

Educators' Perceptions Towards Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL)

Aqsa Halepoto

Scholar, English Language Development Centre, Mehran University of Engineering and Technology, Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan.

Niaz Ahmed Bhutto

Department of Sociology, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan.

Inayatullah Kakepoto

Department of English, Quaid-e-Awam University of Engineering Science & Technology, Nawabshah, Sindh, Pakistan.

Email: kinayat@quest.edu.pk
(Corresponding Author)

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Abstract: This paper presents the findings of a case study about university teachers' perceptions regarding Mobile assisted language learning (MALL) and the fences associated with it. Five English language teachers from public sector universities were surveyed respondents for this study project. Researchers used the purposive technique for data collection. This technique is the fittest research method since participants were drawn on specific criteria of only English language educators. The research mode was qualitative, and the data collection instrument was semi-structured interviews. The content analysis approach was employed for data analysis purposes. Miles & Huberman's (1994) qualitative data analysis method was employed. Results exhibited that mobile-assisted language learning played an indispensable role in English language learning. Nonetheless, a few barriers influenced it, i.e., 'teachers' inadequate knowledge, absence of devices, expensive internet packages, electricity load shedding, poor network coverage, demotivation, boredom, small screen, sluggish internet speed, and data storage deficiency.

Key Words: Educators, Perceptions, Mobile, Assisted, Language, Learning

Introduction

MALL plays an important role in the field of education in universities. It is noteworthy to mention that teaching the English language depends on new and novel methods, tools, techniques and programs. It includes the use of computers, laptops, mobiles and software. [Guy \(2009\)](#) says that learning through electronic mobiles is mobile learning. Technology has changed the mode of teaching and learning ([Gilakjani, A. P. 2017](#))

not only in developed but underdeveloped countries of the world. In recent years a series of incredible developments have occurred in the education system of Pakistan in the shape of Mobile assisted language learning that has facilitated students, especially in the days of academic emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of MALL is quite easy and comfortable. Because it is portable and allows students to use it in and outside of the class. Though worldwide, MALL is used commonly, researchers and educators work to make it

part of the education system of Pakistan. MALL applications boost English language learning efficiently. Effective English language learning help students achieve academic and professional excellence ([Raphael Nhongo, 2017](#)). It raises a need that classroom teaching should be based on modern methods of learning that develop students' interests.

Literature Survey

Mobile assisted language learning (MALL) is a very broad array of approaches studied by world-renowned researchers from time to time. MALL is an educational skill designed for effective learning of students through the use of mobile phone applications ([Loewen et al., 2019](#)). Mobile learning is learning using a mobile device ([Traxler in Fazeena et al., 2015](#)) sitting at any place. This application played an important role during pandemic days. It is easily accessible and can be accessed from any place. Moreover, it is affordable as compared to computers and laptops. [Traxler \(2007\)](#) stated that it emphasizes on learning experience facet in place of teaching. The 21st-century students should be technically savvy to be competitive in all fields of education because it is education that provides better human capital to the workforce in all professions of life. The job market scenario requires that students need to be proficient in English Language ([Hsiao et al., 2016](#)) to communicate with multiple stakeholders around the globe. Educators prefer this MALL technology for teaching and learning purposes; hence it has become very important in the field of academics. Academic applications can be installed on mobile phones, which enhance language creativity ([Ni & Yu, 2015](#)) and competency. Mobile features entail audio, video, animation, and image projection elements. Language activities eliminate learning anxiety among students ([Ongoro & Mwangoka, 2014](#)). The use of the language approach in removing fear and anxiety

among students is fruitful and productive because it supports acquiring language skills and competencies. Mooneeb Ali (2020) studied mobile-assisted language learning applications in English as Second Language classrooms. This researcher found trainers were well abreast with MAAL technology and its useful purpose. Mobile phones, computers, multimedia, smart boards, LEDs, lightning pen and the internet, are technical tools used in classrooms ([South, 2017](#)). MALL is totally changed thought compared to conventional learning ([Ozdamli & Cavus, 2011](#)) method of teaching. A conventional method of teaching is a common practice in Pakistan, even in this digital age of technology where teachers depend upon one-way traffic of teaching. However, there seems to be an apparent change in the methods of learning due to technological development ([Cakmak, 2019](#)), and there are many advantages to it. MALL can be considered a mobile technology invasion in the field of academics in terms of teaching and learning. Accessibility, availability of tools and practicality are key components of MALL in classroom teaching and learning.

