

Engaging MALL Tools for English-Speaking Learning: Insights for Cake, Duolingo, and YouTube by Indonesian Students

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ABSTRACT

Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) has emerged as a useful tool to improve language learning. This study explores the viewpoints and experiences of Indonesian learners on the specific issue of using mobile apps to improve their English-speaking skills across three apps. The study uses a narrative inquiry methodology to capture the rich individual experiences of students in navigating the opportunities and difficulties provided by MALL. Specifically, this research will explore their motivation, the effectiveness of various applications, and the improvement of these tools on their overall language proficiency. In addition, this study will consider the implications of these findings for the future field of education. In general, although MALL apps offer advantages and disadvantages for language learners, the participants are strong in their efforts to use this technology for educational purposes; their experiences highlight the evolution of digital language education and the possibility future developments will overcome present limitations, responding to a variety of goals for learning and styles in ever more efficient ways.

Keywords: MALL Tools; English Speaking Learning; Student Experiences

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, mobile-assisted language learning, or MALL, has emerged as a useful tool for enhancing learning a language. Since smartphones are so widely used and advanced language learning programs have evolved, the way students interact with new languages has experienced a significant transformation. MALL will be especially interesting to students who wish to improve their speaking because in traditional classroom settings, it allows them to practice language skills whenever and wherever they want. Shahdad et al. (2020) claimed MALL focuses on the application of mobile technologies to teaching languages. While learning a second language in a classroom isn't always practical for students, they may be able to do so without worrying about location or schedule if they use mobile devices. This is beneficial for students learning a second language through mobile devices. Nehe et al. (2023) believed that mobile applications for language learning have been used for several purposes, such as increasing the standard of language directions, and they have the power to seriously transform the way language is taught. Of all the available apps, Cake, Duolingo, and YouTube have gained a lot of popularity due to their user-friendly interfaces and interactive speech-improving content.

Through the advancement of technology, these obstacles started to be overcome with the emergence of MALL in the early 2000s, which offered more dynamic and interesting language learning opportunities. Hashim et al. (2017) found that computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) are the two main areas in English language teaching and learning that represent the use of technology to enhance English language learning. MALL is becoming a crucial component of language instruction, especially when studying English as a foreign language (EFL). A rising number of students, especially those in Indonesia, are using mobile apps to enhance their traditional classroom instruction. From organized lessons and tests to real-time speaking exercises with native speakers, these apps offer a wide variety of activities. Through simple, useful

discussions, apps like Cake provide daily practice with conversation. Outstanding and modern with simulating direct conversations with native speakers, the Cake application can be used as additional material for speech classes. It is also expected to be able to provide students with an engaging, meaningful, and self-directed learning experience will keep them motivated to practice these speaking skills. It promotes enthusiastic and involved learning among students in the classroom. Because the app offers instant feedback, students don't have to worry about making mistakes while they practice speaking. The Cake application aids children in their gaining vocabulary as well (Ali, 2023). However, Duolingo uses gaming to keep students interested in the development of languages. Puspitasari (2023) claimed using Duolingo can help participants learn English more effectively, especially when it comes to comprehending sentence structures and enhancing their listening and pronouncing abilities. YouTube, on the other hand, provides an extensive array of language learning channels offer lessons, pronunciation guides, and live interactions with content creators. Much empirical research has been conducted. Nur and Butartar (2022) proved the effects of using YouTube as a medium for learning English speaking skills. However, few qualitative studies have been conducted to investigate a deeper understanding of its impacts on students' learning experiences, particularly at the university level.

Educators and researchers are investigating strategies to improve the educational integration of MALL with formal education institutions. MALL, with its significant mobile device features, has helped support language acquisition (Shahdad et al., 2020). Blended learning methods, which combine traditional classroom education with mobile learning, are growing more and more popular, as evidenced by previous research. Meanwhile, previous research created two different applications for analyzing the subject's interaction with the source person. Thus, this study focuses on the viewpoints and experiences of Indonesian students about the specific problem of using mobile apps to improve their English-speaking abilities in three apps. This study uses a narrative inquiry methodology to capture the rich, individual experiences of students navigating the opportunities and difficulties provided by MALL. Specifically, it will explore their motivations, the effectiveness of different apps, and the improvements of these tools on their overall language proficiency. Additionally, the study will consider the implications of these findings for future educational fields.

