



# Students Perception on Using TikTok as a Microlearning Platform: Its Impact on Students' Understanding in EFL Classrooms

Fadel Muslaini<sup>1</sup>, Amiruddin<sup>2</sup>, Sri Fatta Meldawati<sup>3</sup>

Politeknik Negeri Ujung Pandang<sup>1</sup>, Universitas Islam As'adiyah Sengkang<sup>2</sup>, Institut Agama Islam Yapnas Jeneponto<sup>3</sup>

Email : [fadel@poliupg.ac.id](mailto:fadel@poliupg.ac.id)<sup>1</sup>, [amiruddin@unisad.ac.id](mailto:amiruddin@unisad.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>, [Srifattameldawati@yapnasjp.ac.id](mailto:Srifattameldawati@yapnasjp.ac.id)<sup>3</sup>

## ABSTRACT

This study explores first-semester students' perceptions of using TikTok as a microlearning platform and examines how it influences their understanding in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom at Ujung Pandang State Polytechnic. With the growing popularity of short-form video content among young learners, TikTok has emerged as a potential tool to deliver concise, engaging, and accessible instructional materials. This research employed a qualitative design, using semi-structured interviews with selected students to gain in-depth insights into their experiences, attitudes, and perceived benefits of using TikTok for microlearning.

The interview data were analyzed through thematic analysis, resulting in several key themes. The findings show that students perceive TikTok as an effective supplementary learning tool that enhances their understanding, particularly in vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation exposure, and the simplification of complex materials through short visual explanations. Students reported that the platform's brief and focused content helped maintain attention and improve retention. However, they also acknowledged challenges, such as distractions from non-academic content and the limited depth of learning that short videos can provide. Overall, students expressed positive views toward the integration of TikTok in EFL learning, indicating that it can support classroom instruction when used appropriately and purposefully.

The study concludes that TikTok-based microlearning offers meaningful benefits for beginner-level EFL learners by improving engagement and comprehension, although its effectiveness depends on structured guidance from instructors.

**Keywords:** *TikTok, microlearning, students' perception*

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## INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technologies has significantly transformed teaching and learning practices in higher education. Among various emerging platforms, TikTok has gained widespread popularity, especially among young learners, due to its short, visually appealing, and easily accessible video format. Originally created for entertainment purposes, TikTok has gradually evolved into a potential educational tool, offering opportunities for microlearning—an instructional approach that delivers content in small, manageable segments designed to support quick understanding and retention. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, microlearning through short videos can help learners grasp vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar more efficiently by presenting material in simple, engaging formats. As students increasingly rely on digital platforms for learning, examining the educational potential of TikTok becomes essential.

Recent studies suggest that microlearning fosters learner autonomy, increases motivation, and enhances comprehension, particularly when integrated with multimodal elements such as audio, text, and visuals. TikTok's interactive features—such as duets, voiceovers, short explanations, and creative editing tools—make it suitable for delivering EFL content in ways that are engaging and relevant to students' digital habits. However, despite its growing recognition as an instructional aid, empirical research focusing on students' perceptions of TikTok as a learning tool in formal educational settings is still limited. Most previous studies have concentrated on general digital media use or traditional e-learning platforms, leaving a gap in understanding how TikTok specifically influences learning experiences in microlearning environments.

At Ujung Pandang State Polytechnic, first-semester students are typically transitioning from senior high school to a more structured and academically demanding learning environment. Their familiarity with social media platforms makes them an ideal group for exploring the intersection between entertainment-based applications and educational objectives. Investigating their perceptions provides meaningful insights into how TikTok can be strategically utilized to enhance classroom learning, particularly in EFL courses where engagement, exposure to authentic language input, and motivation play a crucial role in comprehension.

Given these considerations, this study aims to analyze students' perceptions of using TikTok as a microlearning platform and to explore its impact on their understanding of English language materials. Through interview-based qualitative inquiry, the research seeks to provide an in-depth interpretation of how learners experience TikTok-supported instruction, the benefits they perceive, and the challenges they encounter. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the growing body of knowledge



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on digital microlearning and offer practical insights for educators seeking innovative ways to integrate social media into EFL teaching.

### Research Questions



1. How do first-semester students at Ujung Pandang State Polytechnic perceive the use of TikTok as a microlearning platform in EFL classrooms?
2. How does the use of TikTok influence students' understanding of English language materials in EFL learning?

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore students' perceptions of using TikTok as a microlearning platform and to understand its impact on their comprehension in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for in-depth investigation of students' experiences, attitudes, and interpretations that cannot be captured through numerical data. Semi-structured interviews served as the primary instrument for data collection, providing flexibility while maintaining focus on the research objectives.

The participants of this study consisted of 10 first-semester students from Ujung Pandang State Polytechnic, each selected based on high competence in their respective classes. Competence was determined through instructor recommendations, academic performance, participation in class activities, and demonstrated proficiency in English during the early semester. Purposeful sampling was used to identify students who could provide rich, insightful information about their learning experiences with TikTok-based microlearning.

