



The Effectiveness of TikTok Content in Improving English Idiom Acquisition among High School Students

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Abstract

This study investigated the effectiveness of TikTok content, especially from the account *@englishwithlakhan*, in improving English idiom acquisition among high school students. It also explored how students perceived TikTok as a learning tool. A quantitative pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design was used, involving 23 students from class XI.1 at SMA Ahmad Yani 2 Baureno. The instruments included an idiom test and a 10-item questionnaire. Over four weeks, students watched selected TikTok videos that explained English idioms. Their scores before and after the treatment were compared using a paired sample t-test, and student perceptions were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Questionnaire reliability was tested with Cronbach's Alpha. The results showed a significant improvement in students' idiom understanding. The average score increased from 22.31 to 72.17. The t-test result ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$) confirmed that the improvement was statistically significant. Students also responded positively to TikTok as a learning platform, finding it interesting, helpful, and easy to understand. The questionnaire reliability score was 0.929, indicating good consistency. In conclusion, TikTok content is effective in supporting English idiom learning and enhancing student motivation. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate short educational videos as learning media. Further research can explore comparisons with other platforms or include control groups for more comprehensive analysis.

Keywords: TikTok, idiom acquisition, English learning, multimedia learning, student perception

Introduction

In the era of digital transformation, social media has become an inseparable part of students' daily lives (Khikmah et al., 2024). Among various platforms, TikTok has gained massive popularity, especially among teenagers, due to its dynamic short-form video format that offers entertainment and user interaction (Sofeny et al., 2022). Interestingly, this growing interest in TikTok opens up new educational opportunities particularly in English language learning by leveraging content from specific accounts designed for educational purposes.

While many students at SMA Ahmad Yani 2 Baureno, especially those in class XI.1, actively use TikTok on a daily basis, the platform is mostly consumed for entertainment. However, its potential as an educational tool remains largely untapped. Informal observations indicate that although students are familiar with TikTok, few utilize it for learning purposes. This phenomenon invites a shift in perspective: from using TikTok as mere entertainment to exploring it as a medium to support academic achievement, particularly in acquiring English idioms.

Previous studies have investigated the role of social media in language learning with platforms such as Instagram and YouTube receiving considerable attention (Alghameeti, 2022). For instance, Khulel (2022) mentions that Instagram has been explored as a vocabulary learning tool and as a space for developing writing skills, while YouTube has proven effective in enhancing speaking proficiency through educational vlogs (Zahro, 2020). Recent studies have also begun to examine TikTok's potential for language education, focusing on vocabulary acquisition (Simanungkalit & Katemba, 2023) and speaking skills by Feblianyah and Syafryadin (2023). However, studies that specifically address idiom acquisition through TikTok content remain limited. This represents a clear gap in the literature, considering that idioms are a vital component of natural English usage but are notoriously difficult for learners to master due to their non-literal meanings.

Most existing research tends to generalize TikTok's educational content without focusing on specific content creators or idiom acquisition. While Fitria (2023) have evaluated the use of accounts like *@englishwithgeet*, *@english.with.luccy*, *@englishwithcarla*, *@englishwithnab*, and *@andreaholmenglish* for pronunciation practice, formal research on the impact of accounts such as *@englishwithlakhani* which presents idioms in real-life film clips has not been sufficiently explored. This study seeks to address that limitation by examining how content from *@englishwithlakhani* can enhance idiom understanding among high school students. The research responds to the call for more contextualized and engaging learning tools aligned with students' interests and digital habits.

This study is not only relevant in terms of academic discourse, but also carries pedagogical urgency. As educational practices evolve, integrating familiar technologies into learning environments becomes essential. By investigating TikTok as a medium for idiom acquisition, the study aims to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of digital content in enhancing language comprehension. The findings are expected to inform curriculum developers, educators, and even content creators about the educational value of TikTok, especially in presenting idioms in a visually engaging and context-rich format.

Ultimately, this research was conducted with the hope of filling the gap in existing studies related to TikTok's role in idiom learning. By focusing on the specific content from the *@englishwithlakhani* account, this study offers a novel contribution to both academic literature and classroom practice. The objective is not merely to determine the effectiveness of TikTok content but also to explore students' perceptions toward learning idioms through this platform. Through this approach, the research aspires to demonstrate how digital media can be optimized to support language acquisition in more innovative and accessible ways.

