

Students' Engagement in Tiktok: Its Relationship to Vocabulary Skills



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ABSTRACT: This study aimed to determine the relationship between students' engagement in TikTok and vocabulary skills to 127 students in the College of Teacher Education at Southern de Oro Philippines College for School Year 2024-2025. They were taken as respondents through Slovin's Formula. This study employed correlational research design. The data was collected through an adapted survey questionnaire. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were used to analyze the data. The results of the study revealed that students' level of engagement in TikTok is high specifically on academic and entertainment use. Students' vocabulary skills are also high, there is a strong positive correlation between students' TikTok usage and their vocabulary skills. Thus, students are more engaged with TikTok in entertainment use than academic use. It is therefore recommended that educators may utilize platforms like TikTok to create engaging content, to encourage academic engagement among students. Transforming TikTok into an educational platform for the students to enhance vocabulary skills like creating educational videos and interactive tests.

KEYWORDS: antonyms, entertainment, synonyms, tiktok, vocabulary

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology has led to substantial changes in communication, learning, and social interaction, particularly among younger generations. Platforms like TikTok emphasize short form engaging video content, have transformed how people consume media, with implications beyond entertainment. As TikTok gains popularity among students, its potential as an educational tool, especially in language learning, has become an area of growing interest.

TikTok stands out for its ability to merge entertainment with education, offering an interactive platform where users can participate in creative challenges, word games, and language-based activities. According to Fiallos et al. (2021), TikTok allows users to create and share short video content, making learning both fun and engaging. Zhuo (2019) observed that TikTok is especially popular among youths aged 13 to 17, positioning it as a powerful tool for educational engagement in this demographic. As noted by Perez (2024), children aged 4 to 18 now spend an average of 112 minutes daily on the application, indicating its significant relation on media consumption patterns. Moreover, Potrel (2022) highlighted the platform's integration into both recreational and educational settings, as educators increasingly leverage TikTok's potential for interactive learning.

Vocabulary as Merriam-Webster (2024) defines it plays a critical role in language proficiency, encompassing the words individuals know, understand, and use to communicate. Vocabulary is fundamental to effective expression, comprehension, and cognitive development. Therefore, as such it plays a critical role, strong vocabulary enhances one's ability to articulate thoughts and grasp new information. In this context, TikTok's innovative features may provide a unique opportunity for students to improve their vocabulary skills, as the platform combines entertainment with opportunities for active language practice.

Research has already pointed to the educational benefits of using multimedia platforms like TikTok in language learning. A study by Syifaul (2023) found a positive correlation between the time students spent watching TikTok videos and their language development. Through visually stimulating and interactive content, TikTok engages students in ways that traditional methods may not. Vocabulary-building activities on TikTok, such as word challenges, language quizzes, and collaborative video features like duets and stitches, allow students to practice language skills in real time. These interactive experiences, along with TikTok's live sessions, where learners can ask questions and receive feedback, contribute to an enriched learning environment (Alshreef & Khadawardi, 2023).

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Additionally, a study by (Roshdi & Rahmat, 2023) stated that some features on TikTok, such as captions and subtitles, help students learn terms and pronunciation. Students benefit from this multimodal approach by becoming more familiar with a variety of vocabulary sets, including synonyms and expressions that are useful to their learning goals.

A few studies, however, have explored the broader relationship between TikTok use and other vocabulary skills, including antonyms. This gap in research has motivated the present study, which aimed to explore the relationship between students' use of TikTok and their overall vocabulary skills. Specifically, the study investigated the perceived levels of academic and entertainment based on TikTok use and whether a significant relationship existed between TikTok engagement and students' ability to master vocabulary skills such as synonyms and antonyms.

By examining this relationship, the study would contribute valuable insights into the educational potential of TikTok and its connection with language learning, particularly vocabulary acquisition. This study sought to explore the relationship between students' engagement in TikTok and their vocabulary skills, focusing on how TikTok's interactive features may help vocabulary acquisition.

This study was anchored on the Imitation Theory of Language Learning by B.F. Skinner. The theory involves imitation and practice. The TikTok application has a good connection on students' language mastery learning outcomes potentially due to its role in facilitating imitation and practice of language skills. (Rahmawati & Anwar, 2022). This study supported the basic idea of the imitation theory, which holds that learners pick up language by imitating the speech and actions of those around them. TikTok has become an essential resource for students who want to increase the scope of their English vocabulary by providing a platform to hone their language abilities, engage in tasks, and obtain additional language-learning resources. These possibilities encourage students to increase and expand their vocabulary.

Furthermore, understanding behavioral learning theory is essential for grasping the critical processes at play in how individuals learn and adapt behaviors, as discussed by Rosadi et al. (2020). The study suggested the positive relation of the TikTok app on language mastery learning outcomes aligned with B.F. Skinner's Imitation theory of language learning. Skinner's theory emphasize imitation and practice as crucial components of language acquisition, and the study's findings regarding the app's role in facilitating imitation and practice of language skills support this focus. This comprehensive examination illuminates how individuals learn and accomplish tasks, underscoring the theory's significance in grasping human behavior and learning dynamics.

