

## Analysis of Vocabulary Learning Process from Instagram and TikTok

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### Abstract

This research explores the effectiveness of Instagram and TikTok as aids for enhancing students' English vocabulary acquisition. Instagram has instructional accounts that routinely publish English learning videos and introduce new vocabulary. TikTok offers exciting content that can aid in vocabulary acquisition but consumes significant data due to its video-centric design. The research investigated vocabulary learning processes and methods in both platforms in depth using a qualitative methodology and a case study design. Six English majors from a private university in South Borneo were asked to participate in this study because they had mastered English vocabulary through autonomous Instagram and TikTok use. Students saved vocabulary-related photos from these platforms to review them later. In addition, participants used the taught language in their regular activities to improve recall and employed mobile phone notes for additional practice. The urge to keep up with popular slang on Instagram and TikTok significantly motivates students to acquire new vocabulary. This indirect pursuit of slang language helps their speaking skills and reading, writing, and listening comprehension. This study highlights the importance of Instagram and TikTok in enhancing students' English vocabulary. Students can improve their language competence by utilizing educational accounts and enjoying these platforms' dynamic content. These findings have substantial implications for educators and students in the digital age who seek automated approaches to enhance language learning.

**Keywords:** *vocabulary, learning english, tiktok, instagram*

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi efektivitas Instagram dan TikTok sebagai alat bantu untuk meningkatkan penguasaan kosa kata bahasa Inggris siswa. Instagram memiliki akun pembelajaran yang secara rutin menerbitkan video pembelajaran bahasa Inggris dan memperkenalkan kosa kata baru. TikTok menawarkan konten menarik yang dapat membantu dalam perolehan kosa kata tetapi menghabiskan data yang signifikan karena desainnya yang berpusat pada video. Penelitian ini menyelidiki proses dan metode pembelajaran kosakata di kedua platform secara mendalam menggunakan metodologi kualitatif dan desain studi kasus. Enam mahasiswa jurusan bahasa Inggris dari universitas swasta di Kalimantan Selatan diminta untuk berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini karena mereka telah menguasai kosa kata bahasa Inggris melalui penggunaan Instagram dan TikTok secara mandiri. Siswa menyimpan foto terkait kosa kata dari platform ini untuk ditinjau nanti. Selain itu, peserta menggunakan bahasa yang diajarkan dalam kegiatan rutin mereka untuk meningkatkan daya ingat dan menggunakan catatan ponsel untuk latihan tambahan. Dorongan untuk mengikuti bahasa gaul populer di Instagram dan TikTok secara signifikan memotivasi siswa untuk memperoleh kosa kata baru. Pengejaran bahasa slang secara tidak langsung ini membantu keterampilan berbicara dan pemahaman membaca, menulis, dan mendengarkan mereka. Studi ini

menyoroti pentingnya Instagram dan TikTok dalam meningkatkan kosa kata bahasa Inggris siswa. Siswa dapat meningkatkan kompetensi bahasa mereka dengan memanfaatkan akun pendidikan dan menikmati konten dinamis platform ini. Temuan ini memiliki implikasi substansial bagi pendidik dan siswa di era digital yang mencari pendekatan otomatis untuk meningkatkan pembelajaran bahasa.

**Kata Kunci:** *vocabulary, learning english, tiktok, instagram*

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Diajukan: 20 Juli 2023 | Diterima: 4 Agustus 2023 | Tersedia Online: 7 Agustus 2023

## Introduction

Vocabulary is crucial in English language learning as it is the main foundation for constructing sentences. In English language education, however, the necessity of mastering vocabulary is sometimes ignored. Aini & Nohantiya (2020) observe that English has become the second language of choice, with many individuals, such as students and workers, needing to acquire English proficiency to support their daily activities. Motivations for learning English may depend on individual roles, with some being driven by personal curiosity and a desire to learn the language without external pressure.

Mastering vocabulary frequently encountered daily is crucial to achieving English proficiency in reading, listening, speaking, and writing. To flourish in the four language skills, it is necessary to have a substantial vocabulary. Active and passive types of vocabulary can be distinguished. Active vocabulary comprises words that speakers can comprehend, pronounce correctly, and utilize successfully in speaking and writing (Haycraft, 1978). Passive vocabulary, conversely, consists of words that speakers understand and comprehend in context but may struggle to express accurately when speaking or writing. Learning vocabulary requires both receptive and productive components. Receptive learning refers to the ability to recognize and recall word meanings. In contrast, productive learning involves recognizing and recalling word meanings and promptly applying the words effectively in speech and writing (Laufer & Nation, 1999).

