

Students' Perceptions of Using TikTok @Nofreeadi for English Vocabulary Learning in EFL Context: A Qualitative Study

Yosefa Kaldista Tari¹, Lailatul Musyarofah^{*2}, Siti Aisyah³

^{1,2,3} Universitas PGRI Delta Sidoarjo

*Correspondence: ✉ * lailatulmusyarofah@universitaspgridelta.ac.id

Abstract

The integration of social media into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning has opened up new opportunities for vocabulary acquisition among students. This study explores students' perceptions of using the TikTok account @nofreeadi as a medium for learning English vocabulary. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, it involved twelve students from the English Education program. Data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, then analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed four main themes: ease of use, perceived usefulness, factors limiting acceptance, and user expectations. Students viewed TikTok @nofreeadi as an easy-to-use platform due to its short, clear, and interesting content, as well as its usefulness in supporting vocabulary learning through contextual examples. However, several limitations were identified, including the fast delivery of content, limited depth of explanation, and minimal interaction. Overall, the research results indicate that TikTok @nofreeadi serves as a fairly effective complementary medium for vocabulary learning, underscoring the importance of strategically integrating TikTok-based learning into formal English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction to enhance students' vocabulary development.

Article History

Received: 19-Jan-2026

Revised: 22-Jan-2026

Accepted: 15-Feb-2026

Keywords:

English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English vocabulary, student perceptions, TikTok

© 2026 Yosefa Kaldista Tari, Lailatul Musyarofah, Siti Aisyah

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

INTRODUCTION

English has become an essential international language in the context of globalization, playing a central role in academic communication, technological development, and professional interaction. Proficiency in English no longer functions solely as a linguistic skill but as a gateway to global knowledge, educational mobility, and career opportunities (Kabooha & Elyas, 2018). Individuals with strong English competence are better positioned to access

information, participate in international discourse, and compete in an increasingly interconnected world (Abidah, 2024).

Vocabulary mastery constitutes a fundamental component of English proficiency. Adequate vocabulary knowledge enables learners to comprehend texts accurately, express ideas clearly, and engage in meaningful communication. Vocabulary also supports the development of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, making it a core element in overall language competence. Studies consistently highlight that limitations in vocabulary often constrain learners' ability to perform higher-level language tasks, particularly in academic contexts (Alim et al., 2025).

Vocabulary-related difficulties remain evident among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at the university level. Academic demands require students to read complex texts, participate in critical discussions, and produce formal written work in English. Insufficient vocabulary knowledge frequently restricts students' comprehension and expression, leading to academic challenges and reduced confidence in using English. These limitations may also influence students' preparedness for professional environments where English is required (Alqahtani, 2015).

Traditional vocabulary learning practices continue to dominate many instructional settings. Memorization of word lists and direct translation are commonly applied despite their limited effectiveness in promoting contextual understanding and long-term retention. Such approaches often present vocabulary as isolated units rather than meaningful language resources, which may reduce learner engagement and motivation. As a result, vocabulary learning becomes mechanical and disconnected from authentic language use (Baleghizadeh, 2011).

The increasing integration of digital technology into daily life has reshaped students' learning preferences and habits. Social media platforms provide access to authentic language input, multimodal content, and informal learning opportunities that extend beyond classroom boundaries. Previous research has demonstrated the potential of platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook Reels in supporting vocabulary learning and learner engagement through audio-visual and contextual exposure (Crystal, 2003).

TikTok has gained particular popularity among university students due to its short-video format and interactive features. The platform combines visual, auditory, and textual elements in concise content, creating opportunities for

contextual language exposure (Faruq, 2025). Educational content related to English vocabulary, pronunciation, and language use has become increasingly visible on TikTok. Existing studies generally report positive learner responses toward TikTok-based learning, especially in terms of motivation and engagement (Hikmah et al., 2024).

