

## MOBILE ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING AND DIGITAL STORYTELLING FOR MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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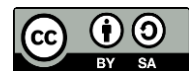
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### Abstract

This study reviews the use of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) and digital storytelling in multilingual educational settings. It focuses on research trends, teaching strategies, and their role in supporting inclusive and effective language learning. Using a systematic literature review, peer-reviewed studies published between 2020 and 2025 were collected from major academic databases and analyzed thematically. The findings show that combining MALL and digital storytelling improves learner engagement, motivation, intercultural awareness, and language proficiency in diverse classrooms. These approaches also support personalized learning, collaboration, and the development of critical literacy skills related to educational equity and social justice. The main contribution of this review is its integrated perspective, which views mobile learning and digital storytelling as connected pedagogical approaches in multilingual and multicultural contexts. Overall, the study highlights the potential of technology-based learning to promote learner autonomy, adaptive learning, and inclusive teaching practices. The findings also provide useful guidance for educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers in developing learning programs that respond to the needs of multilingual learners.

**Keywords:** Digital Storytelling, MAAL, Multilingual education



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## INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of mobile technologies has significantly reshaped contemporary language education by extending learning beyond conventional classroom boundaries. Mobile devices have enabled learners to access language resources flexibly across contexts, supporting learning experiences that are no longer confined to formal instructional settings. In multilingual educational environments, this technological shift is particularly relevant due to learners' diverse linguistic backgrounds and learning needs. As a result, educators are increasingly required to adopt pedagogical approaches that are both flexible and inclusive. These developments signal a fundamental transformation in how language learning is conceptualized and enacted.

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has emerged as a prominent approach that integrates mobile technologies into language education to support learning across time and space. This approach emphasizes learner-centered instruction by allowing learners to control the pace, place, and mode of their learning activities. Research indicates that MALL facilitates learner autonomy and sustained engagement through personalized and context-aware learning environments (Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg, 2020). Such features are especially beneficial in multilingual classrooms where learners exhibit varied proficiency levels. Consequently, MALL is increasingly viewed as a pedagogical framework rather than merely a technological tool.

Beyond autonomy, MALL has been associated with increased learner motivation and active participation in language learning tasks. Mobile-based environments often incorporate interactive features that promote authentic language use and meaningful communication. A meta-analytic study demonstrates that mobile learning positively influences language learning outcomes by fostering engagement and learner involvement (Sung et al., 2022). These findings suggest that MALL can enhance both cognitive and affective dimensions of language learning. Therefore, mobile technologies hold considerable potential for supporting effective instruction in linguistically diverse contexts.

Alongside the growth of mobile learning, digital storytelling has gained recognition as a pedagogical approach that combines narrative construction with multimodal digital tools. This approach encourages learners to create stories by integrating text, images, audio, and video, thereby supporting multimodal meaning-making. Empirical evidence shows that digital storytelling enhances language development by engaging learners in purposeful and creative language use (Yang & Wu, 2021). Through storytelling activities, learners develop skills in organizing ideas and expressing meaning coherently. As such, digital storytelling aligns well with communicative and constructivist approaches to language education.

Digital storytelling has also been shown to foster higher-order thinking skills and deeper learner engagement. By constructing narratives, learners are required to reflect critically on content and communicate perspectives effectively. Recent studies indicate that storytelling-based tasks promote critical thinking and intercultural awareness in language learning contexts (Ngo & Nguyen, 2023). These outcomes are particularly relevant in multilingual settings where learners navigate diverse cultural and linguistic experiences. Consequently, digital storytelling serves as a powerful pedagogical strategy for holistic language and literacy development.

In multilingual educational contexts, digital storytelling plays a crucial role in validating learners' linguistic and cultural identities. Story-based pedagogies allow learners to draw upon their lived experiences and linguistic resources during the learning process. Research suggests that digitally mediated storytelling practices challenge monolingual norms by legitimizing learners' multilingual repertoires (Hafner & Miller, 2022). This recognition fosters a sense of belonging and participation among learners from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, digital storytelling contributes to more inclusive and culturally responsive language education.

