

SHORT VIDEO PLATFORMS TO LEVERAGE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' ENGLISH VOCABULARY MASTERY: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract: *Short video platforms have emerged as promising tools for English vocabulary learning, yet evidence regarding their effectiveness in secondary-school EFL contexts remains fragmented. This systematic literature review synthesizes recent evidence on TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels, with particular attention to vocabulary achievement, retention, engagement, learner autonomy, and implementation challenges. Guided by a PRISMA 2020-informed procedure, the review thematically synthesized empirical studies and recent systematic reviews published during the past decade. Findings indicate that short-form video learning generally supports vocabulary development, motivation, attention, and learner autonomy through multimodal input, authentic contexts, subtitles, replicability, and concise presentation. However, evidence remains heterogeneous, with limitations involving small samples, brief interventions, perception-based measures, and weak comparison designs. Notably, research directly targeting senior high school students and comparing major short-video platforms remains scarce. This review contributes a focused research agenda emphasizing rigorous comparative designs, validated vocabulary measures, delayed post-tests, and longitudinal follow-up.*

Keywords: Short Video Platforms; English Vocabulary Learning; EFL; Learner Autonomy; Systematic Literature Review

I. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has altered the conditions under which English is taught and learned. Smartphones, social media, video-sharing services, and mobile learning applications have expanded access to language input beyond the physical classroom. In English as a foreign language (EFL) settings, this expansion is especially important because learners may have limited opportunities to encounter authentic English outside school. Recent syntheses of mobile-assisted vocabulary learning show that mobile technologies can support vocabulary retention, receptive and productive knowledge, learner motivation, and self-directed learning when technology is integrated with purposeful pedagogy (Duan et al., 2026; Ji & Aziz, 2021; Lin & Lin, 2019).

The research proposal underlying this article identifies the same pedagogical problem from the Indonesian secondary-school context. It notes that conventional vocabulary learning can become dependent on translation, isolated word lists, and memorization, while students have relatively limited exposure to authentic contextualized English. The proposal consequently positions TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels as potential sources of short, multimodal, and accessible vocabulary input. It also originally proposed a one-group pre-test/post-test intervention with approximately thirty Grade X students and eight instructional sessions. Those details are retained here only as the conceptual and contextual origin of the article; they are not treated as empirical results because the present publication is a systematic literature review rather than a report of newly collected classroom data. □filecite□turn1file7□L488-L505□

Short video platforms are pedagogically interesting because they combine speech, moving images, on-screen text, subtitles, gestures, demonstrations, and contextual cues within brief units. Such characteristics can facilitate focused

attention and repeated exposure, two conditions that are relevant to vocabulary learning. A recent review of mobile-assisted English vocabulary learning found that multimodal input and interactive activities can contribute to both receptive and productive vocabulary development, while also identifying a continuing underrepresentation of deeper lexical knowledge such as collocation, contextual usage, and lexical organization (Duan et al., 2026).

Empirical research increasingly supports the potential of TikTok and YouTube for vocabulary learning. Bernard (2021), for example, found that short TikTok videos helped learners attend to lessons, encounter new words, and connect vocabulary with real-life contexts. Indonesian studies have subsequently reported positive vocabulary outcomes after TikTok-based instruction, including quasi-experimental evidence from junior secondary learners and a 2025 study focusing specifically on Grade XII students (Maria & Sujarwati, 2025; Tampubolon et al., 2023; Usman et al., 2024). YouTube-based studies similarly report gains in vocabulary achievement and positive learner perceptions (Ibhar, 2022; Jasmia et al., 2022; Trijunianti et al., 2026).

Nevertheless, the literature remains fragmented. Some studies measure vocabulary achievement, others examine perceptions or motivation, and still others investigate informal exposure or self-directed learning. Learner populations also vary considerably, from primary and junior secondary students to university learners. Recent systematic reviews confirm the promise of TikTok and mobile learning while simultaneously identifying concerns about distraction, content quality, weak instructional integration, limited empirical designs, and inconsistent assessment (Ahen et al., 2026; Duan et al., 2026; Jantan Anua Jah et al., 2024). Therefore, a focused synthesis is needed to determine what can reasonably be concluded about short video platforms and English vocabulary mastery, particularly for senior high school students in EFL contexts.