Current research on TikTok-assisted language learning tends to focus on the platform as a whole rather than examining the pedagogical characteristics of individual content creators. This approach overlooks the fact that educational value on TikTok is largely shaped by how content is selected, contextualized, and delivered (Yoestara, 2024). Different creators apply different instructional strategies, resulting in varied learning experiences for students. Limited attention has been given to learners' evaluations of specific educational accounts, particularly those emphasizing contextual vocabulary use (Wayan et al., 2024).

The TikTok account @nofreeadi presents an example of contextualized vocabulary learning through authentic materials such as podcasts, films, songs, and public figures' speech. Vocabulary is introduced within natural contexts, allowing learners to observe how words function in real communication. The informal and humorous presentation style contributes to the account's popularity among university students while maintaining relevance to everyday language use (Sundanis & Akbar, 2025).

Empirical investigation into students' perceptions of the @nofreeadi account as a vocabulary learning medium remains limited. Most studies on TikTok in English language learning have not addressed how learners perceive the educational quality of individual accounts or how specific content strategies influence perceived learning benefits. This absence indicates a clear research gap related to creator-specific analysis in TikTok-based vocabulary learning (Maria & Sujarwati, 2025).

This study aims to explore university students' perceptions of using the TikTok account @nofreeadi for acquiring and expanding English vocabulary. Students' perceptions are essential indicators of engagement, motivation, and perceived learning value, all of which contribute to the effectiveness of informal digital learning environments. Understanding these perceptions provides insight into how contextualized vocabulary content on TikTok is received by learners (Laili et al., 2023).

The contribution of this study lies in its focus on a specific educational TikTok account rather than a general platform analysis. The findings are expected to enrich discussions on social media-assisted language learning by highlighting the role of creator-driven pedagogical practices. Practical implications may include guidance for students in selecting effective learning content, support for educators seeking to integrate relevant digital resources, and feedback for content creators aiming to improve the educational quality of their materials.

The scope of the study is limited to students' perceptions and does not measure direct vocabulary gains or learning outcomes. Despite this limitation, the study offers valuable insights into learners' experiences with contextual vocabulary learning through TikTok and provides a foundation for future research employing experimental or mixed-method approaches.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The integration of social media into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning has opened up new opportunities for flexible, student-centered teaching. Social media platforms allow students to access language input outside of formal classrooms and interact with content that reflects real-life communication. Through interactive features and multimedia formats, social media supports student engagement and facilitates exposure to language use, which is particularly beneficial for vocabulary learning. For students as adult learners, social media can serve as an additional learning medium that supports independent learning. When learners consider social media useful and easy to use, they are more likely to use it for educational purposes. Therefore, students' perceptions play a key role in determining the effectiveness of social media as a learning tool.

TikTok is a video-sharing social media platform designed to enable users to create, edit, share, and consume various types of short-form audio-visual content. The app provides a range of creative features, such as adding music, visual filters, special effects, and lip-syncing, which support user expression and interaction (Cuşnir, 2025). The design allows users to consume learning materials efficiently and repeatedly. In accordance with Dual Coding Theory by Clark & Paivio, (1991), The combination of verbal and visual elements in TikTok can improve understanding and memory retention, which supports good vocabulary mastery. TikTok content often displays examples of language

use in contextual situations, such as conversations, movies, or songs. This characteristic supports vocabulary learning because learners not only learn the meaning of words but also their use in everyday life. Innovative learning materials that are directly related to students' daily lives can significantly strengthen their intrinsic motivation to learn languages because they help students feel that what they are learning is relevant and useful for their daily lives. This is achieved through effective repetition, clear visual contexts, and entertainment, making the learning process more enjoyable and efficient.

Student perceptions refer to how students interpret, evaluate, and respond to learning experiences and media. In the context of digital learning, student perceptions greatly influence their level of engagement and willingness to use certain technologies. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis, (2015) explains that student acceptance of learning technology is determined primarily by perceptions of usefulness and perceptions of ease of use. In this study, students' perceptions of the TikTok account @nofreedi were influenced by whether they considered the content useful for vocabulary learning and whether the platform was accessible and easy to understand. Positive perceptions encourage repeated exposure to vocabulary input, which supports vocabulary recognition, comprehension, and usage (Nation, 2013). Therefore, analyzing students' perceptions is crucial to understanding the educational value of TikTok-based vocabulary learning.

