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Breaking the Grammar Barrier: Boosting EFL Motivation with Microlearning Videos

***[1]Syahrini Sovia, [1]Jamilah**

[1]Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

***Correspondence:**
syahrinisovia.2023@student.uny.ac.id

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Abstract

Grammar learning in EFL settings is often seen as difficult because it involves abstract rules that need repeated practice and meaningful context to master. Many students lack motivation to learn grammar, which harms their ability to use grammatical structures correctly. Microlearning videos, which provide short, focused, visually engaging lessons, are effective in making grammar learning more accessible and motivating by offering contextualized examples and immediate reinforcement. Therefore, this study examined how well microlearning videos improve eighth-grade students' motivation and grammar skills. A quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design was carried out at SMPIT Al-Masykar Bina Insani with 55 students (32 males, 23 females), divided into an experimental group (n=32, using microlearning videos) and a control group (n=23, using textbooks). Grammar tests (25 multiple-choice questions) and a motivation questionnaire (16 items measuring intrinsic and extrinsic motivation) were given and analyzed using SPSS 26.0 (descriptive statistics and MANOVA). Results showed significant differences between the groups in both grammar scores (M=69.13 vs 55.48, $p<.05$) and motivation levels. The experimental group experienced increased intrinsic motivation in communication, social, and skill areas, and higher extrinsic motivation in knowledge and achievement, while the control group's motivation slightly decreased. These results suggest that microlearning videos are an effective alternative to traditional grammar teaching, supporting both language skills and motivation in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: Grammar skills, microlearning-based videos, motivation, EFL students, English language learning.

INTRODUCTION

Many EFL learners find grammar difficult to master because its rules are highly complex, interconnected, and often abstract, making understanding how these forms function in real communication (Alhaysony & Alhaisoni, 2017; Komara & Tiarsiwi, 2021). This difficulty is even more evident among junior high school students, who are still developing the cognitive and analytical skills needed to recognize grammatical patterns, compare forms, and transfer learned rules into their language use (Amalia et al., 2021; Andriani et al., 2021; Zannah et al., 2023). Grammatical accuracy, as emphasized by Pawlak

(2021), relies not only on understanding rules but also on consistent practice and attention, which can be overwhelming for learners at this stage. When students repeatedly struggle to apply grammar correctly, they often feel frustrated and unsuccessful, gradually decreasing their willingness to continue working on grammar tasks (Lestari, 2023). Over time, this lack of persistence results in lower motivation. As motivation declines, students tend to practice less, hindering their ability to internalize grammatical structures (Nevisi & Farhani, 2022; Alharbi & Saaty, 2022). These conditions highlight the need for approaches that help students understand grammatical forms and motivate them to practice and actively use grammar.

Motivation is widely recognized as a key factor in second and foreign language learning success. According to Socio-Educational Model by Gardner (1985), motivation is a combination of effort, desire to learn the language, and positive attitudes toward the learning environment. This model identifies two main orientations: integrative motivation, which reflects a learner's desire to become part of the target language community, and instrumental motivation, which involves practical goals like academic success or career growth. Supporting this perspective, Dong et al. (2022) and Othman (2024) emphasize that motivated learners put in more effort, persevere through difficult tasks, and pay closer attention to language patterns, resulting in higher proficiency and more accurate language use. Building on Gardner's work, Dörnyei (2005) introduced the L2 Motivational Self System, which redefines motivation through a self-driven framework consisting of three elements: (1) the Ideal L2 Self, or the learner's vision of themselves as a confident and successful language user, acting as a strong internal motivator; (2) the Ought-to L2 Self, representing perceived external pressures and expectations; and (3) the L2 Learning Experience, which encompasses learners' immediate attitudes toward classroom activities, tasks, and the overall learning environment. Therefore, increasing motivation is essential for maintaining active engagement and improving the accuracy and fluency of grammatical use over time.

