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TINY STEPS, GIANT LEAPS: THE PLACE OF MICRO-LEARNING IN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT
This study investigates the impact of microlearning on language and literature education at the university level, addressing a significant gap in existing research. The traditional approaches to teaching these subjects often lead to overwhelming experiences for students, hindering retention and engagement. This research explores how microlearning, defined as small, easily digestible learning units, can enhance student retention, creativity, and engagement in real classroom settings. Conducted over six weeks, the study involved 100 undergraduate students and 10 instructors across two English and literature courses. Participants engaged in daily microlearning tasks, such as analyzing poetry, practicing grammar, and experimenting with sentence structures, each designed to be completed within 10–15 minutes. Data collection included focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. The findings reveal that microlearning significantly enhances student retention and engagement while fostering creativity in linguistic tasks. However, challenges related to task coherence and content development were identified. This study underscores the transformative potential of microlearning in language and literature curricula, highlighting the need for careful implementation that is aligned with educational objectives. The results provide valuable insights for educators aiming to integrate microlearning effectively into their teaching practices.

Keywords: giant leaps; micro-learning; tiny steps

INTRODUCTION

Language is both a tool for communication and a vessel for cultural expression, creativity, and identity (Manz et al., 2024; Moser et al., 2024; Radvansky, 2021; Rafi & Fox, 2024; Ryan & Vansteenkiste, 2023). Its study encompasses an intricate interplay between rules and artistry, grammar, and imagination, making it one of the most dynamic areas of education (Gołda & Tomaszczyk, 2024; Kaufman & Beghetto, 2023; Zhang et al., 2024). However, for many learners, mastering language and literature can be daunting due to the vast array of vocabulary, syntactic structures, idiomatic expressions, and literary devices that need to be understood and applied. The traditional approach of teaching these elements in broad, comprehensive sessions often overwhelms learners and reduces retention, particularly in environments with limited resources or diverse learning capabilities (De Lorenzis et al., 2023; Ho et al., 2024; Kazemi & Ghoraishi, 2012).

In response to these challenges, microlearning has emerged as a promising educational approach. Microlearning, defined by Hug (2023) as "small units of learning designed to be consumed quickly and easily," focuses on breaking complex concepts into manageable chunks. This method reduces cognitive load, fosters engagement, and

enhances the learner's ability to absorb and apply knowledge by prioritizing clarity and focus. Micro-learning is a "bit-chew" approach to learning. The method has been widely embraced in various fields, such as professional training and digital education (Javorcik et al., 2023; Karlsen et al., 2023). However, its application to language and literature education is still underexplored.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to bridge the gap in language and literature education by integrating microlearning strategies. Despite the growing body of research on microlearning in corporate and digital education, its application to traditional classroom settings, particularly in language and literature, remains limited. This study aims to address this by demonstrating how microlearning can enhance student engagement, retention, and creativity in these subjects. By providing empirical evidence and insights into effective microlearning practices, this research contributes to the development of innovative educational frameworks that educators can adopt to improve learning outcomes in diverse classroom environments.

Creativity and rhythm are at the heart of language learning—a quality metaphorically captured in the phrase "the dance of words." Much like a dance, language requires technical mastery and an appreciation of flow, context, and adaptability. Every grammatical structure and literary device contributes to this dance, allowing learners to engage with texts in ways that resonate emotionally and intellectually. Integrating microlearning into language education could amplify this engagement, allowing learners to practice these components in focused, iterative ways that build confidence and skill over time (Choudhary & Pandita, 2024; Nowak et al., 2023).

Scholars such as Clark & Mayer (2023) have emphasized the importance of tailoring instructional design to cognitive science principles, arguing that learners retain more information when content is concise and relevant. Similarly, Aletta et al. (2024) advocate for focused practice in second language acquisition, suggesting that small, purposeful learning tasks produce better outcomes than broad, unfocused exposure. Despite such research, the potential of microlearning to transform the teaching of language and literature remains an underutilized opportunity that this study seeks to address.

While research on microlearning is abundant in fields like corporate training and e-learning, its application to language and literature—especially in traditional classroom settings—has not been sufficiently explored, and there is limited evidence on how microlearning impacts creativity, retention, and engagement in linguistic contexts. This paper aims to investigate how microlearning influences language retention and comprehension in students, assess the extent to which it fosters creativity in linguistic and literary tasks, and identify the challenges and limitations of implementing microlearning in language and literature education. Additionally, it seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of microlearning in enhancing student retention of linguistic concepts and literary techniques, explore its role in cultivating creativity among language learners, analyze barriers to its

implementation, and propose a framework for integrating microlearning into the classroom and digital language teaching environments.