Literature Review

TikTok as a Learning Medium in English Language Education

TikTok, originally launched for entertainment, has evolved into a powerful medium for language learning due to its interactive and multimodal features. Its ability to combine visual, audio, and textual elements aligns with cognitive learning theories that emphasize the benefits of multiple representations. Research by Kang and Lou (2022) explains how TikTok's algorithmic "For You Page" (FYP) customizes content based on user preferences offering continuous exposure to educational videos, even when users are passively browsing. This incidental learning process creates meaningful opportunities to acquire language, including idiomatic expressions, in a contextual and engaging environment.

Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory in Giannakos and Cukurova (2023) and Mayer's Multimedia Learning Theory by Mayer (2005) both support the effectiveness of concise, visual-rich content in promoting deeper comprehension. TikTok's brief video format caters to this by breaking down complex content such as idioms into manageable learning units, making it more accessible to students who are digital natives (Prensky, 2001). Moreover, with features such as subtitles, duets, and comments, TikTok encourages user interaction and fosters social constructivist learning environments as suggested by (Mohammed et al., 2020).

The Educational Potential of *@englishwithlakhani*

Among the many educational accounts on TikTok, *@englishwithlakhani* stands out for its focus on idiomatic expressions. The account uses scenes from movies and TV shows to present idioms in natural discourse, then pauses to offer clear explanations. This method supports Krashen's (2004) Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes the value of comprehensible and contextual input in language acquisition. The combination of visual storytelling, native speaker usage, and real-life dialogue situates idioms within authentic communicative contexts, enhancing student understanding and retention.

The account's popularity over 26.6 thousand followers demonstrates its reach and relevance among learners. Its pedagogical approach reflects Paivio's (2014) Dual Coding Theory, where information presented simultaneously through words and images is more effectively processed than through verbal input alone. Students are not only taught the definitions of idioms but are also shown how those idioms function in situational contexts, thus supporting both linguistic and pragmatic competence.

Understanding English Idioms in Language Learning

Idioms are fixed expressions whose meanings cannot be inferred from their individual words. According to Borman et al. (2018) and Liu (2017), idioms fall into metaphor-based, proverb-based, and culturally embedded expressions. Their figurative nature and cultural specificity pose challenges for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, who often default to literal interpretations. Because of this, idioms are frequently neglected in standard classroom instruction, contributing to a lack of idiomatic fluency among learners.

However, integrating idioms into digital learning platforms such as TikTok offers a way to present these expressions in multimodal formats, which are better suited for acquisition. As Boers and Lindstromberg (2008) note, idioms are more easily understood when taught through clear contextual usage and visual cues an approach naturally aligned with TikTok's video-based environment.

Mayer's Multimedia Learning Theory

This study is grounded in Mayer's (2005) Multimedia Learning Theory, which proposes that learners retain information better when it is presented through both verbal and visual channels. The theory includes several principles relevant to this research:

Modality Principle:

Learners comprehend better when they hear explanations alongside visuals than when reading text alone. TikTok's narrated videos align well with this principle.

Temporal and Spatial Contiguity Principle:

Information is more effectively understood when presented simultaneously and in close proximity. On TikTok, idioms are typically explained with on-screen text while video scenes unfold visually.

Personalization Principle:

Using conversational, informal language boosts engagement. TikTok creators, including @englishwithlakhan, often use friendly tones that resonate with teenage learners.

By applying these principles, TikTok facilitates the acquisition of complex, abstract language features like idioms, especially for learners who benefit from contextualized, bite-sized learning experiences.

Research Methods

This study adopts a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental research design. Experimental design is used to test an idea (media or procedural practice) to determine whether the idea affects the outcome or dependent variable (Ramadhana & Allo, 2021). The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of TikTok content specifically videos from the account *@englishwithlakhana* in enhancing students' understanding of English idioms. The research focuses on evaluating learning outcomes before and after the intervention using standardized testing and perception-based questionnaires. This methodological section elaborates on the research design, population and sampling techniques, instruments, data collection procedures, operationalization of variables, and data analysis methods to ensure replicability of the study.

The research design used in this study is a one-group pre-test and post-test design, which belongs to the category of pre-experimental design (Irmayani et al., 2022). This design allows the researcher to observe the effect of a treatment in this case, TikTok-based instructional media on a single group of participants. According to Pravitasari and Rahmah (2024) the study begins with a pre-test to assess students' baseline understanding of English idioms, followed by the treatment phase where students are exposed to selected TikTok videos, and concludes with a post-test to determine any learning gains. Although this design does not include a control group, it provides a clear comparative framework for measuring change over time and evaluating the influence of multimedia input on idiom acquisition.

