First, the responses were coded based on the similarities and repeated words. Then, the statements with the same code were grouped, sorted according to themes and reviewed again before report writing. This method is preferred because it is a flexible approach that allows researchers to obtain rich and detailed data (Miles et al., 2019; Nowell et al., 2017).

Results

Demographic Details

Table 1 displays the demographic details of this research's participants. A total of 12 students were selected, out of which seven are females and five are males. All of them are 13 years old and they were in Year 6 when the research was conducted. These students are native Chinese speakers from SJK(C) Chee Wen, a government school in Subang Jaya. More than 80% of the students have been learning English for more than 9 years and their proficiency level ranges from low to moderate.

Table 1

Demographic information

Item	Value	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	5	41.7
	Female	7	58.3
Age	13	12	100
Race	Chinese	12	100
School	Government	12	100
Years of English language acquisition	6-8 years	2	16.7
	9-11 years	10	83.3
English proficiency	Low	5	41.7
	Moderate	7	58.3

The Effects of TikTok on Year 6 Students' Vocabulary Learning

The pre-tests and post-tests developed for this research contain the same test items to provide a clear understanding of the students' progress.

A. Students' Pre-test and Post-test Results

As shown in Table 2, the difference (n%) represents students' improvement level after using TikTok for learning purposes. Then, the mean score ($\mu\%$) was calculated to identify students' average scores while the mode score (%) was calculated to identify the score that was most frequently achieved by the students.

Table 2

Pre-test and post-test results

Students	Pre-test (%) (before TikTok)	Post-test (%) (after TikTok)	Difference (n%)
R1	34	48	14
R2	11	45	34
R3	38	50	12
R4	33	48	15
R5	29	48	19
R6	11	31	20
R7	19	47	28
R8	7	31	24
R9	33	45	12
R10	28	46	18
R11	11	40	29
R12	24	38	14
Total score (%)	278	517	239
Mean score ($\mu\%$)	23.17	43.08	19.92
Mode (%)	11	48	12, 14

Based on the table displayed above, it is evident that all the students have shown an improvement in their post-test marks. Prior to using TikTok, the students had a mean score of 23.17% but after using TikTok, their mean score has significantly increased to 43.08%. While some students had a score difference of less than 15%, a considerable percentage of them obtained a high difference in scores, ranging from 20% to 34%. Furthermore, in the pre-tests, the score that was frequently achieved by the 12 students was 11% while in the post-tests, the score frequently achieved was 48%.

B. Test of Significance (Paired Sample T-test)

Table 3

T-test analysis results

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	23.17	12	10.920	3.152
	Posttest	43.08	12	6.598	1.905

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-19.917	7.305	2.109	-24.558	-15.276	-9.445	11	<.001

Table 3 presents the t-test analysis results for both the pre-tests and post-tests. Based on the table, the mean score for post-tests is 43.08 (SD = 6.60) while the mean score for pre-tests is 23.17 (SD = 10.92). Then, the mean score difference between both tests is 19.92 (SD = 7.31)

and this indicates that the score difference is significant ($t = -9.45, p < 0.05$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the Null Hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and there is an improvement in students' scores as well as mean scores ($M = 19.92, SD = 7.31$) after using TikTok as a tool for vocabulary learning.

Year 6 Students' Perceptions of Using TikTok for Vocabulary Learning

Next, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather the participants' perceptions on the use of TikTok for learning and its effectiveness. After collecting data, the thematic analysis method was used to examine them. The results showed that the majority of participants had a positive perception of TikTok as a learning tool, with only a few who expressed negative views.

A. Understanding of the TikTok Videos Shown

As presented in Table 4, students provided contrasting responses on their understanding of the TikTok videos shown. Positive responses were provided by one group of students while the other group had a less positive response.