Participants represented different classes within the first semester to ensure diversity of experiences and perspectives across academic groups.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Thematic analysis of the interviews yielded three main themes that describe students' perceptions and the impact of TikTok use on their understanding of English language learning.

### **Theme 1: TikTok Enhances Students' Understanding Through Visual and Short-Form**

#### **Content**

Most participants stated that TikTok helped them understand English material more quickly because the video format was short, clear, and easy to repeat. Students felt that visual explanations—such as example sentences, illustrations, or subtitles—helped them grasp difficult concepts, especially vocabulary and grammar.

Students emphasized that:

- short videos made the material easier to understand,
- the use of audio and visuals strengthened memory,
- replays allowed them to review the material at any time.

Some participant responses included:

· "I understand grammar more easily if the explanations are short and there are examples on screen."

· "TikTok helps me remember vocabulary because it includes visuals and direct pronunciation."

These results indicate that TikTok is effective as a microlearning medium, especially in supporting basic EFL understanding.

### **Theme 2: Increased Motivation and Engagement in EFL Learning**

All participants stated that using TikTok increased their motivation to learn. They found learning more engaging because the platform was familiar and they used it regularly. The engaging, creative, and engaging content encouraged them to study independently outside of class.

Students expressed that TikTok:

- made learning feel more relaxed,
- increased their desire to access the material regularly,
- encouraged them to seek out additional relevant videos.

Examples of participant comments:

- "I'm more enthusiastic about learning because the videos aren't boring like long materials."
- "Learning through TikTok makes it more enjoyable and less stressful." This increased motivation directly impacted active participation and improved understanding.

### **Theme 3: Challenges-Distractions and Limited Depth of Learning**

Despite positive perceptions, students also reported several challenges. The biggest challenge was distraction, as TikTok features a lot of entertaining content that can easily distract them from their learning goals. Furthermore, students acknowledged that videos that are too short sometimes only provide basic understanding and are less helpful for complex material.

Common complaints include:

- "I intend to study, but end up being tempted to watch other videos."
- "If the material is difficult, TikTok videos are too short, so I have to find other explanations."

These limitations suggest that TikTok is more effective as a supporting medium than as a primary learning resource.

## **Discussion**

The findings of this study confirm that TikTok has great potential as a microlearning platform in EFL learning, but its effectiveness depends heavily on how the platform is used.

### **TikTok Supports Microlearning Principles**

The research results show that TikTok's short video format aligns with the principles of microlearning, which emphasizes learning in small, concise, and easily digestible units. Students are able



e to grasp the material more quickly because the simple and visual content helps reduce cognitive load. These findings support Mayer's theory of multimedia learning, which states that combining text, audio, and visuals can enhance comprehension.

### **Increased Motivation Aligns with Mobile Learning Theory**

TikTok use has been shown to increase student motivation to learn. This aligns with the Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) theory, which emphasizes that the mobility and convenience of digital platforms can increase engagement and learning autonomy. Students who are familiar with TikTok feel more comfortable using it as part of their learning process. **Challenges Highlight Need for Structured Integration**

While TikTok facilitates comprehension, students face challenges such as distractions and limited depth of material. This suggests that TikTok cannot stand alone as a comprehensive learning resource. Microlearning on TikTok needs to be integrated with:

- more comprehensive class materials,
- teacher guidance,
- supporting activities such as discussions or exercises.

These findings align with previous studies that suggest that social media must be used in a targeted manner to maintain focused and effective learning.

### **Overall Interpretation**

Overall, students had a positive perception of using TikTok as a microlearning platform. TikTok increased comprehension, motivation, and engagement, particularly in vocabulary, simple grammar, and pronunciation. However, TikTok was more effective as a supplementary tool than as a primary learning medium.

This study confirms that integrating TikTok into EFL learning can provide significant benefits, especially for the digital-native generation, provided its use is guided by appropriate pedagogical strategies.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study investigated first-semester students' perceptions of using TikTok as a microlearning platform and examined its impact on their understanding of English language materials in EFL classrooms at Ujung Pandang State Polytechnic. Through thematic analysis of interview data from ten high-performing students across different classes, the research identified three major findings.

First, students perceived TikTok as an effective medium that enhances their comprehension, particularly in vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, and basic grammar understanding. The platform's short-form, visually supported content allows students to process information quickly, revisit lessons easily, and strengthen retention. Second, TikTok significantly increases students' motivation and engagement, as its user-friendly and familiar interface



nterface makes learning more enjoyable and accessible. Third, while students acknowledged the benefits, they also reported challenges, such as distractions from non-academic content and the limited depth of learning provided by short videos.

Overall, the study concludes that TikTok is a valuable supplementary learning tool that can support EFL instruction and improve students' comprehension when integrated purposefully. However, it should not replace traditional classroom instruction, especially for complex language topics requiring deeper explanation. TikTok-based microlearning is most effective when used in combination with structured guidance from lecturers and additional learning activities.

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