Several previous studies have discussed the positive impact of using TikTok as a medium for learning English. For example, research conducted by Efivania et al. (2025) at SMA Negeri 1 Mempawah Hulu on students' perceptions of the TikTok application in English learning using descriptive quantitative methods found that students consistently rated TikTok very positively, especially in improving vocabulary and pronunciation. In addition, TikTok was considered very easy to use, increased motivation, and made the learning process enjoyable. The main advantage of TikTok is that it facilitates flexible independent learning that can be accessed without space and time limitations. Then, research by Yanti & Priatmojo (2025) at SMP N 22 Semarang on the influence of TikTok on improving students' speaking skills. The method used was a quasi-experiment with a quantitative approach. The research revealed that the results obtained through pre-tests and post-tests showed that the group that used TikTok-based learning experienced a statistically significant increase. And lastly, research by Maria & Sujarwati (2025) on a population of

12th-grade high school students examined how TikTok videos can influence students' vocabulary mastery using a quantitative method with a quasi-experimental design. The study found that through a comparison between the experimental group (using TikTok) and the control group (using worksheets), the group taught with TikTok achieved higher average post-test scores. Overall, these studies show that learning through TikTok has significant potential, especially in the context of English language learning.

Previous studies have shown that TikTok is effective in improving students' English language abilities and skills. However, most of the existing research to date has used a quantitative approach that emphasizes measurable learning outcomes, while students' subjective experiences and perceptions have been less explored. In addition, previous studies have mostly focused on students at the secondary school level, such as junior high and high school, so that understanding of the perspectives of university students as adult learners with greater learning autonomy, digital learning preferences, and intrinsic motivation is still limited.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative methods are approaches that aim to explore and understand the meanings individuals or groups create. This study focuses on exploring the subjective views of students in depth regarding the use of the TikTok platform, specifically the @nofreeadi account, as a medium for acquiring and enriching their

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore students' perceptions of using TikTok as a medium for English vocabulary learning, particularly the TikTok account @nofreeadi. According to Creswell (2023), Qualitative methods are approaches that aim to explore and understand the meanings created by individuals or groups regarding specific social or humanitarian issues.

The participants involved in this study were 12 students enrolled in the Public Speaking course in the English Education program at PGRI Delta University. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on certain criteria, such as being active EFL learners and having direct experience using or being exposed to TikTok content. A total of 12 participants was considered adequate for this study because the focus of the study was on data depth. According to Creswell (2023), in qualitative research, the determination

of the number and selection of participants is based on the need to obtain rich and meaningful data in order to understand the phenomenon in depth. The sample size is flexible and is determined by the achievement of data saturation, which is when additional data collection no longer produces new themes or significant information, so that the addition of participants is not necessary.

The researcher served as the primary research instrument, supported by several data collection tools. The treatment involved three selected videos from the TikTok account @nofreeadi containing English vocabulary content, which functioned as stimuli to elicit students' perceptions. Data were collected through a questionnaire distributed via Google Forms to obtain students' general perceptions, followed by semi-structured interviews for deeper exploration. Photographs were also used as supporting visual documentation.

The next step was data collection. Data collection was carried out in several stages. The pre-field stage included obtaining research permits, developing plans, and preparing research tools, including TikTok videos, questionnaires, and interview guides. During the field stage, participants were first informed about the purpose of the study before watching three stimulus videos in sequence, with each video played twice. After watching the videos, participants complete an online questionnaire in about ten minutes. Five participants are then selected for follow-up interviews. The interviews are conducted face-to-face, last about 10 to 15 minutes, and are audio-recorded using smartphones to ensure data accuracy, accompanied by photos for documentation.