Given the strong link between motivation and grammar achievement, maintaining learners' motivation is crucial, especially for junior high students who often see grammar as dull and disconnected from meaningful communication (Iqbal et al., 2017; Maulidia & Sholah, 2023). Keeping motivation in grammar learning requires teaching methods that are accurate but also engaging and meaningful in context. The microlearning approach offers a promising solution because it presents learning materials in short, focused segments that are easier to understand and remember (Fitria, 2022; Hosseini et al., 2020; Al-Zahrani, 2024). This method combines visuals, narration, and real-life examples, making grammar rules clearer and more relevant for learners. O'Mahony (2014) and Liu (2024) claim that its interactive and visually appealing format grabs learners' attention and maintains their motivation by reducing cognitive overload and creating a sense of achievement with each segment completed. For junior high students, who usually have shorter attention spans and need more stimulating input, microlearning can offer immediate reinforcement and promote consistent practice (Nitiasih et al., 2024). By blending accessible content with motivational features, microlearning videos will likely help learners internalize grammatical structures more effectively while staying engaged throughout the learning process.

Recent studies have consistently highlighted the potential of microlearning to improve language learning outcomes across various educational settings. Fitria (2022) and Ghafar et al. (2023) point out that microlearning provides flexibility and accessibility,

offering lessons in short, focused segments through different digital media such as videos, gamification, infographics, and mobile apps. This approach supports diverse learning styles, boosts understanding and retention, and makes content easy to update. However, both studies note its limitations for complex or highly detailed material. Divining content into small units may impede deep understanding and require teachers to invest extra time and resources to create suitable materials. Addressing motivational and cognitive factors, Hosseini et al. (2020) found that flipped microlearning classrooms improved EFL learners' self-regulation, autonomy, and active participation, while Chen and Sitthiworachart (2023) reported increased motivation and satisfaction in vocabulary learning through mobile microlearning apps.

Similar positive findings are evident in Nitiasih et al. (2023), who demonstrated that microlearning-based videos effectively sustain junior high school students' memory retention in English learning. At the higher education level, the Flipped Mobile-Based Microlearning (FMM) approach improved accessibility, engagement, knowledge retention, and academic performance (Enhancing Postgraduate Students' Learning Outcomes study). Furthermore, a systematic review and meta-analysis by Prasittichok and Smithsarakarn (2024) confirmed the significant effectiveness of microlearning in improving EFL students' speaking skills compared to traditional methods. These studies highlight microlearning's benefits in promoting learner motivation, engagement, and language proficiency, showing its usefulness across various levels and language skills, including grammar learning.

Despite increasing evidence of microlearning's benefits for language learning, its use in grammar instruction remains underexplored, especially at the junior high school level where students often struggle with grammatical accuracy due to low motivation and limited retention. Most existing studies focus on vocabulary acquisition, speaking skills, or general engagement, with little attention given to grammar learning as a specific focus. Additionally, while previous research has emphasized the motivational potential of microlearning, few studies have looked at its combined effects on motivation and grammar mastery within a single intervention, particularly in EFL secondary school contexts. To address these gaps, this study introduces microlearning-based videos specifically designed to teach the simple past tense and adverbs of time in narrative texts, aiming to boost students' motivation and grammar skills simultaneously. Therefore, the study investigates how effective microlearning-based videos are in enhancing students' motivation and grammar ability in learning grammar at SMPIT Al-Masykar Bina Insani, guided by these research questions: (1) How effective are microlearning-based videos in improving students' motivation to learn grammar? Moreover, (2) How effectively are microlearning-based videos enhancing students' grammar skills? The study hypothesizes that microlearning-based videos significantly impact both students' motivation and their ability to learn grammar.