Table 4

Students' understanding of the TikTok videos shown

Positive Responses	No. of Participants	Less Positive Responses	No. of Participants
Understood all the videos	9	Difficulty understanding some of the videos	3
Gained new vocabulary knowledge	5	Certain videos were more challenging	2

Out of the 12 students, nine of them shared that they were able to understand all of the videos. Five of them also stated that they gained new vocabulary knowledge such as synonyms and idioms after watching. However, three students commented that they had difficulty understanding some of the TikTok videos and specifically, two explained that certain videos were more challenging than others, which impacted their understanding. For example:

"Some I not understand because the English videos is very difficult." (Zanya)

"I understand some of the English videos but others too hard for me." (Sherry)

It also appears that the students' weaker English proficiency may have played a role in their comprehension of the videos.

B. Feelings After Watching the TikTok Videos Shown

The table below displays varied feelings that students experienced after watching the TikTok videos shown. While many students had positive feelings, some had negative feelings.

Table 5

Students' feelings after watching the TikTok videos shown

Positive Feelings	No. of Participants	Negative Feelings	No. of Participants
Interesting	4	Boring	2
Happy	4	Challenging	2
Motivating	2		
Surprising	1		

Based on the responses provided, positive feelings like interest and happiness were the most common. Four students found the videos interesting and engaging while another four found them enjoyable and entertaining. This was due to the humour and engaging visuals used in the videos, which made learning English more fun for them. For example:

"I find them interesting because some of the videos introduce words with memes and I get to learn more words." (Hannah)

"I was very happy while watching the English videos. They are colourful and there are lots of pictures. Some are funny too." (Ken)

Two students also claimed that the videos motivated them to learn more as they were short. In other words, the duration of the videos made learning feel manageable and this encouraged them to explore further. For example:

"The videos are interesting and they motivate me to learn more because they are short." (Joelle)

Meanwhile, another shared that it was surprising to him as he was not aware of the abundance of English videos. This is because he often uses the platform to watch non-educational videos and rarely uses it for educational purposes.

On the other hand, two students mentioned that some of the videos were boring because of the speakers' tone and expression. They disliked the monotonous voice and limited facial expression of the speakers, which negatively impacted their learning experience. For example:

"I felt boring for some videos because the speaker talk the same way. I dislike it when the speaker keep say good job and wink at ending." (Gerald)

Another two students who had difficulty understanding some of the videos also described the experience as challenging. Due to their lower English proficiency, they struggled to recognise certain words and understand them, which added to the perceived difficulty of using TikTok for language learning. For example:

"I think a bit challenging because the words that were said I am not familiar." (Natalie)

"I am very interested but felt very challenging because the level are tall." (Zenya)

C. TikTok for Vocabulary Learning

Table 6 shows students' perceptions of TikTok for vocabulary learning in terms of its content, learning experience and features. Many provided positive perceptions and only one student has a less positive view of TikTok for vocabulary learning.

Table 6

Students' perceptions of TikTok for vocabulary learning

Positive Perceptions	No. of Participants	Less Positive Perceptions	No. of Participants
Useful features	11	Experience depends on creators	1
Allows independent learning	9		
Interactive	5		
Interesting content	4		
Fun learning experience	4		
Easy to understand	3		
Relatable	3		
Wide range of topics	2		
Improves learning efficiency	2		
Alternative tool for learning	2		
Opportunity to learn from native speakers	2		

The table above shows that most of the students (11 students) agreed that TikTok contains useful features. They find that the short videos help them to learn easily and remember vocabulary better. The captions and translations also help them in learning when they are unable to hear the videos clearly. Additionally, students appreciate that they can easily search for videos of their own preference and save those videos for future use. For example:

"The videos are quite short so it's easier to remember the words they said. There are also captions in the videos so if I can't hear, I can see and learn too." (Vernice)

"It is also easy for me to find videos that I like." (Joelle)

"I also can save the video. When I forget, I can open to revision it." (Zeny)

Next, nine students commented that TikTok allows them to learn independently. They explained that they could search for videos to learn English whenever they want and improve their proficiency outside of the classroom. They also enjoy creating their own videos, which helps them to retain information and improve their vocabulary. For example:

"I can easy find English videos to learn when I am free and I like it when teacher ask us to create own video. Create own video make me remember words." (Sherry)

The platform is interactive as well (five students), allowing students to leave comments, chat with creators, follow them and participate in challenges. For example:

