



EXPLORING MOBILE-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING (MALL) AS A CATALYST FOR DIGITAL LITERACY AMONG DIGITAL NATIVE

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study focused on the perceptions and experiences of English Literature undergraduates from Z Generation concerning the application of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) and its role in enhancing digital literacy. This form of research was narrative inquiry-based, utilizing semi-structured interviews with five participants who were chosen through purposive sampling. The data was analyzed thematically with the aim of extracting recurring major patterns and themes. Results indicated that MALL was perceived positively in relation to language learning and the cultivation of digital literacy skills. Participants engaged with ChatGPT, Google Translate, and Duolingo for interactive and vocabulary-focused learning. Some cited problems with inconsistent internet access, institutional restrictions, varying levels of tech-savviness, unproductive policies, and disparate skill levels. This gap requires looking beyond infrastructure and teaching theory shifts. This research also highlighted the need for careful evaluation when utilizing MALL due to considering the ever-growing web of information put forth online, assessing the trustworthiness of the information raises critical thinking questions. Conclusively, the authors noted that while MALL greatly strengthens one's self-directed digital literacy skills, there are pedagogical infrastructure barriers that diminish its potential effectiveness.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, English Language Teaching, Literature, MALL, Z Generation.

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of mobile technologies has significantly transformed the landscape of language acquisition in the modern digital era. The widespread use of smartphones and tablets has led to the emergence of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), offering new opportunities to make instruction more accessible, immersive, and seamlessly integrated into daily life (Jebur, 2020; Solihin, 2021). The growth of mobile technologies has revolutionized language learning, which has resulted in the development of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). Although its advantage for English overall is widely established, its potential in English literature is still untapped (Gael & Elmiana, 2021). In academic circles, there is a growing interest in examining the intricate implications of MALL in specific disciplinary contexts, particularly within the realm of English literature. This investigation requires a thorough analysis of how mobile technologies

intersect with teaching methods to enhance language proficiency, literary analysis, and critical engagement in the study of English literature. Such scholarly pursuits involve synthesizing existing research, incorporating empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, and teaching strategies to uncover the various aspects of integrating MALL into the specialized field of English literary education (Abusa'aleek & Abusa'aleek, 2014; Alemi et al., 2012; Li, 2023). An exhaustive analysis should take into account socio-cultural, cognitive, and technological elements to maximize its application (Kondo et al., 2012; Polakova & Klimova, 2022; Prasetya & Syarif, 2023; Tonekaboni, 2019)). Knowledge of how MALL can influence English literary studies can enhance pedagogical practice and increase literary engagement, and its study is thus indispensable.

The integration of innovative educational technologies in the field of English literature pedagogy has the potential to significantly advance the discipline. These technologies enable complex textual analysis and foster higher-order thinking skills (Chen, 2013), thereby accommodating the diverse interests and learning paces of students (Mishra & Koehler, 2008; Tonekaboni, 2019; Tuzahra et al., 2021). However, the successful implementation of these educational innovations relies heavily on gaining insights from the primary stakeholders - the students. Their experiential knowledge and perspectives play a pivotal role in informing the design and execution of technology-enhanced initiatives in a meaningful and effective manner (Ndahayo & Ndayambaje, 2024). To effectively integrate educational technology in English literature pedagogy, it is crucial to have a comprehensive understanding of students' experiences and perceptions. By incorporating their insights, educators can ensure that technology-enhanced

initiatives are tailored to their specific needs and preferences. This customization enhances student engagement and ultimately improves learning outcomes (Hamidah, 2021). By actively involving students in the decision-making process, educators can better align technological interventions with the pedagogical objectives of English literature instruction (Iskandar et al., 2022).

Prior research has explored MALL in enhancing digital literacy. According to Baharloo and Kamaie (2023) found that technology-based instruction improves both language acquisition and digital literacy among EFL learners in Iran. Similarly, Butarbutar et al. (2020) highlighted MALL's benefits for Indonesian students, including independent learning, vocabulary expansion, and cognitive skill development. Irianti (2020) emphasized educators' positive reception of technology-integrated teaching, supporting its future use. Meanwhile, Rafiq (2020) examined MALL's role in phonics literacy for non-literate adults, showing high engagement and gradual overcoming of learning barriers via WhatsApp-based strategies.