To obtain accurate details on students' opinions of using the apps, this study used a narrative inquiry qualitative method research design. Participants were interviewed based on their experiences learning English speaking through Cake, Duolingo, or YouTube (from one or all of these applications). Concerning their previous, present, and future experiences with learning through the applications, structured interviews were held. study is designed to explore the applications of speaking practice, as well as the difficulties and advantages they saw in doing so. Furthermore, the researcher interviewed participants via WhatsApp, transcribing the Indonesian text answers into English. According to Nehe et al. (2023), to understand the experiences that students had applying mobile language learning applications, information was collected through interviews. Next, the data was given in the form of stories.

METHODS

This study investigates the perspectives and experiences of Indonesian students about the specific topic of employing three different mobile applications to enhance their English speaking abilities. The study applies a narrative inquiry methodology in order to highlight the different kinds of experiences that students have while facing the challenges and opportunities presented by MALL. Participants in this study are four sixth-semester undergraduate students, 21 to 22 years old students from Universitas Islam Malang specializing in English education. Using at least one of these three apps, the students were chosen to share their viewpoints. Individual interviews have been completed in three months. We gave each pseudonym to highlight ethical considerations: Albi is the first participant, and Ying, Dodo, and Ily. Ily is reviewing the Cake app, Albi and Ying are reviewing the Duolingo app, and the last one Dodo is on the YouTube app).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As stated by Ubaidillah et.al (2023) the three-dimensional space for narrative inquiry designed by Clandininn and Connelly (2000) was used to explain the study's findings: looking forward, looking inward and outward, and looking backward.

Looking Backward: First Experiences and Perspectives of the Challenges

This study's initial inquiry into the participants' past experiences of using Cake/Duolingo/YouTube was about how the first time they used the app and their perspectives when facing the challenges in the learning process. These introductory experiences highlighted the multifaceted challenges presented by using MALL apps for English proficiency, opening the stage for deeper exploration and analysis. It's interesting to see how they react and tell their first progress. We will start with Cake, and then Duolingo, the last one is YouTube. These are how the order of the scenes in the findings will be.

Excerpt 1 (Cake):

My first experience in learning English was using Cake, I loved when the first time I used it because the app was interesting, and my expectation was when I learned from the app it will going to be very fun and not boring. Related to the challenges, I was a little bit confused about how to use the speaking feature from the app because that was my first time and I felt unconfident also afraid of the result of my practice. In addition, because of many assignments of mine, I got easily bored and that delayed my learning progress (Interview, Ily, 24 June 2024).

Excerpt 2 (Duolingo):

Learning from Duolingo is fun. But then I realized it was so boring and had none of the speaking focus, only grammar and vocabulary (Interview, Albi, 9 June 2024).

Excerpt 3 (Duolingo):

I knew Duolingo from social media ads. The first time I tried it ended up well and interesting enough, due to the features not only giving learning material theoretically but also practically. Not only learn about grammatical systems but also speaking practice, listening, and writing. The questions also fit based on the level we are in. Then there are the corrections when we make a mistake. I expected this app to help me improve in the grammar aspect because I felt difficulty in arranging language structure when speaking. The challenge I faced was signal, since not all of the places have a good signal, accessing Duolingo requires a very good signal. Thus, repeated questions are only for upping the level. While I felt bored by the same questions all of the time. After that, my perspective changed a bit, especially for the writing feature here. When I make a mistake which causes one letter wrong, it will be admitted to be the wrong answer. And it made me mad. Because I have been busy with a lot of my assignments, I felt tired just from learning from Duolingo anymore. I think practicing English from YouTube is more effective because Duolingo is pointless for me nowadays (Interview, Ying, 10 June 2024).