"I can also give comment and practice the words I already learn." (Gerald)

"TikTok challenges let us chat with creators and learn more." (Tim)

"I can follow people that teach English and watch their videos to improve." (Oscar)

"Now, we can look at funny videos and join the activities." (Travis)

Another perception that emerged is the interesting content available on TikTok (four students). One student further elaborated that they are interesting because all creators use different methods to present and deliver content. They also find learning vocabulary through TikTok to be a fun experience (four students) as it is different from the traditional teaching methods, which they prefer. For example:

"The videos also have very interesting content because people use different ways to teach something." (Ken)

"It is a good idea because learning is more fun. We don't have to read textbooks or look at slides." (Travis)

Not only that, three students agreed that the content is easy to understand and relatable (three students) as creators use short and simple explanations along with relevant examples to ease students' understanding. For example:

"I think it's a good idea because the content is easy for everyone to understand. The explanations are straight to the point." (Joelle)

"I think the video got give examples from our life and got a lot of words." (Sherry)

Two students also shared that there is a wide range of topics available on TikTok and they can choose which ones to focus on to learn vocabulary. It improves their learning efficiency as well (two students) because they can learn more in a shorter duration. These bite-sized contents allow them to focus on a single concept or vocabulary word, which is beneficial for their learning. For example:

"There got a lot of interesting topics and good experience. If read books, learn very slow." (Zeny)

"It provides me with small classes from short videos and I can learn more in a short time. Like specific words." (Alexis)

Moreover, two students stated that they consider TikTok as an alternative tool for learning, especially when they get bored with books. For example:

"If I'm tired of learning with books, I can learn through these contents." (Hannah)

They also appreciate the opportunity to learn from native speakers (two students) as creators come from different countries. One student finds it useful to listen to British and American accents for vocabulary learning but pointed out that the learning experience depends on the creators. This is because each creator has their own style so it could either be a great learning experience or otherwise. For example:

"TikTok let us learn from British and American people, which is good when learning vocabulary but the experience depends on the person in the video because they are all different." (Vernice)

D. Differences Between TikTok and Textbooks for Vocabulary Learning

Table 7 presents students' varying perceptions of TikTok versus textbooks for vocabulary learning. While many students perceive textbooks negatively, most students perceive TikTok positively.

Table 7

Students' perceptions of TikTok and textbooks for vocabulary learning

Perceptions	TikTok	No. of Participants	Textbooks	No. of Participants
Positive	Accessible	6	Higher credibility	2
	Provides extra information	3	Adds knowledge	1
	Engaging	3		
	Authentic	2		
	Easy to remember	2		
Negative	Device problems	1	Lack accessibility	4
	Distracting	1	Not engaging	4
			Fixed structure	2
			Difficult to remember	1

Half of the students shared that TikTok provides good accessibility as it is portable and convenient to learn anytime and anywhere. It is also easy to search for videos to learn, without having to carry many textbooks around. For example:

"TikTok is an app that can be downloaded almost on every mobile phone so it's convenient. It's also portable and we can learn whenever we want at wherever." (Alexis)

"If use TikTok, no need to bring so many books and easy to find for any information we need." (Sherry)

Besides that, three students claimed that the platform provides extra information for them. This is because the content on TikTok and textbooks is different and it allows them to learn everyday words that are not available in textbooks. For example:

"I can get extra information because some things on TikTok are different from textbooks. Like words we use every day that are not in the book." (Oscar)

Another three students also find it engaging because the contents are interesting and fun. They also appreciate that they can leave comments for the creators while learning. For example:

"TikTok is very interesting and have fun extra information. And you can comment a feedback." (Tim)

Furthermore, TikTok offers authenticity (two students). They get to listen to proper pronunciation and learn from native speakers, which is not possible when learning vocabulary through textbooks. For example:

"TikTok can provide proper pronunciation when people say it." (Hannah)

"TikTok has many English speakers that can teach us new vocabulary that are not in textbooks." (Ken)

It is also easier to remember vocabulary (two students) because there are fewer texts and simplified explanations. For example:

