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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Problem

Vocabulary is a fundamental component of English language learning, enabling students to understand texts, express ideas, and communicate effectively. Harahap (2025: 240) states that vocabulary is an essential element of language learning and plays an important role in developing effective communication skills. Vocabulary mastery strongly influences students' ability to listen, speak, read, and write in a foreign language (Wangdi, 2022: 27). Students' success in vocabulary learning is influenced not only by teaching strategies but also by the learning media used. Learning media that provide visual, auditory, and contextual input can support students in understanding word meaning, pronunciation, spelling, and usage more effectively. Therefore, selecting appropriate learning media is essential in vocabulary learning.

In recent years, digital learning media increasingly support vocabulary learning, including social media platforms that provide audio-visual content. Efivania et al. (2025: 155) state that TikTok has the potential to function as an effective learning medium that enhances learning motivation while simultaneously enriching English vocabulary visually and practically. As a short video-based application, TikTok presents vocabulary through pronunciation models, text captions, contextual examples, and creative visual elements. Several educational TikTok accounts, such as



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@janeelisabet8, @kampuninggrislccom, @learningforenglish, @englishvocabulary100, and @englishvocab.id, provide accessible and engaging English vocabulary content. Through this content, students encounter new vocabulary in meaningful contexts beyond the classroom. This indicates that TikTok has the potential to serve as a complementary medium for English vocabulary learning.

At SMAN 2 Tembilahan, TikTok is widely used by students in their daily lives. However, not all students utilize the platform as a medium for learning English vocabulary. Since this study specifically investigates students' perceptions of using TikTok as a medium for learning English vocabulary, it is important to ensure that the participants have actual experience using TikTok for that purpose. Therefore, before conducting the main research, the researcher administered a preliminary questionnaire as a screening instrument to identify students who met the research criteria. The preliminary questionnaire consisted of four screening questions. The first question identified whether students used TikTok in their daily lives. The second question explored whether students had ever watched English-learning content on TikTok. The third question determined whether students had ever used TikTok specifically to learn English vocabulary. Finally, the fourth question identified how frequently students watched TikTok content related to English vocabulary learning. These questions were designed to ensure that the participants selected for the study had sufficient experience



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using TikTok as a learning medium, enabling them to provide meaningful and relevant perceptions regarding its use.

Based on the preliminary questionnaire conducted among 71 eleventh-grade students at SMAN 2 Tembilahan, all respondents reported that they used TikTok in their daily lives. However, the findings revealed that only 41 students (approximately 58%) had used TikTok to learn English vocabulary, while the remaining 30 students (42%) had never used TikTok for that purpose. In addition, the questionnaire identified students' exposure to English-learning content and the frequency with which they watched vocabulary-related videos on TikTok, providing an initial overview of their learning experiences with the platform.

These findings indicate that although TikTok is highly popular among students, not all students utilize it as a medium for learning English vocabulary. This difference is important because students who have never used TikTok for vocabulary learning may not be able to provide meaningful perceptions regarding its usefulness as a learning medium. Therefore, the preliminary questionnaire was not intended to measure students' perceptions but rather to identify students who met the research criteria. Through this screening process, the researcher ensured that the participants selected for the main study had direct experience using TikTok for learning English vocabulary, allowing the data collected to accurately reflect students' perceptions based on actual learning experiences. Furthermore, the findings also demonstrate that the use of TikTok as a learning medium among



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students is not yet evenly distributed, highlighting the need to investigate how students who have experienced learning through TikTok perceive its usefulness, ease of use, attractiveness, and motivational value in supporting English vocabulary learning

Students' perception of learning media plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of the learning process. Perception refers to the process of selecting, receiving, organizing, and interpreting information from the environment to construct meaning. Hong (2019: 22) explains that perception needs to be examined in order to understand how individuals view a particular learning medium, whether positively or negatively. Students develop beliefs about their learning experiences, and these beliefs influence their motivation and learning outcomes (Fitri 2025: 124). In this study, perception is distinguished from related concepts such as attitude and learning motivation. Perception focuses on how students interpret and evaluate TikTok as a learning medium, while attitude refers to students' feelings toward learning activities, and motivation relates to the drive that encourages students to engage in learning (Alino et al 2025., La mimi et al., 2024).

