

STUDENT-GENERATED TIKTOK MICROLEARNING AS A PERFORMANCE-BASED DIGITAL ASSESSMENT FOR VOCABULARY RETENTION AMONG EFL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

The integration of social media into English language teaching has created new opportunities for technology-enhanced learning and assessment. Although previous studies have extensively investigated TikTok as a learning medium, limited attention has been given to its role as a performance-based digital assessment, particularly through student-generated microlearning activities. This study aimed to explore how student-generated TikTok microlearning was implemented as a performance-based digital assessment to enhance vocabulary retention among EFL learners and how students perceived its role in supporting vocabulary learning. A qualitative case study was conducted involving junior high school EFL learners. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis of students' TikTok video projects and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. The findings revealed two major themes. First, student-generated TikTok microlearning functioned as an authentic performance-based digital assessment by promoting active learner engagement, authentic language performance, collaborative learning, and meaningful feedback throughout the video production process. Second, students perceived that the repeated practice of writing scripts, rehearsing dialogues, recording videos, and using vocabulary in meaningful communicative contexts supported their vocabulary retention and increased their confidence in using English vocabulary. Rather than demonstrating statistically measurable vocabulary improvement, the findings provide qualitative evidence of the learning processes and learner experiences through which vocabulary retention was supported during student-generated TikTok microlearning activities. This study contributes to the development of digital assessment in English language teaching by proposing student-generated TikTok microlearning as a pedagogically meaningful model of performance-based digital assessment that integrates authentic assessment, student-generated content, and microlearning to support vocabulary learning.

Keywords: Tiktok Microlearning, Performance-Based Assessment, Digital Assessment, Vocabulary Retention, EFL Learners.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Vocabulary mastery is one of the most important components in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because it supports students' ability to communicate effectively in speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Akramy et al., 2022). Ideally, EFL learners are expected not only to understand the meanings of vocabulary but also to retain and use it appropriately in real communication contexts (Quoc & Van, 2023). However, many EFL students still experience difficulties retaining vocabulary for long-term use because vocabulary learning often lacks meaningful practice and repeated exposure (Haruka, SHINDO, 2022). Students often forget newly learned words shortly after classroom activities because vocabulary learning is commonly limited to memorization, translation exercises, and textbook-based instruction (Hill, 2022). As a result, vocabulary learning frequently becomes monotonous and less meaningful for students because they rarely use

vocabulary in authentic communication activities (Teng & Teng, 2023).

This phenomenon is also evident in Indonesian EFL classrooms, where students tend to have passive learning experiences during vocabulary instruction and depend heavily on teacher explanations (Patra et al., 2022). Many students are reluctant to actively use vocabulary in communication because they lack confidence and meaningful opportunities to practice English authentically (Aedo & Millafilo, 2022). In addition, traditional vocabulary assessment is still dominated by written tests that mainly measure short-term memorization rather than students' actual ability to apply vocabulary in contextual communication (Nourdad & Banagozar, 2022). Consequently, students may achieve satisfactory scores in tests but still struggle to retain and use vocabulary effectively in real-life interactions (Teng & Teng, 2023).

Several previous studies support this issue. Patra (2022) found that Indonesian EFL students frequently experience difficulties in vocabulary recall because classroom learning activities are repetitive and less engaging (Patra et al., 2022). Similarly, Maryam Zakian (2022) reported that many EFL learners quickly forget vocabulary due to limited exposure and insufficient contextual practice (Zakian et al., 2022). Furthermore, Nation (2024) emphasizes that vocabulary retention requires repeated exposure and meaningful use of vocabulary in authentic situations rather than isolated memorization activities (Nation, 2024). This indicates that traditional approaches to vocabulary learning may not sufficiently support long-term vocabulary retention among EFL learners (Pérez-serrano et al., 2022).

In recent years, the rapid development of digital technology and social media has significantly influenced students' learning habits and communication styles (Panmei & Waluyo, 2023). One of the most popular social media platforms among students today is TikTok. TikTok is a short-video platform that allows users to create creative videos integrated with music, captions, visual effects, and interactive features (Cahyani et al., 2025). Due to its engaging and interactive format, TikTok has attracted attention in educational contexts, particularly in language learning. TikTok supports microlearning practices, which refer to short and focused learning activities designed to improve students' understanding and retention of information (Tan et al., 2022).