After the data has been collected, the researchers then proceed to analyze the data. The data obtained from the questionnaires and interviews is analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis (TA) is a method used to discover, evaluate, and understand patterns of meaning called themes found in qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2017). This process began with converting all questionnaire responses and interview recordings into text format to facilitate the analysis process. Next, the researchers familiarized themselves with the data by reading it repeatedly to understand its contents. The researchers then coded words, phrases, or sentences relevant to the research objectives. After that, the researchers conduct a Theme Search by grouping related codes into sub-themes, which then become the main themes. After that, the data found is reviewed to ensure its clarity and accuracy, which is then supplemented with descriptions

and in-depth interpretations from the researchers, accompanied by direct quotes from the participants.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data in this study consisted of the results of questionnaires and the results of interviews. Analysis of the data from both sources showed consistent and compatible results. Through thematic analysis, four main themes were identified that reflect participants' perceptions regarding the use of TikTok @nofreeadi in acquiring and enriching their English vocabulary.

Table 1: Ease of Use

Theme	Sub-Theme	Evidences	Representatives Quotes
Ease of Use	Short and engaging video format	Students perceived short video duration as easy to follow and not cognitively demanding	<i>"Even though the video is short, it's not boring and is interesting."</i> (R2)
	Use of familiar contexts	The use of movies, podcasts, and public figures increased students' comfort and engagement.	<i>"I am a big fan of the Wednesday movie, so when it appeared in the TikTok content, I got really excited."</i> (P2)
	Simple and concise explanation	Students found the explanations straightforward and easy to understand.	<i>"The explanation is accurate and simple, the words are not complicated."</i> (P4)
	Conversational language style	The creator's speaking style reduced learning anxiety and effort.	<i>"The way he explained things was like talking face to face, and the language was very easy to understand."</i> (R5)

As presented in Table 1, students perceived TikTok @nofreeadi as an easy-to-use medium for English vocabulary learning, particularly due to its short and engaging video format, familiar contexts, and simple explanations.

Table 2: Usefulness

Theme	Sub-theme	Evidences	Representatives Quotes
Usefulness	Acquisition of new vocabulary	Students reported learning new words through repeated exposure to the videos.	<i>"Yes, I learned a lot of new vocabulary, and my vocabulary improved." (P3)</i>
	Understanding pronunciation	Students gained a better understanding of pronunciation	<i>"From the video, everyone can learn a lot of vocabulary while also listening to how it is pronounced." (R10)</i>
	Correction of misunderstandings	The content helped clarify previously misunderstood vocabulary.	<i>"The video helped me understand words that I misunderstood before." (P4)</i>

Table 2 shows that students considered TikTok @nofreeadi useful for English vocabulary learning, especially in terms of acquiring new vocabulary, improving pronunciation, and correcting previous misunderstandings.

Table 3: Factors Limiting Acceptance

Theme	Sub-theme	Evidences	Representatives Quotes
Factors Limiting Acceptance	Fast speaking pace	Some students experienced difficulty following explanations due to fast delivery.	<i>"Sometimes the tempo is too fast, so I can't fully understand what is being explained." (P4)</i>
	Limited depth of explanation	Short duration limited detailed explanations of vocabulary	<i>"The explanatory context is incomplete." (P2)</i>
	Lack of direct interaction	Students could not ask questions or receive immediate feedback.	<i>"When we don't understand the material, we can't ask questions right away." (P5)</i>

As illustrated in Table 3, several factors limited students' acceptance of TikTok-

based vocabulary learning, including fast speaking pace, limited depth of explanation, and the lack of direct interaction.

Table 4: User Expectations

Theme	Sub-theme	Evidences	Representatives Quotes
User expectations	Longer or more structured content	Students suggested extending the duration or organizing the material more systematically.	<i>"If possible, the video could be extended a little to make it longer." (P3)</i>
	Collaboration with educators	Students believed collaboration could enhance credibility and learning effectiveness.	<i>"It would be effective if the creator collaborated with English teachers." (P5)</i>

Table 4 presents students' expectations regarding the development of TikTok @nofreeadi, highlighting suggestions for longer or more structured content and collaboration with English educators.