Despite the expanding literature on MALL, many studies continue to focus primarily on technological affordances or discrete language skills. Such an emphasis often overlooks broader pedagogical considerations related to multilingualism and equity. A critical review of

MALL research reveals that issues of inclusivity and social responsiveness remain insufficiently addressed (Burston & Giannakou, 2022). This limitation restricts the applicability of research findings to diverse educational contexts. As a result, there is a need to reorient MALL research toward more holistic pedagogical frameworks.

Similarly, research on digital storytelling in language education frequently prioritizes instructional design and learner engagement. While these aspects are important, they often receive attention at the expense of examining how storytelling practices intersect with mobile technologies. Recent reviews indicate that limited focus has been placed on mobile-mediated storytelling in multilingual learning environments (Liu et al., 2024). This gap constrains the development of integrated pedagogical models. Consequently, opportunities to combine mobile learning and storytelling remain underexplored.

The lack of integration between MALL and digital storytelling has resulted in fragmented pedagogical guidance for educators. Teachers often face challenges in aligning technological innovation with the linguistic diversity of their classrooms. Research suggests that the absence of coherent frameworks limits educators' ability to design inclusive and effective learning environments (Tai & Chen, 2023). This fragmentation highlights the importance of synthesizing these approaches within a unified pedagogical perspective. Such synthesis is essential for informed instructional decision-making.

The urgency of this issue is further intensified by persistent inequities experienced by multilingual learners in formal education. Language education practices frequently privilege dominant linguistic norms, marginalizing learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Critical scholarship demonstrates that such inequities are deeply embedded in instructional practices and assessment systems (Darvin & Norton, 2022). These conditions underscore the ethical responsibility of educators to adopt inclusive pedagogies. Addressing these inequities requires pedagogical approaches that are both critically informed and socially responsive.

Technology-enhanced language learning has the potential to either reinforce or disrupt existing inequities. The impact of technology largely depends on how it is pedagogically framed and implemented. Critical analyses caution that unreflective adoption of digital tools may reproduce existing power relations in education (Selwyn et al., 2020). Without intentional design, technology risks amplifying exclusion rather than inclusion. Therefore, equity-oriented pedagogical considerations are essential in technology integration.

Conversely, research grounded in critical literacy perspectives highlights the transformative potential of technology when aligned with social justice goals. Studies indicate that digitally mediated pedagogies can foster learner agency and critical engagement with language and power relations (Luke et al., 2021). Such approaches encourage learners to question dominant discourses and articulate alternative perspectives. In multilingual contexts, this critical engagement is particularly significant. These insights emphasize the importance of socially responsive instructional design.

Multilingual education scholarship further stresses the need to recognize learners' linguistic repertoires as pedagogical resources. Contemporary research highlights that translanguaging-oriented practices support inclusive learning by positioning multilingualism as an asset (Li & García, 2022). These practices encourage learners to mobilize their full linguistic resources during learning activities. Such perspectives provide a strong theoretical foundation for integrating mobile and narrative pedagogies. They also align with equity-oriented educational goals.

Within this framework, the integration of MALL and digital storytelling offers promising possibilities for inclusive language education. Mobile technologies can extend storytelling practices beyond classroom spaces, enabling collaborative and personalized narrative construction. Recent studies indicate that mobile-mediated storytelling supports learner engagement and adaptability in diverse learning contexts (Zhang & Pérez-Paredes, 2024). This

integration allows learners to participate actively in meaning-making processes. Consequently, it supports adaptive and responsive learning environments.

Despite this potential, research on the combined use of MALL and digital storytelling remains dispersed across disciplines. The lack of systematic synthesis limits the accumulation of coherent knowledge in this area. Scholarly reviews suggest that fragmented research landscapes hinder theory building and pedagogical innovation (Reinders & Benson, 2021). Addressing this limitation is essential for advancing technology-enhanced language education. A comprehensive synthesis can bridge theory and practice.

