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University Students' Perception and Enactment of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL)



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Abstract

This study investigated university students' perception and enactment of usage of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in learning English, focusing on students from the physiotherapy and nursing department at Dr. Zia Ud Din University at Sukkur, Sindh, Pakistan. It explores how mobile applications like Google Translate, YouTube, Zoom, WhatsApp, and Elsa Speak help students improve their language skills in speaking, reading, writing, and listening. A qualitative research approach was used, involving 97 students selected from an initial pool of 127 based on their participation and response quality. Data were gathered through an open-ended questionnaire and interviews, examining students' digital literacy, learning strategies, and challenges with Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL). The results show that the students view MALL positively for its flexibility and ability to promote self-directed learning of language. However, barriers like poor internet access, digital illiteracy, and mobile devices were identified unequal access as barriers. The study calls for enhanced institutional support and infrastructure to optimise Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL)

Keywords: Mobile Assisted Language Learning, University Students.

Introduction

English language learning provides many advantages and disadvantages to the ESL learners in many ways, as Mobile technologies are evolving and increasing rapidly. As technology continues to evolve. The incorporation of such technologies is effective in the learning and teaching process. A popular way nowadays is "Mobile Assisted Language Learning" (MALL) (Miangah & Nezarat, 2012). So this research study implicates that learners applying MALL by using mobile applications, such as Google Translate, Google Meet, YouTube, Zoom, and Elsa Speak, help in their learning (Darsih & Asikin, 2020). For successful learning, learners need to be autonomous so that they take control of their learning (Lyddon, 2016). The widespread COVID-19 pandemic had major impacts on people's lives. People are being asked to take safeguards to avoid being poisoned. Social isolation serves as a real mask for those who are not affected. With the outbreak, a huge number of people were forced to study remotely to follow the worldwide stay-at-home order (Vargo, 2021). Furthermore, the most important decision taken in this regard is to take everything home, such as work from home

(WFH) and school from home (SFH). It is unquestionably not a serious issue for adults. It makes a huge difference in the lives of school students. With the outbreak, a large population was forced to study remotely to follow the worldwide stay-at-home order (COVID-19-20). Furthermore, the most important decision taken in this regard was to take everything at home, such as work from home (WFH) and school work from home (SWFH). (Vargo, 2021).

This Study suggests these devices create a more engaging and real-world learning environment compared to traditional classrooms. This extra practice can lead to better performance in class. Learners themselves see mobile devices as valuable tools for independent learning, allowing them to find information, communicate, collaborate, and essentially take charge of their own learning experience (Farley et al., 2015). So the mentioned electrical devices play such a crucial role to learn a foreign language, especially in Pakistan, where most of the students use mobile phones and also spend their precious time playing games along with learning a language by using electrical devices, Ishaq et al. (2020), including mobile devices. Laptops, tablets, microphones, and other handheld devices are used everywhere for doing everything by ranging from voice calling to sending short messages, and video chat. Teachers and lecturers are being asked to plan Activities for their learners to support online learning lessons at home as the use of mobile phones increases. Speaking and listening are the most important aspects for learning a foreign language, while using technology during the crucial virus is more efficient and interesting than it has ever been. Kukulska-Hulme, A., & Shield, L. (2007). Therefore, this study is unique in the way to identifying the gap that needs a vast study in the medical field, and this study will try to overcome the English language learning barriers through mobile.

Problem Statement

This objective study helped us to explore how university students at the physiotherapist department of Dr. Zia Din University at Sukkur, in Sindh, Pakistan, perceive English as a foreign language learning. The majority of the students have various educational backgrounds and showcase the unique strategies for speaking English at proficient levels, from beginner to advanced levels. This research methodology is intended to identify the various characteristics of a population's factors that influence students' utilization of mobile devices for language learning. So students' present mobile device skills for useless purposes may not be translated directly to maximizing the benefits of MALL (mobile-assisted language learning) perception. Moreover, the study explores to investigate whether MALL can have valuable impacts on

students' beliefs, personality, and attitudes towards using mobile devices for language learning, potentially influencing the frequency of their MALL engagement and perception.

