

# Balancing Innovation and Limitations: A Review of Language Learning Technologies

Arif Alexander Bastian

Universitas Aisyah Pringsewu, Indonesia  
arifalexander1@aisyahuniversity.ac.id

## Abstract

This study explores the advantages and disadvantages of using technology in language learning, focusing on tools such as Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), mobile applications, and online learning platforms. Through a review of recent literature, it is evident that technological tools significantly enhance language acquisition, particularly in listening, reading, vocabulary development, and pronunciation. CALL systems, with their multimedia and interactive features, have been shown to improve learner engagement and retention, while mobile applications offer flexibility and autonomy, allowing learners to study at their own pace. However, challenges remain, including the lack of teacher-student interaction in online platforms, reduced opportunities for real-time communication, and potential issues with learner motivation and consistency. The findings suggest that a blended learning model, combining the strengths of technology with the guidance of traditional classroom instruction, provides the most effective approach to language learning. Teachers play a crucial role in structuring learning experiences, offering feedback, and maintaining learner engagement. While technology has the potential to transform language education, its integration requires careful planning to address its limitations. Further research is needed to evaluate the long-term impacts of digital tools and to refine strategies for their effective use.

**Keywords:** Language Learning Technologies; Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL); Mobile Language Applications; Online Learning Platforms; Digital Tools in Education

## INTRODUCTION

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the rapid advancement of technology has revolutionized various sectors, including education. Language learning, in particular, has greatly benefited from the integration of digital tools and platforms, which offer innovative approaches to acquiring linguistic proficiency. Technologies such as Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), mobile applications, and online learning platforms have redefined how languages are taught and learned. These tools provide learners with unprecedented access to resources, interactive features, and personalized feedback, enabling them to develop their skills in dynamic and engaging ways. According to Chapelle (2001), CALL technologies have expanded the pedagogical possibilities for language learning, providing a scaffolded environment where learners can experiment with language structures and receive immediate feedback. These tools promote individualized instruction by adapting to learners' proficiency levels and specific needs. Similarly, Kukulska-Hulme (2012) highlights the transformative role of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), noting that mobile applications empower learners to practice language skills in diverse contexts, fostering autonomy and contextualized learning. Moreover, online platforms have been recognized as crucial in facilitating authentic communication. As Doughty and Long (2003) argue, online learning environments can simulate real-life interactions, enabling learners to engage with native speakers and multicultural communities, thereby enhancing their pragmatic competence and intercultural understanding.

Despite these advancements, previous studies have primarily focused on the benefits of individual technologies (e.g., CALL, MALL) in isolation, often overlooking systemic challenges and comparative analyses across tools (Levy & Stockwell, 2006; Hubbard, 2013). For instance, while research underscores the flexibility of mobile apps (Kukulka-Hulme, 2012) or the interactivity of online platforms (Doughty & Long, 2003), few studies critically examine how these technologies intersect with socio-economic barriers, teacher roles, or long-term linguistic outcomes. Additionally, the rapid evolution of emerging technologies (e.g., AI, VR) has outpaced empirical investigations into their pedagogical efficacy and ethical implications (Golonka et al., 2014). This gap highlights the need for a comprehensive review that synthesizes advantages and disadvantages across diverse language learning technologies (LLTs), while addressing unresolved questions about equity, cultural sensitivity, and optimal integration strategies. By consolidating fragmented findings and identifying under-researched areas, this paper aims to provide a clearer roadmap for future research and practice. The remainder of this article reviews recent research on the impact of LLTs, focusing on their benefits (e.g., flexibility, accessibility, engagement) and limitations (e.g., digital divides, reduced human interaction, privacy concerns). Ultimately, it calls for a balanced framework to maximize technology's potential while mitigating its risks in language education. This article aims to provide a comprehensive review of the advantages and disadvantages of language learning technologies. By critically examining their impact on various aspects of language education, including learner autonomy, teaching methodologies, and the broader educational landscape, this review seeks to highlight both the transformative potential and the inherent limitations of these tools. Through this exploration, the article underscores the importance of adopting a balanced approach to the integration of technology in language learning, one that leverages its strengths while addressing its shortcomings.