The present review addresses that need through three questions: (1) What effects of short video platforms on English vocabulary learning are reported in recent empirical literature? (2) What pedagogical mechanisms and learner responses are associated with these effects? and (3) What limitations and implementation conditions should be considered when short video platforms are used for senior high school vocabulary instruction? The contribution of the review is to bring together evidence that is often separated across studies of TikTok, YouTube, mobile learning, and social-media-assisted English learning, while explicitly identifying the evidence gap concerning senior high school vocabulary mastery.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

English Vocabulary Mastery

Vocabulary mastery is multidimensional. Knowing a word involves more than recognizing a translation; learners need knowledge of form, meaning, pronunciation, spelling, grammatical behavior, collocation, and contextual use. Recent vocabulary scholarship emphasizes that instruction should therefore move beyond simple breadth measures and incorporate meaningful use and depth of knowledge. The distinction between receptive and productive vocabulary is

also important because learners may recognize words during reading or listening without being able to retrieve and use them independently.

For senior high school learners, vocabulary is particularly important because English is encountered in academic materials, digital media, examinations, and future professional communication. The research proposal emphasizes vocabulary related to everyday life, school and academic activities, technology and media, descriptive language, social interaction, and public communication. This contextual orientation is appropriate for short-video learning because such platforms naturally present words in situations rather than as isolated lists. □filecite□turn3file6□L425-L451□

Recent mobile-assisted vocabulary research suggests that technology can be particularly useful when it supports repeated encounters, learner control, contextualization, and active retrieval. However, technology itself does not guarantee lexical learning. Duan et al. (2026) note that deeper dimensions of vocabulary knowledge remain less frequently examined than simple retention or recognition. This distinction is important for interpreting short-video studies: an improvement in a post-test does not necessarily demonstrate durable productive vocabulary mastery.

Short Video Platforms and Microlearning

Short video platforms can be understood as a form of microlearning when their content is deliberately segmented into small, focused learning units. TikTok is particularly associated with brief vertical videos and algorithmically recommended content; YouTube Shorts integrates short-form video into the broader YouTube ecosystem; and Instagram Reels provides short audiovisual content embedded in a social networking environment. Their educational affordances include brevity, replayability, multimodality, portability, searchability, and social interaction.

The proposal identifies TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels as the core platforms because each can deliver vocabulary through spoken English, visual demonstration, captions, and contextualized situations. □filecite□turn1file5□L339-L387□ However, the evidence base is not equally strong for all three. TikTok currently has the clearest empirical literature directly connected to English vocabulary learning. YouTube has a much broader evidence base for video-assisted vocabulary learning, but fewer studies isolate the Shorts format. Instagram Reels is pedagogically plausible but comparatively under-researched as a vocabulary intervention.

The distinction matters because evidence about long-form YouTube cannot automatically be treated as evidence about YouTube Shorts. The proposal itself appropriately recognizes this limitation and describes the transfer from long-form YouTube findings to Shorts as an extrapolation rather than a directly confirmed platform-specific result. □filecite□turn1file5□L355-L364□ The same caution should be applied to Instagram Reels.

Cognitive and Pedagogical Mechanisms

The Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning provides a useful explanation for why video can support vocabulary learning. Mayer (2021) argues that meaningful learning is promoted when verbal and pictorial information are coordinated while unnecessary cognitive load is minimized. For vocabulary instruction, a word can be encountered simultaneously through spoken form, written form, visual referent, and contextualized action. Short videos can

therefore create several coordinated cues for encoding and retrieval, provided that the presentation is not overloaded with irrelevant effects.

Mobile-assisted language learning adds another mechanism: learning can become portable, immediate, and self-directed. Systematic reviews of MALL indicate that mobile environments support flexible access to language resources and can facilitate vocabulary practice outside formal class time (Ishaq et al., 2021; Ji & Aziz, 2021). In short-video environments, learners can replay a clip, pause at an unfamiliar word, inspect subtitles, search for additional examples, and revisit the same item later. These affordances can increase exposure frequency and learner control.

Contextual learning is a third mechanism. A vocabulary item presented in a cooking demonstration, school activity, travel situation, or social interaction is embedded in semantic and pragmatic cues. Indonesian research on TikTok and YouTube suggests that students value precisely these authentic and practical examples (Bernard, 2021; Madani et al., 2023; Rita & Subekti, 2023). Yet contextual authenticity must be balanced with linguistic appropriateness: informal videos may contain slang, inaccurate grammar, rapid speech, or culturally specific references that require teacher mediation.