Research Objectives

- To investigate the strategies that used by students to improve communication skills through MALL.
- To identify the challenges students face in using mobile technology for learning and propose practical solutions and institutional strategies to enhance the effectiveness of MALL.

Significance of the Study

Mobile-assisted language learning is very helpful in the educational settings of Pakistan. The objectives of studies possess crucial significance for both learners and educational purposes in educational institutions. So the objectives of these studies are to enhance learners' understanding of the application of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) while facilitating the learning of English as a second language. And it also examines the potential influence of MALL on improvement in various aspects of linguistics grammar, including (morphology, phonetics and phonology, syntax, semantics, and Pragmatics). Moreover, it investigates the perceptions and enactments of the language learners at the graduate level about the various impacts of MALL on learners' perceptions and promotes to because autonomous learning is very important for modern learning languages through AI tools in education. The institutions will adopt those technological strategies that will facilitate students while learning. This study will be supportive in finding out that if mobile-assisted language learning (MALL).

Literature Review

According to Maitlo et al. (2024). Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has emerged as a powerful approach in the field of English language education, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) learning. With the advancement and widespread use of mobile technology, language learners today have access to a variety of tools and platforms that allow them to engage in learning activities beyond the traditional classroom. In developing countries like Pakistan, where limited resources and infrastructural challenges often hinder quality education, mobile technologies have created new possibilities for language learning that are flexible, accessible, and cost-effective. (MALL) refers to any type of language learning activity that involves the use of

mobile technologies, including smartphones, tablets, laptops, and handheld digital devices. These tools are used either formally in classroom settings or informally in self-directed learning environments. Yang, J. (2013) describes MALL as the use of portable devices in language learning that enables learners to access materials, interact with teachers and peers, and practice their language skills anytime and anywhere. MALL not only supports the development of language competencies but also fosters autonomy and motivation among learners.

Effectiveness of MALL

Studies have highlighted the effectiveness of MALL in developing various language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. According to Rajendran, T (2021), mobile applications like Google Translate, Zoom, Elsa Speak, and YouTube serve as valuable tools for language learners by offering them diverse resources and real-life practice opportunities. These platforms are particularly effective for improving pronunciation, listening comprehension, and fluency. Google Translate, for instance, allows students to quickly understand unfamiliar vocabulary, while YouTube and Zoom provide exposure to authentic language use and communication. Elsa Speak, a speech-recognition app, helps learners improve their pronunciation through guided exercises and instant feedback. One of the key advantages of MALL is its ability to promote autonomous learning. Autonomy is considered a critical aspect of successful language acquisition, especially in contexts where learners may not have continuous access to formal instruction. Sha, L., Looi, C. K., Chen, W (2012). Argues that mobile technologies empower learners to take control of their learning processes by setting their own goals, selecting appropriate learning materials, and monitoring their progress. This shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered education aligns with modern pedagogical approaches that emphasize active engagement and personalized learning.

Exploring (MALL) in Modern Education

Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) supports both formal and informal learning practices. In formal settings, teachers can incorporate mobile tools into lesson plans, assignments, and assessments. In informal contexts, students use mobile apps, dictionaries, videos, podcasts, and social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram to interact in English and expose themselves to authentic language use. Ahmad, K. S. (2019). This blend of formal and informal learning enables students to extend their learning beyond the classroom and engage in language practice in real-world situations. Various studies have