Understanding students' perception is important because perception influences students' motivation, engagement, and learning behavior. A positive perception of a learning medium contributes to improved academic achievement. Ningsih (2019: 84) states, "If students have a good perception, then student achievement will be better." In the learning process, students'



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perception influences the quality of interaction and engagement. In vocabulary learning, a favorable perception of TikTok can support independent learning, increase exposure to new vocabulary, and contribute to the improvement of students' vocabulary mastery.

Although TikTok is widely used and has potential benefits for vocabulary learning, limited research has specifically examined students' perception of TikTok as a medium for learning English vocabulary at the senior high school level, particularly at SMAN 2 Tembilahan. Therefore, this research aims to investigate students' perception of using TikTok as a medium for learning English vocabulary at SMAN 2 Tembilahan. This study focuses on students' perception of the usefulness, ease of use, attractiveness, and motivational aspects of TikTok as a supporting learning medium. The findings of this research are expected to provide insights and recommendations for innovative English vocabulary learning strategies in the digital era.

B. Identification of the Problem

Based on the background of the problem, the problem in this research can be identified as follows:

1. Although TikTok is widely used by students, not all of the eleventh-grade students at SMAN 2 Tembilahan use it as a medium for learning English vocabulary.
2. The use of TikTok as a medium for learning English vocabulary among the eleventh-grade students at SMAN 2 Tembilahan is still limited.



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3. Students have different experiences in using TikTok to learn English vocabulary, which may lead to different perceptions toward its use as a learning medium.
4. The students' perception toward the use of TikTok application in learning English vocabulary among the eleventh-grade students at SMAN 2 Tembilahan has not yet been investigated.

C. Limitation of the Problem

This research is limited to examining the students' perception toward the use of TikTok as a medium for learning English vocabulary among the eleventh-grade students at SMAN 2 Tembilahan.

D. Research Question

How is the perception of eleventh-grade students at SMAN 2 Tembilahan toward the use of TikTok as a medium for learning English vocabulary?

E. The Purpose of the Research

To describe the students' perceptions toward the use of TikTok as a medium for learning English vocabulary among the eleventh-grade students at SMAN 2 Tembilahan.

F. The Significance of the Research

There are two kinds of research significance: the theoretical significance and the practical significance. The significance is as follows

1. Theoretical Significance



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The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of theories related to students' perception and the use of social media as a learning medium, particularly in English vocabulary learning.

2. Practical Significance

This study is expected to provide practical benefits for several parties. For students, this research can help them understand the potential of TikTok as an alternative medium for learning English vocabulary independently outside of class. For teachers, the findings of this study can be used as a reference for considering the use of TikTok as a supporting medium in teaching English vocabulary in a more interesting way. In addition, for future Researchers, this study can serve as a reference or starting point for further research related to the use of social media, particularly TikTok, in English language learning.

G. Definition of the Key Terms

There are so many terms involved in this research. In order to avoid misunderstanding the terms used, the following terms need to be defined :

1. English Vocabulary

According to Kamil & Hiebert (2022: 23), English vocabulary is knowledge of the meaning of English words along with their pronunciation, spelling, and contextual usage as the foundation of communication. In this study, vocabulary includes new words that students learn independently through TikTok content.



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2. TikTok Application

According to Rama et al. (2023: 45), TikTok is a social media application that allows users to create and share short videos (15-60 seconds) with music, effects, text overlays, and simple editing features that are popular among Indonesian Gen Z. Researcher define it as an interactive video platform for informal English vocabulary education content.

3. Students' Perception

According to Juhairiyah et al. (2022: 71), perception is the process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting sensory information from learning experiences to form attitudes and beliefs about learning media. In this study, student perception refers to their views on the usefulness, ease of use, and motivation of TikTok for learning vocabulary.