In today's digital age, social media platforms have exceeded their original purposes, evolving into potent educational tools. Cahyono and Perdhani's (2021) insightful suggestion that TikTok can be a valuable platform for students to observe and imitate language usage in terms of vocabulary resonates with contemporary learning methods. By engaging with diverse content on TikTok that covers a wide range of linguistic phrases and vocabulary, learners can enhance their vocabulary through practice and imitation in an interactive and dynamic environment. This learning method aligns with the notion that repetition and engagement in a dynamic context significantly enhance memory retention and linguistic competence. TikTok's diverse content exposes learners to different dialects and cultural distinctions, enriching their understanding and application of the language in real-world settings.

The idea of imitation language states that when considering the relationship between the two platforms and vocabulary skills, TikTok has a good impression on learners' improvement of their English vocabulary. TikTok has become an essential resource for students who want to increase the scope of their English vocabulary by providing a platform to hone their language abilities, engage in imaginative tasks, and obtain additional language learning resources (Simanungkalit, & Katemba, 2023). The interactive nature of TikTok encourages users to participate actively in language challenges and dialogues, fostering a more engaging and effective learning environment. This social media platform also serves as a community where learners can share tips, experiences, and encouragement; this social networking platform allows students to share knowledge and learning, increasing their studying experience.

In view of this, TikTok was regarded as an independent variable in this study since users could use the platform to watch and imitate videos to boost their English vocabulary. It demonstrated how learners could grow their vocabulary by using TikTok to learn synonyms, antonyms, and efficient word usage in a variety of scenarios. TikTok was the independent variable because users could use the platform to enhance their English vocabulary by watching and imitating videos. It proved how learners could expand their vocabulary using TikTok to learn synonyms, antonyms, and practical word usage in various scenarios. TikTok has a strict policy of censoring certain words, which can limit users' ability to express themselves freely. For example, words related to profanity, and certain slurs are blocked, making it difficult for users to discuss certain topics. Even though TikTok might be a helpful tool for vocabulary acquisition through video imitation and participation, it has significant limitations due to its restrictions, regulations and algorithm biases. These factors may restrict users' exposure to diverse cultural contexts and authentic language usage, which may later affect their whole educational journey.

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Hence, vocabulary skill is a crucial factor in students' ability to learn actively and productively, according to Miolo et al. (2023). Mastering vocabulary is vital for language learners to confidently express their ideas and communicate effectively. It is a fundamental aspect of developing both receptive and productive language skills, as Rashid et al. (2023) discussed. Vocabulary knowledge enables language usage and promotes vocabulary growth through practice, making it crucial for developing communication skills and learning a second language. Research highlights the significant correlation between a good vocabulary and academic success, underscoring the need for vocabulary expansion in educational settings. In summary, the theory and the discussion served as the foundation of the study on determining the relationship between students' TikTok engagement and their vocabulary skills.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study used the correlational survey method to investigate the students' engagement in TikTok and its relationship to vocabulary skills. Correlational research refers to a non-experimental research method which studies the relationship between two variables with the help of statistical analysis (Devi et al., 2023). This research design was used in this study because it aims to determine the connection between the two variables- TikTok and the vocabulary skills of the students.

After collecting and recording the data that were gathered in the study, the following statistical tools were used. The study employed the following statistical tools to analyze the data, For Problem 1 and 2, Mean and Standard Deviation were used to determine the students' engagement in TikTok. In contrast, for problem 3, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) was utilized to ascertain the significant relationship between the students' engagement in TikTok and their vocabulary skills.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Problem 1. What is the level of engagement in TikTok in terms of:

- 1.1. academic use and
- 1.2. entertainment use?

Table 1 indicates the summary table of students' engagement on TikTok. It was evident that while students engage with TikTok for academic purposes, their engagement for entertainment is notably higher, with a mean score of 2.86 with SD = 0.90 compared to 2.56 with SD = 0.91 for academic use.

Table 1.

Summary Table Students' Engagement in TikTok

Students' Engagement in TikTok	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description	Interpretation
Academic use	2.56	0.91	Agree	High
Entertainment use	2.86	0.90	Agree	High
Overall Mean	2.71	0.91	Agree	High

Note: 3.26-4.00 Very High; 2.55-3.25 High; 1.75-2.50 Low; 1.0-1.75 Very low

This disparity strongly suggests that, although students recognize the platform's potential for learning, they primarily utilize TikTok as a source of entertainment. The findings align with research indicating that students frequently turn to TikTok for leisure rather than educational content, highlighting a trend where the engaging and entertaining nature of the platform overshadows its academic applications (YPulse, 2022). Thus, while TikTok can serve as an auxiliary tool for learning, its entertainment value often overshadows its academic utility, highlighting the need for users to be mindful of their engagement with the platform to maximize its educational benefits.

Problem 2. What are the students' perceived level of vocabulary skills in terms of:

- 2.1. synonyms; and
- 2.2. antonyms?