The changing trends of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) expose certain areas of research questioning the efficacy MALL represents, particularly pertaining to digital literacy education for Generation Z learners. The existing literature concerning MALL's implementation and effectiveness points to personalized learning frameworks, immersion through multiple modalities, as well as adaptive remediation. Such research, however, lacks sufficiency in methodological cohesion, cohesive framework detailing, and multicultural relevance. These gaps restrain the understanding of MALL's impact on learners, especially regarding students of English literature who need language and digital skills, for holistic presence in academia. This research is aimed at English literature students: investigating how they view MALL for digital literacy development and how it can be tailored to meet their disciplines' pedagogical expectations. MALL has yet to be optimized for discipline-specific contexts and these learners' needs. Addressing these gaps helps enhance learners' perception of MALL for digital literacy enhancement while investigating the feedback from the learners to shape the activities to

align with learners' expectations. These gaps contribute to the pedagogical advancement of technology education frameworks by adapting insights directly into curriculum and teaching strategies.

METHOD

The investigation into the use of MALL to evaluate the improvement of digital literacy skills among university students employs a qualitative research approach. This intentional selection of qualitative methodology aims to thoroughly examine the information gathered from participants during the data collection process (Creswell, 2007). The research design utilized in this study is narrative inquiry, which was chosen by the researchers to facilitate a personalized and in-depth exploration of participant experiences. The narrative inquiry methodology is particularly suitable for understanding personal narratives and subjective experiences (Bresler, 2006; Clandinin & Caine, 2008), aligning with the study's objective of comprehensively understanding the impact of MALL on the development of digital literacy skills among students. Through this approach, the research aims to provide detailed and nuanced insights into the phenomenon being investigated, thereby contributing to the academic discussion on enhancing digital literacy in higher education settings.

A research project was carried out at a public university in Malang, East Java one of the provinces in Indonesia. involving undergraduate students majoring in English literature for a duration of two months, starting from March to April 2024. The primary objective of the study was to investigate the viewpoints, encounters, and understanding levels of these students in the field of English literature. Through purposive sampling, a total of five participants were chosen based on their adeptness in utilizing MALL in their English literature coursework (Campbell et al., 2020). In order to protect the confidentiality of the participants, their identities were concealed by assigning predetermined codes. This approach was adopted to ensure the credibility of the research methodology and to adhere to ethical standards concerning participant confidentiality.

TABLE 1 | Participants' Information

Name (Code)	Gender	Semester	MALL Application Experiences
M1	Male	2	Grammarly, Google Translate, ChatGPT, and Duolingo
M2	Male	2	Canva, Google Translate, and ChatGPT
M3	Male	2	Duolingo, Grammarly, YouTube, Discord, and ChatGPT
M4	Male	2	Grammarly, ChatGPT, and Google Translate
M5	Male	2	Library Genesis, and Google Translate

This study aims to thoroughly examine the complexities present in English literature education, focusing on a specific group. Through rigorous analysis and methodical investigation, the research intends to clarify different aspects relevant to the subject, thus enriching academic discussions. The specified timeframe highlights the significance of understanding the progression of students' viewpoints over a prolonged period, enabling a detailed comprehension of how their perspectives evolve within the discipline. These efforts hold great potential in advancing scholarly knowledge and guiding teaching approaches in the realm of English literature instruction.

Furthermore, the selected method of data collection was semi-structured interviews. This approach strikes a balance between eliciting responses based on predetermined questions and allowing for deeper exploration of themes that emerge during interactions, which allows participants to express and narrate their memories and experiences. The

technique helped in building rapport and two-way conversation which translate to rich data capture and taken from different backgrounds from the sample population.

