

LEARNER ATTITUDES TOWARD USING TIKTOK FOR VOCABULARY ACQUISITION: A REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES**Karimova Aziza**

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**ОТНОШЕНИЕ ОБУЧАЮЩИХСЯ К ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЮ ТИКТОВ ДЛЯ ИЗУЧЕНИЯ
ЛЕКСИКИ: ОБЗОР ЭМПИРИЧЕСКИХ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ****Каримова Азиза***студент, Международный университет Астана, Казахстан, г. Астана*

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматриваются эмпирические исследования, посвященные отношениям учащихся к использованию TikTok как инструмента для изучения английской лексики. Анализируются мотивационные аспекты, стратегии запоминания слов и особенности неформального обучения, а также рассматриваются мнения преподавателей и возможные трудности при интеграции платформы в учебный процесс. Особое внимание уделяется практическим рекомендациям по использованию TikTok в преподавании английского как иностранного языка.

Abstract. This article reviews recent empirical studies on learner attitudes toward using TikTok as a tool for vocabulary acquisition. It highlights students' motivation, informal learning behaviors, and vocabulary retention strategies associated with the platform. The paper also discusses educator perspectives, instructional concerns, and practical implications for integrating TikTok in EFL settings.

Ключевые слова: TikTok; овладение лексикой; отношение учащихся; неформальное обучение; мотивация; цифровые инструменты.

Keywords: TikTok; vocabulary acquisition; learner attitudes; informal learning; motivation; digital tools.

Introduction

In recent years, short-form video platforms have emerged as informal learning environments, offering new opportunities for vocabulary development among foreign language learners. Among these, TikTok has become particularly influential due to its algorithm-driven personalization, multimodal format, and popularity among youth. While initially designed for entertainment, the platform has been increasingly repurposed by students and educators as a tool for language acquisition. Vocabulary—the foundation of communicative competence—is particularly suited to the informal, repetitive, and emotionally engaging format of TikTok videos.

Numerous empirical studies conducted in diverse educational contexts suggest that students hold largely positive attitudes toward using TikTok for vocabulary acquisition. These attitudes include high levels of motivation, a sense of authenticity, and a perception that vocabulary learned via the platform is more memorable and personally relevant than that acquired through traditional methods. In contrast to textbooks or classroom drills, TikTok provides visually rich, often humorous content in real-life contexts, supporting incidental and interest-driven vocabulary learning.

This article reviews the findings of several international studies that focus specifically on learner attitudes toward TikTok as a vocabulary learning tool. The review highlights the motivational appeal of the platform, its influence on learner confidence, and the recurring limitations noted by both students and educators. By synthesizing these findings, the article aims to provide a theoretical and empirical basis for understanding how learner perceptions shape the educational potential of TikTok in foreign language instruction.

1. Motivation and Emotional Engagement

A recurring theme across multiple studies is that TikTok motivates learners through emotionally engaging and personally relevant content. Unlike traditional learning platforms, TikTok leverages humor, storytelling, and visual effects to capture student attention. Cahyono and Perdhani found that learners appreciated TikTok's informal and relaxed atmosphere, which allowed them to experiment with English vocabulary without fear of making mistakes [2]. Similarly, Fitriani and Masykuroh reported that students viewed TikTok as part of their daily routine and were more inclined to absorb vocabulary incidentally through trends, challenges, and influencer content [3].

Learners frequently described the platform as enjoyable and unthreatening, which reduced their anxiety and created a sense of autonomy in their learning process. Julianti's research further confirmed that students became more confident using vocabulary when they were preparing content for a wider audience, such as posting a video or participating in class challenges [1]. In these cases, students were not only exposed to vocabulary but were also required to practice and personalize it in performance-based tasks—making the learning more memorable and emotionally resonant.

2. Informal Learning and Vocabulary Retention

Learners often engage with TikTok outside of formal learning settings, using it as an informal source of language exposure. Studies show that students acquire vocabulary incidentally—without deliberate study—by repeatedly encountering words in entertaining, relatable contexts. For example, Pratiwi and Syafrizal found that learners benefited from visual and audio support, which helped them retain idiomatic expressions and everyday language [5].

Fitriani and Masykuroh also reported that students used the app reflexively in their daily lives and became more aware of recurring patterns in English, which they began to recognize and recall over time [3]. According to Almas, students who engaged with content related to their interests—such as cooking, gaming, or beauty—were more likely to remember vocabulary because it was emotionally and personally relevant [4].

Another important insight is that learners appreciated the ability to learn at their own pace. TikTok allows for rewatching and selective engagement, which many students used to reinforce their understanding. Even when learning was unintentional, the visual context of videos, gestures, subtitles, and voiceovers worked together to support comprehension and memory.

3. Self-Regulated Learning and Autonomy

Beyond motivation and memory, learner attitudes toward TikTok often reflect a growing sense of autonomy. Unlike in traditional classrooms, TikTok allows students to decide what, when, and how they engage with language. Fitriani and Masykuroh observed that many students searched for word meanings on their own, looked up subtitles, or repeated videos to solidify their understanding [3].

However, this autonomy can also be a double-edged sword. Pratiwi and Syafrizal noted that while students appreciated the freedom TikTok offered, many admitted to being easily distracted by

unrelated content [5]. Despite these limitations, the overall learner perception remains optimistic: students generally trust their ability to extract useful language from the content they enjoy.

4. Educator Perspectives and Pedagogical Concerns

While learner attitudes toward TikTok are generally positive, educator perspectives reveal a more cautious approach. Teachers often acknowledge the motivational and linguistic benefits of the platform but raise concerns about content control, academic appropriateness, and instructional alignment. Thorvik's research showed that while students viewed TikTok as dynamic and engaging, teachers worried about the informal nature of the content, screen time issues, and the lack of measurable learning outcomes [6].

In Arifin's review, many educators agreed that TikTok has potential as a supplementary tool, but they emphasized the need for clear lesson objectives and content moderation [7]. Teachers suggested that without guidance, students may internalize informal vocabulary that is unsuitable for academic tasks.

Interestingly, teacher attitudes varied depending on their own digital fluency. As Thorvik noted, educators who had prior experience using social media or mobile-assisted tools were more likely to experiment with TikTok-based assignments, while others remained hesitant [6].

5. Balanced Reflections on TikTok's Educational Role

The reviewed studies make it clear that TikTok is not a one-size-fits-all educational tool. While its visual, personalized, and emotionally engaging content fosters motivation and informal learning, its unstructured nature also creates significant instructional challenges. Learners enjoy the autonomy and relevance TikTok offers, but without teacher support or curated activities, they may struggle to transfer vocabulary into academic contexts or retain it for long-term use.

Several studies emphasized the success of project-based tasks involving video creation, where students had to perform, script, or apply target vocabulary [1][3]. These performance-based learning models appeared to improve both retention and confidence.

6. Conclusion and Practical Implications

The literature reviewed in this article presents a nuanced picture of learner attitudes toward using TikTok for vocabulary acquisition. Students consistently describe the platform as enjoyable, motivating, and helpful for remembering vocabulary—especially when content is emotional and personalized. However, educators express valid concerns about its lack of structure and academic oversight.

In practical terms, TikTok may be best used as a complementary learning tool, especially when integrated into reflective tasks like vocabulary journals, guided discussions, or student-created video projects. Teachers can enhance its impact by curating content and aligning it with clear instructional goals.

TikTok offers significant potential to enrich vocabulary learning in EFL contexts, provided that its implementation is intentional, guided, and accompanied by thoughtful pedagogical support.

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