[Nafisatul Lutfi \(2020\)](#) examined MALL use for students speaking skills and found pupils were satisfied with the usability of MALL application in language learning. [Nuraeni et al. \(2020\)](#) studied students' problems with mobile-assisted language learning. Findings disclosed that the majority of students held a positive perception about MALL, except the problem of internet connectivity affected it. ([Darsih, E., & Asikin, N. A \(2020\)](#) surveyed use of mobile applications in learning English and found mobile applications were useful for learners. [Isna Rakhmawati's \(2019\)](#) study on learning through mobile applications revealed that MALL had a positive impact on language learning, but learners faced internet connection problems. The study of [Junjie Gavin \(2019\)](#) on mobile devices in language learning found students were satisfied with

the use of mobile devices in language learning. [Khawla et al. \(2016\)](#) studied the attitudes of teachers and students about mobile-assisted language learning use and found training and educational infrastructure was missing. [Nasrin Nikpeyma et al. \(2021\)](#) surveyed facilitators and barriers to using mobile devices as an educational tool. The findings showed internet access as a mobile-related barrier. [Nedal \(2014\)](#) surveyed the barriers and benefits of computer-assisted language learning. The researcher found inadequate computers, technical problems and teacher training as language learning barriers. [Kakepoto Inayatullah et al. \(2021\)](#) studied E-learning barriers of university students and explored slow internet speed, electricity load shedding, expensive internet packages and poor computer literacy as e-learning barriers. [Vo Ngoc et al. \(2021\)](#) surveyed student-teacher mobile-assisted language learning acceptance. Results indicated students had a stronger feeling for orientation of teachers to use mobile applications in and outside of the classroom. [Reza Dashtestani \(2013\)](#) investigated mobile-assisted language learning in the EFL context and found language teachers fall short in using required MALL skills activities. [Muhammed Salim et al. \(2019\)](#) studied reading skills through mobile-assisted language learning. Researchers concluded MALL applications provide a motivating learning environment that heavily impacts students reading skills.

[Sufyan Habib et al. \(2022\)](#) studied mobile-assisted language learning outcomes. They explored technological factors, students' readiness, and students' motivation that hit students' performance. [Cicuh Nuraeni et al. \(2020\)](#) investigated students' perceptions of mobile learning in the English language. Results revealed that internet connectivity was the biggest problem for MALL in learning the English language. [Huseyin Oz \(2013\)](#) studied the use of mobile devices as M- learning tools and found

majority of students used phones, but mobile use applications faced certain barriers that included device types, lack of devices and lack of training. [Ke Yang \(2020\)](#) studied learners' motivation for mobile-assisted language learning and discovered language difficulties and affordability of mobile technologies as MALL motivation factors. [Rex Lim et al. \(2021\)](#) investigated mobile-assisted language learning and found students perceived mobile devices use as distractive. [Kübra et al. \(2022\)](#) studied EFL instructors' perceptions about mobile-assisted language learning and found weak internet connection and poor digital literacy among student-teachers. [Kakepoto Inayatullah et al. \(2022\)](#) surveyed satisfying and dissatisfying determinants of online education in Pakistan. Results exhibited that internet issues, electricity load shedding, technical issue, home disturbance, and expensive internet packages were E-education barriers. Emrah [Dolgunsöz et al. \(2021\)](#) studied mobile devices role in online EFL courses. This study found small screen size, microphone problems, and internet connection problems. [Xinyi Lu \(2022\)](#) explored the application of mobile-assisted language for learning English and found students faced problems with an expensive phones as they came from rural areas. [Kakepoto Inayatullah et al. \(2021\)](#) examined E-examination and assessment practices and found uploading answer scripts on software, WhatsApp, sluggish internet speed, load shedding of electricity, low motivation and physical and mental fatigue as potential barriers. Sagun [Shrestha et al. \(2022\)](#) studied practices of online education and found lack of technological support, lack of digital skills and poor network as constraints.

Study Objectives

- (i) To investigate educators' perceptions towards Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL).

- (ii) To determine the barriers that impact Mobile Assisted Language Learning.