III. METHOD

This study uses a systematic literature review (SLR) design informed by the PRISMA 2020 reporting framework. PRISMA 2020 emphasizes transparent reporting of the rationale, search and selection procedures, eligibility criteria, synthesis, and limitations of a systematic review (Page et al., 2021). The review period was restricted to the most recent ten-year window, 2016–2026, with most included evidence concentrated in 2021–2026 because research on TikTok and other short-video formats is relatively recent.

The review is a qualitative evidence synthesis rather than a meta-analysis. The included studies differ substantially in learner age, intervention length, outcome measures, platforms, and research designs. Statistical pooling was therefore not considered appropriate. Instead, the review used thematic synthesis to compare patterns in vocabulary achievement, retention, motivation, engagement, learner autonomy, perceptions, and implementation challenges. Searches were conducted using combinations of the following concepts: “TikTok” AND “English vocabulary”; “short video” AND “EFL” AND “vocabulary”; “YouTube” AND “vocabulary acquisition”; “YouTube Shorts” AND “English learning”; “Instagram Reels” AND “vocabulary learning”; and “mobile-assisted language learning” AND “vocabulary”. Scholarly records were checked through accessible journal and academic-index sources, including Google Scholar-oriented results, ERIC/education literature where available, DOAJ and publisher or institutional journal pages. Recent systematic reviews were also examined backward to identify relevant empirical studies.

Because database interfaces and search-engine result sets are dynamic, the review does not report unstable raw hit counts as if they were fixed database totals. Instead, reproducibility is established through explicit search terms, a defined publication window, eligibility criteria, and the final evidence corpus. The final synthesis focused on studies that directly examined English vocabulary or provided sufficiently specific evidence about vocabulary-related

outcomes in EFL/ESL settings. Titles and abstracts were first screened for topical relevance. Potentially relevant studies were then examined for population, intervention/exposure, vocabulary outcome, design, and findings. The extraction framework recorded: author/year; country or context; participants; platform; study design; vocabulary-related outcome; learner response; and limitations. Systematic reviews were used to contextualize patterns but were not treated as substitutes for empirical primary studies. Study quality was considered through four practical dimensions: clarity of research design, adequacy of participant description, transparency of outcome measurement, and alignment between the research question and evidence. Quasi-experimental studies with comparison groups were treated as stronger evidence for effectiveness than perception-only studies. Qualitative studies were retained because they provide evidence about implementation, engagement, and learner experience that test-based designs cannot capture.

The synthesis proceeded through three stages. First, findings were coded descriptively by platform and outcome. Second, recurring patterns were grouped into themes. Third, evidence was interpreted in relation to the specific senior-high-school context. This final step is essential because a positive result among university learners cannot automatically be generalized to Grade X–XII students.

IV. RESULTS

Characteristics of the Evidence Base

Study	Context/design	Platform	Main vocabulary-related finding
Bernard (2021)	Qualitative; vocational learners	TikTok	Improved attention, interest, understanding; new words connected to real-life contexts.
Jasmia et al. (2022)	Pre-experimental; Grade 8	YouTube	Vocabulary mastery improved after YouTube-supported instruction.
Ibhar (2022)	Pre/post-test; university EFL	YouTube	Vocabulary acquisition improved; learner interest was linked to gains.
Munir (2022)	Correlational; Grade 11	YouTube	English-YouTube viewing habit was examined in relation to vocabulary mastery.
Madani et al. (2023)	Qualitative; Grade 8	YouTube	Students generally perceived YouTube as easy to understand and visually engaging.
Rita & Subekti (2023)	Survey; Indonesian university students	TikTok	Generally positive attitudes, with some uncertainty about effectiveness.
Tampubolon et al. (2023)	Quasi-experimental; Grade 7	TikTok	Experimental group improved more than control group; significant t-test result.
Usman et al. (2024)	Quasi-experimental; Grade 7	TikTok	Vocabulary scores improved after TikTok-based instruction.
Amelia & Adi (2024)	Qualitative; Indonesian vocational students	TikTok	Students valued practical examples; distraction was also reported.
Maria & Sujawati (2025)	Quasi-experimental; Grade 12	TikTok	Significant vocabulary improvement among 70 students.
Miranda et al. (2025)	Secondary-school context	TikTok	Reported support for vocabulary mastery and engagement.
Syarifah & Sholah (2025)	Comparative perception study	TikTok	Learners reported different perceptions across proficiency levels and noted challenges.
Trijunianti et al. (2026)	Quasi-experimental; junior high	YouTube	Easy English YouTube channel supported vocabulary mastery versus conventional instruction.