Although TikTok has attracted increasing attention in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, existing studies have predominantly examined it as an instructional medium for improving learners' motivation, engagement, pronunciation, speaking ability, or vocabulary learning (Tan et al., 2022). While these studies consistently report positive pedagogical outcomes, they conceptualize TikTok primarily as a learning platform rather than as an assessment environment. Consequently, the potential of TikTok to support authentic evidence of students' language performance has received limited scholarly attention (Zein et al., 2024).

Furthermore, previous studies reveal both conceptual and methodological limitations. Conceptually, research has largely emphasized learning outcomes such as engagement, motivation, or vocabulary achievement, with insufficient attention to the principles of performance-based assessment, including authentic task completion, contextual language use, learner agency, and multidimensional demonstration of competence (Santana & Aguirre, 2024). Methodologically, many studies have adopted experimental or survey-based approaches that evaluate effectiveness through vocabulary tests or perception questionnaires (Alghameeti, 2022). Although these designs provide evidence of learning gains, they offer limited understanding of how students experience the assessment process, how teachers implement authentic digital assessment, and how digital performance tasks generate evidence of vocabulary retention in real classroom contexts (Nourdad & Banagozar, 2022).

Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by shifting the focus from TikTok as an instructional tool to TikTok as a performance-based digital assessment. Rather than investigating whether TikTok enhances vocabulary learning alone, this study explores how student-generated TikTok microlearning functions as an authentic assessment through which learners demonstrate vocabulary mastery, contextual language use, creativity, communication, and repeated vocabulary practice. Employing a qualitative case study enables an in-depth examination of assessment implementation and learners' experiences, thereby extending current scholarship on performance-based digital assessment beyond technology integration toward a richer understanding of authentic assessment in EFL classrooms.

This study is important because today's students are highly connected to digital technology and social media platforms (Bast, 2021). Therefore, English language assessment practices also need to adapt to students' digital learning environments and preferences (Tan et al., 2021). Investigating TikTok microlearning as a performance-based digital assessment is relevant because it may provide a more engaging, authentic, and student-centered approach to vocabulary learning and assessment (Tan et al., 2022). Furthermore, this study may help teachers move beyond traditional vocabulary testing by integrating creative digital assessment practices into EFL classrooms (Antequera, 2021).

Based on these issues, this study aims to explore the implementation of student-generated TikTok microlearning as a performance-based digital assessment and to investigate students' perceptions regarding its role in enhancing vocabulary retention among EFL learners. Specifically, this study focuses on how TikTok-based assessment activities are conducted in the classroom and how students experience the learning and assessment process.

This study is expected to provide both practical and academic contributions. Practically, the findings may help English teachers develop more innovative and engaging vocabulary assessment strategies using digital media. The study may also support students in developing vocabulary retention through authentic and enjoyable learning activities. For educational institutions, this study may provide insights into integrating technology-based assessment into English language learning (Santos & Marques, 2021). Academically, this study is expected to contribute to the growing literature on digital assessment, microlearning, TikTok-based learning, and vocabulary retention in EFL contexts, particularly in Indonesian secondary school settings.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design (Yin, 2018). A qualitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and practices within their natural learning environment (Braun et al., 2025). A case study design was considered appropriate because the study focused on a specific educational phenomenon occurring within a particular classroom context (Oranga & Matere, 2023).

The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 6 Watampone, Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language. The research site was selected purposively because the school had incorporated digital learning activities into English language instruction, providing a relevant context for examining technology-based assessment practices. The participants consisted of one English teacher and twenty students from one EFL classroom. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who were directly involved in the TikTok microlearning activities. The English teacher was responsible for designing and

implementing the assessment tasks, while the students actively participated in creating TikTok-based vocabulary projects. As students were already familiar with social media applications, particularly TikTok, they represented an appropriate group for investigating the use of digital microlearning as a performance-based assessment in vocabulary learning.

To obtain comprehensive data, this study employed three data collection techniques: classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis (Lim, 2025). The instruments were developed based on the objectives of the study and the conceptual framework underpinning this research, namely performance-based digital assessment, student-generated content, microlearning, and vocabulary retention. The observation checklist focused on students' engagement, vocabulary use, repeated practice, collaboration, and authentic performance during TikTok-based learning activities (Fischer & Taltekin, 2023). The interview guide was designed to explore students' learning experiences, perceptions, benefits, and challenges regarding the implementation of student-generated TikTok microlearning as a performance-based digital assessment (Lim, 2025)(Braun et al., 2025). The document analysis checklist was used to examine students' TikTok videos, particularly their vocabulary accuracy, contextual language use, pronunciation, creativity, and communication. The analysis focused on identifying evidence of vocabulary use, pronunciation practice, contextual language application, creativity, and communicative performance demonstrated in students' digital products.

