

Speak English, Act Local: University Students Using Tiktok For Project-Based Learning On Hunger And Health

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ABSTRACT

ABSTRACT This study explores the effectiveness of a Project-Based Learning (PjBL) approach using TikTok as a digital medium for English language instruction at the university level, with a focus on Zero Hunger and Good Health and Well-being (Sustainable Development Goals/SDGs). The participants were 25 students from an English Education department at an Indonesian university. Students created English-language educational content on nutrition, health, and food security and uploaded it to TikTok as part of their class project. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, involving classroom observations, interviews, and content analysis. Results indicate that this approach not only enhanced students' English skills particularly in speaking and writing but also fostered social awareness and critical thinking. The findings suggest that integrating social media with project-based learning can be an effective strategy for promoting both language competence and 21st-century skills.

Keywords: Project-Based Learning, TikTok, English Language Learning, SDGs, Zero Hunger and Good Health

74 Introduction

English language education in the digital age must go beyond linguistic competence to include social awareness and engagement with global issues. Hunger and public health remain critical challenges in Indonesia and globally. As part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Zero Hunger and Good Health and Well-being (Goals 2 and 3) are especially relevant themes to incorporate into educational contexts.

Social media platforms like TikTok are increasingly integrated into students' daily lives and offer a unique opportunity for authentic, meaningful learning. By employing Project-Based Learning (PjBL), educators can harness students' creativity and agency to produce impactful content. This study investigates how university students engage in English language learning while advocating for social issues through TikTok-based projects.

This study investigates how a group of Indonesian university students used TikTok to create English-language content related to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). These themes were chosen due to their immediate relevance to students' local communities and the broader global context. The aim is to examine how PjBL, supported by TikTok, can be leveraged to foster students' English proficiency, creativity, critical thinking, and social awareness.

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75 Literature Review

Project-Based Learning in Language Education

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is an instructional method characterized by student-driven inquiry, collaboration, and the creation of authentic products (Bell, 2010). In language education, PjBL has been shown to increase learners' engagement and promote the meaningful use of language in context. According to Warschauer and Meskill (2000), technology enhanced PjBL allows students to use language as a tool for real communication and problem-solving, rather than as an abstract skill.

Digital Media and Language Learning

The integration of digital tools in language education has created new opportunities for communication, collaboration, and creativity (OECD, 2018). TikTok, a video-sharing platform popular among younger audiences, has emerged as a promising tool in educational contexts. Pratiwi and Sari (2022) found that using TikTok in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms increased students' motivation and speaking fluency, while also encouraging the use of English in real-life situations.

SDGs and Education

The United Nations' SDGs serve as a global framework for addressing pressing social, environmental, and economic issues (United Nations, 2015). In the Indonesian context, food insecurity, malnutrition, and public health remain persistent challenges. Embedding SDGs in university curricula not only raises awareness but also cultivates values such as empathy, responsibility, and critical thinking (Kemendikbudristek, 2021).

Table 5: Reviewed studies and their alignment with research questions

No	Benefit	Disadvantaged
1	Enhances English speaking and writing skills through real-world use	Requires a stable internet connection and access to digital devices
2	Increases student motivation and engagement via a familiar platform	TikTok's short video format may limit depth of discussion
3	Develops 21st-century skills (creativity, collaboration, critical thinking)	Assessment of learning outcomes may be more subjective and varied
4	Promotes awareness of local health and hunger issues	Students with low digital literacy may struggle with content production
5	Encourages use of English for advocacy and public communication	Potential distractions from non-educational content on TikTok
6	Provides authentic audience feedback from online viewers	Privacy concerns and digital safety need to be managed carefully
7	Encourages reflective learning through project presentations	Group work may lead to unequal participation or workload imbalance

76 Research Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to capture students' experiences, perceptions, and outputs related to a TikTok-based PjBL project. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and content analysis of students' TikTok videos.

Participants

The participants were 25 fourth-semester students enrolled in an English Education program at an Indonesian university. Participants were divided into 5 groups where all participants had basic digital literacy skills and were active users of TikTok prior to the project.

Instructional Procedure

1. **Content Introduction:** Students received an overview of the SDGs, particularly Goals 2 (Zero Hunger) and 3 (Good Health), along with guidelines on creating educational content for TikTok.
2. **Project Planning:** Students were divided into small groups to draft scripts and storyboards for their TikTok videos.
3. **Content Production:** Each group created 1–3-minute English-language videos addressing local health, food security, or nutrition topics.
4. **Presentation and Reflection:** Videos were presented in class, followed by reflective discussions on the learning process and audience feedback.

Data Collection Techniques

1. **Classroom Observations:** To monitor student engagement, collaboration, and language use.
2. **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Conducted with selected students and instructors to gather insights on learning outcomes and challenges.
3. **Content Analysis:** TikTok videos were analyzed based on themes, language accuracy, creativity, and message clarity.

77 Result and Discussion

The analysis of 5 TikTok video projects revealed several recurring themes and outcomes:

Key Themes

1. **Nutrition Education:** Videos explained the health benefits of local foods such as tempeh, purple sweet potato, breadfruit, spinach, and moringa.
2. **Healthy Lifestyle Campaigns:** Students promoted exercise, balanced diets, and hygiene.
3. **Community Awareness:** Some projects focused on local hunger issues and suggested grassroots solutions.

Language Learning Outcomes

1. Students demonstrated noticeable improvement in their speaking and writing skills, particularly in organizing and delivering messages clearly in English.
2. Vocabulary related to health, nutrition, and sustainability was used accurately and appropriately.

3. Students exhibited greater confidence in public speaking and digital storytelling.

Social and Cognitive Outcomes

4. Increased awareness of local and global hunger and health issues.
5. Development of critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative skills.
6. Enhanced ability to use English as a tool for social advocacy, not just academic achievement.

The findings of this study align with prior research supporting the use of PjBL and digital platforms in language learning (Bell, 2010; Warschauer & Meskill, 2000). By engaging students in real-world issues through accessible technology, the project created a learning environment that was dynamic, relevant, and empowering.

The integration of SDGs into English instruction enriched the curriculum and connected language learning to students' lived experiences. Students not only improved their English proficiency but also cultivated a deeper sense of social responsibility. This aligns with the objectives of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which aims to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, and values to shape a sustainable future.

TikTok's format encouraged multimodal literacy, allowing students to combine language with visual, audio, and nonverbal cues. This multimodal expression is crucial for preparing students for communication in digital and globalized contexts.

78 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that combining Project-Based Learning with TikTok can be an effective strategy for enhancing English language skills while promoting awareness of global and local health issues. The approach supports both linguistic and socio-civic development, making it highly relevant for 21st-century education. As a tool for advocacy and creativity, TikTok has the potential to transform traditional classrooms into platforms for action and change. Future research could explore cross-disciplinary applications and expand the use of similar models in broader educational contexts.

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