METHOD

This study used a quasi-experimental research design with a pre-test–post-test control group setup. A quasi-experimental approach fits classroom research where random assignment of individual students is impossible, so intact classes are used for practical and ethical reasons (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Cohen et al., 2018). Two groups participated: the experimental group, which received treatment through microlearning-based videos, and the control group, which was taught using traditional methods like English textbooks. The research was carried out in three stages: pre-test, treatment, and post-test. The pre-test

assessed students' initial grammar skills and motivation, while the post-test measured changes after the treatment. The study was conducted at a private junior high school in Serang, Banten, during the first semester of the 2024–2025 academic year (August–September 2024). The population included all eighth-grade students at SMPIT Al-Masykar Bina Insani, totaling 55 students from two classes: Class 8A with 23 female students and Class 8B with 32 male students. Cluster random sampling was used, as recommended by Gay et al. (2012), which involves choosing intact groups rather than individuals when the groups are similar. Both classes were in the same grade, followed the same curriculum, and had the same teacher. Based on class size, Class 8A was designated as the control group, and Class 8B as the experimental group.

Two instruments were utilized: a grammar test and a motivation questionnaire. The grammar test, designed by the researcher based on the school's English modules and textbooks, comprised 25 multiple-choice questions focusing on the simple past tense and adverbs of time. Students' scores were categorized according to Nurgiyantoro's (2017) rubric: very good (75.6–100), good (58.6–75.5), fair (41.6–58.5), poor (24.6–41.5), and very poor (0–24.5). The motivation questionnaire, adapted from Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), included 16 items measuring intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (8 items each). Motivation levels were classified following Wimolmas (2013): high (3.68–5.00), moderate (2.34–3.67), and low (1.00–2.33). To ensure content validity, the instruments were reviewed by Ms. Sari Hidayati, M.A., Ph.D., and a pilot test was performed with eighth-grade students from MTs KMI Pematang Cilurah, who were not part of the study sample. The reliability of the grammar test was determined using the KR-20 formula ($\alpha = 0.83$), and the motivation questionnaire's reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.87$), both indicating high internal consistency (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2012).

The intervention involved three sessions, each lasting 70 minutes. The experimental group studied grammar through microlearning-based videos designed with short segments (3–5 minutes each) featuring visuals, narration, and contextualized examples relevant to narrative texts, following the principles of Mayer's (2009) Multimedia Learning Theory, which promotes the use of dual coding (verbal and visual input) to improve understanding and retention. Each session included three stages: (1) Planning, where learning objectives were introduced and prior knowledge was activated; (2) During activities, students watched videos, discussed examples, and completed brief interactive exercises; and (3) Reflection and feedback, where the teacher clarified misconceptions and provided corrective feedback, aligned with active learning principles (Prince, 2004). The control group received instruction on the same grammar topics using traditional methods through teacher explanations and textbook exercises. The same instructor taught both groups to ensure consistency.

Ethical considerations included obtaining approval from the school administration, and informed consent was secured from students and their parents. Participants were assured that their data would remain confidential and would be used only for research purposes. Additionally, data were analyzed using SPSS 26.0. Descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum) were computed. Before hypothesis testing, the assumptions of normality (Kolmogorov–Smirnov test) and homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices (Box's M test) were checked, as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was then

conducted to examine the effects of microlearning-based videos on students' motivation and grammar ability. The alternative hypotheses were: Ha1 (microlearning-based videos significantly influence students' motivation to learn grammar) and Ha2 (microlearning-based videos significantly influence students' grammar ability). The significance level was set at $p < .05$, and effect sizes (η^2) were calculated to assess the practical significance of the results (Cohen, 1988).

FINDINGS

This section presents the study's findings during the first semester of the 2024–2025 academic year at a private junior high school. Class VIII A, with 23 students, served as the control group, while Class VIII B, with 32 students, served as the experimental group. The experimental group received instruction through microlearning-based videos to examine their effect on students' motivation and grammar skills, whereas the control group was taught using traditional methods. The findings are based on data from grammar tests, which assessed students' grammar skills, and motivation questionnaires, which evaluated their learning motivation, administered before and after the treatment. The grammar test results were analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS 26.0, including calculating the mean, median, mode, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum scores for both groups. Similarly, the motivation questionnaire scores were analyzed to determine the mean scores of the control and experimental groups. The following tables display the students' grammar test scores before and after the intervention.