In response to these challenges, this study systematically reviews peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2020 and 2025 that examine the integration of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning and digital storytelling in multilingual educational contexts. The review aims to identify prevailing research trends and analyze pedagogical strategies reported in recent studies. It also examines implications for inclusive and effective language instruction. By synthesizing empirical evidence, this study seeks to inform curriculum design and instructional practice. Ultimately, it contributes to the development of equitable and socially responsive language education.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### ***Research Design***

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design to synthesize empirical research on the integration of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) and digital storytelling in multilingual educational contexts. The use of an SLR design facilitates a structured, transparent, and systematic synthesis process that allows for the comprehensive mapping of existing research while supporting the identification of dominant research trends, methodological approaches, and recurring pedagogical themes across studies. In line with recent review guidelines, this approach also enhances methodological rigor and replicability by making the review procedures explicit and traceable (Page et al., 2021). By systematically examining and integrating findings from diverse empirical investigations, the SLR design enables fragmented evidence in technology-enhanced language learning to be consolidated into a coherent and analytically grounded body of knowledge, thereby providing a robust foundation for interpreting current practices and informing future research directions.

### ***Research Target/Subject***

The research targets consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2020 and 2025 that examined Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), digital storytelling, or their combined application in multilingual or multicultural educational contexts. This time frame was selected to capture recent developments and contemporary pedagogical practices in technology-enhanced language learning. To ensure alignment with the research objectives, articles were selected based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria that focused on relevance, methodological clarity, and contextual appropriateness. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to maintain conceptual coherence within the review corpus, a practice widely recommended in systematic literature reviews to ensure analytical depth and thematic consistency (Xiao & Watson, 2019). Only studies written in English and reporting empirical findings or systematic syntheses were included, thereby ensuring the reliability and scholarly relevance of the reviewed evidence.

### ***Research Procedure***

The review process followed a structured and sequential procedure consisting of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion of studies for synthesis. During the identification stage, an initial pool of articles was compiled from the selected academic databases. Subsequently, titles and abstracts were screened to remove duplicate

records and publications that did not align with the focus on Mobile-Assisted Language Learning and digital storytelling in multilingual contexts. Studies deemed potentially relevant then underwent full-text evaluation to assess their eligibility based on the predefined inclusion criteria. This stepwise approach reflects best practices in systematic review reporting and enhances transparency and methodological rigor in study selection (Page et al., 2021). By applying consistent criteria at each stage of the review, the procedure minimized selection bias and ensured coherence across the review stages. The overall procedure of the systematic literature review, encompassing the stages of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion, is illustrated in Figure 1.