As a method in this study, the interview protocol aims to achieve systematic and coherent data collection which includes a well-defined framework of questions that were created in accordance with the research questions. These frameworks make sure that the data collected are relevant and insightful. The protocol does standardization of the questioning, which decreases bias and increases dependability in the answers given. Also, it serves as a documentation tool for capturing essential information for subsequent analysis and, thus, provides order. Protocols of this sort enhance the trustworthiness of a study by providing control over the accuracy of data collection which facilitates thorough scholarly examination and further enhances the body of knowledge in the discipline.

The researchers used face-to-face interactions to collect data in five stages. They started with a preparatory phase, followed by individual interviews lasting 10-30 minutes. After reviewing the transcripts for accuracy, a second round of interviews validated and expanded on the initial responses. Finally, they analysed the data to identify patterns and insights. This rigorous process ensured methodological robustness and data integrity, enhancing the depth of understanding of the research phenomenon.

The primary method of data analysis is thematic analysis (Braun et al., 2017) which systematically uncovers patterns, themes, and meanings within the qualitative data. This is in conjunction with the research objectives focused on deriving insights and, therefore, trust through transparent coding and interpretation. The description mentions narrative inquiry (Mirick & Wladkowski, 2019). only to provide contrast with its focus on story, line-by-line coding, and 're-storying' while appreciating the depiction; the central method remains thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis was selected for its flexibility and ease in organizing a wide array of qualitative data, and not narrative inquiry's focus on stories, which is not the primary goal of this research. Both methods share some components of framework such as coding and theme development (Mirick & Wladkowski, 2021), but thematic analysis is prioritized in this study because it provides answers to the questions posed more effectively than the other.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Researchers exploring MALL in English literature education have found diverse participant experiences. For instance, M2, who typically uses smartphone apps, tried using a PC application to improve his English. This shift highlights his willingness to explore various technological tools to enhance his language learning:

... I use tools like ChatGPT and Canva to enhance research, presentations, and scholarly interactions. They streamline academic processes and improve efficiency, with their mobile and desktop accessibility ensuring consistent quality and effectiveness in my work...
(M2)

Participant M3, in line with the views expressed by Participant M2, utilized a variety of mobile applications such as *ChatGPT*, *Deepl*, *Duolingo*, and *YouTube* to improve their English language skills, with a specific focus on enhancing their ability to communicate effectively. This diverse use of digital platforms highlights an active involvement in technology-driven learning methods, which are becoming increasingly common in modern educational settings. Through the use of these apps, Participant M3 displayed a clear understanding of the importance of immersive and interactive language learning environments, demonstrating a strategic approach to skill development. This approach emphasizes the complex nature of contemporary

language learning strategies in the digital age. M3 also argues:

To boost my English skills, I use YouTube for educational videos, Duolingo for interactive learning, and ChatGPT for exploring topics ... These tools help me improve vocabulary, grammar, and conversation, reinforcing my academic knowledge and accuracy. (M3)

M1 expressed a dissenting viewpoint regarding the integration of MALL into English language education, emphasizing the following:

Combining Google Translate and TestEnglish.com on laptops and cellphones has significantly enhanced students' understanding of English literature. Google Translate aids in translating complex linguistic nuances, while TestEnglish.com offers diverse resources for skill evaluation and improvement. This integrated approach strengthens academic learning, creating an engaging and interactive environment that boosts proficiency in English literature and highlights the role of digital technologies in modern education. (M1)

According to M1 argues that incorporating media resources accessible through cell phones and computers can be a valuable strategy for improving English language proficiency in the study of English literature. M1's viewpoint highlights the potential synergy that arises from utilizing various digital platforms to enhance language learning efforts. This approach is based on the belief that multimedia resources provide learners with a range of opportunities for engagement, including visual, auditory, and interactive elements, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive and immersive learning experience. The use of technological resources in educational settings aligns with current pedagogical approaches that emphasize the integration of digital tools to optimize learning outcomes and cater to the diverse learning styles and preferences of students.