The population of this study comprises 11th-grade students from SMA Ahmad Yani 2 Baureno in Bojonegoro. The total number of students in class XI.1 is 23, and this class was selected for the study using a total sampling technique. Total sampling is appropriate given the relatively small population size, which allows the researcher to include all participants while maintaining manageability (Listiyowati et al., 2023). This particular class was chosen due to three main considerations: the students are active TikTok users, they are already familiar with the researcher from a previous teaching practicum, and the class size is ideal for the in-depth observation required during treatment.

In terms of research instruments, this study employs both objective and subjective tools: a test (pre-test and post-test) and a perception questionnaire. The idiom test, used in both the pre- and post-intervention phases, consists of 15 multiple-choice questions designed to evaluate students' comprehension and contextual understanding of idiomatic expressions. Each correct response is scored as one point, and the raw score is converted into a percentage using the formula: $\text{Final Score (\%)} = (\text{Number of Correct Answers} \div 15) \times 100$. Student performance is classified according to Heaton's (1989), rubric which includes five assessment

categories: Excellent (86–100%), Good (71–85%), Fair (56–70%), Poor (41–55%), and Very Poor ($\leq 40\%$).

The questionnaire, developed by the researcher, consists of 10 Likert-scale (Likert, 1932) items aimed at exploring students' perceptions of TikTok as a learning medium. The statements are grouped into three categories: learning convenience, motivation, and usefulness or effectiveness. Responses range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This instrument helps the researcher understand the affective and motivational dimensions of learning with TikTok and complements the quantitative results from the idiom test.

The research instruments underwent expert validation to ensure relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study's objectives. The validation was conducted by an experienced lecturer in English language education, who reviewed all items and suggested several revisions to improve accuracy and readability. As a result, the final versions of the instruments meet the standard requirements for educational research and are suitable for measuring both learning outcomes and perceptions.

Data collection was conducted in three stages: pre-test, treatment, and post-test, followed by questionnaire administration. The pre-test was given at the beginning to assess students' existing knowledge of idioms. During the four-week treatment phase, students were exposed to a curated selection of TikTok videos from *@englishwithlakhan*. Each week focused on different aspects of idiomatic learning: Week 1 introduced idioms through video-based explanation; Week 2 emphasized contextual practice with cloze tests and discussion; Week 3 focused on sentence production and role-play; and Week 4 concluded with idiom-based games to reinforce retention. After the treatment, a post-test identical in structure to the pre-test was administered to measure learning gains. Finally, the perception questionnaire was distributed to gather students' feedback and subjective experiences regarding the use of TikTok for language learning.

To analyze the collected data, the researcher employed both inferential and descriptive statistical techniques using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. The pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed using the paired sample t-test, which is suitable for comparing two related means and assessing the significance of the observed differences (Hapsari, 2019). Prior to the t-test, a normality test (Shapiro-Wilk) was conducted to ensure that the data distribution met the assumptions required for parametric testing. If the p-value obtained from the t-test is less than 0.05, it indicates a statistically significant improvement in idiom acquisition after the treatment, thus supporting the effectiveness of TikTok as a learning tool.

The data from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores and frequency distributions. This analysis helped to interpret students' attitudes, engagement levels, and perceived benefits of using TikTok in idiom learning. The integration of both objective test data and subjective

questionnaire responses allows for a more comprehensive evaluation of the educational value of TikTok content in the English classroom.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

This section presents and interprets the results of the study investigating the effectiveness of TikTok content specifically from the *@englishwithlakhan* account in improving the English idiom acquisition of high school students. Findings are presented through descriptive statistics, inferential testing (paired sample t-test), and perception-based analysis via questionnaires. Each set of findings is followed by a scientific discussion that connects the results to existing theories and prior studies.

Results of Pre-Test and Post-Test

Prior to the instructional treatment, students in class XI.1 at SMA Ahmad Yani 2 Baureno completed a pre-test to assess their existing idiom knowledge. Table 1 below summarizes the pre-test results, indicating that most students had a poor understanding of idiomatic expressions.

Table 1 : Pre-Test Results

No	Category of Mastery	Score Range (%)	Frequency	Percentage
1	Excellent	86 – 100	0	0%
2	Good	71 – 85	0	0%
3	Fair	56 – 70	0	0%
4	Poor	41 – 55	2	8.7%
5	Very Poor	≤ 40	21	91.3%
Total			23	100%

According to the data analysis in table 1, there are no students scored in the “excellent” category (0%). Similarly, there are no students were in the “good” or “fair” categories. Meanwhile, 2 students (8.7%) were in the “poor” category, and the majority of students (21 or 91.3%) were categorized as “very poor.”