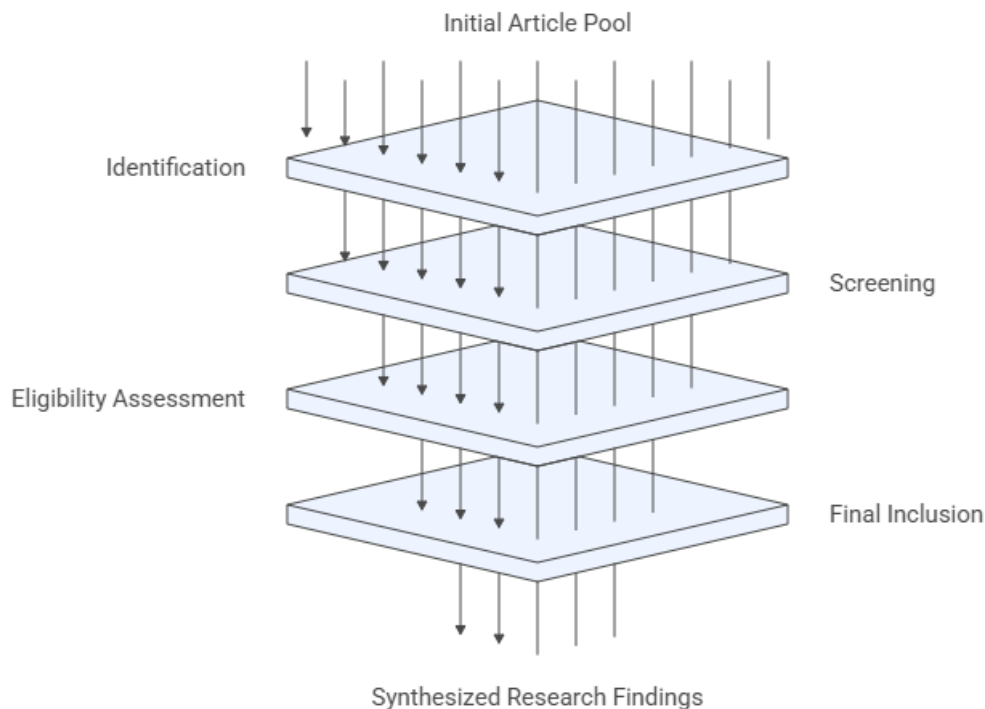


Figure 1 : Systemic Literature Review Process

Figure 1 illustrates the overall procedure of the systematic literature review conducted in this study, outlining the sequential stages through which relevant research on Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) and digital storytelling in multilingual education was identified, evaluated, and synthesized. The process began with the identification stage, during which an initial pool of articles was gathered from selected academic databases. This was followed by a screening stage aimed at refining the corpus by removing duplicate and non-relevant studies. Subsequently, an eligibility assessment was carried out through full-text evaluation to ensure alignment with the predefined inclusion criteria. The final inclusion stage resulted in a set of studies that formed the basis for synthesis, enabling a comprehensive and methodologically rigorous examination of how MALL and digital storytelling have been implemented and studied within multilingual educational contexts. Through this structured procedure, the review ensured transparency, consistency, and reliability in consolidating prior research findings.

### ***Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques***

The primary data source in this study comprised published journal articles retrieved from the selected academic databases. To support systematic data collection, a data extraction matrix was developed and used to record key information from each study, including publication year, research context, methodological approach, pedagogical strategies, technological tools, and principal findings. The use of structured extraction instruments has been widely recommended in systematic reviews of educational technology to enhance analytical consistency and reliability across studies (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2020).

### *Data Analysis Technique*

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis combined with comparative synthesis. Initially, relevant findings from each study were coded inductively to identify recurring patterns related to learner engagement, pedagogical strategies, multilingual inclusivity, and learning outcomes. Thematic analysis allows for flexible yet rigorous interpretation of qualitative patterns across diverse studies and has been increasingly applied in recent educational research syntheses to support theory development and pedagogical interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Subsequently, cross-study comparisons were performed to identify convergences and divergences among findings.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning has increasingly become a central pedagogical approach in multilingual language education. The expansion of mobile-based instruction reflects a broader pedagogical shift toward flexible and context-responsive learning environments. Recent empirical research indicates that mobile-supported language learning enables continuous exposure to authentic linguistic input and supports sustained learner engagement across diverse settings (Godwin-Jones, 2020). These characteristics are particularly relevant in multilingual classrooms where learners operate across multiple linguistic systems. Mobile-assisted learning practices therefore extend instructional continuity beyond classroom boundaries. This development signals a reconceptualization of language pedagogy in digitally mediated contexts.

Learner autonomy and motivation represent prominent pedagogical outcomes associated with mobile-assisted language learning. Mobile environments allow learners to regulate pace, select learning pathways, and engage in situated language use. Longitudinal classroom studies report that mobile-supported instruction positively influences learners' self-regulation and motivational orientation toward language learning (Stockwell & Hubbard, 2021). Such findings highlight the suitability of mobile learning for heterogeneous learner populations. Autonomy-oriented pedagogies encourage active learner participation in the learning process. These conditions reinforce the pedagogical relevance of MALL in multilingual education.