Just like Ily, Ying experienced boredom as a result of their multiple tasks. However, the majority of the three believed that their first experience using the app to learn wasn't all that awful. Albi thought using Duolingo to learn languages was enjoyable. Albi became bored, however, believing that the program relied too much on vocabulary and grammar rather than providing enough speaking practice. It was obvious that students did not feel that way if the students denied (40.8%) the boredom claim, which claimed that Duolingo made learning English monotonous (Purwanto, 2023). In short, from the study related to the boredom of using Duolingo we can know students' mostly disagree with it. The majority of students said they did not regularly use Duolingo for their English language studies because the attractions of social media were more interesting to them when they opened their phones than Duolingo (Inayah et.al. 2020). Ily had a great first experience with Cake; she thought the app was interesting and predicted fun against boredom. Since this was a new experience for them, they struggled with confidence issues and confusion when employing the speaking feature. Because it decreases boredom during study sessions, an engaging feature can help boost students' enthusiasm for learning, and the feature is quick and also enjoyable for English talks (Lestari, 2021). They also highlighted how their learning progress was prevented by the ability to become quickly bored with

other projects. Because not all places had reliable connectivity, signal strength was a major problem that affected their ability to use Duolingo frequently. Frustration was also caused by the questions' repetition and the difficult inaccurate corrections, especially when one had been busy with other tasks.

Excerpt 4 (YouTube):

Okay, my first experience of using an application to learn to speak English was when I tried YouTube before using the application, I hoped I could learn more effectively and more fun than using conventional methods such as reading books or taking courses and, I hope it can help me practice my pronunciation and vocabulary more effectively and flexible. And the challenge I felt was the lack of direct interaction with the native speaker so I felt less confident in speaking. At first, I felt it was less effective, but as time went by, I started to see progress in mastering the word and pronunciation courses I looked for from the search bar. The moment that influenced this change the most was when I started to be able to understand and respond to simple conversations in English with more confidence. (Interview, Dodo, 8 July 2024).

Dodo chooses YouTube rather than more conventional approaches like reading books or attending classes because of its potential effectiveness and flexibility. His goals were to increase vocabulary and pronunciation. Dodo was unable to communicate directly with native speakers, which made him less confident while speaking. After using YouTube consistently, he experienced an improvement in his ability to understand and reply to Basic English discussions, even though at first, he felt unsuccessful. The successful use of YouTube videos improved the speaking abilities of students and their experience in the classroom during their studies online (Syafiq et.al. 2021).

Starting their English-speaking learning adventure with MALL programs such as Cake, Duolingo, and YouTube looked like a fresh and exciting idea at first. Even with the various difficulties and challenges they had, they stayed in learning English using the current apps. When they began their language-learning adventure, most participants were excited and optimistic about the potential of MALL programs such as Cake, Duolingo, and YouTube. Boredom from repetitive content or hard error correction, absence of interactive components (particularly with native speakers), and technical problems (such as signal strength) were common challenges. As students faced these difficulties, their perceptions slowly changed. While some became dissatisfied and thought specific apps weren't as useful or interesting as they seemed to be, others noticed ongoing advancement and realized the benefits of commitment. The study highlights both the potential and limitations of such technologies in educational contexts and creates a foundation for further investigation into how these early experiences impact long-term attitudes and practices in using MALL apps for language learning.

Looking Inward and Outward: How Current Use of the App(s) for Learning

The study explores how they used Cake, Duolingo, and YouTube to get better at speaking English and provides insights into their usage habits while evaluating benefits.

Excerpt 5 (Cake):

Usually, I manage my study schedule reminders from the app so I'll not forget and still be able to use the app every day. The app's correction feature for the words or sentences I defined was a really helpful feature for me to improve my speaking. And I think my pronunciation improved after using the app. Before I did not realize that I made mistakes when speaking when I learned from the app I know how to say something correctly and I'm glad to know that (Interview, Ily, 24 June 2024).

Excerpt 6 (Duolingo):

Current use of the app has improved vocabulary focus and all features are good but nowadays we need to pay for some premium unlocked features. But still, it's good enough to learn from the app (Interview, Albi, 9 June 2024)

Excerpt 7 (Duolingo):

I rarely learn from the app, maybe these days I switch to film music, or short videos from TikTok and YouTube when I'm in the mood. I would love the grammar feature, because it made me think to understand the correct grammar when I use it. Also, I'm thankful I ever learned from this app. Maybe I should improve my pronunciation a little in pronunciation for my daily vocabulary. Before I used it I often made many wrong words and now I feel my grammar is not bad but better (Interview, Ying, 10 June 2024).