Table 2 presents data on students' vocabulary skills in terms of synonyms, specifically focusing on how TikTok helps their understanding and use of synonyms. The table analyzes various indicators, with emphasis on the highest, lowest, and

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overall mean scores to gauge the platform's position on vocabulary development. The overall Mean of 2.71 with SD = 0.85 suggests that, on average, students agree that TikTok contributes positively to their vocabulary skills in terms of synonyms, with a generally high level of perceived benefit.

Table 2

Overall Vocabulary Skills

Vocabulary Skills	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description	Interpretation
Synonyms	2.71	0.85	Agree	High
Antonyms	2.59	0.84	Agree	High
Overall mean	2.65	0.85	Agree	High

Note: 3.26-4.00 Very High; 2.55-3.25 High; 1.75-2.50 Low; 1.0-1.75 Very low

Table 2 indicates that students demonstrate a high level of engagement with TikTok for vocabulary skills, with a Mean of 2.71 with SD = 0.85 for synonyms and 2.59 with SD = 0.84 for antonyms, both categorized as Agree and High. However, this academic engagement occurs within a broader context where synonyms use significantly dominates the use of antonyms. While students are utilizing TikTok to enhance their vocabulary, the platform's primary appeal lies in its entertainment value, which often overshadows its educational potential. This trend is supported by findings that reveal a substantial portion of college students primarily turn to TikTok for entertainment, despite acknowledging its usefulness for academic assistance (Mekler, 2021). Thus, while TikTok can aid in learning, particularly in vocabulary acquisition, it is important to acknowledge that students tend to use the platform more for entertainment than for academic purposes. This tendency is largely due to TikTok's design as an entertainment platform, which prioritizes engaging and enjoyable content. Additionally, the addictive nature of TikTok leads to increased screen time, making it easy for students to lose track of time while browsing through entertaining videos.

Problem 3. Is there a significant relationship between the students' use of TikTok and their vocabulary skills?

Table 3.

Correlation Analysis of Students' Engagement in TikTok and Vocabulary Skills

TikTok Engagement	R-Value	P-Value	Strength of Relationship	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Entertainment use	0.874	0.000	Very Strong	Reject Ho	Significant
Academic use	0.756	0.000	Very Strong	Reject Ho	Significant

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The correlation analysis between students' engagement in TikTok reveals significant insights regarding its relationship on both entertainment and academic uses. The entertainment use of TikTok shows a very strong positive correlation (R-value = 0.874, p-value = 0.000) with student engagement, indicating that as students engage more with TikTok for entertainment, their overall engagement levels increase significantly. This suggests that TikTok serves as a powerful tool for enhancing students' engagement in a recreational context, which aligns with findings that emphasize the platform's role in providing enjoyable content that captivates users' attention (Salasac, et al.2022).

Likewise, academic use of TikTok also demonstrates a very strong correlation (R-value = 0.756, p-value = 0.000) with student engagement but is notably lower than that of entertainment use. This indicates that while academic content on TikTok is beneficial for student engagement, it does not have the same level of connection as entertainment content. The difference in these correlations highlights the greater effectiveness of TikTok as an entertainment medium compared to its academic applications. It suggests that students may find more value and motivation in engaging with entertaining content than in educational material on this platform (Lobo et al., 2022).

These findings underscore the importance of understanding how different types of content on social media platforms like TikTok can help the student engagement differently. The stronger correlation associated with entertainment use suggests that leveraging this aspect could enhance educational strategies aimed at increasing student involvement and interest (Alvarez et al., 2024).

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This study came up with the following conclusions based on the findings of the study:

1. Integrating instructional resources into TikTok can be beneficial. By

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presenting educational content in an entertaining format, such as short and entertaining videos, students are more likely to actively engage with the material.

2. The results demonstrate that students are more skilled at using synonyms and tend to use them more frequently than antonyms in their vocabulary usage.

3. There was a very strong relationship found between students' engagement in TikTok and their vocabulary skills. This suggests that students' ability to understand and use new words has a correlation with how they immerse themselves in academic and entertainment TikTok videos.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions found in this study, the following recommendations are presented.

1. Considering that the entertainment use is higher than academic use, educators may think about creating interesting academic content specifically for viral platforms like TikTok. To draw students in and encourage academic engagement, this could involve brief instructional videos, interactive tests, or tasks that combine learning with fun.

2. The study indicated that students are less skilled with antonyms than with synonyms. It is recommended that vocabulary contents include additional exercises and materials that concentrate on the identification and application of antonyms may be incorporated in the class. Games, flashcards, or contextual exercises that highlight the value of antonyms in language understanding and expression could be used to accomplish this.

3. To maintain the momentum of exploring the correlation between students' level of engagement in TikTok and their vocabulary skills, future research should continue to investigate this relationship. Expanding the scope of studies to include a larger sample size and diverse demographic groups will help validate and deepen our understanding of how TikTok engagement influences the vocabulary skills among students.

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