Duan et al. (2026)	Systematic review; 36 studies	Mobile learning	Multimodal input and interactive practice support retention and vocabulary development; deeper lexical outcomes remain underexplored.
Ahen et al. (2026)	Systematic review; Indonesian formal education	TikTok	Benefits included vocabulary, motivation, engagement and confidence; challenges included distraction and content quality.

The evidence base demonstrates a consistent directional pattern: short-video and video-assisted instruction is more often associated with positive vocabulary outcomes than with null or negative outcomes. However, the strength of evidence varies. Quantitative studies tend to report improvement in post-test scores, whereas qualitative and survey studies primarily report positive perceptions, engagement, or learner autonomy. This means that the literature provides stronger evidence for “promising effectiveness” than for a definitive causal claim across all contexts.

Effects on Vocabulary Achievement and Retention

The clearest evidence comes from quasi-experimental and pre-experimental studies. Tampubolon et al. (2023) reported higher gains in a TikTok experimental group than in a conventional-learning control group among Grade 7 students. Usman et al. (2024) similarly investigated TikTok-based vocabulary instruction among Indonesian junior-high EFL learners and found improvement in vocabulary performance. Most directly relevant to the present target population, Maria and Sujarwati (2025) examined Grade XII students and reported significant improvement in vocabulary mastery after TikTok-based instruction.

YouTube evidence points in the same direction. Jasmia et al. (2022) reported vocabulary improvement after YouTube-based instruction among Grade 8 students, while Trijunianti et al. (2026) reported the effectiveness of an Easy English YouTube channel in a quasi-experimental comparison. The broader systematic-review literature likewise indicates positive effects of mobile and video-supported vocabulary learning, although methodological heterogeneity prevents a simple universal effect estimate (Duan et al., 2026; Ji & Aziz, 2021).

An important qualification is that most studies measure immediate or short-term post-test performance. Evidence for delayed retention is much thinner. Consequently, it is safer to conclude that short video platforms can facilitate vocabulary learning and immediate achievement than to claim that they necessarily produce durable long-term mastery.

Multimodality, Context, and Repetition

A recurring explanation across the literature is multimodal contextualization. Bernard (2021) found that learners used TikTok content to encounter vocabulary connected to interests such as cooking and cosmetics, with subtitles and short presentation helping comprehension. This is consistent with the research proposal's emphasis on videos that combine spoken vocabulary, visual demonstrations, subtitles, and real-life situations. □filecite□turn1file9□L606-L636□

Short videos also support repetition. Learners can replay a clip, pause it, read captions again, and revisit vocabulary outside class. Mobile-learning reviews identify learner control and repeated exposure as important mechanisms for vocabulary learning (Duan et al., 2026; Ishaq et al., 2021). However, repeated exposure should be accompanied by

retrieval and productive practice. Simply watching a large volume of content may increase familiarity without necessarily developing the ability to use words accurately.

Context therefore appears to be most beneficial when teachers convert video exposure into structured learning tasks. The proposal's planned sequence—pre-viewing activation, while-viewing identification, post-viewing contextual practice, and review—offers a pedagogically coherent model because it turns passive viewing into active vocabulary processing. □filecite□turn1file2□L133-L160□

Motivation, Engagement, and Learner Autonomy

Positive affective outcomes are another recurring theme. Learners often describe TikTok and YouTube as enjoyable, visually attractive, easy to access, and less monotonous than traditional vocabulary activities. Rita and Subekti (2023) found generally positive attitudes toward TikTok for vocabulary learning among Indonesian university students, while Madani et al. (2023) reported that secondary-school learners appreciated YouTube's visual presentation and perceived ease of understanding. These findings suggest that short-video platforms can create conditions for sustained engagement.

Engagement is educationally relevant because attention is a prerequisite for processing vocabulary input. Bernard (2021) explicitly linked short TikTok videos with improved attention and interest. More recent systematic reviews similarly identify motivation, engagement, confidence, and autonomy among the frequently reported benefits of TikTok and mobile learning (Ahen et al., 2026; Duan et al., 2026).

Nevertheless, positive perceptions should not be confused with learning effectiveness. Some students can enjoy a platform without achieving substantial vocabulary gains. Conversely, a demanding vocabulary activity may produce learning even when learners do not describe it as entertaining. The strongest instructional position is therefore to treat engagement as a facilitating condition rather than the ultimate outcome.