Digital storytelling has gained recognition as a pedagogical approach that integrates language learning with multimodal literacy development. Narrative-based tasks engage learners in complex meaning-making processes that involve linguistic, visual, and auditory resources. Recent instructional studies demonstrate that digital storytelling supports second language development and higher-order literacy skills (Robin, 2022). These learning outcomes are closely linked to the cognitive demands of narrative planning and multimodal composition. Storytelling activities also foster purposeful and reflective language use. Digital storytelling thus functions as a multidimensional pedagogical scaffold.

In multilingual contexts, digital storytelling supports intercultural learning and identity negotiation. Narrative practices enable learners to represent personal and cultural experiences through flexible language use. Empirical investigations show that storytelling-based pedagogy enhances intercultural awareness and communicative sensitivity among linguistically diverse learners (Dooly & Sadler, 2020). Such practices challenge monolingual ideologies embedded in conventional language instruction. Learners are encouraged to validate their multilingual identities. This pedagogical orientation aligns with inclusive and culturally sustaining education.

The relationship between digital storytelling and learner identity is further mediated through digital literacy practices. Multimodal composition provides learners with opportunities to express identities that may not be fully captured through written language alone. Recent studies emphasize that digital storytelling amplifies learner voice and supports identity

construction in multilingual settings (Almeida & Valente, 2023). These practices conceptualize language learning as a socially embedded process. Learners participate as meaning-makers rather than passive recipients. Digital literacies therefore contribute to both linguistic development and social participation.

The pedagogical integration of mobile learning and digital storytelling reveals complementary instructional affordances. Mobile platforms enable storytelling activities to occur across formal and informal learning spaces while supporting collaboration and peer interaction. Research on mobile-supported collaborative learning highlights its potential to enhance interactional competence and authentic language use (Sung & Poole, 2022). Learners engage in iterative cycles of narrative production and reflection. These processes strengthen social dimensions of language learning. The integration of mobility and storytelling enhances pedagogical coherence.

Critical perspectives emphasize that technology-enhanced language education must be examined through an equity-oriented lens. Digital tools alone do not guarantee inclusive learning opportunities. Studies indicate that technology integration may reinforce educational inequalities if issues of access and representation are not addressed (Williamson & Hogan, 2020). Language learning opportunities are shaped by social, cultural, and institutional factors. These insights foreground the ethical dimensions of instructional design. Pedagogical intentionality becomes central in multilingual contexts.

Multilingual education frameworks further illuminate the pedagogical value of technology integration. Contemporary theories emphasize the importance of leveraging learners' entire linguistic repertoires. Research demonstrates that multilingual pedagogies support deeper engagement and meaning-making in diverse classrooms (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021). Digital storytelling environments naturally accommodate flexible language practices. Learners are not restricted to a single target language. This alignment reinforces the pedagogical compatibility between technology use and multilingual education.

Despite demonstrated pedagogical potential, challenges related to implementation remain evident. Reviews of mobile learning research identify persistent issues related to teacher readiness, instructional coherence, and digital infrastructure (Hockly, 2021). These constraints influence the sustainability of technology-enhanced practices. Institutional support and ongoing professional development are frequently cited as critical enablers. Teachers require pedagogical frameworks alongside technical skills. Addressing these challenges remains essential.

Curriculum design and assessment practices play a critical role in optimizing technology-enhanced language learning. Digital storytelling products increasingly serve as authentic assessment artifacts capturing linguistic and intercultural development. Recent research highlights the importance of aligning digital tasks with curricular goals to ensure instructional validity (Chapelle & Sauro, 2022). Such alignment supports formative assessment practices. Assessment becomes embedded within learning processes. Curriculum coherence strengthens instructional effectiveness.

Learner engagement also emerges as a key mediating factor in mobile-based storytelling environments. Mobile storytelling fosters emotional involvement and sustained participation in language tasks. Empirical studies associate mobile-mediated narrative tasks with increased cognitive and affective engagement (Pérez-Paredes & Zhang, 2023). Engagement operates across multiple dimensions of learning. Learners demonstrate deeper investment in language production. Narrative-based mobile learning thus enhances engagement quality.