As shown in the data analysis table 1, the researcher presents the descriptive statistics for students’ idiom acquisition before using TikTok content as a learning medium in class XI.1 at SMA Ahmad Yani 2 Baureno, as shown in table 2 below:

Table 2 : Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test

		Statistic	Std. Error
pre-test	Mean	22.3191	1.42808
	Lower Bound	19.3575	

95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Upper Bound	25.2808	
5% Trimmed Mean		22.5286	
Median		20.0000	
Variance		46.906	
Std. Deviation		6.84883	
Minimum		6.67	
Maximum		33.33	
Range		26.66	
Interquartile Range		6.67	
Skewness		-.239	.481
Kurtosis		-.024	.935

The descriptive statistics reveal a mean score of 22.31%, placing the students predominantly in the “very poor” category. This highlights the students’ initial difficulties in comprehending idioms and sets a clear benchmark for evaluating the impact of the intervention.

After four weeks of exposure to curated TikTok content, the students completed a post-test. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3 : Post-Test Results

No	Category of Mastery	Score Range (%)	Frequency	Percentage
1	Excellent	86 – 100	11	47.8%
2	Good	71 – 85	7	30.4%
3	Fair	56 – 70	4	17.4%
4	Poor	41 – 55	1	4.3%
5	Very Poor	≤ 40	0	0%
Total			23	100%

According to the data analysis in table 3, the findings show that 11 students (47.8%) achieved an “excellent” score. Meanwhile, 7 students (30.4%) were in the “good” category, 4 students (17.4%) were in the “fair” category, and only 1 student (4.3%) was in the “poor” category. None of the students were categorized as “very poor.”

Based on the table 3, the researcher presents the descriptive statistics for students’ idiom acquisition after using TikTok content as a learning medium in class XI.1 at SMA Ahmad Yani 2 Baureno, as shown in table 4 below:

Table 4 : Descriptive Statistics of Post-Test

post-test	Mean		72.1739	2.32054
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	67.3614	
		Upper Bound	76.9864	
	5% Trimmed Mean		71.7232	
	Median		73.3300	
	Variance		123.853	
	Std. Deviation		11.12894	
	Minimum		53.33	
	Maximum		100.00	
	Range		46.67	
	Interquartile Range		20.00	
	Skewness		.493	.481
	Kurtosis		.228	.935

The post-test mean increased significantly to 72.17%, shifting the students' overall performance from "very poor" to predominantly "good" and "excellent." These findings strongly suggest a positive learning gain due to the intervention.

A Shapiro-Wilk normality test was applied to validate the assumption of normal distribution prior to conducting a paired sample t-test. The results indicated that both pre- and post-test scores met the normality criteria ($p > 0.05$).

Table 5 : Normality Test

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.
pre-test	.914	23	.051
post-test	.947	23	.249

Following this, a paired sample t-test was conducted. The results are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6 : Paired Sample T-Test

		Paired Differences					
		Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	before – after	-49.85478	-55.86880	-43.84076	-17.192	22	0.000

The p-value (.000) is below the threshold of 0.05, indicating a statistically significant improvement in students' idiom acquisition after using TikTok as a learning medium. The confidence interval also excludes zero, further validating the results.

Questionnaire Findings on Student Perceptions

Students' perceptions of TikTok as a learning medium were assessed using a 10-item questionnaire categorized into three aspects: learning convenience, motivation, and perceived usefulness. The responses were overwhelmingly positive.

Table 7 : Questionnaire Descriptive Statistics

No	Category	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	Learning Convenience (Kemudahan Belajar)	<i>Contoh dalam video mudah dipahami dan diikuti.</i>	4.39	0.499
		<i>Saya merasa lebih paham setelah menonton video idiom di TikTok.</i>	4.35	0.714
		<i>Durasi video TikTok sudah cukup untuk membantu saya mengingat idiom dengan baik.</i>	4.22	0.671
2.	Motivation and Engagement (Motivasi Belajar)	<i>Saya merasa belajar lebih menyenangkan dengan menggunakan konten TikTok.</i>	4.43	0.662
		<i>Saya akan merekomendasikan TikTok kepada teman-teman untuk belajar Bahasa Inggris.</i>	4.22	0.671
		<i>Konten TikTok lebih menarik dibandingkan belajar melalui buku teks.</i>	4.48	0.511
3.	Perceived Usefulness and Effectiveness (Manfaat dan	<i>Video TikTok dari @englishwithlaxhan membantu saya memahami idiom Bahasa Inggris.</i>	4.22	0.600