The findings show that students consider the content of TikTok @nofreeadi as an easy-to-use learning medium for learning English vocabulary. The short video format, clear delivery, and use of familiar contexts such as movie clips or public figures make the learning process more enjoyable, interesting, and easy to understand, thereby reducing the cognitive load on students. Students also feel that the short video format helps them maintain focus and makes the learning process feel more relaxed and less stressful. This is also in line with previous studies showing that TikTok is considered an accessible and easy-to-use learning medium that supports flexible and independent English language learning, allowing users to access learning content anytime and anywhere. These features make TikTok a user-friendly medium that effectively supports language learning outside of formal classroom settings (Efivania et al., 2025 ; Maria & Sujarwati, 2025). According to the Technology Acceptance Model, ease of use plays an important role in determining whether learners are willing to adopt technology for learning purposes (Davis, 2015).

Through repeated exposure to TikTok videos from @nofreeadis' account, participants experienced several benefits, such as helping them remember and

learn new vocabulary effectively. Another benefit felt by participants is that they can understand the pronunciation of each new word that appears in the content. In addition, the content also explains the meanings of words that they previously misunderstood. This shows that the TikTok account @nofreeadi has considerable usefulness and benefits as a supporting medium in the vocabulary learning process. The integration of audio, visual, and contextual elements in TikTok greatly influences its benefits and usefulness, as in the dual coding theory, stated by Clark & Paivio, (1991) that learning is more effective when verbal and visual information are presented together. The use of vocabulary examples taken from movie scenes, podcasts, and public figures helps students understand how words are used naturally in everyday communication. In addition, repeated exposure to vocabulary through TikTok videos encourages vocabulary recognition and retention (Nation, 2013). Positive perceptions of the usefulness of the TikTok platform as a learning medium encourage learners to voluntarily revisit the content and reinforce vocabulary learning over time.

Not only did participants provide positive feedback, but they also identified several factors that limited their learning experience. These factors included the speed of the content creator's speech, which was considered too fast, the limited depth of explanation due to the short duration of the videos, and the lack of direct interaction with the content creator. This is similar to the research conducted by Yanti & Priatmojo, (2025), which found that short video formats limit the depth of content. This indicates that the vocabulary learning process on TikTok, particularly on the @nofreeadi account, is not yet fully effective, and the content requires attention and follow-up to improve its quality.

Students provided suggestions or feedback for more detailed explanations, longer videos, and more structured content delivery. Some participants also proposed collaboration between content creators and English educators to improve the educational value of the content. Students' expectations for these improvements are a crucial factor in determining the future success of social media platforms such as TikTok. Students are active evaluators in assessing learning media, especially digital media. These findings suggest that TikTok-based vocabulary learning can be optimized when strategically integrated with classroom teaching. Educators can use TikTok content to introduce or reinforce vocabulary, while the formal learning

environment can provide space for interaction, discussion, more in-depth explanations, and opportunities for further practice.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that, in general, students have a positive view of using the TikTok account @nofreeadi as an additional tool for learning English vocabulary. This positive view is driven by the ease of use and understanding of the content, as well as the perceived benefits, particularly through engaging short videos, the presentation of vocabulary in appropriate contexts, and the clear presentation of material that supports vocabulary recognition and understanding. On the other hand, this study highlights several limitations that affect the overall learning process, including the speed of material delivery, limited depth of material due to the short duration of the videos, and a lack of direct interaction. These limitations indicate that although TikTok provides significant support for vocabulary learning, this platform cannot completely replace structured teaching methods and interactive learning environments. Therefore, TikTok-based vocabulary learning will be more effective if it is strategically applied in conjunction with formal EFL teaching, where educators can provide clarification, more comprehensive explanations, and opportunities for interaction.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed to the completion of this research, both directly and indirectly. The support, guidance, and input provided have been invaluable.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

This research was conducted by a researcher covering various stages, including concept formulation, data collection, data analysis, and manuscript preparation. The research was carried out under the guidance of several academic advisors who provided critical input, suggestions for improving the manuscript, and approved the final version of the manuscript.

