

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background of the research which describes the researcher's reasons for conducting this research. In addition, the statement of the research problem is formulated as well as the objectives of the research. It is followed by the significance of the research which informs the benefit of this research.

A. Background of the Research

Vocabulary is assumed as the backbone of language. Nation (2001) a well-known linguist stated that vocabulary knowledge enables language use, and conversely, language use leads to an increase in vocabulary knowledge¹. This quote underscores the idea that vocabulary is a starting point for language learning as it allows learners to engage in communication and use the language. Considering the important of vocabulary acquisition, Nation (2001) also describes that vocabulary essential for successful second language use and plays a vital role in all language skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Further, in more specific terms, Cahyono and Widiarti (2015) stated that vocabulary plays a critical role in the learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly in Indonesia, where English has been taught

¹ I. S. P. Nation, *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2001), accessed February 3, 2025, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/identifier/9781139524759/type/book>.

from early education to familiarize students with it for its use in global communication². In Indonesia, enhancing students' vocabulary is a critical educational objective, as vocabulary serves as the foundation for comprehension and communication (Schmitt, 2019)³.

In recent years, the latest curriculum or the *Kurikulum Merdeka* offers a flexible approach in teaching methods, including in vocabulary teaching and learning (Dewi and Hartanto, 2020)⁴. Following the previous statement, teaching vocabulary under the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at school nowadays shifts from traditional teacher-centered into student-centered approach allowing educational institutions the freedom to tailor lessons based on students' needs and interests (Nurzen, 2022)⁵. Additionally, a new thing under *Kurikulum Merdeka* is differentiated learning. In term of vocabulary teaching, it emphasizes learning based on students' varying vocabulary proficiency levels (Hidayati & Sujarwati, n.d.)⁶. The curriculum is designed to allow teachers to focus on both basic vocabulary for students needing foundational reinforcement and functional and contextual

² Bambang Yudi Cahyono and Utami Widiati, "THE TEACHING OF EFL VOCABULARY IN THE INDONESIAN CONTEXT: THE STATE OF THE ART," *TEFLIN Journal - A publication on the teaching and learning of English* 19, no. 1 (August 29, 2015): 1.

³ Norbert Schmitt, "Understanding Vocabulary Acquisition, Instruction, and Assessment: A Research Agenda," *Language Teaching* 52, no. 02 (April 2019): 261–274.

⁴ Niken Hasdina et al., "STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSE," *English Education and Applied Linguistics Journal (EEAL Journal)* 7, no. 1 (March 30, 2024): 23–33.

⁵ M. Nurzen, "Teacher Readiness in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Kerinci Regency," *Edunesia: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan* 3, no. 3 (November 12, 2022): 313–325.

⁶ Liza Hidayati and Iis Sujarwati, "The Differentiated Learning Strategy in Implementation Merdeka Belajar Curriculum to Improve Students' Learning Outcomes of English Lesson in Elementary School," no. 5 (n.d.).

vocabulary for more advanced students with real-life applications (Latifa et al., 2023)⁷.

In a similar vein, the curriculum also promotes diverse teaching methods (Husnul H et al., 2024; Latifa et al., 2023; Risna, 2023). According to the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia, project-based learning, as one of current teaching method, involves presenting students with contextual problems (Isrokijah, 2020). Through PBL, students learn vocabulary not only by engaging into hands-on projects such as designing posters or presentations that incorporate targeted vocabulary but also exploring real-world problems through group discussions and reporting which fosters vocabulary acquisition (Moss et al., 1998; Solomon, 2003; Willie, 2001).

Other current method in teaching vocabulary is theme-based learning. This integrates thematic lessons related into daily life such as culture, science, technology, and global issues which introduces or even familiarize students with related vocabulary ⁸. Likewise, Nurhayati found that the use of picture series in English learning activities enhanced students' ability to comprehend and retain vocabulary through visual context. This suggests that multimodal input, even in static form, can assist

⁷ Helmia Latifa, Koesoemo Ratih, and Maryadi Maryadi, "Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in English Language Teaching: A Study of Teacher Learning Steps," *VELES (Voices of English Language Education Society)* 7, no. 3 (December 27, 2023): 640–651.