"TikTok is least word and easy to remember." (Natalie)

"Got easy explanations and no need to see many words so can remember." (Travis)

However, one student pointed out that there might be device-related problems when using TikTok such as no battery or Internet connection. Another student stated that it is distracting as well since there are many non-educational videos available for entertainment on the platform. For example:

"But sometimes, phone will have no battery or connection." (Gerald)

"TikTok can distract people because a lot of content online is for fun." (Vernice)

On the other hand, there are positive and negative perceptions of textbooks for vocabulary learning. Firstly, two students believe that textbooks have higher credibility as they offer more accurate and reliable information and are written by qualified authors. One student also shared that she considers textbooks to be more helpful in acquiring knowledge, as compared to TikTok which is mostly used for entertainment. For example:

"But textbook has correct information." (Hannah)

"TikTok can distract people because a lot of content online is for fun. While a textbook adds more knowledge to us and the textbook's content is more trusted because the authors have training." (Vernice)

However, four students believe that textbooks lack accessibility. They shared that this is because the books are heavy and inconvenient to carry around. They also find it tiresome to flip through the pages searching for specific information while the same can be easily found on TikTok by searching for keywords. For example:

"Textbooks are sometimes heavy and it's not portable." (Alexis)

"But textbook you need to find the page. So mafan and will makes you sleep. So TikTok easier to find, just type." (Zenya)

In addition, four students find textbooks not engaging because they are text-heavy and lack visuals. They feel that they cannot interact with the learning material like they would be able to do on TikTok, where they can interact with the creators and other users. For example:

*“Not like textbook, so boring. Only have many words, little pictures, no challenges like TikTok.”
(Tim)*

Two students also expressed that textbooks have a fixed structure and only cover specific content, which makes it difficult to learn conversational words or phrases. For example:

“Also, textbooks can only teach us the vocabulary in it so we cannot learn other vocabulary from life.” (Ken)

Lastly, one student finds it difficult to remember textbook contents as they contain a lot of text. For example:

“Textbook got too much word and is hard to remember.” (Natalie)

E. Advantages and Disadvantages of TikTok for Vocabulary Learning

Different perspectives on the advantages and disadvantages of using TikTok for vocabulary learning were provided. As illustrated in Table 8, most students believe that TikTok has more advantages than disadvantages for learning vocabulary.

Table 8

Students’ perceptions of TikTok’s advantages and disadvantages for vocabulary learning

Advantages	No. of Participants	Disadvantages	No. of Participants
Accessible	8	Distracting	7
Engaging	7	Unreliable	6
Provides proper pronunciation	5		
Improve vocabulary knowledge	5		
Quick acquisition of vocabulary	1		

Out of 12 students, eight stated that TikTok is easily accessible as it is portable, convenient, easy to use and free. They shared that they can use the platform anywhere and anytime they want to learn vocabulary on their devices. It is also easy to use as they can search for videos they prefer quickly and learn without having to pay. For example:

“The advantages are that TikTok is portable and it can provide you with English videos as if it’s like a little class. It’s also free.” (Alexis)

“It’s convenient and easy to find videos. I can learn when I feel like it.” (Joelle)

TikTok is also an engaging platform (seven students), where they can have a great learning experience without feeling bored. Students also commented that there are many interactive features and activities available on the platform, which enhances their learning experience. For example:

*“TikTok can provide entertainment while learning vocabulary if the video is interesting.”
(Vernice)*

“We can learn through trends and challenges and learn with other users. We can also create own videos.” (Travis)

Furthermore, TikTok enables students to listen to proper pronunciation of words (five students). They appreciate that they can listen to native speakers' accents and learn how to pronounce words accurately. For example:

"I can listen to oversea people speaking English and I can learn their speaking way." (Sherry)

Not only that, five students mentioned that using TikTok has helped them improve their vocabulary knowledge. One student even elaborated that TikTok helps her acquire vocabulary quickly. For example:

"It is easy to use and it can teach us words that we didn't know." (Ken)

"Easiest to remember and learning something new within a minute." (Natalie)