Study Questions

- (i) What are educators' perceptions of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL)?
- (ii) What are the barriers that impact Mobile Assisted Language learning?

Study Methodology

This is a qualitative study since it involves semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with English language teachers teaching in a public sector university in Pakistan. Five (5) English language teachers participated in this pilot project. Interviews were audio recorded in order to prepare transcriptions. They were coded, transcribed, and themes were generated to draw conclusions. Themes were extracted using the conventional content analysis approach was used for extracting the themes. More specifically, Miles & Huberman's (1994) qualitative data analysis method was employed for this study.

Findings and Analysis

Findings Part -1

- (i) What are educators' perceptions of Mobile Assisted Language (MALL)?

Research Question 1 findings are presented as under:

- Mobile phones played a paramount role in the pandemic COVID-19 in Pakistan because it's affordable, and also, the issues of electricity and

network coverage were managed better than desktops. (ESLT 1).

- Mobiles played too much an important role in online teaching in COVID 19 because lots of students belong to poor families, and they could not buy laptops, computers and desktops. At that time, Mobiles were one of the greatest sources of their study. (ESLT 2).
- Yes, if we think about a specific pandemic in this situation, mobiles have definitely been playing a very important role why because it's not possible for the university to arrange physical classes, so that's why this device or technology is very effective for the learning English language. (ESLT 3).
- I think that mobile phones or their tools played a very important role in communicating with students and also communication between teachers and students, but language learning was not really taken place, but it was a source of being communicating and for completing our courses or the given tasks and instructions to the students. (ESLT 4)
- Yes, mobile apps are very useful during pandemics teachers and even students were using WhatsApp groups while learning, and this was also used as one of the digital tools for learning, so we had to use laptops and mobile devices even if they were outside the classroom, mobile learning can take place anytime and anywhere. (ESLT 5).

Table 1. Summary of R.Q. 1

S. No	Code	Theme
1	ESLT 1	Mobile phones played a significant role during the COVID-19 pandemic days.
2	ESLT 2	Mobile phones enjoyed an indispensable role in online teaching during COVID-19 pandemic days.

3	ESLT 3	Mobiles have been playing a very imperative role in the pandemic.
4	ESLT 4	Mobile phones played an imperative role, but language learning was not really taking place.
5	ESLT 5	Yes, mobile applications are very useful; learning can take place anytime and anywhere.

Table 1: speaks about educators' perceptions of MALL. Four teachers agreed that mobile-assisted language learning plays an important role in English language learning. However, one teacher differed with this conception that MALL plays any role in English language learning.

Findings Part- II

(ii) What are the Barriers that impact Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL)?

Research Question 2 findings are presented as under:

- There are many barriers such as the use of technology, and teachers have insufficient knowledge about this, lack of devices, exorbitant internet packages, load shedding, network coverage and ill reading habits. (ESLT 1).
- There are many barriers... small screen, lack of motivation, past experience, limited teaching experience, challenging eLearning materials, inadequate support, personal cognitions, online learner boredom and lack of community involvement. (ESLT 2).
- First of all, I say regarding the barriers, for the teacher's barrier is that if teacher means unable to use these applications of Mobile definitely

means the technological approach is one of the barriers another thing is that for example suppose many teachers don't know specific programs like google meet, google class if they are unable to run definitely it is a barrier and other thing speed matters in the city especially urban areas there is the proper speed of internet if students are away from city or teachers even away from city or sometimes even universities we take the class connection of the internet, so this speed and disconnection matters a lot how that lectures disturbs a lot. (ESLT 3).

- There are many barriers such as load shedding of electricity, exorbitant internet packages, poor environment, reading difficulty on a small screen, lack of computer training, infrastructure issues, data storage and multimedia deficiencies, lack of confidence with technology, small screen problems, teacher overload and internet connectivity issue in remote areas (ESLT 4).
- As far as barriers are concerned, there are various barriers like we have network issue load shedding issue again how well be no Applications of those versions of the technology. (ESLT 5).

Table 2. Summary of R.Q.2

Sr. No	Code	Theme
1	ESLT 1	Teachers' insufficient knowledge, lack of devices, exorbitant internet packages, load shedding, network coverage, and poor reading habits.
2	ESLT 2	Limited teaching experience, lack of motivation, inadequate support, learner boredom, small screen.