⁸ Nida Mujahidah Fathimah, "Theme-Based Teaching," *Journal of English and Education* (2014); Mutiarani Mutiarani and Irpan Ali Rahman, "Theme Based Instruction Model in Teaching Extensive Reading," *English Language in Focus (ELIF)* 2, no. 1 (September 26, 2019): 43.

vocabulary growth by connecting words to visual meaning⁹. Additionally, align with the flexibility of the curriculum, students are encouraged to learn vocabulary independently by reading book or journal articles¹⁰.

The current curriculum or *Kurikulum Merdeka* develops rules or regulations emphasizing flexible teaching methods designed for thematic learning and contextualized lessons. In accordance with the Decree of the Standards, Curriculum, and Education Assessment of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 033/H/KR/2022, vocabulary is part of learning outcomes in English subject. The curriculum encourages on developing communication competencies, meaning that vocabulary is integrated into language skills. Now, those language skills are encompassed both receptive and productive namely listening and speaking; reading and viewing; and writing and presenting.

Align with previous paragraph, vocabulary is tied to current real-world context such as environmental issues, digital literacy, health, and cultural heritage. According to the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (2020), teachers have the autonomy to select themes and contexts of the vocabulary as long it aligns with Profil Pelajar Pancasila which emphasizing values such as critical thinking and global awareness.

⁹ Dwi Astuti Wahyu Nurhayati, "Using Picture Series to Inspire Vocabulary Comprehension for the Second Semester Students of English Department of IAIN Tulungagung," *JEELS (Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies)* 1, no. 2 (2014): 23–38.

¹⁰ Anisa Mutia, Rosnani Sahardin, and Geunta Mardika Putra, "The Impact of Vocabulary Instruction on Vocabulary Achievement," *English Education Journal* 13, no. 4 (January 8, 2023): 464–477.

Additionally, teacher can design lesson plans allowing adaption to students' needs. Cited from the *Technology Driven Education Reform in Indonesia* on Repositori Kemdikbud, vocabulary is also introduced by incorporation of literacy and independent learning through extensive reading, multimedia, and project-based learning, which align with the Merdeka Belajar philosophy ¹¹.

In terms of assessment itself, teachers are guided to design formative and flexible assessment focusing on holistic evaluation of language skills. Vocabulary competence is assessed through performance tasks, self-assessment, and peer feedback rather than memorization ¹².

Teaching vocabulary nowadays at school also encourages teachers to incorporate technology by utilizing interactive digital tools and multimedia resources such as Quizizz, Duolingo, and Kahoot for vocabulary practice (Latifa et al., 2023)¹³. In today's education landscape, the integration of digital media in English language teaching has become increasingly important. Nurhayati (2019) emphasizes that the use of online media significantly contributes to students' listening skill development and fosters a more engaging learning environment. Nurhayati (2019) found that the use of Edmodo as a virtual learning platform in phonology classes

¹¹ Claudia Wang Yolanda Monique Zhang, Ali Sesunan, Laurencia, "Technology-Driven Education Reform In Indonesia" (n.d.).

¹² Arifin Nur Budiono and Mochammad Hatip, "Asesmen Pembelajaran Pada Kurikulum Merdeka," *Jurnal Axioma : Jurnal Matematika dan Pembelajaran* 8, no. 1 (April 13, 2023): 109–123.

¹³ Latifa, Ratih, and Maryadi, "Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in English Language Teaching."

increased students' engagement and motivation. She also noted that e-learning environments allowed more flexible and interactive learning experiences despite several technical challenges¹⁴. Moreover, integrating social media into vocabulary teaching encourages students to analyze and discuss English captions or instructions used on those platforms that align with their interests. The *Kurikulum Merdeka* explicitly promotes technology integration to foster 21st-century skills¹⁵.