However, students agreed that the platform has its own disadvantages. More than half of them (seven students) commented that TikTok is distracting and shifts their focus as it contains many unrelated videos. Sometimes, they are easily attracted to those videos and this negatively affects their learning process. Additionally, six students perceive TikTok to be unreliable as the content can be created by anyone. Thus, it may contain inaccurate information and different explanations compared to those given by qualified sources. For example:

"Some videos might teach the wrong thing and we can get distracted easily so it's bad." (Oscar)

"The disadvantages of using TikTok in vocabulary learning is that some people may provide wrong information because everyone can make the videos." (Hannah)

"Different explain from teacher and textbook." (Natalie)

F. Recommending TikTok as an English Learning Tool to Others

Students' willingness to recommend TikTok as an English learning tool to others is indicated in Table 9. As shown below, almost all students shared that they would recommend the platform while only two disagreed.

Table 9

Students' willingness to recommend TikTok as an English learning tool to others

	Perceptions	No. of Participants	Perceptions	No. of Participants
	Agree	10	Disagree	2
Reasons	Accessible	7	Inaccurate information	1
	Improve vocabulary quickly	5	Distracting	1
	Fun learning experience	3		
	Can learn from native speakers	1		

Seven students found TikTok to be an accessible platform as it is portable, free, convenient and easy for learners to use. According to them, they can learn vocabulary on their devices for free, whenever and wherever they want. It is also easy to use as students can search for videos they want or follow certain creators to stay up to date with the latest videos. For example:

“Like it’s free, I can see whenever and wherever I want on my phone and get a lot of information.” (Oscar)

“Yes, I would. It’s because it’s easier to just use the search bar or follow people that teaches English to learn vocabulary.” (Joelle)

Next, five students shared that TikTok helps them improve their vocabulary quickly because the videos are not lengthy. For example:

“Yes, it is easy. Words that we don’t know can search and watch faster. Then we can learn faster.” (Gerald)

“It can also be used to revise some of the vocabularies quickly as it’s short.” (Alexis)

Meanwhile, another three students stated that learning through TikTok enables them to have a fun learning experience because the videos are interesting and funny to them. For example:

“Yes, because we can have fun while learning. The videos are interesting.” (Travis)

“Of course, if people don’t like to read books. My friends can learn English from this app and have fun because the videos are funny.” (Sherry)

Another student agreed that he would recommend TikTok to others because everyone can learn from native speakers. Besides learning vocabulary, they can also listen to those speakers’ pronunciation and improve their listening skills. For example:

“Yes. I would recommend using TikTok as an English learning tool to others because it has great English speakers that can teach us new vocabulary.” (Ken)

However, two students stated that they would not recommend this platform. This is because they believe that some of the content may contain inaccurate information and is distracting, which influences their vocabulary learning. For example:

“No, I wouldn’t because textbooks can provide real and right information although TikTok can be easy and interesting.” (Hannah)

“No, I wouldn’t. It’s because TikTok can make us forget about learning.” (Vernice)

Discussion

The Effects of TikTok on Year 6 Students’ Vocabulary Learning

Participants completed pre-tests and post-tests to assess their vocabulary knowledge before and after using TikTok respectively. Both tests consisted of the same questions to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the students’ progress after the intervention.

After data analysis, it was discovered that all students demonstrated significant improvements in their marks. Each recorded an increase of 10% or more and the mean score nearly doubled. The t-test analysis also suggested that the mean score difference between both tests is significant ($t = -9.45$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that TikTok is a valuable tool for vocabulary learning and it helps students to expand their vocabulary knowledge. These findings are consistent with past researchers who found that those who learned through TikTok performed better on post-tests compared to those who did not (Du, 2023; Rahmawati & Anwar, 2022; Rajan & Ismail, 2022).

Year 6 Students' Perceptions of Using TikTok for Vocabulary Learning

After completing both tests, all students were interviewed to collect their perceptions of using TikTok for vocabulary learning. It was noted that they had a generally positive perception of TikTok as a learning tool and preferred it over traditional textbooks.