The data collection process was carried out in several stages. First, permission was obtained from the school, and coordination was conducted with the English teacher regarding the implementation schedule of the TikTok microlearning activities. Before data collection, observation protocols, interview guidelines, and documentation instruments were prepared. The teacher then introduced the TikTok-based vocabulary assessment project and explained the assessment criteria to the students. Students were assigned to create short TikTok videos incorporating target vocabulary through activities such as vocabulary explanations, pronunciation demonstrations, dialogues, storytelling, and contextual communication tasks. During the implementation process, classroom observations were conducted to document students' participation, interaction, and engagement in the learning activities. After the completion of the projects, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected students and the teacher to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perceptions of the assessment activities. All collected data, including observation notes, interview transcripts, and students' digital projects, were subsequently organized and prepared for analysis.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework proposed by Braun & Clarke, (2008). The analysis involved several stages, including familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. The researcher repeatedly reviewed observation notes, interview transcripts, and students' TikTok projects to gain a comprehensive understanding of the dataset. Meaningful data segments related to vocabulary retention, engagement, creativity, assessment experiences, and perceptions of TikTok-based learning were then coded systematically. Similar codes were grouped into broader categories and developed into themes that represented recurring patterns across the data. Finally, the identified themes were interpreted to explain how student-generated TikTok microlearning served as a performance-based digital assessment and how students perceived its contribution to vocabulary retention in the EFL classroom.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, methodological triangulation was employed by collecting data from multiple sources, including classroom observations, semi-

structured interviews, and document analysis of students' TikTok video projects. The use of these complementary data sources enabled the researchers to compare and corroborate the findings, thereby strengthening the credibility of the interpretations. Furthermore, detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, learning activities, and data analysis procedures are provided to support the transferability of the findings. Throughout the analysis, emerging themes were continuously compared across the three data sources to ensure consistency and accurately represent participants' experiences (Nowell et al., 2017).

FINDINGS

The data obtained from classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis revealed four major themes regarding the implementation of student-generated TikTok microlearning as a performance-based digital assessment in EFL vocabulary learning: (1) increased student engagement and participation, (2) vocabulary retention through repeated and contextualized use, (3) authentic demonstration of vocabulary mastery through digital performance, and (4) challenges in pronunciation, confidence, and technology.

Main Theme Subtheme Empirical Evidence

Implementation of Student-Generated TikTok Microlearning as a Performance-Based Digital Assessment Students' engagement and participation Classroom observations showed active participation during script writing, rehearsals, and video production. Interview responses indicated that students were more motivated and actively collaborated throughout the learning activities.

Authentic demonstration of vocabulary mastery Analysis of students' TikTok videos demonstrated authentic vocabulary use through dialogues, storytelling, pronunciation practice, and communicative performances.

Challenges during assessment implementation Observation and interview data identified several challenges, including pronunciation difficulties, limited confidence, technical issues during video editing, and internet connectivity.

Vocabulary Retention through Student-Generated TikTok Microlearning Repeated vocabulary practice Observation, interview, and document analysis consistently showed that students repeatedly rehearsed, recorded, and revised their videos, resulting in repeated exposure to target vocabulary.

Meaningful contextual vocabulary use Students applied vocabulary in dialogues, role plays, and storytelling activities. Classroom observations and document analysis demonstrated that vocabulary was used appropriately within meaningful communicative contexts.

Students' perceived improvement in vocabulary retention Interview responses suggested that students felt more confident in remembering and using vocabulary after completing the TikTok project. Observation and document analysis also reflected improved vocabulary use during subsequent classroom activities and in the final video products.

Implementation of Student-Generated TikTok Microlearning as a Performance-Based Digital Assessment

Students' Engagement and Participation

The first theme emerging from the data was students' engagement and participation during the implementation of student-generated TikTok microlearning as a performance-based digital assessment. The findings revealed that most students actively participated in various stages of the project, including planning video content, practicing vocabulary, recording videos, and collaborating with peers. Observation data showed that students

demonstrated enthusiasm throughout the learning process and were willing to engage in classroom discussions related to the TikTok project. Several students explained that the activity was different from their usual English lessons and made vocabulary learning more enjoyable. Students reported that they enjoyed creating videos, working with friends, and using a social media platform that was already familiar to them.