## METHOD

This article aims to provide a comprehensive review of the advantages and disadvantages of language learning technologies. By critically examining their impact on various aspects of language education, including learner autonomy, teaching methodologies, and the broader educational landscape, this review seeks to highlight both the transformative potential and the inherent limitations of these tools. Through this exploration, the article underscores the importance of adopting a balanced approach to the integration of technology in language learning, one that leverages its strengths while addressing its shortcomings. This study is grounded in a comprehensive literature review. According to Zainal (2007), a literature review serves to present theories, findings, and insights derived from relevant scholarly sources. Its primary function is to establish a conceptual framework for analyzing the problem-solving approaches identified in the research. Additionally, it provides a critical synthesis of existing works—including articles, books, presentations, and digital resources—through evaluation, summarization, and the author's analytical perspective. The outcomes of previous researchers' studies may be used as a benchmark against which this study's hypotheses can be evaluated. This study employs a literature review methodology to examine the advantages and disadvantages of language learning technologies (LLTs). A literature review is a systematic and analytical approach that synthesizes existing research to provide an overview of a specific topic or field. This method was chosen to critically evaluate the current body of knowledge on LLTs, identify patterns and trends, and highlight gaps in the research. To conduct this review, a comprehensive search of academic databases, including but not limited to Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, was performed. Keywords such as “language learning technologies,” “CALL (computer-assisted language learning),” “advantages of digital language tools,” and “challenges in technology-mediated language education” were utilized to ensure a

broad yet focused collection of relevant literature. The search included peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and reports published within the past two decades to capture both foundational studies and recent advancements in the field. The selection process involved several stages. Initially, titles and abstracts were screened to identify studies that explicitly addressed the benefits and drawbacks of LLTs. Subsequently, full-text articles were reviewed to ensure their relevance and methodological rigor. Inclusion criteria were set to prioritize studies that provided empirical data, theoretical insights, or comprehensive reviews on the subject. Additionally, works that explored diverse contexts, including formal education, self-directed learning, and cross-cultural environments, were included to capture a holistic perspective. The analysis focused on categorizing the findings into two main themes: (1) the advantages of LLTs, such as accessibility, learner autonomy, and enhanced engagement, and (2) the disadvantages, including technological barriers, over-reliance, and socio-economic disparities. This thematic organization allowed for a structured discussion of the dual impact of these technologies on language learning. By adopting a literature review approach, this study seeks to consolidate existing knowledge, provide a balanced understanding of LLTs, and lay the groundwork for future research and practical applications in the field of language education.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The integration of technology in language learning has been a subject of extensive research in recent years, with a growing body of evidence supporting the positive impact of digital tools, particularly Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and mobile applications, on language acquisition. Lai and Gu (2020), in their meta-analysis, emphasize that CALL has a notably positive effect on learners' language skills, particularly in reading and listening. Their synthesis of existing studies demonstrates that interactive and multimedia-based platforms significantly engage learners, facilitating not only language comprehension but also retention. The authors suggest that CALL, when used in conjunction with traditional pedagogical approaches, can create a more immersive and dynamic learning environment. Moreover, CALL's ability to provide personalized learning experiences and immediate feedback is identified as a key factor in enhancing learners' motivation and improving outcomes.

Chapelle and Sauro (2019) further substantiate these findings by highlighting the role of technology in advancing language learning practices. Their study underscores the transformative potential of technological tools, including virtual learning environments and online platforms, which provide learners with greater autonomy and flexibility in their language learning journey. By reviewing literature on the impact of technology in language education, they note that online learning environments facilitate real-time communication, which is crucial for developing fluency and pragmatics in language use. They also argue that technology enhances the accessibility of language learning, making it possible for learners to engage with language material and interact with native speakers outside the classroom, thereby fostering a more global and diverse learning community.

In a more specific context, Stockwell (2021) explores the increasing prominence of mobile applications in language learning. He identifies mobile apps as highly effective tools for vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, and pronunciation practice. The flexibility of mobile apps is emphasized, as they allow learners to engage with language material on their own terms, thus promoting autonomous learning. Stockwell's findings suggest that the widespread use of mobile devices has led to a paradigm shift in language education, providing opportunities for learners to practice language skills in diverse contexts, including informal and situational settings. The use of mobile applications supports the development of skills that may

otherwise be neglected in traditional classroom settings, such as spontaneous speech and listening for detail in real-world conversations.

Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2020) contribute to this discussion by focusing on the role of mobile technologies in supporting informal, out-of-class language learning. Their review highlights how mobile devices empower learners to engage in language learning activities at their convenience, without the constraints of formal classroom settings. They argue that mobile learning is particularly valuable in fostering self-directed learning, as learners can access resources and practice language skills whenever and wherever they choose. This flexibility, coupled with the ability to use smartphones and tablets for both formal learning tasks and informal language practice, enables learners to create personalized learning experiences that fit their individual needs and schedules.