Based on her experiences, I was able to enhance her speaking ability through the Cake feature learning. However, Albi and Ying believed that the grammar and vocabulary addition features were suitable to improve their English. The study explores how they used Cake, Duolingo, and YouTube reminders on the Cake app to help them monitor their study schedule and ensure everyday usage. As for their experiences, we discovered the correction option of the app was quite helpful in enhancing their communication skills. They were able to recognize and fix pronunciation errors, which increased their comfort level when speaking English.

Ying stated that she uses Duolingo infrequently as well as choosing to replace it with other media, such as movies or music. This shows a less organized approach compared to Cake or YouTube. Even though she used it infrequently, Ying enjoyed Duolingo's grammar focus since it made it easier for her to understand and employ correct grammar while speaking English. Though Ying and Albi noticed a change in focus from regular use to other media, it helped their overall language skills. The fact that Duolingo can motivate and assist them in getting better at English students to study English more outside of the classroom on their own grew their interest in using it (Inayah et.al. 2020).

Excerpt 8 (YouTube):

Currently, I use the application every day for 30 minutes. I usually follow the lessons provided by what I searched, then practice my pronunciation and repeat the words and sentences that have been learned. And I also use the conversation material to practice my speaking skills. About beneficial features here, the most useful feature in my opinion is the app always has so many sources related to my searching needs such as pronunciation practice material and direct feedback from the YouTubers. This feature can help me find several materials to learn. Besides, I feel my progress in speaking English is quite proficient and significant since I learn speaking using the application. One of the achievements that I feel is in the ability to speak more fluently and confidently in everyday conversations (Interview, Dodo, 8 June 2024).

The current state of English language learning with MALL apps like Cake, Duolingo, and YouTube shows a dynamic connection between specific learning experiences and use. Students can learn language through interactive and visual information using Cake's interactive features, which support a variety of learning styles. Cake is the best app for students to use if they want to practice speaking English (Lestari, 2021). From the Ily statement, we can claim the progress as Ily has been good and helpful. The specific tasks and instant feedback that Duolingo's adaptive learning systems offer users improve learning effectiveness and enthusiasm. As Albi and Ying stated, they had improvement in their vocabulary and grammar. With its huge collection of user-generated videos, YouTube functions as a virtual language classroom offers real-world interactions and realistic language settings. Dodo spent thirty minutes a day on YouTube, advancing conversational skills and pronunciation by watching planned classes based on searched materials. Dodo also discovered YouTube's variety of information was helpful, especially for practicing pronunciation and getting direct feedback from content creators. YouTube videos help students enjoy and understand English classes, which makes them more content and motivated to learn the language (Syafiq et.al. 2021). This kind of content made learning easier and made a big difference in their ability to speak English confidently and clearly. Together, these applications show how technology is becoming more and more important in language learning, combining modern technologies with proven methods to adjust

to the various needs of language learners. Overall, they reported positive impacts on their speaking ability.

Looking Forward: Future Goals and the Think of the App(s)

We talked about participants' future goals of learning English speaking through the apps and their opinions of the app. These excerpts highlight and list their objectives, which can include improving employment chances through language competency or reaching fluency in speaking

Excerpt 9 (Cake):

My goal is to be able to speak English fluently and correctly like a native speaker, I'm going to always study and learn from the app or directly talk with the natives to improve my speaking skills. My mind about the app is that maybe not many of us can choose what topics we want to discuss for the practice as our wish relies on our comfort zone for learning English speaking. And maybe I'm not going to use the app the next day. Remembering in this digital era today, there must be more interesting apps than this, easier to use and more efficient depending on my needs. Because the app is interesting and easy to understand, learners absolutely can enhance their speaking skills if they want to learn and diligently use the app (Interview, Ily, 24 June 2024).

Her behavior indicates a great desire to become skilled in speaking English as a native speaker. To improve her skills, she stresses the value of regular practice and even face-to-face interaction with native speakers. Ily criticizes the app's limits even as she acknowledges it can help with serious improvement in her speaking abilities. The lack of flexibility in conversation topic selection may restrict language learners to specific comfort zones and limit their ability to speak the language wider. She suggests possibly uninstalling the app in the future, noting that in the current digital environment, the latest and possibly more effective apps might appear. She believes that technological developments may result in apps are more user-friendly and better suited to specific educational needs.