This research aims to build upon existing studies that have explored microlearning in language and literature education, such as those conducted by Clark and Mayer (2016) and Ellis and Shintani (2014), which highlighted the effectiveness of concise instructional design. However, unlike these studies, which primarily focused on general educational outcomes, this research seeks to specifically investigate the nuanced effects of microlearning on student creativity, retention, and engagement in real classroom settings. By addressing these specific dimensions, this study hopes to contribute original insights into the integration of microlearning in language education, ultimately providing a more comprehensive understanding of its transformative potential.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to investigate the impact of microlearning on language and literature education. By delving into the experiences of both students and educators, the study aims to gain a deeper understanding of how microlearning affects key aspects such as retention, creativity, and engagement in real classroom environments.

The research is centered on two university-level English and literature courses. 100 undergraduate students and 10 instructors, chosen through purposive sampling, participated in the study to ensure a diverse range of linguistic and academic backgrounds. The microlearning modules consist of brief, focused tasks, such as analyzing a stanza of poetry, practicing specific grammatical structures, or experimenting with sentence rewrites in various literary styles. Each task is designed to be completed in 10 to 15 minutes, offering a manageable yet impactful learning experience. This approach emphasizes microlearning's practical, real-world applications in an academic setting, aiming to provide valuable insights for educators and learners alike.

Data collection methods include semi-structured interviews with educators to gather their perceptions of microlearning's effectiveness, focus group discussions with students to explore their experiences, and classroom observations to document interactions and responses to the modules. Additionally, students' outputs, such as written tasks and creative assignments, are analyzed to evaluate language skills and creativity development over time.

Thematic analysis is employed to identify recurring patterns and insights from the qualitative data. The findings are triangulated with classroom observations and student outputs to ensure validity and reliability. This methodology provides a nuanced understanding of how microlearning can be effectively integrated into language and literature education, highlighting its potential and challenges.

This section presents a detailed analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations, employing thematic analysis to identify patterns and key insights. The data analysis involved organizing all audio

recordings from interviews and focus group discussions, which were transcribed verbatim, and compiling field notes from classroom observations to create a comprehensive dataset. Using NVivo software, the data were coded into categories based on recurring ideas, concepts, and responses, and these codes were grouped into overarching themes aligned with the research questions. Triangulation was conducted to cross-verify findings from interviews, discussions, and observations, ensuring validity and reliability.

The analysis revealed key themes, including improved retention and comprehension, where students noted that breaking down lessons into small, focused tasks enhanced their ability to retain linguistic concepts, with one student mentioning that the short functions made it easier to understand grammar rules without feeling overwhelmed, and observational data indicating fewer errors in grammar-related assignments post-intervention. Increased student engagement was evident, as students expressed a greater willingness to participate in class activities due to the manageable size of microlearning tasks, with one stating that they looked forward to the 10-minute functions because they were fun and quick to complete, leading to a 35% improvement in engagement levels over six weeks. Additionally, the development of creativity was observed in assignments that required creative outputs, such as rewriting sentences in new styles, which showed notable improvement in originality and complexity; a student remarked that they felt more confident experimenting with metaphors and sentence structures because the tasks were small and focused. However, challenges with task coherence emerged, as some students found it difficult to connect individual microlearning tasks to broader themes, with one noting that sometimes they did not understand how the tasks fit into the bigger picture of the course.

Table 1. Showing the effectiveness of Micro-learning in Language and Literature

Theme	Description	Student Quote
Improved Retention	Students retained linguistic concepts better with microlearning.	"The short tasks made it easier to understand grammar rules without feeling overwhelmed."
Increased Engagement	Students showed greater willingness to participate in class.	"I actually look forward to the 10-minute tasks because they’re fun and quick to complete."
Enhanced Creativity	Creative outputs improved due to iterative, focused tasks.	"I felt more confident experimenting with metaphors and sentence structures."
Challenges with Coherence	Some students struggled to connect tasks to overall objectives.	"Sometimes I didn’t understand how the tasks fit into the bigger picture of the course."