Table 1. The mean score of the grammar test in the pre-test for the two groups

Group	N	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Range	Min	Max
Experimental	32	45.00	44.00	44	18.429	72	12	84
Control	23	49.39	44.00	24	22.934	72	16	88

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the grammar pre-test for both the experimental and control groups. The control group obtained a slightly higher mean score (49.39) compared to the experimental group (45.00), indicating that, before the treatment, the control group had marginally better grammar ability. The median scores were the same (44.00) for both groups, suggesting that half of the students in each group scored below or above this value. The mode, or most frequently occurring score, differed between the groups: 44 in the experimental group and 24 in the control group, showing greater variability in the latter's score distribution. Regarding score spread, the control group showed a higher standard deviation (22.934) than the experimental group (18.429), indicating more variability in students' grammar performance within the control class. However, both groups had the same range of 72 points, with the control group scoring between 16 and 88, while the experimental group scored between 12 and 84. These results confirm that the two groups had relatively comparable grammar ability levels before the intervention, with no substantial differences that could bias the subsequent treatment results.

Table 2. The mean scores of the grammar test in the post-test for both groups

Group	N	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Range	Min	Max
Experimental	32	69.13	72.00	80	18.987	72	28	100
Control	23	55.48	52.00	32	19.383	60	32	92

Table 2 shows the grammar post-test's descriptive statistics for the experimental and control groups. The experimental group achieved a noticeably higher mean score (69.13)

than the control group (55.48), indicating greater improvement in grammar ability after the intervention. The median score was also higher in the experimental group (72.00) than in the control group (52.00), suggesting that at least half of the students in the experimental class scored above 70. In contrast, half of the control group scored below 52. The mode further supports this trend, with the most frequent score in the experimental group being 80, compared to 32 in the control group. The standard deviations were similar (18.987 for the experimental group and 19.383 for the control group), indicating comparable variability in both groups' post-test scores. However, the experimental group had a slightly wider range (72 points), scoring between 28 and 100, whereas the control group ranged from 32 to 92. These findings suggest that while both groups improved after the treatment, the experimental group demonstrated a substantially greater enhancement in grammar performance.

Table 3. The distribution of grammar test scores in the experimental and control groups

Range of Scores	Experimental Group				Control Group				Category
	Pre-Treatment		Post-Treatment		Pre-Treatment		Post-Treatment		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
75.6 - 100	2	6.2	15	47	5	21.7	4	17.39	Very Good
58.6 – 75.5	7	21.9	9	28.2	3	13	5	21.74	Good
41.6 – 58.5	8	25	4	12.5	4	17.4	7	30.43	Fair
24.6 – 41.5	11	34.4	4	12.5	7	30.4	7	30.43	Poor
0 – 24.5	4	12.5	0	0	4	17.4	0	0	Very Poor

Table 3 presents the distribution of grammar test scores in both the experimental and control groups before and after the treatment. In the experimental group, there was a significant improvement across all performance categories. Students in the "Very Good" category increased dramatically from 6.2% (2 students) in the pre-test to 47% (15 students) in the post-test, and those in the "Good" category rose from 21.9% (7 students) to 28.2% (9 students). At the same time, lower performance categories showed a substantial decrease: the "Poor" category dropped from 34.4% (11 students) to 12.5% (4 students), and the "Very Poor" category completely disappeared, decreasing from 12.5% (4 students) to 0%. The "Fair" category also decreased from 25% (8 students) to 12.5% (4 students), indicating that many students shifted to higher performance levels after receiving microlearning-based video instruction. In contrast, the control group showed relatively minor changes. The proportion of students in the "Very Good" category slightly decreased from 21.7% (5 students) to 17.39% (4 students), while the "Good" category improved modestly from 13% (3 students) to 21.74% (5 students). The "Fair" category increased from 17.4% (4 students) to 30.43% (7 students), whereas the "Poor" category remained unchanged at 30.43% (7 students). The "Very Poor" category dropped to 0%, showing minimal progress at the lowest level. These results indicate that while both groups experienced improvement, the experimental group demonstrated a more pronounced upward shift in performance, with a considerable reduction in lower categories and a significant increase in the higher categories, confirming the greater effectiveness of microlearning-based videos in improving grammar ability.