From a broader research perspective, fragmentation in technology-enhanced language learning scholarship remains a concern. Scholars call for integrative research designs that connect pedagogy, technology, and learner experience (Levy, 2021). The combination of mobile learning and digital storytelling offers such integrative potential. These approaches bridge classroom and out-of-class learning. Pedagogical alignment becomes the organizing principle. Integration addresses conceptual and empirical gaps.

Recent studies further highlight learner voice and agency within multilingual digital storytelling. Narrative tasks empower learners to articulate perspectives often underrepresented in formal curricula. Empirical evidence shows that multilingual learners use digital storytelling to assert linguistic presence and negotiate meaning (Miller & Hafner, 2022). These practices support participatory learning environments. Learner narratives function as sites of knowledge construction. Voice-oriented pedagogy gains increasing relevance.

To synthesize these interrelated findings, Figure 2 presents a conceptual representation of the key conditions supporting effective technology integration in multilingual language learning :

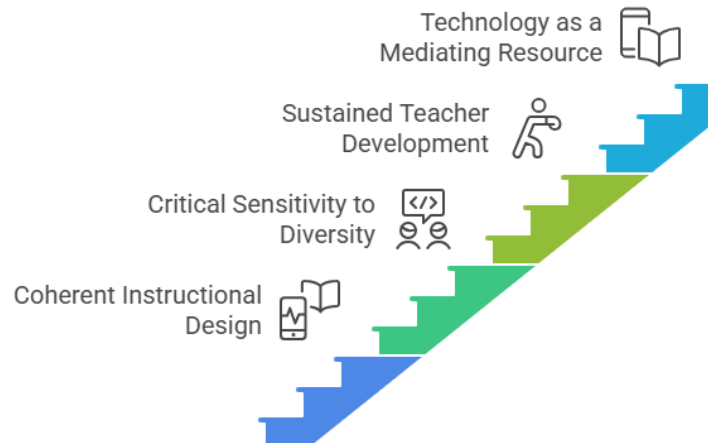


Figure 2 : Effective Technology Integration in Language Learning

Figure 2 synthesizes the key conditions that underpin effective technology integration in language learning, as identified across the reviewed studies. The figure conceptualizes integration as a progressive and interconnected process, beginning with coherent instructional design and extending through critical sensitivity to learner diversity, sustained teacher professional development, and the positioning of technology as a mediating pedagogical resource. Rather than depicting technology as an isolated solution, the model emphasizes that meaningful integration emerges from the alignment of pedagogical intent, teacher capacity, and inclusive learning practices. This synthesis highlights that effective technology-enhanced language learning, particularly in multilingual contexts, is contingent upon the interplay between instructional coherence, equity-oriented design, and continuous pedagogical adaptation.

Taken together, the findings indicate that the pedagogical integration of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning and digital storytelling in multilingual contexts is most effective when anchored in coherent instructional design, critical sensitivity to learner diversity, and sustained teacher professional development, positioning technology as a mediating resource for inclusive, autonomous, and meaningful language learning..

## CONCLUSION

This systematic review highlights the pedagogical value of integrating Mobile-Assisted Language Learning and digital storytelling in multilingual educational contexts. The synthesized findings demonstrate that these approaches support learner engagement, autonomy, multimodal literacy, and intercultural competence by accommodating linguistic diversity and promoting meaningful language use. Their effectiveness is closely linked to coherent instructional design, curriculum alignment, and teachers' capacity to integrate technology within inclusive and learner-centered pedagogies. At the same time, the review underscores the need for critical and equity-oriented implementation of technology-enhanced language learning. Mobile learning and digital storytelling must be embedded within supportive

institutional frameworks, sustained professional development, and ethical considerations of access and participation. Future research is encouraged to adopt integrative and longitudinal perspectives that examine pedagogical sustainability, assessment practices, and teacher education in multilingual settings, thereby strengthening the contribution of technology-mediated learning to equitable and resilient language education.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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