<i>Efektivitas TikTok)</i>	<i>Saya dapat menggunakan idiom yang saya pelajari dari TikTok dalam kalimat saya sendiri.</i>	4.30	0.703
	<i>Belajar idiom melalui TikTok adalah kegiatan yang bermanfaat.</i>	4.35	0.647
	<i>Secara keseluruhan, TikTok adalah platform yang efektif untuk belajar idiom Bahasa Inggris.</i>	4.43	0.662

The table 5 show that the average responses for all items in each category are 4.20, which indicates a generally positive perception among students.

In the Learning Convenience category, the highest mean score was 4.39 for the statement “Contoh dalam video mudah dipahami dan diikuti.” This indicates that students perceive TikTok videos as clear and supportive in enhancing their comprehension of idioms.

For Learning Motivation, the highest mean score was 4.48 for “Konten TikTok lebih menarik dibandingkan belajar melalui buku teks”, This suggests that students find TikTok to be a more engaging and stimulating learning platform compared to traditional methods, which reflects their increased interest and motivation in using digital media for language acquisition.

In the Perceived Usefulness and Effectiveness category, the highest score was 4.43 for “Secara keseluruhan, TikTok adalah platform yang efektif untuk belajar idiom Bahasa Inggris.”. This shows that students view TikTok as a valuable and impactful learning medium.

Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that the use of TikTok, particularly content from the *@englishwithlakh* account, significantly enhances students' acquisition of English idioms. This conclusion aligns with Mayer's Multimedia Learning Theory, which suggests that dual-channel input visual and verbal facilitates deeper processing and retention. TikTok videos that combine speech, text, and visuals provide rich, contextualized input that strengthens idiomatic comprehension.

In line with the first research objective, the significant improvement in post-test scores validates the effectiveness of the platform as an instructional tool. These results support earlier findings by Tirtayasa et al. (2024) who also observed vocabulary improvement through TikTok-based instruction. However, this study uniquely contributes to the field by focusing specifically on idioms an aspect of language often underrepresented in classroom instruction and digital learning research.

Addressing the second objective, students expressed positive perceptions toward TikTok's role in language learning. They found it more engaging and accessible than traditional materials, echoing findings by Sanusi et al. (2023), who highlighted TikTok's motivational influence on learners. The content's relatability

and visual appeal seem to foster not only better comprehension but also enjoyment and learner autonomy important affective factors in language acquisition.

Importantly, this study also addresses existing gaps in the literature. While previous research has explored TikTok's potential for vocabulary, pronunciation, and general English skills, few have investigated its application to idiomatic language. By providing empirical evidence that TikTok can effectively support the learning of idioms, this study expands current understanding of digital media's role in second language acquisition and opens new avenues for integrating popular platforms into pedagogical practice.

In conclusion, the integration of targeted TikTok content into English language instruction demonstrates both cognitive and motivational benefits. The results show that students not only perform better on assessments but also feel more motivated and connected to the learning process. These findings offer strong support for the inclusion of short-form video platforms like TikTok as supplementary tools in modern language education especially for areas such as idioms, where context and repetition are critical

Conclusion

This study concludes that TikTok content, particularly from the account *@englishwithlakhan*, is effective in improving high school students' acquisition of English idioms. By employing a pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design alongside a perception questionnaire, the research found a substantial increase in students' idiom mastery after four weeks of exposure to curated TikTok videos. The integration of short-form, visually contextualized content not only facilitated better comprehension but also aligned with students' learning preferences and digital engagement patterns. Additionally, students expressed positive perceptions toward the platform, emphasizing its convenience, motivational power, and perceived usefulness in the learning process.

The contribution of this research lies in its exploration of idiom learning through multimedia-rich, non-traditional instruction, an area previously underrepresented in language learning literature. While the findings affirm TikTok's educational potential, particularly in making idioms more accessible and relevant, this study is limited by its lack of a control group and small sample size confined to a single classroom context. Future studies are encouraged to adopt more robust experimental designs, larger and more diverse populations, and longitudinal analysis to further validate and expand on these findings. Integrating similar digital platforms across broader learning domains could also help explore how social media can transform language education in more sustainable and inclusive ways.

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