3	ESLT 3	Poor internet speed in rural areas.
4	ESLT 4	Loadshedding of electricity, small screen problems, poor environment, deficient computer training, data storage insufficiencies, reading difficulty on a small screen, exorbitant internet packages and internet connectivity issue in remote areas.
5	ESLT 5	Network issue, load shedding issue.

Table 2: indicates that all teachers mentioned certain barriers that impacted mobile-assisted language learning in language classrooms.

Discussion

Teachers approved that Mobile assisted language learning (MALL) plays a paramount role in learning the English language. There are numerous reasons for it because it is a friendly application, easy to use and affordable as compared to laptops, computers and desktops. Moreover, Mobile is a device which is easily available to teachers and students. Teachers expressed the idea that during pandemic days, it was never possible for universities to arrange physical classes. Hence, mobiles played a very effective and useful role in learning the English language in and outside of classrooms. It also surfaced from the data that mobile phones or their tools played a useful role in communicating with teachers easily, which was never possible without the help of mobiles. Because Mobile was easily accessible for both teachers and students, it connected them properly. Besides, it helped in the completion of academic courses during the pandemic without academic loss of students in the shape of session delays. Data further revealed that mobile applications played a paramount role during the pandemic because students and teachers used WhatsApp applications which are part of digital technology and played a very important role in teacher-student communication. It is the major quality of mobile devices to use this application anytime and any place. The findings of this research question are in line with literature

studies already done by various researchers such as ([Nafisatul Lutfi, 2020](#); [Nuraeni et al., 2020](#); ([Darsih, E., & Asikin, N. A 2020](#); [Isna Rakhmawati, 2019](#); [Junjie Gavin, 2019](#); [Vo Ngoc et al., 2021](#); [Muhammed Salim et al., 2019](#)).

Findings of Research Question 2 revealed that Mobile assisted language learning (MALL) in Pakistan is never free from certain barriers and problems. Barriers that surfaced from teachers talk were teachers' insufficient knowledge, lack of devices, exorbitant internet packages, loadshedding of electricity, network coverage, poor reading habits, limited teaching experience, lack of motivation, inadequate support, learner boredom, small screen, poor internet speed in far flung rural areas, absence of computer training, poor environment, reading difficulty on small screen, data storage deficiencies, and exorbitant internet packages. These barriers need to be redressed in Pakistan to make in order to make Mobile assisted language learning (MALL) effective in the field of education. Findings of this research question are in line with other literature review studies for instance: ([Isna Rakhmawati, 2019](#); [Khawla et al., 2016](#); [Nasrin Nikpeyma et al., 2021](#); [Nedal, 2014](#); [Kakepoto Inayatullah et al., 2021](#); [Reza Dashtestani, 2013](#); [Sufyan Habib et al., 2022](#); [Cicih Nuraeni et al., 2020](#); [Huseyin Oz, 2013](#); [Rex Lim et al., 2021](#); [Kübra et al., 2022](#); [Kakepoto Inayatullah et al., 2022](#); [Emrah Dolgusöz et al., 2021](#); [Xinyi Lu, 2022](#); [Sagun Shrestha et al., 2022](#)).

Conclusion

The objective of this research was to investigate educators' perceptions of Mobile

assisted language learning (MALL) role in the field of education. Results revealed that Mobile assisted language learning (MALL) plays an important role in the field of education. It is a healthy feature of learning and facilitates learning outside of classrooms as well. Mobile devices are affordable and easy to use for students since the majority of students possess mobiles since they live in the age of mobile communication and technology. Mobiles offer an advantage in that they can be accessed from anywhere and anytime for academic learning purposes. Especially, Mobile played an important role during the pandemic days. It is noteworthy to mention that desktops or laptops are expensive compared to mobiles. They are

beyond the purchasing power of students since a majority of students come from low socioeconomic status families, and they belong to the source of farming and agriculture. So, mobile phones are a better alternative to these devices for academic purposes. However, it surfaced that Mobile assisted language learning (MALL) is never free from barriers that impact student learning at a certain scale. These barriers comprise 'teachers' inadequate knowledge, absence of devices, expensive internet packages, electricity load shedding, poor network coverage, demotivation, boredom, small screen, sluggish internet speed, and data storage deficiency.

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