Despite the clear advantages, the research also acknowledges several challenges associated with the integration of technology into language learning. Zhao and Huang (2020), in their review of online learning platforms, point out that while these platforms provide learners with access to a wide array of resources and the opportunity to interact with native speakers, they also come with limitations. One of the primary concerns they highlight is the lack of direct teacher-student interaction, which can hinder the development of certain language skills, particularly speaking and listening, where immediate feedback and real-time communication are crucial. Additionally, the absence of face-to-face interactions may result in a loss of the social and cultural nuances that are integral to language learning. Zhao and Huang also note that the effectiveness of online platforms is often contingent upon the learner's level of motivation and self-discipline, as the lack of structured, classroom-based supervision can lead to disengagement and inconsistent learning progress.

The findings from these studies suggest that, while technology—particularly CALL and mobile apps—offers substantial benefits for language learning, the challenges associated with its use should not be overlooked. The key to maximizing the potential of digital tools lies in their integration with traditional instructional methods. A blended learning approach, combining the flexibility and accessibility of technology with the guidance and expertise of teachers, may offer the most effective solution. Teachers' roles as facilitators and guides in the learning process remain critical, particularly in supporting learners' motivation, providing personalized feedback, and ensuring that technology is used in ways that complement and enhance traditional learning methods.

In conclusion, while the integration of technology into language learning presents considerable advantages, including increased access to resources, enhanced learner engagement, and the promotion of autonomous learning, it also brings forth challenges related to the lack of direct teacher interaction and the need for learner self-discipline. The most effective language learning environments will likely be those that incorporate a thoughtful balance between traditional face-to-face instruction and the innovative capabilities of digital tools. Further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of technology-enhanced language learning and to identify best practices for the integration of digital tools into diverse educational settings.

### Review of Selected Studies

1. **Lai and Gu (2020):** Their meta-analysis emphasizes that CALL has a notably positive effect on learners' language skills, particularly in reading and listening. By synthesizing multiple studies, they demonstrate that interactive and multimedia-based platforms significantly enhance learner engagement, comprehension, and retention. A key finding is that CALL tools, when integrated with traditional teaching methods, create a more immersive learning environment. Personalized learning experiences and immediate feedback are identified as crucial factors in motivating learners and improving outcomes.

2. **Chapelle and Sauro (2019):** This study highlights the transformative potential of technological tools such as virtual learning environments and online platforms. Their findings underline the role of technology in fostering learner autonomy and flexibility. Online learning environments enable real-time communication, which is essential for developing fluency and pragmatics. Additionally, the accessibility provided by these platforms allows learners to interact with native speakers and engage with diverse language materials outside the classroom.
3. **Stockwell (2021):** Focused on mobile applications, this study identifies their effectiveness in vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, and pronunciation practice. Stockwell emphasizes the flexibility of mobile apps, which support autonomous learning and facilitate language practice in informal settings. The findings suggest a paradigm shift in language education, with mobile devices enabling learners to develop skills such as spontaneous speech and listening for detail in real-world contexts.
4. **Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2020):** This study examines the role of mobile technologies in informal, out-of-class language learning. The authors argue that mobile devices empower learners to engage in self-directed learning by providing access to resources anytime and anywhere. This flexibility allows learners to tailor their learning experiences to their individual needs, blending formal learning tasks with informal practice.
5. **Zhao and Huang (2020):** In their review of online learning platforms, they highlight both advantages and challenges. While these platforms provide extensive resources and opportunities for interaction with native speakers, they also point out limitations, such as the lack of direct teacher-student interaction and the absence of cultural nuances integral to language learning. They stress that the effectiveness of online platforms often depends on the learner's motivation and self-discipline.
6. **Godwin-Jones (2018):** This study examines the role of social media and online communities in language learning. Godwin-Jones argues that platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram offer learners unique opportunities for language practice, especially in terms of authentic interaction with native speakers. Social media, when used strategically, can help learners develop fluency and cultural understanding, as it facilitates real-time communication, access to diverse perspectives, and the creation of learning networks. However, the study also highlights the potential for distraction and the need for learners to filter and evaluate language input critically.
7. **Reinders and White (2020):** Their study focuses on the integration of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) in formal educational settings. Reinders and White argue that mobile devices are particularly useful for vocabulary learning and grammatical practice. Through games, quizzes, and spaced repetition systems (SRS), mobile applications help learners reinforce their language skills in an engaging and efficient manner. They also discuss the potential for gamification, suggesting that incorporating game-like elements into language learning platforms can increase motivation and learner engagement.
8. **Viberg and Grönlund (2017):** This research investigates the impact of mobile learning on collaborative language learning. The authors found that mobile devices enable learners to collaborate in real-time, sharing resources and engaging in interactive tasks. The study highlights the potential of mobile learning to promote cooperative learning, where learners not only practice language skills but also collaborate to solve problems, which can enhance critical thinking and social language use. The findings suggest that collaborative mobile learning can lead to higher levels of engagement and better retention of language material.