Although a few of them mentioned that textbooks contain well-researched and verified content, many prefer to not use textbooks as they are text-heavy and lack engaging format. Because of this, students also experienced difficulty in remembering information. Similarly, Sholikah (2023) revealed that many participants find textbooks to be monotonous and overwhelming due to the large amounts of information presented in written form and the lack of visuals. Students have also expressed that textbooks are often unattractive and pointed out that the use of colours and engaging illustrations should be included to attract their attention (Pasaribu, 2022). Hence, when designing textbooks, publishers must use clear language, provide concise explanations, break down complex topics, create visually appealing layouts and incorporate interactive elements such as augmented reality (AR) through QR codes.

Furthermore, some students from this research have expressed that textbooks have a fixed structure and only cover specific content without incorporating everyday language. As a result, they find it difficult to learn conversational words or phrases and connect with the content. This finding aligns with previous research by Em and Nun (2022), who shared that students prefer English textbooks that contain authentic language and daily conversations for better understanding. Thus, content creators should consider introducing definitions or examples with everyday language to aid in better understanding of complex concepts and presenting certain concepts in a way that highlights their relevance to real-world situations.

In addition, this research's students shared that textbooks are heavy and inconvenient to carry around. They also find it easier to search for information on social media platforms like TikTok instead of flipping through the textbook pages. Carrying multiple books daily can be a burden for some, which is why many prefer using social media platforms as an alternative learning tool (Alshreef & Khadawardi, 2023). To alleviate these issues, publishers can consider splitting thick textbooks into a few volumes to reduce weight and for convenience. Schools can also implement locker systems where students can store textbooks without carrying them around all day.

A. TikTok's Content

Aside from the reason above, this research findings revealed that many students prefer using TikTok to learn vocabulary due to its diverse and interesting content. With a wide range of

videos available, they can select content that aligns with their interests and preferences. This encourages them to continue exploring and learning more vocabulary. One student from this research also elaborated that the videos are interesting because each creator uses different methods to present and deliver the content. Likewise, Natasya et al. (2023) found that students enjoy spending time improving their English on TikTok as interesting educational content is abundant. Therefore, it is important for teachers or creators to present information creatively on TikTok to capture students' attention and avoid a traditional classroom atmosphere.

According to Ining (2021), most content on TikTok is designed to be easily understood and tailored to meet the needs of a general audience. The participants in his study were able to quickly and effectively understand the content they learned due to the simple, short and clear explanations provided. However, students of this research provided contrasting responses. Although a majority of them reported a good understanding and successfully achieved the learning outcomes, a few faced difficulties in understanding certain videos due to their lower English proficiency. This suggests that TikTok may not be suitable for all students although it has been found to help enhance students' vocabulary by past researchers. Thus, teachers should be careful when reviewing and selecting TikTok videos for students so that they fit everyone's learning needs. Alternatively, if teachers want to create their own TikTok videos, it is crucial to ensure that the content is comprehensible for all regardless of their proficiency level.

Next, students from this research shared that TikTok videos contain real-life examples that are relatable. This allows them to learn words and phrases used in everyday conversations, rather than just textbook examples. They can also learn additional context and insights by engaging in discussions with other users as well. This finding is in line with Tan et al. (2022), which reveals that students' language proficiency improves when they practise the language in real-world situations through TikTok duets and challenges. Simanungkalit and Katemba (2023) also discovered that their participants learned more about specific words and expressions that are used in real life, which they could then apply in their communication. Hence, teachers should consider integrating TikTok into their lessons to help students relate to the content and enhance their comprehension. However, teachers need to ensure that the words and phrases that students will learn are beneficial rather than harmful.

Additionally, it was found that many students appreciate the opportunity to listen to English accents and proper pronunciations through TikTok videos. Unlike learning from books, TikTok allows them to listen to how native speakers pronounce words with their accents. This helps them improve their listening and speaking skills, besides increasing their vocabulary knowledge. Likewise, Kueh and Aziz (2022) reported that their students learned various authentic English accents from TikTok speakers from all over the world. Novitasari and Addinna (2022) also noted that students gain more confidence in their English skills when learning from native English speakers. Thus, teachers should consider integrating TikTok into their lessons as it could enhance other aspects of students' language proficiency besides vocabulary knowledge. However, it is crucial for teachers to review the pronunciations beforehand to prevent students from learning incorrect ones.