“I felt excited because English is my favorite subject. I also like watching English videos on TikTok.” (S1)

“Usually I do not really like English, but this activity was fun.” (S3)

“TikTok videos because they are more enjoyable.” (S5)

Students further explained that creating videos made English learning less monotonous compared to traditional vocabulary exercises. Even students who initially had little interest in English became more involved because the activity allowed them to use technology and creativity during the learning process. The teacher interview also confirmed that students responded positively to the project. According to the teacher, students who were usually passive during English lessons became more active and motivated when participating in the TikTok project.

“Most students responded positively. They looked excited because the activity was different from the usual written assignments.” (Teacher)

Observation data additionally showed that students actively discussed ideas with peers, shared responsibilities during recording, and participated in classroom interactions throughout the project implementation. Overall, the findings indicate that TikTok-based assessment increased students’ engagement, participation, and motivation in vocabulary learning activities.

Authentic Demonstration of Vocabulary Mastery through Digital Performance

The second theme emerging from the data was the authentic demonstration of vocabulary mastery through digital performance. The findings revealed that TikTok videos provided opportunities for students to demonstrate vocabulary knowledge through meaningful communication rather than traditional written tests.

Document analysis showed that students successfully integrated vocabulary into dialogues, storytelling activities, and situational conversations. Students demonstrated vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, communication skills, and creativity simultaneously during their video performances. Student videos showed varying levels of achievement. Some students demonstrated accurate vocabulary use, clear communication, and creative content development. Others experienced pronunciation difficulties and occasional hesitation; however, they were still able to communicate their intended messages effectively. The teacher explained that assessment focused on students’ ability to use vocabulary meaningfully in communication rather than simply memorizing vocabulary items.

“I focused more on students’ ability to use vocabulary meaningfully rather than on perfect grammar.” (Teacher)

Students also perceived the assessment as different from conventional vocabulary tests.

“I had to use English actively, not just answer questions.” (S1)

“I had to speak English instead of only writing answers.” (S2)

These findings suggest that TikTok functioned as a performance-based digital assessment by allowing students to demonstrate vocabulary mastery through authentic communicative performances.

Challenges in Implementing TikTok-Based Assessment

The fourth theme identified from the data was challenges experienced during the implementation of TikTok microlearning. The findings revealed that pronunciation difficulties, low confidence, and technological issues were the most common challenges encountered by students. Several students admitted that they felt nervous when speaking English in front of the camera. Some were afraid of making mistakes in pronunciation and worried about how others would evaluate their performance.

“I was worried because English is difficult for me.” (S4)

“I was shy and afraid of making mistakes.” (S4)

“Sometimes I forgot the pronunciation.” (S2)

The teacher also identified pronunciation difficulties and low confidence as major obstacles during the project.

“The main challenges were pronunciation difficulties, lack of confidence, and technical problems.” (Teacher)

Observation data supported these findings, showing that some students needed multiple recording attempts before completing their videos. Several students also experienced difficulties related to internet access and video editing skills. Despite these challenges, students generally completed the project successfully with support from peers and guidance from the teacher.

Overall, the findings indicate that although TikTok-based assessment provided numerous benefits, successful implementation required continuous teacher support, peer collaboration, and technological assistance.

Vocabulary Retention through Student-Generated TikTok Microlearning

The second major theme explores how student-generated TikTok microlearning contributed to students' vocabulary retention throughout the implementation of the performance-based digital assessment. Analysis of classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and students' TikTok video projects revealed three interrelated subthemes: repeated vocabulary practice, meaningful contextual vocabulary use, and students' perceived improvement in vocabulary retention. These findings consistently emerged across the three data sources and illustrate how the assessment activities supported students' vocabulary learning.

Repeated Vocabulary Practice

Interview data revealed that repeated vocabulary practice was one of the most prominent learning experiences reported by students during the TikTok project. Throughout the assessment process, students repeatedly rehearsed dialogues, revised scripts, practiced pronunciation, and recorded multiple versions of their videos before submitting the final product. These activities required students to retrieve and reuse the target vocabulary several times, making vocabulary practice an integral part of the assessment process rather than a separate learning activity. Classroom observations confirmed that students continuously practiced pronunciation and vocabulary while discussing scripts with their group members. During the recording sessions, many students repeated sentences several times until they felt confident with their pronunciation and vocabulary use. Peer discussions also encouraged students to provide feedback and correct one another's vocabulary choices before recording the final video. Document analysis further supported these findings. Several TikTok videos showed evidence of revision and improvement, particularly in pronunciation accuracy, vocabulary selection, and sentence construction. The final video products generally demonstrated greater fluency and confidence than students initially displayed during classroom preparation activities.