The understanding of regularly used terminology facilitates communication. Gyllstad et al. (2021) suggest that an efficient way quickly acquire spoken fluency in a foreign language is to focus on learning 800 to 1,000 frequently used words. By acquiring these common vocabularies, students can comprehend at least 75% of the language spoken in daily life. As a result, these languages with a high frequency of usage have a higher value because they are more prevalent in everyday conversation. Various techniques for vocabulary acquisition facilitate diverse learning environments. Effective communication with others requires a firm vocabulary knowledge, especially since English has one of the most extensive vocabularies of all languages.

Bai (2018) highlights using cognitive strategies, including selective attention, as an essential part of cognitive strategies in vocabulary learning. Many students prefer regularly used vocabulary, prompting lecturers to concentrate on teaching fundamental basic words and providing thorough explanations. Various facets of word knowledge, including double meanings, grammatical qualities, and collocations, are emphasized during instruction. The cognitive observation of students demonstrates that autonomy methods are common, with many using vocabulary books for learning and memory. A minority of subjects read English-language newspapers or periodicals to improve their vocabulary, and an even smaller number build word flashcards to review and memorize words in their free time.

Students frequently consult definitions to understand phrases or sentences linked to the target term, as dictionary use is a prevalent cognitive strategy. Nonetheless, fewer students pay attention to the English definition alongside the Chinese translation. The subject population widely utilizes bilingual dictionaries. In addition, social/affective methods are regularly implemented, and most students demonstrate a high focus in vocabulary studies. When confronted with disappointing outcomes in vocabulary acquisition, some students are motivated to persevere and build self-confidence and self-drive to overcome obstacles. However, Octaviana et al. (2023) report that the lack of vocabulary and limited media resources pose significant challenges to students during the learning process. As a recommendation, Kusumaningrum et al., (2020) propose a learning strategy that goes beyond mere explanation and includes description and illustration.

With the advancement of technology, students now have the flexibility to learn wherever they choose. Educational institutions can benefit from technological developments, and teachers should leverage technology to make learning more engaging and avoid monotony. Liando et al., (2022) say using images as a learning medium significantly improves students' vocabulary outcomes. The visual attractiveness of photos attracts students' attention and inspires learning enthusiasm. Additionally, social media platforms allow students to expand their vocabulary.

Due Evaluations of the pros and cons of social media for English learning distinguish. On the one hand, the benefits include facilitating the learning process, encouraging student activity, creativity, and independence, serving as a social platform for networking and expanding social circles, boosting motivation, and increasing awareness. In contrast, the downsides include difficulties in gaining timely replies to questions and the harmful use of social media. In addition, marketing on social media may not always fit with the targeted learning objectives and demands.

Nonetheless, using social media can effectively support the educational process, enabling learning activities to be conducted anytime and anywhere. According to Mulyani (2019), learning with social media can overcome the limitations of physical space and time in a traditional classroom setting. Students and lecturers can interact online, engaging in discussions related to course material, asking questions, expressing opinions, and aiding one another in comprehending the subject matter. Utilizing media for learning has become a prominent trend, with Instagram and TikTok being popular platforms for English language learning.

Instagram is one of the most popular applications, providing opportunities for language study and vocabulary development. Students can subscribe to accounts that post English-learning videos and new words daily. The platform' features are continually updated to compete with other social networking sites.

Instagram offers novel filters and material, maintaining users' attention in learning. Accessing engaging information, such as videos with hilarious and appealing graphics, pronunciation instructions, and explanations of contemporary slang, is necessary for learning vocabulary on Instagram. Similarly, learning English with TikTok requires following accounts that provide educational information, precise pronunciation instructions, and even Western films with text and translations, allowing students to watch films while learning new terminology (Bahri et al., 2022). However, it is worth noting that TikTok can consume significant data due to its video-oriented content, while Instagram offers image posts containing more data-efficient words.