B. TikTok's Features

In terms of the features, the unique format of short videos has attracted many users, including most of the students in this research. They mentioned that the short videos help them learn quickly and remember words or phrases easily. They also find it convenient to review the videos multiple times as they are not lengthy. Similarly, Dominguez et al. (2023) have emphasised the significance of short TikTok videos in preventing students from getting bored and capturing students' attention. Thus, teachers can use these short TikTok videos to spark curiosity, introduce a new topic or provide a quick review before moving on.

Findings also revealed that students enjoy watching TikTok videos as the videos often utilise interesting graphics, animations and audio. This keeps them interested and engaged during lessons, leading to more active participation. Students from this research also stated that most of the videos also include captions and translations. With these elements, they find it easier to learn, understand and retain new vocabulary. Likewise, Meylina (2023) noted that the use of colours and visual aids effectively captures students' attention and enhances their ability to remember what they have learned. Students have also reported that the subtitles help them notice the vocabulary being taught (Cahyono & Perdhani, 2023; Setiawati & Sunra, 2023). Hence, teachers can utilise TikTok videos to explain complex and abstract concepts so that students can visualise and understand the content better.

Besides that, many students who participated in the research noted that TikTok offers a variety of interactive features to its users. For example, the platform allows them to interact with creators and other users through likes, shares, comments and messages. They can follow English teaching creators and stay updated with the latest videos as well. There is also popular music, trending filters and popular challenges for them to participate in while learning. As a result, they perceive TikTok as a fun way to interact with others while learning and enjoy using it. This finding aligns with Aziz and Dali (2023), who found that interactive features facilitate more opportunities for knowledge sharing and creativity. If TikTok is incorporated in classrooms, it would be beneficial for kinesthetic learners as well. However, teachers need to monitor students' interactions to prevent issues like cyberbullying and harassment.

Moreover, findings revealed that students find it easy to search for specific videos on TikTok and appreciate the platform's hashtag feature that helps them find suitable videos based on their learning needs. According to Rama et al (2023), TikTok uses algorithms to suggest videos based on users' interests and preferences as well, which keeps students motivated to continue their learning journey. The save feature is also a favourite among this research's students as it allows them to revisit the videos they have saved for revision purposes, which helps them improve and increase their vocabulary knowledge (Hutagalung, 2023). All of these foster independent learning, allowing students to enhance their English proficiency outside the classroom without relying on the teacher.

Not only that, students who participated in this research expressed that TikTok provides them the convenience of learning anywhere and anytime. They also have the flexibility to study at their own pace and acquire vocabulary quickly. A study conducted by Ibrahim et al (2023) confirms that TikTok is a helpful tool as students can learn without having to dedicate a specific time to language learning. This research also revealed that students appreciate the cost-saving aspect of TikTok since it is free and eliminates the need to purchase expensive

textbooks or carry heavy books. Fitria (2023) has suggested that private English classes or tuition can be costly, which makes TikTok a cost-effective and efficient alternative for learning English.

C. Learning Experience on TikTok

The majority of students in this research believe that TikTok is a great platform for learning due to its numerous benefits. They would also recommend it as a tool for learning English to others. This finding is consistent with previous research by Alvarez et al (2024) as well as Anumanthan and Hashim (2022), who discovered that most students had a positive learning experience with TikTok.

Next, since this research's students are accustomed to traditional teaching methods in the classroom, they find TikTok to be a unique and interactive way of learning. This increases their attention span and interest, leading to greater motivation and active class participation. They also experienced positive feelings such as happiness because they get to learn in a stress-free environment. Similarly, Erwani et al (2022) shared that students believe TikTok can help alleviate boredom during the learning process and motivate them to achieve their learning goals while having a new experience. However, findings revealed that some students find certain videos boring. One student further elaborated that the quality of the learning experience depends on the creators. Therefore, teachers or creators must ensure that the videos created can engage students.