Considering the advances of technology and under the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, teachers are allowed to utilize the products of technology in their class. Further, social media, particularly TikTok, as one of social media as well as authentic resources on which students have been familiar with is a great choice for potential learning media¹⁶. TikTok has become popular not only as entertainment media but also as source of information and learning¹⁷. According to study by Adiobe, this information is supported by a phenomenon that people is now seeking for information on TikTok instead of browsing on the internet. According to the report from Good Stats, by 2024 Indonesians' average duration on TikTok is 38 hours 26 minutes per month around 1 hour 32 minutes per day. Based on the available data on the

¹⁴ Dwi Astuti Wahyu Nurhayati, "Students' Perspective on Innovative Teaching Model Using Edmodo in Teaching English Phonology: A Virtual Class Development," *Dinamika Ilmu* (June 11, 2019): 13–35.

¹⁵ Lailatul Alifah and Sukartono, "Integration of 21st Century Skills in Thematic Learning in Elementary School," *Jurnal Ilmiah Sekolah Dasar* 7, no. 1 (February 6, 2023): 168–175.

¹⁶ Restu Yulia Hidayatul Umah and Yulia Anggraini, "Potential Utilization of Tiktok as Learning Support Media in Elementary School" (n.d.).

¹⁷ Rustan Efendy, Haerani Nur, and Muh Ilham Jaya, "The Use of the TikTok Application and Its Effect on Students' Learning Behavior," *Jurnal Inovasi Teknologi Pendidikan* 11, no. 2 (2024).

internet, the majority of Indonesia TikTok users is young people with range 53% of users aged 13-24 years old, who approximately are high school students. Given that existing data, optimizing TikTok in English language learning specifically to high school students is potentially promising.

By integrating something they love to spend their time a lot these days, learning English would be less stressful since TikTok is a global-reach platform which might appeal to young learners¹⁸. It often includes informal language, slang, and expressions from various English-speaking cultures, which can expose students to authentic English vocabulary¹⁹. Supported by TikTok's algorithm, it can potentially be exposing students to repeated English content. In terms of instructional strategy, Nurhayati demonstrated that using cartoon films significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery by providing repeated visual and auditory exposure. This aligns with how engaging English content on platforms like TikTok may contribute to incidental vocabulary learning²⁰.

TikTok, as a short-form video-based social media platform, holds significant potential in the field of education, particularly in learning English vocabulary. Its engaging, accessible, and concise content format allows learners to encounter new vocabulary in authentic, real-life contexts,

¹⁸ Aida Nabilah Azman et al., "Acceptance of TikTok on the Youth towards Education Development" 4 (n.d.).

¹⁹ Riswan Tri Wahyu, Nihta V F Liando, and Rinny S Rorimpandey, "THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TIKTOK AS MEDIA TEACHING TO" (n.d.).

²⁰ Dwi Astuti Wahyu Nurhayati, *The Effectiveness of Teaching Vocabulary by Using Cartoon Film Media* (unpublished, available via Academia.edu: <https://iain-tulungagung.academia.edu/Dwiastuti>)

making it easier to grasp meaning and usage naturally. Features like captions, native speaker audio, and supportive visuals foster incidental learning, which has been shown to be highly effective in enhancing vocabulary retention and understanding.

While TikTok is often viewed negatively by the public and dismissed as purely entertainment-focused, the platform is increasingly populated by educational creators who deliver English lessons in fun, relatable, and relevant ways for younger audiences. TikTok provides a flexible, interest-driven, and informal learning environment, bridging the gap between traditional instruction and modern digital learning preferences. Therefore, it is essential to recognize and utilize TikTok as a valuable alternative learning medium when approached wisely and purposefully.

Several existing studies have shown the impact of social media on language learning. As stated to the statement by Schmidt (1994)²¹, language can be learned incidentally through exposure to meaningful input rather than direct instruction. In line with previous statement, by consuming English content on social media particularly on TikTok might lead to vocabulary acquisition²². Focusing on vocabulary development, using TikTok plays a

²¹ Jack C. Richards and Richard W. Schmidt, *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), accessed December 17, 2024, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781315833835>.

²² Bambang Panca Syahputra, "The Use of Tiktok Education: The Impact on Student's Vocabulary Acquisition" (2024).

great role as this could be engaging, less stressful and alternative to traditional English classroom learning, making it feels more natural ²³.