explored the role in the context of Pakistan. During COVID-19, the use of mobile technology in education has been growing steadily. However, challenges such as limited digital infrastructure, lack of training, and socio-economic disparities still exist. Despite these barriers, MALL has become increasingly relevant for Pakistani students who use smartphones and other devices not only for entertainment but also for educational purposes. Rashid, S. (2018) highlights that the widespread use of mobile phones offers researchers and educators an opportunity to explore their potential in enhancing academic outcomes, especially in English language learning. Mostly, Students in Pakistani universities, particularly in semi-urban and rural areas, often come from diverse educational backgrounds and have varying levels of English proficiency. This diversity makes mobile learning tools especially valuable as they can be tailored to suit individual learning needs. For example, language learning apps allow students to choose their level of difficulty, practice specific skills, and receive instant feedback, which is not always possible in a traditional classroom setting. Moreover, MALL enhances motivation and learner engagement. Motivation is a key factor in second language acquisition, and mobile learning tools have been found to increase students' interest and participation in learning activities. Panagiotidis, P., Krystalli, P. (2023) note that mobile technologies allow learners to learn at their own pace and in environments that they find comfortable, which can positively affect their motivation. Gamified language apps like Duolingo also make learning more enjoyable by offering rewards and challenges, which encourage consistent practice.

Digital Literacy

According to Tulasirao, V. (2021) important aspect of MALL is its contribution to developing digital literacy skills. As students engage with mobile tools for learning purposes, they also improve their ability to navigate digital platforms, search for information, and use online communication tools. These skills are essential in today's knowledge-driven society. However, not all students have equal opportunities to develop these skills, which can lead to a digital divide. Learners from low-income families may not own personal devices or have access to stable internet connections, limiting their ability to fully benefit from MALL.

Teacher Support and Professional Development

Especially in the context of Pakistan, according to Ali, M. M., and Asad, Z. (2020), teachers also play a critical role in the successful implementation of MALL. Their attitudes, beliefs, and preparedness influence how effectively mobile technologies are integrated into language

instruction. In many cases, educators need professional development and training to effectively use digital tools in their teaching. As technology becomes more embedded in education, institutions must provide teachers with the necessary support and resources to adapt to these changes. Despite its many advantages, MALL also presents certain limitations. Some students may use mobile devices primarily for entertainment purposes, which can reduce the effectiveness of MALL if not guided properly. There are also concerns about distractions, lack of supervision, and reduced face-to-face communication. Therefore, it is important to strike a balance between technology use and traditional learning methods.

Research Methodology

This is a Qualitative study. This research was conducted using a Qualitative research methodology. The researcher conducted a separate class based on two way communication between teachers (Us) and undergraduate students while talking to session the students, we observed the well approached and confident students, then we select them, so that the data for this research were taken from 28 students out of 65 students from the physiotherapist department of Dr. Zia Din university at Sukkur, and 27 students from the nursing department. In collecting data for this research, we used questionnaires and interviews with the students. The questionnaires were in the form of a statement. Then, analyzing the data obtained, it was concluded that the general perception and enactment of the students is that the perception of the students on the (MALL) in learning language is positive, as they perceive that the (MALL) is effective and beneficial for their target language learning. The purpose is to present the learners' responses and perceptions toward the mobile devices that are used in English-speaking classes. Furthermore, the participants taking English courses online at a long distance were asked several questions related to the use of technologies. The methodology adopted for this study is designed to gather comprehensive insights into students' views, attitudes, and practices related to the use of mobile devices in enhancing their language skills. So, this approach allows the researchers to gather in-depth, rich data regarding students' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences with MALL. By using qualitative methods, the study captures complicated insights into how mobile devices influence language learning and identifies challenges and opportunities in the learning process. In the end, they were delivered questions concerning,

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through a separate class based on two way communication (survey) between teachers (Us) and undergraduate students while talking to session the students, we observed the well approached and confident students, then we select them, In collecting data for this research, we used also questionnaires and interviews with the students. The questionnaires were in the form of a statement, and they included five degrees of answer options. Then, analyzing the data obtained, it was concluded that the general perception and enactment of the students is that the perception of the students on the (MALL) in learning language is positive, as they perceive that the (MALL) is effective and beneficial for their target language learning. There were a total of 128 participants who responded to the survey, were only 91 were students. Then, the well-approached fifty-five students were selected. The data were structured and analyzed by using Microsoft Office.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: *Digital Fluency*