Unlike the previous participants, M4 demonstrates a tendency to prefer paid online learning applications. M4 explained his choice by highlighting the use of the Ruang Guru application for acquiring English language skills, as he excerpts:

User prefers paid educational apps like Ruang Guru for English learning, valuing their extensive features and better outcomes ... This choice reflects a commitment to quality and effective tools, aligning with their philosophy of optimizing language learning through premium resources. (M4)

The passage highlights a preference for using paid educational apps like Ruang Guru for English learning. This choice is based on the belief that such platforms offer comprehensive, engaging features that improve learning outcomes and user experiences. Investing in premium tools reflects a commitment to accessing high-quality resources and enhancing language proficiency. This approach aligns with a broader educational philosophy that values effectiveness and depth in learning.

Following this, M5 further elaborated on their encounter with MALL during their English literature studies, emphasizing its significant role in accessing the desired information and its subsequent influence on fostering a more profound understanding of knowledge acquisition. M5 clarified that the incorporation of MALL greatly aided their academic endeavours, ultimately enhancing the level of comprehension achieved.

...I consider MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning) to be essential in my learning journey, frequently depending on it over my lecture notes. This inclination arises from its ability to assist in thorough information retrieval. I commonly use tools such as library genesis for literary sources and Google Translate for understanding intricate vocabulary or sentences. (M5)

In the thematic segment concerning the importance of technological skill development among literature students, researchers have encountered a diverse array of insights elucidated by participants. For example, M2 articulated that in assuming the role of students within the contemporary milieu, technological advancement holds profound importance in bolstering day-to-day learning processes. This assertion underscores the indispensable role of technological competencies in navigating the educational landscape of the present era, thereby underscoring the imperative for literature scholars to adeptly engage with and harness technological tools to enhance their academic pursuits. Such perspectives underscore the burgeoning significance of technological proficiency as an indispensable facet of contemporary literary education, serving as a catalyst for holistic scholarly growth, such M2 argued:

Modern technology plays a crucial role in enhancing language learning for millennials and post-millennials. By integrating state-of-the-art tools, educators can improve accessibility, engagement, and effectiveness in language education. Embracing these advancements is essential for maximizing linguistic proficiency and ensuring that young students benefit from innovative technologies. Prioritizing the use of modern tech in education systems is key to advancing language skills and overall learning outcomes. (M2)

Divergently, M1 emphasizes the crucial need for technology to support self-directed learning. This emphasis highlights the significant impact of technological progress on improving educational independence. M1's statement emphasizes the importance of incorporating technology to promote self-reliant academic endeavors, emphasizing the modern educational environment's dependence on digital tools.

In today's society, having a strong grasp of technology is considered crucial in many areas, especially in academia. Technology plays a key role in empowering literature students to engage in self-directed learning. Utilizing online resources and seeking advice from experts are common methods used to improve technological skills, ultimately supporting independent academic pursuits. (M1)

M1 highlights how technology enhances literature studies by enabling self-directed learning and academic empowerment. Digital resources like online texts and scholarly articles allow students to explore literature independently, while online platforms facilitate collaboration with experts and peers. This interaction not only deepens literary knowledge but also refines technological skills, preparing students for the digital era. Technology thus acts as a catalyst for intellectual growth and academic independence.

Furthermore, M3 presents a more intricate explanation of the development of technological proficiency in the field of literary studies. M3 highlights the preference for utilizing smartphones and personal computers to enhance digital competencies in literary pedagogy. The use of these technological platforms is emphasized as crucial in promoting a deeper understanding of academic discourse, integrating multimedia resources seamlessly, and fostering interactive learning experiences within the realm of literary education. This deliberate incorporation of digital tools represents a deliberate endeavor to optimize pedagogical approaches by integrating modern technological methods. As M3's excerpt:

... I believe this is of utmost significance. Students must not limit themselves to mastering just one technology for educational purposes. Rather, they should be ready to adapt to the ever-evolving technological landscape. Personally, I rely on my smartphone and computer to stay updated on the latest trends, seeking tutorials on platforms like YouTube. This approach has proven to be highly beneficial in tackling my academic assignments. (M3)

In addition to promoting the adaptability and versatility of students in utilizing various technological tools, M3 emphasizes the significance of utilizing online resources for continuous self-improvement and skill development. The recognition of platforms like YouTube as valuable educational tools represents a shift away from traditional methods of learning, where formal educational institutions were the primary sources of knowledge acquisition. By embracing informal learning platforms such as online tutorials, students not only enhance their technical skills but also foster a proactive approach to lifelong learning. This shift in perspective reflects a broader cultural change towards a more accessible and democratized educational environment, where individuals have greater autonomy in shaping their learning paths.