Table 4. The mean score of intrinsic motivation in the experimental and control groups

	Experimental Class	Control Class

Indicator	Pre-Treatment	Post-Treatment	Pre-Treatment	Post-Treatment
Communication	2.89	2.98	3.02	2.91
Social	3.25	3.27	3.35	3.17
Skill	3.27	3.42	3.36	3.22
Total	9.41	9.67	9.73	9,03

Table 4 shows that the intrinsic motivation scores of the experimental and control classes were measured before and after the treatment across three indicators: Communication, Social, and Skill. The experimental class showed a slight but consistent increase in all indicators. The Communication score improved from 2.89 to 2.98, the Social score rose slightly from 3.25 to 3.27, and the Skill score grew from 3.27 to 3.42. As a result, the total intrinsic motivation score increased from 9.41 to 9.67, indicating a positive change in students' intrinsic motivation after receiving microlearning-based video instruction. In contrast, the control class showed a slight decline in all indicators. The Communication score decreased from 3.02 to 2.91, the Social score dropped from 3.35 to 3.17, and the Skill score decreased from 3.36 to 3.22. Consequently, the total intrinsic motivation score declined from 9.73 to 9.03. These findings suggest that microlearning-based videos positively affected students' motivation by maintaining and slightly increasing it. In contrast, conventional teaching methods appeared to decrease students' intrinsic motivation over time.

Table 5. The mean score of extrinsic motivation in the experimental and control groups

	Experimental Class		Control Class	
Indicator	**Pre-Treatment**	**Post-Treatment**	**Pre-Treatment**	**Post-Treatment**
Knowledge	2.83	3.66	3.50	3.43
Education	3.40	3.09	2.90	2.88
Achievements	3.91	4.13	4.00	4.13
Total	10.14	10.88	10.04	10.44

Table 5 shows the extrinsic motivation scores of the experimental and control groups before and after the treatment. The experimental class showed a general increase in extrinsic motivation after using microlearning-based videos. The most significant improvement was in the Knowledge indicator, which rose from 2.83 to 3.66, showing that students became more motivated to learn grammar for knowledge acquisition. The Achievements indicator also increased from 3.91 to 4.13, indicating that students were more motivated by their desire to improve their performance. However, the Education indicator slightly decreased from 3.40 to 3.09, although the overall extrinsic motivation score improved from 10.14 to 10.88, reflecting a positive overall change. On the other hand, the control class showed minimal changes in extrinsic motivation. The Knowledge score dropped slightly from 3.50 to 3.43, the Education score decreased slightly from 2.90 to 2.88, while the Achievements score increased slightly from 4.00 to 4.13. As a result, the total extrinsic motivation score increased only slightly from 10.04 to 10.44. These results suggest that microlearning-based videos were more effective in boosting students' extrinsic motivation, especially in motivating students to gain knowledge and achieve better performance, compared to traditional teaching methods, which only caused minor changes.

DISCUSSION

This study showed that microlearning-based videos significantly enhanced students' grammar skills and motivation compared to traditional teaching methods. The experimental group made notable progress in grammar performance, with the mean score rising from 45.00 in the pre-test to 69.13 in the post-test, while the control group showed only a slight increase from 49.39 to 55.48. The distribution analysis supported these findings, as 47% of students in the experimental group achieved the "Very Good" category after the treatment, compared to just 17.39% in the control group. These results confirm that microlearning-based videos are more effective than traditional methods in improving grammar mastery among junior high school students. This finding aligns with previous research. Nitiasih et al. (2024) reported that microlearning-based videos effectively helped junior high school students retain English learning in memory. Similarly, Silalahi and Halimi (2020) found that using videos to teach the simple past tense to pre-secondary students in an informal English course led to positive learning outcomes. Dana et al. (2023) also concluded that microlearning-based English video materials created for junior high school students were of high quality and suitable for boosting students' language learning results. Collectively, these studies reinforce the potential of video-based microlearning as an effective teaching tool for grammar learning.