REFERENCES

- Abidah, A. N. (2024). *Students' Perception on Utilizing TikTok Videos for Vocabulary Acquisition*. 7(2), 104–115.
<https://doi.org/10.18860/jeasp.v7i2.24418>
- Alim, S., Aisyah, S., Sabat, Y., Hastuti, U. N., & Alamsari, E. (2025). *Gamified Vocabulary Learning: EFL Students' Perceptions of Using Duolingo to Enhance English Vocabulary Mastery*. 10(4), 493–500.
<https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v10i4.1256>
- Alqahtani, M. (2015). *THE IMPORTANCE OF VOCABULARY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND HOW TO BE TAUGHT*. III(3), 21–34.
<https://doi.org/10.20472/TE.2015.3.3.002>
- Baleghizadeh, S. (2011). *The Impact of Two Instructional Techniques on EFL Learners Vocabulary Knowledge: Flash Cards versus Word Lists*. 35(2), 1–9.
- Clark, J. M., & Paivio, A. (1991). Dual coding theory and education. *Educational Psychology Review*, 3(3), 149–210. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01320076>
- Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 9760(February), 1–2.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613>
- Creswell, J., & Creswell, D. (2023). *RESEACRH DESIGN*.
- Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language*.
- Cuşnir, C. (2025). TikTok Design and Experience: A Semiotic Technology Approach. *Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations*, 27(1), 7–23. <https://doi.org/10.21018/rjcp.2025.1.683>
- Davis, F. D., & Davis, F. (2015). *Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, and User Acceptance of Information Technology*. September 1989.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/249008>
- Efivania, T. N., Salam, U., & Rahmani, E. F. (2025). Students' Perceptions on Tiktok Application for Learning English. *JEELL (Journal of English Education, Linguistics and Literature)*, 12(1), 154–165.
- Faruq, S. (2025). *Social Media as a Tool for Vocabulary Learning: Students' Reflections in a Qualitative Study*. 10(6), 970–983.
- Hikmah, N., Rahmaniah, R., & Whitworth, N. (2024). *STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF USING INSTAGRAM REELS AS MOBILE-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING TO IMPROVE*. 12(1), 385–396.
- Kabooaha, R., & Elyas, T. (2018). *The Effects of YouTube in Multimedia Instruction for Vocabulary Learning: Perceptions of EFL Students and Teachers*. 11(2), 72–81. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v11n2p72>
- Laili, R. N., Tinggi, S., & Kesehatan, I. (2023). *LUNAR (Language and Art)*. 7(2), 39–56.
- Maria, L., & Sujarwati, I. (2025a). *mastery*. 6(2), 367–379.
- Maria, L., & Sujarwati, I. (2025b). Short video TikTok in EFL: How does it impact students' vocabulary mastery. *Indonesian Journal of Educational*

Yosefa Kaldista Tari, Lailatul Musyarofah, Siti Aisyah
Students' Perceptions of Using TikTok @Nofreedi ...

Development (IJED), 6(2), 367-379.

Nation, I. S. . (2013). *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*.

Sundanis, R. O., & Akbar, M. A. (2025). *The Effectiveness of Using Youtube Videos as Learning Media in English Vocabulary Mastery*. 10(3), 125-135.
<https://doi.org/10.35974/acuity.v10i3.3987>

Wayan, C. I., Budiarta, E., Sarah, A., & Akmar, M. (2024). *STUDENTS ' PERCEPTION TOWARDS TIKTOK IN ENHANCING THEIR VOCABULARY FLUENCY THROUGH AUTONOMOUS LEARNING*. 12, 34-42.

Yanti, E. A. M., & Priatmojo, A. S. (2025). The Effect of Using TikTok in Improving Students` Speaking Skills. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 1(1), 171-186. <https://doi.org/10.31538/alsuna.v8i1.6235>

Yoestara, M. (2024). *A Study on Enhancing EFL Students ' Vocabulary Proficiency via TikTok*. 11(3), 1652-1668.