Moreover, M5 articulated his perspective regarding the significance of digital competencies. This discourse underscores the pivotal role of digital skills in contemporary contexts, highlighting their relevance across various domains. M5's statement contributes valuable insights to scholarly discourse on the subject, enriching understandings of digital literacy and its implications.

As students, it is crucial for us to fully embrace technology as an integral part of our lives. The rapid pace at which information and technology are advancing necessitates our ability to stay updated. Acquiring proficiency in technology skills is of utmost significance as it equips us to tackle any obstacles that lie ahead. (M5)

According to the excerpt above, M5 viewpoint highlights the interconnectedness between technological progress and educational innovation, with digital tools playing a crucial role in empowering learners to confidently navigate the complexities of modern literary studies.

Moreover, it is evident that a range of opinions exist among individuals regarding the benefits and drawbacks linked to the use of MALL to enhance their literary interpretations. This diversity of perspectives is highlighted by the statement made by Participant M1. This recognition underscores the complex nature of the conversation surrounding the incorporation of technological resources like MALL in the field of literary research. It emphasizes the need for a detailed analysis of the consequences and effectiveness of utilizing such methods, thus demonstrating the intricacy involved in pedagogical strategies for literary analysis.

In my subjective view, the utilization of MALL significantly enhances my learning experience, particularly in addressing curriculum aspects that have not been adequately covered by instructors. I have discovered that the advantages of MALL, such as high accessibility, diverse explanations, and depth of information, substantially improve the quality of my learning... (M1)

M3 agrees with M1's perspective on the benefits of MALL in providing easy access to information. Moreover, M4 highlights the numerous advantages that arise from using MALL in the field of literary education, emphasizing its convenience in accessing comprehensive information and promoting innovative learning opportunities in literature. In the discussion on MALL, both M3 and M4 align with M1's viewpoint on its effectiveness in facilitating convenient information access. Furthermore, M4 elaborates on the extensive benefits of MALL specifically in the context of literary education. This clarification emphasizes the quick retrieval of detailed information and the cultivation of new learning possibilities in the realm of literature, thereby enhancing the educational experience.

I gained profound understanding through the utilization of MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning) in my literature studies.

I came across a plethora of information that was not covered in my lectures. Moreover, I made use of multiple applications to explore literature discussion groups, which greatly contributed to the improvement of my language proficiency... (M4)

In addition, as English literature students incorporate MALL into their academic pursuits, they frequently encounter challenges related to navigating technical barriers in information retrieval. This assertion is supported by the M3 study. These challenges involve various technical complexities, such as proficiency in utilizing digital tools, accessing online repositories, and identifying reliable sources within the vast digital landscape. Consequently, these obstacles present significant challenges to students seeking to seamlessly integrate MALL methodologies into their educational path, highlighting the importance of targeted interventions to address such challenges in pedagogical practices.

In my opinion, the most common limitation I face is the availability of internet access. Living in a boarding school campus setting means that the internet connection is often restricted. This limitation hinders my ability to search for and access information seamlessly. Additionally, unexpected power outages further complicate the situation... (M3)

In line with the above-mentioned viewpoint, M5 appears to communicate similar information. This is due to their mandatory adherence to the rules set by the campus Islamic boarding school, which requires a one-year commitment, thus limiting the range of acceptable technological procurement and use. This statement is supported by the explanation provided by M5 in the quoted passage. The necessity of complying with institutional regulations, based on doctrinal principles and educational goals, defines the boundaries within which technological access and ownership are restricted. M5's recognition of this limitation emphasizes the importance of institutional norms in influencing the technological landscape within the campus setting.