The improvement in grammar skills can be linked to the features of microlearning, which presents content in brief, focused segments that improve understanding and memory (Fitria, 2022; Ghafar et al., 2023; Shafiee, 2023; Nitiasih et al., 2024). According to Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning by Mayer's (2009), integrating visuals, narration, and relevant examples encourages dual coding (verbal and visual processing), which boosts comprehension and lessens cognitive overload. This theoretical view supports the current findings, as splitting grammar rules into smaller, manageable parts helps students process, remember, and apply grammatical knowledge more effectively. The results also align with Nitiasih et al. (2023), who highlighted that short, repeated exposure through microlearning videos enhances long-term memory retention, further clarifying the notable post-test improvements in grammar ability seen in the experimental group.

In terms of motivation, the experimental group showed a clear increase in intrinsic and extrinsic motivation after the intervention. For intrinsic motivation, indicators such as Communication and Skill demonstrated slight but consistent improvements, rising from 2.89 to 2.98 and 3.27 to 3.42, respectively, while the control group experienced declines in these areas. Similarly, the experimental group's extrinsic motivation increased significantly, especially in Knowledge and Achievements (Knowledge: 2.83 to 3.66; Achievements: 3.91 to 4.13). These findings support Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivational Self System, which highlights that engaging and meaningful learning experiences positively influence both the Ideal L2 Self (intrinsic motivation driven by a vision of oneself as a successful language user) and the Ought-to L2 Self (extrinsic motivation shaped by external expectations or achievement goals). The results also align with research on technology-enhanced and active learning; for example, Rezaei et al. (2025), Mohammed and Al-Hassan (2023), and Cabrera-Solano et al. (2020) suggest that interactive and active learning environments boost motivation by fostering a sense of autonomy and achievement, while Chen and Yang (2014) emphasize that technology-supported learning encourages positive attitudes and increased learner engagement.

This study's motivational impact of microlearning aligns with previous empirical evidence. Hosseini et al. (2020) found that flipped microlearning environments increased learner autonomy and engagement, while Chen and Sitthiworachart (2023) and Mostrady et al. (2024) reported that mobile microlearning applications boosted learners' motivation and satisfaction in vocabulary learning. The stronger motivation shown by the experimental group can be linked to the interactive and visually rich nature of microlearning, which makes grammar learning more engaging and meaningful. As O'Mahony (2014), Liu (2024), and Monib et al. (2024) argue, visually supported microlearning decreases cognitive overload. It promotes a sense of achievement after completing each small segment, encouraging learners to stick with their studies. This feature is especially important for junior high school students, who generally have shorter attention spans and need more stimulating input to stay focused and interested.

While this study offers insights into the effectiveness of microlearning-based videos in enhancing students' grammar skills and motivation, several limitations should be acknowledged. Conducted in a single school with two intact classes, the results may not apply to other settings. The focus on the simple past tense and adverbs of time within narrative texts limits its relevance to other grammatical structures, and the brief three-session intervention restricts conclusions about long-term impacts. The study relied solely on quantitative data, without qualitative evidence such as interviews or classroom observations that could have provided deeper insights, and it did not account for learner-specific factors like digital literacy or prior multimedia experience. Future research should involve larger, more diverse samples, use longer interventions with follow-up assessments, and examine other grammar topics or integrated skills. Employing mixed-method approaches and investigating how learner characteristics interact with microlearning-based instruction are also recommended to gain a more comprehensive understanding of its effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

This study found that microlearning-based videos effectively improved grammar skills and motivation among eighth-grade students. The experimental group showed a significant boost in grammar performance, with higher average scores and more students reaching better performance levels than the control group. The short, focused, and visually supported microlearning content helped students understand, remember, and use grammatical structures more effectively, especially when learning the simple past tense and adverbs of time. In terms of motivation, students in the experimental group experienced notable increases in both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, while the control group saw only small changes. These results suggest that microlearning-based videos can be a powerful alternative to traditional grammar lessons, offering middle school students a more engaging and supportive learning environment.

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