Not only that, it has been observed that TikTok is a platform that can cater to students with different learning styles. For instance, visual learners who learn best through sight can benefit from the visually stimulating content while auditory learners who learn best through audio can listen to the narrations and explanations. The background music and sound effects can also keep students engaged and motivated. Meanwhile, kinesthetic learners who learn best through a physical approach can join the challenges or duets. All these helps to enhance the quality of the learning process. Likewise, the visual and auditory learners from research by Duan (2023) find these audiovisual aids beneficial and stimulating. Thus, teachers can use this platform to add variety to students' learning experiences.

D. Learning Experience on TikTok

While TikTok has its advantages, some students have pointed out its disadvantages such as the reliability of TikTok videos. Since anyone can create content on TikTok, there is no assurance that the creator is an expert on the topic. This means that the content could be inaccurate or incomplete and may not be trustworthy as it could be based on the creator's personal beliefs. As the content originates from diverse sources, there will be different accents and varied learning quality as well. While it is good to have exposure to these accents, the inconsistencies can lead to confusion for students. Hence, teachers who want to use TikTok videos in their lessons should always check the creator's credentials, if possible, to see their qualifications. Teachers must also look for any inconsistencies and verify the accuracy of the information before using it in their lessons.

Moreover, TikTok can be distracting according to a few students from this research. This is because there is a lot of non-educational content that can divert their attention away while learning. To address this issue, teachers should educate their students on how to manage

their use of TikTok. This could include setting time limits, taking scheduled breaks or turning off notifications. If TikTok is being used in the classroom, teachers should monitor their students' use of the platform but if it is being used at home, parents should step in to help monitor their child's use to ensure that they stay on task. Furthermore, one student mentioned that device-related problems such as a dead battery or poor Internet connection can also disrupt the learning process. To avoid these issues, both teachers and students should make sure that they are adequately prepared before beginning the learning process.

Conclusion

This research offers valuable insights into the topic, shedding light on the effectiveness of TikTok on students' vocabulary learning and their perceptions of the application. While traditional methods remain essential for a strong vocabulary foundation, TikTok serves as a valuable supplement for younger learners to improve their proficiency level. By learning outside of the classroom, students have the opportunity to achieve a higher level of proficiency.

In this case, TikTok offers a wide variety of content that provides extra information for students. The videos usually come with captions and students can even save them for future revisions. They will also be exposed to native speakers with authentic accents, which will improve their comprehension and pronunciation. Additionally, TikTok provides a fun and engaging way to learn and interact with creators and other users. When students enjoy the learning process, it helps them to better understand the content and retain information. Most importantly, TikTok is free and portable, allowing students to learn anytime, anywhere and without the need to carry heavy textbooks.

It is important to note that while TikTok can be a helpful tool for learning, there is a potential for inaccurate and unreliable information. Since anyone can create content on TikTok, students may not be able to distinguish the accuracy and reliability of the information provided, which could lead to them learning the wrong things. Also, certain videos may not be engaging or suitable for all students as everyone has different learning styles and proficiency level. Furthermore, younger learners may be easily distracted while learning. As TikTok is an entertainment-focused platform, students may be tempted to watch non-educational content at times.

Hence, teachers and parents can take certain steps to help students use TikTok effectively for learning. Firstly, teachers who wish to use readily available TikTok videos in their lessons should verify their accuracy and reliability beforehand. They should also educate students on how to check the trustworthiness of the content so that students can use the platform effectively outside of the classroom. Moreover, teachers can recommend TikTok videos or qualified creators for students to learn on their own time. However, teachers must make sure that the videos they use or recommend to students are engaging so that students stay focused while learning. If teachers choose to create their own TikTok videos, they must also ensure that the videos are suitable for students of different levels as some might be challenging for those with lower English proficiency. Next, parental involvement is crucial in preventing students from being distracted. To ensure that students stay focused on learning, parents can monitor their child's use of TikTok. With the help of all parties, students will be able to use TikTok as an educational tool effectively.

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