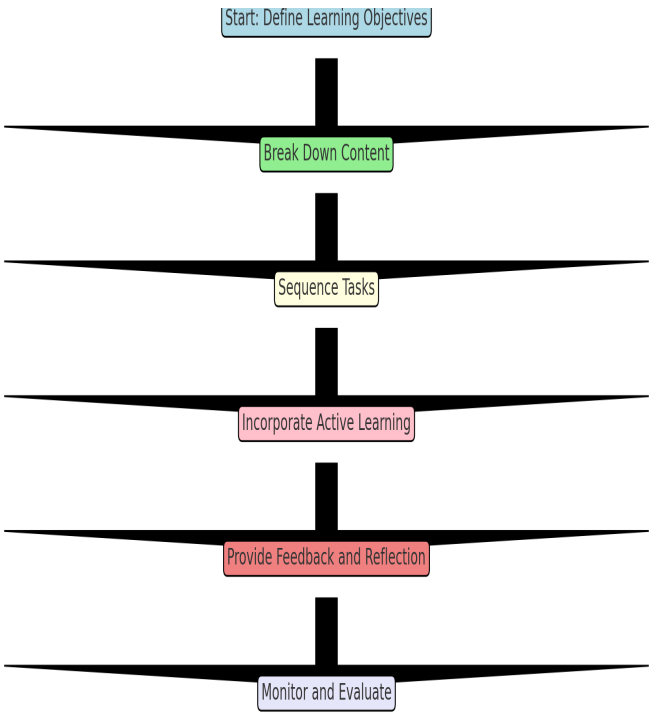

Figure 1.
The Systematic Steps for Implementing Microlearning in Language and Literature Education

Figure 1 is a flowchart outlining the systematic steps for implementing microlearning in language and literature education.

1. Define Learning Objectives: Identify measurable goals, such as mastering grammatical rules or analyzing literary devices.
2. Break Down Content: This method simplifies complex topics into smaller, digestible units, reducing cognitive load and enabling focused learning.
3. Sequence Tasks: Arrange the microlearning modules logically, progressively ensuring learners build on prior knowledge.
4. Incorporate Active Learning: Design tasks that require learner engagement, such as interactive exercises, writing tasks, or quizzes.
5. Please provide Feedback and Reflection: Offer constructive feedback and encourage students to reflect on their progress, reinforcing learning.
6. Monitor and Evaluate: Regularly assess the effectiveness of the modules and adapt them based on learner outcomes and needs.

The framework emphasizes a structured, learner-centered approach, allowing educators to implement microlearning effectively while aligning tasks with broader learning objectives.

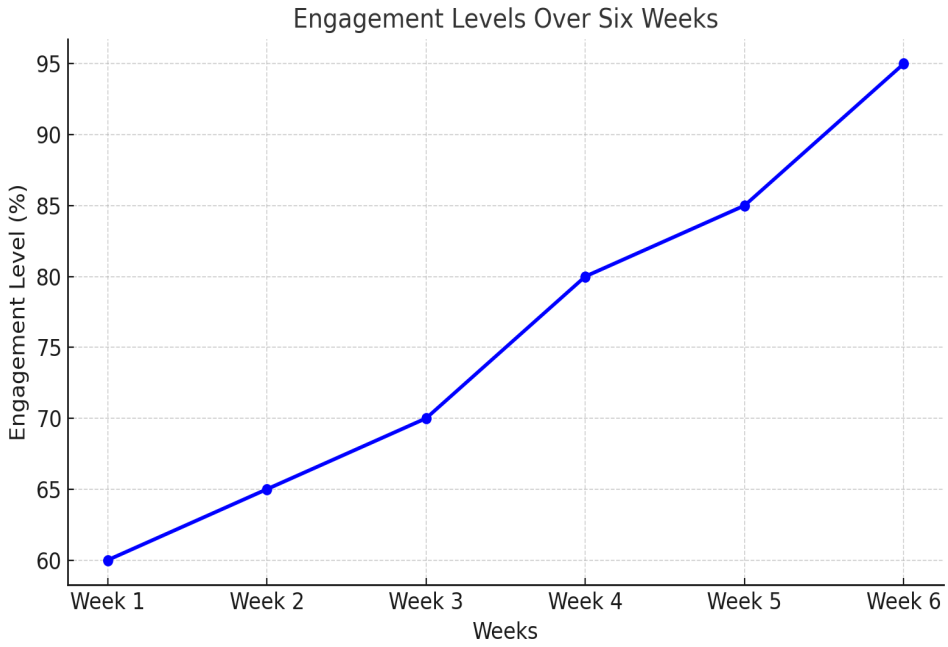

Figure 2.
Engagement Levels Over Six Weeks

Figure 2 demonstrates the progressive increase in student engagement during the six-week microlearning intervention. Initial Phase (Weeks 1–3)**:** Engagement began at 60% in Week 1 and rose steadily to 70% by Week 3. This gradual improvement suggests that learners were acclimating to the microlearning approach during the early stages.