Implementation Challenges

The literature identifies four major challenges. First is distraction. Social-media platforms contain entertainment content, notifications, comments, advertisements, and algorithmically recommended videos. Amelia and Adi (2024) and recent systematic reviews note that students may move from educational content to unrelated entertainment. Second is content quality. Informal videos can contain inaccurate information, slang, pronunciation variation, or language that is unsuitable for classroom objectives.

Third is technical inequality. Access to stable internet, smartphones, data packages, and school infrastructure can constrain implementation. Research on Indonesian digital education has identified uneven access and infrastructure as persistent barriers (Habibi et al., 2023). Fourth is pedagogical alignment. A short video is not automatically an instructional activity. Teachers must select appropriate clips, pre-teach key items, create tasks, and assess learning.

These challenges imply that platform choice should be secondary to instructional design. A well-selected thirty-second clip embedded in a structured lesson may be more educationally valuable than an hour of uncontrolled browsing. This principle is especially important for senior high school learners, who may require guidance in distinguishing useful language input from entertaining but pedagogically weak content.

V. DISCUSSION

The central finding of this review is that short video platforms have substantial potential for English vocabulary learning, but the evidence supports a mediated rather than technological explanation. Vocabulary gains are most plausible when short videos provide focused multimodal input and are followed by explicit attention, retrieval, contextual practice, and review. The platform creates affordances; pedagogy converts those affordances into learning.

The findings also strengthen the research gap identified in the original proposal. The proposal correctly observed that many previous studies involved university learners or general EFL populations, while relatively fewer studies focused specifically on Indonesian senior high school students. □filecite□turn1file0□L33-L49□ The newer evidence partially closes this gap because Grade XII research is now available (Maria & Sujarwati, 2025). However, a broader gap remains: there is still little rigorous comparative evidence across TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels within the same senior-high-school population.

Another important gap concerns outcome depth. Many studies use vocabulary tests that emphasize recognition, meaning, or short-term recall. Yet vocabulary mastery includes productive and contextual dimensions. The 2026 systematic review by Duan et al. specifically identifies deeper lexical organization, collocation, and contextual usage as underexplored. This means future studies should not rely solely on immediate multiple-choice post-tests.

Finally, the review indicates that the Indonesian context deserves specific attention. Indonesian learners may encounter English through globally circulated digital content, but classroom curricula, teacher practices, infrastructure, and students' proficiency levels differ from those in other countries. Consequently, evidence from Saudi, Chinese, Taiwanese, or other university contexts should be treated as supporting evidence rather than direct proof of effectiveness for Indonesian SMA students.

VI. CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review concludes that short video platforms can effectively support English vocabulary learning in EFL contexts, particularly when they are integrated into structured, teacher-mediated instruction rather than used as stand-alone learning tools. Recent evidence, especially from quasi-experimental studies, generally associates TikTok- and YouTube-based learning with improved vocabulary performance, positive learner perceptions, greater engagement, and increased opportunities for self-directed exposure. Evidence from Indonesian secondary-school contexts further suggests that

short video-supported instruction can contribute to vocabulary development. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that the effectiveness of short video platforms depends more on instructional conditions than on the technology itself. Vocabulary gains are most likely when videos contain relevant and comprehensible language input and are accompanied by explicit vocabulary objectives, teacher guidance, repeated exposure, active retrieval, and contextual practice. Therefore, the central issue is not simply whether students can learn vocabulary through short videos, but under what pedagogical conditions such learning leads to durable, productive, and contextually appropriate vocabulary mastery.

For Indonesian senior high school education, the review identifies a clear need for further empirical research comparing TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels within the same learner population. Future studies should employ stronger comparison designs, validated multidimensional vocabulary measures, delayed post-tests, and, where possible, longitudinal follow-up. Such research would help determine not only whether short video platforms improve vocabulary learning, but also which platform and instructional conditions produce the most sustainable outcomes.

The findings also clarify how the original research proposal should be positioned within the SLR format. Implementation and learner responses should be treated as synthesized evidence themes, whereas vocabulary improvement should be presented as a cross-study evidence pattern rather than as a new pre-test/post-test outcome. Overall, short video platforms are best understood as pedagogically mediated supplementary resources within blended or mobile-assisted EFL instruction, with their effectiveness ultimately determined by purposeful instructional design.

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