Meaningful Contextual Vocabulary Use

The findings also demonstrated that students retained vocabulary more effectively when they used it in meaningful communication rather than memorizing isolated word lists. During the TikTok project, students created dialogues, role plays, and short storytelling videos that required them to apply target vocabulary in authentic situations related to everyday communication.

Observation data showed that students actively discussed appropriate vocabulary for different communicative situations before writing their scripts. Rather than simply translating individual words, they negotiated meanings, selected appropriate expressions, and organized vocabulary into complete conversations. These collaborative discussions were consistently observed during script preparation and rehearsal sessions. Document analysis likewise revealed that students incorporated target vocabulary into communicative contexts within their TikTok videos. Most video projects presented vocabulary through conversations, role-playing activities, or storytelling tasks, allowing students to demonstrate their understanding of vocabulary meaning and usage simultaneously. Interview responses similarly indicated that students considered vocabulary easier to remember when it was learned through dialogues and storytelling activities instead of traditional memorization. Students reported that using vocabulary in realistic communication helped them understand both the meaning and appropriate context of the words they learned during the project.

Taken together, the three data sources consistently demonstrated that contextual vocabulary use became an important component of students' vocabulary learning during the implementation of the TikTok-based assessment.

Students' Perceived Improvement in Vocabulary Retention

Interview findings further suggested that students perceived noticeable improvement in their ability to remember and use English vocabulary after completing the TikTok project. Most participants reported that preparing scripts, rehearsing dialogues, collaborating with peers, and recording videos repeatedly helped them recall vocabulary more easily during classroom activities. Students also explained that vocabulary learned during the project remained easier to remember because it had been practiced continuously throughout the assessment process. Rather than relying solely on memorization, students associated vocabulary with specific conversations, situations, and video performances, making recall more meaningful during subsequent learning activities.

These perceptions were supported by classroom observations, which showed that many students demonstrated greater confidence when using previously learned vocabulary during classroom discussions following the completion of the TikTok project. Students were observed using target vocabulary more spontaneously and with fewer prompts from the teacher compared to the beginning of the learning activities. Document analysis also reflected this improvement. Students' final TikTok videos generally showed more accurate vocabulary use, clearer pronunciation, and more appropriate contextual expressions than those observed during the initial stages of the project.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the growing body of research on technology-enhanced assessment by conceptualizing student-generated TikTok microlearning as a performance-based digital assessment, rather than merely as a social media platform or instructional medium for English language learning. The findings demonstrate that the educational value of TikTok lies not in the technology itself, but in the pedagogical design that enables learners to actively construct knowledge, demonstrate vocabulary mastery through authentic communicative performances, and engage in continuous vocabulary retrieval during

meaningful learning activities. By integrating authentic assessment, student-generated content, and microlearning into a single instructional framework, this study extends current discussions on digital assessment in EFL education. The study also provides theoretical implications for English language teaching by illustrating how performance-based assessment, student-generated content, retrieval practice, and sociocultural learning can be integrated to explain vocabulary learning and retention in digitally mediated environments. Rather than viewing assessment solely as a mechanism for measuring learning outcomes, the findings support the perspective that assessment can simultaneously function as a learning process that promotes active participation, collaboration, contextual language use, and sustained vocabulary development. This conceptual integration offers an alternative framework for designing technology-enhanced assessment in contemporary EFL classrooms.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that EFL teachers may incorporate student-generated TikTok microlearning as an authentic assessment strategy that encourages learners to demonstrate vocabulary knowledge through meaningful communication instead of relying primarily on traditional written vocabulary tests. The integration of short-video production into classroom assessment provides opportunities for students to develop vocabulary, pronunciation, communication skills, creativity, and collaborative learning simultaneously while increasing learner engagement and motivation. However, successful implementation requires appropriate pedagogical planning, continuous teacher feedback, adequate technological support, and a classroom environment that encourages students to participate confidently in authentic language production.

This study is limited by its qualitative design and relatively small number of participants within a single educational context. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted within the scope of this research setting. Future studies are encouraged to examine the implementation of student-generated TikTok microlearning across different educational levels and cultural contexts using mixed-methods or experimental designs. Further research may also investigate its long-term effects on vocabulary retention, speaking performance, learner autonomy, and other dimensions of English language development to further refine the conceptual model of performance-based digital assessment proposed in this study.

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