On Instagram, students can select non-private accounts related to English learning, enabling them to follow and access the latest posts regularly. For instance, Kristivani (2018) highlights the constructive content provided by the @belajar\_bahasa.english account (see Figure 1), which includes explanations of vocabulary meanings and examples of their correct usage in sentences. Students can more efficiently manage their data consumption on Instagram by viewing posts in image format. On the other hand, TikTok is an attractive English-learning platform due to its short, engaging videos, creative content with background sound, graphics, and editing effects that are both useful and enjoyable. Through online video material with the hashtag #learnenglish, the site has acquired appeal among teenagers for English language study. Warini et al. (2021) observed that the @belajar\_English account routinely shares articles about new vocabulary and its accurate pronunciations and delivers everyday new vocabulary and meanings.



Figure 1. @belajar\_bahasa.english account on Instagram

Learning vocabulary through Instagram and TikTok for English language fluency has been extensively discussed in the literature. Rahman (2021) conducted a non-experimental research study to examine the effect of using Instagram and TikTok on increasing students' vocabulary. Data collection involved using

questionnaires to assess the influence of these social media platforms on students' vocabulary improvement. Linear regression analysis was employed to analyze the data. The findings revealed a positive and significant correlation, with a correlation coefficient of 0.698 and a total effective contribution of 68% from Instagram and TikTok. As Instagram and TikTok continually introduce new features to remain competitive, their role in language learning has become increasingly relevant (Lee, 2023).

Lee (2023) explored the creative use of emerging image-based social media platforms for informal language learning. The study analyzed 200 posts from each platform collected over two months using public data on Instagram photos, video posts, and TikTok videos. Qualitative content analysis focused on four main dimensions: technological innovation, multimodality, mobility, and interactivity. While Instagram's image posts are data efficient, TikTok's short video feature consumes significant data usage. In comparison between Instagram and TikTok, Lailiyah & Setyaningsih (2020) found that students preferred Instagram as the more popular social media platform. Students viewed learning through Instagram positively due to its innovative approach to language learning, leading to the rapid enrichment of interactive vocabulary.

Drawing from the above background, the researcher is interested in investigating the vocabulary learning process through Instagram and TikTok, particularly its impact on natural English-speaking abilities and text comprehension in books. However, some previous studies have not included students as research samples in experimental research, often focusing on elementary, middle, and high school students. The research aims to strengthen the argument that mastering frequently occurring vocabulary facilitates sentence construction and effective communication with others.

## Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative methodology, namely case studies, to conduct an in-depth investigation of vocabulary learning processes and methods through Instagram and TikTok, emphasizing improving English speaking and reading skills. Through interviews and documentation with the chosen participants, data was collected. Face-to-face interviews were used to acquire valid data and facilitate the development of critical questions. Six students majoring in English from the Class of 2020/21 at a private campus in South Borneo were the subjects of this study. These students were selected according to their successful mastery of English vocabulary through autonomous Instagram and TikTok learning.

## Results and Discussion

Using interviews with students who utilized Instagram and TikTok for vocabulary acquisition, the present study assessed the efficacy of learning vocabulary through these platforms. The outcomes of the interviews demonstrated that acquiring vocabulary through Instagram and TikTok offers the benefit of introducing new informal terminology, also known as slang or informal English, which is prominent among today's

youth. Comparatively, YouTube was less popular among the participants for acquiring vocabulary. Many students reported that they found Instagram and TikTok more engaging than YouTube because of the shortened and interesting content, which made the learning process less monotonous.

Regarding retention strategies, students disclosed that they screenshot vocabulary images found on Instagram and TikTok and store them in their galleries for later review. Moreover, to reinforce memorization, they actively incorporate the newly acquired vocabulary into their daily conversations with friends, either in face-to-face interactions or through WhatsApp chats. As one student stated:

“In addition to screenshotting pictures, I also use notes on my cellphone if there are many new slang words that I don't know about, because I don't want to be outdated.”

When learning new vocabulary on Instagram and TikTok, students encounter several challenges. One of the main obstacles is the limitation on data quotas, as both platforms offer high-quality videos that consume a significant amount of data when watched. Additionally, the pace of Instagram videos is relatively rapid, and there is no option to replay specific segments, which forces students to restart the video if they wish to review certain vocabulary. Moreover, the vocabulary on these platforms often consists of familiar or frequently recurring words, necessitating repetitive exposure for effective learning.