Excerpt 10 (Duolingo):

I think the app for English learning didn't focus on speaking skills, only reading, writing, and also listening. I hope the premium features aren't more expensive and I will recommend the app for learning because we still can access the material freely even if we have to pay for some of them or open it from watching the ads (Interview, Albi, 9 June 2024).

Excerpt 11 (Duolingo):

My goals are to make myself able to speak with native speakers fluently and (from learning through the app) can help me get the job in the future. Maybe for the writing session it is better to complex the questions, because it only focuses on the right spelling, not teaching writing skills. And yes, I think the app is important for me when I need and have time to improve my skills. Thus, the usage of the app I believe will be useful for another learner, especially for a beginner like me before (Interview, Ying, 10 June 2024).

Albi and Ying shared their perspectives on Duolingo as a language-learning app. Albi notes that Duolingo mostly focuses on reading, writing, and listening tasks, and issues the app for placing too little emphasis on speaking abilities. The participant agrees that the app is accessible through free materials and ad-supported alternatives, but expresses a focus on the cost of premium services. Despite this, the participant recommends the app because of its wide reach. However, Ying highlights that her objective is to become fluent in spoken English to improve her chances of getting a job. They criticize Duolingo for emphasizing spelling accuracy too much and failing to correctly teach students all aspects of writing. Despite these criticisms, they consider Duolingo to be a helpful tool, especially for beginners, emphasizing it may be beneficial if users set up time to practice language skills.

Excerpt 12 (YouTube):

My future goal is to be able to speak English more fluently and naturally. I plan to achieve this goal by staying consistent in using the application, increasing the duration of my lessons, and trying to talk with native speakers through other platforms such as for language exchange. I can use that as the result of learning. In my opinion, this application can better support lessons by adding different versions. I mean a special version only for language learners. So we can get more video materials without bothering with our other daily watching list. I think adding more contextual and situational

content in the special app will be a good idea. It can help other students, even me, to understand language use in various situations. I already imagined this application would continue to be an important thing in my learning activity and as technology continues to develop, I am sure this application will become more up-to-date and effective in helping me master English. In addition, I think the use of applications to learn speaking skills will become more common and develop rapidly with AI technology and more advanced interactive features, and it will become an increasingly effective tool and as requested by other students like me too. That's all, thank you (Interview, Dodo 8 July 2024).

Their enthusiastic approach to language learning and their goals for how technology might improve educational experiences are highlighted in this section. It emphasizes the importance of personalized and useful information in assisting with language learning as well as the possibility that future technological developments will completely transform language learning resources. The participant's optimism is a sign of larger movements in language education to use digital platforms, highlighting their function to support optimal language practice and skill development. Although there are still a lot of applications offered to help students get better at speaking, students feel more comfortable using the Cake English application since they can see the benefits of their learning immediately, unlike the other applications (Lestari, 2021).

CONCLUSION

In short, this study explores the various points of view and experiences of language learners using MALL apps like Cake, Duolingo, and YouTube. It is done by focusing on three aspects of narrative inquiry: looking backward, looking inward, and looking forward. Participants initially discussed their initial impressions of the app, expressing a range of emotions including excitement, early success, and initial difficulties. While Duolingo gave Albi and Ying a fun and challenging experience, with noticeable shortages like the boredom in speaking practice and technical issues. Cake gave Ily an exhilarating start. Dodo selected YouTube because of its effectiveness and adaptability; although it did not always allow for direct communication with native English speakers, it produced significant enhancements in spoken English.

They shared a wide variety of future objectives and ideas about the app. Ily believed that applications predict improvements in technology and provide greater topic flexibility would result in more effective learning aids. Both Albi and Ying are interested in fluency; however, whereas Ying concentrates on using language practically to improve her work, Albi emphasizes the importance of more balanced skill development in Duolingo. Dodo expects app updates specifically for language learners, anticipating developments in artificial intelligence and interactive elements to further enhance language learning resources.

Overall, while MALL applications offer both advantages and disadvantages for language learners, the participants are strong in their efforts to use this technology for educational purposes; their experiences highlight the evolution of digital language education and the possibility that future developments will overcome present limitations, responding to a variety of goals for learning and styles in ever more efficient ways.

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