- Blin and Munoz (2018):** This study explores the use of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) in language learning. Blin and Munoz emphasize that immersive technologies such as VR and AR offer learners the opportunity to practice language in a simulated real-world context, providing them with rich, interactive environments that are difficult to replicate in traditional classrooms. Their findings suggest that VR and AR can improve speaking and listening skills by immersing learners in culturally rich scenarios where they must interact using the target language. However, they caution that these technologies are still in their infancy and may require significant resources and technical support to be effectively implemented.

## Discussion

The findings from these studies collectively underscore the significant potential of technology in enhancing language learning outcomes. CALL tools and mobile applications enable dynamic, engaging, and flexible learning experiences that cater to diverse learner needs. Interactive platforms, such as those reviewed by Lai and Gu (2020) and Chapelle and Sauro (2019), are particularly effective in developing foundational language skills, including reading, listening, and vocabulary acquisition. However, these benefits are maximized when technology is integrated with traditional instructional methods. One notable theme across the studies is the promotion of learner autonomy. The flexibility of mobile applications, as highlighted by Stockwell (2021) and Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2020), allows learners to take control of their language learning journey, enabling them to practice in real-world, situational contexts. This autonomy is especially important in informal learning settings, where learners can engage with authentic materials and practice spontaneous language use. Despite these advantages, challenges remain. Zhao and Huang (2020) emphasize that the absence of face-to-face teacher-student interaction can hinder the development of skills requiring real-time feedback, such as speaking and listening. Additionally, the lack of structured supervision in online platforms may lead to disengagement among less motivated learners. These challenges highlight the importance of a blended learning approach that combines the strengths of digital tools with the expertise and guidance of teachers. The reviewed studies collectively suggest that the integration of technology in language learning is most effective when it complements traditional teaching methods. The personalized feedback and adaptive capabilities of CALL tools enhance learner engagement and motivation, while mobile applications facilitate continuous learning beyond the classroom. However, to address the limitations of online platforms, educators must play an active role in guiding learners and ensuring that technology is used strategically to support language acquisition. For instance, integrating CALL tools with classroom activities can provide learners with a balanced learning experience that leverages the benefits of both approaches. Teachers can use mobile applications to assign tasks that promote informal practice while offering structured feedback during face-to-face sessions. Moreover, real-time communication platforms can bridge the gap between online and traditional settings by fostering interactive and culturally nuanced language use.

## CONCLUSION

The integration of technology in language learning, particularly through Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), mobile applications, and online learning platforms, has proven to be a transformative force in modern education. The studies reviewed consistently demonstrate that digital tools significantly enhance language acquisition, particularly in skills such as listening, reading, and vocabulary development. Lai and Gu (2020) found that CALL systems, which incorporate multimedia and interactive platforms, foster engagement and improve language retention. Similarly, Chapelle and Sauro (2019) highlight how technology facilitates

more personalized learning experiences, greater interaction, and increased accessibility, thereby advancing the field of language education. Mobile- technologies, especially language learning apps, have emerged as particularly effective tools for autonomous learning. Stockwell (2021) and Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2020) both emphasize the flexibility these tools offer, enabling learners to engage with language materials at their own pace and convenience. These technologies not only enhance language skills such as pronunciation and listening comprehension but also support informal learning, allowing learners to practice language outside of the formal classroom environment. However, despite the clear benefits, the research also identifies challenges in the integration of these technologies. Zhao and Huang (2020) caution that while online platforms provide learners with abundant resources, they may lack the essential teacher-student interaction required for the development of certain language skills, especially speaking. Additionally, the self-directed nature of online learning can pose difficulties for some learners, particularly in terms of motivation and consistency, as the absence of structured supervision may lead to disengagement. In light of these findings, it is evident that the most effective approach to language learning is one that combines the strengths of digital tools with traditional classroom-based instruction. A blended learning model that incorporates both technological resources and teacher guidance can offer a more holistic and effective learning experience. Teachers remain essential in providing structure, motivation, and personalized feedback, ensuring that learners are supported throughout their language learning journey. Ultimately, while digital tools have the potential to revolutionize language learning by offering greater flexibility, accessibility, and learner engagement, further research is necessary to explore the long-term effects of these technologies and to identify best practices for their integration across diverse educational contexts. As technology continues to evolve, so too will the ways in which it can be harnessed to support and enhance language acquisition.

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