Results No.	Theme	Key Findings
01	Perception of MALL as a Positive Learning Tool	Students found tools like Google Classroom, Zoom, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram , and video blogs useful for improving English, especially speaking and listening . Apps provided a non-judgmental, flexible learning space. Tools like Elsa Speak built confidence .
02	Integration of Mobile Apps in Informal Learning	Students preferred Zoom for classes due to its interactive nature. Technology tools supported classroom discipline and made English learning feel real.

Mobile Applications Used in Online Classes

Table 2: Mobile Application Usage in Online Classes.

Application	No. of Students Responding
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Zoom	30
YouTube	35

Conference Call	20
Google Classroom	30
Video Vlog	20
Facebook	15
WhatsApp	23

Table 3: Empower Learning , Barriers And Socila Impacts

03	Empowerment Through Self-Learning	Students valued self-paced, independent learning using YouTube and apps , which allowed repeated practice and revisiting materials, promoting autonomy and deep understanding .
04	Barriers Beyond Language Learning	Challenges included: - High internet costs- Poor signal in remote areas- Fear of judgment in class led to preference for online, private practice
05	Accessibility and Ease of Use	Students found mobile device user-friendly and the transition to MALL natural since they were already familiar with tools like WhatsApp .
06	Digital Challenges in MALL	Issues included: - Unstable internet- Device sharing at home- Low digital literacy- Outdated devices- Lack of training
07	Impact of Social Media Content Quality	Informal platforms like vlogs, podcasts, social media, and games helped students improve vocabulary and listening skills in a low-pressure environment.

Discussion and Conclusion

Participants highlighted several important features they valued in mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) tools, such as personalized and adaptive learning, feedback systems, daily vocabulary updates, and pronunciation aids. These resources were seen as especially helpful in encouraging independent learning and improving language skills. The survey results were supported by an analysis of open-ended responses, and a word cloud from that analysis emphasized key themes like personalization, adaptability, feedback, and pronunciation

practice. These insights align with what participants shared about how MALL helps build learner autonomy.

The findings also support previous research by Nasar and Abbas (2018), which found that MALL plays a positive role in both teaching and learning. The discussion section of the study explores how MALL can be effectively used in educational settings, not just to motivate learners, but to help them practice independently and take charge of their learning journeys. However, the study also acknowledges potential challenges, such as the need for equal access to technology and proper guidance for students. Survey responses clearly show that participants view MALL as a powerful tool for self-directed learning. They appreciated the convenience and flexibility of being able to use their mobile devices to access learning materials anytime and anywhere. Many reported using language apps, watching educational videos, and joining online language communities as part of their learning strategies, showing real motivation to go beyond traditional classroom boundaries. These results also echo the findings of Wang and Yang (2015), who noted a strong link between how learners perceive MALL and their overall language learning experience. Students with a positive view of MALL were more motivated, engaged, and enthusiastic, highlighting just how much learners' attitudes toward technology can shape their progress and autonomy.

Recommendation

- Universities should provide technical support and access to mobile devices or Wi-Fi facilities on campus to ensure all students can benefit from MALL, especially those from low-income backgrounds.
- Mobile learning content should be developed and shared in offline formats to support students with poor internet access in rural or remote areas.
- Teachers should monitor and guide students on how to use mobile apps effectively, helping them avoid distractions and use their devices for meaningful learning activities.
- Students should form small speaking practice groups on platforms like WhatsApp or Zoom to improve their fluency and reduce speaking anxiety through regular practice.
- Students should take responsibility for their learning by setting weekly language goals and tracking their progress using mobile apps or digital planners.

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