The first study on related topic was carried out in 2022 by Nabilla et al., titled “The Correlation Between Social Media Activeness and Vocabulary Mastery of English Department Students of Universitas Riau” providing the idea that active engagement with social media can positively impact vocabulary acquisition among students²⁴. The study also found that social media is not only for entertainment but also as valuable resource for improving English language skills. Another study by Zainal and Rahmat (2020) titled “Social Media and Its Influence on Vocabulary and Language Learning: A Case Study” revealed that social media helps students to learn new words and use them in a variety of circumstances. The study concluded that social media significantly boost students’ enthusiasm in learning language and develop their English vocabulary.

In similar vein, the study by Pratama and Roslaini in 2024²⁵ explored the relationship between students’ habits of watching English TikTok content and their vocabulary mastery in a senior high school in Tangerang. Using a quantitative cross-sectional method with 125 randomly selected students, data were collected through a questionnaire and a vocabulary test.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Astrinia Ristama Tampubolon, Basar Lolo Siahaan, and Anita Sitanggang, “The Effect Of Using Tiktok On Students’ Vocabulary Mastery In Seventh Grade At SMP Negeri 9 Pematang Siantar,” *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan dan Sosial* 2, no. 3 (October 31, 2023): 390–402.

²⁵ Arya Putra Pratama K and Roslaini, “THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS’ HABIT IN WATCHING ENGLISH TIKTOK AND THEIR VOCABULARY MASTERY IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL,” *ELLTER Journal* 5, no. 1 (April 30, 2024): 215–223.

Results showed that most students frequently watched English TikTok videos and had good to excellent vocabulary skills. A significant positive correlation ($r = 0.232$, $p = 0.009$) was found between the frequency of watching English TikTok and vocabulary mastery. The study suggested that TikTok can be a useful supplementary tool for incidental vocabulary learning and recommends its thoughtful use in language education.

Additionally, a study by Adhim in 2023 investigated the relationship between students' habits of watching English movies and their vocabulary mastery among 32 students at YP Ki Abdus Shomad Kencong Jember²⁶. Data were collected through a habit questionnaire and a vocabulary test. The analysis using Pearson Product-Moment revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.766 > r\text{-table} = 0.349$), indicating that students who frequently watch English movies, especially with subtitles, tend to have better vocabulary mastery. The study concluded that watching English movies significantly supports vocabulary acquisition and recommends it as an effective media for incidental language learning.

Furthermore, a study by Tampubolon et al., investigated the effect of using TikTok videos on seventh-grade students' vocabulary mastery at SMP Negeri 9 Pematang Siantar during the 2023/2024 academic year²⁷.

²⁶ Ahmad Fauzul Adhim, "STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF KIAI HAJI ACHMAD SIDDIQ JEMBER FACULTY OF TARBIYAH AND TEACHER TRAINING 2023" (n.d.).

²⁷ Ida I Dewa Agung Tirtayasa, I Gusti Ngurah Agung Wijaya Mahardika, and Ni Wayan Satri Adnyani, "The Effectiveness of TikTok as an Instructional Media on Students' English Vocabulary Mastery," *New Language Dimensions* 5, no. 1 (July 7, 2024): 31–39.

Employing a quasi-experimental design with purposive sampling, two groups of 30 students each (experimental and control) were given a pre-test, the experimental group received TikTok-based instruction, and both groups took a post-test. The experimental group improved from a pre-test mean of 60.5 to a post-test mean of 80.3, while the control group improved from 60.16 to 70.66. A t-test confirmed a significant difference between groups ($t = 5.761$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that the use of TikTok significantly enhances vocabulary mastery among these students.

While previous studies have explored the impact of social media in vocabulary teaching, only few of the studies conducted to figure out the correlation particularly between the frequency of being engaged with English content on social media, especially TikTok and students' vocabulary mastery. Other studies in a similar topic need to be conducted to explore long-term impact to see how frequency of using TikTok affects vocabulary acquisition by being exposed with the variety of content on TikTok in a natural way, while previous studies often focused only to specific content. Moreover, the subject of studied in previous studies were mostly university student, thus, this research will be focused on high school students in the context of Indonesia as the subject being observed.