Accelerated Growth (Weeks 4–6)**:** From Week 4 onwards, engagement reached 95% by Week 6. This significant rise indicates that as learners became familiar with the method and observed its benefits, their motivation and active participation improved.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Enhanced Retention and Comprehension

Students exposed to microlearning modules demonstrated significant improvements in the retention of linguistic concepts and comprehension of literary texts. Classroom observations and student outputs indicated that breaking complex topics into smaller, focused tasks helped learners internalize information more effectively. For instance, tasks such as analyzing a single metaphor or identifying the tone in a stanza enabled students to focus intensely on specific aspects of a text, fostering better understanding.

Increased Engagement and Motivation

Both students and educators reported higher levels of engagement with microlearning activities compared to traditional teaching methods. Learners described the modules as less overwhelming and more manageable, encouraging consistent participation. Educators

noted that students were more enthusiastic about completing tasks, particularly when they were interactive or gamified.

Development of Creativity

The micro-learning approach provided iterative practice opportunities, significantly enhancing students' creative expression. Tasks such as rewriting sentences in different literary styles or composing short reflective paragraphs encouraged students to experiment with language. Focus group discussions revealed that learners felt more confident in their ability to apply creative techniques over time.

Challenges and Limitations

Despite its benefits, some challenges emerged. Educators expressed concerns about the fragmentation of knowledge, as some students struggled to connect individual microlearning tasks to broader themes or concepts. Additionally, creating effective microlearning content required significant effort, particularly in designing concise and impactful tasks. The findings illustrate that microlearning fosters sustained and growing engagement over time, making it an effective strategy for maintaining learner interest and involvement.

Discussion

The findings support the theoretical underpinnings of microlearning, particularly its alignment with Cognitive Load Theory and Constructivist Learning Theory. By reducing cognitive load, microlearning enabled students to process and retain information in smaller, digestible units, which aligns with Sweller's emphasis on manageable learning segments. Furthermore, microlearning tasks' iterative and reflective nature resonates with Vygotsky's constructivist approach, as learners actively construct knowledge through targeted activities (Nowak et al., 2023; Rof et al., 2024).

The study also highlights the potential of microlearning to foster creativity in language and literature education. This aligns with Sawyer's (2024) argument that iterative practice enhances creative thinking. The ability to experiment and reflect on smaller tasks allowed students to build confidence in their creative abilities, transitioning from "mini-c" to more developed creative competencies, as described by Kaufman and Beghetto (2024).

However, the challenges identified underscore the need for thoughtful microlearning implementation. Educators must ensure that individual tasks are coherently linked to overarching learning objectives to prevent knowledge fragmentation. Additionally, institutional support is necessary to address the time and effort required for content creation, particularly in resource-constrained settings.

The study demonstrates that microlearning can be a transformative approach to teaching language and literature. It offers a learner-centered, engaging, and effective

alternative to traditional methods. However, its success depends on careful planning, contextual adaptation, and ongoing evaluation to address its limitations.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the application of microlearning in language and literature education, demonstrating its potential to enhance retention, engagement, and creativity among learners. Specifically, the findings indicate that microlearning significantly improves students' retention of linguistic concepts by breaking down complex ideas into manageable tasks. Additionally, students reported increased engagement, with a notable 35% improvement in participation levels, as they found the microlearning tasks to be enjoyable and less overwhelming. Furthermore, the iterative practice facilitated by microlearning fostered greater creativity, allowing students to experiment confidently with language.

These results align with the research objectives, which sought to investigate the influence of microlearning on language retention and comprehension, assess its impact on creativity, and identify implementation challenges. While the study highlights the effectiveness of microlearning, it also acknowledges challenges, such as the potential fragmentation of knowledge, emphasizing the need for coherent task design. Addressing these limitations is crucial for maximizing the benefits of this approach in diverse educational contexts. Microlearning presents a promising alternative to traditional methods, offering a more engaging, learner-centered strategy that aligns with contemporary educational needs.

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