Students mentioned that they dedicate approximately one hour daily to accessing the Instagram and TikTok applications to explore videos showcasing new vocabulary. Subsequently, they practice the acquired vocabulary in their daily interactions with friends. However, it is noteworthy that one student expressed reluctance to employ the learned vocabulary in conversations with others, as she remarked:

“I didn't immediately apply the new vocabulary to Indonesians because it was considered pretentiously British, so I was looking for the right person to apply the new vocabulary.”

When these students have grasped a large quantity of vocabulary, they do not stop their exploration of vocabulary improvement. Their learning process continues even though it is not a daily occurrence. As adolescents explore Instagram and TikTok, they encounter new vocabulary, which they actively read, memorize, and share with their peers. This ongoing effort is prompted by the realization that new terminology arises daily on these sites. Moreover, developing a large vocabulary can considerably improve their language ability in speaking, writing, listening, and reading, highlighting the significance of continually expanding vocabulary to obtain higher English fluency.

Regarding the final question, most interviewed students agreed that learning vocabulary through Instagram and TikTok exposes them to new vocabulary, particularly colloquial and informal terms prevalent among today's youth. This technique ensures they keep current with informal and formal linguistic phrases

in their everyday language. The results of these interviews indicate that learning vocabulary through Instagram and TikTok adds to the extension and development of vocabulary.

### Learning vocabulary from Instagram and TikTok can add New Vocabulary

The interviewed students emphasized that learning vocabulary through Instagram and TikTok facilitates the acquisition of new vocabulary, particularly non-formal terms commonly referred to as slang, which is prevalent among today's young people. Suprapti et al., (2021), support this notion, stating that slang obtained from social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok is frequently used, taking forms such as word absorption (e.g., "epribadih" derived from "everybody") and acronyms (e.g., "OTW" derived from "On the Way"). This encourages students to stay updated with the latest vocabulary and slang to avoid being outdated.

Since students belong to the millennial generation, they actively use slang in their daily interactions, as observed by Mulyadi et al., (2019). Their desire to use slang is associated with their growth in digital technologies and information environments. Their efforts to grow their vocabulary encourage attentive reading and the quest for slang terms, improving their speaking abilities continuously. Students also shared strategies to remember newly encountered vocabulary.

These findings align with previous studies. Acquiring vocabulary is crucial, especially for verbal communication. Speaking, as a fundamental aspect of English language proficiency, encompasses four essential macro skills and represents a productive ability that requires substantial exposure for learners to harness its potential effectively (Murtiningsih et al., 2019).

Guntur et al., (2023) conducted a study demonstrating that social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter effectively enhance students' English-speaking abilities. These platforms offer access to authentic English content and enable interactions with native or proficient English speakers, making them valuable resources for language improvement. Zakiah et al., (2023) also emphasize the significance of utilizing appropriate vocabulary learning media effectively develop students' foundational skills.

Purnama et al., (2017) explored the incorporation of various mobile applications, gadgets, and internet access, leading to the emergence of memes as an innovative educational approach. Murtiningsih (2020) highlights the availability of diverse online learning platforms, such as Zoom, WhatsApp, Google Meets, Google Classroom, Quizizz, Kahoot, YouTube, and Canva, which have positively impacted the teaching and learning process. The seamless integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) with online learning has introduced a fresh and enriching experience for educators and students throughout their educational journey.



## Ways students remember new vocabulary

Following interviews with students, it was discovered that many positive ways are used to recall the newly encountered Instagram and TikTok language. Commonly, vocabulary images were taken via screenshots and saved in a gallery for further reference. Furthermore, students actively incorporate this new terminology into their daily conversations with friends, whether in-person or via messaging services such as WhatsApp. In addition, note-taking has been demonstrated to be an excellent method for language retention. Dewi & Supriadi (2022) emphasized that enhancing speaking skills is closely linked to extensive reading and mastering English vocabulary, as it enables effective communication. During vocabulary comprehension, students delve into understanding the meanings and contexts in which the vocabulary is utilized.

## Conclusion

Students employ a systematic approach to acquire new vocabulary through Instagram and TikTok. Firstly, they follow educational accounts present on both platforms. Next, they save vocabulary images and notes in their phone galleries for future review. They rapidly incorporate the newly learned vocabulary into their everyday chats with friends to aid in memory retention. Students' motivation to actively explore new terminology derives from their desire to prevent missing out on Instagram and TikTok slang. This indirect pursuit of slang vocabulary serves to refine their speaking skills and enhances their overall language proficiency, contributing to a comprehensive understanding in reading, writing, and listening.

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