In addition, although English content on TikTok have been shown to positively influence students' vocabulary mastery, their use in English language learning has not yet been fully optimized or applied wisely. Many students watch English contents merely for entertainment, without

recognizing their potential as rich learning resources. Likewise, in educational settings, teachers have not maximized the use of TikTok platform as an open educational tool to support contextual vocabulary development. Therefore, this study seeks to address that gap by highlighting the frequency of being engaged with English content on TikTok as a learning habit and encouraging its more conscious and purposeful integration into the English learning process, especially in the context of vocabulary mastery.

Based on description above and taking into account few general assumptions, researcher tries to figure out if being exposed to English content on social media particularly TikTok has a correlation with students' vocabulary mastery. By focusing on high school students, the findings of this research could later serve as an information for other educators who are looking forward to integrating TikTok or other social medias as the open educational resources into their teaching strategies. Thus, researcher is urged to conduct research titled **“The Correlation Between the Frequency of Being Engaged with English Content on TikTok and Students' Vocabulary Mastery at SMAN 1 Kauman Tulungagung”**.

B. Research Problems

Based on the problems stated in the previous background, thus, the research problem is formulated as follow:

1. Is there any correlation between the frequency of being engaged with English content on TikTok and students' vocabulary mastery?

C. Objectives of the Research

Based on the focus of the study, the purpose of this study is:

1. To investigate the correlation between the frequency of being engaged with English content on TikTok and students' vocabulary mastery.

D. Research Hypothesis

Based on the conceptual framework being used, the hypothesis of this study is formulated as follow:

1. Null hypothesis (H_0): There is no correlation between the frequency of being engaged with English content on TikTok and students' vocabulary mastery.
2. Alternative hypothesis (H_a): There is a correlation between the frequency of being engaged with English content on TikTok and students' vocabulary mastery.

E. Significance of the Research

The results of this research on the correlation between the frequency of being engaged with English content on TikTok and students' vocabulary mastery is expected to hold significant importance stated as follows:

1. English Student

The study is expected to raise awareness among students about how their habit on scrolling through social media particularly TikTok may affect their vocabulary growth. This knowledge could motivate them to be more mindful in their social media

usage, potentially encouraging them to engage with contents that support vocabulary mastery.

2. Educational Practitioner

The findings of this research may give insight to teacher, lecturer, and other educators to integrate social media especially TikTok into their teaching strategies or design interventions to enhance vocabulary learning.

3. Future Researcher

By focusing on high school students in Indonesia, the result of this study could serve as a basis for further research on the impact of social media on students' language knowledge.

4. Policymakers

The findings of this research may lead educational policymakers to create guidelines for more effective use of social media in academic settings.

F. Scope and Limitation of the Research

To prevent misunderstanding and clarify the study, this research is conducted at SMAN 1 Kauman Tulungagung by collecting data from selected sample of 11th grade students in academic year 2024/2025. This study limits the wide range of vocabulary being assessed to nouns, verbs, and adjectives; especially on high-frequency vocabulary which often be found in everyday context.

G. Definitions of the Key Terms

To clarify the terms and contents of the topic in this study, the key terms used are following:

1. TikTok

TikTok is popular social media platform where users create and share short-form video, typically lasting between 15 seconds and now up to 60 minutes. TikTok offers a variety of content that spans entertainment, education, and daily life updates. Through short-form video, TikTok is designed to capture viewers' attention quickly and convey concise information or even entertainment.

2. Vocabulary mastery

Vocabulary is words of a language, including single items and phrase or chunks of several words which convey a particular meaning. Vocabulary mastery refers to students' ability to understand, recall, and correctly use a range of English words, including their meaning, form, and appropriate usage in different contexts.

3. High School

High school is secondary school that prepares students for college, university, and/or career. High school typically includes grades of 9-12, but may also 10-12, or aged approximately 14-18 years old.