The MALL system proves to be highly beneficial in facilitating easy access to information without any hindrances. Nevertheless, due to my current setting in a campus Islamic boarding school, the technological resources available are quite restricted. Internet usage is permitted only on specific days for recreational purposes and solely during class hours for educational purposes. This limitation poses a challenge, especially when trying to access the internet in the boarding rooms amidst the busy schedule of school activities. (M5)

The implementation of MALL highlights the importance of critical thinking, as emphasized by M2. Critical thinking skills play a central role in the effectiveness of MALL, as they are essential for dealing with the complexities of language acquisition and use in digital learning settings. M2's statement emphasizes the crucial role of critical thinking in enhancing the educational results of MALL projects, where learners are required to analyse, assess, and combine information from various linguistic environments. Therefore, the enhancement of critical thinking abilities is a key principle in the development of successful MALL integration strategies.

The effectiveness of MALL tools in fostering critical thinking hinges on students' willingness to explore concepts deeply rather than just skimming the surface. If learners focus on superficial understanding, their reasoning skills and critical thinking abilities may suffer. Thus, evaluating MALL's impact requires considering students' inclination for intellectual depth, as this influences the cognitive outcomes of MALL in education. Addressing these personal tendencies is crucial for enhancing MALL's pedagogical impact. (M2)

This statement is in agreement with M1's claim about the importance of critical thinking in the realm of MALL. Then, M1 highlights the necessity of strong critical thinking abilities in order to navigate MALL environments successfully. This emphasizes the importance of being discerning and having analytical skills to maximize learning outcomes using mobile platforms.

... effective use of technology can significantly enhance students' critical thinking skills. Strategic integration of digital tools supports cognitive development, highlighting the vital role students play in leveraging technology for improved critical thinking. Thus, the synergy between technology and individual effort is crucial for fostering strong critical thinking abilities. (M1)

Following this, M4 clarified that the development of critical thinking skills could potentially be attributed to the use of MALL. This hypothesis implies a possible connection between the educational structure of MALL and the enhancement of critical thinking skills in language learning environments, thus necessitating additional research and academic examination.

... MALL enhances critical thinking by engaging students with diverse online resources. This approach fosters deeper cognitive engagement, allowing learners to analyze and synthesize various perspectives, ultimately improving their analytical abilities and promoting complex understanding. Thus, MALL is vital for developing critical thinking skills in education... (M4)

Furthermore, it is crucial to recognize that the claim put forward presents intricate viewpoints, especially when examined from the perspective of M5:

Critical thinking is crucial in Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) due to the vast, often unreliable information online. Users must evaluate content accuracy and relevance to avoid misinformation, enhancing the effectiveness of their learning. Developing these skills ensures better integrity and success in language acquisition. (M5)

In this case, the person identified as M5 emphasizes the importance of expressing obtained knowledge with precision and clarity. As a result, the importance of promoting critical thinking abilities in the realm of MALL becomes crucial for M5. This highlights the necessity for careful judgment and analytical skills when seeking information in MALL environments, ultimately improving the effectiveness of understanding and knowledge transfer. The emphasis on accuracy in explaining acquired data demonstrates an understanding of the subtle complexities involved in information absorption and distribution within the MALL framework, calling for a strong development of critical thinking skills to navigate these intricacies skilfully.

CONCLUSION

English literature students generally find Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) beneficial for enhancing digital literacy. MALL is valued for its convenience and access to diverse online resources, extending learning beyond traditional classrooms. It supports personalized learning paths to fit different preferences and styles. However, challenges include inconsistent internet connectivity due to institutional policies and infrastructure issues. Additionally, varying individual learning tendencies and technical skills impact MALL's effectiveness. Student feedback highlights the need for thorough assessments to address these contextual barriers. Custom MALL frameworks, designed to overcome gaps in digital proficiency, cognitive styles, and technological access, are crucial. Involving students in the development, implementation, and evaluation of MALL initiatives ensures

relevance and better outcomes. Qualitative student feedback should be systematically analysed to refine MALL strategies. As a tool for digital literacy, MALL offers immersive environments for language practice with structured activities that build competencies like information literacy, communication skills, and critical thinking. Online collaborative projects and communities encourage active participation, while graded assignments foster self-directed learning. With tailored support, MALL holds promise for strengthening independent digital skills.

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